



# Society for Industrial Archeology ROEBLING CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

June 2007

Vol. 16 No. 2

## CHAPTER EVENTS

### DOUBLE FEATURE!

### Screening of “*Brooklyn Matters*” & “*Made in Brooklyn*”

79 Walker St., 5th floor, Manhattan, NY  
Wednesday, July 25, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

It is possible that no single event will have a more long-lasting impact on Brooklyn than the Atlantic Yards Project. This uncommon proposal, however, is mostly misunderstood. *Brooklyn Matters*, a recent film by Isabel Hill, explores how a few powerful men are seen by many to have circumvented public participation and established review processes and are using the power of eminent domain to condemn and demolish historic industrial buildings, some recently renovated, and to turn lively, historic brownstone communities into the densest neighborhood in the country.

Hill's earlier 1993 film, *Made in Brooklyn*, still resonates today. Interviews with plant managers and owners of industrial buildings interspersed with commentary by city planners focus on the issue of whether or not there is truly a place for manufacturing in the urban environment.

Isabel Hill worked for many years at the Historic American Engineering Record as an historian, documenting historic industrial and engineering sites throughout the country. She has also worked as a city planner/historian in Brooklyn for over 20 years. She will be on hand to discuss the films and the issues they raise.

Screening to take place on the 5th Floor of 79 Walker Street (one street south of Canal) between Broadway and Lafayette. It is the building that houses the gallery “Art in General.” Please reserve a space as seating is limited. Call Lynn at 917-515-4154 or email her at RCSIAprez@aol.com.

## McDonalds /Klines Mill

Bedminster Township, Somerset County, NJ.  
Sunday, July 29, 12:45 – 4 pm.

The McDonalds/Klines Mill is significant as a rare, surviving, up-and-down sawmill, which has the mill drive virtually intact. Mills of its type were used to



McDonalds/Klines Mill, Bedminster Township, NJ.  
See more on our July 29th tour! Photographer: Tom Buckingham, Green Brook Township Historical Society.

cut heavy timbers, such as those used in barn construction, into the early 20th century. The mill site is the sole vestige of a 19th-century rural industrial and trading center that included a number of other mills nearby. In fact, William McDonald owned two grist mills and a saw mill in 1779. After a number of owners, it was willed to the wife of Jacob Kline in 1836 and remained in the Kline family until 1899. The mill was listed on the State Register of Historic Places in 1986 and entered into the National Register in 1987. Spend the afternoon with RCSIA as Tom Buckingham of the Green Brook Township Historical Society, takes us on a tour of this unique site. We will also have a short stop at a gristmill along the way. Please note that we will be walking in a wooded area, possibly muddy and with uneven terrain, please dress accordingly and consider your own abilities to handle uneven walking surfaces. Flashlights and hardhats could be useful so please bring them if you have them (we'll have a few on hand)! In the event of rain please call Lynn at (917) 515-4154 to see if the tour is postponed to the rain date of August 5th, meeting at the same time and place.

### Directions:

We will meet at the Far Hills NJ Transit Station. Take Rt.78 to Rt.287 North to first exit (Rt.202-206 North). Take 202 north 2 miles and the train station is on the left. The 11:11 train from New York Penn Station on the Morris-Essex line arrives in Far Hills

at 12:40 (you must transfer at Summit). We may have to carpool, depending on how many people attend. If possible, please consider carpooling with others to get to the site.

## **Williamsburg & Greenpoint's Industrial Heritage Walking Tour**

*Brooklyn, NY:*

*Sunday, August 19, 1:00 – 4:00 pm.*

**T**his neighborhood's industrial and social history, as well as recent efforts to preserve its historic buildings, will be explored on this tour led by Mary Habstritt, Preservation Committee Chair, and Ward Dennis, historian and member of the Waterfront Preservation Alliance of Greenpoint & Williamsburg. Sites along the way will include the Williamsburg Bridge, Domino Sugar, the Austin, Nichols & Co. Warehouse, remnants of American Manufacturing Co., once the world's largest rope factory (aka Greenpoint Terminal Market), and Eberhard Faber's pencil plant.

Meet at the HSBC/Williamsburg Savings Bank, at 175 Broadway (corner of Driggs). Take the J,M,Z subway to Marcy Av. and walk west (toward the East River) on Broadway to the bank.

## **Annual RCSIA Corn Roast**

*1341 Albany Post Road, Croton-on-Hudson, NY;*

*Sunday, September 9, 2007, 1:00 pm*

**J**oin us for our annual event, once again graciously hosted by Gerry Weinstein and Mary Habstritt at their lovely home high above the Hudson! The event will be held in the Engineerium and with luck (and Gerry's skill), some engines will be running.

Contact Lynn at 917-515-4154 about bringing food items to share. A grill, hot plate and microwave will be available for cooking/heating so plan your recipes accordingly. Bring your swimsuits for a dip in the pool.

Detailed travel directions were printed in the August 2003 (vol. 12, no. 2) newsletter. This issue can be accessed on-line at [www.siahq.org](http://www.siahq.org), on left menu go to Chapters, then Roebling, then Newsletters. If you can't access the directions on-line please call Lynn. Pick-ups from the train may be possible but please coordinate in advance with Lynn. Taxis are available from the station and always meet the train.

On the day of the roast (and not before) call Gerry's cell, 917-578-0602 or the Engineerium, 914-271-4949 for further directions.

## **CHAPTER BUSINESS**

### **2006 Roebling Award**

*By George Bulow*

**T**he 2006 John Augustus Roebling Award for Outstanding Contributions to Industrial Archeology was, for the first time, given to a group rather than to an individual. This year's award winner was Friends of the High Line. The award certificate (created by Chapter member Joe Macasek) was presented to Peter Mullan, Director of Planning for Friends of the High Line at the annual Drew Symposium on October 29, 2006. The award includes a \$250 cash stipend, as well. The Award Committee, composed of chapter members Chairman Conrad Milster, George Bulow and Ulana Zalahak, in considering nominees for the award suggested by the members of the chapter, decided that a group was just as eligible for recognition as an individual. What was most important to the committee in designating this award recipient was what actions the recipient had taken to earn such approbation from the Roebling Chapter.

The Friends of the High Line proved to be a "slam dunk" decision for the committee. Formerly the West Side Viaduct of the New York Central Railroad, later owned by Conrail and ultimately by CSX, what came to be known as the "High Line" was an "above-grade" multi-track heavy steel "gateway" designed to carry freight to the working piers, factories and warehouses of Manhattan's west side. Designed in the 1920's and built at the end of the decade, into the 1930's, through the active cooperation and participation of both the public and private sectors, the High Line became a major industrial artifact of New York City. With the demise of break-bulk shipping from finger piers and the simultaneous decline in manufacturing in Manhattan, by the 1980's the railroad no longer had sufficient customers to justify its continued operation. Operations were halted and further service on the elevated line was abandoned. So solidly and well-built was the viaduct that even after more than twenty years, relative neglect and dereliction did it no serious harm. The temptation to completely eliminate what many considered an "eyesore" grew. In the mid 1980's, the southernmost portion of the viaduct was completely torn down. More destruction and removal was a very real possibility.

Ultimately, after a few false starts (what is important is that these tentative, earlier and ultimately futile actions accomplished little, but their early actions insured that what was left of the viaduct remained untouched), two enterprising young men, Joshua David and Robert Hammond, formed Friends of the High Line in 1999.

Their ultimate success in persuading the Bloomberg administration to buy the High Line from its former owner, to create an innovative, “linear”, urban park elevated above the streets and neighborhoods below, is a remarkable story.

The soon-to-be opened first section embodies the ability of the Friends of the High Line to knit together a diverse constituency composed of preservationists, neighborhood activists, people in the design and arts community, local property owners and developers, multiple public officials and, of greatest importance, the media. The focus and discipline of the Friends in using clever design concepts, excellent communication skills and the constant commitment to a realistic goal with strong “grass roots” support has proved to be a winning combination and an instructive lesson for anyone interested in preserving our industrial heritage, especially when the original purpose of a major artifact changes and a new use must often be demonstrated to assure its preservation. Doing this and having the industrial nature of the site be highlighted is the essence of the very best industrial archeology can offer to a wider public. Hence the importance of the Award and recognition to Friends of the High Line.

## Meet the New Board

**Lynn Rakos, President:** Senior Archeologist, US Army Corps of Engineers, New York District, holds a BA and MA in Anthropology from Rutgers University. She is President of the Professional Archaeologists of New York City and was a National SIA board member from 2003 – 2006. She has been a member of SIA since 1985. Lynn lives in Brooklyn but grew up in New Jersey so her life spans the RCSIA territory!

**Tolga Morawski, Vice President:** Electrical Engineer and Photographer, 1997 Graduate of Alfred University, currently pursuing his MA in Art History and MFA in Photography at CUNY. Ongoing interests include photographic documentation of architectural decay and nighttime images of industrial sites.

**Kevin Pegram, Treasurer:** has been a member of the Roebling Chapter since 1985. He is currently also a director of the Society of Industrial Archeology. Kevin graduated from City College of New York with a degree in Electrical Engineering and has an MBA from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. He brings his two decades of experience with Citibank to his current position with the RCSIA. Kevin and his partner Ann Dichter, also a member of RCSIA, live in Forest Hills Gardens, NY.

**Aron Eisenpress, Secretary:** Joined the SIA about 1980 and has been the RCSIA Secretary since about

1984. His interests include historic industry, railroads, bridges, and elements of social history such as worker housing. He is particularly keen on anything that makes an interesting photograph. His daytime job is in main-frame computer systems programming at the City University of New York. He lives on the Upper West Side in Manhattan with his wife Dorothy, daughter Pooja from India, and two wonderful Toy Poodles.

**Thomas Flagg, Trustee:** Tom has been coordinating the Roebling Chapter's annual symposium at Drew University since 1988, now shared with Allison Rachleff. He is a past director of the Society for Industrial Archeology, and a past president of the Roebling Chapter (1984-1988). He has worked in the IA field as a consultant specializing in documenting the history of the Port of New York, and with Gerry Weinstein is also a partner in Photo Recording Associates, which specializes in large format photography of industrial sites. For a day job he is a lab instructor at the State University of NY College of Optometry in Manhattan.

## 2007 ROEBLING AWARD CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The fifth annual John Augustus Roebling Award for Contributions to Industrial Archeology will be presented at the 2007 Drew Symposium, scheduled for Saturday, October 27. The Committee seeks your nominations. Past winners were Conrad Milster, Bill McKelvey, Tom Flagg and the Friends of the High Line.

The Award recognizes an individual, group or organization that has made an outstanding contribution to the documenting or preservation of the industrial heritage of the New York - New Jersey area. The honoree will receive a \$250 cash award and a certificate acknowledging the nature of the honoree's contribution.

Nominees must have displayed an extraordinary effort to save or preserve a site of industrial or engineering interest, or created unique or outstanding documentation through archaeological research, photography, written history, or other means that provide a record of such a site. Nominees are not required to be a Roebling Chapter member. Individuals who are nominated must be living.

Send your nominations by September 1, 2007 to one of the Award Committee members: George M. Bulow, Chairman, Phone: (212) 580-5015, FAX: (212) 580-5017 or by e-mail to: [george.bulow@verizon.net](mailto:george.bulow@verizon.net) or [ivie@erols.com](mailto:ivie@erols.com); Ulana Zakalak by e-mail to: [uzakalak@comcast.net](mailto:uzakalak@comcast.net) or Sandy Malter by email to: [smalter1@earthlink.net](mailto:smalter1@earthlink.net).

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# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE NEWS

## ***Volunteers for this committee are being sought!***

The following is the draft charge of the recently formed RCSIA Historic Preservation Committee. Mary Habstritt serves as the Chairperson. Please review the draft and provide any comments or concerns to Mary at [PreserveIA@aol.com](mailto:PreserveIA@aol.com) or to Lynn Rakos at [RCSIAprez@aol.com](mailto:RCSIAprez@aol.com) or phone (917) 515-4154. Please consider helping Mary in this often time consuming struggle to preserve our industrial heritage. The rewards are sweet when a building is recognized for its historical significance or when one is saved from a wrecking ball. Don't forget – the more we can save the more we can tour!

## ***Draft Preservation Committee Charge***

The mission of the Preservation Committee of the Roebbling Chapter, Society for Industrial Archeology is to advocate for and facilitate preservation and documentation of sites important to the industrial heritage of the greater metropolitan New York/New Jersey area.

This mission includes the following activities:

- Identifying worthy sites.
- Collecting, soliciting, and disseminating historic information on sites, especially through the chapter newsletter and Society for Industrial Archeology Newsletter.
- Providing advice to chapter members when historic industrial resources are threatened in their community and help them bring attention to such resources before they are threatened.
- Collaborating with grassroots organizations, and such formal organizations as the Municipal Art Society, Historic Districts Council, New York City Landmarks Preservation Committee, and the State Historic Preservation Offices of New Jersey and New York, especially when called upon for expert advice.
- Writing letters to and testifying before preservation commissions and state agencies and requesting formal evaluations of significance as appropriate.
- Coordinating letter-writing campaigns.
- Funding targeted documentation and preservation tasks through the Special Projects Committee.

The Committee Chair shall be appointed by and report to the chapter President and shall keep the chapter Board apprised of all Committee activities.

## ***SAVE THE DATE:***

### ***The 27TH Annual Drew Symposium on Industrial Archeology in the New York – New Jersey Area***

*Saturday, October 27, 2007*

*Hall of Sciences, Drew University, Madison, NJ  
9:30 AM to 5 PM.*

Symposium coordinators Tom Flagg and Allison Rachleff have put together a great line up of speakers so make sure you keep the day free to join us at Drew.

Please note that based on the symposium budget the RCSIA board voted on 16 May to approve an increase in the symposium registration fee in order to break even on this event. The fee will be raised to \$25.00 for early registration and \$30.00 at the door. This is the first registration increase in a decade!

## ***OBITUARIES:***

### ***James S. Lee, Sr.***

The industrial archaeologist, Morris Canal expert, railroader and historian, Jim Lee Senior died on April 23, 2007 at the age of 89. Growing up in Phillipsburg, NJ he talked with the boatmen who plied the Morris Canal gathering up their stories. Upon returning from World War II he bought the property in Greenwich Township, NJ on which Morris Canal Incline Plane # 9 West is situated. He married Mary Belle Mann, whose family had long history as “canal people.” With help of family and friends Jim excavated the filled in pit of the water turbine that powered the incline plane on his property. Once you see it you realize what a Herculean task that was. He then researched and restored turbine and much of the site itself. The American Society of Mechanical Engineers recognized Jim for his work on restoring Incline Plane 9 West when they designated it as a National Mechanical Engineering Landmark in 1974. Jim authored two books, “The Morris Canal: A Photographic History” and “Tales of the Boatmen Told.” Clearly his love of the Canal was infectious as he passed on a keen interest in history and sense of stewardship for the site to his son, Jim Lee, Jr. and his grandson, Jim Lee III. The Chapter just toured Plane 9 West on April 21st. Jim Lee, Jr. and Jim Lee III provided us with great information on the how the incline planes worked; showed us tools and materials used in working and maintaining the plane

and water power system, told us tales of Jim Lee. Sr. and his commitment to uncover, restore and interpret the site. The interpretive museum in the canal house included a video of images taken as Jim Lee, Sr., and those he roped in to help, removed literally tons of rock and debris from the turbine pit. We had a lovely day at quite an idyllic site. We can all remember Jim Lee, Sr. for the great work he did for industrial archeology. The family asks that memorial contributions be made to Greenwich Presbyterian Church, 17 Greenwich Church Road, Stewartsville, NJ, 08886.

## **William S. Wilkie**

**R**oebing Chapter member Bill Wilkie passed away suddenly on June 4, 2007, due to an unexpected complication of recent cardiac bypass surgery. He had been making what seemed to be a remarkable recovery, and had visited his favorite used book store only a few days earlier. His death was a shock to all who knew him.

Bill was an authority on the Rockaway Valley Railroad, affectionately known as the “Rock-a-Bye Baby” due to its poor construction and light ballasting. He researched the railroad by walking nearly all 24 miles of its alignment from Whitehouse Junction to Watnong Station, searching for adaptive reuse of railroad structures, chatting up the locals, and photographing whatever he could find that was related to the railroad. Personable and enthusiastic, Bill easily engaged others in his project. His research became the subject of a delightful slide lecture that he gave for various local and regional organizations.

The Rock-a-Bye Baby project led him to research the applejack or Jersey Lightening industry, including a visit to Laird’s distillery in Colt’s Neck. He served on the Board of Trustees of the Ralston Cider Mill in Mendham Township and, a year ago, provided the Roebing Chapter with a tour of the restoration-in-progress.

It was either his interest in apples or through his collection of century-old NJ Department of Agriculture Reports that Bill came upon his next research project: New York City road apples. His presentation, “Horse Apples: The IA of Manure,” was an entertaining and memorable program at the Roebing Chapter Annual Symposium in 2002.

A civil engineer and businessman, Bill seemed prouder that he was descended from Cornish hard-rock miners than his professional success. He was born during World War II at the Copper Range Hospital in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and grew up in the Ann Arbor – Detroit area. The 1997 SIA Annual Conference in Houghton seemed like a personal homecoming as he revisited the places of his early youth and childhood family vacations. At the Painesdale Mine, he met a retired miner who had worked with his uncle.

Bill was a member of the SIA and served on the commit-

tee for the Annual Conference in Brooklyn in 2002. He was also a member of the Tri-State Railway Historical Society and the Friends of the Bernardsville Library. He served on the Board of Trustees of the Newark Academy, where his daughters attended high school. He was instrumental in the planning and construction of the Academy arts wing and field house, where his memorial service was attended by more than 200 people.

A memorial fund, the William S. Wilkie Endowment Fund, has been established at the Newark Academy in Livingston, NJ. The academy is an independent secondary school founded in 1774. The mailing address is: 91 South Orange Ave., Livingston, NJ 07039.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **IA Online**

*From SIA Headquarters*

**S**IA Headquarters is happy to announce that the first issue of IA, Journal of the Society for Industrial Archeology is available online! This development has been a long time coming, and we are excited about what it will mean for the future of our journal and our Society. After substantial consideration, the Board approved affiliation with The History Cooperative, a consortium centered at the University of Illinois Press.

Volume 30, No. 2 of IA is already online and we are in the process of adding three more issues to the site. Any visitor to <http://www.historycooperative.org/> can access these sample issues of IA free for the next twelve months. After this initial period, only subscribers will have access. Initially we will have only current issues online, but will gradually migrate back issues to this format, as well. One of the key advantages of the History Cooperative site, over a simpler PDF page image format, is more powerful search mechanisms to allow efficient research beyond the current issues. Please take a moment to explore this exciting new service. If you have any questions, please contact the SIA office at [sia@mtu.edu](mailto:sia@mtu.edu) or (906) 487-1889.

### **Sohmer & Company Piano Factory Landmarked**

**T**he Sohmer & Company Piano factory in Long Island City, Queens, was designated a New York City landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). As per the February 27th LPC press release the vote to designate the structure was unanimous, “citing its monumental architecture and contributions to the City’s booming 19th century piano manufacturing industry. Built c. 1886 along the East River in Long Island City, the L-shaped struc-

ture, dominated by a handsome clock tower, is located at the southeast corner of Vernon Boulevard and 31st Avenue." The Roebling Chapter wrote to the Landmarks Preservation Commission two years ago to support its landmarking, joining in an effort already supported by the Roosevelt Island Historical Society. A letter of thanks from RCSIA was sent to the Commission by Mary Habstritt. For the press release:

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/press/02\\_27\\_07.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/press/02_27_07.pdf)

For the full designation report:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/Sohmer.pdf>

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 2007

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|-------------|--|
| July 25     | Movie Screening: "Brooklyn Matters" and "Brooklyn Works" |
| July 29     | McDonalds/Klines Mill Tour (Raindate August 5)           |
| August 19   | Williamsburg/Greenpoint Waterfront Walk                  |
| September 1 | Deadline – 2007 Roebling Award Nominations               |
| September 9 | Annual RCSIA Corn Roast                                  |

### Roebling Chapter SIA Officers

President	Lynn Rakos
Vice President	Tolga Morawski
Treasurer	Kevin Pegram
Secretary	Aron Eisenpress

The Roebling Chapter official telephone number is the cell phone of the President: (917) 515-4154. 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](http://www.siahq.org).

Design: Joe Macasek, MacGraphics

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