



Number 103

www.canalwatch.org

December 2025

Second Annual Tour de Towpath a Success

The Second Annual Tour de Towpath was quite a success, with over 100 participants! The riders, walkers, and runners gave us overwhelmingly positive feedback.

One of the riders shared this praise with us: “The Tour de Towpath 2025 was a beautiful bike ride that enabled us to explore the D&R canal in a safe and guided way. The excellent signage and directional markings along the route were tremendous and very helpful—the best we’ve experienced on a ride like this! All the volunteers were terrific. We enjoyed participating on the 20-mile ride. Thank you!”

Another commented, “Big thanks to all the volunteers who helped out, the organizers and the



police officers who guided us through some of the crossings! This was a fantastic event, obviously helped by the nice weather. The route was well-marked and in great condition. Fellow riders were friendly and enthusiastic. Shout out to the DJ! The food was top notch for this type of event!”



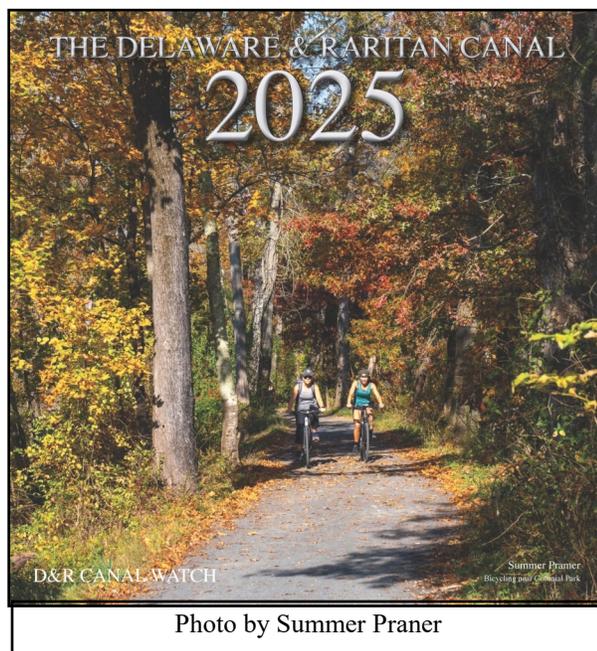
Your Canal Photography is Needed for the Canal Watch 2027 Calendar

The 2025 D&R calendar did not sell out, so we took off a year and skipped the 2026 version. After taking a year off, we are now accepting photographs for the 2027 calendar.

1. The calendar pages are 12” by 12.” In order to print an image this size from your digital camera at a resolution necessary to make a quality print (300 pixels per inch), your image needs to measure 3,600 pixels by 3,600 pixels, i.e., 300 pixels per inch times 12 inches = 3,600 pixels. You should check your smart phone for information about the number of megapixels that are in the photos taken with your camera. Currently, most smart phone cameras do not provide an image that will print a 12” by 12” image at a required print resolution of 300 ppi (pixels per inch).

2. Since our historic waterway is a place that you can visit often, consider visiting the canal in different light, especially early morning and at dusk.

3. Remember that it’s a 70-mile park. Perhaps visit a section that you have not seen before.



We urge you to start shooting and send your images by June 30 to Linda Barth at barthlinda123@aol.com. In your email, please provide the location and date of each image. Photos can come from any year.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS YEAR, EACH PHOTOGRAPHER MAY SEND NO MORE THAN FIVE IMAGES, SO CHOOSE WISELY.

[D&R Canal Watch Activities Schedule for 2026](#)

Saturday, January 3: 10:00 a.m. South Bound Brook Towpath clean-up. Meet at Lock 11 in South Bound Brook, across from the post office on Canal Road (11 Madison Street). Join members of the D&R Canal Watch in their effort to keep the state park a beauty spot in central New Jersey. Leader: Bob Barth, 201-401-3121, bbarth321@aol.com.

Sunday, February 1: 10:00 a.m. Towpath Walk, Demott Lane to Landing Lane. 4.2 miles roundtrip. Meet at Demott Lane off Easton Avenue, Franklin Township. (GPS 1289 Easton Avenue, Somerset NJ 08873). Leader: **Tim Roth**, timroth@comcast.net, 973-222-0586.

Saturday, March 14: 10:00 a.m. History Bike Ride, Griggstown Causeway to Kingston, 10 miles roundtrip on the D&R Canal towpath. Explore the structures along the D&R Canal with Canal Watch trustee Tim Roth. Meet in the causeway parking lot in Griggstown. Bring water; helmet required. Allow three hours. Leader: Tim Roth, timroth@comcast.net, 973-222-0586

Saturday, March 28: Geology hike, 10:00 a.m. Meet at the Bordentown Light Rail Station, West Park Street. A walk and talk on the transition between the D&R Canal and the C&A Railroad. The C&A RR was up and running in 1832 between Bordentown and South Amboy. The D&R canal was in operation in 1834 as was the full length of the C&A RR. In 1837 the C&A RR built the Trenton Branch along the east side of the D&R Canal. The D&R and the C&A built a bridge over Crosswicks Creek so workers and others could walk between the two transportation methods. We have just completed replicas of the railroad tracks of the C&A RR in a small park at the light rail station in Bordentown. Starting at the Light Rail Station, we will discuss the C&A RR and then continue the walk to the canal and discuss the walking bridge over Crosswicks Creek and the sand and gravel quarry work at what is today Review View studio. The quarried sand and gravel was used to build the elevated causeway across Hamilton Marsh on the east side of the Canal. Walk led by Pierre Lacombe, retired USGS geologist, pjlacombe25@gmail.com.

Saturday, May 2: 2nd Annual Canoe Race. Commemorating the 52nd Anniversary of the D&R Canal State Park! Come join us for a **paddling race** on the D&R Canal Saturday, May 2nd at 10 a.m. Proceeds go to the Canal Watch in support of projects in the park. You can choose from 8-mile or 1-mile race distances. Canoes, kayaks, and SUPs welcome. Race begins and ends at the Turning Basin, Alexander Road in Princeton, NJ. \$35. Mandatory pre-Registration and additional details available: <https://paddleguru.com/races/DandRCanalPark50thAnniversaryRace>; 972-742-1500. (There is a "contact race" button on the page that directs to there as well.) Contact: Alan Lamb, Alan.Lamb3@gmail.com.

Sunday, June 28: 2:00 p.m. Canal Watch Annual Meeting

Sunday, July 26: Canal Road Walk and Roll. 10:00-4:00. Canal Road closed from East Millstone to Butler Road. Enjoy a day with friends and family along the scenic D&R Canal with no cars!

Sunday, August 30: Canal Road Walk and Roll. 10:00-4:00. Canal Road closed from Griggstown Causeway to Route 518 in Rocky Hill. Enjoy a day with friends and family along the scenic D&R Canal with no cars!

Sunday, September 13: Canal House Challenge, 10:00-4:00. Five of the historic locktender and bridge-tender homes will be open to the public. Pick up a passport at your first stop and have it stamped. If you visit all five buildings in one day, you will receive a small prize.

Visitors will be invited to tour the homes in East Millstone, Blackwells Mills, Griggstown, Kingston, and Port Mercer (addresses will be provided in the August newsletter). The friends group in charge of each home will welcome visitors and provide a tour and history of the building.

Saturday-Sunday, October 10-11: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday; noon to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Somerset County's Journey Through the Past. Canal Watch members will open the East Millstone bridge-tender's home and station (and the historic outhouse, for observation only). Bob Barth, 201-401-3121, bbarth321@aol.com. (To see the many other historic sites that will be open, Google "Journey Through the Past, Somerset County, NJ.")

Sunday, October 18: 10:00 a.m. Bike Ride on the Feeder Canal. Starting and ending point for this round-trip ride to be determined. **Helmet required. SAVE THE DATE.** Tim Roth, timroth@comcast.net, 973-222-0586.

Saturday, October 24: Geology hike, 10:00 a.m. Meet at Prallsville Mills, Route 29, Stockton. Walk led by Pierre Lacombe, retired USGS geologist, pjlacombe25@gmail.com.

News from the Park Superintendent

Superintendent Maggie Mitchell-Strehl reported that the D&R Canal Watch’s annual “Canal House Challenge,” held in September, drew more than 60 participants. In this annual event, five historic homes along the canal are opened to the public, and participants are challenged to visit all the homes in a single day. While visiting each site, participants can learn about the history of the home and New Jersey’s canal heritage.

The State Park Service has received grant funding from the federal Recreational Trails Program to purchase equipment and to assist with multiuse trail maintenance, as well as the resurfacing a section of the trail from Kingston to Millstone. Building restoration work at the Rockingham Historic Site has been completed, and the installation of the new ADA-compliant path had commenced. Rockingham historian Lisa Flick will retire as of January 1, 2026.



Carnegie Lake at the Millstone Aqueduct. Photo by Tom Egan

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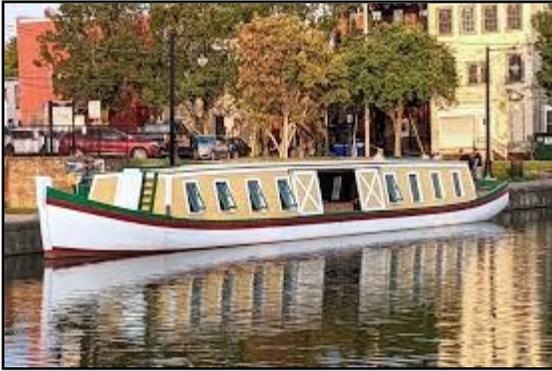
Our Mission

The D&R Canal Watch is an independent, nonprofit organization working to engage the public in the protection of the environment and preservation of the heritage of the D&R Canal.

Canal Society of New Jersey Greets *Seneca Chief* at Liberty State Park, NJ By Capt. Bill McKelvey

The Erie Canal's Bicentennial and the Recreated Voyage of the Erie Canal Boat *Seneca Chief* began on the morning of Wednesday, September 24, 2025. The Buffalo Maritime Center and volunteers built a replica of the 1825 Erie Canal Boat *Seneca Chief*. The vessel embarked on its Bicentennial Voyage, commemorating Governor DeWitt Clinton's historic journey from Buffalo to New York Harbor 200 years ago. Five hundred delegates from the World Canals Conference plus many residents of Western New York cheered the vessel as it left Canalside in Buffalo. A Buffalo Maritime Center crew, comprised of staff and volunteers, navigated the 33-day voyage, departing from Buffalo's Commercial Slip—the western terminus of the Erie Canal—and traveling to Pier 26 in New York City. Along the way, the boat docked at 28 ports along the Erie Canal and Hudson River before reaching New York City for the official commemoration of the canal's opening. Some of the more important stops included Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Schenectady, Albany, and Kingston, NY.

Seneca Chief under construction at Buffalo – Niagara Gazette photo.



The *Seneca Chief* visits Brockport, NY – Westside News photo.



Finger Lakes Times photo of *Seneca Chief* and tugboat *C. L. Churchill* under way.



Stern view of *Seneca Chief* and *C. L. Churchill* by Cohoes City School District.



On Saturday night, October 25th, at 8:45 pm, on behalf of the Canal Society of New Jersey, Capt. Bill McKelvey welcomed the *Seneca Chief* and her crew to New Jersey and the Morris Canal Big Basin, which was formerly a major Lehigh Valley RR pier, warehouse and trans-shipping area. It is now the 520-slip Liberty Landing Marina (LLM) at Liberty State Park, and *Seneca Chief*, the replica of the 1825 wooden canal boat that

made the initial trip from Buffalo to NYC on the Erie Canal, tied up for the night at the head of Dock H, with her escort tug, *C. L. Churchill*. This was the southernmost point reached on their Bicentennial Voyage, and LLM was chosen for its security and calm water.

McKelvey presented to Brian Trzeciak, Executive Director of the Buffalo Maritime Center (owner /operator of the *Seneca Chief*), a copy of his 1978 *Champlain to Chesapeake, A Canal Era Pictorial Cruise* book and literature for the crew about the Canal Society of NJ, D&R Canal Watch, Liberty Historic Railway, and Liberty State Park. He also met Captain Ann Loeding, wife of Gary Mathews, Chief Mechanical Officer for the Bel Del RR at Phillipsburg. She has been a tugboat captain/master for 30 years and piloted the *C. L. Churchill* between Albany and the NJ–NY port area. Her first job was aboard the 1907 tugboat *Pegasus*, which at the time was tied up at the old Rodermond’s Shipyard at the foot of Warren Street, Jersey City, right across from where the *Seneca Chief* docked. Ann has made many trips on the Erie Barge Canal with commercial tows, including with the *Crow*, *Cheyenne*, and *Jay Bee V*. She currently works for NY State Marine Highway and makes regular trips on the Champlain Canal with the CHPEXpress project as well as a regular run moving crushed stone from a quarry in Ft. Ann south to the Hudson River. Captain Ann has also landed many barges at NJ ports and often traversed NJ waters on the way to other ports.

Seneca Chief returned to Pier 25, NYC on Sunday morning, and was open to the public after noon. On Sunday evening they returned to Liberty Landing Marina, and on Monday morning began their long return trip to Buffalo. The *Seneca Chief* was constructed at Buffalo between 2020 and June 2024, primarily using volunteer workers. She is 73 feet long, 13 feet wide, and 3 feet deep, and weighs 40 tons. The original Erie Canal locks the *Chief* was designed for were 90’ long by 15’ wide.

The tugboat that traveled alongside the *Seneca Chief* and provided the propulsion power was the *C. L. Churchill*, a 33-foot-long wooden tugboat built in 1964 at Cohasset, MA. *Churchill* was originally built for Chester L. Churchill as a steam-powered pleasure cruiser. She was converted to diesel power with a 6-cylinder, 120 horsepower, Ford Lehman engine by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum (LCMM) but retained her large smokestack. LCMM used her to tow their unpowered replica wooden sailing canalboat, *Lois McClure*, on several extensive excursions. She was purchased by the Buffalo Maritime Museum primarily for towing *Seneca Chief*.



This is the Ford-Lehman 120 diesel engine in the tug *C. L. Churchill*. These engines, known for their simplicity and reliability, were primarily used in marine applications, especially on trawler-style boats from the 1960s to the 1980s. This small engine demonstrates the efficiency and economy of movement by canal or water—the total weight of the *Seneca Chief* and *C. L. Churchill* is about 60 tons. According to Artificial Intelligence (AI), a 60-ton truck powered by a 120-horsepower engine would be extremely slow—unable to travel much faster than a slow walk on a level road. Such a truck would need about 600 horsepower to travel at highway speeds. Marine Mechanic Santa Barbara photo.

Interestingly, in 2005, the Canal Society of NJ September 16 membership meeting was held at Liberty State Park, Jersey City, aboard the newly built replica sailing canal schooner, *Lois McClure*, from the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, at the Morris Canal Big Basin (now Liberty Landing Marina). The journey was termed “The Grand Journey from the Green Mountains to Manhattan,” which began at Burlington on May 1 and visited numerous ports along Lake Champlain, the Champlain Canal and the Hudson River, including Greater New York, Liberty State Park, North Cove, Battery Park City, and Kings Point, ending at Waterford, NY. The tugboat *C. L. Churchill* towed the *Lois McClure* on these trips. Lake Champlain canal boats are known to have used the Delaware & Raritan Canal. The replica canal schooner *Lois McClure*, 88 feet long and 14.5’ at beam, was constructed over a four-year period from more than 20,000 board feet of white oak. White pine was used for the decks, while masts, booms and gaffs were hewn from white spruce. *Lois McClure* has now been retired. Donated to the Canal Society of New York, she is now a static exhibit on land at Port Byron, NY.



Interior photos of *Seneca Chief* at Pier 25, NYC.
 ◀Photos by Joe Macasek.▶



▲ Wooden tugboat *C. L. Churchill*.
 Photo by Wooden Boat magazine.



Note that Liberty State Park was once a sprawling railroad yard with more than 100 miles of track, roundhouses, McMyler coal dumpers, thawing sheds, coaling facilities, shops, control towers, float bridges, piers, a marine repair facility, an express/freight building, central boiler plant, and more. It was primarily a rail and ferry terminal for the Central Railroad of New Jersey but also served the Baltimore & Ohio and Reading Railroads as well as the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The Lehigh Valley Railroad also served the area at the south end of Liberty State Park now known as West Jetty, Center Jetty, East Jetty and South Lawn. This was where the Black Tom explosion occurred in July, 1916. The humungous explosion, which involved stockpiled munitions in warehouses, railroad cars, barges and canalboats, awaiting shipment to Europe during WW 1, was determined to have been caused by German saboteurs.



View of the Morris Canal Big Basin looking inland from the Hudson River showing an unidentified Lehigh Valley Railroad tugboat and their angled piers in 1954. In the center is LV RR Pier G. To the left, out of view, is the surviving Central Railroad of NJ Jersey City Terminal. This is the area where Lehigh Landing Marina is now located. Margaret Jeffers, LV RR Tide Water Basin photo, Jersey City Public Library collection.



No. 79 is a covered wood lighter built for the Lehigh Valley Railroad in 1914 to shuttle cargo between Lehigh Valley rail yards/piers and ships in the NJ-NY Port area. In 1985 David Sharps rescued her from abandonment, settled on mudflats at Edgewater, NJ. After restoration, she was temporarily moored at the Erie Lackawanna Hoboken Terminal, South Street Seaport and the Morris Canal Big Basin at Liberty State Park before construction of Liberty Landing Marina. Now, *No. 79* is on the National Register, and the centerpiece of the Waterfront Museum at Pier 44, Red Hook, Brooklyn. She provides education, history exhibits, performing arts and space for group events. Waterfront Museum photo.

References: (On the Level No. 91) (American Canals, Vol. 33, No. 4; Vol. 34, No. 1 & 4) (From the Green Mountains to Manhattan: The Grand Journey of the Canal Schooner Lois McClure 2005) (NJ Transport Heritage, Vol. 14, Nos. 2 & 6, Apr. & Dec. 2005) (Buffalo Maritime Center website) (Pier 19 film, about the McAllister Tug and Barge Drydocks – a former Central RR of NJ facility by Industrial Archeologist, Ed Rutsch) (The Big Little Railroad – a 1948 documentary film about the Central RR of NJ) (Assistant Dockmaster, Liberty Landing Marina, Maureen “Moochie” Corrado) (Brian Trzeciak) (Capt. Ann Loeding) (Plus various websites)



The D&R Canal Watch is asking for your support for our activities that protect, maintain, and promote the recreational, historical, aesthetic, and environmental qualities of the Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park. Over the past years, the Canal Watch has:

- **Sponsored a number of events for the park's 50th Anniversary and created the Tour de Towpath.**
- **Restored the Kingston canoe/kayak boat launch**
- **Paid for the conditions assessment and the engineering drawings for the East Millstone and Griggstown bridgetender stations.**
- **Working with the park, we posted signage at six locations to help visitors find their way through Trenton.**
- Led history walks along both the main canal and the feeder, pointing out historic structures and Light Rail study tours
- Led history bike rides along the main canal.
- Sponsored star-gazing and solar observation events.
- Sponsored bird watching walks along the main canal and bilingual nature walks
- Installed and facilitated canal interpretive signage at locks and spillways
- Activities in 2009 marking the 175th anniversary of the opening of the Delaware and Raritan Canal. These included "Meet the Canal Authors Day" and "The D&R Canal: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow," by Richard Hunter" walks, bike rides, canoe and kayak rides, "Hands Along the Canal," and proclamations from our legislature.
- Examination of Lock 9 to determine the feasibility of reopening the lock to navigation
- Post-flood cleaning of canal structures in Griggstown, Zarephath, and East Millstone
- Painting over graffiti in East Millstone
- Repair of shutters on the East Millstone bridgetender's home
- Straightening and painting of the outhouse at the East Millstone bridgetender's home
- Staffing the East Millstone bridgetender's home during the village's Canalfest in October
- A photographic exhibit of the homes of bridgetenders and locktenders.
- Services of an information technology consultant for the park's computers
- Funded classes to certify maintenance staff in small motor repair, applying herbicides, etc.
- Contacted legislators and the governor's office to keep the parks open and retain the commission
- Facilitated the mothballing of an empty bridgetender's home by buying lumber and painting the windows.
- Installed Kaya-Arms on docks to facilitate entering and exiting kayaks
- Funding the park's website and continued updating
- Paying the dues for the Meetup site used for announcing park activities

Canal Watch Achievements (continued on next page)

Canal Watch Achievements (continued from previous page)

- Sponsored lectures on topics such as “The Role of the Delaware and Raritan Canal in the Growth of Trenton’s Industrial Potteries,” “The Operation of the Joint Companies and the Interrelationship of the canal with the state’s first railroad,” “The Roebling Story,” “Photography Along the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park: Treasure in Central New Jersey,” “Meet Ashbel Welch, the second chief engineer of the Delaware and Raritan Canal,” and Jim Amon on how the canal and the park changed during his tenure with the commission.
- Purchased gifts that the park budget could not provide. These include a digital camera, seven picnic tables, several benches, a laptop computer and software, a desktop computer, an LED projector, an inflatable screen for outdoor viewing of videos, a subscription to the Meetup website, a scanner, printer ink, a water testing kit, an external computer drive, lumber for canoe dock at Griggstown, folding tables and twenty chairs for Bulls Island, development of a new park website and maintenance of the site at the rate of \$50 per month, and professional courses for the maintenance staff.

Renew your Membership for 2025

We would like to remind our members to please renew their membership. You can do so online by visiting www.canalwatch.org and clicking on “Join” at the top right.

Please wait a few seconds for the membership form to appear. When you click “Submit,” you will be taken to the payment page. If you prefer to pay by check, please make it payable to D&R Canal Watch and mail it to the Canal Watch at P.O. Box 2, Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553.



D&R Canal Watch 2026 Membership Renewal Form

Membership year: January 1 to December 31

Nonprofit Org \$10 _____ Individual \$15 _____ Family \$25 _____ Organization \$40 _____
Supporter \$100 _____ Patron \$250 _____ Business member \$500 _____ Benefactor \$1000 _____

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. Dues can also be paid online at <https://canalwatch.org/join/>

For reasons of fiscal and environmental responsibility, newsletters will be posted on the Canal Watch website, www.canalwatch.org, and emailed to members for whom we have email addresses. If you require a paper copy, please check here _____.

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