

[Home](#)
Customer Services

- › [Pay Online](#)
- › [Ways to Pay Your Bill](#)
- › [eBilling](#)
- › [Account Information](#)
- › [Customer Assistance](#)
- › [Service Line Protection Program](#)
- › [Water Rates](#)
- › [Property Managers & Trade Professionals](#)

Water Utilities

- › [Drinking Water](#)
- › [Wastewater](#)
- › [Stormwater](#)
- › [Harbor Water](#)
- › [Long Term Control Plan](#)

The Watershed

- › [Watershed Protection](#)
- › [Watershed Recreation](#)

Citywide Initiatives

- › [Regulatory Reform](#)
- › [Environmental Education](#)
- › [Conservation Programs](#)
- › [Air Pollution Control](#)
- › [Noise Codes & Complaints](#)

Business and Professionals

- › [Forms & Permits](#)
- › [Support for Businesses](#)
- › [Doing Business with DEP](#)
- › [Asbestos Abatement](#)
- › [Construction, Demolition & Abatement](#)

About DEP

- › [Inside DEP](#)
- › [News](#)
- DEP Featured In...
- Stories from DEP
- Press Releases



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DEP Donates Century-Old Valve Actuator from New Croton Dam for Permanent Display at Education Center in Dobbs Ferry

Cast-Iron Actuator Provided to Keeper's House Visitors and Education Center

Photos are available on [DEP's Flickr Page](#)

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on Wednesday donated an original valve actuator from the New Croton Dam to be placed on permanent display at a state museum that will open next year in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. The cast-iron actuator, which was installed sometime during construction of the dam from 1892-1906, was donated to the nonprofit Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The actuator will be on display at the Keeper's House Visitors and Education Center. The center, scheduled to open in early 2016, will educate visitors about New York City's water supply system, the Old Croton Aqueduct, and the 26.2-mile linear park that now runs on land atop the aqueduct.

"DEP is proud to donate this artifact from New Croton Dam so that it can be used to educate future generations of New Yorkers about the history and operation of our water supply system," **DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd** said. "We've been grateful to work with volunteers from Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, whose knowledge of water supply history is only matched by their passion. This project also benefits from the stewardship of the state Office of

More Information

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Public Notices

Testimony & Public Comments

- › [Capital Projects](#)
- › [Careers at DEP](#)
- › [Environmental Reviews](#)
- › [Interagency MOUs](#)
- › [A to Z Index](#)
- › [Contact Us](#)



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, which has maintained land atop the Old Croton Aqueduct as one of the premier parks in the lower Hudson Valley. We look forward to continuing our work with both groups as they further their missions at the new education center.”

“State Parks is very pleased and grateful for DEP’s donation of the actuator. This is going to be a tangible enhancement to Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park and to the Keeper’s House Visitors and Education Center. State Parks and the Friends of Old Croton Aqueduct are looking forward to welcoming park visitors to the Keeper’s House in 2016 and helping to further educate visitors about this unique engineering marvel, which brought needed clean water to New York City in 1842, and was transformed during the past 50 years into a beautiful, community-connecting trail corridor,” said **State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey**.

“This actuator is a wonderful gift that will help educate visitors, local residents and students about the history of the New York City water supply system,” said **Tom Tarnowsky, who serves as a board member for Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, and on the exhibit committee for the new learning center**. “Kids decades from now will know that a hand crank was used long before electric motors and computer controls, and they will get a close-up look at the type of iron machinery that was produced long before they were born. It is great to have this piece of history as part of our permanent display.”

The roughly 1,000-pound actuator was one of three inside New Croton Dam that controlled 48-inch valves to release reservoir water downstream into the Croton River. It was manually operated by two hand cranks that spun gears to open and close each valve. DEP is currently working on a project to replace the old valves and their actuators with modern equipment – an effort that will be completed next year. The actuators were planned to be recycled as scrap metal before the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct requested the donation of one to the museum. The actuator will be taken to a state parks facility in the Capital Region so that it can be cleaned and restored before it is displayed on the property outside the museum.

The Keeper’s House Visitors and Education Center will be located on Walnut Street in Dobbs Ferry, inside a former keeper’s house along the Old Croton Aqueduct. At least four keeper’s houses were built at key points along the path of the aqueduct in the mid-1800s. Only two remain, including one in Dobbs Ferry and a second in Ossining that was later moved from its original location when it became a private residence. The keeper’s houses were occupied by practical masons who worked for New York City. The masons generally had three jobs: they trimmed trees and maintained land around the aqueduct, secured the aqueduct right-of-way from encroachment, and sometimes were called upon to use their masonry skills to repair leaks inside the brick aqueduct. The brick keeper’s house in Dobbs Ferry was built in 1857; it was occupied until 1962. The other keeper’s houses were torn down.

New York State Parks is currently working on a \$1.1 million project to refurbish the keeper’s house. When finished, the museum and learning center will include video displays, artifacts, and hands-on activities for children to learn about the origins of their drinking water. It will also include a meeting space for school groups and the general public. Content for the museum is being developed in partnership with DEP and Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, a local nonprofit that includes 500 members. Much of the content will focus on the Old Croton Aqueduct and portions of New York City’s original upland water supply system in Westchester County, which was constructed beginning in 1837. It will also include information about New York City’s quest for additional water in the 20th Century, and the eventual construction of reservoirs and water supply infrastructure in the Catskills.

In 1968, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation purchased 26.2 miles of the original 41-mile Old Croton Aqueduct from New York City. Presently, Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park is a

linear park that runs on land atop the aqueduct, from Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx to the Croton Dam in Cortlandt. The popular recreation path over the underground aqueduct winds through urban centers and small communities. It also runs along numerous historical sites, preserves, and the site of the new museum at the keeper's house. While primarily for walking and running, parts of the trail are suitable for horseback riding, biking, bird watching, snowshoeing and cross country skiing. More information about the park can be found by [clicking here](#). Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct also gives regular lectures and tours along the path of the aqueduct, which carried water to New York City until 1955.

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct is a private, nonprofit, volunteer organization formed to protect and preserve the Old Croton Aqueduct. The Friends work to raise public awareness of the aqueduct and trail and to secure the resources that will enable this historic greenway to remain unspoiled in perpetuity. The organization is based in Dobbs Ferry. More information about the group can be found on its website at www.aqueduct.org.

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation oversees 180 state parks and 35 historic sites, which are visited by 62 million people annually. For more information on any of these recreation areas, call 518-474-0456 or visit www.nysparks.com, connect on Facebook, or follow on Twitter.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of high quality water each day to more than 9 million New Yorkers. This includes more than 70 upstate communities and institutions in Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties who consume an average of 110 million total gallons of drinking water daily from New York City's water supply system. This water comes from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and the system comprises 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and numerous tunnels and aqueducts. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$70 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.7 billion in watershed protection programs—including partnership organizations such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Agricultural Council—that support sustainable farming practices, environmentally sensitive economic development, and local economic opportunity. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program with nearly \$14 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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