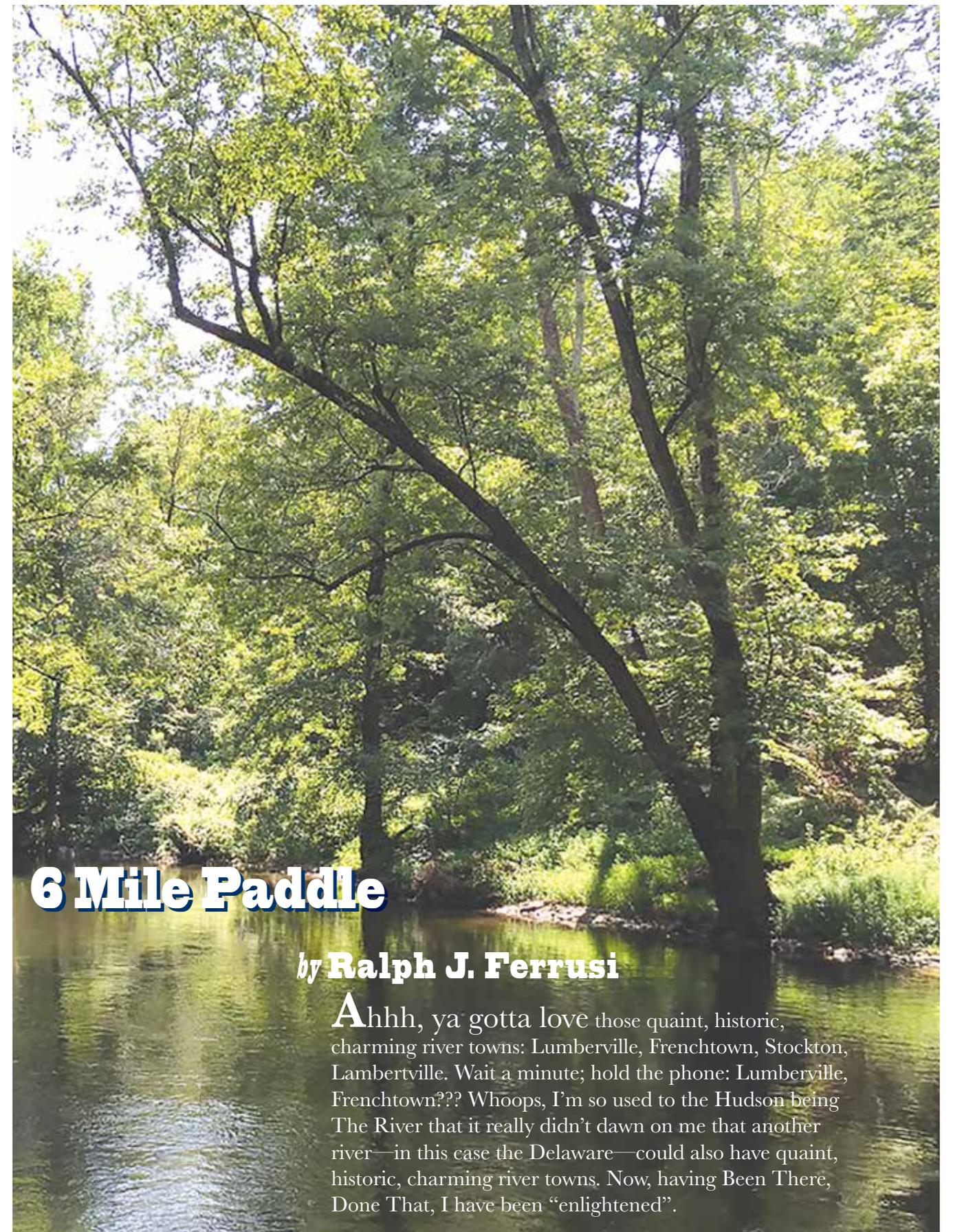




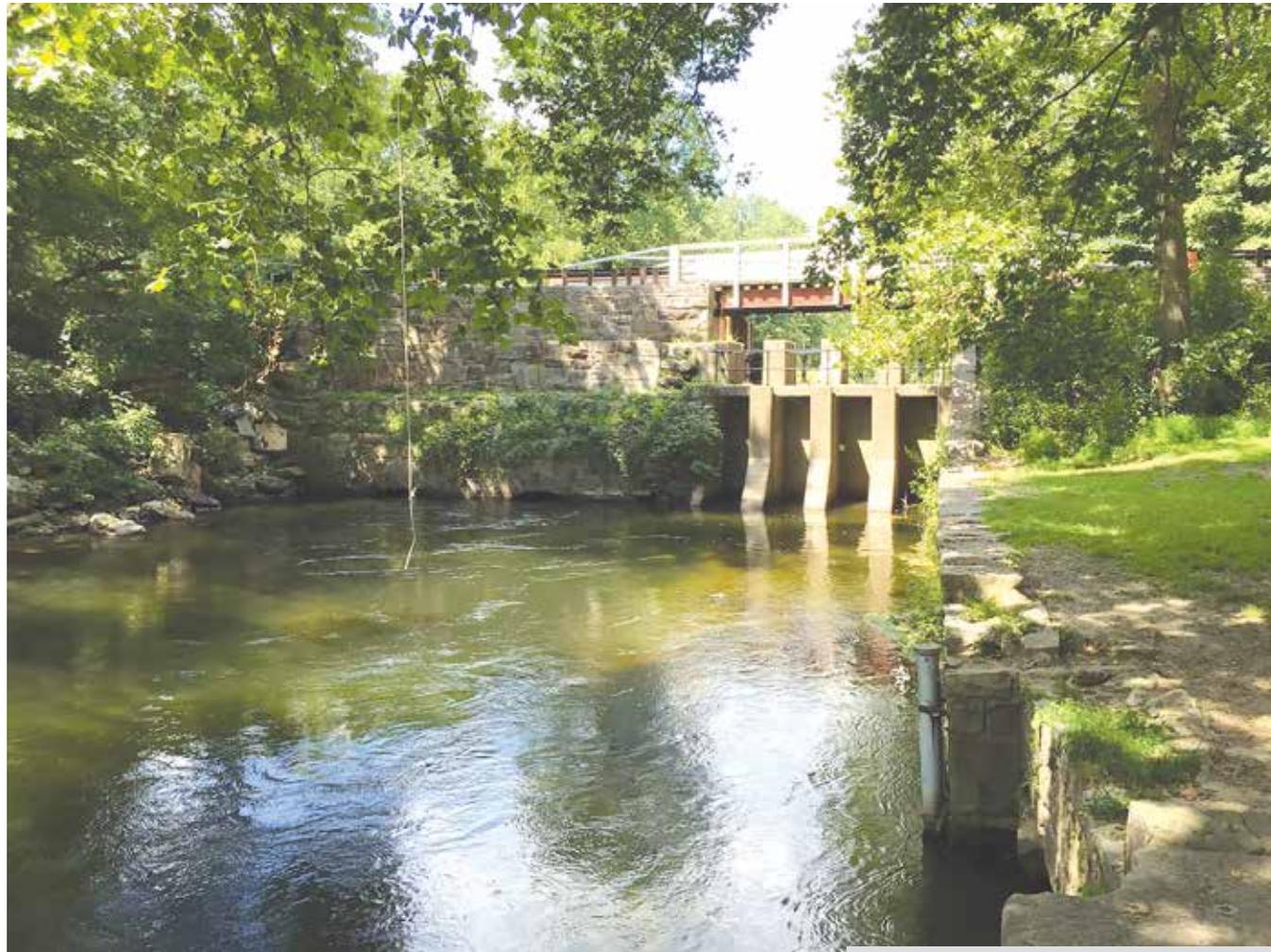
A Near Perfect



6 Mile Paddle

by **Ralph J. Ferrusi**

Ahhh, ya gotta love those quaint, historic, charming river towns: Lumberville, Frenchtown, Stockton, Lambertville. Wait a minute; hold the phone: Lumberville, Frenchtown??? Whoops, I'm so used to the Hudson being The River that it really didn't dawn on me that another river—in this case the Delaware—could also have quaint, historic, charming river towns. Now, having Been There, Done That, I have been “enlightened”.



Delaware/Raritan Canal.

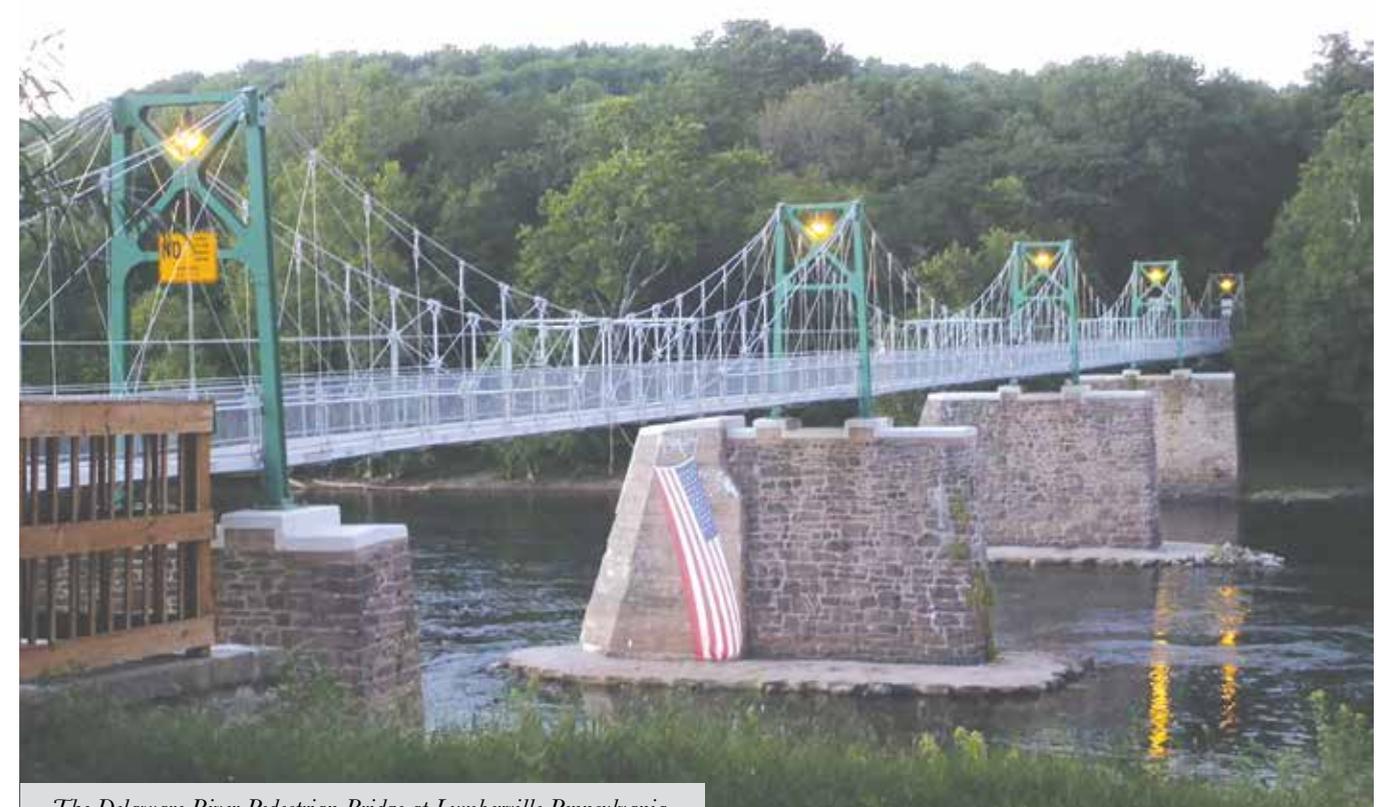
We recently booked a two-night stay in the ultra-charming 1740 Inn in quiet, ultra-charming Lumberville, Pennsylvania (population 95...). Our ultra-charming room had a big picture window, and, a balcony, overlooking the Delaware. I had canoed once on the Delaware back in my didn't-know-my-backside-from-my-elbow (but thought I did) much younger days. I was then a bow paddler, and Harvey—a BIG, strong guy—was the stern paddler. We had a dinky 13-foot aluminum Montgomery Wards Sea King; to put it plainly, compared to the boats Kath and I paddle now, a crappy little boat.

My recollection is that the Delaware was pretty much at brown-water full flood, dead cows floating down the river. Harv and I, totally ignorant, “went for it”. Somehow the River Gods were watching over us, and we survived. Years later, Kath and I returned to the Delaware with our red Royale Old Town Penobscot. We went with a group, and the river was very low, and I recall being all in a twist because I couldn't find any white water to “play in”. It

was a lonngggg, dull day, and did not inspire me to return.

Now years later, and (hopefully) a bit wiser, we strapped our We No Nah Sundowner to the Subaru's roof racks, and headed southwest. The pictures on the 1740 Inn's website showed the Delaware to be just about right outside our room's window. When we arrived, there were a couple of hitches. There was an empty canal, and it's tow path, between the Inn and the river, and no reasonable, sensible way to get the Sundowner across these, then down a steep, overgrown bank to the water.

The only nearby boat ramp was in sight, across the river, in Jersey, but... The nearest bridge was the Delaware River Pedestrian Bridge, and we'd have to carry the canoe up the road, across the



The Delaware River Pedestrian Bridge at Lumberville Pennsylvania.



Our We No Nah Sundowner on the banks of the Delaware.



bridge, then back downriver to the ramp... Nope...so near yet so far.

We arrived on Sunday, and, the instant we stepped into our ultra-charming room and gazed out at the serene Delaware, a jet ski went roaring by, upriver. Uh oh. To me, the Delaware has been, from the get-go, a canoeing sort of river. Canoeing: slow, quiet, peaceful. Full speed and loud worked for me on the Dover drag strip back in the day, but it's currently not my watersport cup of tea. Nuff said...

At any rate, Sunday afternoon was very frustrating for me; there was the river, and to access it we would have to drive all the way back to Stockton and up the river, or all the way up to Frenchtown and back down the river, and, we'd be sharing it with the jet ski maniacs. We ultimately walked across the pedestrian bridge to Bull's Island Recreation Area in Jersey, and we asked some rangers about putting in at the boat ramp and canoeing down the Delaware.

Their first question was "How will you get back???"

I said, "We'll paddle back." They pretty much said the Delaware was a "one way" river; the current was too strong to paddle back upstream. One of the rangers had tried this in a kayak, and gave up... The current in the middle of the river under the pedestrian bridge was strong, but Kath and I have often paddled up the Hudson against the current, wind, and, tide. Plus, we have a very efficient canoe, and both of us are strong, experienced paddlers. But, a seed of doubt had been planted. Crappola...

Sunday, Bull's Island was a Standing Room Only zoo; the parking lots were full, and rangers were turning cars away. Monday morning, our Subaru was the only car in the canoe-launch parking lot. We headed south on the idyllic, perfect-for-flat-water-canoeing Delaware-Raritan Canal. There are often some sort of hazards/obstructions on just about any canoe trip: winds and tides, water levels, underwater rocks, blowdowns. This





canal was just the right width and depth, with no rocks or blowdowns, a mild downstream current, and picture-perfect early morning downstream vistas; and, we were the only boat on it in a six mile round-trip. It was a joy: paddling heaven, all the way down to the Stockton lock and back.

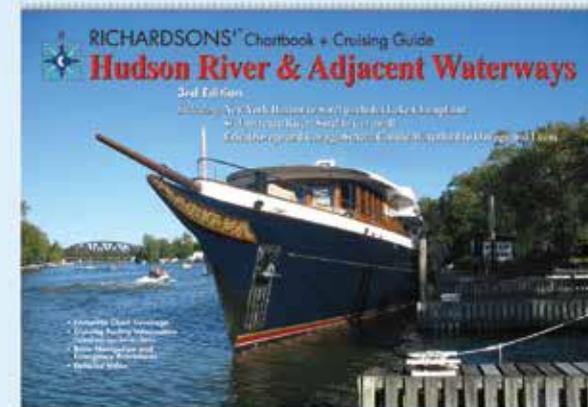
Tuesday morning we bit the bullet and put in at the Byram boat launch on the Jersey side. There was a big sign saying, essentially, if you weren't born in the great state of NJ it would cost \$20.00 to launch a boat. Gimme a break. To me this was just plain highway robbery, and really made me appreciate Foundry Dock Park and all the other Hudson River launches that are free, even for Jersey-ites.

Well, I'm sure this launch was a zoo on Sunday, but it was empty today, and we hustled the Sundowner into the water and headed upriver, against the Delaware's impossible-to-paddle-upstream current. No problemo...

We paddled several miles upstream to a set of typical all-the-way-across-the-river Delaware River rapids, then back to the put-in; a fine hour and forty-five minute round-trip.

Here's how the Delaware cleverly ties in to the "Beyond" in Boating on the Hudson: At least some of the water under the hull of our boat originated in the Catskills! The Delaware splits just below Hancock, New York. The East Branch heads through the Pepacton and past Margaretville all the way up to Grand Gorge where it splits from the Bear Kill. The West Branch goes through the Cannonsville Reservoir then past Delhi and Stamford, where it originates just below Woodchuck Hill, flowing through the Stamford Reservoir and Utsayantha Lake. And, one final interesting factoid: these two sources are approximately only eight miles apart as the crow flies!

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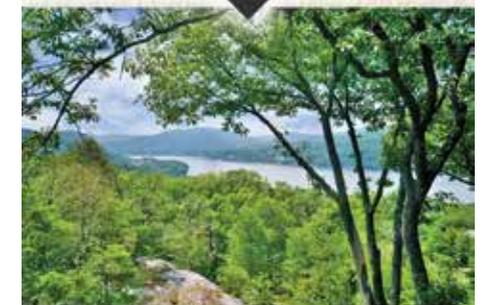
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