

D & R CANAL WATCH

Number 45

www.canalwatch.org

March 2009

175th Anniversary Edition

Annual Meeting—Sunday, May 17, 2:00 pm

CANAL WATCH CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY AT ANNUAL MEETING

For well over 100 years, the concept of creating an inland transportation system across the narrow waist of New Jersey had been considered. By the early 19th century, this dream was close to becoming a reality, but would this alignment be a canal or a railroad? Curiously, the charters for the Delaware & Raritan Canal Company and the Camden & Amboy Railroad Company were granted by the State Legislature on the same day in 1830. Even stranger is the fact that within one year these two companies united to become the Joint Companies. Together, the Joint Companies collectively employed their resources to construct the Delaware & Raritan Canal and New Jersey's first railroad, the Camden & Amboy. The railroad was completed between Bordentown and Amboy two years before the opening of the D & R in 1834. Another branch of the railroad was completed from Trenton to New Brunswick in 1839. For many years the Joint Companies conducted their canal and railroad as mutually beneficial operations, despite the fact that canals and railroads are frequently thought of as bitter rivals.

At the D & R Canal Watch Annual Meeting, on Sunday, May 17, William J. McKelvey will present a new program, illustrating the operation of the Joint Companies and the interrelationship of one of New Jersey's premier canals with the state's first railroad.

The meeting will be held downstairs in the old Lawrence Township Municipal Building, Route 206.

Bill McKelvey is a past vice president of the Canal Society of New Jersey and has served on its board for many years. He is a recognized authority on the Delaware & Raritan Canal, its users and their vessels, and historic vessels used on the waterways of the East Coast. He has authored books on these subjects, has provided countless lectures on these topics, and for many years coordinated the society's European canal trips.

D & R CANAL WATCH 5K FUN RUN AND WALK

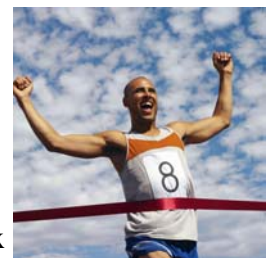
The Eighteenth Annual D & R Canal Watch 5K Fun Run will be held on April 4, 2009 at 10:00 am (Fifth Annual 1-mile walk at 9:30 am). With start and finish at Washington Crossing State Park, Titusville, NJ, at Routes 29 and 546, the runners will travel through historic Titusville with views of the Delaware River and return on the canal towpath.

The run is sanctioned by NJ=USA Track & Field. Prizes will be awarded to winners in six age categories. Members of the AMTA-NJ Sports Massage Team will provide free warm-up stretches and post-race messages for participants.

This is the 175th anniversary year of the opening of the canal, and we hope for a record number of runners. Participants may register online at www.active.com, download the registration form from the website at www.canalwatch.org, or call 609 924-2683. All proceeds benefit the D & R Canal State Park.

Come out and run or walk! Tell your neighbors, family, and friends to do the same! We need volunteers to help with the race that day and with the follow-up computer work. If interested, please call 609 924-2683. Your help will be very much appreciated.

The D&R Canal Watch 5K Fun Run, which starts at Washington Crossing State Park, is an annual event attracting as many as 250 runners. Funds raised by the run have made possible a series of purchases for the park that have included flat files for maps, a VCR, tractor trailer, saw, computer program, camera, water-testing kit, and benches.



CANALEDAR—EVENTS FOR THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

March 30—Bike the Canal Feeder in Mercer County. Join the Sierra Club for an easy 14-mile bike trip along the historic towpath. Participants are asked to meet at 10 am the Washington Crossing State Park parking area located directly off Rt 29 and adjacent to the D & R Canal path. The group will pedal from Washington Crossing State Park (Titusville) north to Lambertville and return to the start location in time for lunch. The D & R towpath is relatively flat and well-graded dirt with some occasional loose dirt and gravel. Hybrid or mountain bikes are recommended but **HELMETS ARE REQUIRED**. Bring a lunch that will stay in your car and can be retrieved upon completion of the ride. **INCLEMENT WEATHER CANCELS**. This ride will be led by George & Leona Fluck. For more info, please call 609-259-3734 or email Leona@pineypaddlers.com.



April 4—18th Annual D & R Canal Watch 5K Run & 5th Annual 1-Mile Walk. The D & R Canal Watch 5K Fun Run, which begins and ends at Washington Crossing State Park in Titusville, has become a popular annual event attracting as many as 250 runners. The course loops through the village of Titusville and then along the D & R Canal towpath. Prizes will be awarded and t-shirts supplied to all registrants while supplies last. For full details, directions, entry form, registration information and/or materials, contact the D & R Canal Watch at (609) 777-9379 and online at www.canalwatch.org, or register at www.active.com. **All proceed will benefit the park!**



April 18—Bike the Path from Princeton-Kingston. Enjoy a morning bike ride along the D & R towpath. A guided 7.5 mile ride highlighting the canal structures and history along the Princeton-Carnegie Lake-Kingston section. Interested folks are asked to bring their own bicycle and helmet and meet at Turning Basin Park in Princeton at 10 am. Turning Basin Park is at the intersection of Alexander Road and the D & R. Learn about the Princeton-Kingston section with some exercise in the bargain! This ride is sponsored by the D & R Canal Watch. For further information please contact Bill Wiseman at 908-359-4241.



April 25-26—Steamboat Rides on the Delaware River. As part of Lambertville's annual Shad Fest, visitors are invited to ride a real sternwheel steamboat, replica of local 1860 steamboat. This 20-minute cruise will take passengers to the **D & R Canal outlet lock** and back to the shad fishery by the bridge in Lambertville. The steamboat will board passengers between 12:00 and 4:00 pm at Lewis Island next to the Lambertville Bridge. A fee of \$5.00 per person will be charged. Weather permitting. For further details and information please contact SPLASH, the Delaware River Steamboat Floating Classroom at info@steamboatclassroom.org.



May 2—Birding The Seasons On The D & R Canal ~ BIG DAY IN MAY. What a great way to celebrate the 175th Anniversary of the D & R Canal by getting out in the park and monitoring one of its most precious natural resources - the birds - the ones that reside year round, those that winter here, those passing through for the breeding season and those dropping by on their way north and south in their migration. So what is a "Big Day"? It is ONE big fun day of birding with a little extra challenge. We plan to do an inventory of all bird species seen along the canal on ONE day and see what we come up with. We hope to cover the entire length of the main canal, feeder and adjacent park lands. This will be quite an undertaking so we will need volunteers to help lead field trips that day and to participate in different segments along the path. This is a time that likely will represent the greatest number of species based on migration and breeding patterns. Please mark your calendars and plan to join the group. You need not be an expert - just a pair of eyes and the desire for a fun day are required! If this has piqued your interest, then please contact either Arlene Oley (arobirder@aol.com) or park naturalist, Stephanie Fox (dnrnaturalist@verizon.net). For more details and information, please call the park office at 609-924-5705.



May 2—Spirit of the Jerseys Annual History Fair. Events and booths highlighting the state historic sites (including the **D & R Canal**). Washington Crossing State Park, County Road 546 in Titusville, Mercer County, 11:00-5:00 (schedule TBA). Activities will include foodways, music, living history & reenactments, historic games, crafts, vintage baseball and **boat rides on the D & R Canal**. Come discover and celebrate NJ's diverse

and rich history! Join the family fun at "The Crossing" from 11 am - 5 pm. For information call 609-737-9303 or visit www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/historic. No admission fee. Registration not required. Event will be held rain or shine. *This annual event is sponsored by the NJ Division of Environmental Protection ~ Division of Parks and Forestry ~ Office of Historic Sites.*

May 9—Hands Along the Canal. All you devoted park users: this is the opportunity to show your support of our 175-year-old canal by taking part in this ambitious task! **Hands Along the Canal** is a bold undertaking that will attempt to have thousands of hand-holding park users lined up along the historic towpath from Landing Lane to the Brearley House in Lawrenceville! Sponsored by the Kingston Historical Society and the East Coast Greenway, this show of support is scheduled to take place at 10:00 am and last for fifteen minutes. We can't accomplish this goal without your help, so those of you who love and use the D & R should make sure to mark your calendars, **pick your favorite** location, and plan to be a part of this show of support for the park! Come help celebrate the canal's 175th anniversary year by taking part in this ambitious historic effort. Keep checking back for further details at handsalongthecanal2009@yahoo.com; 732-340-1411.



May 16—Birding the Canal in Zarephath. Join the D & R Canal Watch and birders Barbara and George Dawson as they lead an early morning walk along the towpath in the Zarephath area. The woods and water along the towpath of this 175-year-old canal provide a home to countless bird species. Listen, too, for the chirps and peeps of frogs and toads from the surrounding area. The program will begin at 8:00 am. Participants are asked to meet at the parking area at the intersection of Weston Canal Road and the Weston Causeway (parking available at the abandoned section of roadway accessible from Weston Canal Road). Be sure to bring water and binoculars and water. For more information, please contact Barbara Dawson at 732-887-6070. Weather permitting.



May 16—Canal Authors Extravaganza. Visit with authors of canal-related books and bring your own copy to be signed. Some books will be for sale. Authors who will be there to meet and greet are: **William McKelvey** (*The Delaware & Raritan Canal; Champlain to Chesapeake*); Pulitzer Prize-winning poet **Paul Muldoon** (*Moy Sand and Gravel*); **Richard F. Veit**, with his father's book, *The Old Canals of New Jersey*; **Will Rivinus** (*Guide to the Delaware Canal*); **Marie Murphy Duess** (*The Delaware Canal: From Stone Coal Highway to Historic Landmark*); **Linda J. Barth** (*Bridgetender's Boy, The Delaware and Raritan Canal*); **Walter Choroszewski** (*Somerset County: A Celebration of Communities*); **Jeanette Muser** (*Rocky Hill, Kingston and Griggstown*); **Lee Sullivan Hill** (*Canals are Water Roads*); **Jessie Havens** (*Somerset County: Three Centuries of Progress*) and poet **Penelope Schott** (*Canal!*).



Lee Sullivan Hill and Linda Barth will read excerpts from their children's books throughout the day. To take you back to canal days, **Roy Justice** will entertain you with canal songs and stories of the old canallers. Visitors may watch videotapes about the D & R Canal, including the NJN production, produced by Cliff Crawford and narrated by Jean Shepherd. So come join us and meet the authors who have been inspired to write about the historic D & R Canal. This FREE event is sponsored by the D & R Canal Watch and will be held at the Griggstown Causeway from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm. For further information please call Linda Barth at either 908-722-7428 or 908-240-0488.

May 23—Bike the Path to Griggstown. Enjoy a morning bike ride along the historic towpath with canal enthusiast Bob Barth. Bob will lead this 8½-mile ride and explain canal structures and history along the way. Participants are asked to bring their own bicycle, helmet and lunch and meet at the Blackwells Mills Causeway (where Canal Road and Blackwells Mills Road meet in Somerset, Franklin Township) at 10:00 am. Come enjoy the park, burn a few calories and learn a bit about the D & R! This ride is sponsored by the D & R Canal Watch. For more information, please contact Bob Barth at 201-401-3121.



May 25—Memorial Day Paddle on the D & R Canal and the Delaware River. Join the Sierra Club for a 10-mile shuttleless paddle that begins at 10 am on the D & R feeder canal at Washington Crossing State Park and progresses north to Firemens Eddy. Paddlers will then portage to the Delaware River and float downriver to our start point. Bring your own boat, equipment, lunch and beverages. Rentals are not available. Please contact leaders to confirm trip and participation. Inclement weather cancels. This ride will be led by George & Leona Fluck. For further information please call 609-259-3734 or email Leona@pineypaddlers.com.



June 13—The Blackwells Mills Canal House Association's 12th Annual Folk Concert by the Canal.



Musicman Tal and Friends returns to the historic Blackwells Mills Canal House for the 12th Annual Folk Concert by the Canal. The song sheets are ready, all you need to do is bring a blanket, chair, and some munchies and be prepared to enjoy a few hours relaxing by the canal. Come join the fun! Blackwells Mills Canal House, intersection of Blackwells Mills and Canal roads, Franklin Township. Admission is free! 1:00-4:00.

June 14—Garden Party at the Port Mercer Canal House & Canoe the Canal Day. This joint Lawrence Historical Society and Lawrence Township annual event offers an afternoon of boating on the canal followed by ice-cream, music and tours at the historic Port Mercer Canal House. Bring your own canoe or contact the Lawrence Township Recreation Department if you don't have your own. Call 609-844-7067 to reserve a canoe through the Township (\$30 for the afternoon) and join other paddlers between 1:00 - 4:00 pm for an afternoon of fun. Boating will start at Cherry Tree Lane in Lawrence Township and end at the Port Mercer Canal House where tours, music and ice-cream from the Stone Cold Creamery await. The Garden Party at the Port Mercer Canal House begins at 2:00 pm. For further details please call The Lawrence Historical Society at (609) 896-0782 or visit www.thelhs.org.



June 27-28—Walking Tours of the Canal. Join the Lambertville Historical Society for a guided walk along the feeder canal. For more details, please call 609-397-0770 or visit www.lambertvillehistoricalsociety.org.

July—D&R Photographic and Art Show. Sponsored by the D&R Greenway Land Trust. Look for details in the next issue and online at www.dandrcanal.com/programs.html.

August—D&R Photographic and Art Show. Prallsville Mills Complex, Stockton; 609-397-3586; <http://home2.netcarrier.com/~drms>. Look for details in the next issue and online at www.dandrcanal.com/programs.html.

August 9—Picnic Along the Canal. Sponsored by the Griggstown Historical Society and the Van Harlingen Historical Society, this old-fashioned “bring your own picnic basket” will be held in Colonial Park. Look for details in the next issue and online at www.dandrcanal.com/programs.html.

August 30—Picnic Along the Canal. Bring your family to the Prallsville Mills Complex and celebrate the canal’s anniversary. Look for details in the next issue and online at www.dandrcanal.com/programs.html.

August 30—Bike the Feeder to the Picnic. Meet at the Bulls Island D & R Canal canoe launch parking lot at 11:00 am and bike south three miles to the Prallsville Mill Complex for the picnic. Then proceed south to Lambertville and back to Bulls Island. 14.5 miles total. Bring bike, helmet, water, and lunch. You may choose to stay for lunch at the picnic or head right back.

6TH ANNUAL SPIRIT OF THE JERSEYS STATE HISTORY FAIR WILL HIGHLIGHT AND D&R CANAL

Join us at the 6th annual Spirit of the Jerseys State History Fair, on Saturday, May 2 from 11 am–5 pm at Washington Crossing State Park.

This year's fair will feature a special postal cancellation commemorating the 175th anniversary of the Delaware & Raritan Canal, note cards of historic canal houses for sale, boat rides on the feeder canal, a quilting bee and appraisal, and an antique car display featuring a Mercer automobile that was made in NJ in the early 1900s.

Other favorite activities will include children's games of the 18, 19th & 20th centuries; historic foodways; an "artifakes" archaeological dig; frontier, Civil War, Revolutionary War living history encampments; food vendors; period music; and much more. For further information, visit the fair at www.njhistoryfair.org or call 609-737-9303.



NEWS FROM OUR CANAL PARK AGENCIES

D & R CANAL STATE PARK

The Griggstown Muletender's Barracks is in the midst of a capital renovation. It is slated for completion on August 26, 2009. The Boca Group is serving as the general contractor. At the moment, the first floor does not exist. You can see straight to the basement. Rebar is being installed for the future concrete (and hopefully flood-resistant) first floor.

Work is slated to begin in April for the pedestrian bridge across the canal in Colonial Park, Franklin Township. During portions of the construction period, the towpath between Amwell Road in East Millstone and the Weston Causeway will be closed, due to the machinery needed for the bridge placement. The completion date for this project is June 30, 2009.

The photo shows the fireplace on the first floor of the Barracks with its support that is in the basement. As you can see, the first floor no longer exists.



D&R CANAL COMMISSION

The public comment period for the commission's proposed new regulations ended on January 30th. The commission and the Department of Environmental Protection are preparing responses; we expect the regulations to be adopted soon.

NEW JERSEY WATER SUPPLY AUTHORITY

The authority will soon be starting a small dredging project between Mulberry Street and Whitehead Road. The fish ladder at the Island Farm weir in the Raritan River was cleaned of debris, and the roadside embankment repair at the recent water main break was completed.

UPCOMING EVENTS FROM OUR SISTER CANAL ORGANIZATIONS

March 28—Lunch and Walk Along the Delaware Canal. Join the Friends of the Delaware Canal for the first walk on the new towpath surface. Marvel at the extensive earthwork and see the restored structures. Starting at Wy-Hit-Tuk Park, walk north to the Forks of the Delaware in Easton to see the junction of the Delaware and Lehigh rivers, the fish ladder, the dam, and the guard and weigh locks. Then its off to town for lunch at Sette Luna. Round trip: 5.75 miles. Cost: \$25. To register, call 215-862-2021 or email the Friends at friends@fodc.org by **March 21**.

June 27—Waterloo Canal Day, Waterloo Village on the Morris Canal, Byram, NJ; Canal Society of New Jersey, 11-4. Free admission and boat ride. Food, sales items. Museum open. www.canalsocietynj.org; 908-722-9556.

June 28—27th Schuylkill Canal Day; 9-4 at restored Lock 60, Mont Clare, PA. A day of family fun with much excitement. 610-917-0021; info@schuylkillcanal.com.

August 22—Wharton Canal Day. Canal Society of New Jersey will sponsor boat rides on the Morris Canal. Canal lecture, vendors, food. 908-722-9556; www.canalsocietynj.org.

September 12-13—**South Bound Brook Canal Days**. Boat rides on the D & R Canal, lectures, Abe Lincoln, Civil War encampment, and much more. 732-469-5836; info@staatshouse.org.

D&R Canal Watch 2008-2009 Membership Renewal Form

(Membership year: September 1, 2008—August 31, 2009)

Individual \$15 _____ Family \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone(s) _____

Email address _____

Please send this form and your check, payable to the D&R Canal Watch, to D&R Canal Watch, P.O. Box 2, Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553-0002.

Each newsletter is posted in color on the Canal Watch website, www.canalwatch.org. If you are on the DRCW listserv, you will receive an email notification when a newsletter is posted. Do you wish to continue to receive the newsletter via U. S. mail? Yes ___ No ___ (Your “No” will save natural resources and mean more funds for the park).

Volunteers are needed to lead walks/trips. Do you have computer, photography, or design skills that you are willing to use for the organization? May we call on you? Yes ___ No ___ Try me ___ (circle your skill)

The D & R Canal Watch is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.

IN TRIBUTE TO OUR FOUNDER, BARBARA “BABS” THOMSEN

We have learned only recently of the death of D & R Canal Watch’s founder, Barbara (“Babs”) Thomsen on May 7, 2007, at the age of 83. Her daughter, Barbara Kerckhoff, has very kindly filled us in. The Canal Watch board offers belated condolences to her three children, her seven grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

The details of Babs Thomsen’s long, active, and productive life are too numerous to list here. The death of her husband, Carl Thomsen, in a plane crash during Naval Reserves exercises in 1958, left her a single mother of three small children, ages 6, 5, and 4 months. After her children were grown, Babs’s work for two non-profits, the Middlesex, Somerset, Mercer Regional Study Council and Friends of Princeton Open Space, undoubtedly kindled in her the preservation and environmental interests that led to her activism. The town of Cranbury, where she resided for fifty-eight years, is a major beneficiary of her civic work, which included open space and landmark preservation, saving the old Cranbury School from demolition, and affordable housing. She was an active campaigner for Democratic candidates and member of the Cranbury Housing Association, Cranbury School Board, and Cranbury Landmarks, Inc. It is for her founding of the D & R Canal Watch in 1988 and guidance over the organization for the next four years that we will best remember her.

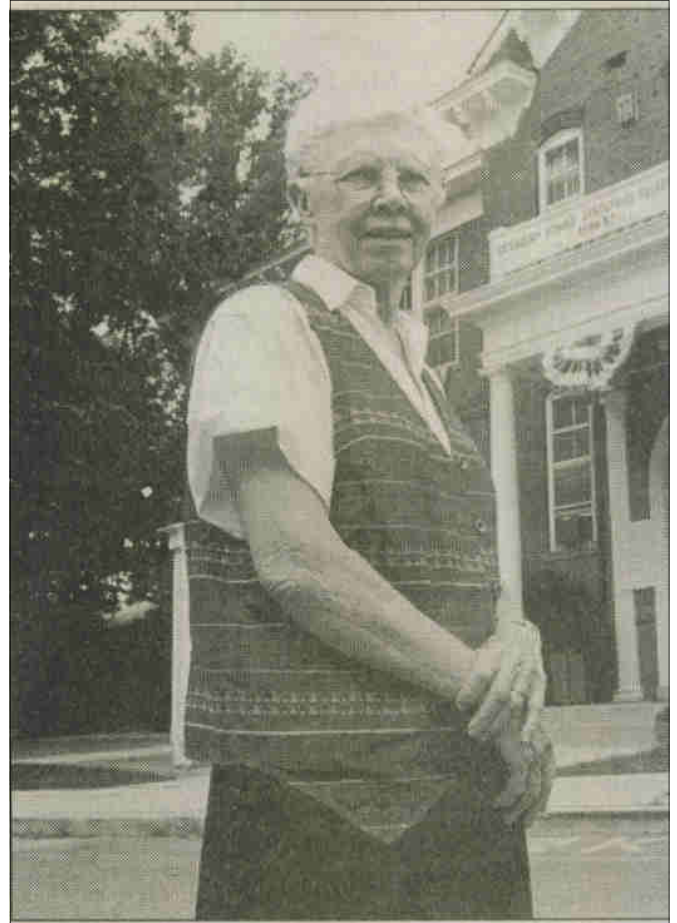
In 1988, while working for Friends of Princeton Open Space, Babs recognized the need for a citizens’ group to provide a voice for the D & R Canal State Park. By then the canal park was fourteen years old and was on the National Register. Plans were developed and their realization well along to make the canal the focus of a linear park and greenway across Central New Jersey, with continuous paths and the multiple opportunities for recreation and historic appreciation. The time had come to press for realization of these plans and for the necessary refinements .

The public outrage surrounding the cutting of trees and repair of the berm between the canal and Lake Carnegie in 1985 may have served as Bab’s catalyst for founding a membership organization to help protect, promote, and enhance the D & R Canal State Park

Babs sought a rational, informed, and positive approach to advocacy on behalf of the canal. Her methods were no less aggressive and were always tinged with a sense of urgency, and her tools were the facts, strong positions, letter writing, public meetings, and persuasion. She attended every Canal Commission meeting and often spoke up in the public response sessions. She became a kind of conscience for the canal; the anonymous ultimate users of the canal were always her motivation and her guide. She was a motivating force in preserving the buried Lock Two in the Bordentown section of the D & R Canal State Park when NJDOT threatened to build the Lambertton Connector too near. A primary focus of her interests was the canal in the city of Trenton --on improving access, paths, surroundings, and viewshed. She was impatient and perhaps discouraged at the lack of progress, but her influence, especially in that city, is being felt to this day in urban renewal, new housing, paths, interpretive signage, and plantings along the canal.

During her tenure Babs served not only as president of our organization, but as its *de facto* secretary, membership chair, and newsletter editor. She cranked out four years of quarterly newsletters on her word processor and photocopied, stapled, labeled, and mailed them herself. In June 1992, much too early for some of us, she resigned from the Canal Watch board. She probably sensed that the organization she founded was able to survive and flourish without her. She may also have recognized that other causes in Cranbury stood waiting and in need of her attentions.

In 1992, the Canal Watch installed two benches along the canal in her honor. A tree in her memory has been planted at Heritage Park in Cranbury.



PHOTOGRAPHS NEEDED

The Canal Watch is at long last redesigning its website, and we need beautiful photographs of the canal! You photographers out there, both amateur and professional, are invited to each contribute one or two photographs. A gallery of canal photographs, old and modern, is planned. The masthead and each web page will also display photographs, on a rotating basis.

Please send your photographs in digital format (high definition, please) to Barbara Ross at albatross8@verizon.net. Please include the location on the canal and photographer's name. We will give credits, but no copyright protection.

LOOKING FOR MEMORIAL BENCHES AND RAILROAD MILEPOSTS



The D & R Canal Watch is attempting to locate the benches on main canal and feeder and railroad mileposts along the feeder. We ask for your help with this endeavor.

It would also be interesting to note if any main canal mileposts are missing, tipped over, or damaged. If you come upon a milepost or bench along the towpath or feeder rail trail, please note its location, the honoree (for benches) and numbers. For railroad mileposts the numbers always add up to 68; for main canal mileposts, 44. Please report your findings to Barbara Ross at albatross8@verizon.net. Many thanks.

Visit the D&R Canal State Park website, www.dandrcanal.com for the latest events and activities.

D&R Canal Watch
P.O. Box 2
Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553