

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

No. 54, September 2017

Hastings' Quarry Trail: A Rail-Trail With a Difference

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson, with the support of a passionate group of residents known as the Friends of Quarry Park and Trail, is reclaiming the old Hastings marble quarry and returning it to parkland. The first stage of the project, Quarry Trail, is now complete; Hastings' Mayor Peter Swiderski cut the ribbon to signal the opening of the entire trail on July 14, 2017.

Quarry Trail invites Aqueduct walkers to enjoy a new side trip from the Aqueduct and create new "loop" walking routes. About 600 feet long, it extends from the Old Croton Aqueduct just south of William St. to Southside Ave., across from the Metro-North rail tracks. The start is marked by a sign and stairs that wind down and under the Aqueduct trail.

The trail itself is surfaced with crushed stone. Its first section, punctuated by short flights of stone steps, arrives at a stairway that the walker can easily ascend to Warburton Ave. to explore the restaurants, shops, and civic buildings of Hastings' business district. Or, one can continue on the trail under the Warburton Ave. bridge to the top of a long flight of steps, where a marvelous view of the Hudson and Palisades opens up. At the bottom of the stairway, the walker is about a quarter-mile from Hastings' Rowley Bridge Trail to the south, and the same distance from Hastings station and the start of the commercial district to the north.

Quarry Trail is a rail-to-trail project with an unusual history. As the location of one of Hastings' earliest industries, the 5.5 acre quarry site has powerful connections to both the Village and the Hudson River. Beginning in 1828, sloops docked at the waterfront landing at Hastings to be loaded with marble cut by some of the area's first immigrant workers. The stone was carried from the quarry to the dock by an inclined steam railway.

The part of the Croton Aqueduct that borders the quarry site was built in 1838. According to the terms of the Aqueduct charter granted by New York State, the massive structure that encased the water tunnel had to accommodate existing roadways and other rights-of-way it crossed. The quarry's inclined railway was accommodated by means of an arched opening at the base of the Aqueduct embankment. It is through this arched passage that Quarry Trail, with its fine river views, starts its descent toward the Hudson, following the steep path the railway tracks once occupied. This may be the only rail-trail that was originally an inclined railway.

(cont. on page 2)



The view west, framed by the Quarry Trail's passage under the Warburton Ave. bridge. (Photo by C. Lomolino)

Hastings' Quarry Trail *(cont. from page 1)*

The highly prized Hastings marble was delivered to construction sites up and down the eastern seaboard for use in noteworthy historic buildings, public landmarks, and private mansions of the era. Marble Collegiate Church in Manhattan is just one example.

Now, after almost 15 years of effort by Hastings volunteers and elected officials, Quarry Trail is open to pedestrians and plans are underway to remediate the overgrown landfill that prevents public use of the quarry site that at one stage in its history had been a park. Plans call for a naturalistic, low-maintenance village park with na-

tive plantings, highlighting the tall marble cliffs at the site and distinctive sense of place. It will be entered directly from the Aqueduct trail and will become another green, pleasurable feature of a walk on the Aqueduct.

The Quarry Park and Trail project has received generous grant support from Scenic Hudson, the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the NYS Department of State, and BP/ARCO. It has been championed by the Friends of Quarry Park and Trail, Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, the Hastings Historical Society, and many other groups.



"Croton Aqueduct at Hastings." Plate XVII from Illustrations of the Croton Aqueduct by Fayette B. Tower, 1843. Tracks of the quarry's inclined railway are in foreground.

Museum Opens Aqueduct Exhibit

To celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Croton Aqueduct, the Museum of the City of New York on September 2 opened the exhibit **"To Quench the Thirst of New Yorkers: The Croton Aqueduct at 175."** The exhibition recounts the history of the Aqueduct and showcases the letters and drawings of Fayette Bartholomew Tower, the young engineer who worked on the Aqueduct and whose 1843 volume, *Illustrations of the Croton Aqueduct*, has provided the classic images of its structures. The exhibit also features newly commissioned photographs by Nathan Kensinger, tracing the aqueduct's route and revisiting sights that Tower sketched nearly two centuries before. The exhibit is open until Dec. 31. See mcny.org/exhibition/quench-thirst.

Visitors to the Museum will also be interested in its permanent exhibit, **"NY At Its Core: 400 Years of NYC History."** In examining the elements of New York's rise to greatness, the exhibit features the city's renowned water supply as part of its essential infrastructure.



Invasives Strike Force Crew from the NY-NJ Trail Conference and NY State Excelsior Conservation Corps, with Diane Alden in front row. (Photo by P. Mora)

Invasives Campaign Intensifies This Summer

I Love My Park Day on May 6 was a huge success thanks to the astounding organizational skills of Friends board member Diane Alden. Some 88 volunteers continued the multi-year project to control invasive plants along a mile-long stretch of the trail just south of the New Croton Dam. Diane followed this event with a more complex effort on an expanded trail section from July 7 to 13, coordinating several groups that worked during overlapping periods. These were four members of the NY-NJ Trail

Conference's Invasives Strike Force Crew, a nine-member NY State Excelsior Conservation Corps, and individual volunteers. In one four-day period more than 18,000 plants were removed – some sections of the trail are now completely clear of invasive plants. Judicious herbicide treatment was applied, which should keep the removed plants from regrowing. The campaign will continue; donations are welcome. For details and photos, see <http://aqueduct.org/news/excelsior-invasive-plant-battles-won>.



Lamartine Avenue Section Reclaimed for Trail Walkers

Encroachments on the Aqueduct have long been a fact of life, many dating to the decade of declining use and minimal maintenance prior to its acquisition by State Parks. Many adjacent property owners extended fences across the right of way, but over time most of these have been removed. Among the remaining exceptions was a short section in Yonkers between Lamartine Ave. and Bishop William J. Walls Place, where the Aqueduct made its eastward turn.

Reclaiming it was more complex than simply carting away trash and planting grass. Neighbors, many of whom would lose illegal, free, off-street parking, had to be convinced of the value of the idea. A plan was developed, drainage devised, pavement

and even a two-vehicle carport removed, as were scores of hazardous trees. State Parks' Capital Construction crew came in this summer with heavy equipment, and with the addition of quantities of topsoil, fine gravel, and several hundred pounds of grass seed, the area has been markedly transformed. The grass is growing and received its first cutting in late August. Many neighbors have acknowledged the improvement.

Public use is all-important to firmly establish the trail here. One group regularly plays soccer at the south end. *Aqueduct walkers*: please walk through this newly regained corner and spread the word! — Steven Oakes, Manager, Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park



Photo Gallery • The steel span of the High Bridge, illuminated. (Photo by A. Nukheja)

Long-Closed Stairway Replaced by New Path in Van Cortlandt Park

Christina Taylor, Executive Director of Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, reports the good news that the southern end of the Old Croton Aqueduct path within the park is now open. In the past a stairway brought those walking the Aqueduct next to I-87 (Major Deegan Expressway) downhill to just north of the Van Cortlandt Park Golf House. The old stairs, which had fallen into hazardous disrepair and were closed for several years, have now been removed and replaced with an ADA-accessible path, allowing walkers to reach the Golf House safely once again. The new path was installed as part of a State Department of Transportation project replacing a section of I-87.



Keeper's House Visitor and Education Center

15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY
between Broadway (Route 9) and Main St.

The historic house is adjacent to the Old Croton Aqueduct trail.

Hours: Saturdays and Sundays, 11am to 4pm

The Keeper's House is an estimated 5- to 10-minute walk uphill from the Dobbs Ferry Station on Metro-North's Hudson Line Railroad. Service from Grand Central Terminal.

For more information call **914-693-4117**. In case of inclement weather, the house may be closed.

Annual Meeting: "Turning Water Into Money"

More than 100 people attended the Friends' Annual Meeting on April 23, held at Tarrytown's Warner Library, to hear author Gerard Koeppel's talk, "Turning Water Into Money," the story of Aaron Burr's spurious Manhattan Water Company and Alexander Hamilton's ambiguous involvement.

Koeppel is the author of *Water for Gotham: A History* and, most recently, *City on a Grid: How New York Became New York*. In his talk, he related Burr's machinations to gain a state charter for a private water company, purportedly to supply New York City with clean, abundant water. In reality Burr supplied little water but was able to use language he had written into the charter to form a bank that survives today as JP Morgan Chase. It isn't clear why Hamilton gave vital support to the water company proposal; Koeppel offered intriguing speculation on Hamilton's possible motives.

Business meeting: following the President's and Treasurer's reports, members of the Friends elected to the Board of Directors new member Joanna Riesman, and re-elected incumbent members Mavis Cain, Douglas Emilio, John Flack, Carl Grimm, Robert Kornfeld, Jr., Ildiko Viczian, and Elisa Zazzera.



Keeper's House docents on a May 21 outing to Bannerman's Castle on Pollepel Island, a state park. The event was organized by Friends' board member Lesley Walter. Aqueduct manager Steve Oakes is at far right in front row.

Aqueduct Walkers, Take Note!

Signage Kiosks Mark the Bronx Aqueduct Trail

Thanks to the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, there are now seven striking sign kiosks marking key points along the route of the Old Croton Aqueduct in the Bronx. Each of the three-sided structures is 7.5 feet tall, with graphics embedded into powder-coated, curved metal. One side is common to all the kiosks, introducing the city's water supply system and the Croton Aqueduct story. Another panel maps the Aqueduct route from the Westchester-NYC boundary at the north edge of Van Cortlandt Park to the southern tip of Manhattan, each with a You Are Here marker. The third panel provides site-specific text and images. The kiosks were designed by Nancy Owens Studio, LLC, and Laurel Marx Design.

The locations are: NYC boundary, Van Cortlandt Park South, Jerome Park Reservoir, Aqueduct Walk (Aqueduct Lands), Burnside Ave., University Malls, and the Bronx end of the High Bridge.



Sign kiosk on the Aqueduct, above the north side of Burnside Ave. (Photo by L. Scoones)

Zoning Codes Can Help Protect the Trail

The Friends' mission includes monitoring the entire trail, which often entails speaking out at municipal meetings to alert residents of the responsibility we all have for the care and future protection of this National Historic Landmark. Recently, we took a position in light of zoning code changes being considered in Dobbs Ferry, where the trail runs through the heart of the business area. In a letter sent in May to the Mayor and village Trustees, we urge that the zoning code acknowledge, through a number of specific provisions, the importance of the Aqueduct to village life and local

businesses. For example, Dobbs Ferry has had no required setbacks for development abutting the Aqueduct in the downtown area. We support a setback of 25 feet, similar to requirements in Hastings and Irvington. We also urge attention to architectural massing, so buildings don't create a closed-in, "tunnel" effect for Aqueduct walkers.

The Aqueduct viewshed is our recurring passion, and we are well aware that the preservation of views and appreciation of nature are vital to the experience of all those who use and treasure the trail.

—Mavis Cain

Calendar Notes

Save the Date!

Aqueduct Birthday Party

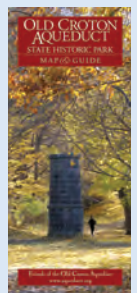
Sunday, October 8
2 to 6 pm

Join the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the opening of the Croton Aqueduct with a birthday party at the Keeper's House in Dobbs Ferry. Food, music, and fun for all. Details to be announced.

Check our online calendar for walks, tours, and Ossining weir visits led by the Friends as part of the Hudson River Valley Ramble, as well as other Aqueduct-related events. Visit aqueduct.org/calendar.

Editor's Notes

Revising our Westchester map. An updated edition of the Friends' current map-guide of the Aqueduct in Westchester County (pictured) is now in preparation. We invite readers' suggestions or corrections for the revised edition.



Friends seek newsletter editor. We welcome expressions of interest from Aqueduct enthusiasts with writing and editorial experience.

Please contact Interim Editor Charlotte Fahn about either matter (see back page).

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email: czfahn1@gmail.com, *tel.:* 914-478-3961,
or by mail c/o the Friends.
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Join Us!

Your tax-deductible contribution helps to protect and preserve the trail.

Members receive our newsletters. New members can choose
to receive our Westchester ☐ or NYC ☐ map at no charge.

☐ Renewal ☐ New Member

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeper \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Friend \$50 |
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Added donation (thank you!): \$ _____

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Please make checks payable to Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct. Send with this
coupon to the Friends at Keeper's House, 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522.

**For inquiries about Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic
Park** or to report trail conditions, call Historic Site Manager
Steven Oakes at 914-693-5259, or write to him at 15 Walnut
Street, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522.

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct is a
private, non-profit, volunteer organization
formed to protect and preserve the Old Croton
Aqueduct in Westchester County and New
York City. The Friends work to raise public
awareness of the Aqueduct and trail, and to se-
cure the resources that will enable this historic
greenway to remain unspoiled in perpetuity.
Tel.: 914-693-4117. *Website:* **aqueduct.org**

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