

# ROEBLING CHAPTER

## Society for Industrial Archeology

March 2008

Vol. 17 No. 1

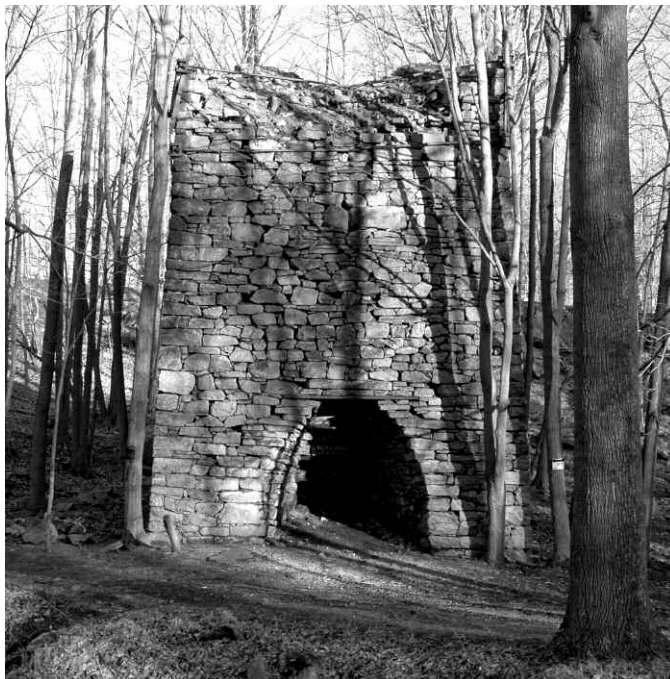
### CHAPTER EVENTS

#### ***Ice Houses, Quarries, and Great Walls – The Industrial Archeology of Rockland Lake***

*Rockland Lake State Park, NY*

*Saturday, April 5, 11:00 AM - 2:30 PM.*

Join us on an invigorating tour of Rockland Lake and Hook Mountain as we explore the extensive vestiges of the ice harvesting and quarrying industries as well as the remains of domestic and recreational activities. The ruins of the ice houses are simply massive and intriguing, and feature a 450 foot long by 12 foot high foundation wall that is largely intact after 130 years. The inclined railway, used to transport ice from the lake up and over Hook Mountain for transit on the Hudson River is also quite spectacular. Atop Hook Mountain, the view of the river 700 feet below is incredible. The tour will be lead by Timothy Englert with the Palisades Interstate Park Commission. Mr. Englert will provide an overview of the history of the area while we eat our lunch in the



*The remains of the Village of Split Rock center around the only standing blast furnace stack in Morris County.*

Josephine Hudson Center, named for the sole woman to work for the Knickerbocker Ice Company. He'll also show photographs from the Knickerbocker Ice festival, which featured large ice sculptures erected at the site of the ice houses. The center features artifacts and print materials related to Rockland Lake's diverse industrial, social, and recreational past. Please bring your lunch and beverages! There will be off trail hiking in areas, and it is hilly, so wear appropriate footwear. Those wishing to stay on pathways will still be able to see a significant portion of the remains.

Meet at the Program Center at Rockland Lake State Park; Take Route 9W north from Nyack or south from Haverstraw. There are two entrances to the park on Rt. 9W. Enter at the North Entrance, which is the first if coming from Haverstraw to the north, and the second if coming from Nyack to the south. Follow the park road until you come to the first parking lot. Enter here and park nearest the canopied pavilion to the left. The Josephine Hudson Program Center is at the front left corner of the building. Please RSVP Lynn (contact info on back page).

#### ***The Industrial Archeology of Split Rock Iron Furnace***

*Rockaway Township, NJ*

*Saturday, April 12, 10AM – 1PM*

*Fee: \$3.00 for all*

This walk is a rare opportunity to see Morris County's only standing iron furnace and the village that supported its operation. The visit will include a look at the impressive stone furnace stack, the forge site and an examination of the surrounding community. This is a hike featuring archeology so your imagination will be needed to see some of the structures no longer there. We will be doing a moderate amount of walking, sometimes over uneven terrain, so wear proper footwear and consider your walking abilities. Chapter members Joe Macasek and Bierce Riley will lead this tour which is co-sponsored by the Morris County Park Commission.

Contact Lynn for meeting location. Sorry, there is no public transportation to this site. Please find a chapter buddy with car or contact Lynn who will try to help get you there (contact info on back page).

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## **Industrial History and Cultural Change on the East River, Queens and Brooklyn**

*Saturday, May 3, 10:30-3:30pm.*

**J**oin us on the B-61 bus and its fascinating route along the East River waterfront. We'll enjoy narrated walks that focus on the industrial history of the waterfront and the evolution of these increasingly popular neighborhoods. We'll begin in Long Island City, Queens and view the transformation of early twentieth century daylight loft buildings from factories to new uses. We'll pass through the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, DUMBO-Vinegar Hill, downtown Brooklyn, Cobble Hill and Red Hook. We'll disembark for walks in DUMBO and Red Hook to explore manufacturing and maritime structures that have largely given way to housing and retail uses today. The walks will be led by geographer Jack Eichenbaum, industrial archaeologist Tom Flagg and Community Coordinator for Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez Dan Wiley.

Meet on the lowest level (token booth) of ELEVATED Queensborough Plaza station of the 7 and N trains. The underground E, R station at Queens Plaza is just a short walk away. You will need a Metrocard! Bring your lunch or pick up something along the way. As space may be limited please RSVP Lynn (contact info on back page).

## **Celebration Events for the 125th Anniversary of the Brooklyn Bridge!**

*May 24, 25 and 26*

**T**he Roebling Chapter will join with the American Society of Civil Engineers, Metropolitan Section and the Brooklyn Borough President's Office in celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Brooklyn Bridge. The events are in the early planning stage although the dates seem to be set. Please check the ASCE calendar as the time approaches at <http://www.ascemetsection.org> (on the menu bar across the top is a link to events, and on that pull down menu is an events calendar). Details will be posted there by ASCE as plans become final.

An email about the events will be sent to those on the Roebling Chapter email list. If you want to be included on the email list please email Lynn or if you don't have internet access call Lynn for event details (contact info on back page). Volunteers may be solicited as the plans move along!

## **CHAPTER BUSINESS 2008 Annual Meeting**

**W**e held our 2008 Annual Meeting on January 26 at the Paterson Museum in Paterson, NJ. Prior to the meeting, forty-eight of us were treated to a tour of the Paterson Historic District led by chapter member Gianfranco Archimede, the Executive Director of the City of Paterson Historic Preservation Commission. Many of us also enjoyed a tour of the museum led by Giacomo DeStefano, the museum's Director. Many thanks to both of them for providing great tours and a most appropriate spot for us to hold our meeting. The meeting began at 1:15PM.

## **2007 IN REVIEW**

*By Lynn Rakos*

### **TOURS AND EVENTS**

**F**ollowing our 2007 Annual Membership Meeting in January we offered 10 tours, a movie screening and our annual corn roast and annual symposium on IA at Drew. Seven events were held in NJ – six in NY State – of those 4 were in New York City.

In April we toured Plane 9 West of the Morris Canal. This was a joint effort with the Archaeological Society of New Jersey's Northern Chapter. Jim Lee, Junior and Jim Lee III, led us on a tour of the site and museum. We had a follow-on tour of the Peoples Water Company Pump House lead by Bill McKelvey.

This was followed by a day at the former Yama Farms. This tour in the Shawngunks in Ulster County, NY was led by archaeologist Wendy Harris, author of a recent book on Yama Farms. Yama Farms was an extraordinary resort that flourished during the opening decades of the twentieth century. Foremost among the guests was a group known as the "The Famous Four," which included the naturalist John Burroughs, inventor Thomas Edison, and industrialists Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone.

The summer's tours included the MacDonald/Klines Sawmill in Somerset County, NJ. It is a rare surviving timber-frame up-and-down sawmill, which has the mill drive virtually intact. The mill and two dwellings are the sole vestiges of a 19th-century rural industrial and trading center that included a number of other mills nearby. The mill is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Tom Buckingham of the Green Brook Township Historical Society, led the tour of this unique site.

Tom Flagg led 2 tours in Riverside Park South, along

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the Hudson River in Manhattan. These tours were co-sponsored by NYC Parks Department. The tours explored what is left of the once industrially active waterfront and the former 60th St. yard of the New York Central RR.

In July we had a double feature screening of film maker Isabel Hill's recent film, **Brooklyn Matters** and an earlier piece called **Made in Brooklyn**. **Brooklyn Matters** addresses the myriad planning issues associated with the Atlantic Yards project in Brooklyn.

Hill's earlier 1993 film, **Made in Brooklyn** consists of interviews with plant managers and owners of industrial buildings interspersed with commentary by city planners focused on the issue of whether or not there is truly a place for manufacturing in the urban environment. Gerry Weinstein kindly let us use his studio in Manhattan for the screening.

August found a large group of IA-ers wandering Williamsburg and Greenpoint along the East River in Brooklyn. Our own Mary Habstritt and Ward Dennis, historian and member of the Waterfront Preservation Alliance of Greenpoint & Williamsburg led us on the tour. Sites along the way included the Williamsburg Bridge, Domino Sugar, the Austin, Nichols & Co. Warehouse, remnants of American Manufacturing Co., and Eberhard Faber's pencil plant.

In early September we held our annual Corn Roast at Mary and Gerry's wonderful home in Croton. Hanging out at the Engineerum and swimming pool with the chapter is always a good time. We began the day with a tour of Croton Point Park, led by archeologist Eugene Boesch. The location includes archeological sites occupied at least 7,000 years ago and extends through the period of 19th to early 20th century industrial activity. Buildings, including subterranean wine cellars, icehouses, storage structures, as well as clay mining areas, associated with the nineteenth century Underhill family brick works and vineyard.

The Light Rail to Roebing, NJ drew a big crowd in October. This was a joint tour with the Oliver Evans chapter. We rode along New Jersey's oldest rail line, the Camden & Amboy, now NJ Transit's RiverLINE to the village of Roebing. Members of the Roebing Historical Society, including former mill workers, led us on a walking tour of this remarkably intact company town. Clifford Zink, RCSIA member, architectural historian and consultant to the Main Gate House Museum, provided an overview of the Roebing Steel Mills and John A. Roebing Company history. Thanks to member Ingrid Wuebber for organizing this tour.

Soon thereafter we visited the Schoen Tassel and Cord Company on West 25th Street in Manhattan. Marty

Sliver, the owner, led us through the plant. The Schoen Company has been in business for over 60 years. They produce tassels and cords by hand and on century-old machines.

On the Veteran's Day Monday off we toured the former Star Porcelain works in Trenton, NJ led by chapter member Chuck Taylor. Star Porcelain was founded in 1899. It was a job shop, making 'Electrical Specialties' - ceramics such as insulators, sockets, and fixtures for holding heating coils. The extensive overhead monorail system was very interesting and entertaining to the group.

Just two of members joined me on the tour of the Thomas A. Edison Memorial Tower and Menlo Park Museum, in late November. This lack of attendance might have been due to the fact that the weekend was the one before Thanksgiving so people were likely shopping, traveling or preparing to travel. It was too bad so few were there as we were given a most interesting talk by Jack Stanley, the museum curator.

## **DREW SYMPOSIUM**

This year our symposium was again very ably co-chaired by Tom Flagg and Allison Rachleff. Due to losses in the previous year the board voted to raise the registration fee to \$25 for pre-registration and \$30 at the door. Despite this increase our registration numbers were high. Talks included several on the NY Harbor waterfront; an update on Bethlehem Steel; a talk about an oil pipeline; work at Ledell's Forge, an 18th century bloomery in NJ; and a talk on the rehabilitation of a lenticular bridge that include great time lapse video of the bridge being deconstructed and put back together again. Thanks again to all who made this year's symposium a great success, particularly to our co-chairs, Allison and Tom and to Nanci Batchelor for ensuring we were all well fed. Thanks also to our speakers.

## **NEWSLETTERS**

At a board meeting we held in May I said I would try to keep the newsletter shorter - mostly due to the expense of printing and mailing each issue. Alas, I have failed. This is mostly due to the fact that we had so much to report this year. It is also due to the fact that a lot of us are wordy! Me included.

We got out the four newsletters this year, as required by our by-laws. I have tried to establish a schedule for the newsletter and so far so good. I was told however that Ed Rutsch wouldn't be happy - as one of our founders with a much more fluid approach to deadlines - but I like to think Ed would forgive me!

Thanks to Joe Macasek who continues to donate his

design services. And thanks to Aron for getting the labels where they need to be. Thanks to all who provided articles for the newsletter.

## **NEW YORK STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN MEETING**

On November 28, Mary Habstritt and I attended the 2007 – 2011 New York State Statewide Historic Preservation Plan Public Meeting organized by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). This was one of 13 meetings held around the state. The goal of these meetings was to hear from organizations, individuals and agencies on historic preservation issues in their community and to get ideas on how to improve historic preservation opportunities. RCSIA Vice President, Tolga Morawski, attended the meeting held in Albany, NY on December 12. Follow up with SHPO staff suggests that RCSIA presence at the meetings helped to reinforce our concerns for IA resources.

## **ROEBLING AWARD**

The 2007 John Augustus Roebling Award for Contributions to Industrial Archeology went to the Water Works Conservancy. The conservancy was honored for its preservation of the New Milford Plant of the Hackensack Water Company in Oradell, New Jersey. This was our 5th award.

George Bulow, was this year's chair. He served his three years which I gratefully acknowledge. Ulana Zakalak becomes the chair for 2008 and Sandy Malter continues to serve on the board. Thanks to George for chairing and thanks too to Ulana and Sandy!

George rotating off the committee left us in need of a third committee member. I am very pleased to announce that Clifford Zink has agreed to serve on the Award committee.

As many of you know, Clifford is an architectural historian with his own business in Princeton, NJ. He has extensive experience with industrial structures and sites including dedicating many years working towards the preservation of the Roebling works in Trenton. Clifford also authored the book, "The Hackensack Water Works," for the Water Works Conservancy, this year's recipient of the Roebling Award. Clifford is also a consultant on the new Roebling Gatehouse Museum in Roebling, NJ. Clifford is known to many members through his talks at the Drew Symposium and the tours he has lead for the chapter. He brings to the committee a great deal of knowledge on the IA of our region and on the people working in local IA. Together, with Ulana Zakalak and Sandy Malter, we have a stellar committee.

## **OBITUARIES**

Sadly last year we lost several members including Chris Bradley, Carter Litchfield, Bill Rau, Jim Lee and Bill Wilkie. Their contributions to our group of friends and colleagues and to IA will be missed.

## **BUSINESS AFFAIRS**

Business affairs this year essentially equals "Old Business" as several of the issues from last year remain including the need for and cost of Directors and Officers insurance; becoming a 501 (c) 3 and developing a chapter website. We now have stationery with our new logo. Mary Habstritt will work towards obtaining our 501 (c) 3 status. Having this will help with any fund raising efforts we decide to pursue. Bob Bodenstein offered to help research the D&O insurance. Tolga Morawski will work on a website. Hopefully by next year there will be significant progress on these issues.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

*Reported by Kevin Pegram*

Balance as of Jan. 14, 2007	<b>\$16,732.58</b>
Balance as of Dec. 31, 2007	<b>\$14,459.46</b>

Our dues no longer cover our operating expenses. The printing/ mailing of our newsletter is our largest expense, followed by our insurance premium. This year's expenses also included the printing of stationery with our new logo. The quantity printed should last for several years.

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

*Reported by Aron Eisenpress*

Membership stands at 458, of whom 87 are already paid for this year, 13 are paid for future years, 251 are paid through 2007, and 65 are only paid through 2006. An additional 44 people who have not renewed for 2006 will be getting their final reminder shortly and will be taken off the membership list. By comparison, our membership last year at this time was 457 members, also not including members dropped for non-renewal. There are 42 comp memberships, consisting largely of organizations that have helped the chapter or that may prove supportive as well as representatives of other SIA chapters and the National SIA board.

A recent comparison of the chapter membership list with the National 2006 directory revealed that out of 460 RCSIA members, 175 were not members of the National SIA. Approximately 100 members of National SIA living in the RCSIA region are not members of the chapter. We reached out to them by mailing them the Drew Symposium flyer.

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## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

*Reported by Mary Habstritt, Chair*

The Historic Preservation Committee was established in January 2007 at the Annual Meeting by incoming President Lynn Rakos and out-going President Mary Habstritt agreed to serve as the committee Chair. Its mission is to advocate for and facilitate preservation and documentation of sites important to the industrial heritage of the greater metropolitan New York/New Jersey area. It was envisioned that this mission would encompass such activities as identifying sites worthy of preservation; collecting, soliciting, and disseminating information on historic sites; providing advice to others when historic industrial resources are threatened and help bring attention to them; collaborating with other organizations, especially to provide expert advice; writing letters to and testifying before government agencies, formally requesting evaluations and designations; and coordinating advocacy campaigns.

Habstritt has seen many successes including the land-marking of Domino Sugar and Eberhard Faber pencil factory complex in Brooklyn and the Sohmer Piano factory in Queens. RCSIA Testimony before the Landmarks Preservation Commission noted that the entire complex has been determined eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places and asked that more be protected. Although sad that it was needed, a significant accomplishment was that the National Trust for Historic Preservation designated the entire Brooklyn industrial waterfront to its 2007 annual list of 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. RCSIA strongly supported this designation.

Some results appear imminent. RCSIA has written a letter supporting listing the Glenwood Power Station in Yonkers on the "Seven to Save" of the Preservation League of New York State. This is an annual list of New York's most endangered historic places.

RCSIA commented on the proposed Great Falls State Park in Paterson, NJ asking that the industrial heritage be better integrated into the landscape design. The chapter wrote to the New York State Parks Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation asking that they help get utilities for the historic ships moored in Hudson River Park.

A loss this year included the demolition of the iconic Revere Sugar refinery in Brooklyn because the developer got demolition permits first and sought re-zoning only after the historic buildings were rubble.

New York City's Mayor Bloomberg in his recent state of the city address, claimed credit for re-zoning one-

sixth of the city so far during his administration. All to reclaim "underused" land. That underused land is normally zoned for manufacturing and includes the kinds of places the SIA cares about. Plans to re-zone the full length of 125th Street, the Garment District, and the South Bronx all have potential to destroy former industrial structures. The New York City re-zonings alone have kept this committee of one extraordinarily busy.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE REPORT**

*Reported by Allison Rachleff and  
Gianfranco Archimede, Co-chairs*

In 2006, during Mary Habstritt's tenure as RCSIA president, RCSIA announced its intention to form a Special Projects Committee that would be responsible for disbursing up to \$5,000 on an annual basis to individuals, organizations or government agencies engaged in industrial archeological projects of limited scope. At the time, Allison Rachleff (NY) and Gianfranco Archimede (NJ) were asked to co-chair the committee.

The purpose of these grants would be to swiftly fund critical efforts to preserve or document industrial heritage sites and structures. Priority for funding would be given to projects in New York and New Jersey. Potential projects could include small-scale documentation reports; seed money for preservation of significant historic industrial resources; or advocacy efforts to raise public awareness concerning the importance of threatened resources.

Ideally, the Special Projects Committee would preside over a grant fund that could be evenly divided on an annual basis between New York and New Jersey. In each state, project grants could range between \$200-\$1,000. However, if, during a given year, a large number of worthy applications originated from one state and not the other, the committee could deem it appropriate to disburse the majority of funds to the state with worthy applications. Furthermore, if the committee was made aware of a particularly urgent project in one area, the committee could deem it necessary to reallocate the 50/50 funding scheme to assist the urgent project. Funding the committee is a current issue that the chapter is addressing.

At the annual meeting Allison and Gianfranco led a lively discussion regarding how to obtain funding and how much funding to consider. Ideas discussed included raising dues with a portion dedicated to special projects, holding dinner dances with silent auctions and applying for large grants that RCSIA would then distribute to qualified applicants. Concern was voiced that applying for grants and holding large events to obtain significant sums of money would take the chapter away from its present form as an informal group. Another



*RCSIA members at the Annual Meeting listen as Gianfranco Archimede begins our tour of the Paterson Historic District. Behind the group is Locomotive #299, on display at the former Rogers Locomotive Works which now houses the Paterson Museum.*

noted that we need to support organizations with missions to preserve/promote IA and industrial structures as without our help the buildings and landscapes we love to tour will be lost. A key issue noted with regard to obtaining grants to redistribute was the tracking of the funds and reporting. As a volunteer organization it can be a lot to ask of someone. It was stated that original intent of the Special Projects Committee was to fund small projects and entities that need a quick injection of funds to do things such as printing/ mailing important announcements and calls to action. The general sense of the membership was that at this point, smaller amounts of money raised through donations, 50/50s at meetings, etc. would be acceptable and welcomed. Raising the dues to include an amount specifically for Special Projects was also considered acceptable. The general sense was that dues of \$20.00 with \$5.00 for Special Projects was sensible.

A questionnaire was distributed at the meeting regarding ways to fund raise. The questionnaire will be included in the next newsletter and a tally and summary will follow.

## **ELECTIONS**

**T**om Flagg supervised the election. All board members were eligible to run again. No nominees were received from the floor. The chapter officers for 2008 are Lynn Rakos, President; Tolga Morawski, Vice President; Kevin Pegram, Treasurer and Aron Eisenpress, Secretary.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Adding new trustees** – It was suggested that we add new trustees to the board; one from NJ, one from NY and one at-large. Presently, as per our by-laws, we

have one trustee in addition to the executive board who are also trustees. The executive board appoints the fifth trustee. The idea of additional members is to ensure representation of each state and also to include more people in running the chapter and determining its activities. If we decide to proceed with this we can make an official change to our by-laws and possibly include voting for trustees. We can also consider doing this informally and have a trustee from each state serve on the board in a non-voting/advisory capacity. The board can appoint these trustees or ask for volunteers.

The general sense of the membership was that the informal approach would be a good start.

### **2. Changing the date of the annual meeting** –

There was discussion of changing the meeting date to a time of better weather. To do so requires a by-law change as it is stipulated in them that our meeting be in January. We report to National SIA in January and our election takes place at our annual meeting in January. The hope is that better weather might bring more people to the meeting. Our annual meetings at Drew were attended by approximately 30 people. The change to Paterson attracted 48 for the tour but a group of 30 remained for the meeting. For those of you who did not attend the meeting, please let us know if a different month might entice you to attend.

**4. Dues increase** – since we are no longer meeting our operating expenses with our dues there was considerable discussion on raising them. They have stood at \$10.00 for a decade or so. One money saving (and tree saving) suggestion is to offer our newsletter electronically. The newsletter is currently available, after mailing to our members, on the National SIA website ([www.siahq.org](http://www.siahq.org)). The e-newsletter idea will be further examined. Dues will be raised in 2009. The new dues amount has yet to be determined but will likely be increased to \$15.00 or \$20.00.

**5. Updating email list** - The chapter has two email lists; one for sending items of possible interest to members, the other for updates and calls for action on the preservation front. To be included on these lists please email [RCSIAPrez@aol.com](mailto:RCSIAPrez@aol.com). A listserv is also being established.

**6. Changing By-Laws** – Several issues discussed at the meeting, including obtaining our 501(c) 3 status, may entail changes to our by-laws. It was suggested that

## **SAVE THE DATE & CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS**

### 28TH ANNUAL DREW SYMPOSIUM

*on Industrial Archeology in the New York – New Jersey Area*

The Roebling Chapter of the Society for Industrial Archeology is soliciting illustrated presentations on the industrial heritage of the Roebling Chapter region for the 28th Annual Drew Symposium to be held on Sunday, October 26, 2008 at the Hall of Sciences, Drew University, Madison, NJ from 9:30 AM to 5 PM.

We are seeking presentations that focus on historic industrial resources in the metropolitan New York/New Jersey area, but we are also happy to consider proposals that cover topics beyond the New York City region. Presentations are typically 25 minutes in length and heavily illustrated. If you would like to make a presentation, please contact Tom Flagg or Allison Rachleff, symposium coordinators. Tom's e-mail is tflagg@suny-opt.edu and Allison's is allison.rachleff@earthlink.net. Or write to: Thomas Flagg, SUNY College of Optometry, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036.

a committee be formed to further discuss this topic so that any changes to the by-laws and ensuing voting by membership (as required by our bylaws when changes to them are proposed) can be undertaken as efficiently as possible. We will be looking for volunteers to help!

**7. National Conference** - We were contacted about the possibility of hosting the National SIA Annual Conference in 2009 or 2010. The idea is to base the conference on the Hudson River, possibly in the Poughkeepsie area. This is now on hold. If this moves ahead I'll be contacting you all for further ideas and help.

The meeting was adjourned well after 4PM due to a lot of thoughtful discussion on many topics. Gianfranco kindly stayed on to run through the talk he had prepared on planning the Great Falls State Park in Paterson.

## OTHER EVENTS

### *The Society for Industrial Archeology's 37th Annual Conference, San Jose, CA*

The National SIA is holding the 2008 conference in San Jose from May 28 to June 1st. The theme this year is "Change is Constant." As per the conference website ([www.siahq.org](http://www.siahq.org), follow link to Conferences) it is change that has shaped the Bay Area and Silicon Valley, whether geologically or through the rapid pace of innovation and technology. The SIA Samuel Knight Chapter is co-hosting the conference with History San Jose, the Computer History Museum, San Jose State University, Department of Anthropology, and others. The conference hotel is the Sainte Claire, a National Historic Landmark. Tours are being finalized and are subject to change as the conference planning proceeds but the website includes a long list of places being considered. National SIA members will hear about the

conference registration through a mailing. RCSIA encourages you all to join the national SIA if not a member already.

## **The Pencil-Making Process**

(Continued from December 2007 Newsletter)

*By Mary Habstritt*

The process of manufacturing pencils has changed little since the 19th century. It begins with graphite being ground and mixed with water and acids to remove impurities. It is then washed and allowed to settle out and dry, then mixed with clay that has gone through a purifying wash and dry process. The two powders are mixed together with water to the consistency of cream, to varying proportions of graphite and lead. The higher the proportion of clay, the harder the lead; the more graphite, the softer the lead.

The mix is then fed into mills for finer grinding, a process similar to grinding pigments for paint. It sometimes passes through the mill as many as 24 times for fine pencils, and comes out in the form of a paste. It is then enclosed in canvas and put through a steam press to remove any remaining water. This creates a "dough" that goes on to the forming press. A powerful screw extrudes the lead into a thread of the desired shape, square or round. The leads, very brittle at this point, are then dried, cut and baked in a crucible at high heat for hardness.

Cedar, which is used for the outer "case," is soft and close-grained; it is sawed into blocks the length of a pencil and the width of six pencils. These blocks are run through a machine that planes and grooves them to the depth of half a lead. The leads are then laid into the grooves of the bottom piece of wood, while a second piece is coated with glue and laid over the first.

The nearly completed pencils are then placed in a press until the glue is dry. A planing machine then cuts apart and shapes the individual pencils.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- April 5** Industrial Archeology of Rockland  
Lake State Park, NY
- April 12** Industrial Archeology of Split Rock  
Iron Furnace, NJ
- May 3** Industrial History and Cultural  
Change on the East River, Queens  
& Brooklyn
- May 24 – 26** Brooklyn Bridge 125th Anniversary  
Celebration Events
- May 28 – June 1** National SIA Conference, San Jose, CA
- October 26** RCSIA Annual Drew Symposium on  
Industrial Archeology

## Roebling Chapter SIA Officers

President	Lynn Rakos
Vice President	Tolga Morawski
Treasurer	Kevin Pegram
Secretary	Aron Eisenpress

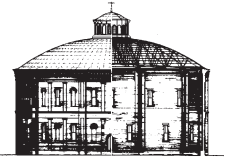
The Roebling Chapter official telephone number is the cell phone of the President: (917) 515-4154, or contact the Roebling Chapter by E-mail: [RCSIAprez@aol.com](mailto:RCSIAprez@aol.com).

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

A downloadable chapter membership form and general information about the SIA are available at [www.siahq.org](http://www.siahq.org).

Design: Joe Macasek, MacGraphics

**AN OFFICIAL CHAPTER OF THE  
SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL  
ARCHEOLOGY**



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**ROEBLING CHAPTER NEWSLETTER** is published four times per year by the Roebling Chapter, Society for Industrial Archeology, c/o Lynn Rakos, 230 6th Ave., Apt 4, Brooklyn, NY 11215, e-mail: [RCSIAprez@aol.com](mailto:RCSIAprez@aol.com).

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