

D&H Transportation Heritage Council

July 24, 2024 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

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

Participants:

President Bill Merchant, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls
Secretary Laurie Ramie, Upper Delaware Council
Sally Talaga, Wayne County Historical Society, D&H Canal Park at Lock 31
Jane Varcoe, Waymart Area Historical Society
S. Robert Powell, Carbondale Historical Society
Ingrid Peterec, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River
Alex Garcia-Maldonado, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River
Kenny Christianson, Lackawaxen River Conservancy and Rowland Cooperative
Sean Moore, Sullivan County's Delaware & Hudson Canal Interpretive Center, Summitville
Nancy Bachana, Sullivan County's Delaware & Hudson Canal Interpretive Center, Summitville
Bill Bollinger, Bollinger & Rutter Video Services
Tom Colbert, Wayne County Historical Society, chair of D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 Committee
John Christiansen, summer intern for Wayne County Historical Society, University of Scranton

Call to Order: President Merchant called the business meeting held at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 to order at 12:43 p.m. He thanked Talaga for hosting the group, providing a morning tour and lunch, and congratulated Colbert and Talaga on the impressive progress they've made in authentically restoring the Daniels Farmhouse and tavern. This work is inspirational for all other sites. Merchant noted that DHTHC Vice-chair Cliff Robinson, Jr. was absent due to an unfortunate occupational hazard involving a sewage pipe and hopes to see everyone in October.

Acceptance of April 24, 2024 DHTHC Minutes: On a **motion** by Varcoe, seconded by Moore, the 4/24/24 minutes were approved, with all in favor.

Treasurer's Report: Donna Durland had circulated a written financial report in advance with an end balance of \$1,497.19 as of July 23. Twenty-one organizations and individuals have paid their dues for 2024: Bloomingburg Restoration, Carbondale Historical, Waymart Historical, The Delaware Company, Robert Barth, Town of Mamakating, Sullivan County, Upper Delaware Council, Outdoor Club of Port Jervis, Canaltown, Wayne County Historical, Century House Historical, Minisink Valley Historical, D&H Canal Historical, Bill Bogertman, Lackawaxen River Conservancy, Rowland Cooperative, Mamakating Historical Society, Mamakating Library, Phillipport Community Center, and Town of Deerpark.

Open Space Institute's O&W/D&H Trail Initiative: OSI's multimillion dollar project to connect 67 miles of trails from Rt. 42 in Port Jervis to the O&W Rail Trail in the Town of Accord over a 10-year period is coming along well. It makes it easier that Sullivan and Orange Counties own the majority of the D&H canal bed in their sections. The only expected void will be near Ellenville, where all traces of the D&H Canal have been demolished. They received over 1,000 responses to a community survey which have been overwhelmingly positive. There were some complaints about motorized vehicles not being allowed on the trail. Merchant serves on the committee; he attended all three open house meetings held during May in Ellenville, Wurtsboro, and Port Jervis. He said OSI does fantastic work and trails are really trending now. The trails will be accessible and interpreted for the public, and parking areas will be clearly delineated. Powell said that while he is pro-trails, he has sometimes observed that all vestiges of the railbed must be

obliterated in favor of installing a “minor highway through the woods”. There are a couple trails in Carbondale and Lackawanna County where that original, natural look has been lost and he has found numerous errors in signage since the local historians weren’t consulted. Merchant assured that OSI is very sensitive to and appreciative of history. Powell said that having enlightened individuals involved in the planning from the start is the only solution. Merchant agreed that getting involved in community activities does pay off.

National Register Update: Merchant said that his contacts at the National Park Service reached out before Thanksgiving 2023 to indicate that the project budget to update the D&H Canal’s National Register of Historic Places listing had been depleted, but he has continued to go out on his own time to bring the inventory up to date. That includes finding a buried Lock 71 that hadn’t been included. He wrote about 80% of the historical narrative for the 420 extant features for this nomination and received comments back through around page 10, then no others. Merchant offered to send the current draft document out to anyone interested while we continue to wait for the NPS to finalize its review and publish it. As the historian and museum curator for the NPS Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, Garcia-Maldonado said that he has had a lot of dealings with National Register projects. Since it’s a collaboration of different NPS regions working together, it does tend to take a long time to reach the end. He offered to speak with Merchant later to provide some guidance.

National Historic Trail Designation Update: National Park Service retiree Karl Beard had recommended that DHTHC look into getting designated as a National Historic Trail. With the National Register listing as a basis, Merchant doesn’t believe this would require a feasibility study, but it does take an Act of Congress. U.S. Representative Pat Ryan is interested in sponsoring it and his staff has drafted language for a bill that Merchant reviewed. He will continue to pursue it, noting that it would be a great bipartisan initiative. Bachana asked whether the Erie Canal is a National Historic Trail, which nobody knew.

DHTHC DVD Series Chapter 5 Update: Bollinger reported this video is coming together nicely. He has filmed sit-down interviews with David Kime, Bill Merchant, and Cliff Robinson so far. They are interested in bringing in new voices and a diversity of other presenters. Chapter 5 covers southern Ulster County, and he has done principal shooting for Chapter 6 in the process. Topics include the Ellenville Glass Factory, stone cutting at a quarry, gear houses on top of locks, the aqueduct designed by John Jervis in Accord, and the Stony Kill Aqueduct, among other features. Bollinger said he regards this content from a novice standpoint to consider what the public needs to know for it to make sense and tell the story. He’s open to suggestions on other topics. Tanneries were suggested, which Bachana said she could help with since she had just finished a segment on tanneries about the use of hemlock bark instead of animal skins. She further suggested a segment showing kids interacting, even with a canal model. Children are interested in water, boats, and mules. Talaga agreed that showing how the system works through a model would be helpful for visualization. Merchant said when Chapter 5 is ready for release, we plan to coordinate a bus tour in that section. Talaga said she would like to revisit and replace the Chapter 2 footage of the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 to show the advancements made since then. Merchant asked, why don’t we do a promotional video for all of the D&H and Gravity Railroad sites? Keeping the footage in its original form has historic authenticity value. A new video could summarize the breadth of this whole canal system. The chapters have told the history of it, but they don’t promote the museums and membership specifically. Powell said he could foresee ending Chapter 6 by saying something to the effect that the canal system has evolved and developed since production began, and let’s take a quick look at that with some current footage. We could ask citizens who aren’t on this committee to comment about their awareness of the canal system and their reactions to the videos. Merchant said this also could be done as a separate

video. It doesn't have to be decided today. Bollinger reminded everyone that the shop he'd been using to reproduce the DVDs has closed and that this group has talked about transitioning to streaming platforms. Bachana asked why that isn't being done now, with Talaga replying that we were waiting until all six chapters are finished. Merchant said youngsters aren't buying DVDs and we do want to appeal to the next generation, but that doesn't mean there is no audience for DVDs also. If we can come up with some grant funding, we want to upgrade our website so it could potentially handle video subscriptions or the like. The site already has a PayPal option. Talaga said our inventory of DVDs is currently sufficient. When Chapter 5 is ready, it would be a good time to check in on the supply of Chapters 1-4.

D&H 200th Anniversary Events: The next event coming up on the D&H chronology of milestones is the Jan. 7 selling of canal company stock at the Tontine Coffee House in New York City (now an Amtrak station, according to Christianson) as well as in Goshen. Merchant said that Cliff Robinson has some ideas on how to commemorate that. A suggestion had been made to put on a D&H 200th Anniversary weekend symposium next summer. That would be a heavy lift but if we got funding such as a grant from the Hudson Valley National Heritage Area to support it, his site in High Falls would offer to host it. Any funding from that source would require being spent in Ulster County. The anniversary celebrations will continue through 2029, with the final events associated with the Stourbridge Lion.

Old Business – None

New Business – Members discussed the location for the next Council meeting on October 23, with the decision to host it at the D&H Canal Linear Park in Summitville.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

S. Robert Powell– 1) Powell was pleased to be asked to write the foreword for a book by Peter H. Grant, "Leonor Loree and the Delaware & Hudson Railroad." He passed around a copy of this prologue, explaining that Loree was the last of the 19th century railroad tycoons and an extraordinary man. He served as president of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad for 31 years through his 1938 retirement after having been hired by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1877 as a rodman. 2) The Medina Railroad Museum near Buffalo, NY contacted Powell in April to ask if he was interested in accepting a set of very large, old map books they wanted to donate to a more appropriate facility since they are a model railroad museum. They had initially contacted Steamtown in Scranton since the maps were railroad related in PA and NY, and a committee member recommended reaching out to Powell as an authority on the D&H after discovering that the volumes listed as least a few Delaware & Hudson atlases. Powell took a chance by agreeing to pay \$314.28 for shipping without knowing the exact contents. There were four musty boxes, each weighing between 28-63 lbs. Powell was delighted to find 11 volumes that included a series of professionally drawn and detailed maps that he said will take years to process the valuable data they contain. He shared a list of what's in the collection and one page's sample of a color map excerpt. 3) While exploring in the Prompton area, Powell discovered the raceway for Plane No. 15 which was designed by James Archbald in 1895. He passed around photos showing the water wheel's remarkable historical integrity. 4) He also distributed copies of a map that delineates the Northern Coal Field. All of the coal shipped by the D&H came from that, which is a fact worth knowing and important to trace. Merchant added that ¾ of all the world's anthracite coal came from there. 5) Lastly, Powell shared copies of his bibliography of Delaware and Hudson Railroad books and articles, all of which can be read on the Carbondale Historical Society website or via Internet Archive. It includes 30 electronic format volumes with 12,301 pages and more than 80 articles written over the last 30 years. He continues to research copies of New York City meeting

minutes from the D&H Company dating from the 1890s to 1930s that someone in California donated as one source of astonishing information for new articles.

Kenny Christianson – The Rowland Cooperative Market remains open seven days a week, although they had to transition to volunteer labor. The Lackawaxen River Conservancy continues to work on a National Wild and Scenic Rivers designation bid for the Lackawaxen. Their Annual Day by the River is scheduled for Aug. 3 with a National Park Service program on snakes.

John Christiansen – This is his second day as an intern with the Wayne County Historical Society and he's excited to be here. He suggested that these organizations could reach out to college historical clubs and societies that often are interested in providing volunteer hours and would love to visit their sites.

Sean Moore – The Sullivan County D&H Canal Interpretive Center in Summitville will host Merchant as a speaker on July 27 for a “Bagels and Locks” program. He and Bachana were interviewed by WJFF Radio Catskill 90.5FM to promote that program, and anyone can listen to the approximately 16-minute segment on the public radio station's archives. They plan to videotape Merchant's program. They also have an audiotape available of a presentation that Cliff Robinson did at the Mamakating Library in Wurtsboro. On Sept. 14 at 2 p.m., they will host a photography workshop by Frank Coviello. That's designed to help raise awareness of the interpretive center besides Coviello providing excellent instruction.

Nancy Bachana – 1) Last weekend, the Sullivan County D&H Canal Interpretive Center sponsored a guided hike along one mile of the towpath that brought out six adults and three kids. It ended with an open house at the Mamakating Historical Society. Bachana discovered that there is an existing audio tour for that section. She has been a volunteer tour guide at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Neversink Unique Area in Rock Hill monthly for four years and says the largest group she ever had was 22 people. The audience has never expanded despite publicity, and a lot of them are repeat participants, so that is challenging. Discussion ensued about phrasing it as a walk vs. a hike to be potentially less intimidating and ways to get the word out most effectively. 2) With a goal of creating interest in the canal from the younger set, Bachana has drafted a 74-page book titled “The Key to Puzzler's Lock”. It is aimed at 7 to 10-year-olds, about children living in a canal town, and has illustrations by her daughter. She handed out a few copies and would love to receive feedback (via nbachana@gmail.com). Bachana is offering it, if it fits any purposes, for potential publishing, school trips, prize donations, etc. Talaga said the only other fictional children's book she has seen on this subject is the “Canal Boat to Freedom” which they send to schools along with a teacher's guide ahead of tours. At Wayne Highlands schools, high school students are mentors to the 4th graders for program orientation. That book is out of print but Talaga feels it would be very saleable otherwise. The author was a local historian from the Neversink Valley area who is deceased. There are very few resources at children's reading level. Kids today want to be able to identify with children of that era. Bachana said she has a second book as well that is very pro-canal with modern children solving a canal puzzle. Merchant noted that there are plenty of on-demand publication sources. Powell recommended going into the schools to visit classrooms with canal material, then if they want to know more, they may be prompted to bring their families to the museum or other sites. Kids want human contact; they're not responding to paper. Peterec said that any educational material must fit into the school's curriculum, for which local history is focused on the 4th grade level. Transportation has been a challenge. The National Park Service doesn't do on-site programs anymore with an expectation for the kids to come to them; they go to camps, libraries, and youth group organizations instead. That makes it worthwhile for the time

that a ranger spends on developing a program. It's a built-in audience. She agreed with Powell that it can spur on kids to come to sites with friends and families to learn more.

Jane Varcoe – It has been difficult to get volunteers to keep the Waymart Area Historical Society running. She is working on five grants simultaneously for her community endeavors and needs to focus on all that paperwork.

Ingrid Peterec – The July 13 Zane Grey Festival in Lackawaxen, PA was great, with nearly 700 people attending. With that behind them, NPS staff will now be going out to exhibit at other events. Organizing D&H Canal Days in May is also labor-intensive but valuable to do. They provide paid transportation for schools but sometimes districts only allow one field trip per year and they opt to go elsewhere. She and Garcia-Maldonado worked with the Wayne County and Pike County Workforce Development to get help. Youth up to age 25 can get paid to intern at 40 hours/week. It's a great opportunity for local residents to earn money, get experience in the history field, and add this to their resumes. Peterec distributed copies of a flyer for a free Vintage Baseball Game to be held on Aug. 24 at noon at the Veterans' Memorial Park in Lackawaxen, PA, sponsored by Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River and the Zane Grey's West Society. It will feature The Mountain Athletic Club vs. The Elizabeth Resolutes. Powell commented that he has seen images of D&H Company baseball teams. Peterec asked if he could send her information on that.

Alex Garcia-Maldonado – One current project going at the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River with intern assistance is the transcription of oral histories that were collected over four decades, which started with interviews of NPS staff. They had a problem with the conversion of the tapes but have been dedicating time to it. In September, he will be kicking off a collaboration with the Onondaga (often incorrectly referred to as Iroquois) tribe.

Laurie Ramie – The Upper Delaware Council had exhibits on the porch of the Zane Grey Museum for that festival on July 13 next to Merchant and will have an informational booth next at Narrowsburg Riverfest on July 28. The 36th Annual Family Raft Trip is coming up on Aug. 4 between Ten Mile River and Lander's Minisink Base. The next event after that will be the 36th Annual River Valley Awards, for which they are currently accepting public nominations through August 23 for Cultural Achievement and nine other categories.

Sally Talaga – The Wayne County Historical Society's 11th Annual Canal Festival is scheduled for August 17 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at this location. Talaga handed around rack cards listing the participants (including Merchant, Powell, and NPS) and programs for the day.

Tom Colbert – The WCHS has an appointment to look at a barn they would consider moving to this site to house a museum, bathrooms, and caretaker cottage.

Bill Merchant – The D&H Canal Society and Museum and Mid-Hudson Regional Visitor Center remains open seven days per week. They received a \$30,000 operational grant through the NYS Council on the Arts, since Merchant said no museum stays open on admissions and memberships alone. They have seen 7,700 visitors over the two years that it has been open. What gets people there is their Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok platforms as well as their email list and YouTube channel followers. For the last eight years, Merchant has been broadcasting monthly radio programs on local history for WGHQ in Kingston. He also does a monthly history lecture and gives monthly guided tours on a solar-powered boat on the Upper Rondout Creek for the Hudson River Maritime Museum that sell out. An application for a \$900,000 federal grant to develop a loop trail and renovate a telegraph office is in the works. Their annual benefit gala will be "Food

and Wine of the Presidents” on October 5 at the Wiltwyck in Kingston with a curated dinner, wine program, and a silent auction. Last year’s gala raised \$70,000. Merchant has a slew of 200th D&H anniversary programs lined up for next year.

Next Trustees Meeting: The DHTHC Board of Trustees will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **September 25, 2024** at noon at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg, NY.

Next Council Meeting: The DHTHC full membership will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **October 23, 2024**, at Sullivan County’s Delaware & Hudson Canal Interpretive Center at 16 Bova Road in Summitville. Itinerary details will be sent out in advance.

Adjourn: The July 24, 2024 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m. on a **motion** by Talaga seconded by Christianson.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Laurie Ramie, 8/1/24