

D&H Transportation Heritage Council

July 26, 2023 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

*Hosted by the Wayne County Historical Society at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31,
Hawley, PA*

Participants:

President Bill Merchant, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls

Vice-President Cliff Robinson, Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy

Treasurer Donna Durland, Mamakating Historical Society

Secretary Laurie Ramie, Upper Delaware Council

Alex Garcia-Maldonado, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (Zoom)

Bill Bollinger, Bollinger & Rutter Video Services

Chester Hartwell, individual member (Zoom)

Debbie Bigelisen, Phillipsport Community Center

Jack Braunlein, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum

Jack Weiser, Phillipsport Community Center

Joe Tantillo, individual member

Jon Rubin, individual member

Judy Gumaer Testa, Assistant to the Mamakating Historian and Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation, Cuddebackville

Kenny Christianson, Lackawaxen River Conservancy and The Rowland Cooperative

Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating (Zoom)

Norma Schadt, Town of Deerpark Historian Alternate (Zoom)

Rolf Moeller, Shohola Railroad & Historical Society

Sally Talaga, Wayne County Historical Society, D&H Canal Park at Lock 31

Sean Moore, Sullivan County's Delaware & Hudson Canal Interpretive Center, Summitville

Call to Order: President Merchant called the business meeting held at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 Clinton Leet Memorial Pavilion to order at 1:03 p.m., following a tour of the interior restoration of the Daniels' Farmhouse by Sally Talaga and lunch provided by the Wayne County Historical Society.

Acceptance of April 26, 2023 DHTHC Minutes and June 2, 2023 DHTHC Board of Trustees

Minutes: On a **motion** by Durland, seconded by Bigelisen, these two sets of minutes were approved. Since Robinson indicated that he had to depart early, business and discussion agenda items were shuffled.

Report on 5/20 DHTHC Port Jervis to Phillipsport Bus Tour:

Robinson said that the bus tour went very well. Forty-nine people had signed up and 48 people showed up on May 20. This was just as well because the 50-passenger school bus was a tight fit for that many adults and Robinson had to stand the entire way, but that was better for passengers to hear him since there was no microphone and sound system as there had been on his first tour's motorcoach. He sold \$130 worth of the DHTHC DVD series and profited approximately \$400 after payment of expenses. Having arranged to take the full inventory of DVDs from Talaga, Robinson was now returning the balance and turning over those funds. He noted that the Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy had promoted the trip and paid the bills for the bus charter and catering. He feels whoever takes that risk should get the reward, adding that his first bus tour ended up losing around \$300. Merchant said now that DHTHC is a 501(c)(3) organization, this group can handle the fiduciary responsibilities in the future. Robinson said that his Quickbooks program has been

down for months now so he had no paperwork to offer as yet. Talaga made a **motion** which Moore seconded to table this matter until Robinson can provide a profit and loss statement. Merchant and Ramie remarked on the high praise they heard from participants about Robinson's historical narration and people's enjoyment of the tour. Ramie said we actually had to turn people away to be placed on a waiting list due to the level of interest in this trip, after the capacity was reduced due to the unavailability of a 56-passenger motorcoach from Rolling V Bus Corp. that had been originally anticipated. Robinson said a larger bus with an intercom system should be pursued when we offer a tour for the next segment of the canal to be covered by the DVD series.

Treasurer's Report and Membership Update: Durland reported that DHTHC currently owes bills in excess of the \$1,439.16 balance of her report, but this does not count the bus tour and DVDs revenue, and dues payments she received that day. The Council has an outstanding invoice dated 6/19 for \$234.73 due to W Design of Barryville for 3.75 hours of website maintenance between Jan. 25 and June 3, 2023. At the time her report was generated, Durland has received 2023 dues from: Village of Wurtsboro; Upper Delaware Council; Waymart Area Historical Association; Basha Kill Area Association; Mamakating Historical Society; Cliff Robinson/Neversink Feeder and Canal Society; Carbondale Historical Society; Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation; Century House Historical Society; D&H Canal Historical Society; Wayne County Historical Society; The Delaware Company; Don Drewett; Mamakating Library; Pike County; Sullivan County; Lackawaxen River Conservancy; Rowland Cooperative; Phillipsport Community Center; and the Town of Mamakating.

Status of DVD Chapter 5: Phillipsport to High Falls and Chapter 6: High Falls to the Hudson: Principal shooting for these next two chapters has been completed while editing, interview sessions, still photos, and musical accompaniment are pending. Bollinger would like to set up a date to film Merchant, Robinson, and other musicians in High Falls, as well as to arrange a date to conduct interviews for both videos simultaneously. Chapter 5 starts at Lock 36 after the last segment ended at Spring Glen. Robinson said that they found Locks 35 and 36 don't match the topography of the historic D&H maps so they need to change the numbers in the description. The Barber and Wakefield sources appeared to be wrong on those. Regarding the old maps, Merchant said that Canadian Pacific Railroad won't sell those original maps in their possession because they receive a tax break for them, but this organization has and can use its electronic copies.

Approve Updated Bylaws – Draft revisions to the DHTHC Bylaws were distributed electronically on 6/2/23 in compliance with the required 30-day review period. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Bigelisen, the bylaws were adopted as presented, with all in favor. Among the changes are to add clauses pertaining to the DHTHC Board of Trustees for the incorporated organization, the titles of chair and vice-chair to president and vice-president, and the meeting schedule for the trustees and the full Council. A copy of the bylaws duly adopted on 7/26/23 will be circulated.

Upcoming Activities for D&H 200th Multi-Year Anniversary – Braunlein reported that he has a contact, Fred Hof, who can get an American postage stamp commissioned to recognize the 200th anniversary of the D&H Canal. Since it takes 3 years to accomplish that, it would be ready in 2028. He displayed examples of what other canal organizations have done to recognize milestones, such as calendars, bike challenges, a symposium, map and brochure publications, and hikes. Merchant said that the staff at the D&H Canal Historical Society is willing to serve as a clearinghouse for anniversary events planned by Council members and communities. Talaga said that she spoke with National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Chief of Interpretation Ingrid Peterec at the Zane Grey Festival to learn that NPS has a program called

“Take a Hike” that provides patches to those who go on various trails that they list on a map in a brochure. Canal trails could be part of that hard copy and digital publication. Rubin said that there are local people who don’t know these trails exist in their communities such as the one by him in Phillipsport and would likely be enthusiastic about it. There should be hikes, bike rides, and kayak tours organized to direct people to them. Merchant said that we do have all of the publicly accessible sites identified on a website. In the next 2-5 years, the Open Space Institute will be investing \$3-5 million in making massive improvements to the O&W Trail. They’re aware that people love loop trails. They could connect to D&H assets. He feels that’s our best bet since they’re very aware of the D&H. That OSI interest is phenomenal, and this is all going to change. Speaking in general about the anniversary, Merchant said the organization needs to start looking for funding to support these programs. Braunlein foresees creating a dedicated website. We could issue news releases for each event that use a common tag line or slogan to tie them together. Work with the local press on that, he suggests. Barnes said there has been progress in organizing anniversary activities in Wurtsboro and Mamakating since the last meeting. They have contacted the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association and Orange County Tourism for promotional support. They will start meeting in late summer. The site is confirmed for the original groundbreaking and there is potential for doing a reenactment. The Wurtsboro Board of Trade will host its Annual Founders’ Day on a Saturday, July 12, in 2025 and is open to extending it to the actual anniversary date of Sunday, July 13, to make the whole weekend a celebration. Merchant and Braunlein said they would like to be included at those organizational meetings. They are offering their resources to make sure that people from Ulster County to Pennsylvania know about these events so that the anniversary promotion benefits everyone. Christianson displayed one of the two D&H Canal 200th Anniversary banners he has available to loan out, offering it to Talaga for use at the 8/19 Canal Festival in Hawley most immediately. They do not cite specific dates or activities.

Legislative Liaison Report and National Recreation Trail Designation Process – Merchant reported that Legislative Liaison Don Drewett has gone back to work, which affects his availability. Merchant summarized conversations he had with Karl Beard from the National Park Service and U.S. Congressman Pat Ryan’s Chief of Staff, Dan Torres. Beard offered tips on the National Recreation Trail (NRT) designation process. When Merchant attended a Zoom meeting on NRTs, he found that it would not be appropriate for the Five Locks Walk since it’s too short and the length of most of the D&H trails would fall into the same situation. The NRTs are meant for a “grander vision” and he doesn’t feel that it would be worth the work to apply online by Nov. 1st. Barnes requested more information on the NRT program; Merchant said he would send him a link and his notes from the Zoom webinar. There is another program called National Historic Trails. There are none designated in New York State currently; it takes an Act of Congress for that. He has brought up the issue with Rep. Ryan’s office. The process can take 1-2 years. Merchant believes it would dovetail nicely with the National Historic Landmark nomination. He’s hopeful that if Rep. Ryan sponsors it, they could get a bill introduced during this session of Congress. That’s currently in process.

National Historic Landmark Nomination Update Status – There is no word back yet from the federal government on the status of National Park Service review of the D&H nominating report submission of 411 extant features for the updated listing.

DHTHC Website, Social Media, and Brochure – Durland reported that a Donate button has been added to www.dhthc.org, linked to a PayPal account that she established. The invoice from W Design she mentioned earlier includes the cost of that set-up. The revised bylaws will be added to the website. Ramie said that Dorene Warner had asked if we would like to post minutes from the Board of Trustees meetings, but all agreed those are intended for the internal membership to receive and not necessarily of interest to the public. Merchant said he would love for other people

to do Facebook posts for DHTHC to keep the content current. Contact him to become an administrator. Tantillo, a professional graphic designer, has offered to revamp the existing DHTHC brochure. It will incorporate the new logo that he created with the group's input which was approved at the last meeting. Merchant said we had waited to revise the brochure as we continue to use up our current stock and until the organization's structure changed. He will send Tantillo the original file for redesign purposes.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

Sally Talaga – Talaga thanked everyone who participated in the tour of the Daniels farmhouse earlier. It is slowly being furnished as the interior restoration continues. The Wayne County Historical Society held the dedication dinner for the Clinton Leet Memorial Pavilion on June 17 to recognize the board member who had the concept to develop this actual portion of the canal. Leet passed away 10 years ago, 3 months after they opened the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31, and he is memorialized on a sign on top of the pavilion. All that's left to do with the canal boat replica that sits atop of the pavilion is to stain the pressure-treated wood next spring. She was amazed how they curved the wood on the bow, stern, and rutter. Overall, the goal is that when you turn into the parking lot, you see what a post-1850s boat looked like on the canal. The secondary purpose of the pavilion is to provide event space for activities like that dedication dinner and today's meeting. The 10th Annual Canal Festival will take place on August 19 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the park with vendors; live traditional music; guided history and nature walking tours; demonstrations and programs such as Native American dancing, an archeology dig, blacksmithing, textile arts, and wood carving; youth activities; and food for sale by a professional chef who donates his time. The D&H DVDs will be screened inside the house, where the canal store will be open. Admission is free and two parking lots will be open, with paid security to direct traffic. Asked how much the pavilion cost to construct, Talaga said approximately \$100,000 in total for the canal boat replica and the pavilion shell, which came in a kit shipped from Florida and accounted for about \$80,000 of that expense. That does not count the incalculable number of volunteer hours invested into the project.

Laurie Ramie – Ramie distributed copies of the summer issue of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter and mentioned the next two upcoming events for the Upper Delaware Council are the 35th Annual Family Raft Trip on Aug. 6 and the 35th Annual River Valley Awards on Sept. 10 at Central House Family Resort in Beach Lake, PA, for which public nominations are due by Aug. 18 and reservations at \$33 per person are requested by Sept. 1. U.S. Congressman Marc Molinaro (NY-19th District) will serve as the keynote speaker.

Joe Tantillo – The Wayne County Historical Society, for which he volunteers, is expanding their merchandising. He redesigned the WCHS logo which was originally created in 1917 to now feature the Stourbridge Lion and they have a new billboard up on the Rt. 6 Texas-Palmyra Highway.

Rolf Moeller – The Shohola Railroad and Historical Society will sponsor a program on "Immigration to Our Area: History of German Settlements" with Sullivan County Historian John Conway on Aug. 2 at the Shohola Municipal Building.

Judy Gumaer Testa – The status of the Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation's operation at Orange County's D&H Canal Park in Cuddebackville is currently undergoing legal review. She will keep the group informed of how that progresses.

Donna Durland – The Mamakating Historical Society will hold programs on “Women of the Canal” by Bill Merchant on Aug. 26 at 2 p.m. and on “The Liberty Highway” by John Conway on Sept. 7 at 7 p.m. at their building.

Kenny Christianson – The Lackawaxen River Conservancy hosted a program by Bill Merchant on “Marginalized Populations of the D&H Canal” last year. Rowland Cooperative celebrated the March 13, 1823 Pennsylvania Legislature vote to canalize the Lackawaxen River as the inaugural activity for the D&H 200th anniversary celebration. On July 29, the Conservancy will hold its Day by the River on Towpath Road with a National Park Service talk. He reiterated that the two anniversary banners they had printed are available to any members to borrow.

Jack Braunlein – The D&H Canal Historical Society hosted 4,400 visitors at its Museum and Visitor Center last year, very good attendance, and the lecture series has been very popular. They hosted an immersive theater experience with seven actors called “The Raging Canal” and are trying to finance the filming of that. They are also collaborating with the Century House Historical Society to originate a theatrical piece at the Widow Jane Mine.

Bill Merchant – Merchant has presented 23 lectures outside his own museum so far in 2023. He distributed the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 issues of “The Canawler” newsletter.

Sean Moore – The Sullivan County D&H Canal Interpretive Center in Summitville reopened on Memorial Day. They have hosted homeschoolers and plan to have Cliff Robinson, Jr. speak on July 30 at 3 p.m., based on advance registration, on “The Mamakating Section of the D&H Canal” which will be recorded. Moore mentioned that his mother was at the 150th anniversary of Wurtsboro.

Other: 1) Merchant and Gumaer Testa volunteered to split the cost of the annual dues for the Minisink Valley Historical Society’s membership in the DHTHC. MVHS will then be added to the membership directory. 2) Talaga reported on the inventory of historic DVDs based on their return after the bus tour and purchases that took place during the meeting: Chapter 1 – 0; Chapter 2 – 5; Chapter 3 – 0; Chapter 4 – 45. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Christianson, the Council approved reordering 25 copies each of Chapters 1-3, with all in favor. 3) The Pike County Historical Society had requested advance circulation of a flyer for a Civil War Re-enactment with the 142nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry on “Defending the C&O Canal” to be held at 495 Towpath Road in Hawley, PA during an Aug. 12-13 encampment at Lockhouse 16 on the Lackawaxen River. Entry fee is \$10. Visit www.pikehistorical.org.

Next Meetings: The DHTHC Board of Trustees will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **September 27, 2023** at 2 p.m. at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg, NY. The DHTHC full membership will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **October 25, 2023**, with the location and itinerary to be determined. Merchant will ask S. Robert Powell if the group can have its business meeting in Carbondale, PA with a morning program and lunch preceding the 1 p.m. start.

Adjourn: The July 26, 2023 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m. on a **motion** by Moeller seconded by Tantillo.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Laurie Ramie, 8/15/2023