



(Above photo, looking south across the dry-docks, not far from present site of the **Chamber of Commerce** building on Berme Rd. In center are the Hunt Warehouse, Center Street Bridge [also seen in photo below, from other direction], and Russell House Hotel [also known as The Arlington, and as The Ontario & Western House], all also visible in the photo at right, which also shows, center right, past the Canal Street Lock, the S.A VanWagener Store, still mostly standing today as the Canal Lodge Adult Care Center. All photos courtesy of the **Ellenville Public Library & Museum**.)

Port Ben was an active and busy port, with the canal store, two dry-docks and two extensive boat yards.

The **D&H Canal** made it possible for raw materials to be brought into the area and finished products to be distributed far and wide. Those opportunities brought the *Ellenville Glass Company* and enhanced the growth of both the *Ellenville Pottery* and the foundry.

Increased commerce required banking facilities, so the *First National Bank of Ellenville* was founded in 1863 and the *Ellenville Savings Bank* in 1869. A weekly paper began publication in 1849.

And so it went, but the canal was limited by winter weather conditions, when the water froze, and by drought and floods during the warmer weather. In 1871, the *New York and Oswego Midland Railroad* completed its branch from the south to Ellenville. For almost thirty years, canal and railroad ran side by side for many miles. There is a very popular postcard which shows just that scene, a card much prized by collectors (photo, opposite page, upper right).

The canal was dying, unable to compete with the speed and all-year operation of the railroad. The last boat to run the full length of the canal made its trip in 1898; the postcard picture of that boat, going past the *Napanoch Reformatory*, is shown on the cover of this issue. One of the canal's final important functions in this area was to carry some of the construction materials and most of the furnishings for the reformatory being built in Napanoch.

The *New York, Ontario & Western Railway* took over the operation of the bankrupt *Midland* and extended the rails to Kingston in 1902, opening a whole new territory for the summer visitor.

It would be easy to go on and on about the **D&H Canal**, the **O&W Railway**, and their impact on this area,

and the way their opening of the valley to commerce necessitated better roads to outlying communities and natural beauties. But books have been written on these and related subjects and are readily available at local libraries and bookstores. They are matched by the many organizations and museums which specialize in efforts to preserve the history of the **Delaware & Hudson Canal** and the Gravity Railroad system. To name a few in this area: the Neversink Valley Area Museum's D&H Canal Park on Hoag Road off Route 209 in Cuddebackville (call 845-754-8870 for hours, or www.neversinkmuseum.org); **D&H Canal Linear Park** in the Town of Mamakating; the *D&H Canal Historical Society & Museum* on Mohonk Road in High Falls (687-9311, www.canalmuseum.org) and, of course, the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum* in Ellenville. The *Museum* does not maintain regular hours during the winter months, but an advance call will make an appointment for specific material. Their research material on the subject of the **D&H Canal** has been invaluable to researchers and authors for almost fifty years. Their collection of pictures and postcards is unique.



Thanks to the efforts of the *D&H Canal Heritage Corridor Alliance*, communities along the canal/railway route have saved portions of the canal as a greenway for use by residents and visitors alike. The corridor traces the route of the **Delaware & Hudson Canal**, the **New York, Ontario and Western Railway** and the scenic **Rondout Creek**. It includes towpaths and locks, historic hamlets, and many outstanding natural and historic resources. The Department of the Interior confirmed in 1995 that five **D&H** sites had been listed as State and National Historic Landmarks: the company office in Honesdale, PA; the Roebling Aqueduct (the Delaware Aqueduct) at Minisink Ford; the basin and canal bed in Cuddebackville; a 5,000 foot section in Alligerville; and Locks #15 through #20 in High Falls.

Andy Helgesen of Ellenville is the current chairman of the Alliance and the local activist in the movement to expand and improve the Town of Wawarsing section of the corridor. The Village of Ellenville has applied for a grant to improve the canal from **Canal Street** to **Lock 30** on the **Berme Road** (across from *JM Originals*) and to refurbish the lock. This will connect with the improvements made by the Town of Wawarsing (through a municipal park project grant) from the village sanitation facility adjacent to the **Little League Field** and ending near the *Ulster Correctional Facility* and the *Eastern New York Correctional Facility*. There is no open access to **Institution Road** at this time, though group permission is possible.

Andy is very willing to talk about the project and will welcome interest and cooperation from Wawarsing citizens and civic groups in the ongoing project. He has agreed to contribute an article about the local project in the near future and may be contacted at 647-5292. ♡

