

Clearwater Great Hudson River Revival aka Clearwater Folk Festival – A Bio

The ethos of the Clearwater Great Hudson River Revival is best understood by explaining its history. The Revival is the major annual undertaking of the Poughkeepsie based organisation, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc [initially called Hudson River Sloop Restoration]. A non-profit making, 12,000 member environmental body it employs education, public celebration and lobbying to further its aim of making the Hudson River and other waterways environmentally safe. In the 18th and 19th century Dutch sloops used to ply the Hudson bringing furs from places such as Albany to New York, and returned northward to the numerous river edge towns in Upper New York with supplies. In 1966, during one memorable dinner at Pete Seeger's home in Beacon, NY, concern was expressed over the increasingly polluted state of the Hudson River. The discussion that ensued gave birth to an environmental campaign, the public face of which became, a *modern day* replica sailing ship, the sloop Clearwater. In 1969 the 106-foot long boat undertook its maiden voyage. These days some 20,000 adults and youngsters come aboard each year, to learn about the environment, navigation, history and biology of the river. Stopping at ports along the Hudson to recruit members, in the early years the crew [volunteers, sailors, performers and educators] would draw the public's attention to river's plight. Thirty years on, the organisation has been instrumental in gaining improvements to water quality, expanding public access to the shorelines, promoting water conservation, preventing the dumping of toxic chemicals and protecting wildlife habitats.

The first Clearwater Folk Festival, billed as a "Folk Picnic" and hosted by Pete Seeger, took place in a meadow in Garrison, New York in 1966. The aim, to raise money for the construction of the sloop, Clearwater. Growing into an annual event, in 1978 it was renamed the Clearwater Great Hudson River Revival. From 1978 to 1987, it was held on the shores of the Hudson River in Westchester County's Croton Point Park in Croton, N.Y.. The festival moved inland to Westchester Community College in Valhalla, N.Y., from 1988 through 1997. America's oldest and largest annual environmental arts and music festival, relocated to the riverfront campus of Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY in 1998. In 1999, turning full circle, it moved back once more to Croton Point. Some 20,000 people attend the festival each year.

Although it bears the title Revival, this two day *folk festival* [which will celebrate its 37th year in 2002] presents folk, jazz, blues and world music. There are also musical and storytelling performances for children, dancing, craft and food booths, as well as jugglers, clowns and mimes. And, of course, environmental displays. The festival site is fully accessible to the disabled, continuing a Clearwater commitment made years ago. It was the first music festival to be sign language interpreted for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing, and Braille and large print programmes are also available. These days, the multiple stages are solar powered. On-site camping for the public and sailing on the sloop Clearwater are also part of the festival experience. Clearwater conducts other Hudson River waterfront festivals on an annual basis. These smaller strawberry, corn and pumpkin festivals, are arranged by local Sloop Clubs affiliated to the Clearwater organisation.

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