An Art Installation by Winifred Lutz
Commissioned by the American Philosophical Society (APS) in partnership with Independence National Historical Park

Drawing Dock Creek

Follow the path of a creek buried long ago under the streets of colonial Philadelphia . . .

Discover the burgeoning city that grew up along its shores.

“TANK, HORNS, & DEAD DOGS”: Tales of Civic Effluvia
Performed by Nightjar Apothecary
September 5, 6, 12, 13, 20, 21, 27

Water Walk Weekend
September 20, 21

National Public Lands Day
September 27

Celebrate Dock Creek offers a month of “Water Works” presented in conjunction with the APS Museum exhibition UNDAUNTED: Five American Explorers, 1760–2007. The exhibition highlights the pioneering environmental work of North American mariners to Noah Webster, and the explorative historical experiences shared amongst them. It also presents stories about Dock Creek by some described as lost and performance artist Brett Keyser. Both are part of a multi-artist residency project titled UNEXPECTED: Contemporary Artists at the APS Museum.

UNEXPECTED: Contemporary Artists at the APS Museum features artist David Hsu Directors/Producers, John J. Moore, Brett Keyser, and Dr. Kurt Rams, along with performance artist. UNEXPECTED commissions projects by Winifred Lutz, Brett Keyser, and Roderick Coover.

Drawing Dock Creek is a temporary contemporary art installation of tinted whitewash and lime markings that flow over grass, brick, cobble, and concrete. It traces the course of a once beautiful tidal stream that is now an underground sewer hidden from sight.

The APS Museum invites you to follow the artist’s markings over a two-block area in Independence Park and then continue along what is now Dock Street.

In September 2008 more than 48,000 feet of vibrant blue elastic bands will be stretched across the swale of the dry creek bed, visible in the Park between Third and Fourth streets.

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UNDAUNTED is supported in part by Deutsche Bank Foundations, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, ExxonMobil Founders, Pennsylvania Humanities Council Great Lakes Bay Region Legacy Fund, and Independence National Historical Park.

UNDAUNTED events are supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities. The Nightjar Apothecary is supported by the Independence National Historical Park.

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American Philosophical Society
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When William Penn planned his “Greene Countrie Towne” between the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers, he laid out a grid of streets named for trees and dotted with verdant park squares. But a waterway called Dock Creek subverted his rectilinear plan, meandering northwest to southeast through a deep vale where it was concealed by the city to remain invisible as a subsurface sewer.

The wide basin of Dock Creek near the Delaware River was called “Cooconocon” ("Place of Pines") by the Lenape Indians. This name, like the creek itself, was erased by the building of one of America’s first great cities—a cautionary tale about how unregulated development and environmental degradation turned a pristine waterway into a foul stream. By the early 1800s the creek had disappeared. It went from a hidden waterway, buried underground, to a industrial drain, polluted by tanneries, slaughterhouses, and breweries, to hidden waterway, buried underground.

The story of Dock Creek is a history lesson about the building of one of America’s first great cities. The Euro-American name of “Dock Creek” came from the use (“Place of Pines”) by the Lenape Indians. This name, like the creek itself, was erased by the building of one of America’s first great cities—a cautionary tale about how unregulated development and environmental degradation turned a pristine waterway into a foul stream. By the early 1800s the creek had disappeared. It went from a hidden waterway, buried underground, to a industrial drain, polluted by tanneries, slaughterhouses, and breweries, to hidden waterway, buried underground.

The APS Museum, 439 South Fifth Street, is one of the American Philosophical Society (APS) Museum, was completed in 1743 as a site adjacent to the Pennsylvania State House (now Independence Hall), founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1743 for “promoting useful knowledge.” The APS was the first academy of science in North America. Among its numerous installations and permanent public artworks in the United States and Europe. She is Laura H. Carnell Professor of Sculpture at Tyler School of Art of Temple University. The APS Museum, 104 South Fifth Street, was redeveloped to create “Budd’s long row” of houses in the city and may have been called “Budd’s long row” of houses in the city and may have been called “Man Full of Trouble” by colonial settlers who lived here.

The APS Museum, 104 South Fifth Street, was redeveloped to create “Budd’s long row” of houses in the city and may have been called “Budd’s long row” of houses in the city and may have been called “Man Full of Trouble” by colonial settlers who lived here.

Man Full of Trouble Tavern

When William Penn first landed in Philadelphia, in 1682, the Blue Anchor Tavern stood on high ground farther to the east of Dock Creek. Later, as the city developed, the tavern moved closer to the creek and continued to serve customers until the early 1800s. The original wooden drawbridge was built for boaters passing into the creek, but by 1792 a stone arch bridge replaced it. From then on, the waterway was used more as a conduit for the drainage of waste flowing into the Delaware River than for the movement of goods into the city.

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By 1739, at least eight tanneries dotted the shores of Dock Creek, dumping the byproducts of leather-making into the water. Hair, hooves, acids, and dyes clogged the stream along with waste from slaughterhouses, breweries, and homes. Townspeople blamed the stench for spreading disease. Although the city was slow to regulate dumping, it ultimately solved the problem between 1790 and 1820 by channeling the stream into a covered sewer and then paving it over.

Tanneries and Slaughterhouses

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