

2025 Annual Edition of

The Canal Chronicle

The Official Newsletter of the Walnutport Canal Association, Inc.

Web Site: <http://walnutportcanalassociation.tripod.com/>

Email: wca1@ptd.net



We are proud to maintain 4 ½ miles of a fully watered canal and adjoining towpath that flows through the borough of Walnutport and Lehigh Township. It's an ideal place for biking, hiking, picnicking, fishing, boating, and nature study. We encompass a mix of local history and nature with a restored 1829 Locktender's House and a Heritage Center Museum that presents the history and life in Walnutport and surrounding areas, as well as the Walnutport section of the Lehigh Canal, dating back to 1740..

OUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IS UNDERWAY

It's now time to renew your WCA membership for 2025 Not a member, that's okay, we certainly welcome and appreciate new members. Please take a few minutes, while it's fresh in your mind, to complete the Annual Membership Drive form located on Page 7 and return it to us in the self-addressed envelope that is provided.

We request that you complete all the information on the form, even though it may be the same as previous years, just in case something has changed.

The WCA appreciates the membership and contributions of all our supporting members, and that includes our volunteers, because it helps us maintain the canal area and our buildings which is our mission.

CANAL CLEAN-UP

Please consider helping us for our annual WCA Canal Clean-up. This year's cleanup is scheduled for **Saturday April 12, 2025 from 9:00 AM until NOON**. We will meet at the pavilion. We ask that you bring your own gloves and we will supply the tools. Refreshments will once again be provided by Thrivent Financial. We thank them for their continued support of this event.

Please consider volunteering. This is a wonderful opportunity to help our organization, meet some new or old friends, and spend a beautiful spring morning in the outdoors helping us beautify our picturesque canal. Please mark your calendar and join us for this important event!

2025 CANAL ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

Board of Trustees Members: James Evans,
Larry Merkle, Vincent Morris, Erwin Prutzman,
Robert Treskot

Officers: President: George Pandich
Vice President: Brenda Morris
Secretary: Susan Gegeckas
Interim Treasurer: George Pandich
Historian: Marilyn Kaul

WALNUTPORT CANAL ASSOCIATION 2025 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, April 12

CANAL CLEANUP

9:00 AM to NOON

Sunday, May 18

ALL YOU CAN EAT

SPRING BREAKFAST BUFFET

8:00 AM to NOON – WCA Pavilion

Sunday, June 8 and Monday June 9

LEHIGH RIVER SOJOURN

Saturday, October 18 and Sunday, October 19

WALNUTPORT CANAL DAYS

10:00 AM to 6:00 PM EACH DAY

RAIN OR SHINE

Co-sponsored by:

Slatington Lions Club

Lehigh Township Lions Club

Lehigh Township Lady Lions

Walnutport Canal Association

ICE SKATING ON THE CANAL 2025

by Brenda Morris

January 2025 brought several weeks of extreme cold weather. It also brought ice skating back on the canal. If you grew up in the Walnutport area, nothing warms your heart on a frigid day than the site of people busy cleaning the snow off the canal so they can skate.

For those of us who spent our teenage weekends on the ice, to see this activity back is almost a gift. For me, it stirred up memories of skating till you couldn't feel your toes anymore and not caring.

It was the weekend and the canal was the place to be. It was time for "Crack the Whip." It was a time for campfires along North Canal Street and when you finally got off the ice, it was time for hot chocolate from Skipper's.

It was very special to be a kid then and the older I get the better the memories get. It almost makes me wish for more cold weather so the skaters will return and I can reflect on a time when I was one of them.



ALL YOU CAN EAT SPRING BREAKFAST

by Brenda Morris

After the long cold winter, signs of spring along the canal are always welcome. For the WCA, one of our favorite ways to welcome spring is the All You Can Eat Spring Breakfast. This year's event is Sunday, May 18 from 8:00 AM to Noon and the menu will bring back all your favorite items including eggs, plain and blueberry pancakes with syrup, creamed chipped beef, sausage links, hash brown patties, toast with butter and jelly, plus a fruit cup. All the usual beverages coffee, tea, hot chocolate, orange juice, and water will of course be offered. Topping it all will be a large selection of tempting baked goods to go with your coffee or tea. The cost for adults is \$10.00, children four to ten eat for \$5.00 and children under three are free.

The breakfast would not be the success it is without the support of all the volunteers who sign up to work the kitchen or serve your meal and bake those amazing baked goods. Nothing chases the winter blues away better than gathering over a good breakfast with friends. Mark your calendar for Sunday, May 18, 8:00 AM WCA Pavilion **BREAKFAST WITH FRIENDS.** We will be looking out for you!

PAVILION RENTALS by Brenda Morris

The WCA Pavilion was once again a busy spot in 2024. From May thru the first week in October it was the sight of parties and celebrations of all types. If you prefer an early spring event or if you like the summer days of July and August, the pavilion is the perfect venue.

If you're someone who loves fall, September is a picturesque setting of early fall colors outside with all the convenience the pavilion has to offer to make your event a success. We are pleased with how many people, after renting for an event, come back to us to celebrate other occasions.

Included in the rentals are a commercial refrigerator and freezer, 15 picnic tables, serving tables, indoor men's and women's restrooms and enough power for roasters and crockpots. Also provided is plenty of parking behind the pavilion with access to a drop-off area close to the building for any handicapped guest.

The Pavilion was built to provide a space for people to gather in celebration, and over the years we have had the privilege to be a part of countless gatherings. The sights and sounds of people gathering in the pavilion, and on the grounds outside, are proof the building has met its expectations. We look forward to helping you with your upcoming plans for the 2025 season. **For more information please call Brenda at 703-919-0905.**



LOCKTENDER'S HOUSE AND HERITAGE CENTER MUSEUM TOURS *by Doneta Merkle*

The Locktender's House and the Heritage Center Museum will be open for tours from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM on Sundays May 25, June 22, July 20, August 17, and September 21. Both venues will also be open during the Walnutport Canal Days festival on Saturday, October 18 and Sunday, October 19. Admission for the Locktender's House is \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children. Admission for the Heritage Center Museum is \$1.00 per person. Plan to visit both sites on one of these dates. You'll learn the history of the Lockhouse and the Frank Kelchner family at the Locktender's House and the museum presents the history and life in Walnutport and surrounding areas, as well as the Walnutport section of the Lehigh Canal, dating back to 1740. **We have an urgent need for additional tour guides for both locations; but more so for the Locktender's House.** Three guides are needed for both locations. Tour information is provided to Lockhouse tour guides to conduct the tour and there is a printed self-guided tour booklet to give to museum visitors. Please consider volunteering ... it's fun and motivating and you get to meet a lot of interesting people. **If interested please contact Doneta at 484-695-1173. Tours for individuals or groups at other times can also be scheduled by calling Doneta.**

THANK YOU *by Doneta Merkle*

We are extremely grateful for all the donations and volunteer support we receive. It allows us to remain viable in our committed efforts to continue our important work of maintaining and preserving the Walnutport section of the Lehigh Canal. **Be sure to mark your membership application on Page 7 for any activities where you can volunteer.**

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

All WCA meetings are held at 7:00 PM in the Walnutport Borough Council Chambers located at 417 Lincoln Avenue in Walnutport. The annual reorganization meeting is held the third Wednesday in January each year if it's not a legal holiday, and if it is a legal holiday, then on the next full business day. Regular meetings, for the purpose of conducting the business of the association, are held the third Wednesday of every month, except for July and December.

Update on Environmental Improvements on the Canal

by Peggy Shannon, Walnutport Resident and Vice President of Bertsch Hockendauqua Catasauqua Watershed Association

As spring approaches you may start to see flowers, shrubs and trees along the canal and beside the boat launch that weren't there before. These new plants are the result of a 2023 grant from Lehigh Valley Greenways to the Watershed Coalition of the Lehigh Valley (WCLV) to remove an invasive plant, Japanese Knotweed, that was affecting native plants and lowering animal life in and beside the canal. Last year at this time plans were made to provide a spring vision of graceful Redbud Trees and budding Pussy Willows and a multitude of wildflowers in bloom in place of the Knotweed infested areas that were growing exponentially every year along the canal and river.

The Bertsch Hockendauqua Catasauqua Watershed Association, our local volunteer Watershed group and, a member of the WCLV, enlisted volunteers from the Walnutport Canal Association and the community to remove the Knotweed and plant four hundred fifty Wildflower plugs and seventy native shrubs and trees in four areas along the canal and beside the boat launch. A sign is planned for installation this fall in the boat launch area to explain what work was done and why invasive plants harm the balance of nature. As time passes we will start to see these plants grow and fill in the reclaimed areas, to stabilize the waterway banks and restore animal and plant diversity along the canal.

Invasive plants generally crowd out native plants that feed and provide shelter to local wildlife - birds, insects and other pollinators as well as reptiles, fish and amphibians. Over time they will completely take over an area crowding out local vegetation. The Japanese Knotweed removal is a difficult process as it grows by spreading roots that must all be removed to stop the spread of this invasive plant. Yearly maintenance will be required to catch any re-growing Knotweed, but as time passes, this need will decrease. **Since we had such a dry fall we may need to replace some plants that didn't receive sufficient water to live through the winter. We welcome volunteers that can help with plant replacement and other tasks to maintain our environmental improvements to our beautiful Walnutport Canal Park. Contact BHCWatershedAssoc@gmail.com to see how you or your organization can get involved.**

HERITAGE CENTER MUSEUM by Doneta Merkle

We are beginning to work on the final wall in the main museum showroom. In this section, to be titled "Community", it is our hope to display a variety of pictures and memorabilia of schools, churches, our fire company and a few other surprises that we hope you will enjoy. We already have some police department items on display. It's also our objective to add another display case so we can exhibit items that cannot be hung on the wall.

For the past year or so it has become apparent to us that we will soon run out of space to display pictures, artifacts and other items that we either already have or that may be donated to us in the future. Problem solved! I'm happy to share with you that we've expanded our museum this past fall. Our talented association craftsman, Vince Morris, graciously converted his "workshop" into an additional showroom. Located just beyond the general store, the floor has been painted, and rough-cut pine was put on the walls. We are so grateful for this additional space where we will house the newly acquired twenty-two foot 1/4 scale replica of a canal boat mentioned in the President's article below.

In closing, I'd like to report that our newly opened media room was well received during both last year's summer open house tours and the Walnutport Canal Days festival. What a fantastic addition this has been in that it helps broaden the museum visit experience. Please stop and check it out when our museum is open this year. A schedule of summer open house dates can be found on Page 3.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK by George Pandich

As we approach the end of one of the coldest winters in a while, the Walnutport Canal Association is staying hot with ideas. Since this past summer we have been in negotiations with the Lehighon Borough and others regarding the acquisition of a 1/4 scale canal boat that was built several years ago using actual canal boat drawings. I am very pleased to say that an agreement was reached and the WCA now owns the boat, and it will be on display in our Heritage Center Museum when we open in May of this year. The boat has a big story to tell and that will be the subject of a documentation on how it came to be, so please plan to visit us this year.



Photo Courtesy of Terry Ahner /Times News

We will once again have our clean up in April and our spring breakfast in May and all the help we can get will be appreciated. More details on those events are elsewhere in this publication. The Lions Clubs of Slatington, Lehigh Township and their Lady Lions did a great job of continuing the fall canal festival and we wish them well with their festival again this year.

On a more sober tone, 2024 saw the passing of Greg Soltis, who with outstanding interest supported every phase of the canal for over 35 years, he'll be missed forever. In his remembrance the WCA dedicated a gazebo in his name.

Please attend one of our monthly meetings (3rd Wednesday) at 7:00 PM at Walnutport's borough hall. We need help and volunteering once in a while will go a long way to keep the canal a beautiful place to enjoy nature and get a glimpse of history.

DOUGLAS BOEHRER MEMORIAL GARDEN by Doneta Merkle

In 2017 The Douglas Boehrer Memorial Garden, located on the north side of the WCA pavilion parking lot, was created. The support of the community since 2017, when construction of the upper part of the garden began, has been terrific. The lower part of the garden was completed in 2020. There are beautiful native trees and shrubs planted in the garden in memory of loved ones. There are regular benches to sit and just relax, read or reminisce about cherished memories. This past summer Vince Morris added a circle of landscaping pavers to the lower section, just inside the fence opening. Several engraved memorial benches, placed in the garden in memory of loved ones, adorn the circle. New this past year was a group of individuals who volunteered to pull weeds and perform other jobs in the garden for us. They did this on a rotating bases from May through October. **A HUGE THANK YOU GOES OUT TO EACH MEMBER OF THE GROUP.** Their attention to detail kept the garden looking it's best all summer long. If anyone would like to volunteer their services, or **if you would like to add an item to our garden, please contact Vince at 703-999-4083.**

GAZEBO *by Brenda Morris*

On a beautiful October Sunday afternoon the WCA proudly welcomed family, friends and coworkers of our friend Greg Soltis to help us celebrate his life and thirty-five years of dedication to the community of Walnutport.



A gazebo with a plaque honoring Greg was placed along side the Locktender’s House on Lehigh St. Greg loved Walnutport and the history of the canal and its impact on the growth of the area. Sadly Greg lost his battle with Alzheimer’s on February 12, 2024 at the age of 75.

This dedication was one filled with funny stories and memories of Greg’s unique personality. It was a celebration of deep respect for a man who lived to make his little community a better place for everyone. It ended with everyone singing a sentimental version of “If I Had A Hammer”, a bow to Greg’s occupation as a carpenter. It is our sincere wish that everyone visits the gazebo, sits on the bench and enjoys the view. Greg loved the WCA and we’ll love and remember him always.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES UPDATE

by Jim Evans

The WCA Board of Trustees, with the help of our President, is in the process of revising our official By-Laws as recommended by our attorney. Once the Board has reviewed and approves these revised By-Laws, the Board Chairman will present the recommended changes to the Walnutport Canal Association membership at a regular scheduled monthly meeting. Trustees Erv Prutzman and Jim Evans have finalized the new Chart of Accounts and procedures which will be utilized to help simplify the canal’s financial reporting. The Board of Trustees meets on an as needed basis but must meet at least twice per calendar year per our By-Laws.

2024 Membership Report



	Renewed	New	Total
Individual	100	7	107
Family	180	18	198
Corporate	20	0	20
Total	320	25	325

RETURN OF THE SOJOURN *by Brenda Morris*

The beauty of small-town living is tradition. In 2024 the WCA was excited to once again join the Wildlands Conservancy in the return of their Lehigh River Sojourn to our area. The Sojourn had taken a hiatus for a few years, but interest in this four-day fun event was once again high for all those river rafters out there.

On Sunday June 8 the rafters disembarked the Lehigh River at the pavilion where we welcomed them with an all you can eat dinner buffet. After enjoying their meal and some time to relax, they were treated to an evening of music and a chance to look back at a photo display of all the past sojourns that we had over the years. Memories and nostalgia ran deep with everyone rafters and WCA volunteers alike. We were extremely pleased to open the Heritage Center Museum and share with them the amazing collection we have of artifacts from Walnutport and surrounding areas. This museum was not open at the time of the last Sojourn and the appreciation for the attention to detail was heard from all who ventured inside. Many of the rafters set up camp outside the pavilion and spent the night. The next morning we happily served them a tasty breakfast and sent them on the last leg of their journey. They are a happy mix of families and friends who take part in this activity, and it is always fun for us to be a part of the experience.



As a sign of their approval of our efforts, we are pleased to announce the Sojourn is returning in 2025 with a request to spend two nights camping on the grounds by the pavilion. If you would like to join the team of amazing volunteers who worked to make the 2024 event a success we welcome your support on June 8 and 9 of this year for the return of this Sojourn tradition. **For more information contact Brenda 703-919-0905.**

WALNUTPORT CANAL DAYS 2024: A NEW TRADITION BEGINS!

Celebrating Community, History, and Fun by Mike Frohnheiser

In October 2024, the beloved Walnutport Canal Festival evolved into something new! After learning that the Walnutport Canal Association would be ending the festival after 2023, the Lehigh Township, Slatington, and Lehigh Township Lady Lions Clubs stepped in to ensure this cherished community event would continue.

The result? *The Walnutport Canal Days* – a two-day celebration, now held on the third weekend of October. This new format keeps the spirit of the old festival alive while adding exciting new features. The event was held exclusively on the Walnutport Canal Association (WCA) property, with the use of South Canal Street eliminated, creating a more focused and immersive experience.

And what a weekend it was! The weather was perfect, and the community came together for two full days of fun and festivities. Attendees enjoyed:

- Delicious food from local vendors
- Handmade crafts and unique artisan goods
- Live demonstrations and historical re-enactments
- Wagon rides and canoe/kayak rides down the canal
- A kids' corner full of fun activities
- Live entertainment by local musicians and artists.

A Special Thanks

We'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Walnutport Canal Association for co-sponsoring the event and opening the Locktender's House and Heritage Center Museum for visitors all weekend long. Their support made the smooth transition to Walnutport Canal Days possible and ensured the event remained true to its roots.

We also want to acknowledge all the local businesses, volunteers, Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Inc. and generous donors who helped make the event a success. It wouldn't have been possible without your support!

Get Involved!

Interested in being part of the action this year? Whether you want to volunteer, sponsor, or participate, we'd love to have you involved. Please reach out to Mike Frohnheiser at frohnhem@nasdschools.org.

Save the Date:

Join us for the Walnutport Canal Days 2025, coming Saturday, October 18 and Sunday, October 19 from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM each day, RAIN OR SHINE. We can't wait to celebrate with you again!



WALNUTPORT PLAYGROUND NEWS

by Brian Filchner

The Walnutport Playground Association was established in 1944. We are proud to provide opportunities for healthy play and recreation for children.

This Spring the WPA will have seven softball teams for girls ranging from age six to nineteen. We will also have two boys' teams ranging in age from five to eight. We will have over one hundred players participating this Spring.

The WPA will be hosting our annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 19th at 1:00 PM. The egg hunt is for children age toddlers to ten. We also host a Homerun Derby in June which is sponsored by the Philadelphia Phillies. The HR Derby is for boys and girls age seven to twelve.

The WPA would like to thank all the coaches and parents that volunteer. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Brian Filchner, Walnutport Playground President at bf0715@ptd.net.

We continue to look for VOLUNTEERS!

If you can lend a hand in one or more of these areas it would be helpful: 1) Attend our monthly meetings 2) Volunteer for events we run during the year 3) Sign up for work details as they arise throughout the year 4) Bake for our events. While in reality we have several hundred members, only a handful of dedicated people keep our association operational. Please check the areas you are able to volunteer on the membership renewal form found on Page 7. For additional information please contact Doneta at 484-695-1173.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The WCA membership drive for 2025 is now underway. To renew your current membership, or to become a valuable new member of our association, please complete the membership form below, cut along the dotted line, and return it to us in the self-addressed envelope provided with this newsletter. **Checks should be made payable to the Walnutport Canal Association, Inc. and mailed to 417 Lincoln Avenue, Walnutport, PA 18088.**

Application forms can also be found on our website at <http://walnutportcanalassociation.tripod.com/>

Memberships are as follows (no increase over last year):

Individual \$10.00

Family \$20.00

Corporate \$40.00

All memberships run from April 2025 to April 2026

Your support helps to maintain the canal area, Locktender’s House, Pavilion, Heritage Center and the grounds maintained by the WCA. We appreciate each and every membership. Please take a few minutes **today** to renew your membership or become a new member of the WCA. **WE THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**



2025 Membership Application Form

Renewal New Member

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ Email: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

\$10.00 Individual Membership \$20.00 Family Membership

\$40.00 Corporate Membership Additional Donation

I would like to contribute some of my time and be an **ACTIVE** member for the following event(s):

Canal Cleanup – Saturday, April 12

All You Can Eat Spring Breakfast - Sunday, May 18

Lehigh River Sojourn – Sunday, June 8 and Monday June 9 - Circle Date Choice(s)

Walnutport Canal Days Locktender’s House or Heritage Center Museum Tour Guide - October 18 & 19
Circle Date Choice(s)

Year round help is always needed, welcomed and much appreciated. I would like to help with:

Weeding Weed Whacking General Maintenance

Baking for Events Heritage Center Museum Open House Locktender’s House Open House



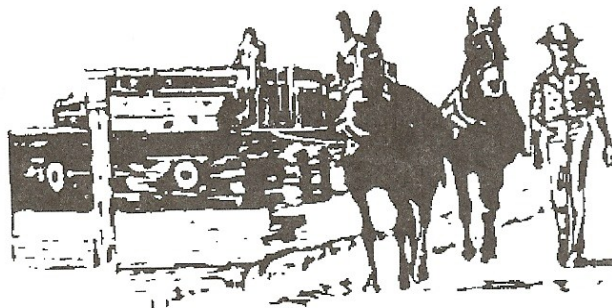
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417 Lincoln Avenue
Walnutport, PA 18088

PRESERVE THE PAST RESERVE THE FUTURE

WCA MISSION STATEMENT

*To maintain and preserve
the Walnutport section
of the Lehigh Canal
and to present an interpretive history
of the Canal Era at the
Locktender's House.*



**Become An
Active Member**

**Support Your
Community**

The Walnutport Canal Association, Inc.
A non-profit organization