

# **D&H Transportation Heritage Council**

## **April 23, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

*Held at the Mamakating Historical Society's Summitville Schoolhouse*

Participants:

**President Bill Merchant**, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls  
**Secretary Laurie Ramie**, Upper Delaware Council  
**Treasurer Donna Durland**, Mamakating Historical Society  
**Sean Moore**, Sullivan County Delaware & Hudson Canal Interpretive Center, Summitville  
**S. Robert Powell**, Carbondale Historical Society  
**Jane Varcoe**, Waymart Area Historical Society  
**Kenny Christianson**, Lackawaxen River Conservancy and Rowland Cooperative  
**Debbie Bigelisen**, Phillipsport Community Center  
**Kerron Barnes**, Town of Mamakating  
**Virdanna Lawrence**, Town of Mamakating and Village of Wurtsboro Historian  
**Sally Talaga**, Wayne County Historical Society, D&H Canal Park at Lock 31  
**Kara Angeloni**, Town of Deerpark Schoolhouse Museum  
**Nancy Bachana**, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum  
**Bill Bollinger**, Bollinger & Rutter Video Services  
**Christopher Corcia**, East Stroudsburg University grad student, Carbondale Historical Society Intern  
**Jon Rubin**, individual member  
**Bob Barth**, individual member

**Call to Order:** President Merchant called the business meeting held at Mamakating Historical Society's Summitville Schoolhouse to order at 1:20 p.m. following an optional morning walk to Sullivan County's D&H Canal Interpretive Center and lunch at Danny's Restaurant in Wurtsboro. Introductions were made around the table.

**Acceptance of October 23, 2024 DHTHC Minutes:** On a **motion** by Bigelisen, seconded by Christianson, the 10/23/24 minutes were approved, with all in favor.

**Treasurer's Report:** Durland provided a written financial report showing transactions with an end balance of \$1,881.67 as of 4/23 and a preliminary list of members who have paid dues for 2025. Payment collection under the new bylaws structure began on 4/1, with many submitted at this meeting. Durland also reported that there was a \$506.50 profit from the 3/29 D&H Canal Ulster County Bus Tour. Forty-two individuals collectively paid \$1,890 via the \$45 per person fees (with three comped tickets provided for the narrators) and the Rolling V charter bus rental was \$1,383.50.

**Possible Change to Bylaws:** Merchant noted that the D&H Trustees serve as fiduciaries for this non-profit organization and handle administrative business between meetings of the full Council. There are currently 10 trustees. At least six members must be present to conduct business. There have been times when a quorum could not be reached due to absences. The bylaws currently lack a procedural provision to address consequences for board members who miss multiple meetings. The proposal discussed at the most recent Trustees meeting is that if a trustee misses four consecutive meetings without notice, those unexcused absences will be regarded as a resignation from the board. Amending the bylaws requires giving 30-days advance notice. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Bachana, the DHTHC approved including that specified draft bylaws revision on the agenda of the **July 23** meeting for a vote, with all in favor. Its publication in these minutes distributed to the full membership will serve as the advance notice.

**Report on March 29 Bus Trip:** Merchant reported that the guests seemed to enjoy the tour of 14 Ulster County sites that he guided with Bachana's assistance. People were willing to hike to several locations to get closer looks at canal features and it was a perfect day out to see everything well. It worked out efficiently to call in lunch orders in advance of arriving at Ricke Lens restaurant in Napanoch. The itinerary stayed on schedule, with the final stop being a chance to take the Five Locks Walk. They sold about a half-dozen of the historic DVDs through the D&H Canal Historical Society due to sales tax rules. When the sixth video is finished, a corresponding bus tour can be arranged for the other half of Ulster County. Attendee Bob Barth complimented Merchant and Bachana on their organizational skills, saying that the tour was wonderful, relaxing, it went smoothly, and he learned a lot.

**Historic DVD Series:** Videographer Bill Bollinger is working with a new source to produce copies of the "Delaware & Hudson Canal: Its History and Legacy" DVD series. The minimum order is 100. Without cases and shipping costs if they are picked up in New Jersey, which Bollinger agreed to do, the cost will be \$144 per file before sales tax. Bachana suggested looking into plastic or paper sleeves instead of jewel cases to save money on their packaging. Since the original artwork for the DVD labels from those first four volumes is in a locked computer, that will need to be replicated or redone. The current inventory of DVDs that Talaga maintains for the group is: Chapter 1 – zero; Chapter 2 – four; Chapter 3 – three; Chapter 4 – twelve; and Chapter 5 – eighty-five out of the original 100. Barnes said that the Town of Mamakating is interested in buying at least 30 copies of Chapter 4 for its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary events in Wurtsboro at the wholesale rate of \$7 each. The retail price is \$10. On a **motion** by Rubin, seconded by Durland, authorization was provided for Bollinger to order 100 copies each of DVD Chapters 1-4, with further investigation to ensue on the artwork and sleeves. Merchant commented that we will continue to look into streaming options for this content as well, but these DVDs are continuing to sell. Talaga recommended that once the final Chapter 6 is done, the group should explore combining all the volumes together into one DVD. Bollinger reminded everyone that if they intend to display the videos at their sites for the public, he will happily provide high-definition files which will provide better resolution to play in that format. Regarding the filming for Chapter 6, Bollinger said 90% of the exterior footage is ready. Conducting sit-down interviews at on-site locations will come next. This volume should be ready by next spring.

**200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events:** Planning for milestone events in the D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad history will continue through 2029, culminating with a commemoration of the Stourbridge Lion's first run. Next up is a **June 14-15** Canawlers Festival at the D&H Canal and Historical Society in High Falls during the New York State Path through History Weekend. It will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on both days. Activities will include museum tours, a scavenger hunt, traditional music, talks, mule wagon rides, and children's games. They will make use of the D&H 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary banner then turn it over to Barnes for the Wurtsboro July event. Barnes handed out a schedule for the Canal Bicentennial on **July 13** for which he and Janet Lybolt are co-chairs of the planning committee. It will include a 12 p.m. parade/procession with groups assembling at the Wurtsboro Firehouse at 11 a.m. Cannon fire and church bells will herald the start of the parade down Pine St. to Fourth St., ending at the reenactment site at 85 Sullivan St. (Dr. Morrison's house). That ceremony will begin at 1:30 with a welcome of dignitaries and guests, and recitation of a portion of Philip Hone's speech from the canal groundbreaking. A light buffet lunch will occur after the ceremony for invited guests. From 2-4 p.m. in the yard at 85 Sullivan St., there will be living history presentations, displays, musical ensembles including the West Point band, various activities for adults and children, an old-time photo booth, and horse & wagon rides on Sullivan Street. Guided towpath walks will be offered between 4-5 p.m. (total distance 1.4 miles). That evening will feature a period costume ball from 7-9 p.m. at the Wurtsboro Firehouse. Tickets will be \$10 per person. Barnes displayed the marketing materials that the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association and its professional design team have developed; this event will be promoted through the I Love NY program as well. Sullivan County awarded a

\$38,850 grant to help pay for the reenactment activities. Available to distribute are postcards, paper or laminated posters, and a tri-fold brochure with sponsorship information. Kohl's Distribution worked with the Mamakating Local Development Corporation to subsidize the printing of 6,000 copies of a D&H Canal Bicentennial Anniversary 2025 calendar that includes historic information and photos. He brought copies to share. Barnes had researched descendants associated with the canal's local history through FindaGrave.com and Ancestry.com, finding biographical information for the Pine and O'Callaghan families.

**National Register Revision:** Merchant reported that he is waiting for the National Park Service to complete its review of the D&H Canal's National Register of Historic Places listing update documentation that he submitted pre-Thanksgiving 2023. He has made significant revisions to the book that he's writing since then based on new discoveries made during this update process. It was the denial of the Neversink Valley Area Museum's application for federal funding due to not being listed on the National Register that prompted this update.

**National Historic Trail Designation:** While U.S. Representative Pat Ryan's office had gone so far as to write legislation to designate the D&H Canal as a National Historic Trail, a bill needs to be introduced in Congress by a sponsor. Since Rep. Ryan's boundaries shifted in the last election due to redistricting, Merchant said he may reach out to Rep. Josh Riley to pursue this Act of Congress action.

#### **Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:**

**Kerron Barnes** – The Village of Wurtsboro has produced a new map showing all their businesses which also lists the D&H Canal. Barnes has rack cards for the TravelStorys app that the Town of Mamakating LDC offers in which hikers who use the app can receive guided narration as they walk, such as at the Bova Road trail. On **June 7-8**, there will be an inaugural hiking event on the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail called ROAM with camping, programming, and guided walks. The Village of Wurtsboro will serve as home base. Expect to walk between 6-12 miles on Saturday for the Summitville roundtrip and 4-6 miles on Sunday from the Basha Kill Boat Launch Access with a shuttle back to Chase School in Wurtsboro, or participate in a portion of each day. Each day includes breakfast, lunch, guided walks with various themes/hosts, and tour options (D&H Canal Interpretive Center in Summitville and Mamakating Environmental Education Center), with June 7 camping at the Mamakating Little League Field (\$15 fee per family or individual). Register at <https://ROAM2025.eventbrite.com> and look up this event online for the full itinerary.

**Bob Barth** – There will be a talk on **June 22** on "Creating a Water Trail for Our Canal" by Mohawk Canoe Club member Don Griffin to explore the possibilities of making a proper water trail along the watered section of the Delaware & Raritan Canal to make it easier to portage kayaks and canoes. This will follow the 2 p.m. Canal Watch Annual Meeting to be held at the Fellowship Hall of the Griggstown Reformed Church, 1065 Canal Road, Princeton, NJ (GPS address). There will be a vote on the slate of trustees, refreshments will be served, and Canal Watch sales items will be available. For more information, please contact Linda Barth at (908) 240-0488 or [barthlinda123@aol.com](mailto:barthlinda123@aol.com).

**Kenny Christianson** – The Rowland Cooperative celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a grand relaunch party held on March 29. The Lackawaxen River Conservancy had proposed the idea of designating the Lackawaxen to become a National Wild and Scenic River but found that too many people were against it, so that nomination attempt has been discontinued. The group will be scheduling its annual Towpath Clean-up.

**Sean Moore** – There is a structural stabilization project for the D&H Canal Interpretive Center property that Sullivan County Parks and Recreation Commissioner Brian Scardefield can discuss

in the future. The museum will reopen on Memorial Day and Moore has organized five programs this summer, including by Cliff Robinson, Jr. and Bill Merchant. Watch for their events schedule or contact him at [spmooore55@verizon.net](mailto:spmoore55@verizon.net) to request the dates and topics. He found a receptive teacher at the Emma Chase Elementary School in Wurtsboro who is interested in arranging tours to the interpretive center and trail. The problem is that their seasons don't align since the site opens in the summer after school is over. Barnes said the Town of Mamakating has had a fruitful relationship with the school and offered to assist with contacts. He had guided the school principal on a canal trail walk.

Nancy Bachana – Now working with the D&H Canal Historical Society, Bachana will be a speaker at the 2025 World Canals Conference that will take place on **Sept. 21-25** in Buffalo, NY in conjunction with the Erie Canal Bicentennial. She would be happy to “plug” any organizations or activities that the Council members would request. Another lecture topic she offers is how the D&H Canal created the tanning industry. She has been asked by the Mamakating Public Library to create a tour along Sullivan Street in Wurtsboro. The first one will be scheduled in June. Bachana thanked Ramie for providing copies of an April 4 article in the *Sullivan County Democrat* entitled “Uncovering the Keys to Puzzler’s Lock” about the historical mystery book that she wrote which is targeted to middle school ages, with illustrations by Roxanne Bachana. She’ll be doing book readings and signings at the **June 14-15** Canawler’s Festival and hopes to organize additional local events and sales outlets. “The Key to Puzzler’s Lock: Book One” is available to purchase online via [nancybachana.com](http://nancybachana.com) or Shopify. Bachana said she sees this as an opportunity to spread information about the canal and her only goal for now is to cover the cost of the book’s printing.

Kara Angeloni – The Town of Deerpark Museum has four, free programs scheduled at the 1863 Schoolhouse in Huguenot so far. May 4 was on the Borscht Belt by Alex Prizgintas. Upcoming talks are **June 6**, “The Port Jervis & Monticello Railroad” by Joe Senese; **July 27**, “Pahaquarry Copper Mines & Old Mine Road” by Frank Salvati; and **Aug. 10**, “John Roebling & The D&H Canal” by Bill Merchant. All start at 3 p.m. and refreshments will be served. Angeloni also handed out copies of the “Deerpark Diary” newsletter and announced that the Town of Deerpark is completing an updated town map brochure project for which they received an Upper Delaware Council grant.

Virdanna Lawrence – She has been working on Revolutionary War 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary research, focusing on treaties signed with indigenous tribes.

Sally Talaga – Talaga distributed the Wayne County Historical Society’s 2025 events schedule. The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Canal Festival at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 is set for **Aug. 16** from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It’s going to be the final one because it’s expensive to run and the volunteers are tired. They will hold other activities at the park instead. She is the guest curator for two new exhibits at the Main Museum opening on May 3. The first is a series of large format prints by professional photographer Thomas H. Johnson, who was commissioned by the D&H Canal Company to document the canal’s operation in the early 1860s. The 14 photos depict scenes from Archbald, Olyphant, Carbondale, Waymart, and Honesdale. They will be on display for two years. The other exhibit, “From Underwear to Sleepwear to ‘Everywear’,” is about the history of the Katz Underwear Company (1898-1991), which at one time was the largest employer in Wayne County. Asked about the condition of the 1820 Daniels farmhouse on the property after a truck ran into it last September, Talaga said that the primary damage was that it shifted the structure and they must restore the foundation with the insurance proceeds. She is working on a volunteer basis to convert Locktender House #33 in White Mills that Dr. Walter Barbe had restored and used in part for a small museum space into an Airbnb instead of the Dorflinger Suydam Wildlife Sanctuary selling the property. She has a \$25,000 budget to make repairs over two years and prove its financial viability.

S. Robert Powell – Thirty-one illustrated volumes on the history of the Delaware and Hudson Gravity Railroad and the D&H Canal Co. by Powell now account for 12,478 pages of research. Each volume is a separate book in an electronic format on an archival DVD. All of Powell's books and articles are listed on a bibliography handout. Powell referenced a book that the D&H Canal Co. produced in 1923 called "A Century of Progress" which commemorated their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Arrangements included a banquet at Hotel Astor; masting of flags on the company's buildings; exhibits; decorations; music; a birthday cake; remarks by Chairman Eugenius J. Outerbridge; addresses by President Leonor Loree on the Delaware and Hudson Company, Mr. J.S. Alexander on Banking and Transportation, and Mr. H.W. Dickinson on The Use of Steam Power; a Centennial excursion to the company's coal fields and scene of first operations in Pennsylvania; inspection of coal breakers; a luncheon at Hotel Casey in Scranton; additional addresses on The Century's Association of Management, Capital and Labor by President Loree; Anthracite Development and Railway Progress by Vice-President Williams; The Early Days of Canals, Railways and Locomotives by Dickenson; a trip over the company's railroad to Carbondale and Honesdale; a return to New York City via the Erie; and resolutions of guests. Information about the 150th Anniversary (1823-1973) of the Delaware and Hudson Railway Company is available in the May 2025 issue of the Bridge Line Historical Society Bulletin, pages 7-8. Powell wrote a review of a biographical book by Peter H. Grant titled "Leonor Loree and the Delaware & Hudson Railroad" that he has available to share some remarkable historical facts about Loree and that company era. There are still some copies available of the Lackawanna & Wyoming Valley Railway Historical Society's 2023 Railway Calendar which featured the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company and Railroad. Its photos and captions include detailed information. Powell displayed a photo of a D&H Railroad Bicentennial (1823-2023) black and yellow patch a friend had sewn that is available for \$7 plus shipping by contacting Larry Rine at 15 Green St. West, West Lebanon, NH 03784 or [larry.rine@yahoo.com](mailto:larry.rine@yahoo.com). Lastly, Powell said he is periodically asked to do a presentation on a Nov. 9, 1974 alleged sighting of a UFO in Carbondale. This incident was the subject of a Nov. 9, 2024 film that aired on WVIA and was reportedly watched by 86,000 people.

Debbie Bigelisen – The Phillipsport Community Center will hold its first meeting of the season on May 11. When the weather allows, they will hold outdoor monthly programs featuring local musicians which cost \$10 and includes a slice of pie.

Donna Durland – The Mamakating Historical Society will reopen its Summitville Schoolhouse Museum to the public shortly. Details on two upcoming programs in June by Frank Salvati and August on the music of the 1960s and '70s will be announced.

Laurie Ramie – Copies of "The Upper Delaware" Spring 2025 newsletter were distributed. Ramie discussed the demolition of the 1902 Skinners Falls, NY-Milanville, PA Bridge that had been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Upper Delaware Council will offer a mitigation proposal for those adverse effects to PennDOT on April 30 to establish an Upper Delaware River Valley Historic Preservation and Interpretation Grants program to try to prevent such historic losses in the future.

Bill Merchant – In addition to helping organize the Canawler Festival on **June 14-15**, Merchant has about a dozen lecture topics that he can offer for presentations. Two upcoming programs he will deliver include "The D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad in Postcards" on **July 12** at 2 p.m. at the D&H Canal Interpretive Center in Summitville and "The D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad on its 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" on **July 25** at 7 p.m. at his museum in High Falls.

Old/New Business: No additional business items were raised.

**Next Trustees Meeting:** The next DHTHC Board of Trustees meeting will be on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, **June 25, 2025** at noon at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg, NY.

**Next Council Meeting:** The DHTHC full membership will meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, **July 23, 2025** at the Ellenville Public Library. Bigelisen offered to reserve the meeting space. Itinerary details for a morning walk and lunch at Ricke Lens in Napanoch will be sent out in advance.

**Adjourn:** The April 23, 2025 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:44 p.m. on a **motion** by Moore, seconded by Bachana, with all in favor.

*Minutes submitted by Secretary Laurie Ramie, 05/19/25*