

D & R CANAL WATCH

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EAST MILLSTONE BRIDGETENDER'S HOME RESTORED

by Vicki Chirco



The bridge tender's home before restoration.

similar houses that stood along the waterway. These houses once sheltered the many bridge and locktenders employed by the canal company, along with their families. Most have been lost due to abandonment and the bulldozer, but about seventeen still stand (some in better condition than others). The East Millstone bridge tender's house is among the survivors.

For years the East Millstone bridge tender's house along the main section of New Jersey's Delaware and Raritan Canal stood in a state of miserable disrepair. The desire to rehabilitate the structure was discussed among park staff, friends groups, and local residents for years. The unused and deteriorating structure sat along the heavily-used Amwell Road and was clearly visible to passersby on a regular basis. Suffering vandalism and neglect, the historic canal structure seemed destined to suffer the same fate that befell over forty-five



The home during restoration



The interior and exterior have been restored.

For more than a decade, plans to tackle the rehabilitation of this house were discussed and finally this spring, with direction from the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission and funds provided by Premier Development, the developer of Canal Walk in Franklin Township, those plans were finally implemented. The project moved at a rapid pace through the spring and into the summer and is now nearing completion. Rotted floor boards and windows were removed and replaced. New framing went in and piles of mud and debris were removed from the basement. New roofing, heating, and

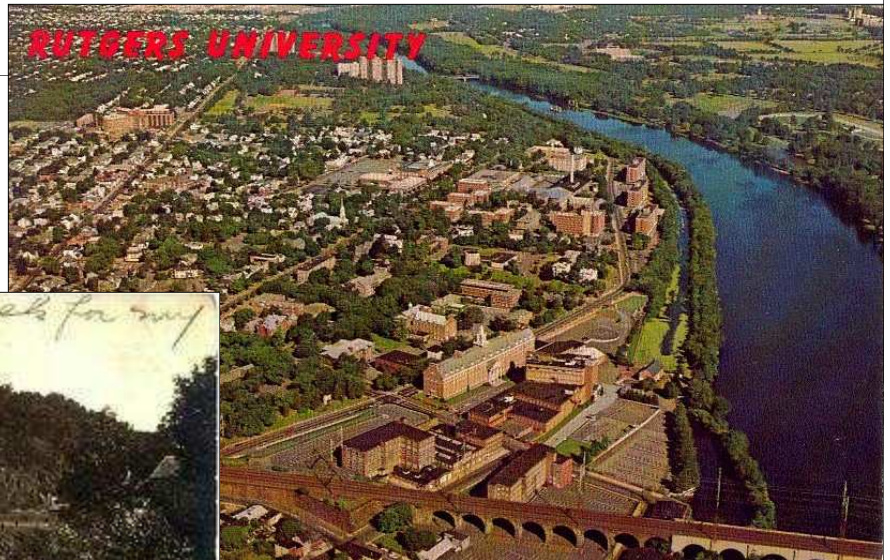
electrical upgrade were installed. Fresh paint was applied inside and out. By August a refreshed and rehabilitated bridgetender's house emerged.

Once completed, the newly rehabbed structure will be assessed by the Division of Parks and Forestry's leasing division for use as office space. A fair rental value will be determined and the site will then be advertised for lease. In due time, it is hoped that the structure will be occupied and put back into useful service.

The East Millstone bridgetender's house is among several construction projects that have seen movement this past year. These include the resurfacing of the towpath from Landing Lane to Griggstown, the completion of the connector path through Trenton linking the feeder to the main section, the rehabilitation of the Muletender's Barracks (also called the Long House) in Griggstown, the rehabilitation of Trenton's Calhoun Street canal house, and the restoration of the former park office at Blackwells Mills. Clearly, it has been a banner year and half for the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park. And still there is more to come! The bridgetender's house in Griggstown will soon undergo its own restoration to emerge as the headquarters and visitor center for the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway. The park staff is hopeful that more of the same can continue in the coming years.

D&R PHOTOGRAPHS ONLINE

Several good digitized old photographs and postcards of the D&R Canal can now be seen on the websites of local historical societies and libraries. Visit the Lawrence Historical Society (www.thelhs.org) and click on Lawrence History and then Photos; then click the link to www.flickr.com. At the Historical Society of Princeton (www.princetonhistory.org) website, click on Library (not historic photos), then the second "click here" under *HSP's Digital Database*; then type "D&R Canal" into the search bar. Go to the New Brunswick Free Public Library (www.nbfpl.org) and click on Historical Postcard collection (under Historical Archives); note the aerial photo of Rutgers, which shows the section of the canal that was later destroyed, and "Beautiful, colored New Brunswick," showing the double outlet locks at the terminus. Visit the Franklin Township Public Library (www.franklintwp.org) and click on Local History/Franklin Photo Archive; then type "D&R Canal" into the search bar.



Rocky Hill, downstream of the bridge at Route 518.
Courtesy Franklin Township Public Library

At the center right, you can see the canal (light green in some places) next to the Raritan River. This area has since been filled in to create Route 18. There is now a multi-use path from just downstream of Landing Lane to the Albany Street bridge.

Courtesy, New Brunswick Free Public Library

See page eight for another photo.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR THE CANAL WATCH, THE STATE PARK, AND OUR SISTER GROUPS

Saturday, September 25—Walk the Path to Rockingham. Enjoy a morning walk with the D&R Canal State Park's historian for a tour along the towpath to Rockingham. In addition to learning about the history of the canal, we'll visit two historic sites—the Kingston locktender's house and Rockingham, the restored 1783 headquarters of George Washington. Meet at the Kingston lock, off Route 27/Main Street in Kingston (about 4 miles north of Princeton) at 9:30 am for a brief talk about the history of the canal. Join us for this 2.5-mile round trip walk back in time. **PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED.** Free. Inclement weather cancels. Call the park office, 609-924-5705, or visit our website, www.dandrcanal.com/programs.html to register or for more information.

Sunday, September 26—Raritan River Festival, Boyd Park, New Brunswick—Art show, cars, food, music, cardboard canoe race, crafts, rubber duck race for charity, canoe rental and race. Visit the Canal Watch table. Noon-8; free. 732-745-5221.

Saturday, October 9—Project Learning Tree Workshop for Teachers & Scout Leaders. D&R Canal State Park Kingston Office (145 Mapleton Road, Princeton). 9:30 am–3:00 pm. Free. Take part in a Project Learning Tree workshop. PLT is an award-winning, broad-based environmental education program for educators and students in PreK-grade 8. The goal is to help students learn how to think, not what to think about the environment. PLT materials bring the environment into the classroom and students into the environment. The program covers topics ranging from forests, wildlife, and water, to community planning, waste management, and energy. This workshop is geared toward formal and non-formal educators, including scout leaders, teachers, naturalists and all environmental educators. **Teachers will receive 5 CEUs upon completion of the workshop.** Please contact Stephanie Fox to register and/or receive more information (609-924-5705). Light refreshments will be served in the morning but **participants are responsible for lunch.** Please come prepared to spend time outdoors. **PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.** This program is FREE and subject to cancellation. www.dandrcanal.com/programs.html.

Sunday, October 17—Roebling Park—Friends of

the Marsh cultural history walk led by Mary Anne Borge & Clyde Quin. 1:30-3 pm. Meet at Watson Woods, Roebling Park. Take W. Park Ave, to Westcott; follow signs toward Watson House/Roebling Park; turn into Roebling Park, drive down the hill, turn left, and park near the picnic tables. For info: 732-821-8310. Co-sponsors Friends for the Marsh, Mercer County Parks, D&R Greenway.

Saturday, October 23—Fall Foliage Walk ~ From Nursery to Canal. D&R Canal State Park's Kingston headquarters, 145 Mapleton Road, Kingston (about 4 miles north of downtown Princeton). 10:00 am. The park's historian and naturalist will lead this leisurely 3-mile round trip walk. See the Kingston locktender's house and Carnegie Lake. Enjoy the fall colors while learning about the historic and natural resources of the park! Free. Inclement weather cancels. Contact the park office at 609- 924-5705 to register or visit us at www.dandrcanal.com/programs.html. **Pre-registration IS REQUIRED.**

Saturday, November 6—Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh cleanup, 9 am–noon. Spring Lake area. Bring gloves if you have them and water; wear long sleeves, long pants. Meet at Spring Lake, Roebling Park (end of Sewell Ave., Hamilton). Contact/information, Warren Libensperger, 609-585-8845; Co-sponsors: Friends of the Marsh, Central Jersey Chapter Sierra Club, Mercer County Parks, D&R Greenway.

Saturday, November 6—Walk along the canal with the D&R's historian and visit two historic homes along the way - the Port Mercer bridgetender's house and the restored 18th-century Brearley House. Meet at the Port Mercer bridgetender's house in Lawrence Township (4278 Quaker Rd.) at 9:30 a.m. for a brief talk about the history of the D & R Canal and a walk-through of the house; then walk south for a tour of the Brearley House. Join us for this 2.5-mile round trip walk back in time. **PRE-REGISTRATION** is requested. Free. Inclement weather cancels. Call the park office at 609-924-5705 or visit our website, www.dandrcanal.com/programs.html to register or for more information. The Lawrence Historical Society, www.thelhs.org.

Sunday, November 14 – Spend a day hiking on New Jersey Conservation Foundation's preserved properties in the Wickecheoke Creek Greenway in Hunterdon County. Three walks of varying lengths will be

by a festive high tea at the Prallsville Mills ton. This annual event honors the late ionist Donald Jones. Meet at Prallsville :30-4:00. Contact: Carol Banhart, 908-234-26; carol@njconservation.org.

November 21—Walking Tour of the 1 Trenton. Meet at Ellarslie Museum in ler Park at 9:00 a.m. Tour the canal from to the new link along Route One. Please mbers of the D&R Canal Watch, the Civic Association, the City of Trenton, s and friends for a leisurely walk along the eder Canal through historic Trenton. See canal enhances the urban landscape! tation will be provided back to Cadwalader or more information, please call Bill at 609-989-3610.

December 11—The Abbott Legacy-logy at the NJ State Museum. 1:30-3:30. display of Abbott Farm artifacts and tour ie scenes with leaders Karen Flinn & Greg Meet at Learning Center, lower level, NJ useum, 205 W. State Street, Trenton. (For s, visit www.state.nj.us/state/museum/s.htm). For information: 732-821-8310. Co- with the Friends: New Jersey State Archeology Department, D&R Greenway st.

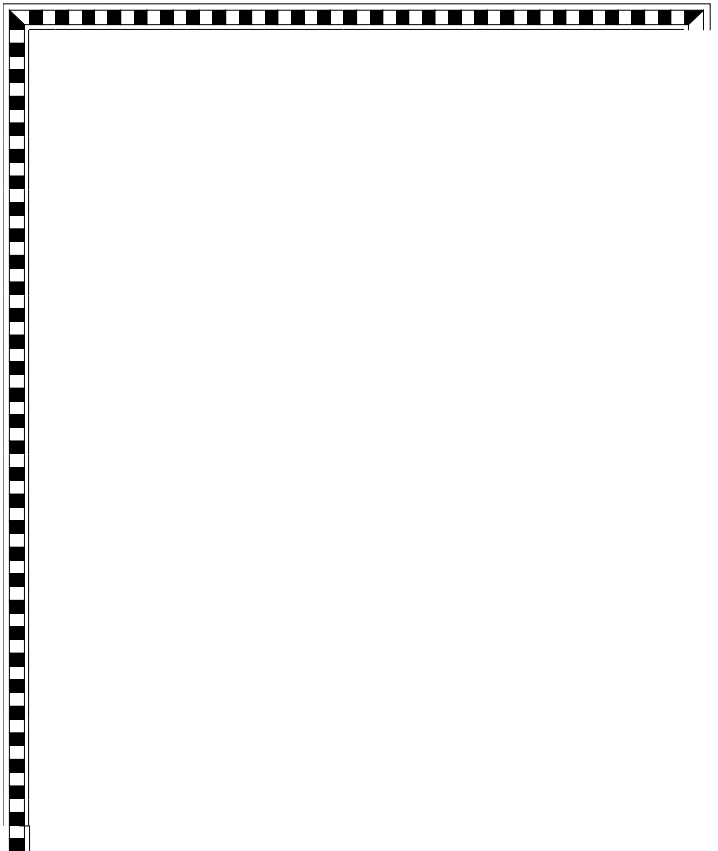
January 22—Visit to the Roebing . Meet at the museum at 10:00 am, 100 Avenue, Roebing, NJ 08554. **From the r North:** Take US 130 to the exit for /Hornberger Avenue. Cross the railroad, it and pass the Light Rail lot; continue o the museum parking lot on the left. Or NJ Transit River LINE light rail to the Roe- station. Join us to learn about the Roebing planned community.

February 19—Light rail trip, Roebing ton. Leaders: Barbara Ross and Doug Join us for a whirlwind tour by light rail 9th century. Meet at the Bordentown River ht rail station at 9:30 am sharp (turn left ing lot at 100 W. Park Avenue at Prince ove the boat landing), purchase tickets, and l to a brief introduction before boarding the 9:55 for a five-minute ride south to Roe- e cuts in the shoreline and a sunken canal n the era when coal-laden boats crossed the

river from Bristol to the D&R Canal. Roebing's abandoned Kinkora plant and the new Roebing museum can be seen from the train stop.

Then board a northbound train for a 15-minute ride to Trenton, and return to Bordentown, arriving at 10:55. The train follows the path of the D&R Canal from Crosswicks Creek to Trenton. See the abandoned canal, Watson's Creek and the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh, with its active eagle's nest. In the City of Trenton, where Route 129 is on the former route of the canal, remnants of the industrial and commercial buildings that lined the canal can be observed and compared with earlier photos. Participants will get an overview of places that are difficult to see any other way, but anyone expecting a leisurely guided tour will be disappointed.

Two-hour tickets are \$1.50 (\$.70 for seniors). Please bring exact change. Pre-registration is strongly advised; call 609-924-2683 after February 5th. *This D&R Canal Watch program is co-sponsored by the Friends for the Marsh and the D&R Greenway Land Trust.*



THE CANAL WATCH NEEDS YOU!

On our annual membership forms, we have asked members to declare their interest in volunteering, but to date have taken advantage of the information only on an individual basis. Well, that is about to change!

- **Bulls Island shoreline restorers:** This fall we have been asked to help plant native dogwoods and willows on the flood-scoured shore areas at Bulls Island in the D&R Canal State Park. The tentative start date is the first Saturday in October, so please pencil the date on your calendars and look for further announcements.

Members with a basic knowledge of computers are needed for three jobs that are extremely important to the organization. We promise you as much initial support and encouragement as you need and a guilt-free trial period. Experience with the specific task is not necessary.

- **Fun Run record keeper:** This job involves listing the runners and walkers as they send in their registration forms, producing run tag labels, and tallying the race results for the website. The latter can be a frenzied few hours; however, the entire job takes only six weeks a year at most, no more than 10-15 hours total, plus a couple of run organizational meetings.
- **Webmaster:** The Canal Watch website has just been redesigned by an angel by the name of Bob Hofmann, who has been graciously donating his services as acting webmaster for several years. Now that the difficult professional work has been accomplished, we need a webmaster to add event announcements, newsletters, and Fun Run information as provided to him/her and to keep the site up to date—no more than a couple of hours a month total.
- **Listserv manager:** We also need a person to work with the membership chair to keep the list up to date and send out the no more than 6 to 8 emails a month that are provided to him/her.
- **Logo designer:** The Canal Watch needs a logo, preferably a simple one with a 19th-century look that depicts the structure that is unique to this canal: the A-frame bridge. Can anyone out there help us? We can provide old photos.
- **Transcriber:** We are looking for someone who can transcribe audio interviews with canal boat captains. Since these people are no longer with us, their words are a valuable source of information.
- **Committee chairs/Trustees:** The Canal Watch has active and proficient chairs of the membership, publicity, events, and run development committees, as well as a newsletter editor. Having chairs or an editor in a grassroots organization implies committees and volunteers, but, alas, this is not the case. Each of these activities could be enriched and improved by volunteers. Please tell us if you have an interest in serving on a committee or being considered for the Canal Watch board.

Other opportunities are in the planning stages; please let us know if you are interested in volunteering, even assuming a supervisory role:

- **Exhibition docents:** Volunteers will be needed to staff exhibitions in one of the canal buildings (specific location to be decided) on a regular schedule on weekends (subject to permission from the park).
- **Canal cleaner-uppers:** Cleanups of the canal from land and water, in cooperation with Mohawk Canoe Club members are being planned for 2011.
- **Level walkers:** Following the lead of roads and highways, we are discussing an initiative in which people can “adopt” a section of the canal to monitor the towpath on a regular basis. Corporate employees, families, or small groups could be “Level Walkers,” doing minor cleanup or reporting problems as they walk the path. Why else are we called the Canal Watch?

NEW TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP CHAIR FOR THE WATCH

Michael Kaplan has agreed to be the treasurer of the Canal Watch, taking over from Erik Jetzt. We are deeply grateful to Erik for serving as treasurer for so many years. We also welcome Diane Tartaglia, who has volunteered to assume the position of membership chair. Thanks to Barbara Ross for her long tenure in this position. Thank you, thank you!

D&R CANAL'S MISSING LINK NOW A REALITY

One D & R Canal path, complete

Jeffrey Laurenti - SPECIAL TO THE TIMES OF TRENTON—July 9, 2010

This past weekend, as I cycled my way back to Trenton on the Delaware and Raritan Canal path and exited, as usual, at Mulberry Street, where the canal disappears under Route 1, I was startled to see that the long-awaited connection to the other half of the canal path, from downtown Trenton to Frenchtown, has just been paved.

For decades, the 67-mile, "V"-shaped canal path -- 33 miles northwest from Trenton to Frenchtown, then 34 miles northeast from Trenton to New Brunswick -- has been missing its hinge at the bottom of the "V." That's the 1.5-mile stretch in Trenton's North Ward between Mulberry Street and Southard Street, where the canal has been entombed since Route 1 was built over it in 1950.

Last October, Gov. Jon S. Corzine kicked off construction of the missing link by completing long-stalled negotiations to buy the rail right-of-way alongside Route 1. The paving of this piece of the trail has just been completed, under Gov. Christie, making the canal path the longest completed trail in the East Coast Greenway running from Maine to Florida.

The whole history of the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park has been a bipartisan achievement. The idea for the park gained legislative impetus from a study commission chaired by former Senate President Ray Bateman, a Somerset County Republican, in 1973. The Legislature approved the bill to establish a canal commission to develop the trail and park in 1974, under the sponsorship of another former Senate president, Democrat John Lynch Sr., of New Brunswick.

Aware that the canal's most vocal champions were in wealthier suburban and rural communities, another co-sponsor and soon-to-be Senate president, Joseph P. Merlino of Trenton, inserted into the bill a mandate for the park commission to give special consideration to "the range of uses and potential uses of the canal in the urban environments of the older, intensively developed communities through which it passes."

Nowhere is that mandate more fully realized than in last week's completion of the missing link in Trenton. While the new trail runs right alongside busy Route 1, the trees and shrubs between them miraculously insulate the trail, which is virtually invisible from the freeway.

I was a young Senate aide when the bill passed and Gov. Brendan T. Byrne signed it into law and could scarcely then imagine how the long-disused towpath would become the delight of cyclists and hikers up and down the canal. After all, in the late 1960s, the city of Trenton had put up a chain-link fence to keep people away from the canal, viewing it as a danger to children after a toddler drowned. But under the visionary leadership of James Amon, the commission's first executive director, fences came down and the fragmented parcels of land were assembled into the seamless trail completed last week.

Without fanfare, the canal commission also reopened to the public's use the long-forgotten piece of the canal on Duck Island in Hamilton to the canal's opening to the Delaware River (and boat traffic to Philadelphia) at Bordentown. That piece was severed from the rest of the canal and filled in to permit construction of the Route 1 freeway six decades ago and Route 129 two decades ago. The forbiddingly overgrown towpath along the remaining canal was cleared in 2008 and opened as one of the most distinctive segments of the entire canal trail. The state needs now only to add a small bridge at the canal's mouth to link it to Bordentown.

With the new piece of trail now paved in Trenton, cyclists can travel off-road the entire course -- New Brunswick to Princeton to Trenton to Lambertville to Frenchtown. They can connect to other trails, such as the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail that links to the canal path at the Brearley House Great Meadow. They can cross one of the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission bridges (without paying toll!) to connect to Pennsylvania's 60-mile Delaware Canal, which runs parallel to the river from Bristol north to Easton. (Indeed, the bridge commission is including a dedicated bike path in the upgraded I-95 bridge at Scudders Falls.)

Not only local residents can benefit. Completion of the missing link allows Trenton to become the center of a new kind of cycling tourism, luring many of New York's European and Latin visitors out for a two-day cycle adventure in historic, small-town America. The canal commission should start putting up appropriate signposts to guide the new kind of cyclist to the remarkable sites in our area. The infrastructure is now in place.

Jeffrey Laurenti of Trenton is a senior fellow at The Century Foundation in New York and a new member of the Trenton Cycling Revolution. Copyright, 2010, The Times, Trenton N.J. All Rights Reserved.

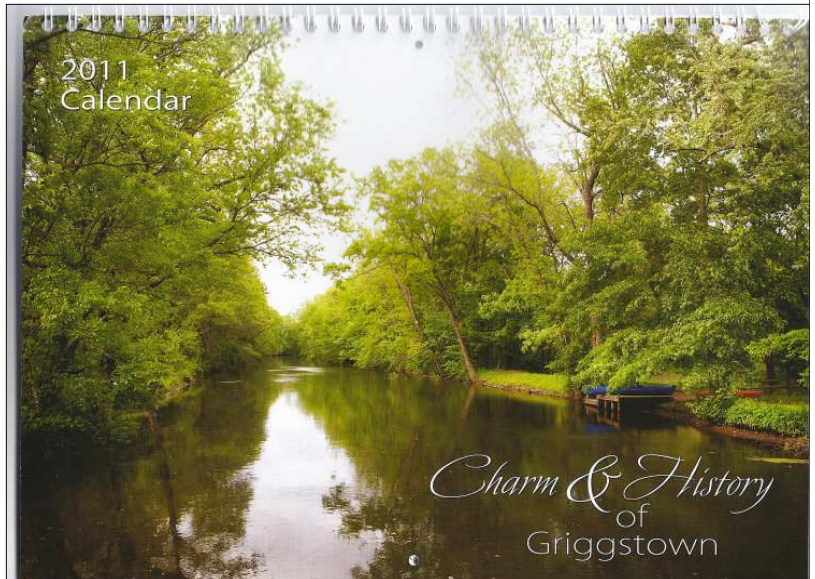
NEW CALENDAR FEATURES MANY CANAL PHOTOS

Now is your chance to support the Griggstown Volunteer Fire Department and enjoy beautiful canal photographs at the same time! The department's Ladies Auxiliary is selling this 2011 calendar, which features a number of views of the D&R Canal, for \$19.95.

Both sides of the front cover feature pictures of the waterway, the bridge, and the bridgetender's hut. Other pages show the bridgetender's home, the locktender's home, and the lock.

Taken by Julie Stauffer (pravadaphotography.com), the color photographs will make a lovely keepsake, long after 2011 is over.

The proceeds of the sales will benefit the Ladies Auxiliary, which gives an annual donation to the of the fire department to purchase needed equipment. To order your copy, please call Grace Torkildsen at 908-359-6503. She will arrange pick-up. To have the calendar mailed to you, please ask Grace for the cost of postage.

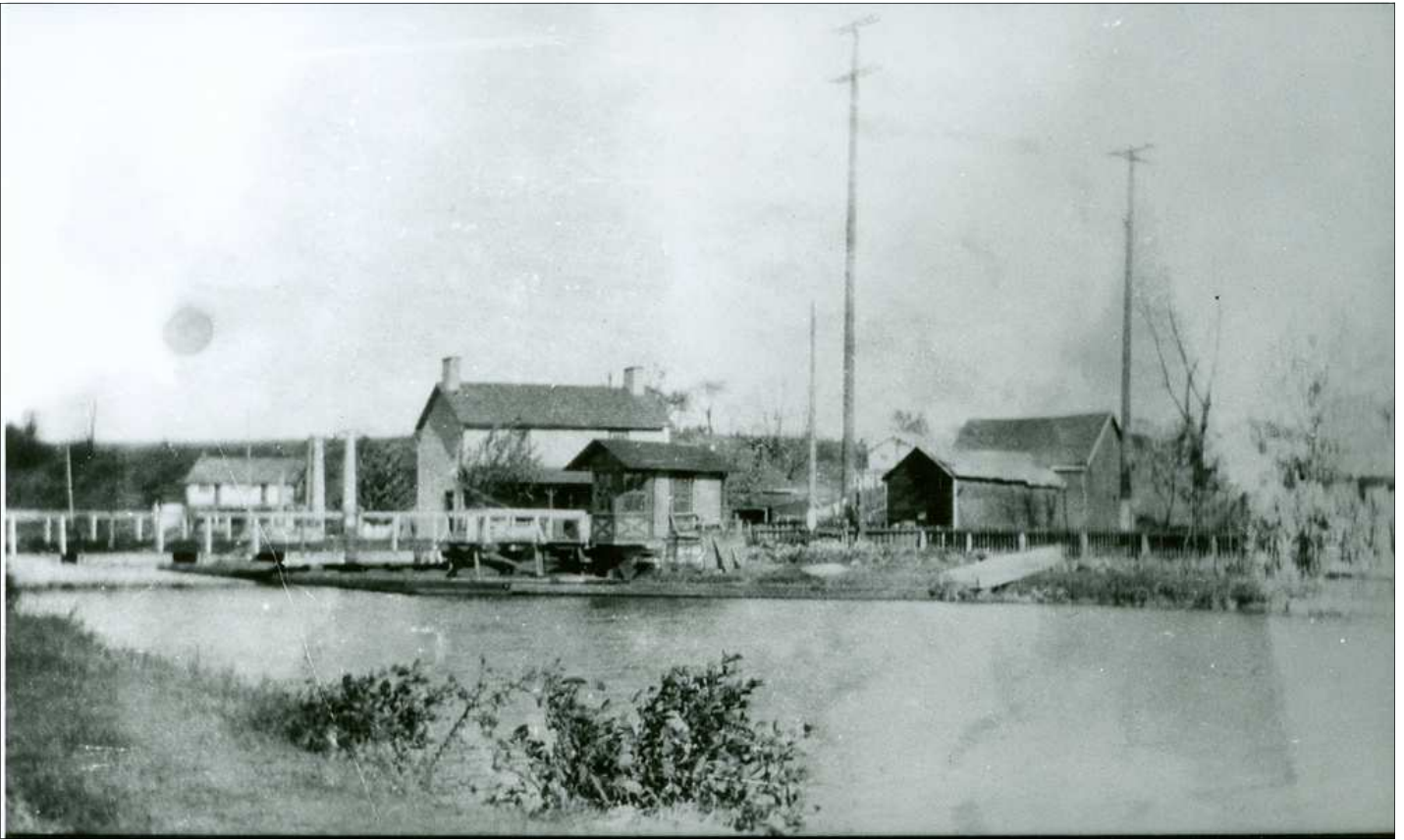


NEW CANAL WATCH WEBSITE!

For years we have struggled along with a website that was much less than adequate. Now, thanks to the magnificence of Bob Hofmann, our acting webmaster borrowed from the Canal Society of New Jersey, we finally have a handsome new website, which is easier both to use and to look at. Thank you, Bob.

The site still needs a little fine-tuning but is ready to be seen and admired. Visit us at www.canalwatch.org and see for yourselves!

We now have a section for photos of the canal and hope that you photographers out there will send us, via email, one or two of your best photos of the canal for posting. You may send the photos, with a brief description, to Linda Barth at barths@att.net. And, yes, we plan to take down most of the depressing flood photos. The best way to thank Bob will be to find someone to take over the responsibility of webmaster (see p.5). With the improved website, Bob indicates that no special software is required to make simple changes.



Blackwells Mills. Courtesy Lawrence Historical Society

NEWS FROM OUR CANAL PARK AGENCIES

D&R CANAL STATE PARK—Superintendent Patricia Kalleser reported that the towpath resurfacing has been completed from Landing Lane Bridge almost to Griggstown. The new surface is made of crushed argillite shale. The restoration of the East Millstone canal house is just about complete; only a few details remain.

Ms. Kalleser and Canal Commission Executive Director Ernest Hahn shared information on the Easton Avenue Corridor meetings they had been attending; discussion ensued regarding the potential construction of a pedestrian bridge in the vicinity of JFK Boulevard and Easton Avenue. Mr. Loos explained that there is an area between the jughandle next to JFK and the diner on Easton Avenue where a pedestrian bridge could provide access to the canal park.

Mr. Hahn indicated that due to the slope of the area it may be difficult to comply with ADA regulations. Mr. Barth of the D&R Canal Watch suggested a floating bridge. The Office of Natural and Historic Resource Development has contracted a feasibility study for the bridge and will continue to work on this project.

D&R CANAL COMMISSION—Mr. Hahn said that DOT recently submitted plans to rebuild three canal bridges in Ewing Township, at Lower Ferry Road, Bernards Drive, and Wilburtha Road.

The newest commission member is Donna Mahon, who represents Parks and Forestry. Donna noted that the new assistant director for parks is John Trontis, from the Hunterdon County Park System.

NEW JERSEY WATER SUPPLY AUTHORITY—Mr. Shepherd reported that the authority was helping with path improvements on the “missing link” path (Old Rose to Mulberry Streets in Trenton). Mr. Bogosian reported that the authority is currently reviewing bids for a cultural resource consultant for the 2012 dredging project. The first of several public meetings about the dredging will be held in December, place and time to be announced. Mr. Shepherd reported that the authority is currently working on tree removal on Lower Ferry Road and that new gates have been installed in the Lambertville Lock. Mr. Shepherd reported that the riprap on the sides of the Parkside Aqueduct has been removed. He said that tree removal and mowing were ongoing.