

# ON THE LEVEL



## THE CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

# CANAL MUSEUM AT WATERLOO

*Waterloo has had a long and complicated history. Although it is now a restored canal town, it isn't that long ago that people lived here. Strangely, until now, it has been these recent times that we have known the least about.*

By Tim Roth

It was on June 1st, 1975 that the Canal Society of New Jersey's museum first opened to the public in a small building on the east end of Waterloo Village. According to an article written by Bob Goller for the *Towpath Post* (the predecessor to *On the Level*), the day started with a meeting in the Methodist Church, followed by a luncheon in the gristmill. The opening was presided over by CSNJ President Clayton Smith and his wife Mary Ann, and Waterloo proprietors Percival Leach and Louis Gualandi. Since then, hundreds of people have visited the museum every year to view the collection of photographs, paintings, models and artifacts from both the Morris and D&R Canals, some exhibits

dating from the museum's opening almost half a century ago.

But what about the history of this building prior to its opening as a public venue? According to John (Rick) Giles in *The Story of Waterloo Village: From Colonial Forge to Canal Town*, the museum was built around 1860 as a simple tenant house, with just a parlor and kitchen on the



Waterloo Village Director Percy Leach, Mary Ann Smith, and President Clayton Smith pose in front of the newly dedicated Canal Society Museum in 1975. This building had, up until then, been a private residence but would soon be filled with exhibits and staff by CSNJ volunteers.

first floor, and two bedrooms on the second. Its sister is the Poyeur House, built during the same time period, and containing a mirror-image floor plan. It is currently isolated and abandoned on the opposite side of the river. Its interior so covered with graffiti that *Weird N.J.* has added the house to its list of Garden State oddities. The museum, on the other hand, survives as one of the best-preserved former residences at Waterloo.

Another big piece of the museum's history was recently filled (*Continued on page 2*)

*In this view, taken sometime in the 1940s from the back door of the building that is now the Canal Museum, Harrison Smith is seen carefully tending his garden. The White Barn in the background is seen looking very much as it does today.*





# CANAL MUSEUM AT WATERLOO

*(Continued from 1)*

in when the Canal Society was contacted by Diane Ketchum, who is a descendant of former residents of the canal museum. Her great-grandfather, Harrison Smiths (no relation to the Percival Smiths) and his wife Minnie Hildebandt Smith once made the small tenant house their home. Mr. Smith was a Morris Canal boat captain, likely having piloted his boat through the village where he lived, and he remained a resident of the house long after the canal's usefulness. His biggest passion during his later years was gardening, and Ms. Ketchum provided a collection of photographs including that of Mr. Smith posing proudly alongside his garden behind the house. Although it has mostly returned to nature, the garden survives outside the backdoor of our museum.

After Harrison Smith's death in 1947, his wife Minnie continued residing in the house until her death in 1966. In the collection were photos of Mrs. Smith posing with relatives around the beautiful garden and in the house parlor at Christmastime. A newspaper article shows four generations of women sitting on the parlor sofa, including Ms. Ketchum's sister. Both Mr. and Mrs. Smith are buried at Union Cemetery in Stanhope, and their tombstones can be found by the road on its north side.

The only significant changes made to the house during its more than 100

years as a residence was the addition of a centered front window on the second floor, and a bathroom to replace the outhouse that existed well into the 20th century. It is unknown to this author whether there were any residents during the nine years prior to the museum opening, or the veracity of the claim that a village school teacher once resided in the building.

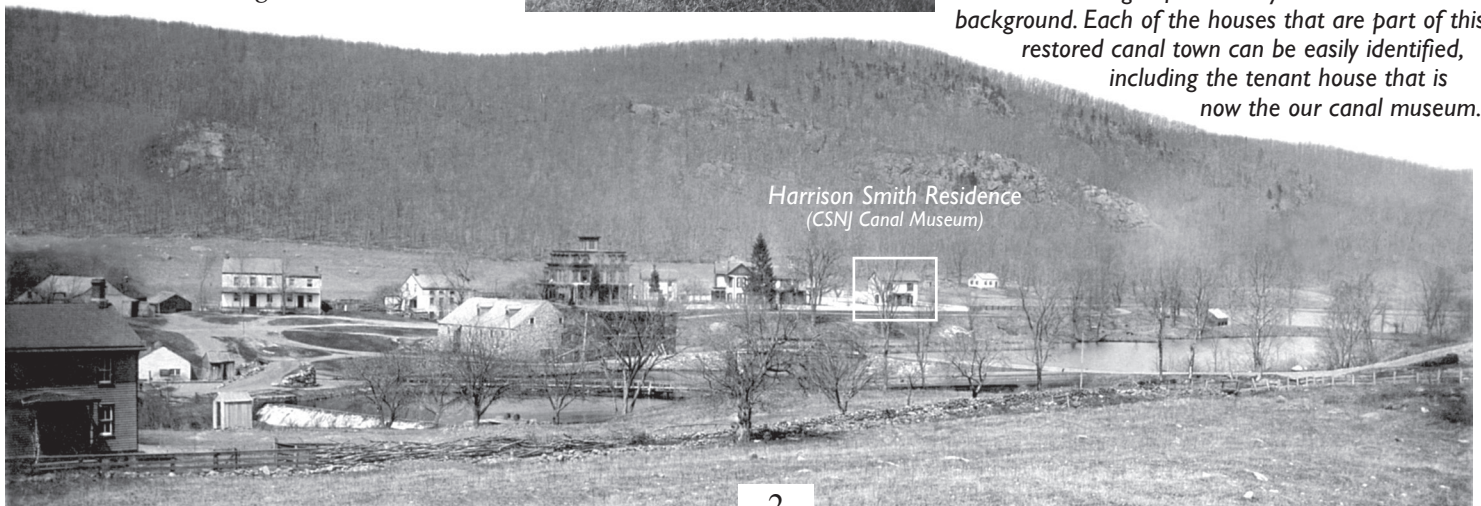
No worse for wear after more than 160 years, the former little house that is home to the Canal Society's museum continues to operate into the 21st century with little change to its structure and architecture. Come to Waterloo and pay her a visit. On Saturdays in-season, you can come inside and see the wonderful exhibits about New Jersey's canals. ■



*TOP: In these family album photos, taken in the 1940s, Harrison Smith is seen standing by the picket fence at the back of his garden with the White Barn in the background.*

*ABOVE & LEFT: Harrison's wife Minnie Smith visits with relatives in the garden with other Waterloo buildings in the background.*

*BELOW: In this winter photo taken in the early 1900s, Waterloo is seen surrounded by open farmland with the ridge of Allamuchy Mountain in the background. Each of the houses that are part of this restored canal town can be easily identified, including the tenant house that is now the our canal museum.*



*Harrison Smith Residence  
(CSNJ Canal Museum)*



# COMMODORE ROBERT F. STOCKTON

## THE D&R CANAL'S "FIGHTING BOB"

*Robert F. Stockton was a man of many contradictions. His interests in the D&R Canal put him at loggerheads with those intent on building the Camden & Amboy Railroad. Although he was never afraid of a fight, he joined forces with others to form The Joint Companies, whose monopoly privileges allowed them to rule New Jersey transportation and politics.*

By John Prieto

During the first half of the nineteenth century, few individuals approached the impact made on American military, political and industrial history more than Robert Field Stockton. His capricious nature was often a problem for those around him but usually served the purposes of his pursuit of honor and glory.

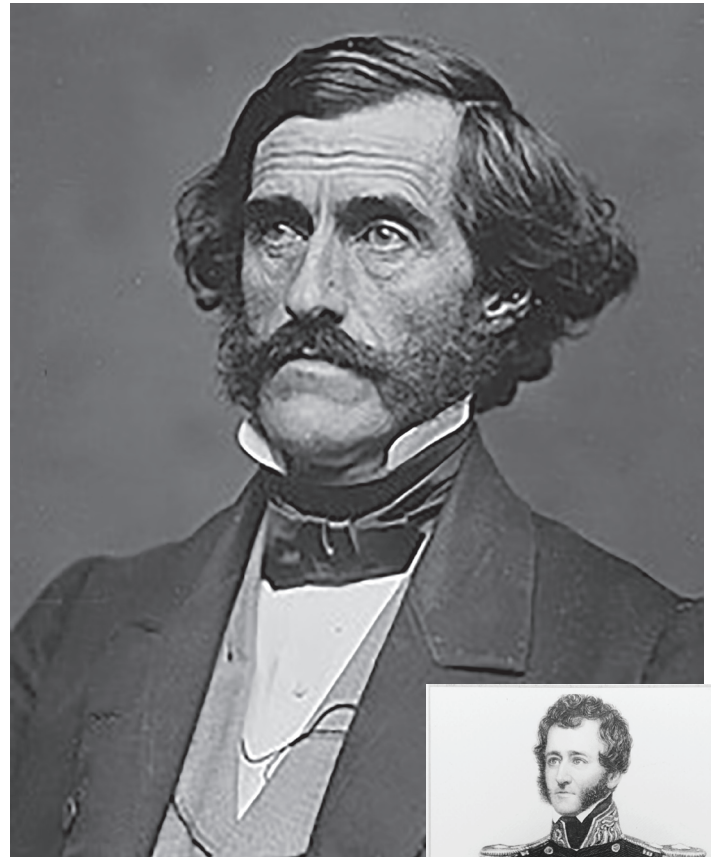
Robert Stockton hailed from Princeton and was born into a political family. His father was a U.S. senator and representative; his grandfather was a judge, New Jersey attorney general and signer of the Declaration of Independence. Robert Stockton attended the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) until he left at age 15 to join the U.S. Navy. As a midshipman, he saw action in the War of 1812, earning him the nickname "Fighting Bob" during the battle for Baltimore. It was noted by his superiors that he possessed a "zeal and promptitude" that made him appear to be everywhere at once.

He then commanded ships that took him to Africa, where he fought the slave trade and negotiated a land deal to establish Liberia. He sailed to the Caribbean where he chased pirates. His actions near Cuba put him at odds with his superiors, after which he was relieved of command of his ship; for a time he sat idle in the Carolinas "awaiting orders."

Stockton moved back to Princeton where he became interested in politics. Over the years, he had gained a reputation for being bold and chivalrous, but sometimes pugnacious. He exhibited oratorical skills and was editor of his newspaper, the *New Jersey Patriot*. He also became a delegate for Somerset County, during which he started a brawl on the floor of the state convention.

In 1826, Stockton was called back into military service to survey naval facilities along the southern coast for a brief time, after which he settled in Georgia to start a sugar cane business.

It was around this time that the Northeast witnessed a great momentum in transportation. The notion of "internal improvements" generated interest in the public mind, especially with the Erie and Morris canals. There were those in New Jersey who believed that a canal across the "waist" of the state was also of great importance.



*Stockton's portrait as a dashing young naval officer matched his reputation and his exploits. In his later years he became a hardnosed businessman, president of the D&R Canal and partner in the Joint Companies. Never one to miss a fight or a dispute, he could wield a pen as skillfully as a sword.*

An initial attempt by New Jersey to begin construction of the Delaware & Raritan (D&R) Canal failed in 1826. Finally in 1830 the state legislature granted charters for the D&R Canal as well as the Camden & Amboy (C&A) Railroad. The state decided it would not undertake the work.

Stockton's sugar cane venture ultimately failed; he then turned his sights on the D&R Canal. He soon found that stock subscriptions for the canal were waning, so he assembled the necessary backing by using his personal funds as well as those from his family. To avoid competition, the

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# ROBERT F. STOCKTON

## “FIGHTING BOB”

(Continued from page 3)

D&R Canal and the C&A Railroad were soon merged; the resultant Joint Companies were then granted exclusive privileges to assure that the needed work would be completed. In return, the companies gave the state shares of its stock, paid transit duties and agreed to reduced fares. In principle, Stockton was against monopolies but defended their use in aid of the Joint Companies. Stockton became the D&R Canal's first president.

By the late 1830s, Stockton returned to military service. He became interested in ship design and aimed to construct a steamship of war, which resulted in the birth of the USS *Princeton*. Its powerful guns, one of which was known as the “Peacemaker,” were being demonstrated in 1844 when a firing accident took the lives of six people including the U.S. secretaries of State and Navy.

By now a commodore, Stockton then was sent to the West Coast at the start of the Mexican-American War; his eventual victory led to the taking of California as a U.S. territory without

specific orders to do so. He spent a few more years in the military and resigned from the Navy in 1850.

Upon his return to New Jersey and despite his misgivings about entering politics, he was elected as U.S. Senator, only to resign two years later. During his time in the senate, he spoke passionately of his thoughts on a wide variety of topics, including colonization, U.S. intervention in foreign lands, military punishment and efficiency, and support for Native Americans. His name was mentioned as a potential candidate for Navy secretary and even U.S. President. He instead focused on his work with the D&R Canal of which he resumed his presidency. He served as president until his passing in 1866, when the D&R had its peak year for freight.

Robert Stockton was indeed a man of paradox: he exercised “creative disobedience” toward his military superiors; he espoused peace but made war; he fought against

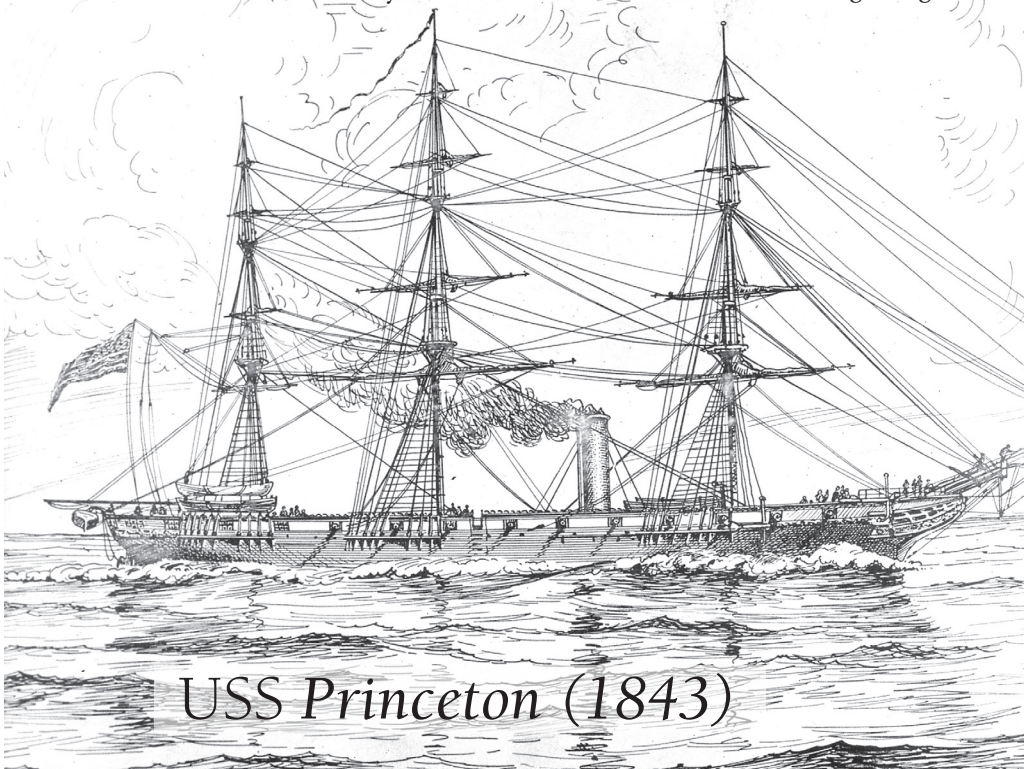
slavery but likely owned them on his sugar cane property; he fought against monopolies while protecting his business interests.

In his later years, he wrote opinions on the formation of the Joint Companies and defended New Jersey's arrangement regarding monopoly privileges. He praised the resulting benefits of the project for the state's citizens, such as increased wealth and improved roads. He worked to fight off the challenges to the monopoly and was successful at defeating state and federal lawsuits. In letters to the *New York Evening Post* in 1864, Stockton rebutted the comments of a “Citizen of New Jersey” regarding “odious” monopolies as mistaken; in another, Stockton likened the original charter as a “franchise” for the Joint Companies which sought to exclude the “unscrupulous cupidity of speculators.”

At his core, however, Stockton was a staunch and unrelenting advocate of the internal improvements of his beloved New Jersey. He proudly boasted that the state in its wisdom refused to become burdened with public debt from its projects and refused to let “ruinous competition” creep into the process.

Stockton always felt he suffered undue criticism in his efforts to save the D&R Canal, believing that its existence was unquestionably beneficial for New Jersey. While contemplating his epitaph and attempting to vindicate his course of action, Stockton once said: “Despite harsh judgment from my fellow citizens, my memory will be cherished with respect.” ■

In the 1840s, Robert Stockton worked with inventor John Ericsson, designer the famous Civil War ironclad USS Monitor, to build a steam-powered, propeller-driven warship. The ship was built in Philadelphia and named after the Stockton's family home in Princeton. Ericsson used many of his revolutionary ideas in the design of the ship and Stockton used his influence to supply the financing and political support. Stockton used some of these same ideas to develop steam powered vessel for the D&R Canal.



USS Princeton (1843)



# THE MORRIS CANAL GREENWAY AT PORT MURRAY

By Tim Roth

Port Murray is one of two Morris Canal villages (the second being Port Colden) that was named after a president of the Morris Canal & Banking Company, and its village mostly maintains the look of a Morris Canal port town. Warren County, in conjunction with



ABOVE: WCPF volunteer Steve Deldonno works to repair the boardwalk needed to complete this section of Greenway trail.

BELOW: Walking west along the Greenway trail you will emerge from the trees onto open farmland. Here the towpath follows a water-filled canal with farm fields beyond stretching into the distance, making this one of the most scenic canal walks you will find.

the Warren County Parks Foundation (WCPF), has been hard at work developing and improving two great sites in Port Murray.

The first site is the Port Murray preserve on Hoffman Road. From the parking lot trailhead, you will descend a hill that paralleled Plane 5 East, which was the last eastward ascent along the “11-mile level” between Port Murray and Saxton Falls. Some recent clearing was completed by the WCPF at the plane’s foot, where sleeper stones and retention walls are now visible.

Following Brickyard Road to the left leads to the spur trail to the plane’s turbine chamber and tailrace tunnel. Warren County has recently installed fencing and gates around these sites to make them safer for hikers. You may notice that the chamber, which is usually 20 feet below ground, is actually higher than ground level. This is due to significant excavation by the Terra Cotta Brick



The landscape here at Plane 7 West is so altered that this short section of stone sleepers at the very bottom of the plane is the only place we can see its original configuration.

Company after the canal’s abandonment. Interpretive signage is planned for this area.

From the entrance of the spur trail, follow Brickyard Road about a half mile to the west and you will come to a towpath trail along a nicely watered section of canal. At the west end, the vista opens up to provide a beautiful view of Warren County farmland. A bench has recently been placed on this end by the Warren County Parks Foundation so hikers can take a rest before heading back. Please do not proceed beyond Harts Lane, as this is private property.

The second site from the Cherry Tree Bend Road trailhead of-  
(Continued on page 6)





# GREENWAY AT PORT MURRAY



When the Morris Canal was abandoned in the 1920s the Pittsburgh Terra Cotta & Lumber Company acquired the property and began quarrying operations that destroyed most of the alignment of inclined. Fortunately, the massive stone work of the turbine chamber and part of the tailrace tunnel was just too much trouble to dismantle. They quarried around them leaving what would have normally been buried underground exposed for us to admire. One side of the turbine chamber was undermined and has fallen away and the end of the tailrace tunnel has been cut short to allow for an access road to the quarry pit beyond.

*(Continued from page 5)*

fers a much shorter hike. The trail descends to canal level, and a boardwalk takes you across the prism to the towpath, and then westward to the Port Murray basin. This was once a place of great activity. In addition

to canal boats stopping for the night and on Sundays, or completing needed repairs at the adjacent boatyard, baptisms also took place here by parishioners of the Baptist Church on the hill overlooking the basin. During the winter months, ice cutting

took place on the basin. The WCPF has also been busy at this site, repairing and painting the boardwalk.

Now that the winter weather has exposed these interesting remains, it's perfect time to explore these two Port Murray sites. ■

## HIGHLANDS CANAL BOAT PRESERVATION

In 2016 the remains of a canal boat were discovered in Highlands New Jersey. We visited the site and established that it was the front half of a Morris Canal hinge boat. This was an incredibly rare find. Eventually the property owner donated the boat the Canal Society and we transported it in pieces to Waterloo Village. The bow of the boat along with other original canal boat artifact are now on display as a part of our Canal Boat Exhibit.

Despite its massive size and weight the bow of the canal boat is a delicious artifact that is well over 100 years old. To make sure it will remain in good condition, this past fall, we hired professionals to do some conservation work. Gary McGowan of Cultural Preservation & Restoration, Inc. carefully cleaned the bow,

inspected for insects, consolidated wood that was deteriorating and repaired and replaced pieces that had become detached. ■



ABOVE: Gary McGowan and CSNJ Vice President Tim Roth inspect an original canal boat rudder post.  
LEFT: CSNJ board member Bruce Blondina (center) joins Tim and Gary to discuss the completion of the project.

# D&R CANAL 2024 WALKS AND EVENTS

*These walks and events are sponsored by the D&R Canal Watch. Contact information for Program Leaders is listed below. If emailing for information, please use "D&R Canal" in subject header.*

**D&R Canal Watch, [www.canalwatch.org](http://www.canalwatch.org)  
D&R Canal State Park, [www.dandrcanal.org](http://www.dandrcanal.org)**

**Program Leaders: Bob Barth, 201-401-3121, [bbarth321@aol.com](mailto:bbarth321@aol.com); Pierre Lacombe, [pjlacombe25@gmail.com](mailto:pjlacombe25@gmail.com); Herve and Anne Barrier, 908-670-5743, [hb9955@gmail.com](mailto:hb9955@gmail.com).**

## **Sunday, January 21: 2:00 p.m. Presentation on the D&R Canal.**

In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the park, the East Millstone Historical Society invites you to a talk about the history and workings of the canal by D&R Canal Watch president Linda Barth. The meeting will begin at 2:00 p.m. at the Millstone Valley Fire Department, 2365 Amwell Road (Route 514), East Millstone. \$10 donation is suggested. No registration. Questions can be emailed to [e.millstonehistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:e.millstonehistoricalsociety@gmail.com).

## **Sunday, February 4: 10:00 a.m.**

Towpath Walk, Demott Lane to Landing Lane. 4.2 miles roundtrip. Meet at Demott Lane off Easton Avenue, Franklin Township. (GPS 1289 Easton Avenue, Somerset NJ 08873). View work on the Landing Lane bridge. Leader: Bob Barth.

## **Saturday, March 9: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

Geology walk and talk along the D&R Feeder Canal near Scudder Falls. Meet at the Scudder Falls parking lot just off Route 29 (River Road), near the intersection of River Road and Bernard Drive, Ewing. Much of the walk will be along the towpath, however, walk will include short hikes up and down steep hills to view rock outcrops. Walk led by Pierre Lacombe, retired USGS geologist, [pjlacombe25@gmail.com](mailto:pjlacombe25@gmail.com)

## **Saturday, March 23: 10:00 a.m.**

History Bike Ride, Griggstown Causeway to Kingston, 10 miles roundtrip on the D&R Canal towpath. Explore the structures along the D&R Canal with Canal Watch trustee Bob Barth. Meet in the causeway parking lot in Griggstown. Bring water; helmet required. Allow three hours. Leader: Bob Barth.

## **Sunday, April 7: 10:00 a.m.**

Towpath Walk, Weston Canal lot to East Millstone, 4.2 miles roundtrip. See the spillway at Somerset County's Colonial Park and the newly restored bridgetender's station in East Millstone. Leader: Bob Barth.

## **Saturday, April 13: 2:00 p.m.**

Nature Walk: Meet at the historic Van Wickle House off Easton Avenue at the foot of DeMott Lane (GPS 1289 Easton Avenue, Somerset NJ 08873). See and hear Baltimore and Orchard Orioles and other nesting songbirds as we walk along the D&R Canal and identify the nature around us. Leaders: Herve and Anne Barrier.

## **Robert F. Stockton Addendum**

On July 3, 1982 the Canal Society of New Jersey on their third UK canal study tour presented a plaque about the *Robert F. Stockton* to William Laird & Son, Recheck, the builder of the vessel in 1838. The presentation was made in the board room of Cammell Laird Shipbuilders, Ltd., (member of British Shipbuilders) in the Maritime England year 1982. Our group was served a wonderful meal by Cammell Laird. The trip was led by Bill McKelvey.

# THANK YOU MEMBERS

In October we sent our annual appeal for donations letter to all our members and friends. The response was great. To all of you who made generous donations, please accept our thanks for your support. Your contributions will go toward funding the many projects we have planned for 2024. ■

## CSNJ EVENTS

This Spring the Canal Society will once again be greeting folks at a number of public events. Please join us or volunteer to help out. Watch for emails with the latest information or visit the CSNJ web site for details.

### **Canal Society Program Meetings**

– January 19<sup>th</sup> –  
– March 15<sup>th</sup> –

### **Macculloch Hall Lecture Series**

– February 25<sup>th</sup> –  
– March 10<sup>th</sup> –  
– April 14<sup>th</sup> –

### **Pathways of History**

– May 4 & 5<sup>th</sup> –

### **Lake Hopatcong Block Party**

– May 18<sup>th</sup> –

### **Waterloo Canal Day**

– June 22<sup>nd</sup> –

## 2024 New Jersey History & Historic Preservation Conference

New Jersey City University – June 5 & 6

Keeping the story and the remains of New Jersey Towpath Canals Relevant in the 21st Century

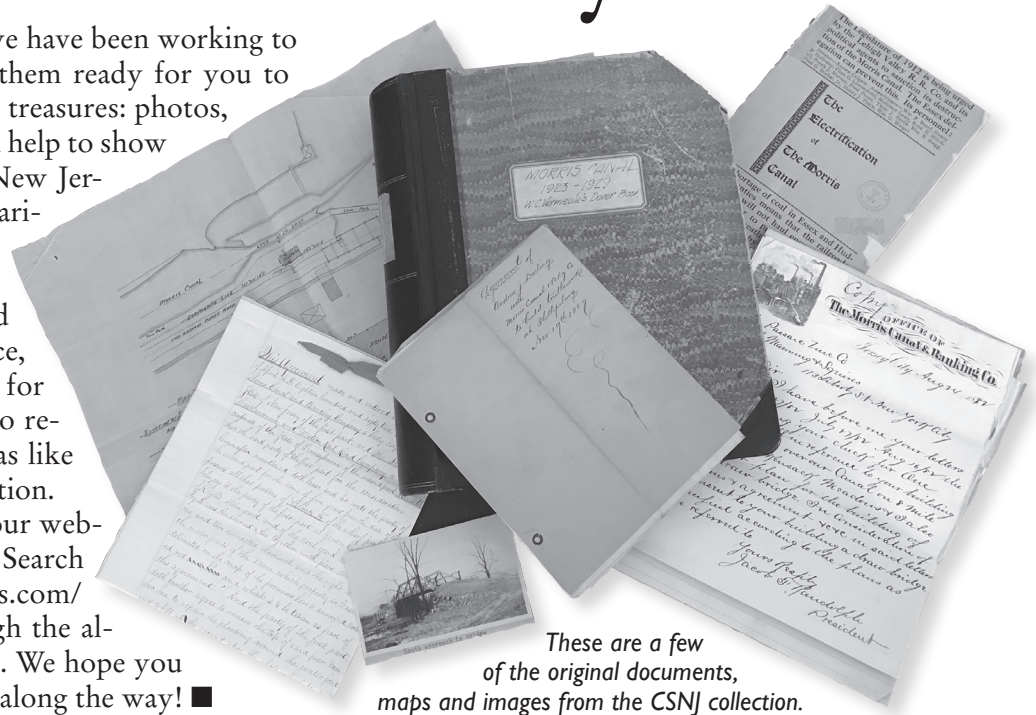


# Explore Our Canal Society Archives!

It's been years in the making...we have been working to organize our archives and get them ready for you to use. Our collection holds many treasures: photos, maps, objects and documents which help to show and explain the proud history of New Jersey's two canals, the Delaware & Raritan and the Morris.

Our new office/archives is conveniently located in Parsippany and outfitted with a suitable workspace, reading area. We are now ready for visitors to make appointments to do research and to experience what it was like to live in the era of canal transportation.

If you can't visit in person, use our website to search online. Keyword Search (<https://canalsocietynj.catalogaccess.com/search>) allows you to look through the almost 2,300 images already available. We hope you enjoy the search! Look for updates along the way! ■



These are a few of the original documents, maps and images from the CSNJ collection.

## Kingston Lock Tender's House Repairs

In 2022 the Canal Society worked with the New Jersey State Park Service and the Kingston Historical Society to fund the rebuilding of the chimney and replacing the flashings on the roof of the Kingston Lock Tender's House. We then funded work to fix the interior wall and ceiling damage caused by the chimney leak. We also worked with D&R Canal then-Superintendent Patricia Kalleser to have plexiglass covers placed over all the first-floor doors and windows of the Griggstown Mule Tenders' Barracks to help protect the building from vandalism.

This past year's projects included exterior woodwork



ABOVE: In October contractors worked to apply a new wood shake roof to the Kingston Toll Collector's House.

LEFT: The Kingston Lock Tender's House, seen here in October, is receiving a new exterior paint job.



and new gutters and leaders on the Kingston Lock Tender's House. In the fall the building got stucco repair work and a paint job. In addition, the nearby Kingston Toll Collector's House got a new cedar shake roof and new plank door and door frame.

This year we will continue to work with the State Park Service to select and fund a new list of projects to help keep the D&R's historic structures in good repair. ■