

ROEBLING CHAPTER

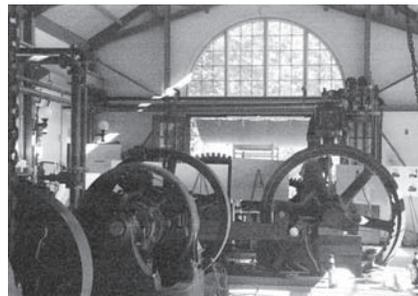
Society for Industrial Archeology

November 2011 – Vol. 20 No.3

THIS YEAR'S CORN ROAST – UNFORGETTABLE!

The annual Corn Roast of the Roebbling Chapter took place on Saturday, September 10th at the spectacular grounds of Mary Habstritt and Gerry Weinstein in Croton-on-Hudson high above the river. Had it been 1609, Henry Hudson's "Half Moon" would have been seen. If it were 1807, Robert Fulton's steamship "North River" would be on its historic maiden trip to Albany and back. On this day of pleasantries, Gerry's Engineerium and the magnificent machines - that have to be seen to be appreciated - honor the spirit of Hudson, Fulton, John Fitch, James Rumsay and Moses Rogers.

Our perennial hosts, Mary and Gerry, topped themselves yet again with exceptional hospitality and a stellar list of guests. In fact, attendance continued to climb from the prior year despite a few cancellations from Roebbling regulars. Assuming Mary and Gerry do not tire of this great tradition they created, next year the chapter will attempt a special reach-out to members who are within a few miles of the corn roast site. The fine weather was a pleasant surprise and pool activity was brisk, as was the grill. Gerry oversaw the corn grill as usual. Last year's meat grillmaster, Jeff Fry, was a tough act to follow. After an extensive search and application process, Janet Mackin was found and anointed this year's Roebbling



Top: Jeff Fry, Janet & Jim Mackin – Lower left: The Engineerium – Lower right: Gerry Weinstein.

Grillmaster. Who knew how fast she would meet the Roebbling chapter's high standards and even distinguish herself with an usefully aggressive distribution technique ("here, take it!").

Alas, Mary spent the first part of the day as Museum Director at Lilac. "Where's Mary" was answered late afternoon with her arrival and pool dip. The setting of the sun over the Hudson signaled the clean-up process, some leftover "goodies" to take home and the end of another memorable corn roast. ■

FUTURE TOURS BEING PLANNED

- Brooklyn Navy Yard
- Hoboken Waterfront
- Staten Island Shipyard
- Split Rock Forge & Furnace

FOR THE LATEST ON UPCOMING EVENTS

WATCH THE ROEBLONG CHAPTER WEB SITE FOR DETAILS

roebblingsia.org



WEBB INSTITUTE TOUR AND “STEAM COFFIN” PRESENTATION

On Saturday, September 24th, Roebling Chapter members and associates of member Jamie Swan, who were connected with his Long Island Metalworkers, toured the renowned Webb Institute in Glen Cove NY. Jamie had arranged and conducted a similar tour in late 2009. William H. Webb was the greatest shipbuilder of his day in the mid-1800s who created a retirement home in the Bronx for retired shipwrights. As they passed away, he employed the facility as a school for naval architecture. It became the premiere school of its kind in the United States. Read “William H. Webb: Shipbuilder” by the noted professor, Edwin L. Dunbaugh, who was on Webb’s faculty and Webb graduate, William duBarry Thomas. A companion book is “A Centennial History of Webb Institute of Naval Architecture” by Dunbaugh. These two, along with “South Street: a Maritime History of New York” (1934) by Richard C. McKay and “The Rise of New York Port: 1815-1860” by Robert G. Albion, provide the most comprehensive maritime history of our area before the era of steam.

Author John Laurence Busch made a presentation of the subject matter of his book “Steam Coffin, Captain Moses Rogers and the Steamship Savannah



Photo by Sandy Needham

Stevenson Taylor Hall at the Webb Institute, Glen Cove, New York

Break the Barrier”. Before the presentation, Mr. Busch toured with us where we saw a print of the incredible steamship Savannah displayed prominently amongst the Webb’s treasures. His presentation took us into that earlier world where new modes of water transportation were built to attain significant reductions of expense. Busch made a most compelling argument that the real accomplishment was that “Steam Coffin” broke the metaphorical barrier and showed what was possible. That possibility of steamship travel across the Atlantic would not be realized in any regular profitable way for another generation. John Laurence Busch tells history at its best, namely, why it matters.

We got the best of author Busch in having him offer his larger insights on technology history. He was most generous with our questions, but especially in putting them into the larger picture of history as progress. His philosophizing offers insights as to why we celebrate industrial history. It’s not just the machines, the designs, the engineering, or the unsung heroes that enable what we in the SIA value. It’s breaking barriers that are all-too-often taken for granted. Read “Steam Coffin” to profoundly understand how one more gigantic barrier is broken. By the way, “Steam Coffin” is a great read (I read its 600+ pages in one weekend). Further, it serves as an excellent survey of New York’s maritime industry in the early 1800s. ■

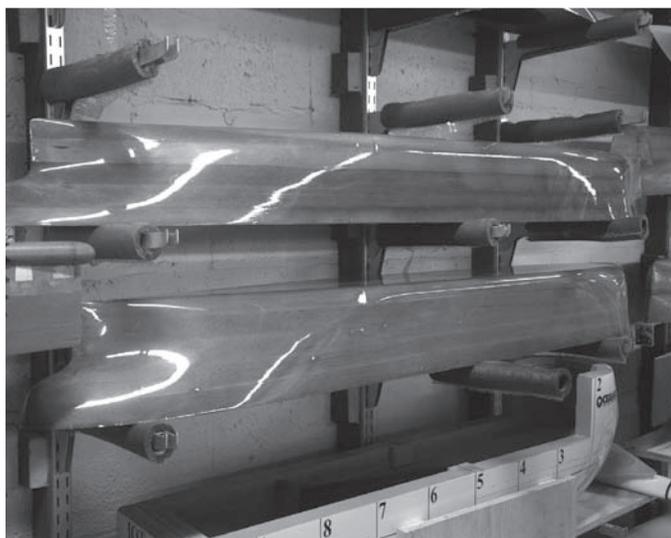


Photo by Sandy Needham

Model Boats in the Webb Institute Collection

MORRIS CANAL LOCK 2 EAST RESTORATION PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY

HUGH FORCE PARK, WHARTON NJ

In 2006 the Borough of Wharton, with the help of the Canal Society of New Jersey, received a \$50,000 grant to examine the possibility of restoring Lock 2 East in Wharton's Hugh Force Park. Archeological investigations showed that, below the surface, substantial portions of the lock's stonework were still in place. Since then, additional grant funding has been obtained from the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust, the New Jersey Historic Trust, and TEA 21 Stimulus. To date, the project has received nearly \$1 million in planning and construction funding. This fall construction work has begun at last.

In October the contractor, assisted by archeologists from Hunter Research in Trenton, began the laborious task of carefully excavating the entire 90-foot-long lock chamber. A backhoe slowly removed earth from the center of the lock and pumps worked to keep the hole from filling with water. Capstones that once covered the top of the lock were removed from the rubble fill, marked, and carefully stacked for use in the reconstruction.

The first few weeks' work uncovered the drop gate notch at the upper end of the lock and found that the wood flooring that lines the bottom of the chamber remains intact. Since the 1920s, the high a



At the upper end of the lock, the wooden platform that supported wicket gates was found in tact, preserved in the wet soil at the bottom of the lock. In the picture below one of the wicket's iron shutter valves can be seen knocked askew by falling stones.

Photo by Joe Macasek



When Morris Canal Lock 2 East was abandoned in the 1920s, the cap stone that formed the top edge of stonework were pushed into the lock and the chamber filled with earth. This fall workers started removing the dirt fill in preparation for rebuilding the lock.

Photo by Joe Macasek

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At the bottom of the lock four heavy iron shutter valves called wicket gate turned in unison to allow water to fill the lock. In the picture about two of these gate are seen after being cleared of debris by the archeology team.

water table and lack of oxygen have helped to preserve the wooden part of the lock. The water level in the bottom of the excavation is carefully kept several inches deep to keep the timbers wet.

More digging revealed the massive wooden framework that once supported the drop gate and upper wickets. Although the drop gate itself was not found, the wicket valve assembly was still in place with its iron shutter gates knocked askew, but still intact. When the lower lock gates were closed, these valves were opened to fill the lock with water from the upper level of the canal. As the lock filled, the drop gate settled into a pocket in the floor of the lock allowing a descending canal boat to enter. The lock tender then cranked the gate up into its



Photo by Joe Macasek

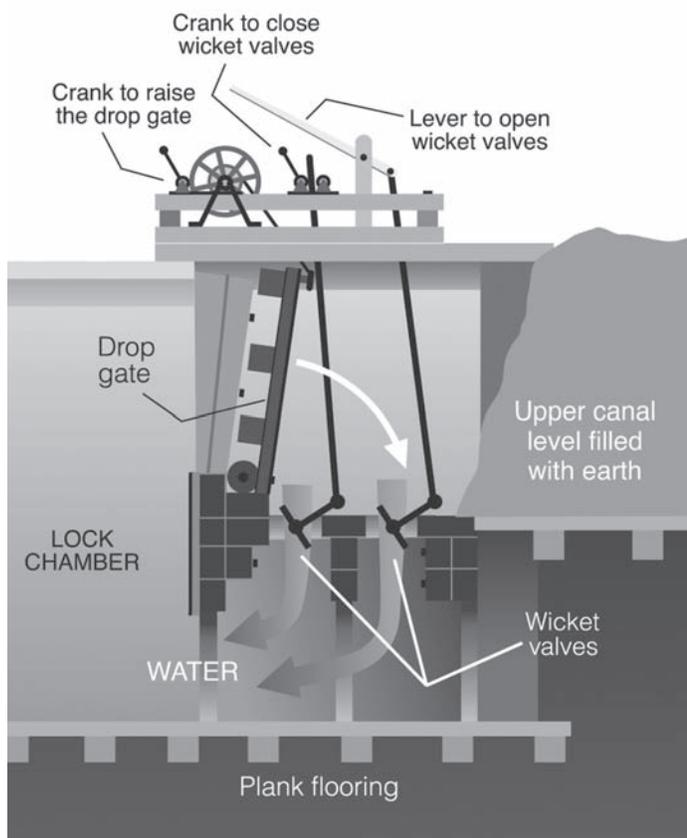
*ABOVE: The wooden stand that supported the controls that opened and closed to wickets was discovered in the bottom of the lock chamber.
LEFT: This historic view shows the wicket gate controls in place at the upper end of the lock.*

THE IRON HERITAGE TRAIL

There are nearly 60 historic sites, including furnaces, forges and mines, that constitute “THE IRON HERITAGE TRAIL” in the NY, CT and MA Tri-state area. This is the region that supplied some of the earliest iron in our country, including some of the chain used against the British in the Revolutionary War by placement across the Hudson River. It also produced Alexander Lyman Holley, whose family was noted for producing high-quality knives, and who brought Sir Henry Bessemer’s steel process to the United States.

Here is the link to THE IRON HERITAGE TRAIL details: <http://www.upperhousatonicheritage.org/index.php?catId=6&subCatId=32>

Most of the sites are only over the New York state line into Connecticut and Massachusetts, but some are in NY. A worthy stop along the way is THE WALKWAY OVER THE HUDSON in Poughkeepsie, which has been acknowledged by award and great acclaim by the Society for Industrial Archeology. See: <http://walkway.org/> ■



This diagram shows the area of the lock exposed during the current phase of the reconstruction.

In weeks to come, the lower end of the lock will be cleared and the walls stabilized before several feet of stonework is added to bring the lock walls up to their historic height. For those who live nearby, please visit the site and follow along as the project moves forward. For those who can't be there, the Canal News will provide a detailed account of progress and discoveries until the job is done. ■

SAVE THE DATE

RCSIA ANNUAL MEETING

Paterson Museum
Paterson, New Jersey
Late January, 2012
(Date will be announced)

NEW JERSEY EVENTS

Industrial Heritage Walk

There will be eleven walks this coming season. The schedule will be available by the end of the year and the first walk will be on the last Saturday in March. For information on next year's schedule or to sign up for a walk please contact us at: macgraphics1@verizon.net

WATERLOO HERITAGE DAYS

The Waterloo Village will be open again in 2012 starting with our Waterloo Canal Day Festival in late June. For information on next year's schedule please contact us at: macgraphics1@verizon.net

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

*In the near future Roebing Chapter members will be getting more and more information about chapter activities and IA News via e-mail. However, we don't have e-mail addresses for everyone. Don't be left out. To sign up now please visit the chapter web site and use the **Sign Up for our Email Newsletter** box in the lower left corner of the screen.*

www.roeblingsia.org

UPCOMING EVENTS – 2012

January– RCSIA Annual Meeting

Date to be announced.

Roebing Chapter SIA Officers

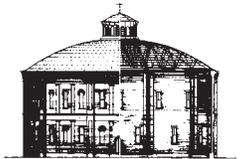
President	Jim Mackin
Vice President	Joe Macasek
Treasurer	Kevin Pegram
Secretary	Aron Eisenpress

You can contact the Roebing Chapter by E-mail at:
RCSIAprez@aol.com

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.

Design: Joe Macasek, MacGraphics

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ROEBLING CHAPTER NEWSLETTER is published four times per year by the Roebing Chapter, Society for Industrial Archeology, c/o Jim Mackin, 370 Riverside Drive #2B, New York, NY 10025, e-mail: RCSIAprez@aol.com.

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