



Number 105

[www.canalwatch.org](http://www.canalwatch.org)

June 2026

**What's ahead for the D&R Canal State Park in the years to come? Find out at our annual meeting on Sunday, June 28 as we hear about the upcoming Master Plan.**

**Sunday, June 28: 2:00 p.m. Canal Watch Annual Meeting.** D&R Canal Commission director John Hutchison will share the work on the new master plan. Fellowship Hall behind the Griggstown Reformed Church, 1065 Canal Road, Griggstown. (GPS may use Princeton, although it is nowhere near Princeton.) Contact: Linda Barth, [barth-linda123@aol.com](mailto:barth-linda123@aol.com); 908-240-0488.

### **More about the Canal Master Plan:**

The D&R Canal Commission is making important progress on its challenging and long-awaited initiative to revise its master plan for the D&R Canal and conduct an up-to-date Historic Structures Survey.

The Commission is working with the Trenton-based firm, Clarke Caton Hintz, on the comprehensive master plan update, made possible through a \$550,000 grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust. The Historic Structures Survey is the project's centerpiece, and it is focusing on documenting the canal state park's historic resources, determining their condition and devising strategic recommendations for preserving these canal treasures. The last historic structures survey was conducted in 1982.

The current master plan, last updated in 1989, has guided the physical development of the park and informed the implementation of the Commission's land use regulatory program to protect the canal's historic, environmental and water supply resources.

During the past three decades, however, central New Jersey has undergone significant environmental, economic and demographic changes. And while the master plan continues to be an important document, it no longer accurately reflects the "truth on the ground" in the 450 square miles of the Commission's jurisdiction. An updated master plan would provide current and comprehensive data, analysis, strategies and recommendations on guiding the physical development and future growth of the canal park and maximizing the potential of its myriad resources.

**Five public meetings have been scheduled so that residents and other interested parties may see the plan and make comments:**

All sessions will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. at the following locations:

July 14: Rutgers University, Edward J. Bloustein School, Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick

July 20: Phillip J. Pittore Justice Center, South Union Street, Lambertville

July 29: Franklin Township Community Center, DeMott Lane, Somerset

August 11: NJ DEP Public Hearing Room, East State Street, Trenton

September 8: Lawrence Township Library HQ Branch, Brunswick Pike, Lawrence Township

### **More Canal Watch Activities and Events for 2026**

**Sunday, July 26: Canal Road Walk and Roll. 10:00-4:00.** Canal Road will be 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 will be 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!

(continued on the next page)

**Sunday, September 13: Canal House Challenge, 10:00-4:00.** Five of the historic locktender and bridgetender 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 are provided at the bottom of this page). The friends group in charge of each home will welcome visitors and provide a tour and history of the building.



**Sunday, September 20: Young Patriots Day at Princeton Battlefield.** Young Patriots Day is an annual, interactive educational event held at Princeton Battlefield State Park in New Jersey, celebrating 18th-century American history for children and families. The 2026 event features Revolutionary War reenactments, historical figures, and hands-on colonial activities. The Canal Watch will staff a table at this event. Volunteers are welcome.

**Saturday-Sunday, October 10-11: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday; noon to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday for Somerset County's Journey Through the Past.**

On Saturday, meet and talk with Canal Cap'n Hummel. Performances at 11:00 and 1:00 at the East Millstone bridgetender's home. The captain will be there all day to talk with guests and answer questions.

Canal Watch members will open the East Millstone bridgetender's home and station (and the historic outhouse, for observation only). Bob Barth, 201-401-3121, [bbarth321@aol.com](mailto: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](mailto:timroth@comcast.net), 973-222-0586.



**Saturday, October 24: Geology hike, 10:00 a.m. Meet at Prallsville Mills, Route 29, Stockton.** During this geology walk, participants will learn about the four geologic units of the Newark Basin along the D&R Canal. Walk led by Pierre Lacombe, retired USGS geologist, [pjlacombe25@gmail.com](mailto:pjlacombe25@gmail.com).

#### **Addresses for the Canal House Challenge:**

East Millstone Bridgetender's Home, 2371 Amwell Road (Route 514). East Millstone section of Franklin Township, Somerset County

Blackwells Mills Bridgetender's Home, corner of Blackwells Mills Causeway and Canal Road, Franklin Township, Somerset County.

Griggstown Bridgetender's House, 2 Griggstown Causeway, Griggstown section of Franklin Township, Somerset County. (GPS will also accept Princeton as the town.)

Kingston Locktender's House, Route 27, at the D&R Canal, Kingston.

Port Mercer Bridgetender's Home, 4278 Quakerbridge Road, Port Mercer section of Lawrence Township.  
If you have questions, please call Linda at 908-240-0488.

## Weekday Lambertville Walk – 3 Miles

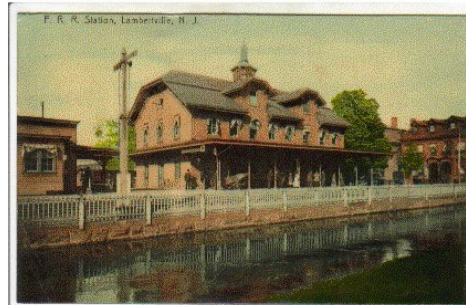
**Thursday, June 25, 2026**

Time: 10:30 a.m - 1:00 p.m.

## Weekday Lambertville Walk – 3 Miles

Join our seasonal historian for a weekday morning walk beginning from the D&R parking lot located next to the Holcombe-Jimison Farmstead Museum north of **Lambertville (1605 Daniel Bray Hwy, Lambertville, NJ 08530; SEE LINK ABOVE & BELOW)**. The group will head south along the D&R Canal State Park's multi-use path into

Lambertville. This walk will take us to its historic downtown and further south to the D&R's lift and outlet locks where the guided portion of the walk will conclude. Attendees will be on their own to either head back into town for lunch at one of Lambertville's excellent eateries or back up the path to their vehicles. This will be a leisurely and fact-filled outdoor program touching on D&R Canal, railroad and Lambertville history so do plan to be with us for several hours.



Carnegie Lake at the Millstone Aqueduct. Photo by Tom Egan

### Board of Trustees

Linda Barth, president  
Tim Roth, vice president  
Ted Chase, secretary  
Tom Lederer, treasurer

Robert Barth  
Christopher “Kip” Bateman  
Joseph Ciccone  
Charles Martin  
Laurie Reynolds  
Barbara Ross  
Barbara ten Broeke  
Sarah Verbeke

The D&R Canal Watch  
P.O. Box 2  
Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553  
908-240-0488

[www.canalwatch.org](http://www.canalwatch.org)  
<https://www.facebook.com/dandrcanalwatch/>  
[info@canalwatch.org](mailto:info@canalwatch.org)

### 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.



Thanks to the Historical Society of Princeton, we have permission to republish the following booklet, *Princeton History, Number 4, 1983*. The booklet contains the story, "Origins of the Delaware and Raritan Canal," by Lewis B. Cuyler.

Some time ago, John Thallemer shared the above poem with the Canal Watch. We wondered where it had originated. Paul A. Davis, the Collections and Research Assistant at the Historical Society of Princeton, was able to locate the poem in their files. It was part of an article in the journal, *Princeton History* #4 (1983). Paul very kindly sent us the entire article, included in this newsletter. We share it here with our readers. Note: There are a few statements that historians have later learned are not accurate. We will add an addendum at the end.

Please enjoy the story on the next few pages.

John Thallemer

I located the following sonnet in *The Journal of the Historical Society of Princeton*, Number four (1983):

### *A Towpath Thought on The Delaware and Raritan Canal*

Partners in toil, canal and towpath, long  
Bore the freight of coarse and heavy trade.  
Barges, mules and men, a clamoring throng,  
For every step they made, a price was paid  
In straining rope of tread of man and beast.  
An ever weary grind from dawn to dark,  
All day a pull and tug that seldom ceased:  
Their scene of labor has become a park.  
This pastoral path we idly stroll upon--  
So level, straight and beautiful to view,  
Cost lives and treasure ere the task was done.  
Our sense of gratitude we here renew  
To those, long gone, who did for us endow  
The smoother paths we all rejoice in now.

October 12, 1982

Pendleton Herring

# *Princeton History*

Number Four, 1983

Nathaniel Burt, *Editor*

## PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

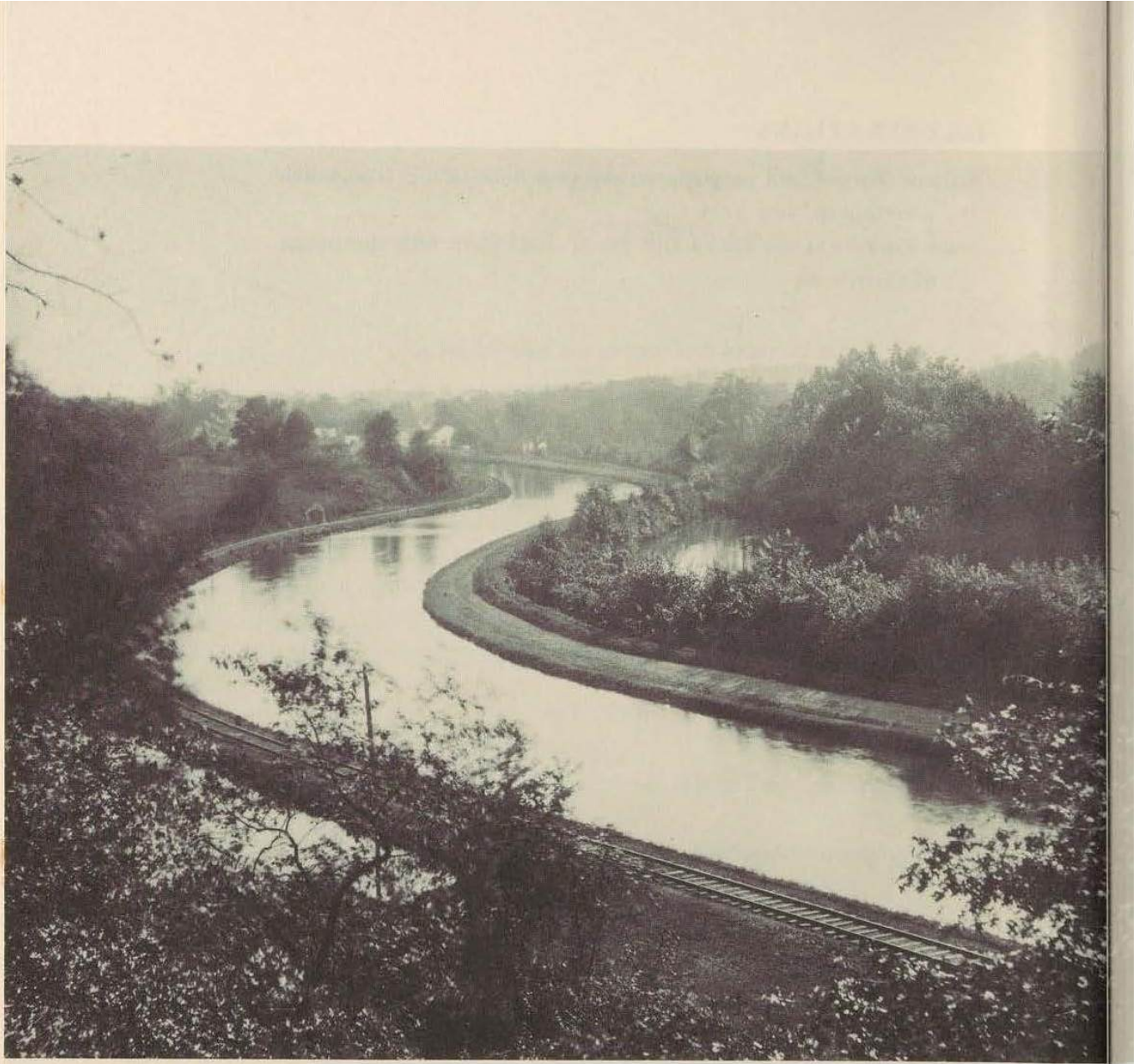
Nathaniel Burt, *Chairman*

Frederick M. English

Wanda S. Gunning



PRINCETON HISTORY is the journal of  
The Historical Society of Princeton  
Correspondence concerning subscription, articles,  
or photographs  
should be addressed to the Editor,  
Bainbridge House, 158 Nassau Street,  
Princeton, New Jersey 08542



*A view of the canal and adjacent railroad looking south toward Kingston*

---

## *Origins of the Delaware and Raritan Canal*

BY LEWIS B. CUYLER

IN THE "Introduction" to his *History of Princeton*, John F. Hageman, Princeton's distinguished historian, wrote the following: "Princeton is not, in any proper sense, a business place. It wears no business aspect. There is a large amount of capital invested here, but not in manufactures, trade or commerce. There is nothing here to invite the manufacturer, but everything to repel him."

As Hageman got deeply into the 19th century, which comprised most of his own life and career as a lawyer and historian, he contradicted the above statement when he wrote that in the decade of the 1830s Princeton met with "an extraordinary revival and development of the material interests of the town," and that "the Delaware and Raritan Canal ... reflects so much credit upon the men who projected it and the capitalists who built it, as well as upon the State which fostered it."

Few of us today realize the important role played by canals and inland waterways in binding together the early colonies that formed our nation. There were, of course, no railroads. Major Indian trails were converted into primitive roads which gradually became turn-pikes suitable for stagecoach travel. While the harbors along the Atlantic coast were most active in our early development, coastal travel was dangerous for the ships of that day and the consumption of time was a hardship. Within both Europe and the British Isles canals had laced the countries and trade flourished. Our new nation followed suit. Indeed, if Hageman had studied or even thought of the impact canals were making on commerce he probably would not have worded the two quotations in the above paragraphs as he did.

Before New Jersey was settled there were Indian trails between the Delaware and Raritan Rivers. They were the precursors of the route of our canal. With the gradual settlement of the State, the finger of commerce pointed toward an inland waterway, one that would connect the Hudson River and its tributaries with Raritan Bay, the Raritan River and the Delaware. The Chesapeake and Delaware Canal had already been built. Our canal was to be the final link between Canada and Lake Champlain and the York and James rivers in the South. The stagecoach routes were no longer suited to heavy and increasing traffic.

The Atlantic coast provided the only water transportation from New York to Philadelphia and that two-hundred-mile passage became known as the graveyard of the Atlantic. Thought had been given to this problem during earlier Colonial days, but did not crystallize toward a shorter and safer route until 1804, when the New Jersey Legislature granted a charter to build a canal connecting the two rivers. Capital funds could not be raised and the project was abandoned.

Two other attempts were initiated, one in 1820 ~~and one in 1824~~. Both failed for generally the same reason: lack of public or private financial support. Severe opposition also came from Pennsylvania, which feared the draining of Delaware waters needed to supply such a new canal. There was also opposition from northern New Jersey, where work had commenced on the Morris Canal planned to connect the Delaware with the Hudson. It would transport the increasing demand on northeastern Pennsylvania coal mines to fire the furnaces of a rapidly growing New York City.

Finally in 1830, despite all of these opposing factors, the State of New Jersey passed the Delaware and Raritan Canal Bill and a fourth company to build the Canal was incorporated. The authorized capital was \$1,500,000 and, if not subscribed to by 1832, the Charter would be void.

In addition to the problems still existing, the potential of railroads was recognized and many were being planned. On the same day the Canal received its charter, one was granted also to the Camden and Amboy Railroad. A new competitive threat loomed. Here we come to the part played in this whole project by two prominent Princetonians, Commodore Robert F. Stockton and his father-in-law, John Potter. Together they provided, both through the sale

of shares and personal investment, the capital needed. Instead of fighting the proposed railroad, they negotiated the consolidation of the two companies.

"No family in Princeton," wrote Hageman, "has maintained for so long a period so prominent and illustrious a name as the Stockton family and the history of Princeton cannot be written without the name of Stockton appearing in every successive generation with the highest honor and with the fame of pre-eminent lustre."

Commodore Robert Field Stockton was perhaps the most distinguished Stockton of his time. He was the grandson of Richard, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was brilliant, attending Princeton, then the College of New Jersey, at a very early age. His education was interrupted by entrance into the Navy, one of his childhood ambitions. He gained early fame and the nickname of "Fighting Bob" in the War of 1812. His rare qualities led to the command of an expedition to Africa in 1820 to acquire an eligible site for the colonization of Black slaves. This eventually resulted in the founding of Liberia, but at first it involved dangerous negotiation with African tribes. After Stockton reached an understanding with a leading chief, a treacherous slave trader incited a small rebellion against Stockton, and this chief (known as King Peter) disappeared into the jungle and did not show up for the final ceremonies legitimizing the agreement.

With one companion and an interpreter, Stockton walked twenty miles into the jungle. Both were armed with pistols. They found King Peter surrounded by armed tribesmen. Through the interpreter and with his hand on his pistol, Stockton quieted the gathering and convinced Peter of his honesty and of the opportunities offered through such an American colony. Even through the interpreter, Stockton was commanding and eloquent. Perhaps the pistol and that of his friend helped. This episode was an act of great determination, courage and statesmanship carried out by a 26-year-old Navy Lieutenant. He returned to America a hero. Several other Stockton exploits could be related, but this one is enough to show the caliber of a man primarily responsible for making the canal and railroad a success story.

John Potter, as a very young man, emigrated from Ireland to Charleston, S.C. in 1784. He became a prominent merchant chiefly through the export of cotton to Liverpool, England. He is consid-



*The house on the corner of Nassau Street and Bayard Lane where Maria Potter and Robert Field Stockton lived after their marriage in 1824. Later occupied by the Edgar Palmer family*

ered to have accumulated a princely fortune. When Lieutenant Stockton returned from Africa in 1823, he was assigned to survey our Southern coastline and was stationed in Charleston, S.C. Here he fell in love with Maria, John Potter's only daughter. They were married in Charleston in 1824. As a wedding present John Potter gave the young couple a house he had built for them on Stockton property in Princeton. This is presently the University guest house on the corner of Nassau Street and Bayard Lane, recently owned and occupied by the Edgar Palmer family. The property was left to the University by the Palmers.

Several other prominent Princeton citizens supported the canal enterprise besides Stockton and Potter, whose names have been emphasized because they were the first to instill interest in others and both typified the character and ability so representative of our town. Among this group were trustees, officials and faculty members of the College, landed gentry, responsible politicians, lawyers, statesmen, and several who serviced the transportation activity between New York and Philadelphia. As many as thirty coaches a day departed from Princeton for New York or Philadelphia. Inns and restaurants sprang up along Nassau Street. One can imagine the activity resulting from such travel. It is not going too far to say that both the canal and railroad were products of Princeton leadership. Potter had invested largely in the capital of the companies and attracted additional investors from the South, where he had become a leading citizen. Stockton, elected president of the combined companies in 1831, was the soul of the enterprise and controlling direction was chiefly in his hands.

Railroads had entered the transportation picture. Soon after the joint companies were formed, it was planned to lay tracks of the Camden and Amboy along the banks of the canal. The purpose was to connect with the New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Co. which ran from New Brunswick to Jersey City, thus providing travel by rail to the banks of the Hudson opposite New York City. Although Stockton kept his commission in the Navy until the late 1840s, he somehow found time to become intrigued by the possibilities of the canal. It had not taken him long to gain the interest of his father-in-law, John Potter, because he was spending much time in Princeton and had purchased the Prospect Farm. This fine 18th century mansion was surrounded by acres that now

make up much of the University campus. He lived here, mostly in the summer, until 1849 when he died in Morven, by then the residence of his daughter and her husband, Robert Stockton.

The country was growing and the costs of construction were considerably more than twice the authorized capital of \$1,500,000. Additional money was needed. Stockton went to Washington and New York with some success. Potter, with marked success, went again to his Southern friends. He and Southern slave owners contributed more than 50 per cent of the additional \$3,000,000 or more needed. Stockton then went to London. Whereas his salesmanship, his energy and charm were not wholly productive in his own country, he met with great success in London. He returned with a loan of \$1,000,000. He had also gotten the Biddle family in Philadelphia to invest about \$250,000 and with this new money the canal from Bordentown, N.J. through Trenton and on to New Brunswick was completed in the summer of 1834.

All canals are dependent on rivers, lakes and other bodies of water to supply their own needs. Smaller feeder canals are often excavated for this purpose. The Delaware and Raritan was supplied by a feeder that drew water from the rapids of the Delaware above Lambertville and emptied into the main canal at Trenton.

Feeders were also used for commerce. This was the case with the feeder for the Delaware and Raritan. It had to be dredged deeper and widened to a greater extent than planned. Similar problems faced the main canal to accommodate larger barges. More bridges had to be built than had been anticipated.

After construction started and the need of funds seemed unending, Stockton may well have been handicapped in America by the fact that the whole project had been nicknamed "Stockton's folly."

We can see why Princeton, although small compared to Trenton and New Brunswick, became the headquarters of the united companies. The town was about at the midpoint of the two rivers. The Basin, so named for two turning pools for barges and for loading and unloading wharves, was located at the foot of Alexander Street, then named Canal Street. The headquarters and the superintendent's office were built there along with a depot for the railroad. A hotel, first known as the Steamboat Hotel and later as the Railroad Hotel, was also erected. The Basin eventually became a settlement

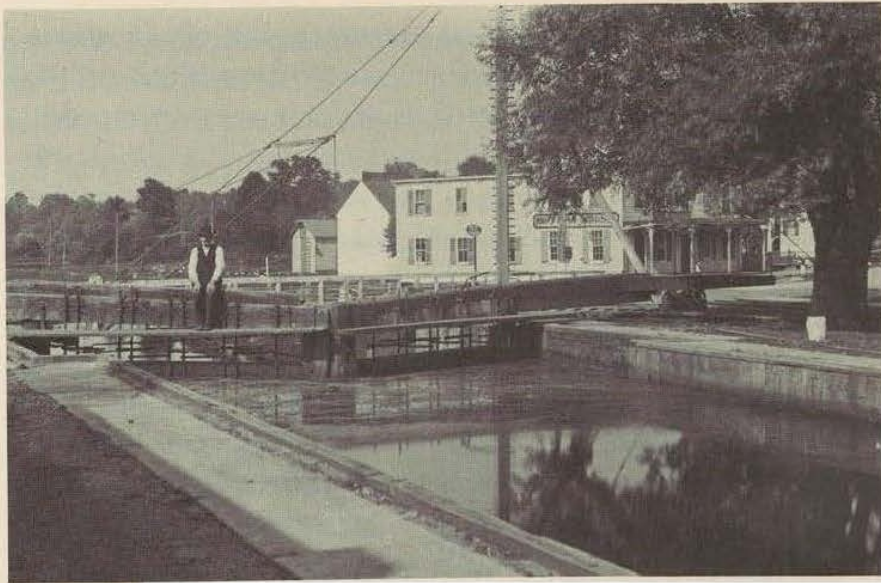
of some forty or more buildings. About one half of them were probably the residences of families engaged in the operation of the canal and railroad and the principals of commercial enterprises. The other twenty or so buildings were connected with industry in what was becoming an important commercial port. There were lumberyards, coal bins, small factories which specialized in housing needs such as roofing and window sashes. Other merchandise included marketable vegetables, fertilizers, quarried stone, bricks and quite a variety of bulky freight suitable for canal transportation. A large general store eventually became a necessity. Resting and changing mule teams in the sheds became an important activity.

All of this contributed largely to the material growth of Princeton. Stockton had given a section of his Springdale farm, part of the present Springdale Golf Club, for the new road (Canal Street) connecting Princeton and the Basin.

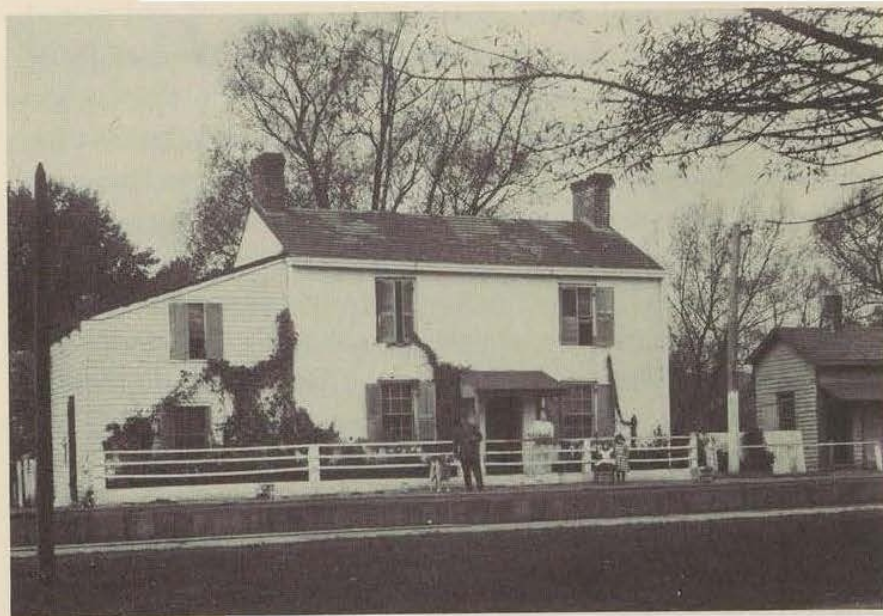
Stockton was proving himself a capable president despite the nickname given to the enterprise. Not only did he effect the consolidation of the canal and railroad, but he proposed and gained legislation which, in return for making the State a shareholder of the united companies, forbade for almost 40 years the construction of any railroad in New Jersey that would compete with the Camden and Amboy. This gave the go-ahead signal to commence laying the tracks of that railroad along the east bank of the canal, a task that was completed in 1837.

Stockton constantly had to defend the two companies from opposition that accused them of being a monopoly owned and run by three families-the Stockton family, the Potters, and the Stevens family of Hoboken, N.J. All of this he met with his articulate flair and apparently he was successful in his defenses.

The problem of labor was constant. It had to be recruited from New York. Shanties were built along the banks as the work proceeded, and living conditions were squalid. An epidemic of cholera in the summer of 1832 caused the deaths of a large number of laborers, many in the vicinity of Princeton. The town became a veritable hospital. Those who died were buried along the banks of the excavation. It is difficult to ascertain the number in the work force. Much of the work was performed by hand, using pick and shovel. Mules and scrapers also contributed power and equipment. In one account the figure of 4,000 laborers, largely Irish immi-



*Hoffman House and swing bridge at Kingston, ca. 1908*



*Lock keeper's house at Kingston, ca. 1908*

grants, was mentioned. (It is possible that this large number refers to the total employed over the four years of construction.) As cholera struck when the work was at its peak, the number who died must have been considerable.

Between the lines in the volumes written on the subject, one senses that Potter wanted to keep a close eye on his flamboyant son-in-law. Like all of the Stocktons, the Commodore was a lover of horseflesh and spent much time at the races. In these sporting interests he was joined by the Stevens family. They were among the large backers of the railroad, particularly Edwin C. Stevens who was treasurer of that company. The story is told that Stockton was much taken with a horse he had seen win at nearby Freehold. At the end of a race meeting in which the horse performed well, Stockton called his groom to his side and ordered him to put that horse in his stables in Princeton. The groom inquired as to how much money he was authorized to spend. In reply Stockton said, "I told you to put that horse in my stable." This sort of bravado, evidently admired by Stevens, did not go down well with Potter, who constantly questioned the financial judgment of his son-in-law as well as the bookkeeping and business methods of Stevens. Perhaps this concern more than any other made his presence in Princeton important. It is fortunate that no outright split developed between these fine, enterprising men. In reality a magnificent team was at work, consisting of an accomplished salesman and statesman, Stockton, a sophisticated capitalist, Potter, and a pioneer railroad man, Stevens.

It is remarkable that the completion of the canal took place within four years. In June of 1834 the opening was celebrated. Barges were borrowed from the Delaware and Chesapeake Canal Co. They were filled with the officials of the two companies, the Governor of the State and many politicians, all of whom brought guests. They traveled from Bordentown to Trenton, then on to Lambertville via the feeder, back to Trenton and then on to New Brunswick. The whole excursion lasted three days. There were banquets at Bordentown, Lambertville and New Brunswick. All bridges, of which there were close to 100, the 14 locks on the main canal, and the bridges and locks on the feeder were crowded with cheering on-lookers. The whole affair had the Stockton touch.

All of this activity incited a great land and building boom in

Princeton. Canal Street was lined on each side with handsome, semi-classical frame houses built by the famous architect-builder Charles Steadman. These houses stretched down the street close to where the Princeton Inn College is now located. Rising up the hill, Basin industry continued to develop. Occupants of these houses probably were the more successful proprietors of the local companies operating in the Basin. They also were likely to have been owned by some of the key officers directing the operations of the canal and railroad. Ivy Hall, built in 1846 to accommodate the College's first attempt toward graduate work in the form of a law school, was bought by the united companies in 1855 to become the head office, the law school having proved an abortive effort. This building on Mercer Street at the head of Canal Street was most suitable and most convenient as the headquarters. Indeed, upper Canal Street and Mercer Street gave material witness to the whole prosperous undertaking during the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s.

However, the first years of the canal, before the boom years, were a disappointment. Stockton's "folly" was showing the possibility of becoming a genuine fact. There were several reasons for this. The expected amount of freight had not yet materialized. The Morris Canal system which connected the Delaware and Passaic rivers tapped the anthracite coal mines of northeastern Pennsylvania. The Erie Canal also figured in the transport of coal to the Hudson at Schenectady. It was thence transported down the river to New York City. The furnaces of the city were already well supplied. Another problem was caused by the shallowness of Raritan Bay, which was not deep enough to float many of the barges at the New Brunswick terminus into New York Harbor. The bay had to be dredged. There was a constant need for additional money.

Fortunately such problems were not permanent. New York City was growing so rapidly that the Morris system could not continue to satisfy the hunger for coal. The dredging of the bay had been accomplished. Industrial development in the city of Trenton, needing water power, went apace with the development of the canal. Lumber was floated from the upper Delaware Valley through the feeder. Coal and iron were delivered through the network of Pennsylvania canals to the feeder.

It has been difficult to develop exact figures showing the rapid change from the early years of disappointment to the prosperous



*Mule team along Delaware and Raritan Canal*

decades of the '40s, '50s and '60s. Stockton, Potter and their compatriots had not lost their nerve. They continued to attract additional financing. After all, the canal was here to stay. It saved those 200 miles of dangerous sea route and was attracting most of that traffic. In the '40s there was recognition that it was credit-worthy and a \$6,000,000 bond issue was floated, \$2,000,000 of which was from England where Stockton had taken another trip. The coal trade had come on with a rush and accounted for 80 per cent of the traffic. About this time a chronicle stated that "No railroad or canal owned such valuable property as that of the joint companies."

From a jumble of reports and figures, a vague guess might be that the total cost of excavation, enlargement and dredging came to something in the neighborhood of \$10,000,000 by 1850 when the canal was considered capable of meeting all necessities for successful operation. This was quite a jump from the original capitalization of \$1,500,000. The net profits after the first year of operation were reported to be less than \$15,000. However, during the decade of the '40s they averaged around \$300,000 and reached close to \$1,000,000 toward the end of the decade of the '50s. During the '60s they approached \$1,500,000-a peak stimulated by the Civil War. From here on the railroads took over.

During these decades stock offered to finance the railroad was oversubscribed. Canals which had tied the new nation together continued as conveyors of bulk, but it is obvious that their importance declined as the railroads also developed the capacity to handle bulk. Despite any such decline, Stockton's "folly" had already brought golden returns to its stockholders. It certainly had added to the princely fortune attributed to Stockton's father-in-law, John Potter, and unquestionably had provided Stockton with the funds needed to attend the races and put good horses in his stable. Potter, who had kept a close eye on the whole enterprise, died in Morven in 1849 at the age of 84 and was buried in the small churchyard adjacent to the chancel of the present Trinity. He had reserved this plot for himself and all of his Potter descendants.

Potter left Prospect, his handsome 18th century house and property, to his second son, Thomas. John Notman, the prominent Philadelphia architect, succeeded Steadman as Princeton's most active and influential architect. A period of Tuscan and Italianate mansions came into vogue. Lowrie House was built in 1849. Guern-

sey Hall was built in 1850. Evidently Thomas Potter was so impressed with the greater grandeur of Notman's work that he had the original Prospect demolished to make room for the Prospect as we know it today—a mansion very much in the style of Guernsey Hall and Lowrie House. Thomas lived for only one year in his new house, but his widow and daughters lived there until 1877 when Mrs. Potter died and the property was sold to become the official residence of the College presidents.

Upon inheriting Morven in the 1830s, Commodore Stockton and his wife Maria sold their former house to James Potter, the eldest son of John Potter, who lived there with his large family of six daughters and one son until 1861. The Potter women had generally married Northerners, but James and his son John returned to the South upon the outbreak of the war. James died in Savannah, Ga. in 1862 and John was killed in the Siege of Atlanta. They had divested themselves of Northern interests and, with the defeat of the Confederacy, the princely fortune had practically vanished.

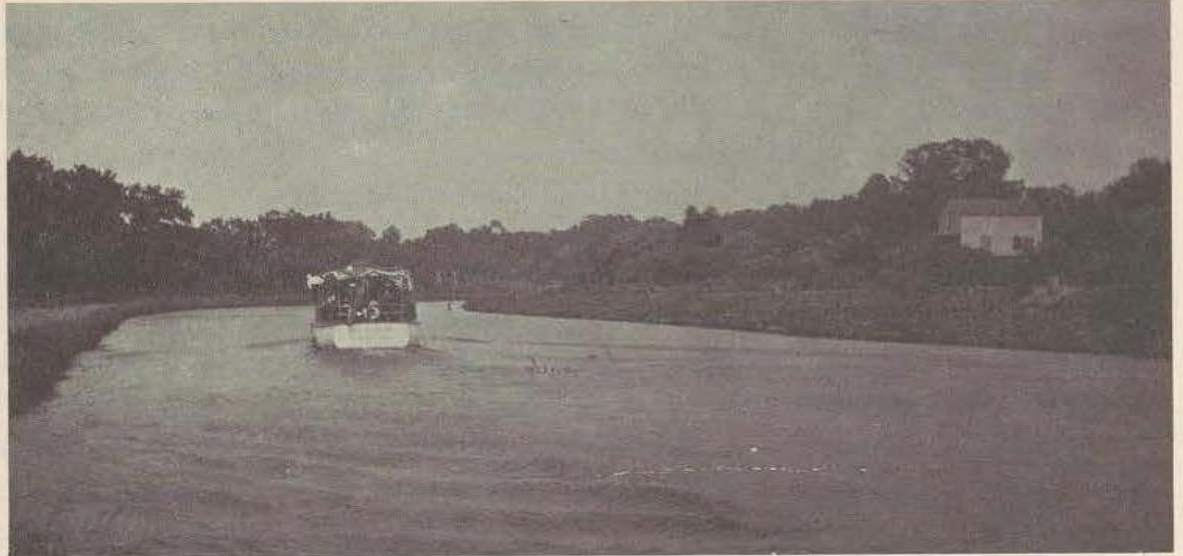
The year 1866 marked the death of Commodore Robert F. Stockton at age 71. Historians have cited that the decline of the canal coincided with the passing of this forceful and colorful figure who, besides his interest in the canal and railroad, had been a brilliant lawyer, a United States Senator, a distinguished Naval officer, a great sportsman, and an investor in several ventures. Of course the loss of Stockton's leadership was a blow, but there were other contributing factors in the decline of the canal. The most important was the removal of the railroad from the banks of the canal in 1867. Because the speed of railroad engines had improved, the curved tracks along the canal were no longer adequate. It appeared inevitable that straight tracks between the New York and Philadelphia areas must be laid. Evidence exists that one of the plans was to have the roadbed pass through Princeton, possibly using Nassau Street. It is not difficult to imagine the controversy that arose over this proposal. A compromise was reached and it was finally resolved to move the tracks three miles east of the town. Naturally this plan involved closing the depot in the Basin and building a new station in Princeton itself. A spur running out to Princeton Junction connected Princeton with the new main trunk line between New York and Philadelphia.

The New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Co. was in oper-

ation from New Brunswick to Jersey City, the New York terminus. A straight, two-track roadbed between Philadelphia and New Brunswick was laid to connect the Camden and Amboy Railroad with that mentioned above. This gave Philadelphia a straight and shorter connection with New York, allowed for the increase in speed and naturally pointed to more consolidation. A charter for such a consolidation was granted in 1867 and the new company was named the United New Jersey Railroad and Canal Co. By this time the Pennsylvania Railroad was well established. The ban on competitive railroads that Stockton had managed to get through the New Jersey Legislature had expired. The Pennsylvania was eyeing New Jersey and the straight rails that gave access to the docks on the Hudson and in New York City. Thus railroads, which had originally supported the canal in the first decades, became its downfall in the years ahead.

When the railroad deserted the canal bank and when access by rail to the Hudson evolved, the canal came to be regarded as of secondary importance. In a major move the Pennsylvania succeeded in leasing the whole rail system between New York and Philadelphia for 999 years and the canal was included in the lease. In 1893 the Pennsylvania converted the two-track line between the two cities into a four-track line, the two center tracks being reserved for freight. This dealt the death blow to the old canal. It lost its importance as a conveyor of bulk, especially coal, and its maintenance became a burden. While it continued to supply water to factories built along its course, such as the terra cotta works at Rocky Hill, and to a number of municipalities, deficits appeared in its operation in the 1890s. It had finally sunk to the role of an inland waterway for pleasure craft. Indeed, in as late as 1929 tolls were collected from 941 such craft.

In 1932 the Pennsylvania announced that the canal would no longer be open for navigation. In 1934 it offered its right as lessee to the State, which accepted it. The State, after many recommendations and studies, has appointed the Delaware and Canal Coalition to protect and forward plans for its recreational use and the canal has been declared a State Historic Site and, more recently, a National Historic Site. It is now well publicized and known that the canal will become, through the cooperation of the State and concerned municipalities, a public park which will run nearly its whole



*A pleasure craft using canal as inland waterway*

distance and certainly enhance the Princeton community.

After discussing this article with Mr. Pendleton Herring, who takes a great interest in Princeton and who lives in Castle Howard, considered to be the oldest mansion in the township, the author received the following sonnet:

*A Towpath Thought on  
The Delaware and Raritan Canal*

Partners in toil, canal and towpath, long  
Bore the freight of coarse and heavy trade.  
Barges, mules and men, a clamoring throng,  
For every step they made, a price was paid  
In straining rope and tread of man and beast.  
An ever weary grind from dawn to dark,  
All day a pull and tug that seldom ceased:  
Their scene of labor has become a park.  
This pastoral path we idly stroll **upon-**  
Solevel, straight and beautiful to view,  
Cost lives and treasure ere the task was done.  
Our sense of gratitude we here renew  
To those, long gone, who did for us endow  
The smoother paths we all rejoice in now.



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 175<sup>th</sup> 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 2026

We would like to remind our members to please renew their membership. You can do so online by visiting [www.canalwatch.org](http://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](http://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)