



Society for Industrial Archeology ROEBLING CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

November 2006

Vol. 14 No. 3

CHAPTER BUSINESS

Call for Nominations

Election of chapter officers will be held at the Annual Business Meeting tentatively scheduled for January 29, 2006 (formal notice of the meeting will be in December's newsletter.)

All four elective offices – President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary – are open, although incumbents may, and probably will, run for re-election. Only the President is term-limited, according to chapter by-laws. The President cannot serve for more than four consecutive terms. (Mary Habstritt, the current President, has served three terms.) All chapter officers must be members in good standing of the national Society for Industrial Archeology as well as of the chapter.

Please nominate candidates by sending names of worthy chapter members to Nominating Committee Chair Tom Flagg no later than December 5, 2005. Tom may be contacted at tflagg@sunyopt.edu or 212-938-5778.



Photo by Paul Margolis

Gerry Weinstein at the pilothouse microphone, providing a running commentary during the cruise.

TOUR REPORTS

Harvey Cruise By Paul Margolis

On Sunday, August 28th, 40 members of the Roebling Chapter were joined by about 15 members of the Suffolk County Historical Society for a New York Harbor cruise on the retired fireboat *John J. Harvey*. The cruise took us from Pier 63 on the west side of Manhattan, around the southern tip of the island, and up the East River as far as the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It didn't seem like the most promising day for a cruise: the weather was overcast and it looked like rain, but the group was congenial and the fireboat offered plenty of shelter from the weather. Shortly before getting underway, a skilled culinary crew served up lunch



Photo by Paul Margolis

The rear deck of the "Harvey" was an ideal location to relax and watch the New York Harbor panorama unfold.

prepared on the *Harvey's* barbecue grill, including vegetable burgers for the non-carnivores.

The *Harvey* is a 130-foot long riveted steel vessel which was in service with the New York City Fire Department from 1931 until 1994. In 1999, a group of maritime preservationists saved the *Harvey* from the scrap heap, and in 2000, the vessel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On September 11, 2001, the *Harvey* and her volunteer crew pitched in to help New York Fire Department fight blazes in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center. The retired fireboat pumped water for more than three days, until hydrants ashore could be put back into service.

A running narration was provided by Gerry Weinstein, with occasional contributions from other Roebling members, who interspersed anecdotes and personal opinions with their commentaries on the history of the New York City waterfront. They pointed out the historical sites along the waterfront, such as the High Line, the former Todd Shipyards, and Bush Terminal, and explained the impending development in areas like Chelsea, Red Hook and the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

As we approached the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges, the rumble of the high-volume water pumps revving up could be heard. The *Harvey* "saluted" the bridge and harbor with blasts from her water cannons, with streams fore and aft, and fanning out from both sides. When all the pumps are going at full capacity, the *Harvey* can discharge 18,000 gallons of water per minute. Cruise participants had been advised to bring along raingear, and those who heeded the advice were protected from the man-made showers. Others, like this writer, ducked into the cabin when he saw the spray coming his direction. The fireboat made a second salute as we rounded the Battery on our return to Pier 63.

The rain, which had been threatening all during the cruise, mercifully held off until the *Harvey* approached the pier. It then began to fall in earnest as the fireboat docked. Passengers said hasty goodbyes and went scurrying for shelter ashore, or like the writer and his guest, for a taxi home. The leisurely three-hour cruise on the venerable *Harvey*, with good food and company and an educational tour of the waterfront, was an ideal Sunday escape from the 21st century.

Corn Roast

Over 30 people enjoyed fresh corn on the cob and an assortment of dishes at the annual corn roast on September 18th at Gerry Weinstein's Engineerium

Two steam-powered generators were run on compressed air and the steam whistle was blown. Swimming in the pool nearby completed a beautiful day.

OTHER EVENTS

East River Preservation

The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance of the Municipal Art Society is mounting an exhibit, *Preservation on the Edge: Our Threatened East River Heritage*. The exhibit opened Thurs. Nov. 10 and continues through Jan. 25, 2006. Several historic images are reproduced from the collection of Gerry Weinstein.

A postcard announcement has been mailed to all Roebling Chapter members and you may already have that in hand.

Note that a book signing for *The East River*, published by The Greater Astoria Historical Society is a feature of the opening reception. This book includes a number of images contributed by Roebling Chapter members, including Bernie Ente and Shuli Sade. The book will continue to be available from Urban Center Books or The Greater Astoria Historical Society (www.eastrivernyc.org).

Preserving the Edge: Protecting and Reusing Our East River Industrial Heritage, a panel discussion on Thurs. Dec. 8 is to include Ward Dennis, an architectural historian and leader of grassroots efforts to preserve the historic sites of Williamsburg and Greenpoint; Andrew Dolkart, professor of historic preservation at Columbia University's School of Architecture; and Mary Habstritt, RCSIA President. It is scheduled for 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

These events will be held at the Urban Center, 457 Madison Av. at 51st St. in Manhattan.

As seating is limited, reservations are recommended, but admission is free. Call 212-935-3960 or e-mail rsvp@mas.org.

Caddell Dry Dock

The exhibit, *Caddell Dry Dock: 100 Years Harbor-side*, is on view at the Noble Maritime Collection, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island, through February 2006. It features the photography of Michael Falco who spent several weeks documenting the work of the shipyard. Also included are dry dock models, tools, and history. The museum is open 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays. For more information call 718-447-6490 or visit www.noblemaritime.org.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NY Research Grant

The New York State Archives Partnership Trust, a non-profit that provides support to the New York State Archives is accepting applications for its 2006 Larry J. Hackman Research Residency Program. The program supports advanced work in New York State history, government, or public policy by covering expenses, including travel, lodging and photoduplication, for original research using historical records at the New York State Archives. Proposals involving alternative uses of archival records, such as for multimedia projects, films, and historical novels, are welcomed. Preference will be given to projects that have application to enduring public policy issues; rely on holdings that have been little used and are not available on microfilm or electronically; or have a high probability of publication or other public dissemination. Applications are available online at www.nysarchivestrust.org or can be requested by calling 518-473-7091. Researcher Services staff at the New York State Archives must be contacted well in advance of completing the application to discuss the research topic and the records to be used. Contact Dr. James Folts, Head, Researcher Services, at 518-474-3955 or jfolts@mail.nysed.gov. Applications must be postmarked by January 15, 2006 and will be reviewed by a panel of scholars who will notify applicants of their decision by May 1, 2006.

NJ History Listserve

H-New-Jersey, a listserv sponsored by the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the New Jersey Department of State, offers a forum to discuss everything concerned with the study of New Jersey history. It is open to anyone with an interest in the subject, including but not limited to academic researchers, teachers, students, archivists, historic site staff, volunteers, genealogists, archeologists, historic preservationists, and just plain history buffs. Subscription is free, and you can unsubscribe at any time. To view recent messages and to subscribe, go to <http://www.h-net.org/%7Enjersey/>

Wagon Works Books

Two books on the Gruber Wagon Works, a National Historic Landmark, were released this fall to coincide with the 24th Annual Heritage Festival at the Berks

County Heritage Center, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

The business itself began in the late 1860s with founder Franklin H. Gruber repairing and building farm wagons at his family farm. The structure which exists today was built by Gruber in 1882-84 and housed the family business through two additional generations until 1972 when it was closed due to a flood control project on behalf of the Delaware River Basin.

Recognized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a unique piece of Americana and an intact relic of early industrial technology, the rural manufactory was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. For the next decade Corps personnel, local organizations and residents, legislators and family members, and a team of five companies specializing in historic relocations joined forces to move this massive structure to a county park five miles from its original site and to restore the building to its 1915 condition. Since 1982 the building has been open to the public as a museum, complete with its original tools, machines, and nearly 19,000 artifacts.

For the first time, the vast amount of documentation pertaining to this historic factory has been worked into a volume that divides its story into three parts: the history of the wagon works, the people involved, and the preserving of the structure.

Gruber Wagon Works: The Place Where Time Stood Still

by Carol J. Hunsberger has been published by the Society for the Preservation of the Gruber Wagon Works, a non-profit foundation established in 1983 to promote the historic site. The work presents a broad range of historical and biographical material that illuminates the late 19th century to mid-20th century wagon-making factory. Copiously illustrated with family and archival photographs and graphics, this 195-page book is available for \$35. It is also available through The McDonald & Woodward Publishing Company below.

Wagon-Making in the United States during the Late-19th through Mid-20th Centuries: A Study of the Gruber Wagon Works at Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania

by Paul A. Kube, with contributions by Clayton E. Ray and Cathy L. Wegener. The book is based on Kube's 1968 master's thesis in which he investigated the growth and development of the Gruber Wagon Works through examination of the tools, techniques, materials, products, and people significant in its creation, operation, and continuing viability through a period of rapid and radical change in American industry. The publisher calls it "perhaps the best description ever recorded of wagon-making in the United States during

the late pre-automotive era.” The book is significant for its description of a rare surviving example of late 19th-century manufacturing, recorded while the factory was still in operation. It provides a step-by-step illustrated account of procedures and tools used in the construction of traditional farm wagons of the 19th and 20th centuries by a small family business.

The 264-page book is available from The McDonald & Woodward Publishing Company for \$22.95 at www.mwpubco.com/gruber.htm or by calling toll free 1-800-233-8787.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2005

Dec. 9 East River panel, Manhattan

2006

Jan. 29 **Chapter Annual Meeting
Madison NJ**

Jun. 1-4 **SIA National Conference
St. Louis, MO**

Roebling Chapter SIA Officers

President	Mary Habstritt
Vice President	Lynn Rakos
Treasurer	Charles Scott
Secretary	Aron Eisenpress

The Roebling Chapter official telephone number is the residence number of the President: (212) 769-4946. Please leave a brief message on the answering machine.

Membership is \$10.00 per year, payable to RCSIA, c/o Aron Eisenpress, 235 West End Avenue, Apt. 14-C, New York, NY 10023.

A downloadable chapter membership form and general information about the SIA are available at www.siahq.org.

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED