



[www.schuylkillcanal.org](http://www.schuylkillcanal.org)

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Come for a relaxing hike on the Neal Thorpe Trail in the cool ravines and woodlands.

# WELCOME

## President’s Message

Before I can discuss the current state of the SCA, I must mention the passing of Neal Thorpe, the matriarch of Schuylkill Canal Park and the SCA as whole. Neal was an extraordinary person that was able to spur ordinary people to do extraordinary things. She was a special person and will be missed, but her vision for the park will live on through the people that knew and worked with her.

The SCA has been completing an update of our historic memorabilia cataloging in preparation for some positive changes in the Locktender’s House since this winter. Montgomery County Division of Parks, Trails & Historic Sites is spearheading the restoration of the Locktender’s house and finished the current phase of restoration this April that included repairs and upgrades to the paint and floors on the first floor. The SCA will announce the grand reopening once completed.

Also, this year marks one of the busiest SCA event schedules yet. In addition to the 37th Annual Canal Day, we have added the Neal Thorpe Memorial Bird Walk to our annual Wildflower walk, the Revolutionary War in Mont Clare, Geology Walk, and Canal Life, as well as other events. Please see our event calendar in this newsletter and keep an eye on the website [www.schuylkillcanal.org](http://www.schuylkillcanal.org) for the events and dates.

On a more serious note, last year was a busy summer for river rescues. Although the SCA is based on preservation of the canal (not the river), users should be aware of the risks of padding on the river early in the season when the water is still cold and during high water. Be careful out there.

Please consider helping to support the SCA further our mission as stewards of the park with a membership, donation, or your time at one of our volunteer events in the coming year. Continued improvement of the park can only happen with your help.

*Strickland Kneass  
President, Schuylkill Canal Association*

## CANAL NEWS

In 2018, the outer wickets on the upper lock gates were stuck in an unclosed position, which prevented the SCA from demonstrating and “exercising” the only working Lock on the 108-mile Schuylkill Navigation System. These wickets on the upstream lock gates were repaired by Flyway/Montgomery County and reachable debris was removed from the fore-bay and lock gate. The SCA volunteers continue to remove woody debris and exercise the lock gates to keep them operational; a large (and getting larger) challenge.

Unfortunately, we have had several acts of vandalism along the canal in 2018 and 2019. A continuing problem is removal of the water level weir board at the east end of the canal (Dixon Pond) that we use to maintain the canal water at the designed level. The canal is an engineered waterway and the various gates and weirs are operated in concert to maintain the water level for public uses and in response to changes in precipitation and river stage, as well as lock operations. Another uninformed person(s) has repeatedly removed of the rubber mat over the grate on the towpath at Dixon Pond. The rubber mat is placed there for the comfort of our four-legged friends, so please leave it alone. On December 22, 2018, the shanty and railroad bridge were spray painted. The SCA quickly responded and the graffiti was painted over on December 23, 2018. Montgomery County rangers and Upper Providence police are on the lookout for these and other vandals.

### **Welcome new board member — Carlos Thillet**

Carlos is a long-term resident of Montgomery County, a Villanova Graduate and Manager for PECO Energy. He first became involved with the Schuylkill Canal Association when he moved into Port Providence in the 1980’s. Carlos spent 10 years in the area, and after moving, he always found his way back to bike, hike, canoe and run the canal as well as attending and supporting SCA’s events. Carlos has been married to Nancy Thillet for 34 years and their two sons were born in Port! He is already putting his skills to work and is helping organize and consolidate SCA membership information to better serve our members. Welcome aboard Carlos!

## RECENT EVENTS

### **St. Patrick’s Day Hike and Treasure Hunt - March 2019**

Over 30 families came to enjoy the hike from the Pickering Inn to Lock 60’s picnic grove and even more came to hunt for treasure. A Leprechaun lost his gold in the picnic grove and the children helped find the coins and turned them in for a prize. Participants got to see a preview of the Locktender’s House first floor restoration and go on a scavenger hunt.



## CANAL TIMES

### Lock 60's Locktender's House interior restoration—one of many upgrades to the wonderful site!

*By Michelle M. Harris, Manager, Montgomery County Division of Parks, Trails & Historic Sites*

Montgomery County has been diligently working to responsibly, accurately and appropriately upgrade/restore the historic Locktender's house which sits so proudly along the Schuylkill Navigation System's Canal. Great work has been done to the exterior over the years and now it is time to focus on the inside.

Some of the issues to tackle were repair to aging plaster and restoration of the paint colors to the original construction era of the house—late 1830's. We hired Building Conservation Associates, Inc. (BCA) to work on an Interior Finishes Analysis on the first room to the left as you enter the house. BCA removed 16 representative samples from the plaster (walls and ceiling), and wood surfaces such as the mantel, baseboards and door jambs to determine the earliest existing finish.

The analysis determined that the ceiling alone had approximately 11 layers of a semi-translucent white finish at the earliest levels, establishing that this material was used for many years. According to BCA, the walls and ceilings "were originally painted with a white-colored finish that appears to be an unpigmented limewash". Limewashes have been around for centuries and they have many benefits. They are considered a breathable finish which makes them perfect for damp conditions, like a house by a canal that is often in the shade. Limewash is also thought to absorb odors, be resistant to bacteria, and can be used on the interior or exterior. Limewashes were economical and produced at home. Often recipes for a "good limewash" were handed down through generations and shared with neighbors.

So, if limewash was so great, why did it go out of fashion? It can be hard to maintain, it looks mottled when aging, and is hard to clean. It can also flake and peel. Limewashes were often painted every year as a matter of routine in order to keep them looking fresh. They do not absorb colors as nicely as acrylics, something modern home owners probably wouldn't love. It can be tricky to apply in a neat fashion, especially dependent upon your recipe. These drawbacks are ones we had to consider for the restoration of the house.

To have a house restoration that is faithful to the history, and yet practical and appropriate for long term maintenance can be tricky. BCA introduced us to KEIM mineral coatings, a silicate wash/paint which mimics the coloration and natural benefits of limewash without the intensity of upkeep. This company has been around for over 100 years and their products are used in many historic preservation programs. Their product has similar breathability, mold/fungus resistance and can even reflect light, just like the glow a true white limewash would provide. The silicate bonds better with surfaces like plaster and stucco than limewash making it durable and long-lasting. The photograph was taken with no lights on and on a cloudy day and shows how the lime wash brightens the room. Since we really can't recreate the unpigmented hue, and we know there is some aging as it now presents, a white shade of mineral silicate was chosen for the restoration.



The woodworking was a different story. Limewash was not used nor would a silicate adhere to the wood surface in the same manner. Instead the analysis showed a cream color. The woodwork had been prepared with shellac and then painted. BCA explains: "...the appearance of this cream-colored layer in cross-section

and in bulk is consistent with the aged appearance of a common 19th century finish (lead white in linseed oil) and that its original appearance may have been less yellow. Linseed oil paints tend to yellow over time, particularly if they are protected from light (for example, by later paint layers).” If we matched the color to what they found today, it is probably a bit more yellow than it was originally. With this in mind, Montgomery County selected a slightly lighter cream color in hopes of keeping closer to the original color.

All of this work is being performed by the wonderful carpentry crew of Montgomery County’s public property under the direction of Jamie Snovel. They have been not only painting but also patching the plaster and repairing the molding throughout the rooms.

But the paint story doesn’t end there! While doing some work on the cupboard doors in the adjoining room our carpenters found some interesting paint details. So, we asked BSA to continue paint studies and they came to us with a wonderful proposal. They had a graduate student from the University of Pennsylvania that would be perfect for the project and at no charge! It seemed like a win-win .....So, come and see the renovations and stay tuned, the latest bit of paint analysis should arrive soon!

## WHAT’S THAT?



What is this heavy iron relic used for?  
(Duck for scale)

## RIVER REPORT

The Independence Day Regatta on the Schuylkill River is scheduled for June 29-30 and July 1, 2019. The race course is from above the Strawberry Mansion Bridge to the Columbia Railroad Bridge. Last year, the Stotesbury Cup Regatta was moved to the Cooper River at the last minute due to high water conditions following heavy rains. The event at Cooper River was successful and the Schuylkill River regatta now faces some stiff venue competition. The accumulated silts in the River have made the depth of the race course lanes uneven which can impact the rowers’ performance.

The rowing community has been advocating dredging of about 3.5 miles, including the race course and boathouse row for several years. The Schuylkill Navy Restoration Committee is close to the \$4.5 million needed for a Big Dig Depth Restoration project and time is growing short to complete fund raising, and to bid and complete the project before the fall regatta season. If the river is not dredged, the nearby Cooper River facilities may become the preferred venue for national regattas.

## MULE POWER

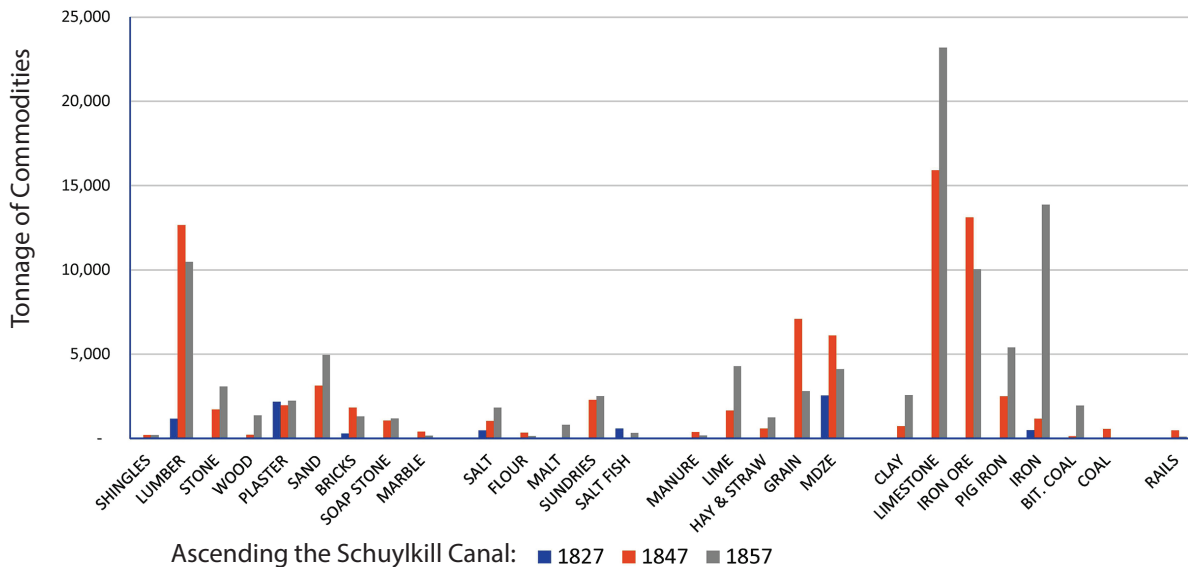
The Schuylkill Canal Association would not exist without our great volunteers. Here are some of the bigger jobs that we accomplished during the past year.

During a bone chilling Sunday in January a group of about a dozen volunteers used the weather to their advantage. The completely frozen canal and fore-bay provided rare accessibility to remove about 25 problem trees and countless nuisance limbs from the waterway. In April 2019 the SCA removed three trees from the canal that interfered with boating.

Volunteers helped out in April with the 4th annual Sly Fox Spreekend! event and Earth Day Cleanup. June is usually the busiest month of the year for us and this year will be no different. We start the month hosting our friends from Schuylkill River Greenway Heritage Area (SRGHA) and around 100 paddlers completing the Schuylkill River Sojourn. Then at the 37th annual Canal Day we will host over 2,000 visitors and hold the Intergalactic Canal Jousting Championship.

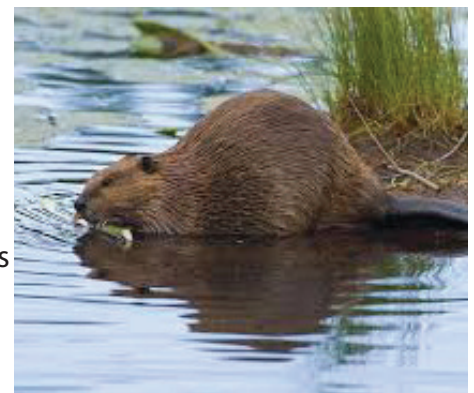
The spring and summer rains will have us clearing fallen trees off the trails and out of the canal. We are still working, along with a landowner, to clear a large tree that came down last year and is still partially blocking the waterway. As always, we close out the year with our Holiday Luminaria. Our volunteers along with Cub Scout Pack 531 will prepare, set out, and clean up approximately 1,500 luminaries. **All help is welcomed!!**

## BACK IN THE DAY - The Schuylkill Navigation Company



## DOWN BY THE RIVER

American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) sightings have increased in Southeastern Pennsylvania in recent years and there is now a family of beavers who are quite at home in Center City Philadelphia. Not to be out done, we have our own resident beavers on the Schuylkill River along the Oakes Reach. Their handiwork can be seen on the Schuylkill River side of the portage, but they are mostly nocturnal so it's unusual to see them during the day. I've seen gnawed bases of trees and limbs along the banks and island, but I have not been able to find the traditional domed lodge. It's believed that most of the beavers using the main river corridors in the Delaware Watershed are "bank beavers" and that they burrow into the steep banks and live underground like muskrats. So, keep your eyes out around the portage and you might be lucky to catch a glimpse of our furry friend.



## RECENT SPONSORED EVENTS

### The Banff Mountain Film Festival

Friday and Saturday, March 1-2nd

Over 2,200 people attended the 22nd Annual Philadelphia showings of the Banff Mountain Film Festival, sponsored by the **Philadelphia Rock Gym** on March 1st and 2nd.



The event was held at the Immaculata University Alumnae Hall in Malvern, PA again this year. Aside from the typical great mountain films on action sports including rock climbing, mountain biking,

and whitewater kayaking, the film festival brought tales of beaver conservation and a father and son story about canoeing through the northwest passage, as well as an amazing chronicle of an underwater videographer/photographer's quest to capture photos of cresting waves from under water. The Schuylkill Canal Association thanks the PRG for having the SCA as the not for profit sponsor of the event and donating all raffle proceeds from both nights to the SCA, totaling over \$3,000!

### Sly Fox Spreekend!

Friday and Saturday, April 19-20th

We celebrated the seasonal release of the "Ale for the Trail" and the arrival of Spring!



**Sly Fox Brewing Company** and the Schuylkill River Heritage Area sponsored a full weekend celebrating one of our area's most valuable recreational resources—the Schuylkill River Trail with kayaking, cycling, running, hiking and walking events.

For more information and to register [www.slyfoxbeer.com/srt-spree](http://www.slyfoxbeer.com/srt-spree)



### Take It Outdoors Adventure Group (TIOAG)

TIOAG led the kayaking portion of the Spreekend, paddling roughly 17 miles to Lock 60. SCA volunteers locked them through the infamous Lock 60. TIOAG, is a recreational company operating in North America and Europe.

For more information and to register: [www.takeitoutdoorsadventures.com](http://www.takeitoutdoorsadventures.com)

**If you would like to Sponsor an event, please contact us!**

## 2019 UPCOMING EVENTS

### Wednesday, June 12th, Schuylkill River Sojourn—Dinner and Program 6 to 8:30 pm

Lock 60 at Schuylkill Canal Park and St. Michael's Park, 610-917-0021

The Schuylkill River Sojourn is a week-long paddle of the Schuylkill River starting in Schuylkill Haven and ending in Philadelphia. As the paddlers come to Lock 60, we invite the community to welcome and join them at a delicious spaghetti dinner with dessert and coffee provided by St. Michael of the Archangel Catholic Church and served by Otterbein United Methodist Church. The dinner will feature a program for everyone to enjoy.

All ages, \$10.00 per person, pre-registration and payment is recommended to make sure there is enough for all to enjoy. The event will take place rain or shine.

**Sunday, June 30th, 37th Annual Canal Day**

**8:30 am to 4:00 pm**

*Lock 60 and St. Michael's Park in Mont Clare, PA (right across the river from Phoenixville)*

The SCA invites the community to its 37th annual event. This day full of family-oriented fun along the Schuylkill Canal Park includes food, music, kids' games & crafts, competitive activities such as the Schuylkill River Trail Run/Denny Porini Memorial Run, Horseshoe Tournament, the Canoe/Kayak 5-Mile Water Trail Race, and the and world-renowned International Canal Joust. The Canal Day \$5/person donation will be accepted upon entering the access road from St. Michael's Park to Lock 60, children 12 and under are free. Please be advised, Towpath Road will be closed to vehicular traffic, starting at 8:30 AM until 4:00 PM, A free handicap-accessible shuttle bus will bring people back and forth

**Sunday, July 21st, Open House at the Locktender's House 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

*Lock 60 at Schuylkill Canal Park, 610-917-0021*

Join the Schuylkill Canal Association for a tour of the Locktender's House at Lock 60. Children of all ages can join in with adult supervision. Free of charge; however, donations will gladly be accepted.

**Sunday, August 18th, Open House at the Locktender's House 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

*Lock 60 at Schuylkill Canal Park, 610-917-0021*

Join the Schuylkill Canal Association for a tour of the Locktender's House at Lock 60. Children of all ages can join in with adult supervision. Free of charge; however, donations will gladly be accepted.

**Sunday, September 15th, Canal History 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm  
Discussion on the British Invasion of Phoenixville and Skirmish at Jacob's Ford (1:00 pm to 2:30 pm), followed by a Photo Safari of Lock 60 (2:30 pm to 4:00 pm)**

*Lock 60 at Schuylkill Canal Park, 610-917-0021*

Join the Schuylkill Canal Association as it discusses the little known skirmish of Jacob's Ford (near Rt. 29 Bridge) prior to the Battle of Germantown. Afterword a Schuylkill Canal Association volunteer will lead a photo safari around the Lock 60 area. The photo safari will be weather permitting.

Children 8 and up with adult supervision. Free of charge; however, donations will gladly be accepted. Meet at Locktender's House.

**SCA MEMBERSHIP**

Most of SCA's financial support comes from the contributions of individual members and local corporate and community sponsors. Help secure our future and support the park by becoming a member.

- \$25 Friend
- \$30 Muletender
- \$50 Locktender
- \$100 Boat Captain
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other/Additional

All contributions are tax deductible.  
Make checks payable to: SCA, Inc.  
Mail to: PO Box 966, Oaks, PA 19456

A copy of SCA's official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania, 1.800.732.0999.

Registration does not imply endorsement.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sunday, October 20th, Geology Walk**

**1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

*Lock 60 at Schuylkill Canal Park, 610-917-0021*

Join the Schuylkill Canal Association's Dave Williams, P.G. for a guided walk to geology along the Schuylkill River and ravines. Dave will point out faults, fossils, and more. Weather permitting, this is a moderately difficult 1.5 hour hike up the first ravine, up a steep hill, along the bluffs, then down a narrow trail, and back to Lock 60 along the Schuylkill River.

Children 10 and up with adult supervision. Free of charge, however, donations will gladly be accepted.

**Sunday, November 17th, Open House at the Locktender's House**

**1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

*Lock 60 at Schuylkill Canal Park, 610-917-0021*

Join the Schuylkill Canal Association for a tour of the Locktender's House at Lock 60. Children of all ages can join in with adult supervision. Free of charge; however, donations will gladly be accepted.

**Saturday, December 14th, Holiday Luminaria**

**6:00 pm to 9:00 pm**

*Lock 60 at Schuylkill Canal Park, 610-917-0021*

Step back in time to a Dickens' holiday scene, as you enter the beautifully decorated Locktender's house and sing along with the joyful music played by local musician(s). Partake in holiday treats and hot cider and join in with the Schuylkill Canal Association as we toast our friends with best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season.

All are welcome and the event is free of charge, however, donations will gladly be accepted. Parking is available at Lock 60. NOTE: The event is cancelled only if there is a steady downpour of rain or snow.

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Schuylkill Canal Association  
P.O. Box 966  
Oaks, PA 19456

