



NEWS RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACTS: Dionne Watts-Williams: 215-685-0722, Dionne.WattsWilliams@phila.gov or Nancy Becker: 610-832-1515, nancy@15minutesinc.com

Celebrating the Bicentennial of the Manayunk Canal

PHILADELPHIA, PENNA. -- Philadelphia is gearing up to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the opening of one of its most influential waterways—the Manayunk Canal. To celebrate, the Fairmount Water Works is presenting a variety of events to provide visitors and residents with a fascinating look at the canal's unique history within the city.

The bicentennial events will be held at the Venice Island Performing Arts and Recreation Center in Manayunk and the Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center located on the banks of the Schuylkill River below the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Highlights include:

- A panel discussion and photography presentation showcasing the past, present and future of the canal
- An insider's tour of Lock 69 and the canal area
- An exhibition and booklet about the Manayunk/Fairmount 200-year confluence and a video about the abandoned Schuylkill Navigation canals, at the Fairmount Water Works
- A Lock-to-Lock 5K Fun Run with the Manayunk Beer Runners

The Historical Significance of the Manayunk Canal

The Manayunk Canal makes up a 2-mile section of the 108-mile Schuylkill Navigation System, and was used to transport anthracite coal into the city and other materials upriver to Phoenixville, Pottstown, and Reading. Water power from the canal allowed 38 mills to thrive in 19th century Manayunk. Originally called the Flat Rock Canal, records of the Schuylkill Navigation Company indicate that the first toll was collected on March 15, 1819.

Today, the Manayunk Canal is the only one in the entire system that still has intact lock chambers at both ends. In this bicentennial year, the Philadelphia Water Department will launch a major reconstruction of the upper canal area.

The large-scale project will dredge the lock area and restore clean river flow to the canal. This restoration will have a significant impact on Philadelphia's drinking water, since the canal empties into the Schuylkill River just a mile above the intake for Philadelphia's Queen Lane Treatment Facility, which supplies about 25% of the city.

Event Schedule for Manayunk Canal Bicentennial

A schedule of the canal's bicentennial events in Manayunk and at Fairmount Water Works is below and on Facebook [here](#).

Venice Island, Manayunk:

- March 13 6:00 PM - **Two Hundred Years of Water: The Past, Present, and Future of the Canal** Panel Discussion and Photographic Presentation presented by Philadelphia Water Department, *at Venice Island PARC, 7 Lock St, Philadelphia*
 - Past: Sandy Sorlien of FWW showing ruins of the Schuylkill Navigation
 - Present: Kay Sykora presenting projects along the Manayunk Canal towpath
 - Future: Lance Butler & David Weld of PWD on proposed Flat Rock/Lock 68 reconstruction
- March 13 – 7:45 PM – **“Schuylkill Punch”** beer tasting and dinner on our own, Manayunk Brewing Co. at Lock 69
- March 16 - 9:15 and 11:15 AM **Canal Bicentennial Toll Day**. Insider tours of Lock 69 and the

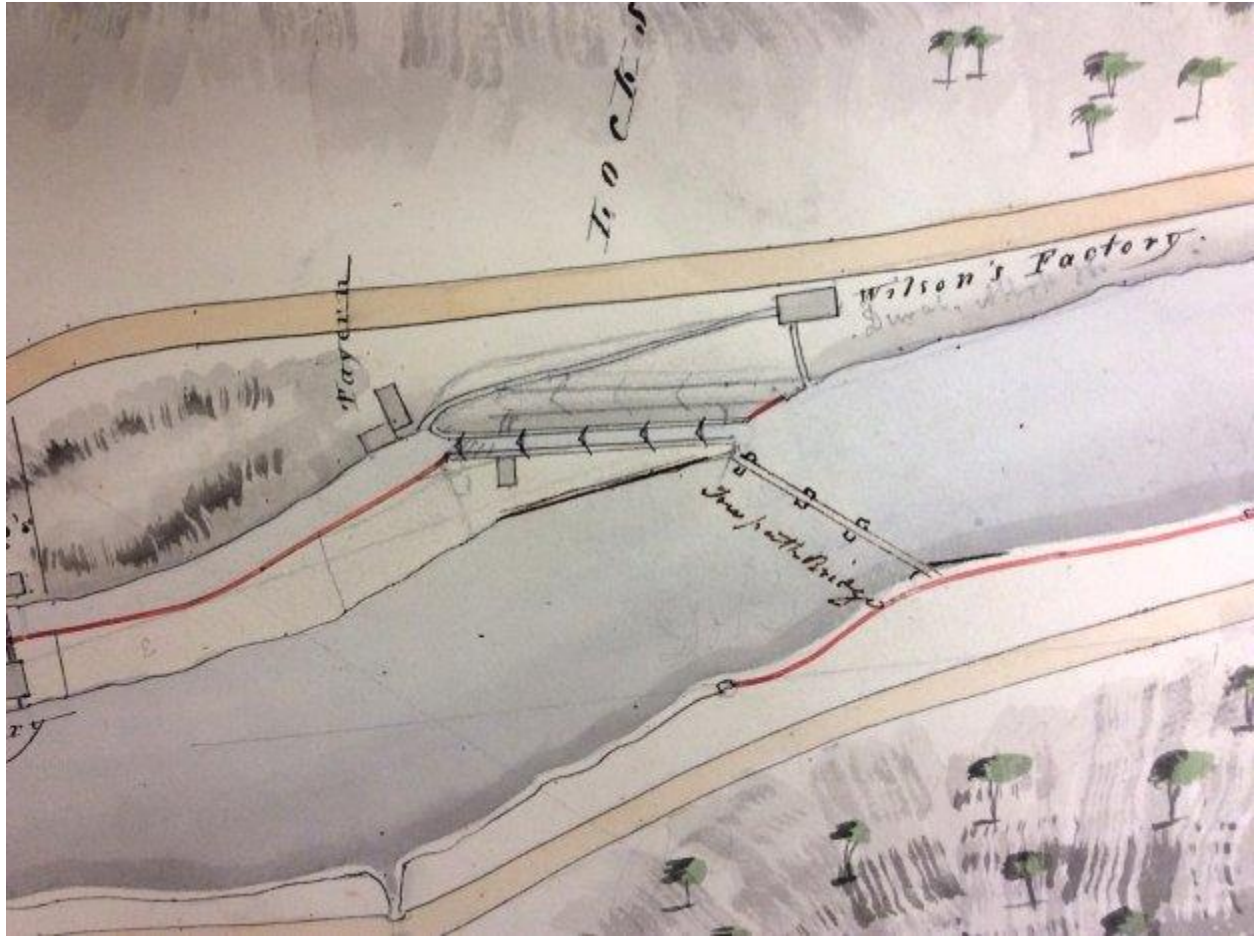
canal area, March 16 10:00 AM- Flat Rock Canal **Lock-to-Lock 5K Fun Run** with the Manayunk Beer Runners- Meet at Venice Island

Fairmount Water Works:

- March 17 – June 9 - **Fairmount and the Manayunk Canal, 1819-2019: Two Hundred Years of Confluence.** An exhibit of 19th century hand-painted maps by Schuylkill Navigation System Engineer Gill, 20th century photographs and 21st century digital images. An illustrated booklet accompanies the exhibition.
- May 2 – **Schuylkill Navigation Video Presentation by Manayunk’s Addison Geary.** Canal historians share insight on the Manayunk Canal and other parts of the system.
- May 4 **Insider Tour** Low tide look at exposed stonework ruins of the Fairmount Canal at former Lock 72.

###

ABOUT THE FAIRMOUNT WATER WORKS: For more than 200 years, the Fairmount Water Works has told the story of our connection with water. It operated as a pumping station from 1815 to 1909, an aquarium from 1911 to 1962, as the Kelly Natatorium until 1972, and today serves as Philadelphia Water's public education destination, housing an award-winning urban environmental education center. The mission of Fairmount Water Works is to foster stewardship of our shared resources by encouraging informed decisions about the use of land and water. We educate citizens about Philadelphia's urban watershed, its past, present and future, and collaborate with partners to instill an appreciation for the connections between daily life and the natural environment. Located on the Schuylkill River at 640 Waterworks Drive, off scenic Kelly Drive in Philadelphia, the FWW is recognized as The Delaware River Basin's Official Watershed Education Center and Gateway Center for the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area, featuring innovative, landmark exhibitions and serving as a living laboratory for urban watershed sustainability projects. For more about the Fairmount Water Works, visit Fairmountwaterworks.org.



(Detail from an 1827 map by Schuylkill Navigation Engineer T.H. Gill showing the original four chambers at the Manayunk Canal outlet. Later pencil markups indicate 1830s doubling of the locks to ease traffic jams, and the 1840s larger lock 69/70 with the current two chambers. On one busy day, more than 80 canal boats "locked through" here in a 24-hour period. The original lock was subsequently buried by the 1889 railroad bridge, built where the wooden "Towpath Bridge" is shown. *Map courtesy of PA State Archives, Schuylkill Navigation Co. Collection MG 110, photograph by Sandy Sorlien.*)



*(City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program by Patricia Ingersoll Photograph by Sandy Sorlien
The Manayunk Heritage Mural, completed in 2011, is reflected in the Manayunk Canal in
2018.)*