

Schuylkill Canal News

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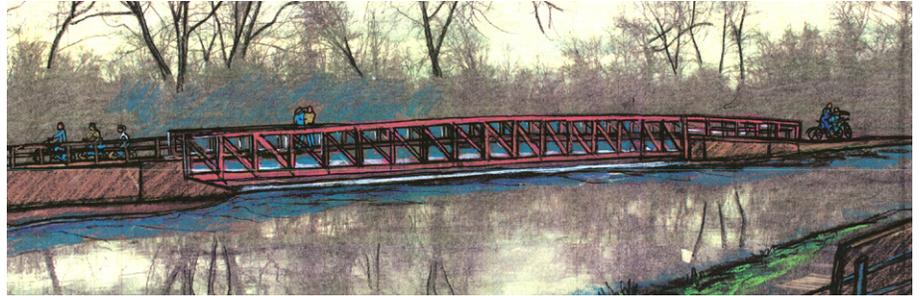
2013 Newsletter • Volume 1
400 Towpath Road PO Box 966
Oaks, PA 19456



Mule Corner We Need Your Help

The SCA is appealing to you to volunteer your time for our two signature June events: the Schuylkill River Sojourn and Canal Day. Meetings are held at various locations around Phoenixville from 7 PM to 9 PM on: April 25th, May 23rd and June 13th. Meeting locations to be announced on our website and Facebook page. Come share your ideas and help us organize.

**2013 Event
Calender
INSIDE**



Artist rendition of the spillway and bridge at Canal Street in Port Providence



Construction of the spillway



Previous breach of the canal spillway

Looking Back

30 YEARS AGO....In early 1980, the state threatened to backfill the Canal and offered Upper Providence Township an alternative to lease the area. Township supervisors were reluctant to assume this large responsibility, but local citizens vigorously organized and acquired sufficient support to declare their willingness to maintain the area. With this understanding, the supervisors leased the area in 1983. During 1985, the local citizens incorporated as the Schuylkill Canal Association, a 501(c)(3) non-profit. This group of dedicated volunteers kept the area clean, cleared the towpath and trails, installed picnic groves and canoe launches and brought the public back in large numbers to the unique area. By 1988, we had succeeded in having the area listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The rest is history.

A Message From the President

You may have noticed that a few things are different around Lock 60. We have been dealing with a few changes recently; two of which include the resignation of our Executive Director and start of several construction projects along the towpath.

Just as we all have experienced some of the economic pinch during the last few years, our nonprofit organization has as well. Due to a lack of successful fundraising and the elimination of an agreed-upon financial contribution by Montgomery County, we were no longer able to exist as an organization and fund an executive director position indefinitely. Betsy Daley, our friend and recent former Executive Director, decided that the existence of organization was more important than her position as Executive Director. She has helped us transition to a volunteer-run organization and still holds the majority of the organization knowledge of the Schuylkill Canal Association, but will no longer be involved in the day-to-day operation of the organization. We are trying to give her a much-needed break and hope to see her back as a member of the volunteer team in the future.

If you have walked, paddled, or ridden along the canal within the past few months you have probably thought that the water level looks low. You are correct; we lowered the water level to assist with the construction projects that are occurring along the canal. If everything goes as scheduled we hope to have the water level back to normal by mid-May. Paddlers have been spotted on the canal and have successfully navigated the entire length. If you do paddle the canal, please be aware that you

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Schuylkill Canal Association

Our Mission

The Schuylkill Canal Association's mission is to preserve, maintain and appropriately restore the Schuylkill Canal and its surrounding lands and manmade structures; to encourage wide public use of the area and an appreciation of its natural environment; to seek ways to further general education in the area's history; to provide facilities and enhanced settings for various kinds of passive recreation; to seek support of individuals and private organizations, and of local, regional, state and federal governments, to achieve these goals; and to solicit, receive and expend funds for such purposes.

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Canal Day Chair

Karen Rodemich

Email

info@schuylkillcanal.com

Web Site

www.schuylkillcanal.org

will need to portage a temporary roadway across the canal at the Port Providence overflow/spillway.

The Port Providence overflow/spillway has been the location of a leak that we have been patching for our entire 31 years of existence. At one time we almost lost all of the water in the canal due to a catastrophic wash-out during a high water event. Numerous investigations were completed and repairs were made but always proved to be temporary and another leak would inevitably reappeared. Currently, Montgomery County is replacing the overflow/spillway and installing a bridge over the new construction. I am not sure if I will miss getting my feet wet when walking the towpath, but it will be nice to cross the spillway on a bridge. This bridge will probably lead to more pedestrian and bike traffic along the towpath. If you ride your bike on the along the towpath or trails between the Fitzwater Station and the end of the canal, please be aware that the primary use of that area is dog walking. When riding on that trail, please be courteous to others, and give the dogs and walkers the right of way.

Another construction project going on is the connection of the towpath below the Route 29 bridge, again this work is being completed by Montgomery County. If you have ever tried to cross the road on foot or bike you know this is one time you were thankful for the Produce Junction traffic jam. Material has been removed and a retaining wall is being constructed to allow the passage of pedestrians and bikes below the busy roadway. In the future the underpass will be the official route of the Schuylkill River Trail and will convey trail users to the sidewalk/bike lane on the upriver side of the bridge to Phoenixville.

Additional resurfacing work will be complete on the towpath between the Schuylkill River Trailhead in Oaks and Route 29 at some point in the near future. The Oakes Reach of the Schuylkill Canal has been around for over 200 years and we would like to thank all the hard working laborers and volunteers that built, maintained and restored our part of the Schuylkill Canal. We would also like to thank Upper Providence Township and Montgomery County for their commitments to the Schuylkill Canal Association and look forward to working with them in the future.

As mentioned earlier, the Schuylkill Canal Association is now a volunteer-run organization; we face many challenges ahead and need your support as members and volunteers now more than ever. Please check our calendar of events for volunteer opportunities to help us maintain the greenway and continue the programs that assist people in discovering Lock 60 and entire area.

Gary Drennen, President



St. Patrick's Day Treasure Hunt

Way more people came out on a dreary day than we expected! More than 40 came to enjoy the hike from the Pickering Inn to Lock 60's picnic grove, and an additional 30 showed up for the treasure hunt alone. We forgot that our hunt actually fell on St. Patty's Day for once. Lesson learned. Music by Meadowlark and some snacks rounded out a fun time for all. A special thanks to the volunteers: the McDonnell family, Lisa Koury, Dan Daley, and Patty for keeping the cookie trays filled, making the treasure bags, handling the unexpected crush, and cleaning up.

CANAL EVENTS

April 20 Earth Day Clean-Up

**9:00 AM
to
1:00 PM**

Lend the SCA a helping hand with some basic sprucing up along the Schuylkill Canal Park area throughout Mont Clare and Port Providence, Upper Providence Township. Volunteers should meet at Lock 60 in Mont Clare by 9:00 AM and sign in at the Locktender's House, where you will be given an assignment (e.g., trail clearing, tire collection, flower planting, work in the herb garden, fallen tree removal, litter pick-up). Volunteer an hour or two or stay the entire day. Whatever amount of time you can offer is greatly appreciated. Volunteers only need to bring a willingness to work.

The SCA will provide gloves, trash bags and all other materials. Hot coffee and breakfast treats will be available between 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM, with snacks and beverages offered throughout the day for volunteers. Additionally, lunch will be offered at 12:00 noon for those still working. A steady downpour of rain at 8:00 AM cancels the clean-up. The rain date for this event is the next day, Sunday, April 21, 2013.

The SCA is a registered participant in the Great PA Clean Up, sponsored by Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. We have our work cut out for us. If you are a local company or a community service organization that can offer a volunteer labor force, please contact us. For more information and to sign up to volunteer, contact the SCA at (610) 917-0021 or via email at info@schuylkillcanal.com

April 21 Shad Fishing and Stone Tools: Early Native Americans Along the Schuylkill River

**1:00 PM
to
4:00 PM**

Education Program at Lock 60, Sunday April 21 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

The Schuylkill Canal Association is pleased to have Matthew D. Harris, RPA, present his findings on the early native peoples of the Schuylkill River Valley. These inhabitants were using the river resources, including native fish species such as shad, and living on the land thousands of years before us. Mr. Harris is currently Senior Archaeologist and Principal Geospatial Analyst at URS Corporation. He will discuss the context of the area approximately 1,750 years ago during the time period known as the Middle Woodland Period. The people of this period are known to have developed seasonal settlements in the Schuylkill River Valley for fish migrations and regional trade in tool making resources. If the weather permits, the indoor presentation will be followed by a moderately difficult 1.5 hour hike up the first ravine to the same vistas of the Schuylkill River Valley seen by these early native people. Note: We are asking for a modest donation of \$5 per person or \$10 per family for this event.

April 21 7th Annual Canoe and Kayak LoopFest

**11:00 AM
to
5:00 PM**

At Lock 60, the Association will host the LoopFest, a guided 5-mile water trail loop paddle down-and-back on the Schuylkill River and Canal; two guided paddles will be scheduled.

Register to participate in the 7th Annual LoopFest. Bring your own boat with necessary personal flotation device or rent one from Port Providence Paddle, (610-935-2750 or www.canoeandkayak.biz). Please be aware, if you do register online you will still need to sign a waiver in person the day of the event.

The Locktender's House will be open, and lock openings will be scheduled along with history displays that highlight the navigation system and its impact on the American Shad river population. Note: We are asking for a modest donation of \$5 per person or \$10 per family for this event.

May 19 Wildflower Hike

**1:00 PM
to
4:00 PM**

Join in on a beautiful spring afternoon for a hike along the river and ravines trails for a Wildflower Hike and Locktender's Open House on Sunday, May 19th. The hike will begin at 1:15 PM from the Lock 60 Information Kiosk. Wear a pair of sturdy hiking/walking shoes, as multiple shallow water crossings are possible. Plan to stick around for the lock opening at 3 PM. Note: We are asking for a modest donation of \$5 per person or \$10 per family for this event.

June 5 2013 Schuylkill River Sojourn Landing at Lock 60

3:00 PM

June 6

7:00 AM

The Schuylkill River Heritage Area, managed by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, presents the 15th annual Schuylkill River Sojourn. The sojourners will be arriving at Lock 60 on Wednesday, June 5th, and staying until Thursday, June 6th. Come on down and help them portage Black Rock Dam and pass through Lock 60 from the forebay into the canal. Plan to be at Lock 60 around 3 PM to welcome them and see how many boats we can fit into the lock chamber. Share a spaghetti dinner with the sojourners and hear a presentation about the Schuylkill River during the the Civil War from 6 PM to 8 PM. Volunteers eat for free; additional dinner tickets are available for \$10 each.

Check our web site www.schuylkillcanal.org for updated event listings

June CANAL DAY

30
8:00 AM
to
4:00 PM

The SCA invites the community to its 31th annual event.

At Lock 60 and St. Michael's Park in Mont Clare, PA (right across the river from Phoenixville). A \$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 handicap-accessible shuttle bus will bring people back and forth, free-of-charge, from the parking area all day.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Kid's Crafts and Rides Canal Day is a day for the kid's to enjoy crafts and rides along the canal. Kid's crafts will be near the picnic grove where parents can enjoy the band and still keep an eye on their children.

Music We are in the process of finalizing the band lineup, but we currently have Echo, Holt 45 and Christine & Company. Check our web site for an updated list. Music will run between 11:00 and 4:00.

Kid's Fishing Derby We have some fishing poles for the kids and prizes from French Creek Outfitters. Registration day of event between 9:30-10:00 at Lock 60 (12 years old and under)

Schuylkill River Trail Run

Denny Porrini Memorial Run

A 5-mile trail run along the Schuylkill River in Mont Clare, PA. This year's run will be in memory of Denny Porrini, the SCA volunteer who created the trail run 27 years ago. The run will continue to be held annually as a memorial to all that Denny has done for the Association. Registration begins at 8:00 AM at St. Michael's Park, run starts at 9 AM at Lock 60. The Run's registration does require you to provide your sex; M or F, and age to place you in the appropriate run categories. \$20.00

Food A number of vendors will be selling water ice, hot dogs, sandwiches, funnel cakes, T-shirts and more.

Horseshoe Tournament Singles horseshoe tournament held at St. Michael's Park, 10:00 AM. The doubles contest will begin immediately after the singles competition. Cash and trophy prizes to top three winners in each category. Registration - \$15.00

Canoe / Kayak 5-Miler Water Trail Race

2013 Canoe and/or Kayak 5-mile water trail loop race - paddling downstream in the river, a short portage, and paddling upstream in the canal. Registration begins at 10 AM, boats in the water by 11:00 AM for the race. Awards given in canoe and kayak categories. Registration - \$15.00

Canoe and Kayak Demos Here is your chance to try out the latest boats on the river free of charge.

Canal Joust

Walk out over the canal, knock your opponent off the beam, and into the canal. This event is a fan favorite (must be a adult to participate)



Business Expo Business Expo at Lock 60, 11:00 AM -4:00

PM, please review instructions for set-up. A table and two chairs are provided under the cover of a canopy. Registration for vendors \$25.00

Flea Market / Craft Show Canal Day 2013 Flea Market / Craft Show at St. Michael's Park, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. New vendors are welcome. All vendors will need to sign a form upon arrival to event. Vendor Registration - \$15.00

Lock Openings Listen to the Locktender's presentation and watch the opening of the only working lock on the Schuylkill River and learn about life on the canal.



Photos: Janet Jones

Oct. 19
Saturday

FOLK N FALL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Great line-up of bands **The Mighty Manatees, Holt 45, & Ted The Fiddler** - **Slyfox Beer & Food** at St. Michael's Pavillion. More information to follow...

Dec. 14
Dusk to
9:00 PM

Holiday Luminaria

Visit Lock 60 and view over 1,000 luminaries lining the canal bank. The Locktender's house will be open to celebrate the holiday's with music, good cheer and a visit from Santa.

Check our web site www.schuylkillcanal.org for updated event listings

Down by the River

Prances With Wolves

After a handful of days without rain, I thought I'd have a nice dry path on a recent run by the river. However, I was quickly slowed to a walk when I hit a carpet of thick mud as far as my eyes could see. I turned back, weighing my options: drive to a different, hopefully drier trail, or hit the paved roads around me.

I chose the latter, just wanting to get the run done at that point. I began with a short loop around the paths at the Upper Schuylkill Valley Park, where I quickly learned a valuable lesson: caged wolves don't seem to appreciate seeing a free-roaming human running by. Dressed in white fleece. Duh.

The two resident gray wolves perked up and started running alongside me, clearly agitated. My heart rate went from 60 to 120 instantaneously, fueled by the surprise of their presence and my memory bank full of bad horror movie plots. I finished my run, but a word to the wise: make an effort to think about where your next run might take you. I'm sorry my wild friends, for flaunting my freedom. It was insensitive.

by Karen Rodemich

Send your "Down by the River" experience to: downbytheriver@schuylkillcanal.com

Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour

The Schuylkill Canal Association was again fortunate to be the charity partner of The **Philadelphia Rock Gym** for the 2013 Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour. As one of the largest and most prestigious mountain culture film festivals in the world, the various human interest and action sports movies that were chosen for this year's world tour did not disappoint. In this, the fourth year that the festival was held at Immaculata and the 18th year that the Philadelphia Rock Gym acted as host, we broke the attendance record with 1,950 people for both nights!



The Schuylkill Canal Association volunteers lending a helping hand to Schuylkill River Sojourners

Help Support the Schuylkill Canal Association.....

I wish to become a member of the Schuylkill Canal Association. My dues will go directly to support the outstanding work of the Association in maintaining the canal area as a historic and recreational community resource. I enclose a check in the amount indicated below. Basic annual dues begin at the "Friend" level of \$25.00, although any contribution is welcome. All members receive the Association's news, calendar of events and email notices, if address is provided. Other membership premiums are given at the higher donation levels as noted.

Barge Owner: \$200: _____

Boat Captain: \$100 _____

Locktender: \$50 _____

Mule Tender: \$30 _____

Friend: \$25 _____

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Town, State, Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax # _____

Email: _____

Website: _____

SCA would be glad to have support from the local corporate community. Please become a corporate member by making a contribution in an amount listed below:

Benefactor: \$1,000 + _____

Patron: \$500 + _____

Sponsor: \$300 + _____

Sustaining: \$200 + _____

All contributions are tax-deductible. Check may be made out to SCA, Inc.
Mail to P.O. 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.



Renovations at the Mule Tender's House

Montgomery County Parks Department is in the process of rebuilding the porch and roof at the old Welsh residence. This house was abandoned after Hurricane Floyd. It sits across the canal from the Fitzwater Station.

Schuylkill Canal Association
400 Towpath Road
PO Box 966
Oaks, PA 19456

Early Life on the Canal

Canal Boat Children

The children of canal boat owners were an important part of the crew. To prevent young children from falling into the canal or river they were often tied to the boat with a rope. Children over the age of 6 would work as mule drivers. They lead a mule from 4:00 AM to 10:00 PM and were responsible for watering, feeding, grooming and harnessing the mules each morning and night. If they were the family's only mule driver, they walked the mule all day.

Canal Mules

Mules are the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse. Mules were preferred over horses because they ate and drank less and were more sure-footed. They had the endurance and smarts of a donkey with the pulling power of a horse. When a mule is worked too hard it will often sit down and refuse to move until it is rested. As long as a mule was well taken care of, it worked without complaint.

Visit us at

www.schuylkillcanal.org

