

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct

Newsletter
No. 28, Winter 2007/08

Friends Meet With Tappan Zee Bridge Planners

On August 2 the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct met with a group of planners and engineers, led by officials from the state Department of Transportation, as part of the state's public outreach process concerning the future of the Tappan Zee Bridge. The purpose was twofold. First, the Friends wished to learn the most current design information on the bridge alternatives being considered. Second, the Friends wanted to provide planners with information on existing Aqueduct conditions; help identify potential physical impacts of the bridge project on the Aqueduct, a National Historic Landmark; and make planners aware of our position that the Aqueduct trail should be reconnected where it is interrupted by the New York State Thruway.

An underground line connecting with Metro-North's Hudson Line is part of the rail network envisioned in one of the options being considered, Alternative 4A, and could come relatively near the masonry Aqueduct. (All the alternatives can be viewed at the website www.tzbsite.com.) Vibration from tunneling beneath the Aqueduct, which is likely in Alternative 4a, is one concern. The effects of possible surface elements such as transit stations, parking lots, and bus or light rail routes is another. The Friends were assured that no surface elements would be proposed that cut through the Aqueduct.

Friends Vice-President Robert Kornfeld, Jr., expressed the Friends' view that a

pedestrian bridge over the Thruway should be incorporated into the bridge project, in order to restore the segment of the Aqueduct trail between Route 119 and Sheldon Ave. Since the 1950s, when the Tappan Zee



"Croton Aqueduct had to be reinforced with steel pipe during construction of the New York State Thruway. Here workmen measure the gap across the aqueduct to fit the pipe. Use of the pipe will prevent collapse of the aqueduct when traffic starts using Thruway. - Photo by Dan Berry." 1955. (News clipping courtesy of the Historical Society of Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown)

Bridge was built, trail users have had to detour for some distance on a heavily trafficked, highway-ramped section of Routes 9 and 119 to get past the Thruway and regain the trail. The Aqueduct itself runs beneath the Thruway.

The dramatic possibility of making the Aqueduct trail “whole” again in this area with a pedestrian bridge has been raised before—in years past, for example, by former state trail manager Brian Goodman, and recently, during the Tappan Zee Bridge public process, by Tarrytown resident and Aqueduct advocate Linda Viertel. It would be consistent with other reconnections of the trail: the 1997 bridge over Route 9 at Archville, and the planned reopening of the High Bridge in New York City. It is also consistent with the invigorated pedestrian movement of recent years, a trend supported by federal transportation policy.

The meeting was a useful exchange of views that afforded the Friends and planners a chance to meet personally, provide material to each other, and lay the groundwork for future talks. A draft environmental impact statement is planned for release next year as part of the state’s formal environmental review process, at which time the Friends will present full testimony and comments on the issues outlined above. In the meantime, we welcome ideas and input from our members.

Sleepy Hollow High School Update

The Friends have received numerous inquiries about when the trail through the Sleepy Hollow High School campus will again be usable. Dr. Howard Smith, Superintendent of the Tarrytown-Sleepy Hollow school district, tells us the school construction project is on schedule, and that we can expect the trail to reopen in spring-summer 2008.

We also learned from Dr. Smith that the original post-construction plan for the trail has had to be changed. There will once again be a permanent detour for Aqueduct trail users, with the critical difference that there will be no longer be any stairs or inclines for trail users to negotiate. Walkers and bikers will detour on a mostly paved path around the back of the new gym and auditorium. The path will be level with the Aqueduct trail. Formerly, for many decades, it was necessary to use a steep, narrow stairway to get around the back of the school.

The breezeway that connects school buildings will still block direct passage on the trail. The original plan called for keeping the breezeway’s central doors open at all times for Aqueduct users to pass through, while keeping locked the doors at either end of the breezeway that provide entry into and exit from the school buildings. For reasons of student safety and school

security, building codes do not permit those doors to be locked.

Signage and landscaping for the new detour path will be additional subjects for attention. The Friends and State Parks’ Aqueduct managers thank the members of the public who have been in contact with us about this important segment of the trail.

New Directional Signs in Yonkers

Trail users have long been frustrated by “missing links” on the fragmented east-west section of the Aqueduct route in Yonkers. Many southbound walkers have even thought the trail ends at Lamartine Ave., which is close to where the water tunnel turned east to make its way to New York City.

Four directional signs installed this fall by State Parks should help resolve the problem. The signs on the trail are located at Lamartine Ave.; at Palisade Ave., close to Ashburton Ave.; at Prescott St., just off Yonkers Ave., east of ventilator 22; and at the north end of Tibbetts Brook Park.



New sign atop the black post on the west side of the Aqueduct trail at Lamartine Ave. (Photos by C. Fahn)

Each sign has verbal directions for how to find the



New sign on the trail at Palisade Ave.

next section of trail, as well as an excerpt from the Friends’ map of the Aqueduct. The Friends have consistently advocated for signs at these as well as other points on the trail. With State Parks, we hope the Yonkers signs will encourage trail users to do more through-walks and explore sections of the trail new to them.

Trail Manager Peter Iskenderian Moves to New Post

Friends of the Aqueduct and State Parks staff gathered to wish Peter Iskenderian a fond farewell and good luck in August, when he transferred from his Aqueduct post to become Manager of Moreau Lake State Park, 10 miles north of Saratoga Springs.

Peter became Manager of Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park and Assistant Manager at Rockefeller State Park Preserve in the fall of 2004. He set about immersing himself in Croton Aqueduct history and became an avid collector of Aqueduct memorabilia. With equal determination he got to know all 26 miles of the state park and its many and varied maintenance needs.

Peter counts as an important accomplishment the removal in March of the chain-link fence that for years had cut deeply into the trail from an adjacent backyard on Flower Ave., at the Hastings-Dobbs Ferry border. This not only opened a previously constricted area for trail users, but gave hope that other encroachments can be successfully addressed. He also found a simple and inexpensive way, with the help of a Boy Scout troop, to open the weir chamber over the Pocantico River. He regards as one highlight of his tenure working with the crew, saying “we are lucky to have Tony Failla working

on the Aqueduct—a great person to learn from and to be around.” Tree management was an ongoing challenge for Peter and the crew. Peter eventually came to serve as the Taconic Region’s representative on State Parks’ hazardous tree task force.

Alix Schnee, Supervising Manager of the Aqueduct, adds to the record, crediting Peter with working closely on resolving an issue of threatened development on the west side of the Aqueduct in Cortlandt; completing work in Yonkers to improve sections of the trail and create new directional signs; and collaborating on an inspection and report of the condition of all the Aqueduct culverts. Alix comments “Peter really did a tremendous job in the short time he was here.”

Most generously, Peter has donated his Aqueduct collection to the Friends for our budding Keeper’s House archive. He has always been cheerful and helpful in response to our numerous requests for help, large and

small. We wish him well. Fortunately, we can consider him a permanent Friend: he writes, from his new assignment, “you can never take the Aqueduct out of me.”



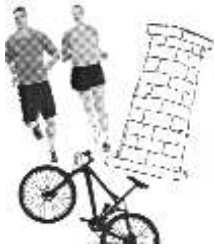
Peter Iskenderian at a farewell gathering of colleagues and friends.

. . . and a New Manager is Appointed: Steven Oakes

The Friends are pleased to welcome Steven Oakes, the Aqueduct’s new Park Manager. Steve has been the Historic Site Assistant and educator at State Parks’ John Jay Homestead in Westchester County for six years. Steve is no stranger to the Aqueduct: he lived in Dobbs Ferry from boyhood through his college years and spent a lot of time riding his bike on the trail; his memories should serve him well as he gets to know the Aqueduct in the role of manager.

Steve’s educational background is in history and political science. He is an avid history buff, and with a

background of having worked in a historic house museum, his appointment seems especially relevant as the Friends and State Parks together seek to develop exhibits and programs for the Keeper’s House Visitor Center. Steve is restoring his own brick house, only 15 or 20 years younger than the Keeper’s House, in Beacon, New York, where he lives with his wife, Meg, and their 12-year-old daughter, Lucy. With so many intersecting interests, we look forward to a productive and congenial collaboration with the Aqueduct’s new manager.



An AqueFest Thank You to all who made it happen!

In Yonkers Elisa Zazzera; Groundwork Yonkers: Rob Baron, Vernon Brinkley, Anne Megaro; Rachel Kopta, Jackie Lhoumeau, Yonkers Scout troop 32-Nepperhan Community Center; Bash the Trash: "edutainers" John Bertles and Carina Piaggio.

In Hastings Eileen Charles, Andrew Bordwin, Gaby Bordwin, Brian, Birgit, Lana and Hanna Street, Mary Lambert, Noah Koch, Amanda Picone, Meg Walker, Fred Charles. Entertainers and educators: Fred Hubbard, Sarah Knox, Cris Kassow, Dan Elias and Vicki Gould, Haven Colgate, Acoustic Riverrun, Claudia Engelbrecht, Ann-Marie McIntyre, Jake Schulman-Ment, Solar Punch, Mitch Koch, Laura Rice.

In Dobbs Ferry Mavis Cain, Ruth Gastel, Sara Kelsey, Amy Bennet, Nancy Sciotto, Farhad Ameen, Hal Kaplan, Deniz Tuzun. Musicians: Mark Turken's Drop Dead Blues and Jazz band; Matt Turk; Steve Kirkman; Fred Gillen; Maureen Lackner. Crafts: Mia de Bethune.

In Irvington Karen Schatzel, Molly Penn, Ellenor Alcorn, Holly Daly, Kathy Hansen, Kathryn Slocum, Stuart Brown, Irvington Girl Scout Troop 2260, Tralala,

Riverspa. Musicians: Paul Mandry Jessie Lambaise, Anne Carpenter, Ed Bettinelli and the Bettinelli, Paris Piston Trio.

In Tarrytown Sharon Blackwell, John Flack, Linda Doughty, Dana Sands, Harry Leeds. Musicians: Ed Horan, Lindsay Blackwell, Kathleen Pemble. Crafts: Mary Lou Gladstone. Jennifer Rapone of Tarrytown Physical Therapy. Face painting: Elena Canaras.

In Ossining Jean Horkans, Todd Vunderink, Valerie Nelson, Linda Levine, Carol Ann Benton, Alice Bruno, Charlotte Morsch, Charlotte Fahn, William Farrell. High Voltage Jazz Band: Jake Scofield, Scott Teller, Max Gulian, Jesse McCormack, and Lee Saber.

In Croton Tom Tarnowsky, Nicole Tarnowsky, Carrie Cosgrave, Joe Decker (NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection), Robert Kornfeld, Jr.. Musicians: Scott Urgola, John Urgola, John Sekelsky, Rachel Sukert.

The Friends gratefully acknowledge recent contributions by the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation and Edgerton Foundation to the Keeper's House Fund.

Work Completed on High Bridge's Bronx Gatehouse

The New York City Parks Department has completed a small but important project to refurbish the deteriorated exterior of the gatehouse at the Bronx end of the High Bridge, and has reopened Bronx Highbridge Park, which had been used as a staging area. The



Work underway on the gatehouse at the Bronx end of the High Bridge. (Courtesy of the NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation)

gatehouse and its twin at the Manhattan end of the bridge date from 1848, the year the bridge was completed. The gates in the two structures controlled the flow of water in the bridge's pipes.

The work included installing a new roofing system to protect the building and resetting and pointing the coping and parapet wall stones to shed water. Masonry infill in the transom window above the door was replaced with original grille work, and paint was removed from the ashlar stone walls to restore their original appearance. Funding came in part from the city's Department of Environmental Protection.

Bronx Highbridge Park, a dramatically sited one-acre space, was redesigned five years ago to feature its relationship to the Old Croton Aqueduct, which took its great turn westward here to cross the Harlem River on the High Bridge, enroute to New York City.

AqueFest 2007! Our 3rd Annual AqueFest confirmed the enthusiasm of the community for the protection of the beautiful trail we all enjoy. Many people visited the Keeper's House in Dobbs Ferry and contributed to its restoration. By the time the 4th AqueFest comes around, work on the Keeper's House will be in full swing, thanks to the generosity of Friends, neighbors, and supporters. The Board sends a warm "Thank You" to all who helped make the day a success.



From top left, clockwise: *A rapt audience at Wickers St. in Yonkers* (and see p. 7); *musical pleasures in Hastings*; *standing in the Aqueduct tunnel in the Ossining weir chamber*; *the AqueFest station at the New Croton Dam*; *fun at the festivities in Irvington*.

Photo credits: Yonkers picture by E. Zazzera. Croton Dam and Ossining pictures by G. Cahill, courtesy of *The Gazette*. Hastings and Irvington pictures by Jim MacLean, courtesy of *The Rivertowns Enterprise*.

“From Mountaintop to Tap”: Friends Assist With Watershed Trek

In a unique commemoration and adventure this past July, 12 high-schoolers and three adults spent three weeks, on foot and by boat, traversing 150 miles of the lands through which our water supply travels to New York City and Westchester County. The route for the final week, during which members of the Friends helped in various roles, was along the Old Croton Aqueduct.

The students, half from Brooklyn’s New York Harbor School and half from Sidney High School in rural



The group at Draper Park, Hastings. (Photo by C. Fahn)

Delaware County, were accompanied by a teacher from each school and led by a wilderness educator and guide from the Catskill Mountainkeepers. The group started on July 7 in the Catskill Forest Preserve, crossed the Hudson River (accounting for 50 miles of the total distance) in rowboats built by Harbor School students, and landed at Croton Point Park on July 22. The culmination was a reunion with families and recognition ceremony in Central Park on July 28.

Friends members participated in planning the Aqueduct stage and on the trail. Carl Oechsner met the trekkers at the north end to talk about the Old Croton Aqueduct and Croton dams. Mavis Cain led the group through the Ossining weir chamber and the Keeper’s House; Charlotte Fahn met them at historic Draper Park in Hastings. On the last day, Tom Tarnowsky met the group at 8 am in Van Cortlandt Park, led them on the Aqueduct in the Bronx and, with members of the High Bridge Coalition, accompanied them across the Harlem River to the water tower in Manhattan’s Highbridge Park,

and finally to Central Park.

The Trek was intended to celebrate, publicize, and strengthen public support for the historic agreement initiated 10 years ago by New York City and the upstate watershed communities on measures to protect the city’s 2,000-square-mile watershed. The trekkers got to know each other; saw farming communities, suburbs, and metropolis; and had outdoor adventures from peakbagging in the Catskills to mastering the tides and currents of the Hudson – most of the time in heat (and sometimes pouring rain) while carrying 40-pound packs. Along the way they met with public officials, environmentalists, and scientists. Each student had a camera and kept a personal journal (www.stroudcenter.org/NYTREK2007). The following excerpt is from teacher Sara Scott’s journal for the final day:

“ . . . The hot summer sun and the humidity definitely took their toll on our already tired bodies; however, the collective enthusiasm surrounding the conclusion of this historic endeavor served as inspiration to us all . . . One woman had seen us on TV earlier in the morning – and actually asked us for our autographs! . . . We certainly stood out . . . a rag-tag group of 15 individuals sporting humungous hiking packs, dirty hiking boots and unwashed polypro shirts . . . we arrived in Central Park to the applause and welcoming arms of family and friends. . . . Imbued with [a] shared sense of purpose, we had become stewards of our precious water resource(s).”

The complex logistical planning for the Trek was led by the Stroud Water Research Center and New York City Department of Environmental Protection.



Early in the Trek, an uphill hike gained the group a view of beautiful Ashokan Reservoir in the Catskills. (Photo from Trek website)



Calendar Note

Sun., Dec. 3. Noon. Walk about 8 miles on the Old Croton Aqueduct and several side trails in nearby parks, ending in Ardsley. Several short uphill. Meet at MetroNorth's Greystone Station (take 11:20 train from Grand Central). Drivers park near Warburton and Harriman aves., north Yonkers. Inclement weather may cancel. Appalachian Mtn. Club. Leader: Hal Kaplan, 914-376-3156. Hike message begins Sat. morning.



Open House New York, 2007. On October 6, Tom Tarnowsky again led the Friends-sponsored walk of the Aqueduct's route in Manhattan during the annual architecture feast, Open House New York. The group met at Central Park's Great Lawn (above); a hardy dozen made it all the way to the High Bridge. The Friends' annual participation in this popular event is coordinated by Douglas Emilio. (Photo by D. Emilio)

MEMBERSHIP COUPON

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

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Please make check payable to Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct. Send it with this coupon to the Friends at Keeper's House, 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109.

Name _____

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Please let us know if you would like to volunteer.

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



Youth group members from the Nepperhan Community Center enjoyed the "edutainment," performed on the drums, and helped with a cleanup on AqueFest day in Yonkers. Here they sport their Friends of the Aqueduct caps. (Photo by E. Zazzera)

For the Holidays

The Friends' color map-and-guides of the Aqueduct in Westchester (Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park) and of its route in New York City fit into a holiday stocking or business envelope. The following carry one or both maps:



Westchester County
(area code 914)

"& Antiques," 111 Grand St.,
Croton-on-Hudson, 271-6802 or 762-7533*
Art Barn, 211 North Highland Ave., Ossining,
762-4997

Cary's Pharmacy, 105 Main St., Dobbs Ferry, 693-0008
Corey Glass Picture Framing, 3 Main St.,
Hastings-on-Hudson, 478-0154

Good Yarns, 8 Main St., Hastings-on-Hudson, 478-0014
The Office Ink, 572 Warburton Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson,
478-0777

Hudson River Museum Shop, 511 Warburton Ave., Yonkers,
963-4550*

New York City

Bronx County Historical Society, 3309 Bainbridge Ave.,
718-881-8900*

Urban Center Books, 457 Madison Ave. betw. 50th and 51st
St., 212-935-3595

Posman Books, Grand Central Terminal, 212-983-1111

*Call ahead to check on hours and map availability.

By mail: The maps are \$5. each (members, \$4.). Add 75 cents shipping and handling for the first map, 50 cents for each additional map. Please specify which map(s) you want. Send a check for the total to the Friends at 15 Walnut St., Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522. Questions? Visit www.aqueduct.org



High Bridge Water Tower on the Manhattan skyline at dusk, July 6, from Bronx Highbridge Park. (Photo by S. Fahn)

Newsletter: Charlotte Fahn, *Editor.* News items, reminiscences, and comments welcome: 914-478-3961 or czfahn@yahoo.com or by mail c/o the Friends.

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Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct
Keeper's House
15 Walnut Street
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522

Keeper's House Project:
Presentation to Dobbs Ferry Board of Trustees
Nov. 27, 7:30 pm, Village Hall, 112 Main St.
Public welcome



Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct is a private, non-profit, volunteer organization formed to protect and preserve the Old Croton Aqueduct. The Friends work to raise public awareness of the Aqueduct and trail, and to secure the resources that will enable this historic greenway to remain unspoiled in perpetuity. *Address:* Keeper's House, 15 Walnut St. Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-2109; *telephone* 914-693-4117, www.aqueduct.org

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