Deerpark Diary

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Anyone interested in sending comments, photos, information etc., please contact: Norma Schadt, Town of Deerpark Historian, mail address PO Box A, Huguenot, NY 12746 or visit the 1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse, 25 Old Grange Road, Huguenot, Mondays 10:00-12:30, Tuesdays 10:00-3:30 or by appointment. Phone 856-2702 or 754-8070

D & H Canal History

In the early 1800s, Maurice and William Wurts received land near Carbondale, Pennsylvania when a debtor defaulted on an obligation. The brothers paid the debt and in exchange received land which was rich in coal. Becoming aware of the growing potential for coal, the brothers acquired additional coal fields at bargain prices.

Their initial plan was to sell the coal in Philadelphia, however the existing competition for this market turned out to be too strong. The other large available market was New York City. To reach it, they needed an inexpensive way to transport coal in volume. The idea for the Delaware and Hudson Canal was born.

Benjamin Wright, a former engineer for the Erie Canal was hired to complete a preliminary survey for a canal

September 2004

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to run from the coal fields to the Hudson River. The topography and availability of water determined the route of the canal which was to run down the Lackawaxan valley from what is now Honesdale to the Delaware river, across the Delaware and to Port Jervis and then along the Neversink and Roundout Valleys to the Hudson River.

The engineering studies indicated that it would be feasible to construct a canal 32 feet wide and 4 feet deep and requiring 108 locks and four aqueducts. With this information, the Wurts brothers actively began to promote and raise funds for the construction of a new canal.

After raising sufficient capital from stock subscriptions and other sources, construction of the canal began near Summitville on July 13, 1825 . The canal was built in sections as the engineering was completed. Benjamin Wright was the chief engineer. He was succeeded in 1827 by John Jervis, for whom Port Jervis is named.

The canal was completed in April of 1828. Amazingly, the construction of this 108 mile canal through sparsely settled wilderness took less than 3 years, using hand tools, wheel barrows black powder and strong backs.

Because the demand for coal alone was not enough to support the operation of the canal, lumber, firewood, tanner's bark, leather and hides, barrel staves and hoop-poles, ship timbers, slate and other products were transported by the boats. Bluestone was quarried in many areas of Deerpark and then shipped on the canal to New York City for sidewalks. As technology improved and coal was more widely used, it became the primary cargo transported on the canal.

When the canal opened it was the most modern form of transportation. It took about ten days to travel the full length from Honesdale to Kingston. Days were long and hard. Many barges were family operated. The father was the tiller, the mother helped with other chores and the children walked along the towpath with the mule or horse towing the boat.

During later upgrades to the canal, four suspension aqueducts were designed by John A. Roebling. The Neversink River Aqueduct in Cuddebackville was completed in January 1851. It spanned 160 feet and was the longest single span bridge in the world.

In the 1860's, the railroads became a major competitor for transporting cargo. Slowly business on the canal became unprofitable, until finally on November 5, 1898 the last canal boat left Honesdale. On April 28, 1899, abandonment of the canal was authorized by the New York State Legislature.

Snubbing Post

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The D & H Canal Park

Malcolm Booth, a local historian, wrote his masters thesis entitled "The Delaware and Hudson Canal: With Special Emphasis on Deerpark, New York" in 1965. He proposed that the Cuddebackville section of the canal be preserved because of a number of factors: 1. an existing flow of water through part of the original canal; 2. the existence of a lock and lock tenders home; and 3. the abutments from John Roebling's suspension aqueduct across the Neversink River. Thanks to Malcolm, there was a resurgence of local interest in the D & H Canal.

The United States Department of the Interior declared the Cuddebackville site a Registered National Historical Landmark in 1968. On July 11, 1971, a bronze plaque commemorating this designation was installed at Lock 51 on Hoag Road.

Funding for land acquisition and for the establishment of a park were sought through the efforts of The Orange County Citizens Foundation, Orange County, and the Federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. With this funding and a $375,000 grant by the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation, the Orange County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation began to acquire the Canal Park property. Jean Amatucci Fox of Huguenot, who then was our representative in the State Assembly, made the announcement about the state grant on December 19, 1978.

The Neversink Valley Area Museum hired Malcolm Booth to develop the Museum project and write a feasibility study on the D & H Canal Park. The Museum had been active in research and collecting canal era artifacts, conducting towpath hikes, and creating exhibits and programs. In 1979, Leura H. Murray, Board of Trustees President, signed a contract with the County of Orange to operate a museum within the D & H Canal Park.

Today you can visit this unique section of the D & H Canal. It is the only existing section with a controlled water source. Walking along the tow path of the canal or taking a half hour canal boat ride on "Neversink Kate" takes you back in time. To learn about life on the D & H visit the exhibits in the Neversink Valley Area Museum Leura Murray Center. Fishing in the Neversink River, picnicking and barbequing are available at the park. For additional information about special programs and events at the Museum call 845-754-8870.

Cuddebackville, N.Y.

Locks in Deerpark

The 108 mile canal route had a net altitude change of 972 feet. One hundred eight locks were built to accommodate this change. Nine locks, # 59 to #51, were built in Deerpark.

Locks #59 and #58

These locks were built to raise the boats to cross the Mongaup Aqueduct. Each lock raised boats ten feet for a total of twenty feet. Fill for the Route 97 Byway bridge approach has completely buried Lock #59. You can see the well-preserved stone work of the lower gate end of Lock #58, if you take a short walk downstream from the highway.

Lock #57

Lock #57, known as Butler's Lock, was one of the most isolated locks on the canal. It was located at the base of the Hawk's Nest. It marks the beginning point of a twelve mile level stretch of canal traveling along the Delaware River, through Port Jervis and north toward the Neversink River. A dry wall was built to hold the canal water. Towboys and towgirls loved to walk along the top of the wall as they led the mules along this stretch of canal.

Lock #56

Lock #56, known as Mineral Springs, was located near Godeffroy and apparently was the midpoint. There was a sign at the Lock, one side stating, "54 Miles to Honesdale" and the other, "54 Miles to Kingston".

Lock #55

Lock #55 is the first of the Neversink Locks. These locks were unique in that special ropes, known as the Neversink Locks Lines were needed to get loaded boats up and over the Neversink Aqueduct. This was a double line pulley arrangement hitched onto the stern. The driver would bring the line forward and hook into a ring. Horses or mules would tow the boat against the current into the lock. The gates would close and the boat could then be raised to

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the next level. When you walk along Canal Drive in Godeffroy, you can see the stone remnants of the lock.

Locks #54, #53 and #52

These locks raised the boats for the Neversink Aqueduct. They were located just west of the Aqueduct. Each one lifted the canal boats ten feet. If you take a ride along Prospect Hill Road, just before the old railroad crossing, you can see the stone remnants of these locks. At this same point you can see the abutments of the Neversink Aqueduct designed by John Roebling.

Lock #51

Lock #51, known as the Pie Lock, is located in the Orange County D & H Canal Park along Hoag Road. The lock got its name because Mary Casey baked delicious rice pies and sold them for twenty five cents a piece or five cents a slice at the store located next to the lock. The Pie Store is still standing next to the Lock Tenders House on Hoag Road. Lock #51 is buried under the roadway leading to the feeder canal.

CANAL LOCK AT GODEFFROY

Coal Boats to Tidewater, by Manville B. Wakefield

From Coalfields to the Hudson, by Larry Lowenthal

Town of Deerpark
Open House Reception

October 17, 2004, 2:00--4:00
1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse
25 Old Grange Road
Huguenot, New York

Historic Time Line of Deerpark

Local artist Susan Miiller has completed seventeen painted panels celebrating the history of the Town of Deerpark. The panels measure two by five feet each and took over two years to complete. They will be presented to the public for the first time on Sunday, October 17th from 2:00-4:00 with an opening reception. Each panel represents a separate period in Deerpark's history, ranging from Prehistory to the present. The panels are a permanently installed panorama encircling the interior of the historic schoolhouse museum.

Susan Miiller gained popularity in both the regional and national art scene during the 1990's. Her work is included in numerous private and public art collections. She also has exhibited extensively in museums and galleries throughout the United States. Receiving an M.F.A. from the University of North Texas in 1992, Miiller has taught at the university level and is currently on faculty at the State University of New York at New Paltz.

This project was supported in part by a grant from The New York Foundation for the Arts (Special Opportunities Stipends) and an Orange County Historian Grant.

This event is free and open to the public. A brochure about the project is available. For additional information call 856-2702 or 754-8070

Do you know who this is?

If you do please contact Norma Schadt, Town Historian: (845) 856-2702

John A. Roebling--(1806-1869)

Roebling was a civil engineer, born at Muhlhausen, Prussia. Soon after graduation from the polytechnic school at Berlin, he moved to the United States. He established a wire rope factory near Pittsburgh. In May 1845, he completed his first important structure, a suspended aqueduct across the Allegheny River. This was followed by a number suspended aqueducts including four for the D & H Canal. The complete success of the use of his wire rope suspension bridges added to his reputation and changed the way bridges were built. In 1869 his design for the Brooklyn Bridge was accepted. During the construction, he received an injury which resulted in his death. His son Washington Augustus Roebling completed the building of the bridge.

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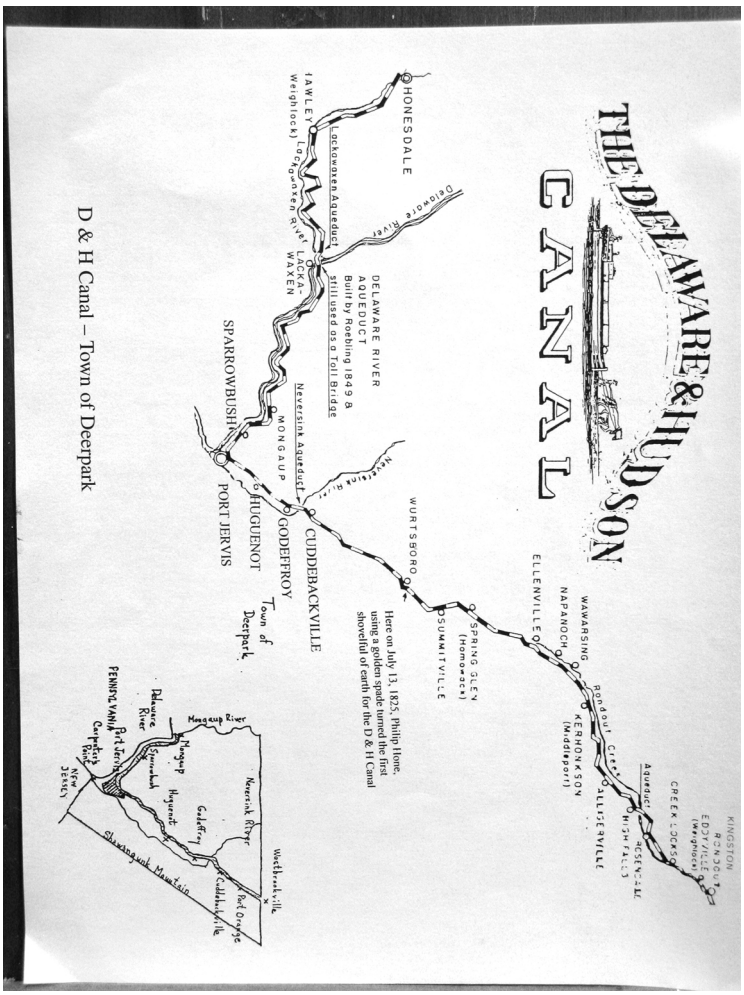

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