

D&H Transportation Heritage Council
April 26, 2023 Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Hosted by The Century House Historical Society, Rosendale, NY

Participants:

Bill Merchant (chair), D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls
Donna Durland (treasurer), Mamakating Historical Society
Laurie Ramie (secretary), Upper Delaware Council
Henry Lowengard, The Century House Historical Society
Jack Braunlein, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum (arrived at 1:15 p.m.)
Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating
Sean Moore, Sullivan County's Delaware & Hudson Canal Interpretive Center, Summitville
Bill Bollinger, Bollinger & Rutter Video Services
Sally Talaga, Wayne County Historical Society, D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 (arrived at 1:10 p.m.)
Jack Weiser, Phillipsport Community Center
Debbie Bigelisen, Phillipsport Community Center
Jon Rubin, individual member
S. Robert Powell, Carbondale Historical Society (Zoom)
Norma Schadt, Town of Deerpark Historian (Zoom)
Judy Gumaer Testa, Assistant to the Mamakating Historian and NVMHI (Zoom)
Chester Hartwell, individual member (Zoom)

Call to Order: Chairperson Merchant called the business meeting held at the Snyder Estate in Rosendale, NY to order at 1:06 p.m. following 10:30 a.m. tours of the Snyder Estate and Widow Jane Mine, and an optional lunch at the Truss and Trestle Diner.

Acceptance of February 22, 2023 Minutes: On a **motion** by Durland, seconded by Barnes, the Feb. 22, 2023 (rescheduled from January) minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report and Membership Update: Durland had provided an advance written report electronically showing transactions since Feb. 22 with a balance of \$2,275.16. She has received 2023 dues from: Village of Wurtsboro; Upper Delaware Council; Waymart Area Historical Association; Basha Kill Area Association; Mamakating Historical Society; Cliff Robinson; Carbondale Historical Society; Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation; D&H Canal Historical Society; and the Wayne County Historical Society. Not all members have paid their dues yet. Barnes offered to contact the organizations in the Town of Mamakating. Durland said Sullivan County had requested an IRS W-9 form that she provided. Durland also reported that she set up a PayPal account for the Council in order to add a Donate button to the website. We will add the language, "Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law."

Business and Discussion Items:

- a) **4/4 DHTHC Board of Trustees Report; Strategic Planning; Fundraising Needs; Bylaws** – There was perfect attendance (10) at the inaugural meeting of the Board of Trustees held on April 4. The first order of business was to review our bylaws. The plan is for trustees to propose updates at their May 5 meeting, then provide the required 30-days advance notice to the full Council to act on the revised bylaws at the July 26 meeting. Durland noted this will give the trustees time to fine-tune the changes at their June 2 meeting if necessary. Merchant said we also discussed conducting a strategic planning workshop to identify our objectives for which we'd benefit from hiring an objective facilitator and other fundraising needs, such as upgrading the website to a mobile-friendly platform and finishing production of the historic DVD series. On the

subject of restructuring, Merchant said he believes that we are still far away from being able to hire an executive director. If we succeed with national park trail designation, that would take care of stewardship over canal sites. Merchant said he has some ideas of funding sources; Durland volunteered to help in researching potential grants. The Trustees will regularly meet on the 1st Friday of the month at 2 p.m. at the Upper Delaware Council office, 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg, NY.

- b) **5/20 DHTHC Port Jervis to PhillipSPORT Bus Tour Report** – In Robinson’s absence due to his father’s funeral service today for which DHTHC will send a sympathy card, Ramie reported that we changed to a charter bus company that dispatches school buses out of Sparrowbush, NY which saved a couple hundred dollars and gained 6 seats with the new 50-passenger bus. The trip is proving to be very popular based on our news releases and member mentions. She’s been handling the reservation list while Robinson planned the itinerary as the tour guide, which includes lunch at the Mamakating Environmental Education Center and various stops to view canal remnants. Payments were going through the Neversink Feeder and Canal Society as fiduciary. The cost is \$55 per person. Passengers will meet the bus at the Walgreens Plaza at 76 Pike St. in Port Jervis at 10 a.m. and return there from the final location on Thornton Road at approximately 3 p.m. Merchant specified that any profit realized should go to DHTHC as the event sponsor. Talaga said that this is the third bus trip we’ve done and, in each case, the proceeds went toward production of the next chapter of the DVD series. When Chapter 5 is out, we will arrange a bus tour of the next canal section from PhillipSPORT to High Falls. Ramie said there was a waiting list for this current trip and it probably wouldn’t be difficult to fill another bus on a different date.
- c) **Timeline for DVD Chapter 5: PhillipSPORT to High Falls & Chapter 6: High Falls to the Hudson** – Merchant reported that they shot all the exteriors except one and will be arranging sit-down interviews next. Bollinger said the timeline depends on getting photos and editing. It could be ready by the end of this summer. Merchant said doing a bus tour in October is preferred for the ability to see the sites best. Barnes questioned whether Columbus Day or Veterans’ Day weekends might work. Rubin commented that these DVDs are an incredible promotion to raise awareness about the canal system and its significance. On a **motion** by Merchant, seconded by Barnes, the Council authorized the payment of \$1,500 to Bollinger and Rutter Video Production Services for Chapter 5. Talaga said she brought along the remaining inventory of DVDs which we sell to sites for \$7 and they can re-sell them for \$10. As of this date, we have in stock: Chapter 1 – 15; 2 – 14; 3 – 26; 4 – 61. Merchant suggested that everyone with merchandise shops should check to see whether they need to replenish their supplies by the July 26 meeting so we can determine whether any duplicate copies should be ordered.
- d) **Finalize New Logo Design** – Merchant displayed two alternate versions of a new logo in which graphic designer Joe Tantillo had incorporated the changes suggested by members after initial designs were circulated electronically. They show both a gravity railroad car and a canal boat. The color scheme is green and grey. The consensus was to de-stylize the “D” font and use a darker grey shade. Merchant said we will have two formats, one for letterhead in a more horizontal style and the other for general logo display purposes. On a **motion** by Barnes, seconded by Braunlein, members approved the amended D&H THC logo design as presented. Merchant said this is good timing to introduce a new logo as we are restructuring as a more formal organization and thanked everyone for contributing their ideas to the design process.

- e) **Upcoming Activities for D&H 200th Multi-Year Anniversary** – Barnes said he has been struggling to find someone to organize the Wurtsboro anniversary event. The actual date to commemorate is July 13, 2025 for the D&H Canal groundbreaking, which is a Sunday after the July 12 Wurtsboro Founders’ Day for which the Wurtsboro Board of Trade is preoccupied planning. Asking these small organizations to do another major event the day after that is difficult, but Barnes said there is a village trustee who is interested as well as the current owners of the original house serving as historic re-enactors who have access to period costumes and music. The artist couple has given permission to use their back yard. Rubin asked if the Board of Trade could be convinced to make this a weekend-long event in 2025 around this anniversary theme which would draw a larger audience. Braunlein offered that the staff at D&H Canal and Historical Society would be happy to help support these anniversary events, wherever they occur along the route. Merchant reminded everyone that it was Braunlein who had first proposed that we consider ways to commemorate the 200th anniversary. Merchant agreed with Rubin that we could ask to meet with the Wurtsboro Board of Trade to propose the idea of incorporating this theme to truly celebrate John Wurts.
- f) **National Historic Landmark Nomination Update Status** – Merchant reported this project awaits National Park Service review of their nominating report submission of 411 extant features of the D&H Canal to update the listing. They found some new discoveries such as a Bolton Basin feature that they will overlay on a map to make sure all extant features are represented. He expects this process to finish this year. Merchant reported that D&H THC Legislative Liaison Don Drewett has been meeting with elected officials in Washington, D.C. They plan to ask U.S. Congressman Pat Ryan, who is the former Ulster County Executive, to co-sponsor a bill to create a national park trail out of the entire D&H canal bed. It involves two states and is an important American story. If there is buy-in for this, they can pursue legislation through Congress. Barnes noted on the New York State level that he had an opportunity to meet with Senator Peter Oberacker on March 6 at Hurleyville to introduce him to Sullivan County’s 50 miles of trails that link up, which he walked a portion of and seemed very engaged. The Open Space Institute received a \$500,000 grant through the NYS CFA process for a Rail-Trail Feasibility Study between Port Jervis and Kingston. There is a Request for Proposals out with an April 14 deadline and May 1 contract award date. While this is actually for a trail along the O&W Railroad, it’s adjacent to the D&H Canal. Merchant said that study report will be used to get funding to pursue the trail project. He has mentioned also that this is an opportunity for the D&H constituency too. There is a lot of money out there to support rail-trails and he believes it could be easily stretched to incorporate Pennsylvania. Barnes noted that the NY/NJ Trails Conference Long Path Protection Plan involves 360 miles from Albany to New York City, through nine counties, two areas of which are in Sullivan County. The plan would connect four trails and eliminate a 1.9-mile section along the road. He’s trying to make sure that all the groups that could be involved are talking to each other. The NY/NJ Trail Conference has a ton of volunteers.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

Sally Talaga – The Wayne County Historical Society will hold a dedication ceremony on June 17 for its post-1850 canal boat model resting atop a pavilion at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 on Rt. 6 between Hawley and Honesdale. There will be a dinner to name the boat after Clinton Leet, a late WCHS trustee who had this concept. Visit www.waynehistorypa.com for the \$50 ticket details, which will include hors d’oeuvres in the Lock House then dinner under the pavilion for a maximum of 60 guests. Talaga met with a sign maker today for a mahogany tugboat they are

recycling. It allows a visual on how large these boats were. They're busy now with the finishing details from the deck up, including the use of a semi-transparent stain to maintain the pressure-treated wood of the replica. The 10th Annual Canal Festival will take place on Saturday, Aug. 19, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the park with a focus on history and natural resources. Expect around 15 vendors, music, and programs on blacksmithing, Native Americans, and early hunting among other topics. The D&H DVDs will be screened inside the house. Last year, they counted approximately 850 guests. Contact Talaga about staffing an information table. Bollinger offered to provide Talaga with high-definition copies of the DVDs for better picture quality.

Henry Lowengard – The Century House Historical Society is clearing vegetation out of the canal slip so people can see it better. They will reopen from Mother's Day to Labor Day. There are several events lined up for the Widow Jane Mine. Search online for those dates and ticket information. He is generally at the Snyder Estate every Sunday to provide information to the public and show off their collections, including carriages from the early 20th century. They have installed new gutters on the buildings.

Donna Durland – The Mamakating Historical Society will be open every Tuesday of May through October and one weekend every month, to be confirmed.

Kerron Barnes – He continues to lead D&H Canal Towpath Guided Walks in conjunction with the Mamakating Library and the Basha Kill Area Association. Upcoming dates are Apr. 23, Graham's Drydock; May 20, O&W Rail Trail/D&H Canal Towpath Loop; Sept. 23 at 10 a.m., Bova Road of the D&H Canal in Summitville; and Oct. 15, 1 p.m., newly completed D&H Canal Towpath starting at the Mamakating Town Hall in Wurtsboro. Space is limited. Register at (845) 888-8004 or www.mamakatinglibrary.org. Barnes added that, between Sullivan Street and the town hall, Orange & Rockland Utilities has almost completed putting power lines into conduits and relocating the substation. The trail will be usable again shortly after that.

Sean Moore – The Bova Road facility at Summitville/Phillipsport will reopen on Memorial Day.

Norma Schadt – There will be a concert with Jay Unger and Molly Mason from the Ashokan Center on June 11 at 3 p.m. at the Grange Hall in Huguenot, featuring period music from the canal era.

S. Robert Powell – He's not able to participate in the D&H 5/20 bus tour because that is the date that a passenger train from Steamtown is coming to Carbondale. The historical society completed the new roof on their caboose and will be making interior improvements this summer.

Judy Gumaer Testa – She has no update to offer on the status of the buildings at the D&H Canal Park in Cuddebackville which the Neversink Museum of History and Innovation was locked out of by Orange County as the property owner. It's in the lawyers' hands.

Laurie Ramie – Copies of the "The Upper Delaware" Spring 2023 newsletter that she produces for the Upper Delaware Council were distributed to share highlights of river valley activities.

Jack Weiser and Debbie Bigelisen – The Phillipsport Community Center will be very active this season. Check out their calendar of events on Facebook. They do a 3rd Saturday monthly music night for \$10 with homemade pies May through October. There will be a yard sale on May 20 in memory of long-time member John Brown. A new cast iron historic marker will be installed on the corner of the highway at the entrance to Phillipsport to cite its canal significance. Bigelisen

thanked Merchant for helping her find primary sources needed for the plaque by the Pomeroy Foundation and said they are working to set a dedication date.

Bill Merchant – Three past issues of “The Canawler” newsletter of the D&H Canal Historical Society from Summer 2022, Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 were distributed. Merchant continues to visit the Minisink Valley Historical Society once a week to research the 1820-1860s correspondence from Russell Lord. He has been taking images to make them publicly accessible through a G Drive while working on a book about the D&H Canal. The D&H Canal Museum and Mid-Hudson Visitor Center are open 7 days a week as of May 1st. He welcomes receiving brochures and noted that they rent out the space for events, with that revenue helping to maintain the building. Ramie noted that there is a link to Merchant’s presentation that aired on the “American History TV” for C-SPAN2 available at www.dhthc.org.

Next Quarterly Meeting: On a **motion** by Merchant, seconded by Durland, DHTHC will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **July 26, 2023** at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 in Hawley, PA. A morning program to view the historic house restoration with some new paint, plaster, and furnishings, and the canal boat replica façade, will take place as well as a buffet lunch ahead of the 1-3:30 p.m. business meeting. Talaga reported that they have a functional outhouse on site.

Adjourn: The April 26, 2023 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m. on a **motion** by Barnes, seconded by Durland.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Laurie Ramie, 5/31/2023