



# Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 School House Museum

Town of Deerpark Historian, P.O. Box 621, Huguenot, New York 12746

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June 2012

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## Deerpark History Comes Alive

A special celebration was held on May 19th marking the Grand Opening of the D & H Canal Towpath Trail. Hikers from Orange and Sullivan County joined members from the D & H Conservancy, the Orange County Parks Department and the Orange County Citizens Foundation along the newly cleared three mile section of the towpath between Huguenot and Cuddebackville.

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On Saturday, July 21st the Town of Deerpark Museum will sponsor a bus tour following the

route taken by Joseph Brant and his Tory troops during the July 20, 1779 raid on the Neversink Valley during the Revolutionary War.

Both of these events are highlighted in this issue.

## Joseph Brant Bus Tour

Every year there is a Battle of Minisink Memorial Weekend at Minisink Ford. To explain the events that led to this battle the Town of Deerpark Museum is sponsoring a bus tour on July 21, 2012 following the route taken by Joseph Brant during his raid on the Neversink Valley on July 20th, 1779. The tour starts and ends at the Sparrowbush Fire House, Main Street, Sparrowbush, NY. All participants will meet at 7:45 a.m. There will be free coffee and snacks available before the bus leaves promptly at 8:00 a.m. Reservations are required. Forms are available at Town Hall, at the Town Museum, 1863 Schoolhouse, 25 Grange Road or on the website [www.1863schoolhouse.org](http://www.1863schoolhouse.org). For additional information, call 845-754-8070. Tickets will be sent to registrants in the beginning of July. Tickets are necessary because space is limited.

Reenactors will be on the bus in costume to explain what happened on that eventful day during the Revolutionary War. Frank Salvati will give extensive background material. Reenactors

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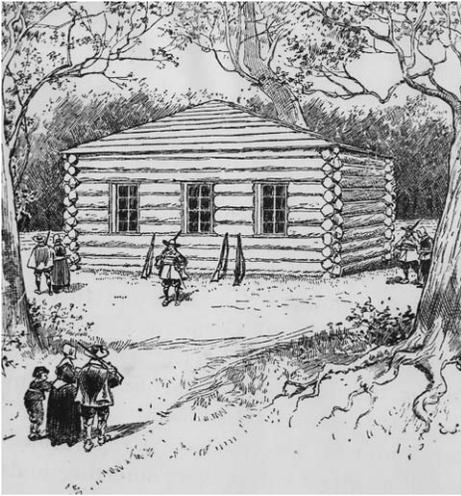
will explain the story connected with each happening, as the bus makes stops at the following historic markers along the route:

1. Indian Raid Signs—Rt. 42 & Rt. 97
2. Indian Raid Sign—Peenpack Trail & Rt. 209
3. Neversink Drive
4. Major Decker's Fort—Militia meets
5. Solomon Davis Gristmill
6. Black Rock School Painted Apron Story



*Painted Apron Drawing from Magazine of American History Vol. X, October, 1883*

7. Willahousa Cave—Major Decker's escape
8. Anthony Van Etten Smithy—J. Swartwout's escape
9. Fort Van Auken--Only fort Brant could not destroy
10. Solomon Kuykendal Homestead
11. Simon Westfall Homestead
12. Cole's Fort
13. Maghakamik Church
14. Peter Kuykendall Home & Tavern



*Maghakamik Church Drawing from Magazine of American History Vol X, October, 1883*

### 15. Fort Decker—

(The Minisink Valley Historical Society will hold a cooking demonstration.)

The bus will return to the Sparrowbush Fire House where a box lunch will be available (must be ordered at reservation time). This will also give time for questions.

The tour will end in time so that anyone wishing to attend the Battle of Minisink Memorial Program at Minisink Ford will be able to do so. That program begins at 2:00 p.m.

## The Rest of the Story

Brant reported ‘I left this place (Minisink) about 8 o’clock next day and marched fifteen miles. There are two roads, one through the woods (Peenpack Trail), and the other along the river. We were coming up this way the next morning, and I sent two men to examine the other road, the only way the rebels could come to attack us. These men discovered the enemy’s path, not far from our camp, and discovered they had got

before us to lay in ambush. These two rascals were afraid when they saw the path, and did not return to inform us, so that the rebels had fair play at us.’

After the attack, Brant and his men marched northward toward Grassy Swamp Brook near the Mongaup River where he had left a number of his followers and they made camp to spend the night.

The river territory was wild and hostile. About fifty miles from their homes, the militia came upon a recent campground of Brant’s warriors. It was at this point that the militia realized that the raiders were much stronger than anticipated. The colonels wanted to wait for reinforcements before attacking, but the rank and file threw caution to the winds and wanted to move forward.

Brant’s war party and Hathorn’s militia approached the Minisink Ford by different routes. Brant traveled north along the Delaware River and Hathorn’s men traveled through the hills by way of the Kesherthton path.

As the militia approached Minisink Ford, the battle was joined. Captain Bezaleel Tyler was sent ahead with a small intercepting force. The rest of the men were divided into three divisions--Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Tusten on the right (top of Ambush Hill)--Hathorn and his men in the center--Lieutenant Colonel Wisner on the left. Captain Tyler or one of his men, fired prematurely giving away Hathorn’s planned ambush. Brant who was about a quarter of a mile downstream of Minisink Ford when the firing began, brought forty of his men behind Hathorn’s and Tusten’s

division which split off Wisner’s division. This cut off one third of the militia force from the battle. Nothing more was heard about this division. Gradually the militia was hemmed in upon a rocky hill by Brant’s forces. The battle raged for about four hours in brutal July heat. There was no water or food and little ammunition by late afternoon. At that point Brant noticed a gap in the American line. Members of the militia retreated toward the river trying to save themselves. Lieutenant Colonel Tusten, a physician, stayed with the wounded he was treating. These men were killed by Brant and his raiders.

The next morning Brant and his party continued north with their plunder.

The bones of those slain in the Battle of Minisink, were left for forty-three years. In 1822, Dr. David Arnell of Goshen and a group of others gathered the bones and brought them back to Goshen and placed them in two walnut caskets. On July 22, 1822 their caskets were buried and the First Minisink Monument was dedicated.



## D&H Canal Towpath Trail

The D & H Canal Towpath Trail was officially opened at 9:00 a.m. on May 19th, 2012 at the former C & D factory’s park-

ing lot, Route 209, with a special ribbon cutting ceremony. Doing the honors were Cliff Robinson and Burt Thelander, of the D & H Conservancy, Rich Rose, Orange County Parks Dept. and Nancy Proyect, Orange County Citizens Foundation.



*Ribbon Cutting—left to right, Nancy Proyect, Orange County Citizens Foundation; Burt Thelander, Vice Pres. D&H Conservancy; Rich Rose, Orange County Parks Dept.; Cliff Robinson, Pres. D&H Conservancy  
Photo Courtesy Andy Komonchak*

It was a perfect spring day when about thirty hikers helped celebrate the occasion by hiking from Huguenot to the Neversink River Aqueduct abutment in Cuddebackville. As a memento of the occasion, small booklets, noting specific, significant stops, were given to participants. Cliff Robinson had copies of canal era pictures pertaining to these stops and explained the significance of each site. Stickers denoting these stops were affixed to the booklets, creating special souvenirs. The following information was provided by the D & H Conservancy.

“Mileages were noted, based on David Barber’s book: *A Guide to the Delaware and Hudson Canal*, and are miles from Eddyville, where the canal met tidewater at the Rondout River.

**Parking Lot (54.68):** When the D & H Conservancy discovered that a small part of the former C & D factory’s parking lot was covering part of the canal, an agreement to move the existing fence onto their property was negotiated. This created a parking area for the canal trail. D & H logo signs mark the site.

**Cuddeback’s Basin (54.45):** Several boats could moor here for the night.

**Bridge Site (54.32):** This bridge marks the half way point on the canal. At one time the bridge had signs on both sides, one that read, “54 Miles to Honesdale” and the other, “54 Miles to Kingston”.

**Van Etten’s Bridge (53.95):** The berm abutment is intact.

**Bridge Site (52.91):** Manville Wakefield, *Coal Boats to Tidewater*, calls this a “change bridge”. The towpath continued on both sides of the canal all the way to the aqueduct. This was necessary because there was a current in the canal from the Neversink Feeder to this point. This necessitated the use of double tow lines to pull loaded canal boats against the current.



*D & H Canal Lock 56  
Photo Deerpark Historian’s Office*

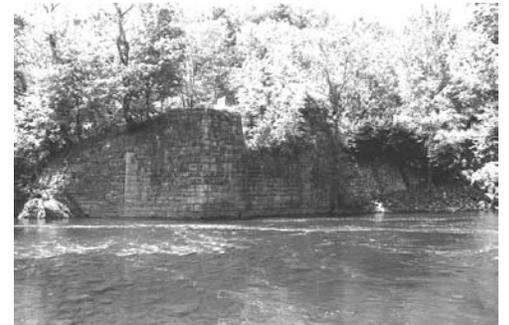
**Lock 56 “Mineral Springs” (52.61-.57):** 10’ lift: This was the first of six locks that lifted boats heading east, the only ones that did so. All others dropped boats heading east. The lock was buried when Graham Road was built.

**Lock 55 “Neversink” (52.29-.27) 10’ lift:** Berm wall is in great shape.

**Lock 54 “Neversink” (52.03-.01) 10’ lift:** Much of this lock has both sides caved in or covered by fill.

**Lock 53 “Neversink” (51.86-.84) 10’ lift:** Most of this lock is intact.

**Lock 52 “Neversink” (51.77-.75) 10’ lift:** This lock is in great shape with just some of the lower wing wall collapsed. The house to the right of the towpath was the lock tender’s house and telegraph station.



*West Abutment of Roebling Aqueduct over the Neversink River  
Photo Courtesy Andy Komonchak*

**West Abutment of Neversink Aqueduct (51.62):** This is one of four aqueducts that Roebling built to carry the canal across the river.”

The trip ended with a comfortable mini-van ride back to the parking lot. Everyone there enjoyed themselves.

## D & H Preservation

Since the 1960s, there has been a resurgence of interest in the D & H Canal. Four important canal sections are designated as National Historic Landmarks: Rondout; Cuddebackville; Roebling Delaware Aqueduct; Hones-

dale. Many miles of canal are preserved as open space, with more being added each year. Stretches of canal are enjoyed for hiking, walking, biking and cross-country skiing in all of the counties the canal goes through.

Since 2001, the D & H Transportation Heritage Council, a partnership of nonprofit organizations, businesses, government agencies, and interested individuals, has been committed to promoting the appreciation and preservation of the D & H transportation system. This includes the canal from Kingston in Ulster County, through Sullivan and Orange Counties along the Delaware River to the Gravity Railroad in Pennsylvania.

In Orange County all of the land along the D & H Canal from the Port Jervis/Deerpark line to the Westbrookville/Sullivan County line is owned by the County. Eventually this entire distance will be cleared for recreational purposes. A one mile stretch of the canal within the Orange County D & H Canal Park, Hoag Road, Cuddebackville, has been enjoyed by visitors since the 1980s. On May 19th this trail was extended to Huguenot. In late summer the trail from Port Orange to the Otisville Road in Westbrookville will be opened. In time the entire Orange County section will be connected to the trail completed by Sullivan County north of Westbrookville and to the existing trail in Port Jervis.

In September 2006, Cliff Robinson organized the D & H Conservancy to preserve the D & H Canal and make it available, once again, to serve the needs of the area, this time as a recreation-

al trail. Over the years volunteers from the D & H Conservancy have cleared brush and cut trees making the towpath passable. A few years ago the Conservancy received a \$125,000 grant to improve the trail and build three bridges to cross over breached sections of the canal. These bridges will have to be completed before the entire trail can be utilized.



*Original D & H Canal stonework along the Trail. All work was done with hand tools and no mortar to hold the stones.*

*Photo courtesy Andy Komonchak*

Last year the Orange County Citizens Foundation also joined in the effort to make this project a reality. The Foundation was instrumental in the creation of the D & H Canal Park.

Anyone interested in volunteering to work on the trail can contact Cliff Robinson at the D & H Conservancy, 119 Mandy's Rd., Westtown, NY 10998, Phone 845-674-8010, [www.dandhconservancy.org](http://www.dandhconservancy.org).



## Historic Marker Update

As you drive through Deerpark you will notice that a number of the historic markers have been repainted. Michael Murphy, Eagle Scout Candidate, (Troop 68, Cuddebackville) and his helpers have been very busy working on the signs along Route 209. It takes much work to complete one sign. Each must be scraped and cleaned. The entire sign is then painted blue. Finally yellow paint is applied to the lettering and the post is painted black. Michael's goal is to have them all completed in June. He will also photograph each sign and using GPS note the coordinates of the location of each sign. This information will be marked on a topographical map. Next year this map will be available on the Town of Deerpark website along with links showing the photos of each sign.

The Deerpark Highway Dept. has installed new and repaired signs. Volunteers painted all of the signs along Neversink Drive in preparation for the Joseph Brant Bus Tour. The next phase will be to paint the rest of the signs along the Tour Route.

If anyone knows of a sign that needs paint, please call the Historian's Office 845-856-2702. We will try to have it painted this year. Thank you.

## 2012 Museum Programs

July 20—Brant Bus Tour  
September 30—Open House at the Huguenot 1863 Schoolhouse  
October 14—Basha Kill Area & Queen Basha Program  
December 3—Annual Tree Lighting & Holiday Sing-Along