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D&R CANAL WATCH NEWSLETTER

A membership organization supporting the Delaware & Raritan Canal

Number 36

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Canal Community Rambles to Begin

This year, instead of the usual linear walks along the canal, the Canal Watch is launching a series of canal community rambles. Each will be different, depending upon the subject, but all will explore the canal and its impact on the specific community. Most of the rambles will involve a fair amount of walking, with opportunities for non-walkers to join in at designated points. Historic canal structures and buildings in the community, adjacent parks and natural areas, and other local points of interest will be explored.

Local experts, environmental groups, and historical societies will be invited to contribute. In a few cases, informal accompanying exhibitions of historic photographs will be held beforehand. Where possible, itineraries will be available for non-walkers on the Canal Watch Web site a week prior to each ramble. The walks are free and no registration is necessary. Here are the first three scheduled rambles:

Kingston Ramble: Saturday, March 18, 9:30 a.m. (about 2 miles, plus diversions). We will meet at the Kingston Canal House at 9:30 a.m. and walk along the towpath to the Carnegie Lake dam, exploring the original canal structures and bypass remains, the canal house, old bridges, and Kingston mill on the way back. After glimpses of the Gulick House and mid-19th-century Kingston, we will walk to the Cook Natural Area and return to our cars via the historic Princeton Nurseries property and new park office.

South Bound Brook Ramble: Sunday, April 9, 9:30 a.m. (about 2 miles plus diversions). We will meet at Lock 11 (across from the post office) on Canal Road and walk along the towpath upstream (0.4 mile) to the spillway. Then we stroll downstream to the new pedestrian bridge that leads to the Canal Crossing development. On the way back we will visit the Dublin neighborhood.

Stockton Ramble: Saturday, May 20, 9:30 a.m. (about 3 miles plus diversions). We will meet at Prallsville Mills and walk the towpath through Stockton to Brookville and return via the rail trail. Historic Stockton, the remains of the grist mill and Hiram Deats foundry at Brookville and the Prallsville Mills complex will be explored.

Walk the Trenton Waterfront on April 8th

The D & R Canal Watch and Delaware River Greenway Partnership are jointly sponsoring a Trenton waterfront walk with Andrew Carten, planning director of the City of Trenton

Carten will lead a 3-mile walk along the partly developed Trenton section of the Delaware River Heritage Trail beginning 9 a.m. Saturday, April 8. Walkers will meet in the parking lot behind the State House/Old Barracks (follow signs to Capitol Complex) and walk to the Water Filtration Plant/Shaky Bridge, under the Calhoun Street Bridge, and along the river to the mouth of Assunpink Creek and follow the Assunpink back to their cars, about 1 hour. The proposed realignment of roads, conversion of Route 29 to a boulevard, and related City of Trenton projects will be noted. DRGP executive director Celeste Tracy will be along for Heritage Trail updates.

Participants will then drive to the County Fish Pier near Katmandu and walk to Marine Terminal Park and back, about 1½ hours.

Shorter trips can be arranged; otherwise, no registration is necessary. Long pants and stout shoes are recommended. The public is invited, free of charge. Call 609-924-2683 for information.

Fun Run Celebrates 15th Year April 1

The 15th annual D & R Canal Watch Fun Run is a special one this year. Not only will the Saturday, April 1st 5K race mark its 15th anniversary (and the second anniversary of the 1-Mile Walk) but it will also represent an ambitious effort to make the proceeds more meaningful to the park.

In the near future the D & R State Park will undertake ambitious projects such as the restoration of the Griggstown Long House, development of the 3.5-mile "Bordentown end" of the canal, interpretive exhibits for the new Park headquarters on Mapleton Road, restoration of the Saw Mill at Prallsville as a visitor and interpretive center, more canoe ramps and docks, and crosswalks where roads intersect the towpath. This year's run proceeds will be aimed at supplementing one or more of these improvements.

Getting back to the event, consider getting some early spring exercise and having a lot of fun on this lovely course starting in Washington Crossing State Park. The Fun Run begins at 10 a.m., and if that is a bit too much, join the 1-Mile Walk at 9:30. For the 5K, awards are given to the top three male and female finishers in six age groups. All walk participants receive a commemorative ribbon and everyone gets a T-shirt and post-race refreshments.

You may download a run registration form at www.canalwatch.org, register online at www.active.com, or call 609-924-2683 to receive a form by mail. See you there!

State Park slates new HQ open house

Save the date! The D & R Canal State Park is holding an Arbor Day Open House at its new offices at 145 Mapleton Road on April 29, tentatively from 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Among the events planned are an early reception for organizations concerned with the canal, Arbor Day presentation, Smokey the Bear and crafts for the kids, food concession, tables set up by interested non-profit organizations, music, and tours of the new park headquarters buildings.

Highlighting the afternoon will be formal dedications of the surrounding preserved lands and park office, followed by the dedication of the Flemer Arboretum and tree planting ceremony.

The day will conclude with guided tours of the former Princeton Nurseries lands and its specimen trees, the Kingston lock area of the canal, and the Cook Natural Area. It should be a fun and interesting day for all. Look for more complete information soon at www.canalwatch.org and www.dandrcanal.com.

The new office opened in December after enduring over 25 years in a creaky old farmhouse in Blackwells Mills. It is now housed in much more up-to-date and spacious quarters in the recently restored office of the former Princeton Nurseries. In addition to being able to offer exhibition, conference, workshop and storage space, the property also includes a separate classroom building for education and program purposes. There is tremendous potential here, including the opportunity for displays of the park's historic and natural resources and development of a trail system on the more than 50 acres acquired through the Green Acres program. The mailing address is 145 Mapleton Road, Princeton, NJ 08540 and the new phone number is 609-924-5705.

Board News – Leadership Changes

We sincerely thank Ron Bond for his service as president of the D & R Canal Watch. Regrettably Ron has had to step down due to a new job and the premature birth of twin grandchildren. He will continue to serve on the board, and we look forward to working with him in the future.

To fill the position, the board appointed co-presidents: Barbara Westergaard and Linda Barth.

Barbara Westergaard, who currently serves as the Canal Watch secretary, has worked for many years as a freelance editor and writer, editing books and articles for a variety of scholarly publishers and journals and writing primarily on New Jersey topics. The third edition of her *New Jersey: A Guide to the State* (Rutgers University Press) will be published later this winter. She learned to love the canal many years ago riding horses and hiking along the tow-path.

Linda Barth has served on the board of the Canal Society of New Jersey and the D & R Canal Watch for many years. With her husband Robert, she has led canal tours throughout the Northeast. The author of many canal and travel articles, she has served as the curator of the Mule Tenders Barracks Museum on the banks of the D & R Canal in Griggstown. A retired teacher, Linda has written two books on the D & R Canal for Arcadia Publishing; her children's picture book, *Bridgetender's Boy*, was published by the National Canal Museum last year.

According Canal Watch bylaws, the board can make interim appointments to be officially voted upon at the annual meeting. Thus, the co-presidents were appointed in November. In addition, two prospective new board members, Bill Flemer and Mark Hamill, are attending meetings and will be nominated for election to the board at the annual meeting. A secretary, events chairperson, and walk guides are also urgently needed; please call 609 924-2683 for job descriptions and to volunteer.

At the annual meeting on Sunday, May 21, the membership will elect officers and trustees. Results of the nominating committee search will be announced in a subsequent newsletter.

Your officers and trustees meet bimonthly at the Brearley House in Lawrence Township. All members are welcome to join us. Upcoming meetings are tentatively scheduled for 7:30 p.m. March 14 and May 16. Please feel free to join us.

Spotlight on Trenton

The private development community is starting to take a serious look at what the City of Trenton has to offer.

One such developer, Full Spectrum of New York, is seeking approval from the city to develop a new mixed-use development in downtown Trenton. The project will consist of approximately 150,000 square feet of Class A office space, 60,000 square feet of retail space, 250 residential units and associated parking structures. The developer received preliminary site plan approval from the City of Trenton Planning Board in late 2005 and hopes to be back in front of the board for final approvals early this year. According to the developer, the project will break ground later this year.

Full Spectrum specializes in the development of high-performing "green" buildings and promises to deliver a green building complex that may be one of the largest of its kind in the county. According to the U.S. Green Building Council, buildings that embrace green building technology are environmentally responsible, profitable and healthy places to live and work.

We hope to see more that will bring a real sense of excitement and progress in our Capitol City.

For all you folks out there looking for the "canal connection," the project is two blocks from the feeder at East State and Montgomery streets.

Stay tuned for more news from the Trenton front.

-- *Bill Valocchi*

New Brunswick's industrial heritage

"Globalization & Industrial America, 1830-2005: New Brunswick, NJ & the Raritan River Valley, a Microcosm?" is the focus of an all-day conference May 12 that will include the presentation of papers on the history of globalization as reflected in local industries. The D & R Canal was clearly a key player in that development.

For more information and a registration form, go to http://www.eh.net/raritan_conference_flyer.pdf.

Bulls Island Campground to reopen

Following repairs caused by flood damage, the Bulls Island campground is slated to open this spring, April 1 to be exact, the beginning of the camping season. So now we can not only take a hike, but also reserve a tent site in celebration of this beautiful area.

Canal Attracts Townhouse Project

Groundbreaking occurred in August for an upscale townhouse development at the site of an abandoned GAF plant in South Bound Brook.

The development, on the berm bank of the canal, will bring several improvements to the surrounding canal area, including a walking and cycling path on the berm bank of the canal, opposite the towpath. In addition, the former railroad bridge across the canal has been re-decked to connect the canal park with the new path and the Canal Crossing development, which also includes a retail block. Visitors and residents will be welcomed by a small gateway park at the corner of Main Street and Canal Road, at the end of the Queens Bridge.

The complex is part of South Bound Brook's program to improve the area and take advantage of its location along the canal, which in the canal's early years was heavily industrialized, including a saw mill, lumber yard, paint factory and a Ruberoid asphalt roofing plant.

Want to know more? Join Linda Barth on the April 9th South Bound Brook Ramble.

Canoe-the-Canal Day set June 11

The Lawrence Historical Society is again teaming up with the Lawrence Township Recreation Department for the annual Canoe-the-Canal Day on Sunday, June 11, beginning at 1 p.m. This delightful one-way voyage promises to have a very refreshing end. Canoes launch from the foot of Cherry Tree Lane, one block south of Whitehead Road, and head north 2.5 miles to a warm welcome at the Port Mercer Canal House where refreshments will be served.

Canoes may be rented by contacting the Lawrence Township Recreation Department between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays at 609-844-7067. For additional information check the society's Web site, www.thelhs.org or call 609-895-1728.

More canal signs coming

The East Coast Greenway is awaiting delivery of 60 ECG signs to be posted along the section of the canal that is part of the Maine-to-Florida recreational trail. The towpath between South Bound Brook and Trenton has been designated part of the ECG since 1995. Thanks to a federal grant to pay for the signs, volunteers are expected begin their installation in March. For more information call the ECG office at 732-340-1411 or go to www.greenway.org.

Calendar of canal-related events

March 4 -- Hike the Bulls Island Natural Area, 1 mile, sponsored by State Park. Meet at the Bulls Island Visitor Center at 10 a.m.*

March 18 – Canal Watch Kingston Ramble (see above).

March 18 -- Spring Solstice Hike In Search of Skunks, Six Mile Run Reservoir Area, 3 miles, sponsored by State Park*. Spot the early signs of spring such as the budding spicebush and the rise of the skunk cabbage. Meet at Six Mile Run parking lot, Blackwells Mills, 10 a.m.*

March 18 -- Port Mercer Canal House Open House with State Park historian, 1 to 3 p.m., sponsored by State Park. No registration required.

March 25 -- Walk the Path to Five Mile Lock with park historian, 3 miles, sponsored by State Park. Meet 10 a.m. at Demott Lane footbridge off Easton Avenue.*

April 1 – D & R Canal Watch 5K Fun Run (see above).

April 1 -- Walk the Path in Lawrence Township with park historian with visit to Port Mercer Canal House and Brearley House, 2.5 miles, sponsored by State Park. Meet 9:30 a.m. at Port Mercer Canal.*

April 1 -- April Fool's Hike at the Mapleton Preserve with Arlene Oley from the Plainsboro Preserve and Stephanie

Fox, park naturalist, sponsored by State Park. Meet 9 a.m. at new main office, 145 Mapleton Road near Kingston.*

April 8 – Trenton Waterfront Walk (see above).

April 9 – South Bound Brook Ramble (see above).

April 22 -- Walk the Path to Rockingham with park historian, including Rockingham tour, 2.5 miles, sponsored by Canal Park. Meet 9:30 a.m. at Kingston Canal House, Route 27.*

April 29 – Arbor Day Open House at new park HQ (see above).

May 6 – Lawrence Historical Society sixth anniversary May Fair at Brearley House, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Parking at \$5 per car. Directions and information at www.thelhs.org or call 609-895-1728.

May 20 – Canal Watch Stockton Ramble (see above).

May 21 – D & R Canal Watch Annual Meeting, Lawrence Township Municipal Building. Slide talk by Bill McKelvey.

June 11 – Canoe the Canal Day (see above).

* Pre-registration required at (609) 397-2949 or at the Canal Park Web site www.dandrcanal.com where you will also find more complete information on these walks as well as other activities.



D & R Canal Watch 2005-2006 Combo Membership/ Volunteer Opportunities Form (please disregard if you already renewed for 2005-2006 last fall)

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

D & R Canal Watch is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Please make your checks payable to:
D & R Canal Watch, PO Box 2, Rocky Hill, NJ 08553.

We need volunteers to lead walks, represent the Canal Watch at events, help clean up the canal, and to provide refreshments for meetings. We need a secretary and events chairperson. If you can help with fund-raising, newsletter layout (obviously needed), or have design skills, we would be most grateful for some of your time. Or let us know just how you would like to become involved!

May we call on you? Yes ___ No ___ Try me ___ (circle your skill)

Our newsletters are posted on the Canal Watch Website www.canalwatch.org and notices are sent to members for whom we have email addresses. Do you wish to continue to receive the newsletter via U.S. Mail? Yes ___ No ___