



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 Schoolhouse

Town of Deerpark Historian, P. O. Box 621, Huguenot, New York 12746

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The 2021 December issue of the *Deerpark Diary* completes a year's study of the Neversink River. Articles of general information about the river, historical events, and recreational activities have been included. This issue concludes with articles about organizations and special features located along the river.

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The Basha Kill

The Basha Kill is the major tributary of the Neversink River. Its headwaters are in Sullivan County north of Wurtsboro. The stream flows in a southwesterly direction parallel to U.S. Route 209 entering Orange County in Westbrookville. It continues through Deerpark to its confluence with the Neversink River northeast of Myers Grove.

The name Basha Kill

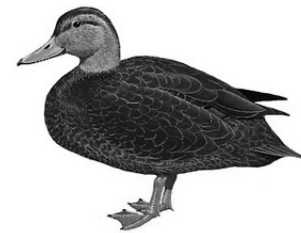
dates back to the early European settlers. Basha was an important Lenni Lenape Indian woman during the late Woodland Period. She lived on the banks of the creek where all the herbs for her medicines grew. There were also some minerals used for healing along the stream. Basha's name is mentioned in the records of the early Dutch settlers.

Speculating how names have derived, we know that the early Dutch inhabitants of Peenpack (Deerpark) gave names to all of the streams (kils) and brooks (kiltjes). In the Dutch language the word "kil" pertains to any body of water. In Deerpark there are the Steeney Kill, Pine Kill, as well as the Basha Kill. During the time when the Indians lived here, Elizabeth was a common Dutch name. Its diminutive would have been "Betje" from which Basha may have been derived. No written records for the derivate for the name Basha Kill can be found.

The stream flows through the Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area, maintained by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. In the 1970s, New York State bought the land in the valley surrounding the stream and installed a permanent dam above the Pine Kill, creating a wetland with a relatively stable water level.

The marsh was created primarily for wood duck and

black duck breeding habitat, however many other species of ducks and birds have made this their nesting place.



There also is a great diversity of insects, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and mammals. Vegetation is also varied, from beautiful wild flowers to stands of maples, oaks, birch and hickory. There are some apple trees, both wild and cultivated, some dating back to the early settlers.

Throughout this special area there are hiking trails for enjoyment and relaxation as well as a number of boat launching areas for canoes, kayaks and rowboats.



The Orange County Land Trust, is protecting 138 acres of working farmland, wetlands, flood plain habitat and wood slopes flanking more than a mile of frontage along the Basha Kill at the foot of the Shawangunks. This land, located in Cuddeback-

ville, is open to the public for hiking, birding and fishing. Access is from State Route 211 about a quarter of a mile from the State Routes 209/211 intersection.

The mission of the Orange County Land Trust is to preserve water resources, critical habitat, rural/urban farmland, scenic vistas and ecosystems in and around Orange County for the benefit of all who depend on them.

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Myers Grove

Myers Grove is a small community, situated along the Neversink River, in the hamlet of Godeffroy in the Town of Deerpark.

According to “A Myer Family in Deerpark” by Olin Judson Myer, the story of the Myer family in America begins with Queen Anne of England (1702-1714). She had a fleet of boats outfitted for the rescue of families suffering French King Louis XIV’s Huguenot persecution after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This persecution expanded to Protestants in the Pala-

tine, Rhine Valley, Germany. The hard-working people of the Palatine were also suffering from bad harvests. They believed that if they emigrated to England, Queen Anne would give them free land in America to start a new life.



Queen Anne 1702-1714

England needed workers to produce lumber for her growing fleet and was aware of the vast forests in the Catskill Mountains. Queen Anne made arrangements for 3,000 refugee men and women from the Palatine to sail for New York on January 1, 1710. Christian Myer, born 1688, at Wolferingen-am-Rhine, was one of the passengers. On board ship he married Ann Geartry Theunyes. After landing in New York harbor, they settled just south of Saugerties to work the land.

In the mid 1800s descendants of the original Myer settlers moved to Westbrookville. Things

didn’t work out too well in Westbrookville so the family moved to Prospect Hill, Cuddebackville. There are three Myer homes located on Prospect Hill Road on the Beers 1875 Deerpark map. The families farmed the land and quarried flagstones which were shipped on the Delaware and Hudson Canal to the Hudson River bound for New York City to lay sidewalks throughout the city.

The Myers had large families who worked together on the farms. Prospect Hill is known for its rocky terrain making farming very difficult.

All this changed in the spring of 1918 when Adolph Katterman, a wealthy silk mill owner bought all the Myer properties. Olin Myer’s father bought the Gumaer’s farm in Godeffroy from William Norris. The move from Prospect Hill to Godeffroy was quite an event. The family made many trips in their Model T Ford and a large horse-drawn lumber wagon filled with crates of chickens, big boxes of pigs and load after load of furniture. The final hurrah was the herd of cattle shepherded along the road from Prospect Hill to Godeffroy. Compared to Prospect Hill the Godeffroy land was a dream, level land, rich soil free from stones and rocks. The farm prospered and the family was able to add to the original acreage by purchasing land from the Adolph Godeffroy estate.

Emil Myer took over the farm from his parents. The land along the Neversink River lent itself to fun-filled summer recreation. Friends and family enjoyed this area and asked to purchase small lots for summer homes. Emil Myer created 50’x100’



Myer Family

Early 1900s

Prospect Hill Road

building lots. Roads were laid out with numbered and lettered avenues. Two roads were given names, Shore Drive and Grove Street. A beach was established on the river for the residents. By mid century, Myers Neversink Grove was established with about 150 summer cottages having been built. As years passed the community changed from a summer/part time neighborhood to a year-round community as residents remodeled their homes for year-round occupancy.

Unfortunately, time and time again Myers Grove residents experienced severe flooding. (see June 2021, *Deerpark Diary* issue), causing great losses. Some homes were abandoned. Some were upgraded to meet today's building codes. Some lots have been combined to increase lot size to accommodate the building of larger homes. Myers Grove of today is very different from the original summer retreat created by Emil Myer.

(Editor's note) Adolph Godefroy, who owned this land before it was sold to the Myer family, had been employed by New York State to build dykes along the Neversink in the Guymard and Myers Grove area to prevent flooding. The dykes were well constructed. Today there is very little evidence of these dykes because as Myers Grove developed, many of the residents removed the stones from the dykes to build the foundations of their homes.

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Wastewater Treatment Plant

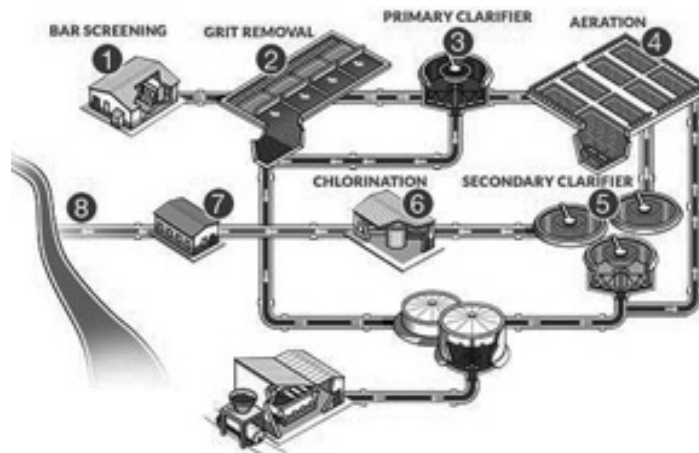
In 1931, a U.S. Supreme Court decree allowed New York City to build the Neversink and Pepacton reservoirs. To avoid the collection of Port Jervis' sewage effluent in the Delaware River, New York City was responsible to build and maintain a Water Resource Recovery Facility along the Neversink River, completed in the 1950s, giving assurance that clean water flowed from the Neversink to the Delaware River.

The Department of Environmental Protection owns and operates the Port Jervis pump stations and the wastewater treatment plant which processes about a million gallons of wastewater per day. It is the largest of the seven wastewater treatment plants owned by DEP in upstate New York. The purpose of treatment plants is to purify wastewater that is to be discharged back into the environment.

5.) secondary clarification; 6.) chlorination; 7.) water analysis & testing; 8.) effluent disposal.

In 2012, the Environmental Protection Commissioner, Carter Strickland, announced that a \$12.5 million project to modernize the plant had been completed. Several major components were in need of replacement, including outdated and aging sewage treatment tanks and sludge drying beds as well as the construction of a new pump building and two primary settling tanks, the installation of two new sludge thickener tanks, a sludge holding tank and an odor control system. New electrical systems were added as an emergency back-up generator.

In 2020, additional repairs were completed to a 3-foot-wide bearing that allows arms to spin on a trickling filter. This filter sprinkles the water that remains after solids have been removed onto beds of stone covered by living organisms. The organisms gobble up nutrients and gasses.



Eight Stages in Treatment Process

There are eight stages in the treatment process: 1.) bar screening; 2.) grit removal; 3.) primary clarification; 4.) aeration;

The cost was \$70,000.

All this work was necessary so that the Port Jervis Water Resource Recovery Facility can continue to be a vital facility in keeping the Neversink River in its pristine state.

Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy, founded in 1951, is a global environmental organization, headquartered in Arlington, VA. As of 2021 it works with affiliates or branches in 78 countries and territories and across every state in the U. S. Their mission states “The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Our vision is a world where the diversity of life thrives and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and its ability to fulfill our needs and our lives.”

In 1993 The Nature Conservancy created the Neversink Preserve located in Godeffroy, purchasing 170 acres of land on the Neversink River in order to protect the newly discovered and federally endangered dwarf wedge mussel. Over time additional land was purchased so that today the Neversink Preserve



covers 550 acres.

Nearly 15 million people rely on the waters of the Delaware River Basin for drinking water and industrial use, making the Neversink Preserve a top priority of The Nature Conservancy. The Neversink River, one of the most important tributaries to the Upper Delaware River, is home to

a variety of migratory fish including American shad and eel and a globally endangered freshwater mussel. Its floodplain forest hosts a number of rare plants and wildlife including bobcat, bald eagles and black bears.

In 2004, The Nature Conservancy was instrumental in the removal of the Cuddebackville Dam on the Neversink, noting that the dam no longer served a purpose and blocked migratory fish such as American shad from their spawning grounds and hindered the dispersal of an endan-



gered mussel.

American Eel

Current conservation priorities include the American eel’s life history. After completing a three-year study of the Neversink River, The Nature Conservancy is working to improve the management and conservation of the American eel. They are also working to restore floodplain forests and reconnect floodplains on Conservancy-owned former agricultural properties along the Neversink River.

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What’s New

New Town of Deerpark Historian

On January 1, 2022, Michael J. Worden will be sworn in as one of the new Town of Deer-

park Judges and the Town of Deerpark Historian.

Worden is a recent retiree from the Port Jervis Police Dept, residing in Sparrowbush with his wife and three sons. An avid traveler, his most recent adventures were in September 2019, visiting the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg. In Liege, Belgium, where his late grandfather had been stationed in 1945, he was able to recreate a photo of his grandfather sitting in the exact same spot on a monument.

Worden has authored two books, “The Murder of Richard Jennings” and “Ghost Detective”. His books are historically accurate and relevant while also being entertaining and fun to read. His works are thoroughly documented and noted. Michael says that his books are unique because he seeks out the locations of crime scenes, burial sites and other locations relevant to the various crimes. Research is key to the authenticity of his books. These traits are ideal for the position of



Deerpark Historian.

Michael can be contacted at the 1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse, 25 Grange Road, PO Box 621, Huguenot, NY 12746—phone 845-856-2702. His e-mail will be posted on the Town of Deerpark website.