

ROEBLING CHAPTER

Society for Industrial Archeology

July 2010

Vol. 19 No.2

UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

Madame Alexander Doll Factory

Friday, August 6 – 11 AM

615 West 131st Street, Manhattan

Meeet in front of the historic Studebaker Building in Manhattan. Go to Madame Alexander web site at <http://www.madamealexander.com/ABOUT+MADAME+ALEXANDER/Museum/Museum/582>. The behind the scenes tour cost \$8 or \$5 for seniors over age 55, and will be paid to Madame Alexander at the factory. After the tour there will be a brief walking tour of the immediate industrial area where Columbia University is planning to create a new campus.

Brooklyn Navy Yard Bus Tour

Sunday, September 12 – 1:45 PM

Make reservation with Urban Oyster at <http://www.urbanoyster.com/>. The tour leaves by bus from the Brooklyn Historical Society in Brooklyn Heights. The price is \$30 or \$25 for members of the Brooklyn Historical Society. See their web site at <http://www.brooklynhistory.org/>. These tours have been very popular, so be sure to book well in advance.

Green-Wood Cemetery Tour

Sunday, October 3 – 1 PM

Fifth Avenue and 25th Street, Brooklyn

Meeet at the Main Gate at Fifth Avenue and 25th Street in Brooklyn. This will be a general tour of one of the greatest cemeteries in the world with particular emphasis on the industrial community. There will be two miles of walking in the cemetery and many features different from those in last year's tour. There is no charge for this tour. See more about Green-Wood at <http://www.green-wood.com/>.

RECENT EVENTS RECAP

Home Rubber & Star Porcelain

On Friday, April 30th, some 15 chapter members visited the Home Rubber Company in the morning and then about half as many went to Star Porcelain in the afternoon. Both are in the old industrial section of Trenton, New Jersey. Home Rubber occupies part of the older Roebling Wireworks facility and began operations in 1881. As such it is the oldest continuously operating rubber company in the United States. Chapter member Chuck Taylor arranged for the incredible tour with owner and President Rich Balka. Mr. Balka gave a nuts-and-bolts explanation and walk through the operation. We touched and felt unprocessed rubber, marveled at how 50-foot lengths of tube were fabricated, and explored equipment and rooms of a different world.

Star Porcelain ceased operations a few years ago. But lucky for us, Chuck Taylor took a liking to this amazing remnant of Trenton. Because of the quality of clay in the Trenton area, the rubber, pottery and porcelain industries thrived. Lenox china was a Trenton mainstay. Star Porcelain can still be found wherever electrical insulators are used. We received porcelain insulators from a room that was a virtual museum of porcelain products. Part of the building was being used by a company supplying industrial-and commercial-grade metal shelving. Chuck walked us through the seemingly endless rooms and up to the roof. The production line must have been hundreds of yards long in its day. Star Porcelain was a notable part of Trenton's proud industrial heritage.

Maritime Industry Museum at Fort Schuyler

Bierce Riley arranged for Captain Eric Johannson to conduct a tour of the Maritime Industry Museum at Fort Schuyler on April 17th. The Museum occupies a large part of the mid-19th century fort

FOR THE LATEST ON UPCOMING EVENTS
WATCH THE ROEBLING CHAPTER WEB SITE FOR DETAILS
roebblingsia.org

on the magnificent campus of the State University of New York Maritime College. It sits at the one-time strategic point that guarded one of the accesses to New York City. Fort Totten complements Fort Schuyler on the Queens side.

Captain Johannson gave a very comprehensive and insightful tour. His background on the Brooklyn waterfront was parleyed into 15 years of teaching at the Maritime College and as President of the museum. The depth of the collection is awesome. It ranks with the Peabody Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, and perhaps the collections at Annapolis and the Smithsonian. Our members were more than dazzled with so many stories and artifacts of maritime history. A follow-up trip is in order.

Aero Nav Laboratories

Before the tour of Aero Nav's operation on at their College Point facility on May 15th, Walter Cienski, Vice President of Testing Services, and Sheldon "Shelly" Levine, Vice President of Marketing, gave a history of the company. Shelly also recounted his many years with nearby Edo Corporation. Edo was the country's premier developer of marine aviation units, notably seaplanes. Cienski explained that the number of tests that were performed were few in number. They included tests for stress, vibration and simulated altitude. The ten Roebling Chapter members on the tour realized soon enough that the actual range of testing was much larger than Cienski let on due to the many variables in the testing process.

Although Aero Nav tests primarily for the defense department, it has also tested speedometers for the Metropolitan Transit Authority as well as NYC police and fire call boxes. Cienski explained that the half-dozen or so testing laboratories in the area arose from the aeronautical industries that clustered on Long Island, such as Grumann, Republic, and Curtis Wright. These labs know each other well and they each developed their own specializations. Curiously, fiber optic testing has arisen from the crash of TWA Flight 800 as fiber optic cable is now used to view the fuel tanks on aircraft.

The testing equipment was particularly interesting. Some of the equipment provided specially closed chambers whereby the testing could be contained and measured, such as effects of shock and salt fog. Occasionally an explosion test was planned, and even though the equipment would contain its effects, all the employees would exercise undue caution by exiting the building. Cienski demonstrated other dramatic effects of testing with vibration equipment and a trip hammer that rocked the area. By all measures, the tour was most memorable and Roebling members were treated with a very unique industrial experience.

(Full disclosure: Walter Cienski is the brother-in-law of Roebling Chapter President Jim Mackin)

Hall of Fame Tour

On Sunday, April 11th, Roebling Chapter members received a guided tour of the Hall of Fame of Great Americans. This Hall of Fame is the first one – before the Baseball Hall of Fame or any other. It was established in 1900 on the uptown campus of New York University in the Bronx. Some 102 notables were elected to the Hall and busts were executed for 98 of them. Many are scientists and inventors upon which our national industry was built. The rotunda of busts is the largest concentration of American sculpture by the greatest sculptors in the country. Notable architect Stanford White designed the Rotunda Hall and adjacent buildings. One building, Gould Library, is so spectacular that it has been used for numerous movie settings as in "The Good Shepard" and "A Beautiful Mind." Art and Susan Zuckerman, who have been champions of the Hall of Fame, conducted the tour. We visited parts of the facility that are generally not open to the public. The Hall of Fame is a treasure and yet very few people know of its existence or significance.

Note: Chapter President, Jim Mackin, appeared on Art and Susan Zuckerman's Monday night radio show on WVOX (1430 AM) in New Rochelle on May 17th. Jim spoke about the Roebling Chapter and particularly about Emily Roebling's role in completing the Brooklyn Bridge. Coincidentally, a call-in guest from the Paterson Museum was also on the program.

Lite Brite Neon Tour Enlightening

Almost 20 members toured the Lite Brite Neon Studio in the Gowanus section of Brooklyn on April 8th. Lite Brite provides customized neon lighting for a long list of well-known companies that remain nameless for proprietary reasons. The owner and founder, Matt Dilling, conducted the tour. He began the day's entertainment by throwing himself up against a door to illustrate a point in explaining the physics of light. And that was only the start of a rather illuminating experience. The range of uses for neon lighting suggests much improvisation in executing many original designs beyond traditional neon signage. Most every facet of this unique operation was explored and encouraged by Matt Dilling's insight into the principles underlying Brite Lite. His vision placed neon lighting in a larger universe where all is connected and we were most fortunate to become a part of it.

After the Lite Brite tour, some of the group ventured over to the Carroll Street Bridge. It is thought to be one of only four retractable bridges in the country. The bridge was featured when the Roebing Chapter hosted the national SIA conference in 2002. Earlier that day, Roebing Chapter member Rich Taylor was fortunate to have seen the bridge in operation. BriteLite Neon occupies space in the historic American Can Company building, across the street from the very historic Coignet Concrete Company, which supplied concrete for the first U.S. use of that material in the Cleffstone Bridge in Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

NEW JERSEY NEWS

19th Century Artifact Found

Near Cooper Mill in Chester, New Jersey, recent excavations to replace the dam at Kay's



*The Roebing Chapter of the
Society for Industrial Archeology*



The **GREAT FALLS SYMPOSIUM**

INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY IN THE NEW YORK – NEW JERSEY AREA

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17TH, 2010

9:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

**International High School
200 Grand Avenue
Paterson, NJ**

Formerly at Drew University. Now being held in the Cradle of the Industrial Revolution in America near the Paterson Museum and the Great Falls National Park. Easy to reach by car, train or bus.

A full day of presentations on the industrial heritage in the Roebing Chapter region.

RCSIA members will receive a flyer in the mail in September.

OTHER EVENTS

Industrial Heritage Walks

By Joe Macasek

For information and reservations please call (973) 292-2755 or e-mail me at macgraphics1@verizon.net for a complete description of the walks. Registered participants will be e-mailed a map with detail and direction for each walk.

August 7 **Milltown & Hackelbarney Mines**

August 14 **Raratan Power Canal (New)**
Water Power & Bridges

September 11 **Waterloo**
Canals & Railroads / Iron & Ice

Pond unearthed rare artifact. When the pond was drained men working on the foundation for the new dam found a slitting roll from the Hacklebarney Forge the once occupied the site. The roll was used the roll wrought iron blooms into bars, a technical advance over the older way of hammering out the bar with a drop hammer. The 40" long by 9" wide artifact is the only one of its kind found at a New Jersey forge site. The dam

work also uncovered massive hand hewn wooden beams from the forge dam and large quantities of charcoal from the coal house.

Roebling Chapter SIA Officers

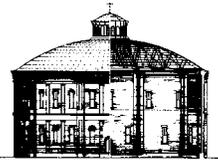
President	Jim Mackin
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Secretary	Aron Eisenpress

You can contact the Roebling Chapter by E-mail at:
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Membership is \$20.00 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.

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AN OFFICAL CHAPTER OF THE
SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL
ARCHEOLOGY



UPCOMING EVENTS

- August 6** Madame Alexander Doll Factory
615 W 131st Street, Manhattan
- September 12** Brooklyn Navy Yard
Brooklyn, NY
- September 16 – 19** National SIA Fall Tour
Montpelier/Barrre, Vermont
- October 3** Greenwood Cemetery
Fifth Ave & 25th Street, Brooklyn

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