

# The Milepost



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

Summer 2004

625 Canal Road, Somerset, NJ 08873

Vol. 4, Issue 3

Phone: [Somerset Office \(732\) 873-3050](tel:7328733050) / [Bull's Island Office \(609\) 397-2949](tel:6093972949) ~ [Park Web Site: www.dandrcanal.com](http://www.dandrcanal.com)

## Steam Power on the D & R

By Vicki Chirco

For many of us living in the rapid paced, technology driven 21st century, the past is often imagined as a charming, simpler, calmer - perhaps even saner - time to live. And when one contemplates transportation via canal, an image of mule driven canal boats cutting a silent path through the gently flowing waters of the man-made waterway usually comes to mind. That picture, as nostalgically peaceful as it is, does not capture the entire story of the canal era nor that of the D & R. The 19th century was as bustling, industrial and even as technologically driven as our own. Advancement, improvement, cost-effectiveness and efficiency were as important to the 19th century business person as his/her 21st century counterpart. The construction of the canal itself is a testament to that desire for advancement. Prior to the existence of the D & R, a trip via ship from Philadelphia to New York around the southern tip of New Jersey could take as long as two weeks. With the opening of the canal, merchants could move their goods between the two cities in as little as two days! The quest for the "next best thing," tool or invention to simplify and facilitate labor has always driven humankind. And so it was on the D & R. Although the mule-powered canal boat was a mainstay along the water route into the 20th century, steam power was introduced on the canal in the early 1840s - a few short years after the its official opening! And why? It was a more efficient and faster means for moving commodities to market. The introduction of this wonder of transportation along the D & R was heralded (*as was its investor and collaborator, Princeton's Richard F. Stockton*) in the [Hunterdon Gazette](#) in 1842 (*reprinted below*). Once introduced along the canal, steam powered vessels of all kinds plied the waters alongside their mule powered counterparts throughout the 19th and into the 20th century. The endless quest for efficiency and profits however would make the waterway obsolete as a transportation route. The expansion of the railroads and the introduction of the automobile contributed to its 1932 closure. The rest, as they say, is history.



The *Robert F. Stockton*, re-named *New Jersey* in 1840, as it made its ocean voyage from England to America in 1839. This iron hulled vessel was fitted with an Ericsson screw propeller and worked as a steam powered tow boat along the D & R for 30 years. This historic vessel and its machinery were scrapped in 1871.

### The Stockton Canal

**Steamers.** Two more of these iron steamers arrived in Philadelphia on Monday, through the Delaware and Raritan Canal, from the city of New York, where they were built. They are to take in cargoes of coal for New Haven and Hartford, in which trade they are to be permanently employed for the future. The two other boats of similar construction are at Bristol, taking in cargoes of coal for Albany. These iron boats are all moved by Ericsson's propellers, the success of which has far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the inventor or of their proprietor, Captain Stockton. - *July 27*

**Captain R. F. Stockton.** The public press pays some well-merited compliments to this distinguished gentleman. Success seems to have attended him in all his great public labors. He has conferred upon his native State great practical benefits, which will ever endear him to his fellow citizens. New Jersey is proud of such a son; and his liberality, patriotism, and persevering efforts, while they command the admiration of all, we are pleased to perceive, are fully successful, and everywhere appreciated. The name of Stockton is destined to stand in future time, preeminent among those of Fulton, of Whitney, of Arkwright, Wall, and others. The [Philadelphia Evening Journal](#) of last Friday contains a notice of the Stockton Iron Steamers... The Editor remarks: "Capt. Stockton's greatest triumph is yet to come. The steam frigate Princeton, (named after, and in compliment to, Capt. S.'s native village) now building at the Navy Yard, from what we have seen and heard of her from practical nautical men, will, when completely equipped for sea, exhibit the most extraordinary and effective application of the arts to the purposes of war that the world ever witnessed." We have witnessed the success of the Canal Iron Steamers, to which are applied the Ericsson propellers, and shall speak of them from personal observation. There are now four of these Steamers passing through the waters of the Canal. A late writer remarks, who was present, what must have been the feelings of Capt. Stockton when making the experiment with his Gun, when nearly at the same time two of his Steamers had just arrived in the Delaware, after quick passages, and one of them was at the time going down the river to Wilmington, under full sail in addition to her Steam Power. - *August 24*

Newsletter Design: Stephanie Fox, RIS - Natural Resources  
Vicki Chirco, RIS - Historic Resources

Park Superintendent: Susan Herron  
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# FREE SUMMER 2004 PROGRAMS AT THE D & R CANAL STATE PARK



Programs are subject to cancellation due to inclement weather. **Registration is REQUIRED for ALL PROGRAMS unless otherwise noted.** Call the Park Office at 732-873-3050 (Somerset Office) or 609-397-2949 (Bulls Island Office) to register.

Visit [www.dandrcanal.com](http://www.dandrcanal.com) for further details and to check for program updates.

**All programs are FREE unless otherwise specified!**

JULY 2004

**July 10: Junior Naturalist:** Become a Junior Naturalist at Bull's Island. Children ages 8-14 are invited to explore Bull's Island by doing scavenger hunts, searching for tracks and learning more about this unique park by completing a Junior Naturalist Booklet. Once completed they will receive an official Junior Naturalist Certificate. The program will be held at the Bulls Island Recreation Area (located off Route 29 in Hunterdon County) and begin at 1:00 pm.

**July 10: Craft Demonstrations and Sale at the Blackwells Mills Canal House:** Watch baskets made, chairs caned, jewelry assembled and soft toy animals created! And, a "toy doctor" will be on hand to attend to any sick one you bring along. 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!

**July 10: Bike The Path to Kingston:** Enjoy a morning bike ride along the canal with the D & R's Historian. Bring your own bicycle and meet at the Griggstown Causeway across from the "Muletender's Barracks" building at 10:00 am. Be prepared for a 10 mile ride that will take us to Kingston and back. Come enjoy the park, burn a few calories and learn a bit about the D & R!



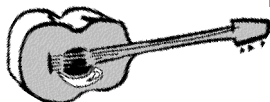
**July 24: Walk the Path to Five Mile Lock:** Enjoy a summer morning walk along the canal towpath with the D & R's Historian. We'll meet at the Demott Lane Footbridge located directly off Easton Avenue in Somerset at 10:00 am and head north toward South Bound Brook's Five Mile Lock for a 3 mile round trip tour along the historic towpath. Come enjoy the park, burn a few calories and learn a bit about the D & R!

**July 24: Snakes of NJ and the U.S.:** You don't want to miss this program! Jerry Ronski, snake educator from Bridgewater, will be presenting a thrilling program on these special reptiles. He will be discussing the habitats and behaviors of the many LIVE snakes that will be visiting the island that day. The program will be from 1:00 to 3:00 pm at the Bulls Island Recreation Area (located off Route 29 in Hunterdon County). All ages are welcome and registration is not required. **DUE TO ILLNESS, THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, AUGUST 21<sup>ST</sup>.**



**July 31: What Is A Canal?:** Kids, bring your parents (or an adult guardian) and join the Park's Historian at the Lambertville Library (located at 6 Lilly Street) at 11:00 am for a program especially for you about the canal. Children ages 5 - 8 will learn all about the D & R such as how it's different from the Delaware River, why & how it was built, what could be found along it's path and even how the locks and bridges worked. And afterwards, if weather permits, we will take a short walk to the Park's path to look at the Lambertville lock. For further details contact Jennifer Sirak (609.397.0275) at the Lambertville Library.

**July 31: Rusty and Jan Jam at the Island:** Bring a blanket, chair and food to Bull's Island to enjoy a relaxing evening of impromptu acoustic guitar and flute music by the river. The program will be held at the Bull's Island Recreation Area (located off Route 29 in Hunterdon County) and begin at 6:30 pm. This is a real casual event. We gather around the picnic tables in the Day Use area and enjoy the evening. All ages are welcome and registration is NOT required.



AUGUST 2004

**Aug. 7: Common Edibles and Medicinal Plants:** Join the Naturalist on a hike into the D & R Canal's Six Mile Run Reservoir Area in Somerset County to seek out some of nature's more common edible and medicinal plants. You will learn how to identify the plants and come to understand their common uses. The program begins at 1:00 pm. Participants are asked to meet at the Somerset Park Office located at 625 Canal Road in Franklin Township.

**Aug. 7: Story of the D & R Canal:** In a program sponsored by the Plainsboro Township Park Rangers, the Park's Historian will offer a narrated PowerPoint presentation on the story of the canal. Both historic and modern photographs will be included to illuminate the waterway's past and present life. Come join us at the Plainsboro Library located at 641 Plainsboro Road on the grounds of the Township Municipal Complex at 2:00 pm for this hour-long adult afternoon program. Registration is not required and admission is FREE!

**Aug. 14: Creatures of Night:** Learn how owls and bats make our world a better place. The Park Naturalist will be at the Bulls Island Recreation Area (located off Route 29 in Hunterdon County) at 1:00 pm to talk about the amazing adaptations and behaviors of these night creatures. This program is appropriate for ages 8 and up.

**Aug. 15: 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 at the corner of Blackwells Mills and Canal Road. Watch canoes and kayaks sail by on the D & R Canal as you relax with a frosty treat and friends. 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 21: Rusty and Jan Jam at the Island:** Bring a blanket, chair and food to Bull's Island to enjoy a relaxing evening of impromptu acoustic guitar and flute music by the river. The program will be held at the Bull's Island Recreation Area (located off Route 29 in Hunterdon County) and begin at 6:30 pm. This is a real casual event. We gather around the picnic tables in the Day Use area and enjoy the evening. All ages are welcome and registration is not required.



# ~ MORE FREE SUMMER 2004 PROGRAMS ~

AUG 2004

**Aug. 28: Summer Butterflies:** Enjoy an afternoon hike with the Park Naturalist into the D & R Canal's Six Mile Run Reservoir Area in Somerset County in search of summer butterflies. Participants will learn how to identify some of our area's common species as well as the plants that these beautiful creatures rely on for survival. The program will begin at 1:00 pm. Participants are asked to meet at the Somerset Park Office located at 625 Canal Road in Franklin Township.

**Aug. 28: Walk the Path to Titusville:** Enjoy a morning walk along the Feeder Canal with the D & R's Historian. We'll meet at the Washington Crossing State Park parking lot located directly off Route 29 in Mercer County at 10:30 a.m. for a 3 mile round trip walk. The group will head north to the historic town of Titusville. Come enjoy the park, burn a few calories and learn a bit about the D & R.



SEPTEMBER 2004

**Sept. 4: 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. 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.

**Sept. 4: Nature Crafts:** Children ages 5-10 are invited to join the Park Naturalist in creating crafts from materials found in nature. The program will begin at 1:00 pm at the Bull's Island Office (located off Route 29 in Hunterdon County).

**Sept. 11: Story of the D & R Canal:** As part of the South Bound Brook Historic Preservation Advisory Commission's annual ***Canal Day at the Abraham Staats House***, the D & R Canal State Park's Historian will offer 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 (*time to be announced - check the web site for updated information*). Come join us at the Abraham Staats House located at 17 Von Stueben Lane in South Bound Brook from 10 am to 4 pm for a full day of canal fun. Registration is not required and admission is FREE!

**Sept. 11: Tracks:** Participants will learn how to identify some of the animal tracks that can be found in New Jersey. We will search the Island for fresh tracks and create plaster of paris casts for everyone to take home as a souvenir of the day. The program will begin at 1:00 pm at the Bull's Island Office. Appropriate for ages 7 and up.

**Sept. 18: Bike the Path to Lambertville:** Enjoy a morning bike ride along the Feeder Canal with the D & R's Historian. Bring your own bicycle and meet at the Bull's Island Recreation Area (off Route 29 in Hunterdon County) at 10:30 a.m. Be prepared for a 15 mile loop that will pass through the historic towns of Stockton and Lambertville. Come enjoy the park, burn a few calories and learn a bit about the D & R! **Not recommended for children under 10.**

**Sept. 18: Birding at Six Mile Run with NJ Audubon:** The Naturalist from the Plainsboro Preserve of the NJ Audubon will be leading a bird walk through the many habitat areas of Six Mile Run Reservoir Site. This is a great opportunity for beginners as well as more experienced birders. Advanced payment of \$10 for NJAS member or \$15 for non-members, please contact the Plainsboro Preserve for more information at 609.897.9400.



**Sept. 18 & 19: Paper Mania Exhibit and Sale at the Blackwells Mills Canal House:** This popular annual event returns to the historic canal house on the corner of Blackwells Mills and Canal Road in Franklin Township. Historic local photographs, memorabilia, prints, old books, postcards, posters, sheet music and more will be on sale. This weekend event will be held on Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup> from 10 - 4 pm and Sunday, September 19<sup>th</sup> from 12 - 4 pm. Registration is not required and admission is FREE!

**Sept. 25: Compass Basics:** If you've always wondered how a compass works then this program is for you! The Naturalist will teach you the basics of using these directional devices and then let you try your skills on a small orienteering course at Bull's Island Recreational Area (*located off Route 29 in Hunterdon County*). Participants are asked to meet at the Bull's Island park office at 1:00 pm. Appropriate for ages 9 and up. The park will provide compasses during the program.

## Summer 2004's Wild Wednesdays at the Island



The D & R Canal State Park is pleased to announce the return of Wild Wednesdays at the Bull's Island Recreational Area. These children's programs will begin at 10:00 am and last approximately one hour. Please call the Bulls Island office to register (609.397.2949) or visit our website at [www.dandrcanal.com](http://www.dandrcanal.com). Parents or an adult/guardian are required to stay. You can register your child for one or all of the programs. As with all of our programs, there is NO FEE. Children must be 4 years or older. Call the Park Office for more details.



### Eaglet Classes (for children ages 4-7)

July 7: Crickets, Butterflies and Beetles

July 21: Adopt-a-Tree at the Island

Aug. 4: Whose Tracks are Those?

Aug. 18: Nature Crafts

### Coyote Classes (for children ages 8-12)

July 14: Insect Investigation

July 28: Junior Naturalist Program

Aug. 11: Stream Stomp

Aug. 25: The Art of Fish Printing

## Rockingham To Reopen This Summer

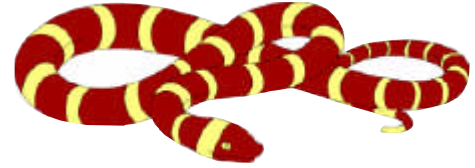
At long last *Rockingham*, General Washington's final Revolutionary War headquarters, is ready to open its doors to the public once again. After a long hiatus - that included physical relocation and an extensive restoration project - the historic site will open its doors for public tours and programs starting in early July. *Rockingham* is managed by the D & R Canal State Park and its fourth - and final location - on Laurel Avenue will eventually be made accessible from the Park's path between Kingston and Rocky Hill. The site historian, Peggi Carlsen, was hard at work while the site was closed reevaluating research and uncovering new information relevant to *Rockingham* and its place in the 18th century. Visitors to the restored mansion can expect a new approach to the telling of its story. The original section of the expanded mansion was built between 1702-1710 making the structure the second oldest house in the Millstone River Valley. While that alone makes it historically significant, it is Washington's occupancy - and the place where he composed his *Farewell Orders to the Armies of the United States* - that ultimately led to mansion's preservation. So plan a trip back to the 18th century and come visit the newly restored *Rockingham*! For hours and/or further information call (609) 683-7132.



Dept. of Environmental Protection  
NJ Division of Parks and Forestry  
Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park  
625 Canal Road  
Somerset, New Jersey 08873

## LIVE SNAKES AT THE ISLAND!

**DUE TO ILLNESS, THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN  
RESCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, AUGUST 21ST.**



**On August 21<sup>st</sup> at 1:00 pm** you can see anacondas, pythons, milksnakes and many other types of fascinating snakes at Bulls Island. Jerry Ronski, a snake educator from Bridgewater, has offered to share his expertise of these reptilian creatures in his ***Snakes of NJ and the U.S.*** presentation. Learn how these animals survive in the wild and the perils they face while getting "an up-close and personal view" of these misunderstood reptiles. The program will be held in the Bulls Island Recreation Area. So come join us for this **FREE** afternoon program.



**REGISTRATION IS  
NOT REQUIRED!**