



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark Museum, 1863 School House

25 Grange Road, P. O. Box 621, Huguenot, New York 12746

Face Book—Town of Deerpark 1863 Schoolhouse Museum

Website—1863schoolhouse.org

Phone—845-856-2702

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Bicentennial Celebration

D & H Canal

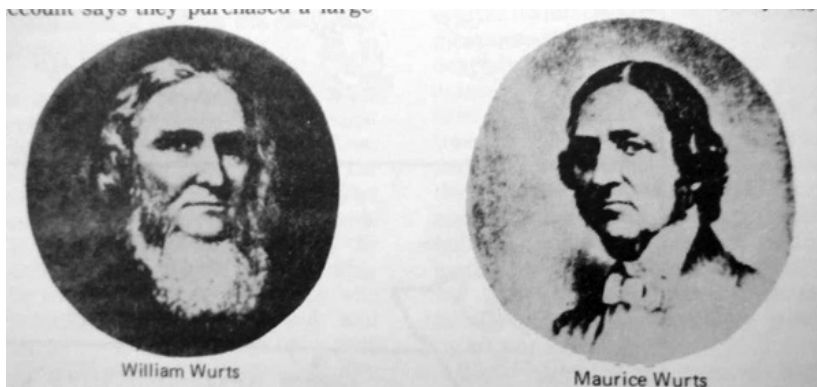
July 13th 2025, marks the 200th anniversary beginning of the Delaware and Hudson Canal. There will be a day-long celebration in Wurtsboro starting at noon with a parade ending at the Groundbreaking Reenactment site, 85 Sullivan Street. Part of the reenactment will include Philip Hone's groundbreaking speech.

Other activities include living history presentations and displays, guided canal towpath walks, horse and wagon rides, West Point music ensembles, and a period costume ball.

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The D & H Canal

In the late 1700s, Philadelphia began buying coal in the Pennsylvania hills, but the sales of this new material increased gradu-



ally. It was not accepted as a commercial product. Its first use as a fuel came on February 11, 1808. Bituminous coal was shipped to America from the United Kingdom, however, the War of 1812 shut off the supply, which sparked America's first energy crisis.

William and Maurice Wurts believed their harder anthracite coal offered a new, cheaper fuel for the area's biggest energy consumer, New York City and the rest of the country. So in 1823 the Wurts brothers hired Benjamin Wright and John Jervis to design a canal from the coal fields near Honesdale, Pennsylvania to Eddyville, New York on the Rondout Creek near Kingston. From there the coal could be shipped on the Hudson River.

The state helped with some of the cost, but to raise the rest, the brothers needed to prove that anthracite coal would work. On January 7, 1825, they convinced several business and financial leaders to meet at the Tontine Coffee House on Wall Street in

New York City to watch anthracite burn. Within hours, freshly minted canal stock sold out to wealthy investors, including Philip Hone. It was the country's first corporation capitalized at one million dollars. Armed with cash, the company was ready to build the 108-mile link between the coal mines and the Hudson River.

Wright and Jervis had designed a canal four feet deep and 32 feet wide, with 108 locks, 137 bridges and 26 basins, dams and reservoirs. The canal's groundbreaking was held on July 13, 1825, with President Philip Hone turning the first shovel full of earth at Mamakating (Wurtsboro). The groundbreaking ceremony was reported to have been accompanied with singing, prayers, speeches, and outbursts of enthusiasm.

The areas the canal would traverse were sparsely inhabited. Much of the canal was built through wilderness, using only picks, shovels, blasting powder and the backbreaking labor of thousands of men. In the spring of



Canal Workers

1826 alone, 2,500 men and 200 teams of horses were working on the section between Cuddebackville and Eddyville.

Many small communities, now nearly forgotten, were created by, and thrived because of, the canal. Substantial population growth, communication and commercial development occurred as a result of the availability of transportation, energy and the flow of products to new markets along the route of the canal.

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Life Along the Canal

Excerpt NPS publication



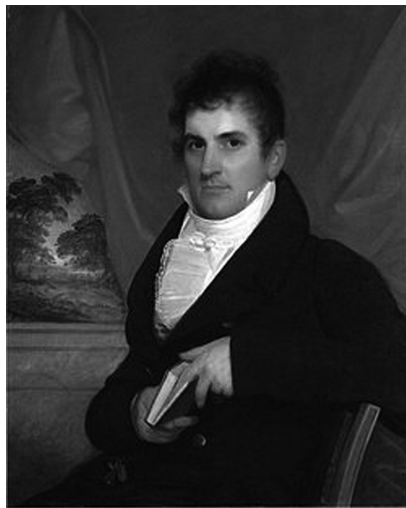
“Life on a canal boat was a ‘family business’. Wives and children worked 15-20 hour days alongside boatmen, [editor’s note: The canal company required that each canal boat have at least three people working it, a captain who owned the boat, a bowman (usually the captain’s wife) and a driv-

er or towboy/girl, the captain’s children] eking out a meager existence with ‘the company’.

“The D & H Canal affected life throughout the region, Irish and German immigrants who built and enlarged the canal increased the cultural diversity, brought new customs to an area populated mainly by Dutch and English settlers and a few remaining Native Americans.

“New towns and industries (boat builders, glass works, and foundries) sprang up along the canal. Previous industries—lumber mills, paper mills, tanneries, stone quarries—prospered with improved transportation. Others, like the Rosendale natural cement industry took advantage of the proximity of the D&H Canal.”

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Philip Hone (1780-1851)

Philip Hone, a man of great prominence in New York society, known for his wealth, sophistication, extensive travel and good taste, served as the first

president of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company (1825-1826). On July 13, 1825 he travelled to Mamakating to turn the first shovelful of soil. Thus began the construction of the canal.

Honesdale, Pennsylvania is named in honor of Philip Hone. The Honesville Post Office (also named in honor of Hone) was established near the Canal prior to 1832 just north of Sparrowbush, New York. It was discontinued November 15, 1840 when the mail was sent to Sparrowbush. He is also remembered for his detailed diary which he kept from 1828 until the time of his death in 1851. It is an extensive and detailed history about the first half of 19th century America.

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The Story of Coal

The use of coal as a fuel dates back thousands of years to Roman times. Archaeologists have discovered the use of coal in North America dating back to 1300 AD when the Hopi Indians used it to fire their pottery. Native Americans in the northeast Pennsylvania area used coal found in surface outcroppings and river beds prior to the 1740s when Europeans found coal in southwestern Pennsylvania. Obadiah and Daniel Gore burned coal in their blacksmith shop in the 1700s. Anthracite coalfields became more expansive in eastern Pennsylvania after their discovery in 1762. Before this time, manufacturing fuel was supplied by wood, charcoal and bituminous coal imported from England. However, the War of 1812 interrupted the im-

portations, leading to a shortage of fuel in Philadelphia in 1814.

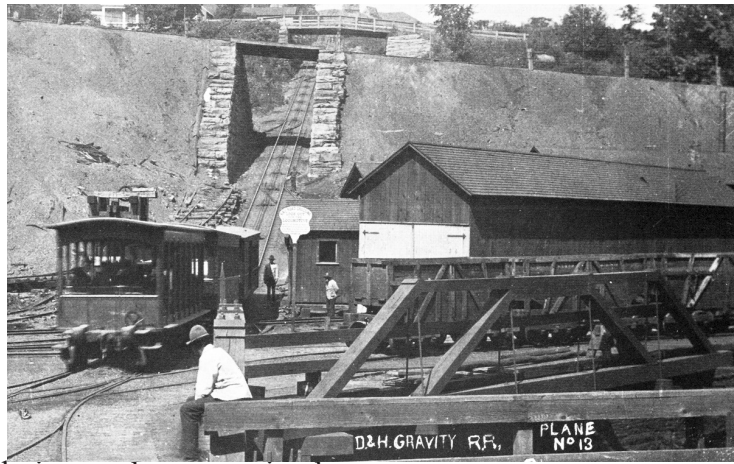
Philadelphia then began buying coal in the Pennsylvania hills, but the sales of this new material were limited. For example the Lehigh Company, the first to become an established supplier, furnished only 365 tons in 1820.

Maurice and William Wurts sent about 100 tons to Philadelphia by rafts on the Lackawaxen and Delaware Rivers in the winter of 1822-23.

There are a number of stories told about how the Wurts brothers became interested in the Pennsylvania coal fields. The most accepted story that has been passed down is that Maurice and William Wurts, during a hunting expedition in Wayne County, became acquainted with David Nobles, a hunter from the Lackawaxen Valley. He was about to be imprisoned for debt. The brothers paid off his debt, secured Nobles' release and William employed him to purchase more land rich in anthracite coal, also known as hard coal or black diamonds. The brothers believed that this coal would help fill New York City's energy need, but they needed an efficient way of transporting their coal.

A canal was the best form of transportation at that time. At first the D & H Canal Company planned to transport their coal from the mines in Carbondale to the Hudson River entirely by canal. However, the availability of water at the summit of the Moosic Mountains and the number of locks needed to scale the mountains between Carbondale and Honesdale precluded this plan.

A "gravity railroad" was



the solution, and construction began in 1827. The "Gravity" designed by D & H Chief Engineer John B. Jervis, utilized a series of inclined planes and steam engines to pull carloads of coal up and over the Moosic Mountains, a rise of almost 1,000 feet. Completion of the "gravity" in 1829 enabled the canal to transport a great percentage of its tonnage in coal.



*Canal Boat Loading
in Honesdale*

Navigation on the canal began at the boat basin in Honesdale, where the coal was transferred from gravity railroad cars



Cuddebackville Aqueduct

to canal boats.

From Honesdale coal travelled 108 miles through 108 locks to the weigh station at Lock #1 on the northern end of the canal. From there steam boats would tow up to twelve canal boats to Island Dock to off load and store the coal for further shipment either south to New York City or north to Canada.



*Canal Boats Offloading
Island Dock, Kingston*

Throughout the 19th century, the D & H Canal together

with the Pennsylvania Coal Company gravity railroad, expanded, struggled, and transformed to become part of a 171-mile transportation system from 1828 until 1898.

Deerpark Museum Programs 2025

All of the Town of Deerpark Museum Programs are presented on Sunday afternoons 3:00pm at the 1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse. Refreshments reflecting the subject of the presentation are served.

July 27, 2025 3:00pm
Frank Salvati presents "The Pahaquarry Copper Mine and the Old Mine Road", a very interesting chapter of our local history about the Dutch Miners and the building of a 104 mile road to Kingston.

August 10, 2025 3:00pm
Bill Marchant presents "John Roebling and the D & H Canal", Roebling, the future engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge, designed and built four suspension aqueducts to carry canal boats over tributaries.

September (date to be determined) **"Silent Movies filmed in Cuddebackville"**, exhibit—museum tour—silent movies show with popcorn.

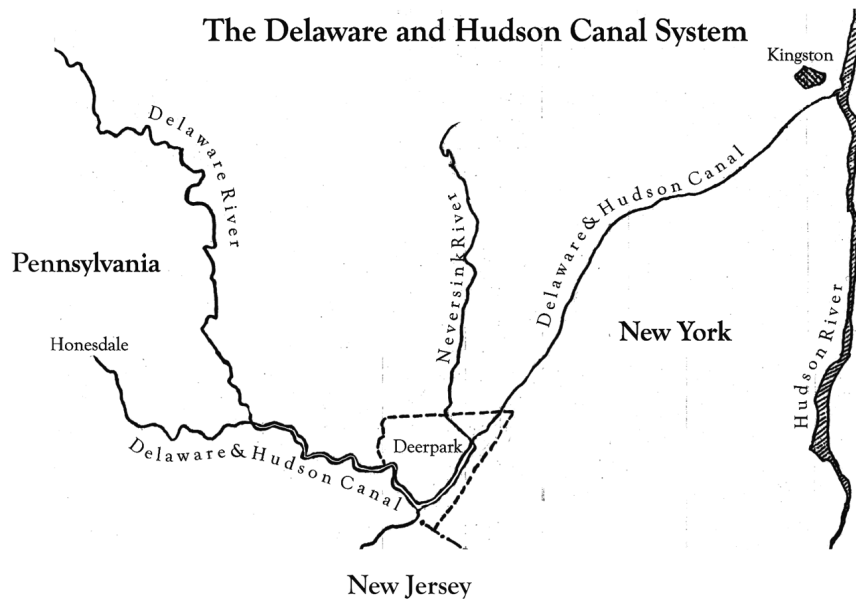
October 26, 2025 3:00pm
Michael Worden presents "Ghost Stories". This is an annual favorite to start the Halloween week.

**Follow us on Face Book
to see old photos of
The D & H Canal Company**



**Town of Deerpark
1863 Schoolhouse Museum**

The Delaware and Hudson Canal System



Anthracite/Bituminous

When the D & H Canal was started, the use of coal for fuel was relatively new in America, at least among the white men. Archaeologists have found evidence that native Indians had used coal for centuries prior to the 1700s.



Anthracite Coal Sample

Stone coal (anthracite) was first discovered in America at Ross Hill, Pennsylvania (Wilkes Barre area). Its first commercial use was by blacksmiths and in 1776, at the government arsenal at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Bituminous coal was first discovered on Coal Hill across from the Monongahela River, Pittsburgh in the late 1700s.

Anthracite (hard coal) is a hard type of coal. Although it is slower to burn and does not ignite easily compared to bituminous, anthracite produces more heat when burned. It also has fewer impurities and a higher carbon percentage. Thus, it burns more cleanly, unlike bituminous coal. Anthracite coal's relative scarcity makes it more expensive than bituminous coal. However, it burns hotter and longer. In the long run, anthracite is arguably the more cost-effective fuel than bituminous.

Bituminous (soft coal), the traditional house coal, is more popular and abundant. It has been used as domestic fireplace fuel for many generations. As it is abundant, bituminous is considerably cheaper than anthracite and burns easily and effectively. Bituminous has more impurities and a lower carbon percentage than anthracite; thus, it produces a thick, black smoke. Today, there are several environmental concerns regarding the domestic use of bituminous coal.