Bloomfield’s Canal Greenway

By Rich Rockwell

When the Morris Canal came to town, Bloomfield was a farming and manufacturing town with mills along its two rivers. The Morris Canal contributed to the town’s growth. It brought several coal and supply yards, mills and factories, and commercial areas. The canal and the town’s position in the greater New York metropolitan area contributed to an increase in population from 3,000 in 1850 to 15,000 in 1910.

When the Morris Canal was abandoned in the 1920s and the property was offered to local municipalities, Bloomfield purchased the five-mile canal property through town with the hopes of using it to build a rapid transit line. The transit line didn’t happen and the property sat abandoned for 30 years. In the 1950s, the town’s growing urban character that made the canal an important artery now made the vacant canal property valuable for highways. About two miles were used for the Garden State Parkway and another two miles were used to build Morris Canal Highway, which was renamed John F. Kennedy Highway.

Aqueduct over Third River in Bloomfield (foreground). James Street change bridge and the foot of Inclined Plane 11 East can be seen in the distance.

M E E T I N G S

Morris County Cultural Center
300 Mendham Road, Morris Township

Friday – May 15, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. – Refreshments at 7:10

CHALLENGES AHEAD – WATERLOO, STATE PARKS & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

MARK TEXEL, Director of the State Park Service
STEVE ELLIS, Acting Northeast Region Superintendent

Since the Waterloo Foundation for the Arts went out of business, the Canal Society has been partnering with the New Jersey State Park Service to provide historic programming at Waterloo Village. Although a lot has been accomplished, the challenge to make the Village sustainable remains a daunting task. At this meeting we will hear from the top people in charge about what is being done to keep our state parks open, how new partnerships are bringing in revenue at Waterloo, and the important roll that Canal Society volunteers play in keeping things working through these trying times.

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Bloomfield Canal

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Drive in the 1960s. We still have a small section of canal that was filled and used as a recreational trail, and we have two small non-contiguous sections that are intact, but overgrown, still owned by the town.

A few years ago, I started collaborating with Carlos Pomares, who had previously worked at Waterloo Village, and Mimi Michalski on trying to save the Collins house. The house, still standing in its original location, was on the property where Inclined Plane 11 East was built. Two generations of Collins men were canal carpenters and helped build its planes, bridges, and aqueducts. When the Morris Canal Greenway Working Group formed, I was eager to attend and learn what we might do to get our piece of the Morris Canal designated as a Greenway.

In 2013, Carlos was elected Town Councilman. With a new Mayor and Council supportive of historic preservation efforts and with Councilman Pomares’ initiative, we introduced a town ordinance to designate the path of the canal through Bloomfield as a Greenway and to form a Morris Canal Greenway Committee. The ordinance passed unanimously.

We created a committee including Bob Barth and Ron Rice as representatives of the Canal Society and canal supporters outside of Bloomfield, an architect, a Collins descendant, and the head of the town Department of Public Works. The Collins house is now included as a centerpiece of the Greenway, and Mimi Michalski and Councilman Pomares are also serving on the committee continuing efforts to preserve the Collins house. The town recently committed funds for stabilization of the Collins house and that work has begun. We plan to include public meeting space and canal museum space in the restored house. The committee is working with the town’s grant writers to apply for grants and planning a number of projects including information kiosks, way finding signs, park areas with interpretive signage and improved walking trails. Although none of the canal is intact as a watered canal, we are fortunate to have a three-mile section that is easily walkable. We hope to increase access to and visibility of...
Working with John (Rick) Giles, the author of *The Story of Waterloo Village*, often leads to interesting discoveries and a new understanding of things you thought you knew well. Rick’s skill and patience in deciphering complicated wills and deeds is amazing and his long emails always start you thinking.

Over this past winter Rick started plotting out some of the Smith family deeds and discovered a reference to a building that is no longer standing, and for which we had no other... (Continued on page 3)
These walks and events are sponsored by the D&R Canal Watch. The walks are free, but donations are welcome and appreciated. For additional information contact Bob Barth at 201-401-3121 or bbarth@att.net.

WALKS

These walks are part of a series of interpretive hikes that will give walkers an opportunity to explore the D&R Canal from the northern end of the feeder canal at Bull’s Island to Landing Lane in New Brunswick.

Sunday, June 14 – 10:00 a.m. (Walk 6)
Hike 5.8 miles from the Trenton Battle Monument to Port Mercer (the meeting place) or choose the 2.9-mile walk to Carnegie Road. Questions? Contact Bob Barth at 201-401-3121 or bbarth@att.net.

Saturday, June 20 – 10 a.m.
History Bike Tour on the towpath from Kingston to Griggstown and back, 10 miles round trip. Explore the structures along the D&R Canal with Canal Watch trustee Bob Barth. Meet at the locktender’s home in Kingston. Bring water; helmet required. Questions? Contact Bob Barth at 201-401-3121 or bbarth@att.net.

Sunday, June 28 – 2:00 p.m.
Canal Watch Annual Meeting at the Griggstown Muletenders Barracks, 4 Griggstown Causeway, Princeton. Guest speaker Jim Amon will discuss how the canal park changed during his 30 years with the Canal Commission. Questions? Contact Linda Barth at 908-240-0488 or barthlinda123@aol.com.

Sunday, July 26 – 10:00 a.m. (Walk 7)
Hike 5.6 miles from Carnegie Road to Alexander Road (the meeting place) or choose the 2.9-mile walk to Port Mercer. Leader: Bob Barth, 201-401-3121; bbarth@att.net.

Saturday, August 8 – 10:00 a.m. (Walk 8)
Hike 5.7 miles from Alexander Road to Rocky Hill (the meeting place is the large parking lot off Laurel Avenue) or choose the 3.8-mile walk to Kingston. Leader: Bob Barth, 201-401-3121; bbarth@att.net.

Saturday, September 26 – 10:00 a.m. (Walk 9)
Hike 6.6 miles from Rocky Hill to Blackwells Mills Causeway (the meeting place) or choose the 3.1-mile walk to Griggstown. Leader: Bob Barth, 201-401-3121; bbarth@att.net.

2015 Industrial Heritage Walks

May through September

May 23 – Denville to Rockaway – Morris Canal Greenway
June 13 – Morris Canal Inclined Planes – Ledgewood
July 11 – Decker-Kincaid – Homestead, Mines & Forge Site
August 15 – Stanhope – Iron & Canal Town
September 13 – Lake Hopatcong – Morris Canal Feeder

Industrial Heritage Walks are sponsored by the Morris County Park Commission
For information & reservations, please e-mail: macgraphics1@verizon.net or call 973-292-2755

Throughout 2015, the Passaic County Department of Planning and Economic Development will offer a series of walks to promote the Morris Canal Greenway in Passaic County.

Sunday, May 17 – 12:00 Noon
Little Falls – Meet at the Woodland Park Library and walk the Greenway route from Woodland Park to Little Falls.

Sunday, Sep 27 – 12:00 Noon
Wayne – Meet at Clifton Canal Park and explore the Greenway route along Broad Street.

Sunday, Oct. 18 – 12:00 Noon
Pompton Lakes – Meet on Mathes Ave. in Pompton Lakes and explore the northern end of the Greenway.

For more information: www.passaiccountynj.org MorrisCanalGreenway
Joe Macasek
macgraphics1@verizon.net

Thanks for being Members!
All the things we do: Waterloo programming, Morris Canal Greenway, advocating for historic preservation, tours and events, are all made possible by your help and support. If you didn’t care, we couldn’t do the things we do.
Joe Macasek, President CSNJ macgraphics1@verizon.net
This new, 160-page book is a mile-by-mile, turn-by-turn guide for following the Morris Canal from Phillipsburg to Jersey City. Each section has a detailed map with GPS data, points of interest, a list of facilities, directions, historical commentary, and photos.

To order, send a check for $25 per copy (plus $5.00 shipping), payable to:

Jakob Franke
424 Tappan Road
Northvale, NJ 07647-1418
201-768-3612
jf31@columbia.edu

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In Memoriam
Frederick A. Heide

Long-time Canal Society member Fred Heide passed away at home on Jan 26, 2015, at age 73. Fred regularly attended CSNJ program meetings and events and was an enthusiastic participant in CSNJ travel programs, both domestic and abroad. He also traveled extensively with various rail groups and on his own, with many trips to Germany and Holland to visit friends and extended family. He was past president of both the Jersey Central Railroad Historical Society and the Tri-State Railway Historical Society.

Fred was a graduate of Lehigh University with a B.S. in civil engineering. He was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, retiring as a major in the Air Force Reserve in 1993. While a student, he had worked at his family’s metalworking business in Hillside, NJ and began his engineering career with International Pipe and Foundry in Parsippany. Since 1980, Fred had been a draftsman and engineer at Star Trak, Inc., Boonton, N.J., working on the restoration of historic railcars.

M&E Railroad Map showing Waterloo in 1852.

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We also came across an 1852 map (provided by Ron Rice) that showed the planned extention of the Morris & Essex Railroad. The mapmaker had carefully drawn in the original iron Company’s tramway connection with the Morris Canal at Waterloo and each of the buildings that stood along Waterloo Road at that time. This evidence seems to confirm that the tramway connected with the canal west of the stone worker’s house. To depict this new information we created the map on page 3.

Next time we will look at the complex arrangement of buildings around the lock.

Field Guide to the Morris Canal

This new, 160-page book is a mile-by-mile, turn-by-turn guide for following the Morris Canal from Phillipsburg to Jersey City. Each section has a detailed map with GPS data, points of interest, a list of facilities, directions, historical commentary, and photos.

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the JFK Drive section, increase connections to other recreation areas and trails, expand the Greenway through Essex County, and connect to neighboring Greenway projects.
Enjoy a tour of the newly completed phase two of the Lock 2 East restoration project together with a whole day of entertainment featuring performances by ten of NJ's best musical artists, narrated canal boat rides, Crafts & Art Show, great food, Civil War encampment, blacksmith demonstrations, pony & hay rides, fireworks and lots more!!!

Contractors use modern tools to reconstruct the massive wooden miter gates as part of the Lock 2 East restoration project in Wharton.

The Canal Society of New Jersey received an operating support grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State.