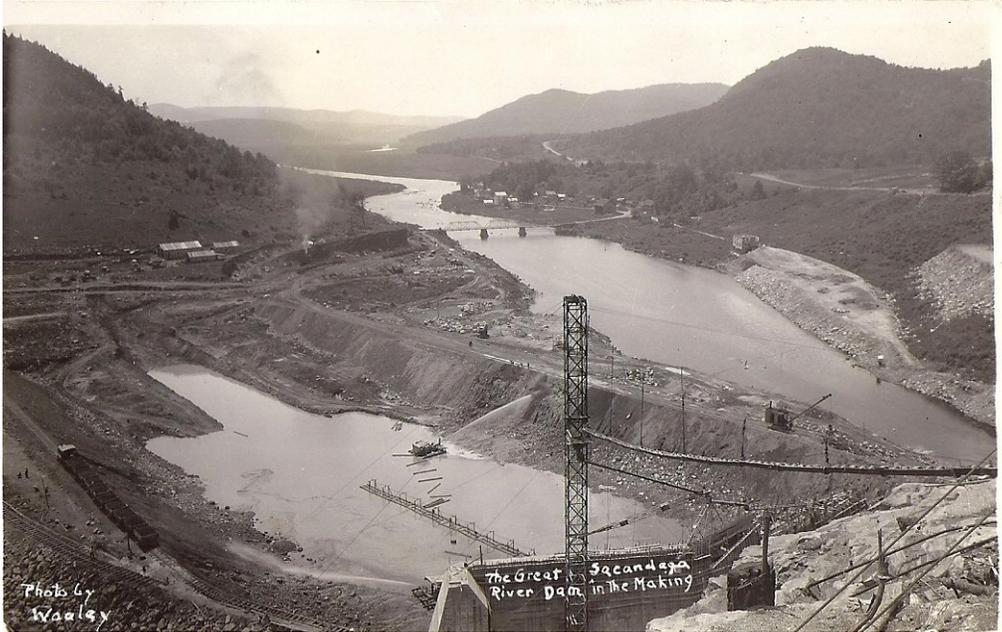


90th Anniversary of the Creation of the Great Sacandaga Lake

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Ninety years ago today life in the Sacandaga Valley changed forever. March 27, 1930 marked the completion of the Conklingville Dam and the closing of its three large Dow valves, which hold back the 37 billion cubic feet of water we now know as the Great Sacandaga Lake. While the day was marked with a small gathering, there was no elaborate ceremony. As all upstate New Yorkers know too well, the weather in March can be problematic for outdoor gatherings. The pomp and circumstance of long speeches from honorary guests eventually occurred in September of that year, when the weather was much more pleasant.

The massive project to build the Sacandaga Reservoir actually began three years prior to this date. Despite local opposition, New York State created the Hudson River Regulating District, giving the new agency the authority to create reservoirs within the Upper Hudson River Watershed in order to impound water, preventing flooding. In addition, water could be released in times of drought. The Sacandaga Reservoir Project would create the largest reservoir in New York State.

Ten communities in the valley were either partially or completely flooded. All residents living below “the taking line” needed to move to higher ground. All of the buildings and structures had to be removed, ten new bridges built, miles of new highway constructed. Two additional dams besides Conklingville had to be

completed. This massive undertaking cost 12 million dollars, 95% of which was paid for by private companies along the Hudson who would benefit from a guaranteed water supply. The other 5% was paid for by communities that would benefit from flood control.

Looking back with our 2020 vision (pun intended) we now know that the Great Sacandaga Lake (whose name was changed in the 1960s to increase tourism) holds the key to the local economy. Waterfront restaurants, shops, marinas and rental properties all benefit from the influx of tourists during the summer who are drawn here by the majestic beauty of the lake. However, at the time of the construction it was unclear how the valley would reinvent itself. When the Conklingville Dam was completed the country was in the throes of The Great Depression, World War II was not far off and America's future was uncertain. The post-war economy of the 1950s brought the huge lakeside cottage boom around the Sacandaga, one that continued for decades and is still active today.

We are all feeling a bit stir crazy these days amid the restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19. May I suggest taking a ride around the Great Sacandaga Lake? When you get to the Conklingville Dam and drive over the top, take a moment to think about the former residents of this valley who had to give up their homes and livelihoods in order for the reservoir to be built. Think about the workers whose job it was to clear the immense valley and build the dam itself. Take in the beauty of the surrounding landscape. I promise, you won't regret it (even in March). Interested in learning more? Check out the 2017 documentary *Harnessing Nature: Building the Great Sacandaga*, funded by the Great Sacandaga Lake Advisory Council and available at www.thegreatsacandagalake.com, at local libraries and at businesses throughout the Sacandaga Valley.