



Society for Industrial Archeology

ROEBLING CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

December 2003

Vol. 12 No.3

UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 25, 2004 – 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Drew University Hall of Sciences

In accordance with our by-laws, which require us to hold a business meeting in January of each year, members are hereby notified that the meeting will take place at the time and location given above. This year we are trying a Sunday, rather than Saturday, date and a schedule that is later in the day and hope that this suits a majority of our members.

The business portion of the meeting will include a report from President Mary Habstritt reviewing the past year's activities and reports from Secretary Aron Eisenpress on membership and from Treasurer Charles Scott on chapter finances. Tom Flagg will supervise election of officers. Plans for the upcoming year will be discussed and proposals are invited.

Four of the five members of the chapter's board are to be elected by the membership. The fifth member is appointed by the elected members. Nominees for 2004 are

Mary Habstritt, *President (incumbent)*

Lynn Rakos, *Vice President (incumbent)*

Aron Eisenpress, *Secretary (incumbent)*

Charles Scott, *Treasurer (incumbent)*

Tradition dictates that we also provide time for show and tell. If you have IA slides, video, artifacts, or the like which you wish to share with other chapter members, please notify Mary Habstritt at 212-769-4946 or mhabstritt@aol.com to be placed on the schedule.

Fruit, cookies, coffee and sodas will be available to all members who attend.

Directions:

Via Automobile #1 – From Northwest New Jersey and Northeast Pennsylvania via I-80: Take I-80 East to I-287 South. Proceed to Morristown Exit 35 (Old Exit 31), "Madison Avenue/Route 124 (Old Route 24)". At top of exit ramp, turn left. Proceed three miles on

Route 124 East to Madison. Drew University is on Route 124 (Madison Avenue) on your right.

Via Automobile #2 – From West New Jersey and Pennsylvania, via I-78: Take I-78 East to I-287 North. Proceed to first Morristown exit (Exit 35, Old Exit 31) "South Street/Route 124 (Old Route 24)". At end of exit ramp, turn left. Proceed 100 yards ahead and take first right, following signs to Route 124 (Old Route 24). At the stop sign, turn right (Route 124 East) and proceed three miles on Route 124 East to Madison. Drew University is on Route 124 (Madison Avenue) on your right.

Via Automobile #3 – From Southern New Jersey via NJ Turnpike: Take NJTP North to Exit 10 and follow I-287 North to first Morristown exit, Exit 35 (South Street, Route 124). At end of exit ramp, turn left. Proceed as above under #2.

Via Automobile #4 – From New York City (Lincoln and Holland Tunnels): Lincoln Tunnel - Follow signs to NJ Turnpike South. Take Exit 14 (Newark Airport). After toll plaza take I-78 West to Route 24. Stay in the far right lane to Exit 7A, Chatham: 124 West (Old Route 24). Follow Route 124 West through Chatham (Main Street) into Madison (Madison Avenue). Drew is located on Route 124 (Madison Avenue) on your left, just past the center of Madison and just after the railroad underpass. Holland Tunnel – Follow NJ Turnpike signs. After toll plaza take I-78 West. Continue as above.

Via Automobile #5 – From New York City (upper Manhattan/George Washington Bridge): Take I-80 West from bridge to I-287 South (Morristown). Proceed as under #1, above.

Via Public Transportation – NJ Transit's Morristown Line train service stops at the station in Madison, approximately one-half mile from the Drew Campus. From the station, proceed to Madison Avenue. Turn left and walk along Madison Avenue until you come to the Drew campus on your left. For train schedules and other information contact NJ Transit: (800) 722-2222 in NJ and (973) 762-5100 in NY.

OTHER EVENTS

Rail Film Fest

*National Canal Museum, Easton PA
January 30, 2004 – 7:30 p.m.*

The theme of the National Canal Museum's annual Railroad Film Night this year is "Steam Railroading in the American Midwest and West." Vintage silent and sound, color and black and white footage will be shown on such lines as the Wasbash, New York Central, Norfolk and Western, Nickel Plate and Pennsylvania. Railroad historian, Mitchell Dakelman, has organized the program and will discuss the films in Two Rivers Landing auditorium. Admission is \$5; \$3 for museum members.

Canal Symposium

*Lafayette College, Easton PA
March 20, 2004*

The 23rd annual Canal History and Technology Symposium will be held at the William E. Simon Center for Economics and Business Administration at Lafayette College. Topics include the B & O's main line cultural resources, early history of Pennsylvania canals, a Japanese prince's visit to Bethlehem Steel, exploration of the Sandy and Beaver Canal, evolution and operation of canal dredges, and restoration efforts on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Complete text of the proceedings is provided to registrants. Registration materials will be mailed to Canal Museum members and past participants in January. Others may obtain registration forms by calling 610-559-6616 or e-mailing membership@canals.org.

TOUR REPORTS

Corn Roast

Forty to fifty members joined Gerry Weinstein and Mary Habstritt at their Croton home for the annual corn roast on September 7. Many brats, ears of corn, and beers were consumed. Several trips down the hill to the Engineerium and an excursion to the Croton Dam late in the afternoon sated everyone's IA appetite. Many guests did not depart until well after dark, tired but happy.

Rail-Marine Operations

The Rail-Marine Operations tour to be led by Tom Flagg was canceled. Originally scheduled for Sept. 19, 2003, the plan was to follow the day's work of a

crew on the Cross Harbor RR, visit Bush Terminal in Brooklyn, and the Greenville terminal in Jersey City. It can be quite difficult for one person to be in the right place at the right time to observe the day's work of an unpredictable short line railroad and scheduling a busload of visitors to such an operation is clearly a gamble with fate. Unfortunately we lost the gamble, twice. Due to the promised arrival of Hurricane Isabel, which caused the railroad to cancel all marine activities for the day, the tour was postponed to Oct. 17. Shortly before that date the railroad's float bridge sunk and could not be raised in time to be used on the day of the tour, limiting operations and making it hard to fill a full day's tour schedule, so we had to cancel the date.

In the original description of the tour we warned that short line operations are subject to change, and had requested everyone to provide contact information, so as far as we know, no one showed up at the meeting place. All money paid in advance was refunded, and we will be rescheduling the trip when spring weather returns and the railroad has completed some maintenance.

High Line

Ten lucky souls, chosen by lottery, got to walk a portion of the High Line, Manhattan's railway viaduct on the lower West Side, on October 22. We met Joshua David of Friends of the High Line and Laurie Izes representing CSX outside the Javits convention center that morning for a one-hour tour. They told us we were the only group to have all ten attendees show up! As we noshed on homemade corn bread and signed liability waivers, we also learned that we were the first tour group to bring refreshments.

Josh and Laurie gave us a brief history of the High Line, opened in 1934 and abandoned in 1980, and told the story of FHL's efforts to save the structure for a city park and the politics involved in doing so. CSX officially takes a neutral stand but would like to have the issue of what will happen to the High Line resolved soon.

We walked the northern end along the siding leading to the Morgan post office and discovered that the main section is blocked with fencing and barbed wire and is accessible only through buildings with permission of the owners. Although disappointed that we could not hike further, we enjoyed astounding views of the skyline, waterfront, and the 34th St. rail yards. A surprise was the opportunity to look straight down at the conveyor bringing earth out of the water tunnel project.

Edison's Mines

Twenty intrepid SIA'ers led by Bill Wilkie and Joe Macasek took a four-hour tour of Thomas Edison's iron ore concentrator and open pit mines in Sussex County New Jersey on November 1. Even after 103 years, location of all the major structures is easily discernable, highlighted by the stonework of the Corliss engine wheel pit (35-ft. diameter) flanked by still intact granite bearing blocks. The complex abounds in oversized anchor bolts, raised masonry shaft bearings and conveyor trenches.

A fascinating aspect of the site is the ability to follow the evolution of Edison's approach to open pit mining at each of the three distinct mine types we visited. This is contrasted with remnants of older underground and open vein (complete with stull pockets) mines which still exist. Rail buffs gained rare mileage as we walked the entire length of the three-ft. narrow gauge railroad which carried ore from the outlying mines to the primary crusher. Diehards insisted on walking to the bitter end of the switch back tail track and stood in the inspection pit at the narrow gauge engine house.

Trenton Industries

On November 15th forty-five chapter members boarded a bus at Princeton Junction train station and were led on a journey through the industrial past of Trenton, NJ by Richard Hunter, historical geographer and industrial archeologist and Clifford Zink, historic preservationist and architectural historian. Aptly enough, the grounds of the former Roebling Plant was one of the stops, but that was not all we saw.

Drawing from extensive research and fieldwork on Trenton's history and archeology, Hunter provided a narrative on the roadways, waterways and rail lines that led to and from New Jersey's capital city as we drove down US Route 1, the old "Straight Turnpike." Once in Trenton, several brief stops were made including one downtown on West State St. at Petty's Run, a now buried stream that was a focus of Trenton's colonial water-powered industry. We also stopped at Assunpink Creek, which provided a source of power for industries from the Colonial to the early Federal periods. Hunter discussed the Trenton Water Power, a 7-mile long canal built in the 1830s to encourage industrial development in Trenton. Few vestiges of this waterway survive on the landscape but we did see the abutments of the aqueduct that carried the Water Power over Assunpink Creek. The Delaware and Raritan (D&R) Canal also survives (except in north Trenton where it is piped under Route 1).



Photo by Ron Rice

Lynn Rakos on microphone, with Richard Hunter, during the Trenton industries tour.

The tour bus was unloaded so we could all see the intriguing spot where the Feeder Canal meets the main line of the D&R at Old Rose Street.

The bus then meandered through the streets of north Trenton, once home to numerous potteries including, but by no means limited to, Ott & Brewer, Lenox China, Boehm Porcelain and the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company. Potteries once lined the D&R and the Camden & Amboy Branch Railroad but today just a few small potteries operate in the neighborhood. Sadly, none of the historic kilns remain. Items produced by the historic companies were passed through the bus and clearly demonstrated that Trenton's ceramics ranged from "teacups to toilets" as one of the wonderful handouts supplied on the tour states. The group got to handle fine china cups and utilitarian chamber pots as well as a few other interesting items manufactured in Trenton.

The Roebling Plant was our next stop where we all stretched our legs as Clifford Zink led us around the grounds of the Roebling Complex, now renovated and reused for offices and stores. We peered into the vast Wire Rope Machine Building as well as former machine shops. The wire rope machine was designated a Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark in 1989. The determined efforts of Zink and his associates in the 1980s were instrumental in getting the complex preserved and reused.

The tour wound down with a drive past the site of the Trenton Iron Company/American Steel and Wire



Trenton tour group gathered around Clifford Zink at the Roebbling machine shop.

Company wire mills, no longer extant, and a quick stop at the Trenton Iron Company/New Jersey Steel and Iron Company rolling mills where one building remains, now a restaurant and bar. The tour ended with a visit to the Ellarslie Mansion, in Cadwalader Park, the home of the Trenton City Museum. The museum was kindly opened for our group by the museum director, Brian Hill. An exhibit on cigar making, an industry few people associate with Trenton, was a nice surprise. Also on view were many of the wares produced in Trenton's potteries.

Of course, we got a glimpse of the truss bridge over the Delaware River, on which it is boldly stated, "Trenton Makes The World Takes." A beautiful autumn afternoon provided a great backdrop for a most enjoyable and informative tour of Trenton. Many thanks are extended to Richard Hunter and Clifford Zink for a great trip and to Lynn Rakos who handled organization.

Symposium Report

The 23rd Annual Drew Symposium was again a great success with about 150 attendees. Formal presentations included *Edison's Iron Ore Operations at Ogdensburg, NJ*, by Bill Wilkie; *The Historic Hackensack Water Works, Van Buskirk Island – From the Past, A Beacon for the Future*, by Maggie Harrer; *Restoration of the Coney Island Parachute Jump*, by Lynn and Wesley Drobbin; and *The PRR's Greenville Yards, Jersey City: Past and Future*, by John Gomez and Tom Flagg. A video on the High Line was followed by informal comments from Mary Habstritt

and Tom Flagg on its history and the effort to save it. Gerry Weinstein gave a brief presentation on the Lilac Project, which has purchased and plans to restore a 1930s lighthouse tender as an interpretive attraction in the Hudson River Park. George Bulow brought a video of a vintage silent film on Domino Sugar.

In addition, the first annual John Augustus Roebbling Award for Outstanding Contributions to Industrial Archeology was presented to Conrad Milster to recognize "his efforts to preserve, document, interpret, and re-create steam technology in New York and New Jersey, and for teaching others what he knows." The award included a certificate and a check for \$250.

A tribute to Ed Rutsch was also part of the program. After a review of his many significant contributions to IA by Pat Condell, Mary Habstritt presented Pat with a check for \$250 to the Edward Rutsch Memorial Fund which will support Michigan Technological University's IA field school at the West Point Foundry, a site that was dear to Ed.

Special thanks go to Nanci Batchelor, for handling the food arrangements, Aron Eisenpress for troubleshooting the computer and audiovisual equipment, Tom Flagg for organizing the program, and Charles Scott for processing registration. Also thanks to Lynn Rakos, for staffing our information table, and Ingrid Wuebber and Bill McKelvey for helping with clean-up.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Domino Sugar

We have learned from plant staff that the Domino Sugar refinery in Brooklyn will close permanently at the end of January. The company had originally announced in August that it would continue to operate the packaging line at this location, but that is no longer the case. Mary is spearheading an effort to get an emergency documentation done by the Historic American Engineering Record program of the National Park Service. This will ensure that a history, photographs, and architectural drawings of this very important 19th-c. waterfront landmark will be placed in the public record at the Library of Congress for future generations. In addition to coordinating access for the HAER team, some chapter members are donating their services to the effort. Mary will also be making a proposal at the annual meeting for use of chapter funds to help make this project a reality. If you cannot attend the annual meeting, please feel free to contact Mary for more information at 212-769-4946 or mhabstritt@aol.com.

Rutsch Fund

As noted above, the chapter recently made a contribution to the Ed Rutsch Memorial Fund. You too can make a contribution to support students attending the summer field school at the West Point Foundry site in Cold Spring, NY. Here students enrolled in the Industrial Heritage and Archaeology program at Michigan Technological University learn archeological techniques by working on a dig. Tuition for the field school is \$1,000 per student. The fund currently stands at just under \$2,000 so more help is needed. Contributions can be made by check to Ed Rutsch Memorial Fund, Michigan Tech Fund, 1400 Townsend Drive, Houghton, MI 49931 or can be made online with a credit card at <http://www.siahq.org/news/edrutsch/edrutsch.html>

Roebing on the Net

If you are interested in knowing more about the Roebing family and their businesses, there is a very good Internet site, the Roebing Online History Archive at <http://www.inventionfactory.com/history/main.html>. It was prepared by the Invention Factory, which has plans to put a science museum in the former machine shop of the John A. Roebing's Sons factory in Trenton, NJ. It was funded by a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.

ROEBLING CHAPTER BUSINESS

Board Meeting

The chapter board held a brief meeting after the symposium.

Present: Aron Eisenpress, Tom Flagg,
Mary Habstritt, Lynn Rakos

Absent: Charles Scott

Mary announced that this meeting fulfills our requirement for one board meeting per year as specified in the chapter by-laws. Tom noted that it would be the 2003 meeting and that the most convenient time to hold these is usually after the annual meeting in Jan. We will probably do so for 2004.

Mary reminded all board members that they are required to be members in good standing of both the chapter and national SIA.

We discussed whether officers needed to pay to attend events at which they are providing event support. For instance, Tom planned the symposium program, Charles

handled registration, Aron provided AV tech support, Lynn worked the chapter table, handling book sales and tour sign-ups. Mary felt strongly that the contribution of effort should serve as admission. It was agreed that officers would not have to pay if they were working at an event. We are on our honor to pay otherwise.

Pursuant to our e-mail discussion, Mary has instituted a non-member pricing for events of \$10 over the member price. This is equivalent to membership dues and should encourage people to join the chapter. Charles suggested, by leaving word with Tom and Mary, that the extra \$10 should automatically be considered dues. That was acceptable as long as it proves workable. Whoever acts as registrar for each event will have to notify Aron to add such persons to the membership roll.

It was suggested by national SIA president Vance Packard that, due to the large amount of funds the chapter carries, that we should consider bonding anyone with access to our funds. Charles found out by consulting Nanci Batchelor, that this is something that can be handled by our insurance agent and needs to cover the average amount held in our accounts, which is \$25,000. He will pursue this.

Charles sent a suggestion that we also increase our liability coverage to \$2 million. He will check with our agent on how much this will cost.

Mary felt that we should have a second signer on all of our bank accounts in case anything should happen to Charles. Since Aron is most likely to be in office for the long term, and he was willing, it was decided he would do this. Mary will ask Charles to initiate the paperwork.

A question was raised by Mike Raber, as a member of the Roebing Award Committee, whether we really need to have a separate account with funds set aside for the award, as stipulated in the award description. The annual award includes \$250, which has little impact on the funds we have on hand or on our annual income. It was decided that it could continue to be paid from our general funds, but the issue could be re-examined if a time should come when funds were depleted.

Tom brought up the need to schedule the annual chapter business meeting. After some discussion, and some advocacy for trying Sunday over our usual Saturday, it was decided that first choice was January 25 and second choice January 24. Consideration was given to providing lunch, but since that would involve pre-registration, the idea was dropped. We might add to the usual coffee and cookies, though. Mary will follow up with Drew University facilities staff.

Dues/Address Changes

Please review the mailing label on your copy of this newsletter. If you have not paid your dues for 2003, kindly make out a check for \$10, payable to RCSIA, and send it to Aron Eisenpress, RCSIA Secretary, 235 West End Avenue, Apt. 14-C, New York, NY 10023. If you

have moved or plan to move, kindly notify Aron of this fact, either by mail at the above address or by e-mail at AFECU@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jan. 25** **RCSIA annual meeting
Drew University**
- Jan. 30 Railroad Film Night
National Canal Museum
- Mar. 20 Canal Symposium
Lafayette College
- June 10-13** **SIA national conference
Providence RI**

Roebling Chapter SIA Officers

President	Mary Habstritt
Vice President	Lynn Rakos
Treasurer	Charles Scott
Secretary	Aron Eisenpress

The Roebling Chapter official telephone number is the residence number of the President: (212) 769-4946. Please leave a brief message on the answering machine.

Membership is \$10.00 per year, payable to RCSIA, c/o Aron Eisenpress, 235 West End Avenue, Apt. 14-C, New York, NY 10023

For those who want to keep abreast of IA matters at the national level, the national SIA may be reached at either of the following web addresses: www.siahq.org or www.sia-web.org.

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