By Sandy Needham

During the year we had a number of joint events with the Canal Society of New Jersey from whom some information is available elsewhere in this newsletter. Thank you, Joe!

Our own events included a second visit to Princeton University, and a unique visit to the soon-to-be-defunct Elevator Museum in Queens. In April we had a great tour of the MTA Transit Museum. Many of us know this location already, but with a wonderfully enthusiastic docent, it all came alive with all the details of the past.

May brought us to the first of our “Behind the scenes at Grand Central Terminal” tours. The event was great thanks to the excellent leadership of Danny Brucker of the MTA who lives and breathes Grand Central. It was so popular that we did a repeat in November.

Ron and Cricket Parker worked with us to have a tour of the Roebling aspects of Trenton in May, followed by a visit to the town of Roebling, NJ, at the beginning of June.

Joe Macasek and Bierce Riley led a Bethlehem Steel tour in mid-May and some of our members had a chance to visit Kansas City in June for the national SIA Annual Meeting. Some of our lucky members took up the invitation to the Waterloo Canal Day Festival in June – a delightful village with artifacts and recreations of the early industrial development of New Jersey.

September saw us in Green-Wood Cemetery and the summer ended with a fun Corn Roast, courtesy of Gerry Weinstein and Mary Habstritt: The weather was not brilliant, but the guests and hosts were in top form.

Only a small number of people showed up for the Newtown Creek Di-
What We Did in 2016

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gester Egg visit; inconveniently, some such visits have to be done midweek. This facility was a real eye-opener with massive stainless steel “eggs” digesting the waste of New York City and making it virtually drinkable – so we are told, but we did not try it. The stunning views from the tops of the digesters allowed us to see almost all of NYC and, surprisingly, there was little or no odor!

We made a visit at the end of the season to Pollepel Island, with its mysterious castle in the Hudson River, built as a munitions warehouse by Mr. Bannerman. His standard of building is not up to that of the Scots barons he was copying and it may be an artifact to see while it is still there.

Our own Symposium was at the end of October with a near record attendance in Paterson, followed by a tour of the Hinchcliffe Stadium, which is slated for restoration in the very near future, and the raceway system.

As the year ended, we repeated the Grand Central Tour (again it was full, so we intend to have another in 2017) and then there was an opportunity for some of us to attend the national SIA Fall Tour in Green Bay, WI. Sandy took an Amtrak train there, but most others flew.

We were lucky with the weather for the last event of the season, a Continued on page 6

Annual Meeting

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lunch; a generous selection of beverages and snacks will be provided.

After business is concluded, there will be presentations followed by a Show and Tell. Please bring your images on a flash drive and tell about your latest IA project. If you have an interesting IA object, please bring it along. If you plan to present, please let us know in advance. Sandy Needham at: scotsloon@gmail.com.

As per RCSIA by-laws, four of the five members of the board are elected by the membership. The fifth member is appointed by the elected members. The Nominations Committee has prepared a slate of nominees; candidates may also be nominated from the floor. Nominees and voters must be members in good standing of the National SIA and RCSIA, as per by-laws of both organizations.

Directions to the Rogers Meeting Center can be found on the Roebling Chapter’s web site: roeblingsia.org.

LCM-HB Corp
Les Metalliers Champenois Tour

They’re back! After a low period over the past few year when we heard the unfortunate news that the Les Métalliers Champenois had filed for bankruptcy, the company has reorganized as LMC-HB Corp. and reopened in the same expanded location in Paterson. Many of our members still remember the fabulous tour of these fine metalworking shops offered before our annual meeting of 2011. The management has graciously offered to again accommodate our members for a revisit in the morning of our upcoming annual meeting day on Saturday, January 28, 2017. If you would like to join this tour, please meet us at the Paterson Museum parking lot at 8:45 a.m. sharp. Reservations required. We will to carpool as much as possible to the site to minimize on-street parking issues, and to assist those who might be coming into Paterson on mass transit. The tour will break to return to the museum for a quick lunch break before regrouping at the Rogers Meeting Center for the annual meeting that begins at noon. Please RSVP to the tour since space is limited to the first 40 respondents. garchime@yahoo.com.
Bethlehem Steel Revisited

By Gianfranco Archimede

Roebling Chapter members enjoyed a long-awaited visit to the National Museum of Industrial History and the Steel Stacks campus in Bethlehem, PA, on November. Sunshine and mild temperature made a perfect touring day for more than 50 attendees, coming from NJ or by bus from NYC. Steel Stacks is a ten-acre portion of the former Bethlehem Steel campus dedicated to arts, cultural events, community celebrations and education about Bethlehem’s steel-making heritage. The new visitor center offers high-quality displays to introduce visitors to the story of Big Steel, but the skyline outside is dominated by the five 230-foot-tall blast furnaces that each produced up to 3,000 tons of iron per day. These artifacts were purposely excluded from demolition for interpreting the steel-making process and as an iconic memorial to the community’s heritage.

Our members were greeted by former steelworkers who had intimate, first-hand knowledge of the furnaces and the steel-making process. They led two groups on a walking tour along the recently opened walkway above the former Hoover-Mason Trestle, a narrow-gauge railroad that serviced the furnaces. From this vantage point at about 40 feet above ground level, visitors were up and close with the furnaces and listened intently to the stories of the guides about their experiences working at the furnaces.

After the tours, members explored historic downtown Bethlehem for lunch, and regrouped at the National Museum of Industrial History for afternoon tours. The museum officially opened its doors in August after a decades-long effort to obtain the funding and resources needed to rehabilitate its 18,000-square-foot, 100-year-old former Bethlehem Steel building on the largest private brownfield in America. Members were greeted by DeeDee Eiffel, and tour guides were Don Young and Mike Piersa, who provided excellent detailed tours through the museum and explained the wonderful artifact collections. They represent the gamut of American industrial history and technology of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Overall, the day in Bethlehem was very satisfying, especially noting the cumulative years of dedication by many of our chapter and SIA members who met the challenge of demolition by transforming these places into world-class industrial heritage centers for generations to come. A very special thanks to all, and to Sandy, Mike, and others who organized the tour.
By Aron Eisenpress

Did you catch our special behind-the-scenes tour of Grand Central Terminal? It was great! And we’re expecting to offer it again in the spring.

Led by Danny Brucker, Metro-North’s Docent-in-Chief, historian, and tour guide extraordinaire, we enjoyed a top-to-bottom tour of non-public areas in the Terminal. After an introductory talk, that included he promised to reveal by the end of the tour, Danny took us up above the concourse to the glass walkways along the windows, with a great view back down. He pointed out that even on these back stairs there are decorative elements, particularly the acorn atop the newel post. (Acorn and oak decorations appear throughout the building, the Vanderbilt family crest. “From a little acorn a mighty oak shall grow,” was Grand Central builder Cornelius Vanderbilt’s motto.)

Our next major stop was at the bottom, in New York City’s deepest, largest, and most secret basement. Here is a room that once was filled with rotary converters, which changed alternating current (AC) into 600 volts of direct current (DC) to power the third rail throughout the terminal and the tunnels. When the last of the rotary converters were switched to solid-state converters the remains of two of the old converters were left in place. (Having been on a tour there once back when the rotary converters were still running, I can tell you that the solid-state units are far quieter.) There are also the very early “computers” which determined the location of a train stuck in the tunnel, back when the only communication was a pull-cord along the tunnel wall.

Then we were off to Track 61 by the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, where Franklin Roosevelt’s railroad car still sits (and is likely to sit for a long time, as it is not up to current standards to be moved by rail).

I cannot give you the full flavor of the tour, though. Danny is a very enthusiastic guide (“Check! Check!”) with encyclopedic knowledge of the Terminal and a passionate delivery. You will have to come on the next tour to see.

P.S. There is, of course, a lot of information on the web about the Terminal. I particularly recommend an article by chapter member Thomas J. Blalock which I came across, on the relocation of the rotary converters from the former 50th Street Substation (where the Waldorf-Astoria was being built). A Google search for “Grand Central rotary converters” will pull it up. ■
FORWARD INTO 2017

By Sandy Needham

We had a wide variety of events in 2016 and are looking forward to what we might do in the coming 12 months.

We are investigating a wide variety of locations such as aspects of NY harbor, the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system, the new Moynihan rail station, fresh-water and waste-water systems, the Long Island Motor Parkway, the Meat Packing district of New York City and our various rail and canal systems in New York and New Jersey.

It is amazing how the High Line has become a wildly popular activity for whole families; we thought that only odd characters from the SIA would take interest in a disused rail line, but now it is one of the prime attractions of New York City. We have a lot of infrastructure in the Tri-State area; and some of it, for good and ill, has a considerable history, of which some of our members are quite knowledgeable.

The great element that we need is input from members:
- What would YOU like us to do, where should we go, what exciting places would you like to find out about or share?
- Do you have a friend with access to the otherwise inaccessible?
- Usually we use a combination of public transport and private cars and have avoided rental of dedicated bus transportation, but would an organized bus tour of a series of sites be attractive to members?
- Should we organize a group to be at the national SIA Annual meeting in Houston in May 2017?

We hope to have a draft calendar for the first half of the year, available for the annual meeting in January, so let's get some input before the Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 28th, 2017.

Clifford Zink leads a tour of the Roebling Wire Rope works in Trenton.

ORGANIZING THE CHAPTER

As JFK almost said, “Ask not what your Chapter can do for you, ask what you can do for your Chapter.”

The annual meeting on January 28th is a good moment to think about our organization and structure.

We have almost 500 members in the chapter and, on a rotating basis we see many of them at the various events. Some events have up to 50 or 60 attendees, while some smaller ones only garner a handful who are interested enough (or able enough, depending on geography and work schedules) to attend.

We also have four officers and three board members, seven in total. With these, we run the administration and the various events throughout the year.

However, we do need more depth in our structure. We want each event to have a leader and a co-leader. This will give us coverage in case of illness or emergency, and spread the load over the membership. If we can build a group of individuals who have acted as co-leader of events, in due course they may be able to lead in the future, and we will have a much stronger backbone for our chapter.

So, I am asking you to consider one or more of the following: Put your name forward as:
- An event leader
- A co-leader of an event

E-mail, call or speak to Sandy Needham or any board member about these opportunities. E-mail: scotsloon@gmail.com.
What we did in 2016
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trip to Bethlehem with a tour of the Steel Stacks and the newly opened National Museum of Industrial History. (See page 3) A great day was had by those on the tour, but some went on the local casino to try to push their luck a little further. We are told that “what happens in Bethlehem stays in Bethlehem”, so we have no feedback on casino results.

Upcoming Events – 2017
Spring Tours listed will be sent to all members early in the year and available on the RCSIA web site.

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