

Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark Museum 1863 Schoolhouse

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June 2013

- **History of Orange County Delaware and Hudson Canal Park**

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History of Orange County Delaware and Hudson Canal Park

The Delaware & Hudson Canal (1828-1898) was 108 miles long stretching from Lackawaxen, Pennsylvania to Kingston, New York. Its primary purpose was to bring coal from the coal fields of Pennsylvania to New York City. As time went by, other products were also shipped on the canal.

A number of sites along the canal's route have been preserved for visitors. The D & H Canal Park in Cuddebackville is one of the sites where visitors can learn about the canal's history. Amenities include a hiking trail along the tow path, a picnic pavilion and playground. The Neversink Valley Museum is also located within the park. Canal artifacts, dioramas and displays in the museum provide information about the history of the canal.

This year marks a number of mile stones in the history of the Dela-

ware and Hudson Canal Park. The following includes articles from The Orange County Park News and past issues of local newspapers.

45 Years Ago (1968)

National Historic Landmark

On October 10, 1968, the Cuddebackville section of the canal was one of four sections of the Delaware and Hudson Canal designated as part of the National Landmark program.

National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. The D & H Canal was designated because it was a vital coal supply line for New York City in the 19th Century.

40 Years Ago (1973)—Major Fund Raising Drive

Orange County Park News (excerpts)
Vol. 3 No. 4 April 1972

Foundation to Launch Fund Drive

Seek Donations to Acquire
D & H Canal Area Park

"The Orange County Citizens Foundation is developing plans to launch a major fund-raising drive to acquire certain properties in the area of the D & H Canal and the Neversink River, Cuddebackville, for future development of an historical restoration and county park.

"The Foundation submitted an offer to one of the major property owners, Orange & Rockland Utilities, Inc., for the purchase of some 78 acres along the Neversink River.

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A model of the proposed restoration of the Delaware and Hudson Canal at Cuddebackville is explained by Malcolm Booth, left, to Port Jervis Chamber of Commerce President Harrison Farnum, center, and Regional Chamber Chairman Charles R. Wolfe.

Union Gazette Photo by Ahlstrom

"The total proposed park site is some 400 acres....It is visualized by Foundation members and county park officials that the canal can be restored to provide rides on horse-drawn barges together with a re-creation of several shops. The area also lends itself to magnificent vistas, camping, boating, hiking, fishing and an opportunity to enjoy an open space in perpetuity."

Orange County Park News (excerpt)
Vol. 5 No. 2 October 1973

Legislature Approves Canal Funds

Await BOR Grant for 400 Acre Park Acquisition

"The Orange County Legislature voted unanimously (18-0) to approve a resolution to appropriate up to \$266,000 as the county's share of the cost for purchasing 400 acres of land for the D & H Canal Park in Cuddebackville.

"The county's commitment will be exercised if the Federal Bu-

reau of Outdoor Recreation approves a \$375,000 Land and Water Conservation grant. The Legislature also anticipates a substantial cash and land gift from the Orange County Citizens Foundation, Inc.

“The Foundation has set a private fund raising goal of \$100,000 and has exercised its option to purchase 78 acres of land from Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc. It is estimated that the land has an appraised value of \$78,000...”

Orange County Park News (excerpt)
Vol. 6 No. 1 May, 1974

Foundation Buys Land for D&H Canal Park

Citizens Group Plans to Donate 78 Acres to County

“The first step in a plan to turn the historic Delaware and Hudson Canal into a focal point for a new county park was taken December 27, 1973 when Orange and Rockland Utilities turned over a deed for 78.6 acres near Cuddebackville to the Orange County Citizens Foundation.



Orange County Citizens Foundation President James H. Ottaway (C) presents Dean Seifried, Orange and Rockland Utilities president, with a check for \$25,000 for the purchase of a 78.6 acre tract of land in Cuddebackville, County Executive Louis V. Mills (R) lauded the sale as a bonch mark in private-public cooperation.—U.G. photo

“James H. Ottaway Sr. Foundation President, received the deed from Dean Seifried, O & R President. The Foundation...paid \$25,000 for the land. Ottaway said the Foundation plans to donate the land to the county, which wants to incorporate it into a 325 acre park. The site includes a lock of the D & H Canal, to be restored to working order. Another historical remnant is the remains of an aqueduct designed by John Roebling, engineer for the Brooklyn Bridge...”

35 Years Ago (1978)--PARK BECOMES A REALITY

Orange County Park News
Vol. 9 No. 1 May 1978

Feds Approve \$375,000 D & H Canal Park Grant Citizens Foundation To Donate \$122,000 Toward County Share

“The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service approved a \$375,000 matching grant for the purchase of the D & H Canal Park in Cuddebackville.

“The 308 acre park includes a one-mile stretch of the D & H Canal and the Neversink River, historic buildings, coniferous forests and meadow areas.

“Acceptance of the grant has been endorsed by County Executive Louis Heimbach. County Legislative approval is expected soon.”

Orange County Park News
Vol. 9 No. 2 Winter 1978

Citizens Foundation Presents \$122,000 to County D & H Canal Park Acquisition Spurred

“A five year concentrated effort to raise funds to acquire the Delaware and Hudson Canal Park was climaxed on October 6, 1978 when the Orange County Citizens Foundation, Inc. presented a check in the sum of \$47,000 and deed to 78 acres of land in Cuddebackville for the Delaware and Hudson Canal Park.

“Foundation Vice President Harold J. Jonas made the presentation to County Executive Louis Heimbach and Legislature Chairman James F. Lulves at a luncheon hosted by the Foundation.

“The land is appraised at \$75,000. In addition, Johannes Hoefgen of Cuddebackville will donate 2.6 acres appraised at \$2,000.

“The Federal Heritage Con-

servation and Recreation Services Land & Water Conservation Fund has approved a matching grant of \$375,000. The County’s share of the \$750,000 project is \$251,000.

“Jonas said in his remarks, ‘It is my honor to appear today on behalf of Proposition Fourteen. Proposition Fourteen states that the Public Good shall be sustained by a Public Awareness that encourages Public Officials to undertake Public Programs that benefit the entire Public. Proposition Fourteen is therefore, based on a spirit of cooperation in which citizens and their elected representatives unite in a common aim.’”

25 Years Ago (1988)--VISITORS’ CENTER

Orange County Park News
Vol. 19 No. 2 November 1988

Visitors’ Center Dedicated at D&H Canal Park

“The new Visitors’ Center building was dedicated at the D & H Canal Park on September 17, 1988. County Executive Louis Heimbach, Legislature Chairman John J. Bonacic, and Orange County citizens Foundation President John F. Meehan, unveiled the dedication plaque.

“The Center was constructed by the Parks Department construction staff under the direction of Paul Odendahl.



“James F. Smith, Chairman of the Board of Orange & Rockland Utilities, Inc. presented the deeds to a nine-mile stretch of the former D & H Canal towpath to Heimbach for future development as a greenway.

“Parks Commissioner Graham M. Skea said that the greenway would be used for hiking, bicycling and nature study. The nine-mile gift from O & R totals 71 acres.

“The Orange County Citizens Foundation, O & R, and Johannes Hoefgen, were all recognized for their gifts to the County to help make the park a reality.”



Boat Basin 1970s

15 Years Ago (1998) Boat Rides



*Neversink Kate on the D&H Canal—1990s
Neversink Valley Area Museum Boat Rides*

Today (2013) A UNIQUE PLACE

Although there is no longer water in the canal, there is hiking

along the tow path. Besides enjoying the natural beauty of the park, visitors can visit the “Census Center of Population”. It is located in the field in front of the Visitors’ Center. This particular place is unique. In 2002 the monument marked this spot as the New York State center of population according to the Millennium census.

The plaque states “This survey point, set July 2002, by the Delaware-Hudson Land Surveyors Association, an affiliate regional of, and together with the New York State Association of Professional Land Surveyors, marks the symbolic center of population for the state of New York. This point is where an imaginary, flat, weightless and rigid map of the state of New York would balance perfectly if all its 18,976,457 residents (based on census 2000) were of identical weight. The center of population is a survey.”

The schematic drawing below depicts Cuddebackville as the fulcrum for the equilibrium of New York State’s population in the year 2000.

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D & H Canal Towpath Trail (2013 Update)

The D & H Canal Towpath Trail was officially opened on May 19th 2012. For details of the opening see the June 2012 issue of the Deerpark Diary.

This spring a dedicated group of volunteers, working with

Cliff Robinson has constructed a 60-foot bridge to span a major breach in the towpath at Port Orange. Robinson’s goal for this coming year is to have the entire path cleared from Port Orange Road to Westbrookville. Another breach is located at the end of Apple Lane in Deerpark Manor. This breach will be crossed using stone steps from the towpath. Then there will be a trail where hikers can cross back and rejoin the towpath beyond the breach. A parking area is also planned at Otisville Road in Westbrookville for those who wish to hike this section of the towpath.



Cliff Robinson and the new 60’ bridge spanning a breach in the D & H Towpath Trail

Each year Cliff Robinson Jr. and his Delaware & Hudson Conservancy volunteers have been working with other preservation groups to restore sections of the canal towpath. His goal is to restore the entire section of the towpath which was deeded to Orange County in 1988. He states that one day, “You will be able to walk from the north end of Port Jervis to Phillipsport on an unbroken trail.” Sullivan and Ulsters Counties are also developing their own trails along the D & H Canal towpath.

Helpers are always needed for these projects. To volunteer, contact Cliff Robinson: The D & H Conservancy, 119 Mandy’s Rd. Westtown, NY 10998; Phone 845-674-8010; www.dandhconservancy.org.

Times Herald-Record Sunday, October 27, 2002

Surveyors get right to the point

By Jeremiah Horgan
Times Herald-Record
jhorgan@th-record.com

All things being equal, the population center of New York state isn't where you think it is. Manhattan? Forget it. Not even close. Would you believe ... Cuddebackville? Or to be more precise, Oakland Valley. Not far from Eden (Road). Or to be even more precise, 41 degrees, 30 minutes 27 seconds north latitude, and 74 degrees, 28 minutes 43 seconds west longitude.

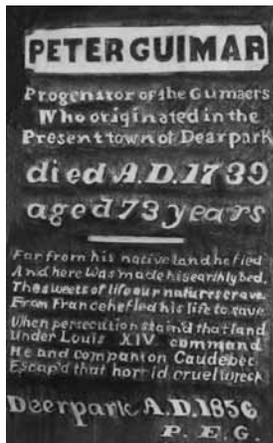


Times Herald-Record/illustration by MIMI ESTES

Who is in the Gumaer Cemetery?

Researched by Dan Ramirez

On August 7, 1991 Fred Montebaro wrote an article in the Port Jervis Gazette about the neglected Gumaer cemetery. There have been changes since 1991. The cemetery has found avid devotees and volunteers from the Minisink Valley Historical Society. Members cut trees down and removed underbrush for public access. The present problem, given the limitations of time and money, is how best to enclose the cemetery with fencing that would compliment the historic site. The history of this burial ground dates back to the earliest settlers. Some of the headstones are impossible to read, however this article is about two men who have headstones that are easily read. Rubbings have been made of these headstones.



Peter E. Gumaer (1771-1869), a direct descendent of one of the first Huguenot settlers of Peenpack, is buried in the cemetery which bears his name. He was born in Fort Gumaer. In 1776, his parents invited a teacher, named Thomas White, into their home to live and establish a school for the children of the neighborhood. At a later date Gumaer donated land and the \$400.00 needed to build a school for the neighborhood. This Godeffroy School still stands on Guymard Turnpike.

When Peter was sixteen

years old he started to study surveying under Moses De Witt. This began a long career of surveying and mapping. Throughout his life, Peter was very active in his community. He was in the military from 1796 until 1801. Over a period of years he served the town as a Justice of the Peace, Town Clerk, Assessor, Overseer of the Poor, Commissioner of Education for the Public Schools of Deerpark and Town Supervisor. He also served Orange County as Commissioner of Deeds.

In 1801 his parents gave him seventeen acres of land. He purchased additional land during the course of his life. An old burial ground was located on his farm. Gumaer set this land aside as a formal cemetery. The earliest date on a headstone is 1713 with the initials HD. The earliest headstone with both a name and a date reads "Ano 1720 DE 16 Yuley Benymyin Provost".

In 1839, thirty-five men gathered to form a committee for the care and preservation of the burial ground. The subscribers included members of the Cuddeback, Gumaer, Swartwout, Hornbeck, Rosencranse and Van Inwegen families. Gumaer surveyed the boundaries and a year later, he and his wife Esther deeded the cemetery to the church, the elders and deacons of the Reformed Dutch Maghagkemeck Church of Deerpark.

One of the headstones that is clearly read belongs to another direct descendant of the original Huguenot settlers, Captain Abraham C. Cuddeback (1738-1817). His resting place and headstone are located at the far end of the cemetery. According to Cuddeback biographical histories, "Abraham was a farmer...in Cuddebackville. He was a large man, weighing over 200 pounds and over six feet tall. His talents were many: a mechanical genius of great dexterity; a weaver; shoemaker; tailor; great marksman. He headed the Committee for Safety throughout the Meckheck-

meck Valley and received the rank of captain, prior to the War of Independence."

Captain Cuddeback fought in McClaughey's Regiment of the New York Militia in the War of Independence. His company guarded the chain across the Hudson River at West Point until the fort was overtaken by the British. Thereafter he was in charge of protecting Fort Gumaer.

On the morning of October 13, 1778, Fort Gumaer was attacked by Joseph Brant and his Tory raiders. Because of Captain Cuddeback's military strategy the fort was saved.

After Joseph Brant attacked the lower settlement on July 20, 1779, Captain Cuddeback joined the militia that pursued Brant and fought in the Battle of Minisink. He was one of the few survivors of this battle. After the war, Abraham returned to live out his life on his farm.



Anyone interested in helping in the restoration work in the Gumaer Cemetery, please contact the Minisink Valley Historical Society, Port Jervis, NY 845-856-2375.

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Joseph Brant Bus Tour Update

The July 20th bus tour is sold out. Tickets will be sent out on July 1st, by e-mail or by regular mail if we do not have an e-mail address.

The August 24th bus tour has only ten seats left. Those tickets will be sent out on August 1st. Reservation Forms are available at Town Hall; Town of Deerpark Museum; or on the Museum Website.