

History and Archaeology



Historian documents the Wiswall Mill foundation in Durham prior to construction of the fish ladder.

Photo courtesy of NRCS.

Background

People have long recognized the valuable resources that the Lamprey and its tributaries provide. Early native peoples left evidence of a campsite in Lee that University of New Hampshire archaeologists can date back at least 8,000 years. European settlers were drawn to the rivers as an energy source and they built mills there as early as the 1660s. Over the years, more than 100 mills processed timber, grain, cloth, paper, wallpaper, leather, shoes, and iron agricultural tools to supply local and regional needs. The largest mill on the Lamprey was the Newmarket Manufacturing Company founded in 1822. At one time, this mill housed the largest weaving room in the world. River valleys supplied brickyards with extensive deposits of glacio-marine clays that were left following the last Ice Age 11,000 years ago. Epping still sits atop a vast deposit of such clay.

The historic resources of the Lamprey were recognized by both the State of New Hampshire and the US Congress as reasons for designating the Lamprey for protection. The National Park Service's 1995 Draft Report to Congress cited the "outstandingly remarkable" archaeological resources of the Lamprey, thus warranting protection through the Wild and Scenic River designation. The Lamprey River Resource Assessment (1994) lists more than thirty historical sites, including two (Wiswall Dam area and the mill district of Newmarket) that are on the National Register of Historic Places. Other sites include hotels, camps, bridges, railroads, churches, and homesteads as indicated on maps and in several historical publications.

Understanding the cultural history of the rivers can help landowners, newcomers, and the general public to develop an appreciation of the rivers. Exposure to river-

related history can enhance a sense of place among local residents. Although many river resources have not changed significantly over time, the focus of *human use* has diversified over the years. Recognition of the historic uses is needed if people are to be expected to assist in protecting the rivers, especially as newcomers settle in the communities along the river.

Goal

Help local citizens understand the historic importance of the rivers in this region and encourage a deeper appreciation of their own sense of place in the on-going history of the rivers.

Accomplishments

- River Story: The History of the Lamprey River Through Time VHS (1997) has been upgraded to DVD and distributed (2009).
- The Lamprey River Curriculum (1990) for both elementary and middle/high school students was updated (2011) and is now widely available through LRAC's website, www.lampreyriver.org.
- The Lamprey River Tour Map and Guide (2008) offers suggestions for visitors to see highlights of history in the lower four towns.
- The Lamprey River Tour: Mary Blair Park DVD (2009) documents both the history and present at Epping's Mary Blair Park.
- More than 100 dams and mill sites in the Lamprey River watershed area were documented and mapped as part of a Small Grant (2009).
- Wiswall's Mill: A Short History DVD (2010) documents the history at Wiswall Falls in Durham.
- Three of four historic panels at the Wiswall Falls kiosk (2010 and 2012) have been completed and installed.
- A historic trail at Mary Blair Park/Folsom Mills in Epping has been completed as part of a Small Grant (2012).

Key Future Actions

- Assist towns to implement planned historic activities at river parks:
 - Work with Durham to create a fourth panel for the Wiswall Falls Park kiosk that highlights the contributions of John Hatch: artist, professor, and Lamprey River advocate.
 - Work with Epping to make natural interpretive trails a reality at Mary Blair Park.
 - Work with the Northwood Historical Society to map trails at the headwaters of the rivers.
- Partner with historical committees to help local citizens understand and appreciate the importance of the rivers in human history of the region.
 - Encourage schools to use the Lamprey River Curriculum as appropriate when studying local and state history.

- Add pictures and stories about at least one historical feature per town to the LRAC website.
- Partner with local historical societies to arrange visits to these sites for local people.
- Identify and encourage protection of historic and archaeological resources on a site-specific basis, using methods such as signage, barriers, or easements.
- Work with the recreation subcommittee to include historic features on the proposed middle/upper river map and guide.
- Expand the data base of existing dams created in 2012 to include past and potential future uses, such as fish passage and possibilities for tourism and recreation.
- Engage local residents in discovering local history to help promote a “sense of place”:
 - Create a “History Detectives” program with a local high school and record the show for You Tube, town television stations, etc..
 - Create a place on the LRAC website where people can report historic findings, ask questions, post stories, etc.. Include a list of local historic societies and contact information.
 - Invite local people to record comments and stories about the history of their river communities when they attend events or visit the LRAC information booth.
 - Help towns to identify and provide permanent protection of irreplaceable historical documents that pertain to the river, with originals kept locally and copies sent to the NH State Library.
- Seek funding for professional research on the archaeology and history of the rivers. Report findings on the website and in appropriate media, presentations, etc..
 - Study and document archaeological sites along the rivers in addition to those in the Wadleigh Falls area.
 - Research and map the route of the Oxway Road that once connected the McCallen Dam in Newmarket to Wadleigh Falls in Lee; develop information about the building of the road, maintenance, etc..
 - Document the brick industry in Epping. Use it as an example of the connection between human history and utilization of natural resources such as those that exist along the rivers.
 - Research and describe the development of railroads in the watershed. Note that railroads largely followed the course of the rivers and that towns often developed around access to the centers of industry, tourism, and agriculture.
 - Research programs and techniques for protecting valuable historic and cultural entities and apply them to at least one project every two years.