

HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY



Newmarket Mills, from past to present Photo courtesy of JoAnne Trahan

Background

People have long recognized the valuable resources that the Lamprey River 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 agricultural tools to supply local and regional needs. The largest mill on the Lamprey River was the Newmarket (textile) Manufacturing Company founded in 1822. River valleys supplied brickyards with extensive deposits of glacio-marine clays that were left following the retreat of the Laurentide Ice Sheet about 14,000 years ago. Epping still sits atop a vast deposit of such clay.

The historic resources of the Lamprey River were recognized by both the State of New Hampshire and the US Congress as reasons for designating the Lamprey River for protection. The NPS's *Lamprey Wild and Scenic River Study Draft Report* (1995) cited the "outstandingly remarkable" archaeological resources of the Lamprey River, 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.

River Profiles

“When I was in high school, I hated history,” says Dick Lord, History Workgroup chair. Almost six decades later, Dick is very much involved in bringing local history to life. Among these efforts, he led a series of highly successful projects that brought the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Natural Resource Conservation



Photo by Dick Lord

Service, the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources, the Durham Historic Association, Durham officials, and community members together to create a four-panel kiosk that tells the story of Wiswall Falls — once the economic center of Durham, New Hampshire.

In the 1860s, Thomas Wiswall and fifteen employees used Lamprey River waterpower to make paper—a ton of it each day—for the thriving wallpaper industry. Two of the kiosk panels describe the mills, the community around them and the history of waterpower along the Lamprey River. A third panel describes efforts to preserve historic mill foundations during the repair of the dam and construction of the new fish ladder, which re-opened a significant portion of the river to river herring migration. The fourth panel dedicates the park to the late John Hatch, avid conservationist and founding member of the two groups that protect the Lamprey River: the Lamprey River Watershed Association and the Lamprey River Advisory Committee.

Hatch Park is one of several locations where the LRAC has been able to present the public with site-specific historic information. Additionally, Dick has ensured that historic research and education are woven throughout the fabric of the LRAC’s efforts. With more than 36 years of involvement in the Lamprey River groups, Dick himself is becoming a part of the river’s history.

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 assist in protecting the rivers, especially as newcomers settle in the communities along the river.

Goals

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.

Key Accomplishments

- [*River Story: The History of the Lamprey River Through Time*](#) VHS (1997) and DVD (2009)
- *The Lamprey River Curriculum* (1990), social studies and science for elementary school children, updated and expanded in 2011 to include middle and high school students
- *The Story of Peter Little Bear* (2005), based on local history in the late 1600s
- *Explore the Lamprey River* [map and guide](#) (2008), including highlights of history in the lower four towns
- history kiosk at Mary Blair Park in Epping (2008)
- [*The Lamprey River Tour: Mary Blair Park*](#) DVD (2009), documenting both the history and present at Epping's Mary Blair Park
- more than 100 dams and mill sites in the Lamprey River watershed area documented and mapped as part of a Small Grant (2009)
- [*Wiswall's Mill: A Short History*](#) DVD (2010), documenting the history at Wiswall Falls in Durham
- four historic panels at the [Wiswall Falls](#) kiosk completed and installed
- [Schanda Park](#) kiosk panel in Newmarket designed and installed (2011)
- [historic trail at Mary Blair Park](#) featuring Folsom Mills in Epping completed as part of a Small Grant (2012)
- Hike it, Bike It, Like It (2013-), offers participants opportunities to learn about local history and nature through outdoor recreational activities
- [Phase I archaeological assessment of Sullivan's Falls](#) mill site in Durham (2016)
- *Chick and Dee-Dee's Lamprey River Adventure* storybook highlighting historical sites along the river (2016)

Key Future Actions

- Work with historical societies to map historic sites in the middle and upper watershed as part of a passive recreation map.
- Partner with historical committees to help local citizens understand and appreciate the importance of the rivers in human history of the region.
- Identify and encourage protection of historic and archaeological resources on a site-specific basis, using methods such as signage, barriers, or easements.
- Engage local residents in discovering local history to help promote a "sense of place."
- Seek funding for professional research on the archaeology and history of the rivers. Report findings on the website and in appropriate media, presentations, etc..

By the Numbers: History and Archaeology

Item Description	Count
<i>Lamprey River Through Time</i> VHS/DVD distributed/viewed on line	>50/>600
students participating in the <i>Lamprey River Curriculum</i>	~ 960
<i>Peter Little Bear</i> history story book distributed	~900
<i>Lamprey River Tour: Mary Blair Park</i> DVDs distributed/viewed on-line	>30/600
dam and mill sites documented and mapped	>100
historic kiosks created	3
Phase I archaeological assessments completed	1
<i>Wiswall's Mills</i> DVD distributed/viewed on-line	>30/>190
<i>Chick and DeeDee</i> history storybooks distributed	60