

The Milepost



Newsletter and Event Guide for the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park

Summer 2006

145 Mapleton Road, Princeton, NJ 08540

Vol. 6, Issue 2

Phone: Kingston Office (609) 924-5705 / Bull's Island Office (609) 397-2949 ~ Park Web Site: www.dandrcanal.com

D & R Canal State Park Headquarters' Dedication Day

By Jeanette Muser

The official opening and dedication of the new D & R Canal State Park Headquarters, the Mapleton Preserve and the Flemer Arboretum was timed to National Arbor Day - always the last Friday in April. Not only did the Saturday, April 29th event call public attention to the many unique trees on the **Mapleton Preserve at South Brunswick** property, but also to the former Princeton Nurseries business which at one time encompassed 1,500 acres at this location. This nationally recognized nursery introduced several new varieties of trees and plants as well as innovative horticultural practices and technologies.

The newly acquired D & R Canal State Park Headquarters and the adjacent Mapleton Preserve are located within walking distance to the Kingston Historic District and canal towpath. This convenient location situates the main park office at the mid-point of the historic canal which is one of the more heavily visited areas of this regional linear park. The Rockingham State Historic Site farmstead, the Cook Natural Area and Lake Carnegie are also nearby. Hiker, bikers, nature-lovers, bird watchers, history buffs, photographers, canoe and kayak fans and canal lovers of all ages can enjoy an array of activities! Saturday's events gave the public a sampling of what will be enhanced in the future.

To honor the Flemer family who established Princeton Nurseries in 1913, the Flemer Arboretum was dedicated. Several members of the Flemer family attended and Bill Flemer IV gave a wonderful slide lecture in the Education Building focusing on the history of the business complete with his personal reminiscences. The Bavarian-style new headquarters of the D & R Canal State Park was once the Nursery's main office. Plans are underway to install interpretive displays on the canal park, expand the Park's small object collection and archive, and eventually establish a research library.



Three generations of FLEMERS await the official planting of the first tree donated to the Park by Princeton Nurseries for the new Flemer Arboretum - a Green Pillar Pin Oak.



Commissioner Jackson dedicates the new park office and praises the joint preservation effort that resulted in its restoration and the establishment of the Mapleton Preserve.

Attendees at the full day event were also offered guided hikes to the Kingston Canal House, the Cook Natural Area and the grounds of Mapleton Preserve. Smokey Bear charmed the little ones as they enjoyed tree related craft activities, participated in a scavenger hunt and learned the proper way to plant a tree. For adults, various non-profit groups provided information about nature, fire safety, history, historic and environmental preservation, and canals. During a private morning reception, awards were presented to those groups and individuals who volunteered at the Park in 2005. Later in the afternoon during the official dedication ceremony, a New Jersey Historic Preservation Award was presented to South Brunswick Township Mayor Frank Gambatese (one of several recipients) for his role in the larger effort to save this significant cultural resource from the developer's bulldozer and preserve it for future generations. The prestigious award officially recognizes the historic and cultural importance of the Mapleton Preserve and its role in connecting state, county and township open spaces. DEP Commissioner Lisa P. Jackson and Congressman Rush Holt (*who once used the headquarters building as his campaign center*) gave brief speeches praising the good efforts of so many people who worked tirelessly to make this state-local-university-private and public preservation effort a reality. Rounding out the speeches, Andrea Bonville from Princeton Nurseries gave a concise address about the Nursery, the Flemer family and the horticultural contributions of William Flemer III.

Two bluegrass bands entertained visitors throughout the afternoon - Bill Flemer's **Riverside Band** and the **Mountain View Band** (whose members are DEP employees). The weather was clear and cool; just right for a tree planting demonstration and a gift of a NJ state tree to each attendee - the Northern Red Oak. This was one Arbor Day celebration few will forget!

Newsletter Design: Stephanie Fox, RIS - Natural Resources
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Photocopying: Bristol-Myers Squibb Company



FREE SUMMER 2006 PROGRAMS AT THE D & R CANAL STATE PARK

Programs are subject to cancellation due to inclement weather, lack of interest or illness.

Registration is REQUIRED for ALL PROGRAMS unless otherwise noted. Call the Park Office at 609-924-5705 (*Kingston Office*) to register or do so online. Visit www.dandrcanal.com for further details and to check for program updates.

All programs are FREE unless otherwise specified!



JUNE 2006

June. 2: **Project Learning Tree Workshop:** This full day workshop is a great way for school teachers, scout leader and environmental educators to get an introduction to a wide variety of tree-related environmental topics. The hands-on workshop will be held at the former headquarters of the world-renowned tree nursery, Princeton Nurseries. Participants will leave with a PLT book complete with over 90 lesson plans and a new found enthusiasm for trees. This full day program will be held from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. Please contact Stephanie Fox to register and/or receive further information.

June. 3: **Walk the Path in Lawrence Township:** Enjoy a morning walk along the canal with the D & R's Historian and visit two historic homes along the way - **The Port Mercer Canal House** and the **18th Century Brearley House**. The group will meet at the Port Mercer Canal House in Lawrence Township (4278 Quakerbridge Rd.) at 9:30 a.m. for a brief talk about the history of the D&R Canal and a tour of the Canal House. We'll then walk along the historic towpath to the Brearley House where the group will be treated to a tour of this restored 18th century home. Come join us for this 2.5 mile round trip walk back in time.



June. 3: **A World of Snakes:** Join us at the new park education building for a LIVE snake program provided by Gerry Wronski, a snake educator from Bridgewater. He will share many fascinating facts about these reptilian creatures and will be bringing a few of his slithery friends along for a visit. This is your chance to get "an up-close and personal view" of these misunderstood animals. This program will be sure to please all curious nature lovers while providing a better understanding and respect of the reptilian world. Program to begin in the education building at 1:00 pm.



June 10: **Walk the Path to Rockingham:** Enjoy a morning walk with the D & R's Historian for a tour along the canal to historic Rockingham! In addition to receiving an introduction to the story of the D&R, participants will visit two historic homes along the way - **The Kingston Canal House** and 18th century **Rockingham**. Attendees are asked to meet at the Kingston Canal House located off Route 27 (approximately 4 miles north of Princeton) at 9:30 am for a brief talk about the history of the D&R Canal. The group will then walk along the canal's historic towpath to Rockingham where they will be treated to a tour of the restored 1783 headquarters of George Washington. Wear comfortable hiking shoes and join us for this 2.5 mile round trip walk.



June 10: **Blackwells Mills Canal House Association's Folk Concert By the Canal:** Musicman Tal and Friends returns to the historic canal house on the corner of Blackwells Mills and Canal Road in Franklin Township for the 9th Annual Folk Concert by the Canal. The song sheets are ready, all you need to do is bring a blanket, chair, some munchies and be prepared to enjoy a few hours relaxing by the canal. Come join the fun! **Registration is not required and admission is FREE!**



June 11: **Walk in the Mapleton Preserve:** Join the **Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands** at 2:00 pm for a leisurely Sunday afternoon walk through the Mapleton Preserve. The history of the property will be discussed and many of the fine trees on the property will be pointed out. Participants are asked to meet at the D & R Canal State Park headquarters. For more information contact Karen Linder at (609) 683-0483.

June. 17: **Compass Basics:** Join the Naturalist at Bull's Island Recreational Area (*located 7 miles north of Lambertville directly off Route 29 in Hunterdon County*) to learn about the basics of the map and compass. Participants will learn how to interpret topographic maps and use a magnetic compass. Afterwards the group will then try their new skills on a small orienteering course set-up in the park's day use area. This program will begin at 1:00 pm and is appropriate for ages 10 and over. The park will provide compasses for use during the program.



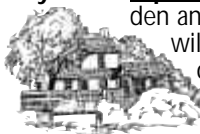
June 24: **"It Will be a Walk in the Park":** The Park Naturalist will lead a walk through the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site and discuss some of the natural resources found within this undeveloped environmental oasis. This program will begin at 10:00 am. Interested participants are asked to meet at the Six Mile Run Reservoir parking lot (625 Canal Road, Franklin Township, Somerset County).



JULY 2006


July 8: **History & Nature Walk to Kingston:** Enjoy a round-trip walk with the D & R's Historian and Naturalist leading from the main office at Kingston to the canal towpath, the Kingston Canal House and beyond. Participants will meet at the new Kingston office located at 145 Mapleton Road at 10:00 am for a leisurely 2.5-mile round trip walk. The group will proceed from the headquarters through a portion of the Mapleton Preserve towards the canal towpath, the Kingston Canal House and Carnegie Lake before turning back. Come enjoy a summer morning outdoors while burning a few calories and learning a bit about the natural and historic resources of the D & R Canal State Park!

July 8: **Open House, Sale and Exhibit at the Blackwells Mills Canal House:** If you haven't had a chance to visit the garden and see the inside of the historic canal house, here's your opportunity. A display and sale of old local photographs will be offered throughout the afternoon. So come, enjoy an hour or so at the old canal house. The doors will be open to all visitors. This event will be held at the Blackwells Mills Canal House located on the corner of Blackwells Mills and Canal Road in Franklin Township between 1:00 - 4:00 pm. Registration is NOT required and admission is FREE!



~ MORE FREE SUMMER 2006 PROGRAMS ~

JULY 2006 (CONT)

July 15:  **Beginner's Birding:** Join the *Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands* at 9:00 am for a bird walk through the Mapleton Preserve. Participants will meet at the park's Kingston office parking lot (*145 Mapleton Road*) for this Saturday morning walk. Those who have binoculars are encouraged to bring them along. Keys to successful bird identification will be highlighted. For more information contact Karen Linder at (609) 683-0483.

July 15: **Skins & Skulls:** The Park Naturalist will be at the Lambertville Library (located at 6 Lilly Street) at 11:00 am to give a children's program highlighting the wildlife that calls NJ home. For more information contact either Stephanie Fox at the park office (609. 924.5705) or Jennifer Sirak (609.397.0275) at the Lambertville Library.



July 22:  **A 19th Century Ice-Cream Social:** It's just not summer without ice-cream so let's get busy and whip-up a batch "the old-fashioned way!" Kids, bring your parents and come prepared to help the D & R's Historian make (and eat - YUM!) this traditional summer treat. We'll churn ice-cream, play a few historic games and learn how this delicious dessert is made. The program begins at 1:00 pm and will be held at the park's Kingston office (*145 Mapleton Road*). This program is open to children 5 YEARS OLD AND UP who must be accompanied by an adult. **Advanced registration IS Required but admission is FREE!** SPACE WILL BE LIMITED SO CALL EARLY AND RESERVE YOUR SPOT!

AUGUST 2006

Aug. 5: **Walk the Path in Lawrence Township:** Enjoy a morning walk along the canal with the D&R's Historian and visit two historic homes along the way - **The Port Mercer Canal House** and the **18th Century Brearley House**. The group will meet at the Port Mercer Canal House in Lawrence Township (*4278 Quakerbridge Rd.*) at 9:30 a.m. for a brief talk about the history of the D&R Canal and a tour of the Canal House. We'll then walk along the historic towpath to the Brearley House where the group will be treated to a tour of this restored 18th century home. Come join us for this 2.5 mile round trip walk back in time.



Aug. 5: **Fish Prints:** Bring a T-shirt to Bull's Island (located 7 miles north of Lambertville off Route 29 in Hunterdon County) and come prepared to create your own fish print T-shirt. The Park Naturalist will have replica fish and paint for you use to create a one of a kind design. Parents and adult guardians should bring their children to the Bulls Island Day Use Area between 10 am - 12 pm to participate in this craft program.



Aug. 13: **Blackwells Mills Canal House Association's Ice Cream Social:** Bring your children and plan to spend a few hours on a Sunday afternoon at the historic canal house. Watch canoes and kayaks sail by on the D & R Canal as you relax with friends and enjoy a homemade frosty treat provided by **Confectionately Yours**. This event will be held at the Blackwells Mills Canal House located on the corner of Blackwells Mills and Canal Road in Franklin Township between 1:00 - 3:00 pm. **Registration is NOT required and admission is FREE!**



Aug. 19: **Story of the D & R Canal:** Come join the D & R Canal State Park's Historian for a PowerPoint presentation focusing on the history of the canal. Both historic and modern photographs will be included to illuminate the waterway's past and present life. This hour-long adult afternoon program will begin at 1:30 pm and be held in the park's new education building located at 145 Mapleton Road in Kingston. Come join us and learn about the old canal's past through photographs. Here's your chance to ask all those questions you may have about the waterway's history. **Registration is NOT required and admission is FREE!**

Summer 2006's Wild Wednesdays in August at the Island!



This summer at the Bull's Island Recreational Area, our Park Naturalist will be conducting a series of Wednesday afternoon **nature programs for kids ages 9-13 that explore animal diversity**. Each week a different classification of animal will be highlighted. **All programs will begin at 1:00 pm and last approximately an hour and thirty minutes.** Please call the Bulls Island office to register (609.397.2949) or visit our website at www.dandrcanal.com to do so. You can register your child for one or all of the programs but, do so early because space will be limited! **Registration IS required ~ All programs are FREE.** Call the Park Office for more details.

Animal Diversity Nature Programs (for kids ages 9-13)

Aug. 2: **Fish & Other Aquatics:** The group will explore the Delaware River in search of the many aquatic creatures that call it home. Everyone will make their own fish print T-shirt from one brought from your home.

Aug. 16: **Birds:** Learn about one of our nocturnal creatures - the owl. We will listen to the screeches, hoots and hollers of these birds and also dissect some owl pellets to investigate their food chains.

Aug. 9: **Mammals:** The group will see, touch, and learn about the skins and skulls of mammals that live in NJ. Everyone will then go in search of tracks along the river and create plaster casts of them to take home.

Aug. 23: **Insects:** There are over a million different types of insects, but we will only learn about a few that live in the park. The group will try to catch a variety of species using nets and learn to identify some of the more common ones found in the wild.

The Day the Walls Spoke

By Vicki Chirco

Any historian, preservationist, architectural historian, archeologist, history buff or anyone else who finds themselves standing in an old building, battlefield or overgrown piece of land has no doubt mused at one time or another "if only these walls or grounds could speak, what stories would they tell, what answers would be revealed." For the researcher seeking answers about a 200-year old structure or Revolutionary battlefield for example, the search can be both exhilarating and frustrating at the same time. "Why is that beam there? Is this fireplace part of the original construction? How many young soldiers fell near this spot?" Through careful research and reasonable, studied conjecture those questions can be resolved with a good amount of certainty however, there are always others that are less easily answered. The story of a place is never fully revealed and some information is, unfortunately lost to time - whispers of past conversations absorbed into the woodwork, walls and dirt.



Seated in his former office, William Flemer III takes a moment to relax, reminisce and answer questions about the Nursery.



Former Princeton Nurseries employee George Fenwick shares his memories and experiences working at the Kingston site.

On occasion the researcher finds him/herself in the enviable position of hearing stories of a place from the very people who are most familiar with it. Such was the case on April 29th - "the day the walls spoke" at the former Princeton Nurseries property in Kingston. Little did the staff of the D & R Canal State Park know when they were planning the Arbor Day Open House that the event would be more than a mere "open house." As the day progressed it soon became apparent to all who attended that it was also a family and company reunion for those who were most connected with the property. Along with several members of the Flemer family (including William Flemer III and his wife, his three children and one of John Flemer's daughters) were many current and former Princeton Nursery employees - all intimately familiar with Kingston site and eager to share their memories. Most had not been on the site for many years and were thrilled to return to the restored main office and preserved property. It was clear from their stories that far from simply being a collection of abandoned warehouses, overgrown fields, ungroomed trees and long forgotten greenhouses, this was a place filled with human experience and history just waiting to be told. Everyone had memories to share from the women who worked in the main office like Rosa Angel and Sara Kent Papier to the men who worked in the warehouses and fields like George Fewick, Wes Harvey and Bud Chamberlin. It was apparent to anyone who listened that although the work was at times grueling and tedious, Princeton Nurseries was a company that valued its workers, made them feel like family and, simply put by many "a great place to work." Their experiences are a valuable part of the Princeton Nursery story and breath life into this old place. These are stories that will not fade into the woodwork but rather become an important part of the nursery's history. Our thanks to everyone who attended and so willingly shared their knowledge and memories. It was an informative, unforgettable and joyful day for all.



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