

Comments on Connetquot



Published by the Friends of Connetquot River State Park Preserve

VOLUME 26 NUMBER 3 Fall 2022

Greetings Friends!

The dog days of summer are behind us. The Friends rallied this summer to keep the river flowing to help the heat-stressed trout by repairing river diverters, removing invasives, and clearing the river of impediments. During those hot summer months, we worked on satisfying our grants. The Living History videotaping project is going well. Construction work in the Clubhouse Fish Prep Room is about to start, and then we are going out for bids on the Hatchery Interpretive Sign project. So, what's next?

Our attention now turns to the Ice House. All proceeds from this year's Silver Anniversary Gala on December 1 will go towards saving this unique structure. This year, we are pleased to present our Gil Bergen Preservationist Award to historical preservationist and craftsman John Remmer. John has done amazing work in almost every building on the grounds, most notably his restoration of the 18th-century Nicoll Grist Mill. Please attend and bring a friend!

Fall is upon us. The air is getting cooler, the days are getting shorter. I look forward to the turning of the leaves from green to gold and orange tones. Connetquot is lovely during any season, but for me, Connetquot is majestic in the fall. I'm hoping for beautiful fall foliage and wonderful weather for our Members Only Open House in October and our Native American History Celebration in November. These are wonderful programs that I hope you come and enjoy with me.

Just as Connetquot prepares for the change of season, the most consistent thing it endures, by constantly adapting to a new way of existing, so shall we. Sadly for us, Park Manager Susanne Wuehler has announced her retirement. Sue has been a pleasure to work with and has overseen great improvements in the maintenance of Connetquot's infrastructure and enhancing park users' experiences. We wish her the very best as she enters this new chapter in her life.

NYS Parks Management is currently interviewing for her replacement. Although I do not know yet who that will be, I look forward to continuing the partnership between the Friends of Connetquot and the Connetquot River State Park Preserve management, working together for the place we all love.

Please check out the back page for information on how to reserve seats at our December 1 Gala at the beautiful Snapper Inn in Oakdale. Come have a good time while supporting our fundraiser!

Stay well, my friends!

Janet



Historical Bits

George W. Perkins

If you've ever been stuck in outbound traffic on the George Washington Bridge, as most of us have, you've had time to admire the great cliffs of the Palisades. In large measure we can thank George W. Perkins, a member of the South Side Sportsmen's Club, for the preservation of what are now Palisades Interstate Park and Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks.

Born in 1862, Perkins rose from a high-school-educated office boy for New York Life to vice president of the company by 1898. A proponent of the Efficiency Movement, he streamlined the way insurance was sold, eliminating middlemen, instituting incentives, and making local agents company employees.

For park lovers, however, his greatest accomplishments were yet to come. Southern parts of the Palisades across from Manhattan has already been quarried to extinction for "traprock," the basalt building material for the burgeoning metropolis. New Jersey and New York, in a move to stop further destruction of the Palisades, formed the Palisades Interstate Park Commission. In 1900, Governor Teddy Roosevelt appointed Perkins as its head.

The Commission was charged with raising private funds for land acquisition. Where to look first? Perkins chose J.P. Morgan, who offered to put up the entire goal of \$125,000 on one condition: that Perkins would come to work with Morgan. Perkins agreed, and the mining stopped. The Commission ultimately acquired the riverfront Palisades from Fort Lee, New Jersey to Stony Point, New York.

By 1901 Perkins was working for Morgan, negotiating complex business deals and restructuring U.S. Steel. Perkins later

became involved in forming Teddy Roosevelt's Progressive Party, but deep divisions over his opposition to antitrust programs (after all, he partnered with Morgan) led to the party's disintegration.

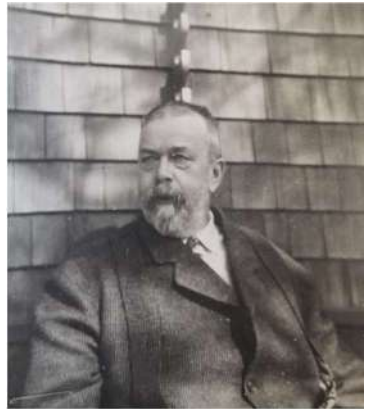
In 1909, New York State purchased land on what is now Bear Mountain State Park. Perkins then arranged a gift of ten thousand acres and one million dollars from Union Pacific Railroad president E.H. Harriman. Other wealthy benefactors came forward, and the state put up \$2.5 million. Thus was born a spectacular and unprecedented interstate complex of state parks. Today, visit Bear Mountain and you'll find Perkins Memorial Drive and the Perkins Tower atop the peak.

One last note: in 1903 Perkins bought Wave Hill House in the Bronx, now open to the public as a botanical garden.

FOC's own Richard Remmer, who is currently a New

York State Park Commissioner, notes, "I am overwhelmed by what he accomplished. He set a bar that none of us in this era will ever attain. His efforts on behalf of New York state parks, including the Palisades and Harriman State Park, are—to put it in a word—*extraordinary*." Our thanks to FOC board member Keith Snedecor for researching Perkins' life.

Above right: Perkins relaxing outside the Clubhouse. Bottom left: Perkins and his catch of the day on May 15, 1914



Tell Your Teens!

by Janice Fischer

The Friends of Connetquot is in the process of revamping our scholarship program for local high school students, with a \$1,000 award to each winner. As a component of the program, we will require students to volunteer at Connetquot River State Park Preserve. We will visit local high school clubs to promote volunteer and community service opportunities, and acquaint schools with New York State Parks' Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program, which offers financial assistance for field trips for outdoor activities in parks and historic sites. We hope to educate and generate interest about our beautiful preserve, encouraging our youth to remain involved in its stewardship.

Out and About in the Park

Connetquot Superintendent Sue Wuehler reports that the staff is scraping and painting first floor windows on the Annex and Clubhouse and filling the potholes along Hatchery Road. Garage doors have been replaced and painted. Volunteers continue to do stream maintenance on upstream portions of the river. The DEC Women's Fishing Expo was scheduled for 9/17/22 at the Hatchery. And a reminder: the Park Office is open for Fishing Permits, Bridle Path Permits and Empire Passports.

Friends of Connetquot Lecture Series
Native American History Month Celebration

Featuring the Montaukett Women Circle Dancers
Saturday, November 12, 2022, 12 noon
at Connetquot River State Park Preserve



Conscience Point explores the roots of American inequity, greed and pollution. It contrasts the values of those who regard land as raw material to be developed for profit and pleasure and those for whom land means community, belonging, heritage and home. The film goes beyond the Hamptons to tell a story of fighting the elite at a time when so many are struggling to retain their homes and heritage.

Photo right: Sandi Brewster-walker



10 Miles of Track: Islip to Patchogue LIRR Stations
Presented by David Morrison

Sunday, November 13, 2022, 1:00 PM
at Connetquot River State Park Preserve

LIRR historian and author David Morrison will discuss the story behind the weathervane at Islip Station, the anomaly at Great River Station, the brief history of the Club House Station, the wedding station, Blue Point's sister station building and Patchogue's demolished signal tower. Hear about the connection between the former Bayport Station building and the South Side Sportsmen's clubhouse. Of course, President Theodore Roosevelt's fondness of the Sportsmen's Club and the Long Island Rail Road will be discussed.



In 1870, Club House Station was created as a flag stop to serve patrons visiting the nearby South Side Sportsmen's Club. A small box-type building was constructed between what are now the Great River and Oakdale Stations. In the style often utilized by the South Side Rail Road, large lettering was placed on the sides of the building, as shown in this 1878 photograph taken by George Brainerd. The building was demolished when the stop was removed from the timetable in 1885.



About Our Speaker

David Morrison is a retired Long Island Rail Road branch line manager who has a passion for the history of the railroad. He is the author of 9 books in the Images of Rail series of Arcadia Publications. He is a charter member of the Railroad Museum of Long Island and he is on the station restoration committee of the Oyster Bay Railroad Museum. He is a longtime member of the Long Island Sunrise Trail Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. He has given countless presentations to libraries and historical societies and continues to do so.

Lectures are free for members of Friends of Connetquot. Non-members pay \$5/person. Seasonal parking rates apply. Please consider becoming a member and enjoy our programming all year long! To register or to become a member, please visit www.friendsofconnetquot.org.

HOOF BEATS

by Carole Scialdone



While we look forward to all the benefits of summer, the heat and humidity really bring out the pesky biting flies. Fly and tick spray can only do so much. Additional protection, as in masks, neck hoodies and boots for our horses, are a must during the peak of the season. When it gets really annoying, we just pick up a canter and run faster than the flies can fly!

The days are already getting shorter, but the good news is that this comes with less humidity and fewer bugs! Horses and riders are certainly thankful for the latter. The green leaf canopy provides shade and protects us from the sun. No matter the conditions, I can't think of a better way to enjoy this special place than from the backs of my two favorite steeds. As things cool off, traversing our beautiful trails is much more enjoyable.

There is so much wildlife to enjoy here at Connetquot. We so enjoy seeing the does with their spotted fawns grazing in the fields. There are handsome bucks drinking from the river, birds singing in the trees, snakes slithering across the trail, foxes playing in the tall grass and hawks flying overhead. Each trip around the park is a new and special adventure.

Soon the temperatures will be dropping, and the trees will be changing colors. Each autumn we look forward to Mother Nature's fantastic show of color. The cooler temperatures make our horses feel a little friskier, and every turn provides a new perspective on this beautiful Preserve.

Left: Carole's horse sports a mask

Creative Construction

by David Reisfield



On Saturday, June 18th the crew of Andy Mirchel; from Save the Great South Bay, Creek Defenders, along with Mark and Janet Soley, Louis Daquila, Bob Simmons and York Moosemuller, all from The Friends of Connetquot, joined David Reisfield, L.I. Greenbelt Trail Conference President and FOC board member, to create a floating boardwalk in a very muddy area known as Dismal Swamp on the L.I. Greenbelt Trail on the north side of Connetquot River State Park Preserve. The walkway was created using a discarded 19-foot aluminum ladder with planks bolted to it and treads screwed into the planks. Another 16-foot ladder has since been donated so we will be finishing the project at a later date. Thank you to all those who helped!

Photos: David Reisfield

Give Us Your Best Shot: Share your photos of the Preserve with us! Send us up to four photos in .jpeg or .png digital format, and for each issue we'll pick a winner. Photos must be current (within a year of submission) and shot within the park. Please give the approximate location of the scene, if possible. DEADLINE for next issue: December 7, 2022. Send your files to Tom Casey at: 2caseys@optonline.net. This issue's winner is Kevin Griffin, who receives a year's subscription to the FOC newsletter for the cover photo.

Entries will be judged by the Friends of Connetquot, Inc., and their decision is final. Each image submitted must be the original and unpublished work of the participant, who must also be its copyright owner. The participant shall retain copyright to the image entered for the competition. By submitting an image for the competition, the participant will be regarded as having granted the organizer the right to use the image in print, broadcast and/or electronic media without any fee payment, for the purposes of promoting the competition or promoting the Friends of Connetquot, Inc. Where any image is so used by the organizer, the participant will be credited accordingly.



*You are cordially invited to
the Friends of Connetquot's
Open House Tour!
Sunday, October 23,
12:00 to 3:00 PM.*

*Come tour the grounds and buildings! Admire all the improvements! Light Refreshments will be served.
Seasonal parking fee applies. RSVP at www.friendsofconnetquot.org.*

Then and Now – History Team Takes Another Step Forward



In our Summer Newsletter, we reported on the great progress the History Team made going through the contents of the many boxes that were stored at Connetquot. In total, the team sorted through and catalogued 55 boxes, culminating in a Deed of Gift to Vanderbilt Museum. Vanderbilt Museum will digitize everything and make them available online for future history buffs! To celebrate this achievement, the history team was treated to a lovely breakfast meeting followed by a tour of the Vanderbilt home.

What really made the day, was visiting the museum's digitizing office where work on "our" boxes was underway! Contact the Friends if you'd like to join us as we sort through the South Side Sportsmen's Club records!



Photos: Janet Soley and Ritamarie Weigand

Big Check Day



In our previous issue we happily announced that the Friends of Connetquot had received a \$41,000 grant from the State Environmental Protection Fund's Park and Trail Partnership program in conjunction with Parks and Trails New York. The funds will be used to create an Educational Interpretive Center and other improvements at the Connetquot trout hatchery.

On a beautiful afternoon on June 29, PTNY board members and state officials gathered at the hatchery to help us celebrate as the Friends accepted a literally large check. (Yes, it was symbolic; the real check is on the way.) Speaker after speaker sung the praises of Connetquot Park Preserve's rich history and natural beauty and how deserving it is of financial support such as this grant. They also stressed the importance of volunteer groups such as FOC. We thank all who attended, with special thanks going to Richard Remmer, who supplied generous refreshments for the day. And bravo, Janet Soley, for your grant-writing work!

As we mentioned before, remember that there's a catch: these Partnership Grants must be matched in part with private and local funding. **Friends of Connetquot will have to raise an additional \$8,250 in matching funds.** Please consider an additional tax-deductible donation to help us fulfill our commitment!

Photo left to right: PTNY Board Chair Jeff Bender, Assemblyman Steve Englebright, FOC Advisory Board Member Joe Mikulas, State Senator Alexis Weik, FOC Board Member Jim Fitzpatrick, FOC Secretary Tom Casey, State Senator Phil Boyle, State Parks Regional Director George Gorman, FOC President Janet Soley, FOC Advisory Board Member Richard Remmer, FOC Board Member Rita Trapani, and PTNY Board Member David Brinston. *Photo: David Reisfield*

LILRC Technology and Innovation Video Grant Update

by Janet Soley

The Friends would like to thank the L.I. Library Resources Council for this grant and the opportunity to capture a handful of memories of the residents of Islip—in particular, those surrounding Connetquot River. We have recorded 3 of the 6 videos proposed in the application. Due to the extreme heat this summer, we had to reschedule taping on several dates, as the South Side Sportsmen’s Clubhouse and the grounds were too warm, and we did not want anyone to deal with the heat along with the stress of being taped! Without getting into a lot of details, I’d like to tell you about our first three “Video Rock Stars”!



Ken Nocar: A resident of Bohemia, his parents would send him to the pond to cut ice for their ice box. After dragging home the ice, he would return to the SSSC to sell their milk. What touched my heart with Ken’s recording was that he is currently watching a friend slowly leaving us due to dementia. He doesn’t want his memories to fade away. So brave of him.

Estelle Gervasio: Her uncle was the chef at the SSSC. Her aunt worked for the chef. Estelle shared beautiful pictures of them. Uncle John was a world traveler before coming to Connetquot. He wrote and published a book, wrote and recorded a love song (in Italian), and proposed to his wife on the Grist Mill Bridge. Every anniversary, Estelle and her husband come back to Connetquot for a photo at the Mill.



Mike Piliero: This East Islip resident grew up in a home that abuts Connetquot. He told us stories about him and his brothers trespassing into the secret and wonderful SSSC. And yes, he did get caught! You will have to watch the video to learn more about that! (Judging from the picture, Gil Bergen eventually forgave him.)

Do you have a story worth keeping forever? Contact the Friends to get involved!

Photos: Janet Soley

Surprise!



On July 22, Sue Wuehler’s assistant Terri Simeone was lured back, reluctantly, to the park on her day off, ostensibly for an after-hours official meeting, only to find a surprise retirement party awaiting her in the Clubhouse, where staff, family members, FOC board members and other guests filled the room. And we all pulled off the surprise!

Terri was a hands-on manager who did great work in the park preserve. She officially retired on August 4. Farewell, Terri, and thanks for all you did for the park!



Left and right: Terri surprised and celebrating. Photos: T. Casey

Oops!



A recent visitor to Connetquot Park Preserve drove up to the fish hatchery and made the unfortunate decision to drive a bit too close to the holding pens and then attempt to turn around. His vehicle nearly ended up swimming with the trout. Park staff aided the driver in getting all four wheels back on the road with no damage done.

Photo: James Fitzpatrick

Changes

You may notice a few changes on our masthead, below left. FOC Board Member Jo-Ann Carhart has a lot on her plate and worries that she is spreading herself thin. Thus, she has decided to step away from the board. She has been a valuable and knowledgeable contributor, and we don't want to lose her—so we have convinced her to at least remain on our Advisory Board.

Past FOC President Ginny Fields and past Board Members Jerry and Rita Trapani have now stepped down from our Advisory Board. Each has a long and storied history of contributing to the success of the Friends of Connetquot, and we thank them for their many years of service.

Board Opportunities

With Jo-Ann Carhart's shift from the Board to the Advisory Board, we now need another Program Chair to seek out speakers of interest to our members. We would also like to find someone interested in publicizing these events. Fundraising, of course, is always a priority, so if you have a talent as a party planner/fundraiser, you could be a big help! Finally, it's important that we find a project manager willing to oversee the smooth administration of our grants.

These tasks don't necessarily require that you become a Board Member, but if you are willing, the positions are open. If you love Connetquot Park Preserve and have a particular skill in these areas or know someone who does, we want to hear from you. The success of our efforts depends on our volunteers. Take a look around the park and see the fruits of many years of FOC's labors. You can be a big part of what we do going forward.

Board of Trustees Executive Board

Janet Soley, President
David Reisfield, Vice President
Robert Ploetz, Treasurer
Tom Casey, Recording Secretary
Janet Soley, Corresponding Secretary

Board at Large

Janice Fischer James Fitzpatrick
Carole Scialdone Keith Snedecor

Advisory Board

Jo-Ann Carhart Edward Kelleher Joe Mikulas
Richard Remmer Bob Giffen, Historian

Newsletter Editor Tom Casey **Webmaster** Eric Larson
Membership Chair Janet Soley
Program Chair Currently vacant
Social Media Chair Carole Scialdone

Mission Statement

The Friends of Connetquot is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation, conservation and history of the 3,473-acre Connetquot River State Park Preserve. We work to help management protect a pristine environment and historic buildings and artifacts. We also support educational programs, fishing facilities and hiking and equestrian trails.

The records of the Friends of Connetquot can be viewed in our room at the Preserve. The New York State Office of Charities Registration holds copies of the annual charities reports required by law.

PLEASE NOTE: Automatic defibrillators are available in the administration office, the BOCES room, the main building and at the hatchery. Preserve staff is trained in their use.

For Emergencies in the Preserve: Call the New York Park Police at 631-669-2500.
Also notify the Entrance Booth at 631-581-1005.

BECOME A FRIEND OF CONNETQUOT

Fill out the membership form below and mail to: **Friends of Connetquot, Box 472, Oakdale, NY 11769.**

Already a member? Give the gift of membership to a friend. Membership dues include our newsletter, Comments on Connetquot, free interesting programs, special events, and the satisfaction of supporting a beautiful Preserve that is a historical and ecological treasure.

Special Contributors receive all the privileges of membership plus a listing on the Donors Plaque. Patrons and Benefactors also receive lifetime membership.

Annual Membership Dues:

(Check the category that applies.)

Special Contributor:

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Senior Citizen (\$20) _____ | Donor (\$500) _____ |
| Individual (\$25) _____ | Patron (\$1000)* _____ |
| Family (\$30) _____ | Guardian (\$2500)* _____ |
| Supporting (\$50) _____ | Benefactor (\$5000)* _____ |
| Sponsor (\$100) _____ | (*) Life Membership _____ |

New Membership Gift Membership Renewal

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ made payable to:

Friends of Connetquot, Inc.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Date _____

(Gift membership only) Please send a gift card that reads:

Visit us at www.friendsofconnetquot.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

S. HACKENSACK, NJ
PERMIT # 1171

Native American
History Celebration
November 13

Local LIRR History
November 14

FOC Open House
October 23

FOC GALA!
December 1



FRIENDS OF CONNETQUOT
BOX 472
OAKDALE NY 11769



COME JOIN THE FRIENDS



Please Come!
The Friends of Connetquot Gala
December 1 — 6:00 PM

We invite you to join us for our fundraising gala, this year honoring John Remmer with the Gil Bergen Award for his dedication and craftsmanship in restoring historic structures in the park. (See the President's Message on page 1.) Dinner, raffle prizes, and good company!

Tickets are \$100 each. (No physical ticket; check in at the door.)
Please reserve by November 21.

To reserve, send name address and phone or email number, and make checks payable to:
Friends of Connetquot, PO Box 472, Oakdale, NY 11769,
or visit www.friendsofconnetquot.org/gala-celebration.

Putting a table together? List the names of those with whom you wish to be seated.



500 Shore Road, Oakdale.



Please check the date on your mailing label and renew your membership if it has expired. Together you and the Friends of Connetquot can have a powerful impact on revitalizing the Connetquot Preserve for future generations.