

Down the Road

D&H Canal Heritage Corridor

by Andrew W. Helgesen, Chairman, D&HCHCA

My involvement with the *Delaware & Hudson Canal* began 43 years after the last *D&H Company* boat passed from Honesdale, PA, to Eddyville, NY. I was ten years old, living with my parents in an apartment that was part of a store on the canal in Godeffroy, NY. Winters were spent skating on the canal with all the other kids. It was a simpler time.

It was not until the early 1990s that my interest in the *D&H Canal* was renewed. That interest got me involved with the *D&H Canal Heritage Corridor Alliance*, becoming its chairman, and with two other canal organizations as a member.

The *Alliance* has been a moving force in Ulster County, committed to work with the County and the Towns of Ulster, Hurley, Marbletown, Rochester, and Wawarsing and their committees to bring into existence a corridor for hiking, jogging, biking, horseback riding and nature walking. As stated in the organization's bylaws, one of its main purposes is:

"To promote greater appreciation, protection and beneficial use of the *D&H Canal Heritage Corridor's* natural, historic and recreational resources for the general public in Ulster County in ways that recognize the rights and interests of private property owners."

The Corridor consists of the *D&H Canal* and the *O&W Railroad* rights-of-way. The *D&H Canal* stayed to the East side of the Rondout Valley from Accord, going through Alligerville, High Falls, and Rosendale to Eddyville on the Rondout Creek. The *O&W Railroad*, from Accord, stayed to the West, crossing the Rondout north of that village, and had stations at Kyseryke, High Falls, Cottekill, Hurley, and uptown Kingston.

From the Sullivan County line north to the Village of Accord, the railroad and the old canal bed intertwined, and in many places the railroad ran over the canal and some of its locks.

The *D&H Canal* was conceived by the Wurts Brothers to transport coal mined in their lands around Carbondale, PA, from the Gravity Railroad at the Honesdale terminus and transport it over 108 miles through 108 locks to Eddyville, NY, on the Rondout Creek above Kingston. It was the first million-dollar project in the country that was privately funded. The first boat to traverse the entire length of the Canal was the Orange Packet, which left Kingston October 16, 1828.

There are presently about 14 miles of trail on the old *Ontario & Western Railroad* bed from Kingston to Rest Plaus Road, approximately 2.3 miles south of Route 213, which runs through High Falls. The Town of Rochester has over 3 miles of trail situated between the hamlets of Accord and Kerhonkson.

The Canal land in Ulster County was eventually conveyed to the *O&W Railroad Company*, which went out of business and picked up its rails in 1957. The land was then in the possession of Ulster County, who sold it off in parcels to varied entities. These entities included townships, private individuals, and businesses. The first piece of land used for trail in the Town of Wawarsing had been purchased by members of the Hull family who, in turn, sold it to Joe Polonsky, who held it for the Town of Wawarsing until financing could be put in place. It is presently owned by the Town of Wawarsing and lies between the



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