

D&H Transportation Heritage Council

July 28, 2021 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

D&H Canal Park at Lock 31, Hawley, PA

Attendance at business meeting:

Bill Merchant (chair), D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls
Cliff Robinson, Jr. (vice-chair), Neversink Feeder & Canal Conservancy
Jane Varcoe (treasurer), Waymart Area Historical Society
Laurie Ramie (secretary), Upper Delaware Council
Don Drewett, D&H THC Legislative Liaison
Norma Schadt, Town of Deerpark 1863 School House Museum and Historian's Office
Sally Talaga, Wayne County Historical Society's D&H Canal Park at Lock 31
S. Robert Powell, Carbondale Historical Society
Kathy Land, Waymart Area Historical Society
Shannon Cilento, Upper Delaware Council
Ingrid Peterec, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River
Kenny Christianson, Lackawaxen River Conservancy
Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating (virtually)
Lauren Hauptman, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (virtually)
Dave Lybolt, Mamakating Local Development Corporation (virtually)
Donna Durland, Mamakating Historical Society (virtually)
Tom Colbert, Wayne County Historical Society

Call to Order: Merchant called the business meeting held at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 Pavilion to order at 1:03 p.m. following an optional morning hike to tour the extended park trail to the Settler's Inn. Talaga introduced Tom Colbert as the Wayne County Historical Society treasurer and chairperson of its Canal Park Committee. He also lived in the D&H Canal Company office in Hawley.

Additions to the Agenda: Proposed title for Don Drewett; Local History Past-Port program; Port Jervis Transportation History Center; and Offer by Pike County Historical Society to host a future DHTHC meeting at Lock House 16.

Acceptance of April 28, 2020 Minutes: On a **motion** by Drewett, seconded by Robinson, the minutes of the last quarterly meeting were approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report and Membership Update: Varcoe presented her written report which included an accounting of activity since April 26, three deposits totaling \$300 and no checks written. The current balance is \$3,389.73. She noted that there are 20 organizations and one individual who have paid dues as full voting member, the most ever. There are also two affiliate members. The current list appears on the back of her report. Varcoe asked if there are any interested candidates to take over as treasurer since she would like to retire from that job. It will require changing the fiduciary from the Waymart Area Historical Society and potentially the bank that she uses. It was noted that it would be good timing to name a new treasurer when the new DHTHC non-profit launches. Varcoe passed around copies of the Basha Kill Area Association newsletter and highlighted a canal article on page 13.

Business and Discussion Items:

- a) **New York State Non-Profit Incorporation** – Merchant reported that he submitted the notarized application package seeking non-profit status about a month ago. Robinson said it typically takes 6-8 months to process.

- b) **National Historic Landmark Designation Project Update** – Merchant reported that he is a subcontractor to the National Park Service’s consultant, Richard Grubb & Associates, to conduct field work that will likely occur in October when the leaves are down. An outline was submitted and the project is on schedule. Hauptman said that NPS Historian Amanda Casper is on maternity leave but she is not aware of any additional updates.
- c) **Chapter 4 Video Filming Status and Inventory of Historic DVD Series** – Robinson reported that videographer Bill Bollinger was all set to start filming for Chapter 4 (Port Jervis to Spring Glen) but then COVID struck and now there is too much underbrush. They have decided to hold off until the canal can be seen again in full. The final Chapter 5 DVD will cover the Ulster County section starting at Lock 35. Talaga provided an inventory of the Chapters 1, 2 and 3 DVDs in stock, which immediately changed as two members purchased copies at the wholesale rate.
- d) **Planning for a Fall Bus Tour from Port Jervis to Spring Glen** – The bus tour focusing on the Sullivan/Ulster County border of the canal route would coincide with the release of the Chapter 4 DVD. Robinson said the earliest timing would be next spring, which is feasible if shooting takes place this fall.
- e) **D&H 200th Anniversary Subcommittee** – Merchant said the subcommittee needs to meet but we have two years before the first early events to commemorate in 2023. He said this is an opportunity to promote this wonderful story we all love. Merchant and Talaga are volunteering to take the lead. Send them a message with any historic events and the dates connected with them that are of interest, and whether your site would like to host a program because there are some activities to mark that don’t have specific locations. Merchant said he anticipates a rolling celebration from 2023 to 2028, with 2025 as the most active. Powell asked what about October 1829 for the Gravity Railroad. He added that the D&H Company stated that 1923 was their 100th anniversary so wouldn’t it behoove us to select 2023 as the key year? 1828 was when the canal company was “born” but they received authorization from the NY Legislature in 1823. Merchant said he’s not sure we need to go by that. Talaga said that the dates should be connected to an event, such as a ground-breaking or a first meeting of the board. We can always re-create events also, such as burning the first piece of coal. Robinson felt nobody will want to travel far or end-to-end each time to commemorate one event. We could do several events on the same day and appeal to our local people. There are so many events to mark in 2025 that we will need to pare it down. We could offer video-streams from each site for those who don’t want to travel. Robinson said we will learn a lot from the first event. Peterec said the National Park Service doesn’t have a facility or the technology to video stream at the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. They could offer walks at the Roebling Bridge or Cowen Farm. That’s the type of programming they normally do anyway but it would be announced under the banner of the D&H Canal anniversary. Merchant suggested for Instagram and Facebook, they could do “Today in D&H History” posts. He did that today about the boat Neversink in 1827 traversing the canal and it got 800 views. Those dates already exist in a Google calendar. He encouraged everyone to send in their information so he can start plugging in their dates, event ideas, and site hosting offers into a document to share.
- f) **Orange County Parks NYS Grant Application to Create Three New D&H Trails** – Schadt passed around maps showing three trails that are proposed for development in Orange County’s D&H Canal Park in Cuddebackville. One is along the feeder canal, one

is on the Neversink River, and one is in between. Only the feeder one leading to the gatehouse has to do with the D&H Canal specifically. It had been watered at one time. Orange County has applied for a 2021 Recreational Trails Program grant, and support letters had been solicited from D&H groups for it. Barnes said that this is a fairly competitive process. It's the start of implementing the recommendations in the Fusco study. He has bushwhacked the area numerous times. Schadt said this will get more people interested in the western end of the county which often feels neglected. Cilento said that she participated in a stakeholder interview for the Orange County Open Space Plan since the Town of Deerpark is a member municipality of the Upper Delaware Council. The draft plan includes maps, historic markers, and trails but there were blank spaces under Deerpark. She sent them Schadt's historic markers brochure, information on trails, and National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River visitor statistics which they agreed to incorporate into the plan. Schadt said they have 16 historic markers in the Town of Deerpark. She said this hike would be "absolutely gorgeous" and thanked everyone who provided support letters. Drewett said that he ran into Orange County Legislator Tom Faggione and asked him about trails. He suggested that his fellow legislators aren't aware of these resources. They are open to conversation about them. Schadt said we could meet at the park in October and hike those trails. They're all behind shrubs now but we could possibly arrange a clearing. She would make sure that the building is open at the Neversink Valley Museum for our meeting location. Robinson said since 1988, Orange County has owned the canal property from Port Jervis to Westbrookville. They built the D&H Canal Park and have been maintaining the feeder system. In 2009-10, his conservancy got a grant and started doing work on the trail. The report that Orange County commissioned Fusco Engineering to study the feasibility of re-watering the Neversink Feeder Dam offered three alternatives ranging from \$236,000 to make no repairs and create a ruins park, to \$2.3 million to rebuild some of the structures with bypass pumps, to \$5.7 million to do a historic rehabilitation of the dam and waste weir. He found some inaccuracies and disagrees with the basis of the report. He believes there are other alternatives to plug the hole in the dam and have water in the canal. He will be meeting with Jim Brooks in early August to provide information on how it could be fixed. It held water for 180 years. The Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy would like the county to turn over the property to them. While he's not against investing \$250,000 or so for recreational trails, that doesn't address the condition of the feeder, aqueduct and canal. Robinson said that Schadt has memories of going ice skating and boating on that pond. Schadt confirmed that she brought three generations to skate there and to cross-country ski from Oak Ridge Park. Drewett said he believes it comes down to liability concerns if the county repairs it. This may be an example of how we need to make this a federal or state initiative instead. Merchant commented that it's always easier to do nothing. He has a dream of creating a trail in Rosendale to link to the Empire State Trail. Powell said there is a certain hysteria over liability associated with bodies of water on property and the risk of damage from flooding. Varcoe noted that the Wayne County Commissioners had to purchase a D&H dam to preserve it from demolition on that basis. The 100-year flood risks increase insurance costs.

- g) **World Canals Conference 8/30-9/3, Hagerstown, MD** – Robinson has been accepted as a presenter at this conference being hosted by the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal. He read off the scheduled topics. His speech will be "The D&H Canal: An Unappreciated American Treasure". He has a 30-minute slot. Robinson has asked Bill Bollinger and Connor Simon to put together a 10-minute video excerpt from the DVD series to highlight some visuals and history. He hopes to increase awareness, pick up some tips from the C&O Canal's tourism success, and perhaps discover some funding opportunities.

- h) **Website and Facebook Postings** – Talaga asked about the possibility of adding the WCHS Canal Festival brochure on the website. Merchant said it’s easy to post a PDF. Ramie said that she will be happy to pass along any updates for the website to Dorene Warner but she would like to collect them into as few requests as possible since we are charged for site maintenance. Regarding the Facebook page, Merchant said he will be happy to share administrator duties with anyone who would like to post items. He added a photo from today’s meeting to Facebook already.
- i) **Don Drewett Title** – Merchant said that voting member Don Drewett from Eldred, NY has committed to help put his federal government experience and connections to work to elevate the national significance of the D&H Canal system and find funding for projects. The entire D&H Canal is a National Historic Landmark and the update of that 1969 designation of five sites is underway. We have two states and numerous communities involved in this initiative. Merchant said they believe it would be helpful for the purpose of approaching policymakers if Drewett had a title to represent DHTHC. We need to aim high. Drewett said that being part of an organization results in more macro-thinking and collaborative opportunities. He would like to go where the decisions are made at the Congressional level, seeking out U.S. Representatives Cartwright, Delgado, and Maloney, as well as work on the Appropriations Committee level to increase opportunities for the D&H Canal. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Varcoe, members agreed to confer the title of “Legislative Liaison for the D&H Transportation Heritage Council” on Don Drewett, with all in favor. This information will be added to the website. Merchant said he appreciates Drewett volunteering his expertise and knowledge.
- j) **Local History Past-Port** – Powell distributed copies of the “Local History Past-Port for the Northern Pocono Mountains Region and Surrounding Areas: A Guide to the Area’s Must-See Historical Sites”, explaining that this booklet is compiled by the Local History Roundtable. It includes 24 attractions and historical society properties in Pike, Wayne, Susquehanna, Lackawanna and Wyoming Counties, PA. People can get their “past-port” stamped at each participating organization and receive a free gift after 10 stamps that is redeemable at the Lake Wallenpaupack Visitors Center in Hawley. Powell noted that several of our members are featured in this publication.
- k) **Port Jervis Transportation History Center** – Powell reported that four organizations have joined together to establish a Transportation History Center in Port Jervis, NY. It includes the O&W Railroad but, to his knowledge, the D&H THC wasn’t asked to participate. He believes we should be part of this alliance. It does include the Outdoors Club of Port Jervis which is a DHTHC member represented by Mike Ward. Merchant commented that Port Jervis is a canal town; Christianson said its name derives from it. Drewett quickly researched it and found that the center (www.pjthc.org) is due to open in Spring 2022. He suggested asking a representative to speak about this new project at the next DHTHC meeting. Hauptman noted that they do have a link to the DHTHC website from their site.
- l) **Other** – **1.** Talaga reported that we are now out of DVD Chapters 2 and 3 following today’s sales. The minimum order is 50 copies. Merchant said he would check his inventory since their store isn’t open and can give them back to replenish the supply if he has a sufficient number. **2.** Varcoe attended the annual Battle of Minisink Commemoration at Sullivan County’s Minisink Battleground Park on July 24 and commended Debra and John Conway from The Delaware Company (a DHTHC member)

for their excellent program. Vince Benedetto from Bold Gold Media was the speaker. She said we don't always remember the Revolutionary War and this observance with reenactors at the monument attracted over 100 people. Ramie added that The Delaware Company has entered a contract with Sullivan County to take over programming at the Minisink Battleground Park and Fort Delaware Museum of Colonial History in Narrowsburg. **3.** Pike County Historical Society Director Lori Strelecki sent a message on July 27 that she would like to discuss the possibilities of PCHS and DHTHC partnering to promote the D&H Canal along Towpath Road but she probably wouldn't be able to make it to today's meeting. She hopes to put together a map depicting the locks and lock houses along Towpath Road, and any contributions of photos or information would be much appreciated. She is particularly interested in the communities of Rowlands, Glen Eyre, Baoba, Baisdenville and Kimbles. She can be reached at pikemuse@ptd.net.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

Tom Colbert – Colbert invited everyone to take a look at the engineering drawings they have for the canal boat façade that will be placed on top of this pavilion on its own foundation. It will be 90 feet long; the pavilion is 70 feet and constructed of yellow pine in a tongue and groove technique. The deck of the boat will be the peak of the roof. It will be visible from the highway and give the public a sense of scale for a canal boat. He also announced the sale of WCHS raffle tickets with a \$1,000 cash 1st place prize for a drawing that will take place on Nov. 30.

Sally Talaga – Copies of the Eighth Annual Canal Festival brochure for the Aug. 21 event were distributed. She noted that the pavilion was done a year ago and it includes a canal boat cabin which is replicated as authentically as they could. Next steps are to put in electrical outlets and fixtures. WCHS has posted a rental agreement on its website for use of the pavilion if anyone is interested. It would not be feasible to hold any events inside the Daniels Farmhouse building even once the structural improvements are completed and a Certificate of Occupancy is granted due to severe capacity limits.

Kenny Christianson – The Lackawaxen River Conservancy is working on developing a Hawley to Lackawaxen trail and a proposal to add the Lackawaxen River to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. That is expected to be a three-year process and will require an Act of Congress. The LRC will hold its Day by the River on Aug. 7 and will be an exhibitor at the WCHS Canal Days. Christianson noted that a local couple donated use of their lock house (at Lock 16) to the Pike County Historical Society. They have been hosting some lectures and even renting the place out to interested parties for overnight stays. Christianson is coordinating efforts to get some Rowland artifacts there to display. He noted that it's a small house but they have room for outdoor activities. He reiterated that PCHS has offered to host a future meeting of DHTHC there.

S. Robert Powell – Regarding the Lock 16 property, Powell pointed out that the Pike County Historical Society is not currently a member of DHTHC although they represent a large part of the canal with 30 locks. He was pleased to be a speaker at a May 29 event at Lock House 16 and feels there is great interest in further promoting that important part of Pike County's history. The caboose that had been in storage for 10 years in Carbondale though moved four times is now ready for installation targeted for mid-August to a site near City Hall on a panel track in partnership with the Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad. He will be speaking about the Gravity Railroad at the Key, Lock & Lantern Convention for railroad buffs coming up in a couple weeks at the Carbondale Hotel. Powell had available copies of three of his articles published in the Bridgeline Historical Society Bulletin: "Passenger Service on the D&H Gravity Railroad:

Carbondale to Honesdale (Part 1), April 2021 newsletter; “Part 2”, May 2021; and “Lake Lodore Amusement Park on the Honesdale Branch of the D&H”, July 2021.

Kathy Land – The Waymart Area Historical Society received a good return from its membership drive. They have opened the museum building on Saturdays from 12-2 only since they don’t have enough volunteers for additional time. So far, they just have a Halloween time event planned. Varcoe added that they have over 330 life members now. Powell commented that Carbondale Historical Society did its membership drive mostly online and got a significant increase in members from all over the country. It was just posted there without specific solicitation but the ability to pay online. It seemed to reflect a sentiment of “we think historical societies are important.”

Ingrid Peterec – Four cable covers are being replaced on the New York side of the Roebling Bridge.

Don Drewett – He will participate as the “token weaver” for the Wayne County Creative Arts Council tour on Aug. 27-29.

Norma Schadt – Copies of the June 2021 “Deerpark Diaries” newsletter were distributed, featuring a Short History of Neversink River Floods among other articles. Tom Faggione, chair of the Recreation Committee, the Deerpark Highway Department, and Town Historian Norma Schadt are collaborating on a project to restore and paint all the historic markers in town. The plan includes involving Scouts and other youth groups to help paint the 50+ signs, thereby they will learn first-hand about the history of the town. A station for sign painting is set up at the Grange Building, 35 Grange Road, Huguenot. She noted that a new plaque has been installed at 26 Hoag Road.

Kerron Barnes – He is pleased to have recruited the Mamakating Library, Mamakating Historical Society, and Mamakating Local Development Corp. as new members. He’s working on the Village of Wurtsboro and the Wurtsboro Board of Trade. The first section of the D&H Canal Trail from the town hall through the woods to connect to the towpath started on April 12 and its 650 linear feet are almost complete. They’re putting down the top layer with poplar fencing. They opened bids for the remaining four segments starting at Ferguson Lane and working towards Wurtsboro. He noted that this project has been six years in development for construction that takes three months.

Laurie Ramie – Copies of “The Upper Delaware” Spring 2021 newsletter were handed out and the Summer 2021 issue is available online at www.upperdelawarecouncil.org under Publications. She noted the article on the adaptive reuse plans for the 1896 Erie Train Depot in Callicoon, NY. She serves on the non-profit board, Callicoon Depot Inc., which is working on that restoration. They have expressed interest in hosting D&H Canal exhibits and programs once it opens.

Bill Merchant – He was able to purchase a John Wurts painting last December that has been cleaned for display. They will be ready to open the new museum at the DePuy House in the spring. They received a \$250,000 anonymous pledge to name the visitor center and have raised \$1.5 million so far for this project. Negotiations between the town and a family are underway to save the oldest (circa 1854) telegraph house that is associated with Lock 15. The Five Locks Walk could become a 6 Locks Walk.

Next Quarterly Meeting: D&H THC will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **October 27**, 2021 at the Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation at Orange County's D&H Canal Park, 26 Hoag Road, Cuddebackville, NY 12729. The itinerary will include a morning hike and optional lunch gathering at the park building, with deli orders taken in the morning, followed by the 1-3:30 p.m. business meeting at that same location. Details will be circulated in advance.

Adjourn: The July 28, 2021 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:26 p.m. on a **motion** by Ramie, seconded by Talaga.

Minutes submitted by Laurie Ramie, 9/21/21