

SUMMER 2022

THE CANAWLER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE D&H CANAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 23 | HIGHFALLS, NY 12440



GRAND OPENING

D&H Canal Museum and Mid-Hudson Visitor Center

SOCIETY UPDATES

On June 18, the D&H Canal Historical Society hosted the grand opening of the D&H Canal Museum and Mid-Hudson Visitor Center in the historic DePuy Tavern. Built in 1797, this National Historic Landmark was at the center of canal-related activity in High Falls. After a 7 year and \$2 million restoration and renovation project, the Society hopes to return the building to its status as a hub of activity during the years the Canal was in operation and beyond. With 150 people in attendance on opening day and over 1600 since then, this vision is quickly becoming a reality.

The new museum features interactive exhibits and relevant artifacts that invite visitors to explore the significance of the Canal. The Visitor Center provides amenities such as public restrooms, a curated book and gift shop featuring local artists and makers, and a virtual concierge system. Visitors can find information about the region by exploring this interactive map that highlights over 100 tourist attractions within 50 miles of High Falls. Connecting visitors to a range of nature and recreation, food and culture, and arts and history sights and activities within the Mid-Hudson Region, it encourages locals and regional travelers alike to experience new places.

The facility is open everyday from 10a-5p through the end of September. Winter hours will be Thursday through Monday from 10a-4p. The suggested donation is \$10 per person for free for members who have donated to the Society in the calendar year.

We have planned a full slate of programs to celebrate being open to the public for the first time since 2019, when the museum was located around the corner at 23 Mohonk Road. Check out www.canalmuseum.org/ events for details. The Visitor Center is available for event rentals to host community and civic groups, local businesses, or your private event. Please email info@canalmuseum.org for more information and to make a reservation.

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IN REMEMBRANCE

The Society would like to honor the memory of long time board member and volunteer, Grace Schoonmaker. Grace Gardner Marek Schoonmaker passed away July 7, 2022 in Kingston, NY. Born June 25, 1925 in New York City to Grace and Frank Marek, but was orphaned at an early age. She was raised by her grandmother Mary “Mini” Sterling and when Grace was 8 they moved upstate to Gardiner, where she resided until she married her husband, the late Clifford “Hebe” Schoonmaker in 1945.

After graduating from The State Teacher’s College in New Paltz (now SUNY New Paltz), Grace became a 6th grade teacher and set the path to being a lifelong teacher and guide. Grace was a devoted mother and passionate volunteer. Many decades of girls and boys developed their leadership, sewing and cooking skills under her direction through her 4-H clubs. She continued teaching as a substitute in Rondout elementary schools, Sunday School at various churches, United States Power Squadrons boating safety courses, and summers hosting her many grandchildren—dubbed “Camp Grandma”.

Grace also dedicated her time to the Society for well over 20 years. In 2001, she received a volunteer award

at the members’ dinner for her many years of outstanding service in the Education Program. She began her service on the Board of Directors in 2002 and remained a key player to the end, always the one to call the board meeting to a close. We thank Grace for her guidance, sharing her knowledge, and most importantly spreading kindness to the board and staff as well as all the youth who passed through the museum doors.



GRAND OPENING HIGHLIGHT

The D&H Canal Historical Society has been fortunate to have the support of invaluable and skillful board members, consultants, and staff to steward the renovation of the DePuy Tavern as the new D&H Canal Museum and Mid-Hudson Visitor Center. To expand upon the recap shared in this season's issue of *The Canawler*, we are highlighting remarks from the Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting on June 18, 2022. They are from only a handful of the people who have dedicated countless hours towards this project over the last 7(+!) years.

Jack Braunlein, Executive Director:

Although in planning for several years, the process that culminates in today's ceremony actually began with the acquisition of the Depuy Tavern in 2015, thanks to grants we received from Open Space Institute and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Then began the long process of working with consultants, trade firms, and funders. It's been a great and dizzying journey. Everyone has been so enthusiastic about the work. It has been a team effort of staff, board, advisory board, consultants, tradespeople, artists, and fabricators—everyone working together in such a deliberate fashion that it has been quite inspirational.

Bill Merchant, Deputy Director for Collections, Historian and Curator:

Thank you so much for joining us today, this has been a decade in the making! Do you believe in magic? This project has been magical. The best board and staff you'll ever find has worked diligently to create this exciting new facility and managed to have fun doing it. We are immensely proud of what we have achieved. The 1968 listing of the D&H Canal specifically mentioned the DePuy Tavern and stated that the D&H Canal Historical Society would like to acquire it for the museum. I am proud to say that we have now accomplished that. Thank you all for your support.

Christina Ferwerda, Exhibit Design Consultant:

I am appreciative of the opportunity to work locally—my work often takes me far around the country and when people ask “where can I see your work” its nice to be able to bring them 5 minutes down the road. As part of the planning process, we invited people from the community to share what they knew and didn't know about the Canal, as well as what they'd hoped and dreamed for in the museum. I hope that the public can see their ideas reflected in the new museum. Working within the 1797 building was such a unique



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opportunity. Some designers would see this as a challenge, but we were able to take it as an opportunity to showcase the historic nature of the building, by highlighting fireplaces, cupboards, etc. The exhibits are designed as a springboard—rather than telling the ENTIRE story, they’re designed to provoke curiosity for programs, events, and additional information that the staff can provide. I can’t wait to see what the Society dreams up to provide more information for the public!

Allan Bowdery, Board Vice President:

My role has been to shepherd the physical renovations to the building. Since we have an easement with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, all work, exterior and interior, had to be approved by them as historically appropriate in addition to meeting ADA requirements. We have tried to leave as much of the original character as possible.

The 1797 builders did a marvelous job of creating a stone structure that remains sound after 225 years. We replaced the roof and strengthened the roof framing. The lean-to addition along route 213 was also replaced. All the existing electrical wiring throughout the building was removed and replaced with metal clad wiring, new breaker boxes, and new LED lighting. The heating and cooling systems have also been replaced with highly efficient air source heat pumps. There is filtration and ultraviolet disinfection built into the main systems as well as separate, better than HEPA, air filtration units installed on both floors. All plumbing has also been replaced.

The paint colors were selected based on historic paint analysis. One of the samples taken had at least 30 coats of paint. We chose the colors based on those used around 1850, as that was the year that the D&H Canal Company purchased the building. Most of the floors

are the original wide-board flooring, patched with copper where necessary. We left one of the ceilings open so that visitors can see the 1797 hand-hewn beams supporting the second floor.

Many people and entities have done this work for us, all of whom are listed on the plaque in the Visitor Center. The quality of their work has been of the highest caliber and I’m sure you will agree when you see the inside.

Courtney Conte, Director of the Mid-Hudson Visitor Center and Assistant Curator:

I started working at the museum in 2018, lucky enough to get a job in my field while still in graduate school. I started out as a docent and have been fortunate enough to work my way up to Assistant Curator and Director of the Mid-Hudson Visitor Center.

The Visitor Center space will offer the community and visitors numerous amenities. The interactive concierge system includes over 100 sites from around the Hudson Valley divided by category or location. The space will be used for pop-up events starting in the fall. We also have a revitalized store with new products and old favorites.

Thank you for joining us as we celebrate the culmination of one journey and the start of another.

We hope to see you at the museum and visitor center soon!



UPCOMING EVENTS

The D&H Canal Historical Society announced its public programs for the remainder of 2022. They include an exciting new series titled *Makers of History*, presented by residents of the Hudson Valley whose work is of national and even international importance; the Society's traditional presentations about the Canal and other subjects of local history; and special pop-up events by a wide variety of regional organizations. All programs will be held in the Mid-Hudson Visitor Center.

The first program in the *Makers of History* series is scheduled for October 14 and features Malia Du Mont, a member of our Advisory Board. Malia served as Director of Policy of the Defense Department in the Obama Administration and was awarded the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service. She has lived in China, speaks Mandarin, and is an expert on the Chinese military and its territorial ambitions, which is the subject of her talk. She now serves as Chief of Staff to President Leon Botstein at Bard.

The second talk, on November 18, will be by Dr. Casimir DeCusatis of Marist, a world renowned expert on cyber security. He will discuss cyberterrorism, ransomware, hacking and other related issues. Additional speakers are being lined up and program dates and subjects will be promoted as they are available. Each Makers of History event has a suggested donation of \$15 per participant. Sign up for our email newsletter at www.canalmuseum.org/newsletter to receive updates!



“Rondout, Then and Now,” a presentation by Stephen Blauweiss

Friday, September 23 from 7-8pm

“Roebling’s D&H Canal Aqueducts,” a lecture by Professor Paul King

Friday, October 7 from 7-8pm

Five Locks Walk Tour as part of Path Through History Tour

Sunday, October 9 from 2-3p

Maker of History Series featuring Malia Du Mont

Friday, October 14 from 7-8p

“Life After Cement: Adaptive Reuse of Cement Mines,” a lecture by Henry Lowengard

Friday, October 21 from 7-8p

“The D&H Canal, 19th Century Engine of Prosperity,” a presentation from Bill Merchant

Friday, November 4 from 7-8pm

Makers of History Series featuring Dr. Casimir DeCusatis

Friday, November 18 from 7-8p

Wine Tasting Fundraiser with Kevin Zraly, world-renowned expert on wine education

Friday, December 2, 7p, online tickets available soon

Note: More information on all events including cost is available on our website at www.canalmuseum.org/events.

Correction: In the program for the Hudson Valley Hero Dinner, we incorrectly listed Jean Lerner as a Trails Hero, when it should have been attributed to Friends of the Shawangunks.

Supporters of the D&H Canal Museum and Mid-Hudson Visitor Center

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Early Major Support and Work

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*Our mission is to highlight the
importance of the D&H Canal and
preserve its stories, landscapes, and artifacts.*

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Design by Kayla Altland

CURATOR'S CORNER

Do you see what we see? As part of our ongoing research of relevant topics, people, and endeavors related to the D&H Canal, one area of interest has been women on the Canal. They played an important role in the Canal's operation, but their stories often went undocumented. Until recently, we only knew of one picture of a girl hoggee along the Canal.

In July, Bill, Historian and Curator, and I visited the Ellenville Public Library and Museum to view their extensive collection of D&H Canal photos. One topic of conversation with our colleagues at the Library was the representation of women along the Canal. While browsing through one of the albums, I spotted something in one of the photos that caught my attention—a skirt. We had unearthed something we didn't think existed, a *second* photo of a girl hoggee! Take a close look at the image and see for yourself.

Up until this point, the only other known photograph was taken by LeGrand Botsford and inspired the painting "On the Towpath" by E.L. Henry. We are thrilled with this recent discovery. Many thanks to our friends at the Ellenville Public Library and Museum for letting us share this incredible photo!

Courtney Conte, *Director of the Mid-Hudson Visitor Center and Assistant Curator*

