

MORRIS CANAL LOCK 2 EAST RESTORATION PROJECT

WHARTON, NEW JERSEY

Wharton's Hugh Force Park contains a remarkably beautiful quarter-mile section of intact Morris Canal, the site of Lock 2 East and the stone ruin of the locktender's house. In 2006 the Borough of Wharton received a grant of nearly \$50,000 from the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust Fund for a feasibility study as a first step toward the restoration of the lock. The study included historical background research on the lock site followed by archeological testing to assess the structural condition of the buried lock. Backhoe tests revealed that the lock's walls remain substantially intact. It was the first time in over 75 years that the walls were exposed to the light of day! Archeological testing around the locktender's stone house ruin revealed domestic artifacts that had once been used by the workers on the Morris Canal and the members of the locktender's family.

As part of the project, the Canal Society of New Jersey presented a program for Wharton school children, focusing on their community's Morris Canal heritage. Students had the opportunity to visit the archeological excavations at the canal lock site.

This year the restoration project received an additional \$100,000 grant to complete the planning process and determine whether the lock can be restored to operating condition or preserved

as a static exhibit. In addition, the Morris County Heritage Commission granted funds to the Canal Society of New Jersey to producing a walking tour brochure that will be available this fall. Finally, funding from the NJ Historic Trust and the Morris County Park Commission has made it possible to start the planing and design for interpretive panels that will bring the story of the canal back to life. In years to come, as the pieces fall into place the

new Hugh Force Canal Park will be a proud example of Wharton's commitment to preserve its history and provide recreational opportunities to residents and tourist alike.

