



FALL 2023

*Friends
of the
Delaware
Canal*

Canal News

A Locktender's Life

The Locktender's House
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Our Mission

The Friends of the Delaware Canal is an independent, non-profit organization working to restore, preserve, and improve the Delaware Canal and its surroundings.

Our primary goals are to ensure that the Canal is fully watered from Easton to Bristol and the towpath trail is useable over its entire length.

We embrace this mission in order to sustain a unique link to our heritage, protect beautiful and diverse natural areas, provide recreational and educational opportunities, and enable the Canal to serve as a community and economic asset.



Woman and girls at doghouse

When you work in a Locktender's House, you are constantly reminded of the people who once lived here and worked the lock so many years ago. We know from first-person accounts that lock tending was a demanding, low-wage job. One main benefit was free housing. And back in the day, "free" didn't get you much.

There were 23 locks along the Delaware Canal, and 17 Locktenders were initially employed to ensure the canal boats could travel through the locks as efficiently as possible.

Several sections of the Canal required adjacent locks to accommodate the drop in elevation. In those instances, a Locktender was responsible for two closely situated locks. An example of this could be found in New Hope, where Locks 8 & 9, along with a guard lock, were the responsibility of one Locktender. The same was true of Locks 10 and 11. In New Hope, you will find three Locktenders' houses within less than ½ mile.

The original list of Locktenders included*:

- John Hibbs - Lock 1 and the Tide Lock
- Elias Gilkyson - Locks 2 and 3
- Samuel Daniels - Locks 8, 9, and Guard Lock in New Hope
- Samuel Stockdan - Locks 10 and 11

- George Solliday - Locks 13 and 14
- Mahlon Smith - Locks 15 and 16
- Joseph Shepard - Locks 22 and 23

Lock 11 and the adjacent house serve as the headquarters of the Friends of the Delaware Canal. This house is still a mystery. Research indicates that the building pre-dates the construction of the Canal and was likely built by Lewis Coryell, who owned the land and worked as the engineer on this section of the Canal. The original first floor of the structure is now underground. The street elevation was raised at some point, and the first floor was filled in.

Dawn to Dusk

The workday of the boatmen and Locktenders began before dawn, and it lasted well into the night. During the height of canal activity, Locktenders became very efficient at locking boats through. And with the help of a willing boat crew, the task could take three to four minutes.

As the canal boat captain signaled their approach, the Locktender would be ready to guide them through. The captain would throw a line with a loop at the end, which the Locktender would attach to a cleat on the lock.

Continued on following page

OUR BUSINESS AND ORGANIZATION MEMBERS

Learn more about these Friends. Click on their links at fodc.org.

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Group

A Locktender's Life, continued



Inside the Lockhouse

The captain would then “snub” or tether the boat before hitting the lower gate. As the boat sank, the captain would release the line. The boat would sink to level and continue the journey.

Heavy traffic was managed by locking distance markers which were guideposts placed a hundred plus yards away from the lock in either direction. The rule is that you could proceed if you were in the locking distance before another boat.

However, the Locktender had discretion here. If the lock were ready for a boat coming north, the boats traveling in the opposite direction would need to wait. The widening of the locks helped ease the captains' tension, who were eager to get on their way. These locks allowed two boats to lock in simultaneously and improved overall traffic flow in the busiest sections of the Canal.

At night, the Locktender would signal that the gate was open by waving a lantern. If the lock was closed, a ruby-colored lamp would be placed in the window of the wicket shanty.

When the Canal opened, the boats traveled day and night, leaving no rest for the Locktender. By the mid-1850s, however, this changed, and Locktenders worked from 4:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. every day except Sunday.

Since the Locktenders were responsible for keeping the traffic moving, they became very adept at anticipating oncoming traffic. Once

they heard the sound of the approaching boat, which could be a bugle or a conch shell, they would reply with their own response to indicate whether the lock was open or closed.

Boat captains were always in a hurry. The more trips they made, the more money they made, so in general, they were an impatient crowd. Fights over who could lock in first were a daily occurrence in the early years. And stories tell us that Locktenders were sometimes forced to throw the brawling parties into the Canal to cool off tempers.

A Family Affair

A Locktender wasn't paid much, so they often had to supplement their income by taking other jobs during the day. This meant the whole family was put into service, locking in the boats as needed. One source said that as soon as a child was strong enough to work the wickets, they were “hired” for the job.

Many Locktenders and their wives also earned extra money, supplying boatmen with provisions. Often, these industrious families would grow vegetables and some livestock, if they had the room, and would sell or barter with the boat captains. Some wives would sell baked goods and launder clothes. Still others would provide stable space for mules to rest in the evening. Boatmen gave these houses names such as the laundry lock or the mule barn lock.

A Locktender's Life, continued



Locktender's House in Uhlerstown

Locktender Houses

According to research from the Heritage Conservancy, 16 Locktender's houses were built along the Delaware Canal for \$9,200.46. These houses were small but well-built. Most were constructed with stone. However, storms and floods led to the rebuilding of many original structures along the Canal. All but one house was built before electricity became available.

Most houses were two stories with two rooms downstairs and a kitchen. Upstairs there would be two or three bedrooms. The bathroom was usually an outhouse. And not surprisingly, they were heated with coal, which was often traded or purchased from canal boat captains.

Any land adjacent to the house was put to good use. Gardens, chickens, and even some larger livestock helped feed the family and the passing boatmen. Without this supplemental income, most families could not survive.

A Living Legacy

Like many historic sites, several Lockhouses have been lost to time. However, some still remain. Several are used by the park service, including our headquarters, yet others are now private residences.

When it became clear the Canal would be sold to the State of Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company offered to sell the Lockhouses to company employees. One account was discovered and shared by a FODC member who is fortunate to live in a Locktender's house today.

As you can tell from the following letter, these Lockhouses were prized for their location and historical connection. Today, the current owners lovingly maintain the character and charm

Excerpts from a letter to the homeowners (dated 8/5/1978).

"It may be of some interest to you to know some of the history (albeit recent) of the Lockhouse. My father was an official of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, the builders and operators of the Canal, and at the time of the transfer of the Canal (late 1920's) to the Commonwealth, he was able to purchase one of the lockhouses. The one chosen was to be a weekend retreat as well as a vacation site, and it seemed that (this one) was the best of the lot as well as the most scenic.

When we took it over it was, to put it mildly, a pigsty. The house itself was filthy and the entire property looked as though it had not been cleaned since the Canal was originally built.

The small building in the back, toward the River Road, was located on the cement pad next to your house and we had it moved to its present location and installed some sanitary facilities, inasmuch as the purchase price included a half-moon backhouse, which did not appeal to us.

Needless to say, for quite a few years, our weekends and vacations were spent in trying to humanize the house and grounds. However, there was compensation: Quite a few parties were held which the family and friends enjoyed. I remember having my high school pals, as well as gals, for weekend shindigs. (In the 30's, believe me, they were properly chaperoned.)

In the northeast corner above the lock, we had installed a dock at which we kept two canoes and a rowboat because at the time the aqueduct over the Tohickon had not been demolished and we were able to canal for miles north on the Canal.

The original cost to my father for the property, as I remember, was \$500.00. Due to World War II, the gasoline shortages, and the fact that sons were called into the service, as well as the death of my father in 1937, the property was sold in 1943."

*Source: A complete list of the original tenders can be found in the Delaware Canal Journal by C.P. Yoder.



**Need
Some
Diversion?**



This Painted Turtle is waiting for you to put together its pieces. Photo by Carole Mebus

Try piecing together one of our online jigsaw puzzles featuring the beauty and wildlife of the Delaware Canal. You can choose the number of puzzle pieces, so the extent of the challenge is up to you. You can find the Jigsaw Puzzle Archive at www.fodc.org/jigsaw-puzzles.

P.S. For those of you who prefer an old-fashioned puzzle, we hope to have another one to offer as a fundraiser next year. Would you like an image of a bald eagle, a great blue heron, or...? If you have a recommendation, just send an email to friends@fodc.org with your suggestion.

Upcoming Events



REDISCOVERING THE TOWPATH EXHIBIT: THE LEGACY OF WILLIAM FRANCIS TAYLOR

WEEKENDS THROUGH THE END OF 2023

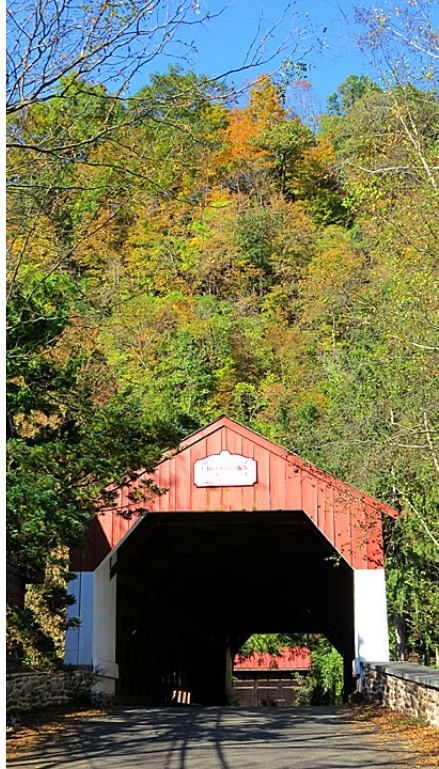
Rediscovering the Towpath celebrates the life and work of Canadian-American William Francis Taylor (1830-1970), artist, founder, author, editor, and conservationist.

Decades before the Friends of the Delaware Canal was formed, William Francis Taylor came to reside in the Delaware River Valley and championed its protection. He created the Delaware Valley Protective Association, which helped in no small part to preserve the Delaware Canal and secure the creation of the Delaware Canal State Park.

As an artist, he spearheaded the acquisition of Phillips Mill in 1928 for the Phillips' Mill Community Association and the Pennsylvania Impressionists, of which he became a part. From 1939-1941, he edited the *TOWPATH* magazine, which celebrated "Life in Three Counties: Bucks, Hunterdon and Mercer" and encouraged all "to preserve the beauty and value of the valley."

Housed in the former Canal Boat Concession Building at Lock 11, adjacent to the Lock-tender's House in New Hope, the exhibit is an imaginative re-purposing of this long, under-used building.

Join us as we celebrate and showcase the art, words, advocacy, and legacy of Taylor's work in the existence of the beautiful, valuable, and primarily preserved Delaware Canal and Delaware River Valley that we enjoy today.



Uhlerstown Covered Bridge

WALK OUT THE OLD YEAR Tinicum Park to the Giving Pond and back SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30 10:00 AM

Back by popular demand, we will hike out the old year along the Delaware Canal towpath and enjoy the winter scenery.

This 4.4-mile adventure will begin at 10 AM. in the rear parking lot by the Canal in Tinicum Park, 963 River Road, Erwinna, PA 18920.

Board Member and history enthusiast, Jeff Connell, will lead the way on this round-trip walk uncovering the historic towns of Erwinna and Uhlerstown.

Uhlerstown is reputed to be the best-preserved canal hamlet in America. We will then venture onto the Giving Pond before beginning our return.

Wearing waterproof boots and dressing in layers is advisable. Hot chocolate and cookies will be waiting at the end of the adventure. We will cancel the walk if rain, snow or dangerous driving conditions prevail.

Check the homepage of www.fodc.org for a Go/No Go message that will be posted by 9 AM on December 28.

The hike along the towpath is free and pre-registration is required. We will post a registration form on our website and attendance is limited to 30 people.

POP-UP WALKS

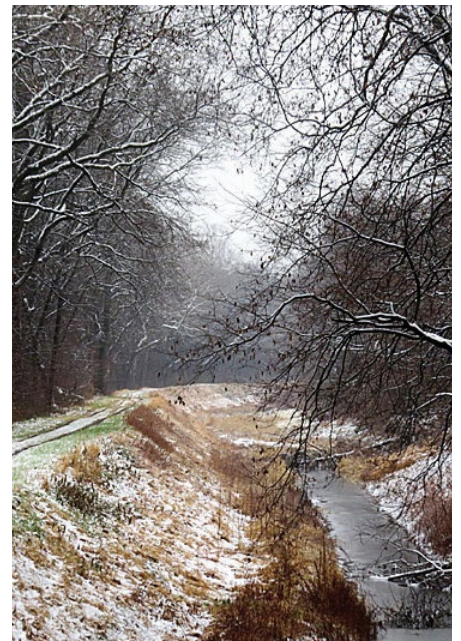
We have had requests for more walks in the colder months, so look for our emails and website updates for additional walks in January and February. Weather and towpath closures permitting, we will schedule a few chilly treks, perhaps with a stop for lunch, along the way.

The towpath has so much to offer year-round, and winter is no exception. The landscape and vegetation provide something new and surprising with every season.

We will post a list of the locations and distances as they become available.

You are welcome to join us for one or all walks and for the mileage that suits you best to explore the towpath and meet some new Friends.

We hope you can join us.



Canal Tender Spotlight

Our volunteers, many of whom are members, are the backbone of our organization. Without them, the Delaware Canal State Park would be a very different place.

Our Canal Tenders act as the eyes and ears of the towpath, all 58.9 miles. They provide valuable input on the conditions along the canal while picking up litter along the way.

To recognize the dedication of these volunteers, we will spotlight a few throughout the coming year.

Mark Greaney

Mark has been a Locktender since 2018 and is responsible for the section of the Canal towpath between the Narrow's Restaurant and Mueller's Store, approximately a five-mile stretch. Lately, his reports have been very encouraging. Little trash, small debris. All good news. Mark is a runner who can cover this distance pretty quickly. He sends regular updates on the condition of the towpath and the surrounding area.

As an employee of ExxonMobil, Mark has enrolled the Friends in the ExxonMobil Foundation's Volunteer Involvement Grant program. His dedication pays off. Mark forwards his canal tender hours to the program, and we receive a donation based on his hours of volunteer service.

Jane Richter

We are lucky to have many committed Canal Tenders who send photos and often take matters into their own hands. In the southern section of the Canal, one of these dedicated volunteers is Jane Richter. Jane tends the area between Bridge Street to E. Maple Avenue in Morrisville. She provides useful information on the condition of the Canal and towpath, which we share with the Park Staff.

Recently, Jane spotted some new graffiti on a bench and fencing along the Canal. She picked up some paint from a member of our CAT team in the area and resolved the issue quickly. The paint was a perfect match, and once Jane painted over the graffiti, the bench and fence looked as good as new. This attention to detail helps keep the park looking its best for residents and visitors alike.

Want to be a Canal Tender?

If you are interested in joining this special group of dedicated volunteers, we do have a few openings available in the southern section of the Canal. Specifically, these areas in Bristol are still in need of a watchful eye.

- Beaver Street to Bristol Lagoon
- Bristol Lagoon to Green Lane
- Green Lane to Edgely Avenue



Graffiti in Morrisville



Graffiti gone

**TO BECOME A
CANAL TENDER.**
Call us at 215-860-2021
or email friends@fodc.org

THANK YOU!

WHAT'S IT WORTH?



Bald Eagle by Judy Greger

The Delaware Canal State Park isn't just another pretty place; it has economic value. This year, on July 4th weekend, several favorite spots along the canal exceeded capacity. The gates at the Virginia Forrest Recreation Area had to be closed due to overcrowding. Since the pandemic, the number of visitors has continued to grow along with their impact on the local economy.

Here are some enlightening statistics

- Pennsylvania is one of the top states for spending on outdoor recreation, generating over \$29 billion annually.
- This industry supports over 250,000 jobs, equating to \$8.6 billion in wages and salaries.
- And the industry generates nearly \$2 billion in tax revenue.
- The combined acreage of Pennsylvania parks and forests is twice the size of the State of Delaware.

Source: Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation

- The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) manages 5,000 buildings, 141 dams, and 171 water treatment facilities.
- An extensive and aging infrastructure will require additional investment.

The current administration is aware of the economic impact of our parks. "*The 2023-24 bipartisan budget invests \$112 million to improve state parks and forests and spur economic growth in the outdoor recreation industry.*"

Investing in the industries that provide the best return on our tax dollars makes economic sense, and our park system fits the bill. The outdoor diversity available in our state parks makes Pennsylvania unique. It is a valuable resource and one worth the investment.

We can all do our part to protect and promote our park system by supporting legislation and funding that maintain this regional and national treasure.

WHERE'S THE WATER?



Work begins at Bridge 4

You may have noticed that many places along the canal that usually have flowing water are lower than before. This condition will persist for several months in some areas and longer in others.

A series of storms over the past three years has caused infrastructure failures along the 58.9-mile length of the canal. Some fixes are more complicated than others. Some will be resolved before the spring. However, the impact on water levels in the canal is the same. When construction is underway on the canal, the water level must be drawn down.

That's the bad news: a dry canal and many trail closures.

Now for the good news. The state has appropriated and approved funding of over \$104 million for park infrastructure improvements, including much-needed repairs in the Delaware Canal.

Approximately 40 + projects in the pipeline will restore and improve the canal for years to come.

A case in point is the High Falls Creek culvert. This culvert



Bridges are getting much needed repairs

has been replaced several times. The size of the pipe could not adequately handle the volume of water that occurs in major storms. The long-term fix will be a new, improved design in keeping with the historic nature of the original structure. This larger culvert will

handle a significant surge in the volume of water.

Approximately 80 bridges span the canal. Many need repair. A comprehensive project called the "12 Bridge Project" will address this issue in the coming year. You will see more towpath closures as the construction teams begin to take core samples and ready the sites for repair.

Other infrastructure improvements that are in some stage of design work or are out to bid include Rodge's Run Sub-canal Culvert in Riegelsville, Spahr's Bridge in Upper Black Eddy, Lumberville Aqueduct, Bowman's Hill Waste Gate in Washington Crossing and the Yardley Aqueduct. In addition, towpath resurfacing is taking place in Easton as Penn-Dot completes wall repairs further south.

So, DCNR has a busy few years ahead on the canal. The park is trying to schedule the work as best it can to avoid extended towpath closures. All agree that no one wants to see the process of watering and de-watering. The plan is to coordinate projects to minimize the impact on wildlife and the environment.

While this work is underway, we will post any closures or alerts on our Facebook page and website. And we will provide as much insight as possible into the timing and completion of these projects.

HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

The holiday season is right around the corner and we wanted to help make your gift giving pain free. So, why not shop our line of exclusive merchandise. Throw in a membership, and we will pack it all up and send a personalized holiday card with a message of your choice.

Our carefully curated selection of tastefully branded items is ready-to-order and we have gifts to fit every budget.

Simply give us a call to place your order or stop by our **Pop-Up Holiday Store in New Hope** to find the perfect gift. Prices range from \$5.00 to \$25.00.

- Car Magnets: \$5.00
- FODC 40th Anniversary Pins: \$5.00
- Large Tote Bags: \$10.
- Dennis Gerhart Illustrated Notecards (Six different designs): \$15.00
- Baseball Hat (Embroidered): \$25.00
- Gray T-Shirt imprinted on front and back (specify size Adult XL, L, M, and S): \$25.00
- FODC Gift Membership—A great gift you can order online!: \$50.00–\$500.00

Minnie Mule

The cutest, most adorable plush mule sporting FODC Bandana: \$15.00



Give us a call at 215-860-2021 or email us at friends@fodc.org and get your holiday shopping done today!

CATTAILS ARE NO MATCH FOR OUR CAT TEAM MEMBERS

Volunteers of the Friends fill various roles. Many of our members and volunteers sign up yearly for the Annual Canal Clean-up in April. Still others are regulars. They are Canal Tenders who “adopt” a section of the towpath and keep an eye on conditions, picking up any debris or trash along the way.

Still others join our CAT Team. CAT stands for Canal Action Team. These heavy-hitting men and women take on some larger projects, like bridge painting, 9/11 memorial bench repair and replacement, and sign installation.

This year, our CAT Team members have taken on the task of removing cattails from the prism of the canal. While cattails are native plants, they can be very aggressive, choking out other plant life while soaking up water.

Removing vegetation from the canal is a water sport. Our CAT members waded into the canal and pull out the cattails, roots and all. Once the first clump is removed, they become easier to conquer. Getting muddy is inevitable, and sore muscles are sure to follow.

Recently, the team tackled two outcroppings: one near the Locktender's House at Lock 11 (*below right*), and another near the Malcolm Crooks Bridge in Solebury (*bottom*). Once the “waders” conquered a clump of cattails, they handed the plants to other land-based volunteers who stacked the debris for removal by the park staff.

It is honest work that pays nothing, yet this arduous task rewards volunteers with the knowledge that their efforts have improved the canal.



WELCOME NEW FRIENDS

Theresa and David Bowers
Laura Casale
Lisa Darnowsky
Maria Alejandra Diaz
Scott Freeman
Karen Vander Laan
Leonard and Heidi Lundquist
Peter and Susan Sleeman
Robert Sternhell
Jonathan Swain
Ruth Tinklepaugh
Margarita Tsalyuk

Spillway at Raubsville by Carole Mebus



ANNUAL YEAR-END APPEAL

In the next few weeks you will receive our annual fundraising appeal. While we have accomplished much this year, we still have more work to do. If you can, please consider a donation to help us continue our efforts to preserve, restore and protect the Delaware Canal.

Thank you!