



Musconetcong River News

Spring 2012

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Asbury, New Jersey

MWA to Begin Asbury Mill Restoration

By Bill Leavens

The Musconetcong Watershed Association has received a challenge grant to begin Phase I of a project to restore the Asbury Grist Mill in Franklin Township, Warren County. Every dollar the Association receives will be matched up to \$50,000 by

Asbury Carbons, and the Riddle family.

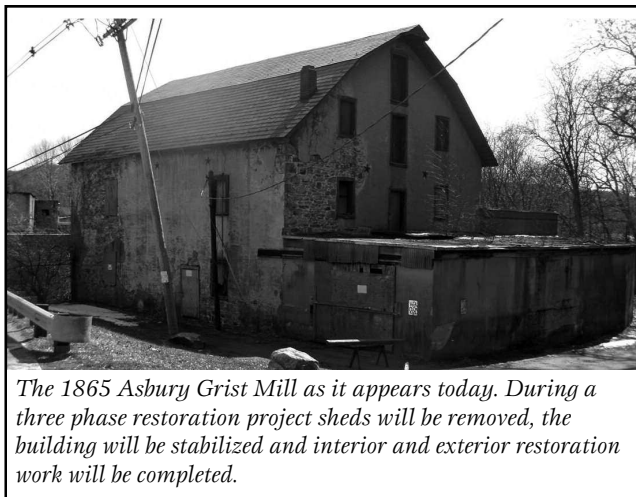
The Association is also the recent recipient of a \$228,000 grant from the Warren County Municipal and Charitable Trust Fund. Proceeds from these grants and other donations will be used to complete the first part of the restoration effort.

used for recreational purposes including fishing and boating.

The mill forms much of the early industrial character of Asbury. From its construction in the 1860s as a grist mill, the building has characterized the industrial might of New Jersey with its use of water wheels and turbines to power the early machines of industry. The building was rented and later acquired by Harry M. Riddle, at which point it was converted to process graphite for industrial use. That business has evolved into Asbury Carbons, a significant employer in the region and the world's largest independent processor and supplier of graphite, a raw material used by a wide range of industries around the world.

The original mill was closed in the 1970's as all production had been transferred to the site of the current main manufacturing plant across the Musconetcong River. Asbury Graphite deeded it, along

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The 1865 Asbury Grist Mill as it appears today. During a three phase restoration project sheds will be removed, the building will be stabilized and interior and exterior restoration work will be completed.

The three phases in the restoration process will lead to the functional reuse of the entire building. This first phase will involve stabilizing the structure. The tailrace and deck area will be restored, a retaining wall will be constructed, and attached sheds will be demolished. The sheds are collapsing and have no historic value. Once this phase is complete the restored area will be

A Fish Hatchery Runs Through It

By Stuart Shafran

MWA member and longtime supporter of the association, Vern Mancini, claims he has never worked a day in his life. Though he's been at it seven days a week since 1958 running the Musky Trout Hatchery located along the Musconetcong River in the town of Bloomsbury, he has never considered what he does to be work. Only recently has he altered this fun schedule to six and a half days a week. Fortunately for him his son Jeff is there to pick up the slack. Together, they maintain one of the oldest privately owned fish farms in the country.

Located in a limestone region, the hatchery is fed by a spring that supplies

the farm year round with 1000 gallons per minute of fresh, pure, clear water. The only thing missing in this ideal location as Vern explains it is enough oxygen, and with his new upgraded oxygen system almost complete he is proud to say that his fish will be even healthier and grow faster.

Though the fish farming business has provided them with a rewarding existence, their location along the Musconetcong River has provided some setbacks. Most recently, the three major fall floods that our watershed experienced brought the river up higher than Vern's seen in fifty years causing the loss of a tremendous amount of trout and

devastating property damage. And when asked how he recovered from such a loss, the ever positive Vern replies, "Well, it gave us the opportunity to upgrade, and it (the high water) put more fish in the river for the fishermen. It's all good."

The history of the hatchery dates back to 1867 when John H. Slack, a Philadelphia physician turned fish culturist, bought the property for the purpose of raising salmon and introducing salmon runs to the Delaware and Raritan Rivers. Without a formal education in fish reproduction, like his predecessor, Vern gained his knowledge and built his farm by trial and error. A one-time sup-

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ASBURY MILL

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with 3.5 acres of property and two other buildings, to the Musconetcong Watershed.

The MWA took title to the mill in 1999 as a donation from the Riddle family, the owners of Asbury Carbons. "This will be a beautiful, functioning gateway to the Asbury Historic Village and an iconic cornerstone for Warren County." said MWA Trustee and project leader Chuck Gullage. "The Association is looking for additional partners and volunteers. Individuals and corporate funders who wish to participate in the project are urged to contact Musconetcong Watershed Association, P. O. Box 113 Asbury, NJ 08802." Inquiries can be made to (908)537-7060. www.musconetcong.com.

MUSCONETCONG WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

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Asbury, NJ 08802

908-537-7060

www.musconetcong.org

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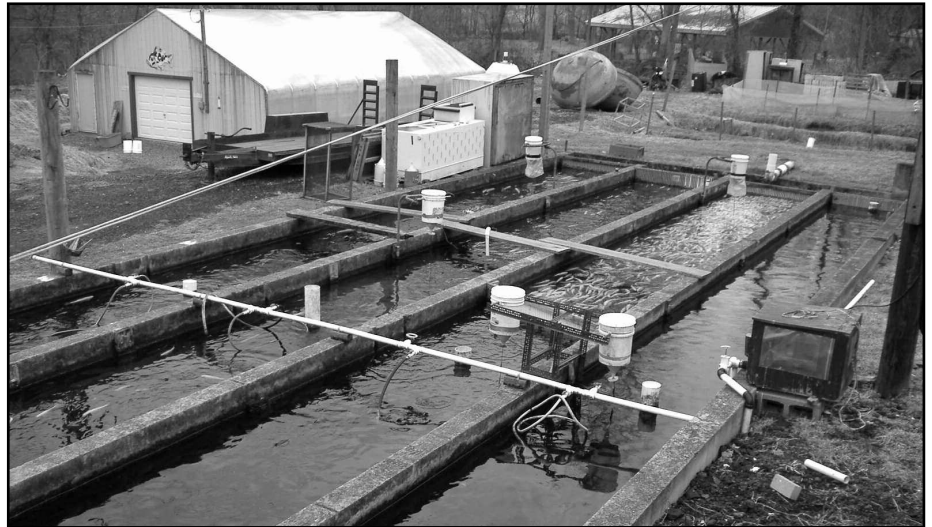
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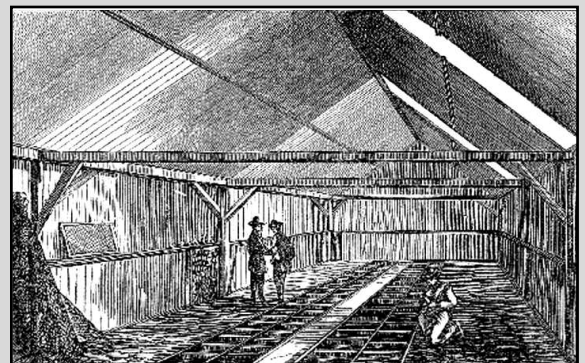
HATCHERY *Continued from page 1*

plier of fish through the Sears and Roebuck Farm Catalogue, he now enjoys providing fish to private owners in the tri-metro area and supplying fresh trout to the restaurant industry. When asked about the future of his hatchery, Vern replies, "I hope my grandson will join us."

For group tours or for more information e-mail musky279@yahoo.com or visit their website www.muskytrouthatchery.com



In the summer of 1867 John Hamilton Slack (1834–1874) purchased 169 acres on the lower Musconetcong River; the property housed the start of a hatchery, a single pond dug by a previous owner. There the Philadelphia physician turned fish culturist created Troutdale Ponds, a hatchery fed by the property's "outstanding natural feature...a limestone spring gushing a thousand gallons a minute of pure 50-degree water, winter and summer". Salmon, smallmouth bass and brook trout were raised at the Troutdale hatchery. Upon Slack's death in 1874 his widow Thirza Slack took on the on the responsibility for the work at Troutdale. She and her descendants continued the hatchery business into the early twentieth century.



Interior of Troutdale's hatching house, from John H. Slack, Practical Trout Culture (1872).

In 1941 the Slacks sold their property to the Warren County Rod and Gun Club. The hatchery was overgrown, and algae and moss

choked whatever remained of Dr. Slack's carefully tended ponds. But the spring that had made the hatchery possible in the first place still ran as clear and cold as ever. In 1947 the club leased the hatchery site to a fish culturist named William H. Stanley, and Troutdale—rechristened as the Musky Trout Hatchery—was reborn. Stanley sold out in 1958 to the current owner, Vern Mancini.

The American Fly Fisher, Winter 201, Hunting Dr. Slack: American Fish Culture's Forgotten Man, by J. I. Merritt.

SAVE THESE DATES!

- **Tuesday April 10th, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. River Talk Plenge Archaeological Site**
Join us as our guest speaker Leonard Ziegler discusses and shares samples of some of the thousands of stone tools recovered from investigations at the Plenge site. These artifacts provide a unique record of life along the Musconetcong River at the end of the last Ice Age and reveal how Native Americans adapted to a changing world. Members \$3, nonmembers \$5. The talk will be held at the MWA River Resource Center, 10 Maple Avenue, Asbury, NJ 08802. Email adrienne@musconetcong.org or call (908) 537-7060 for information or to register.
- **Saturday, April 14, 9:00 a.m. – noon 20th Annual MWA Musconetcong River Spring Clean Up**
Come out and help at the annual River Spring Clean Up. Each year we count on MWA members, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Trout Unlimited members, local residents, environmental clubs and organizations, religious groups, students of all ages, and community service participants to help pull tons of trash from local roadsides and stream banks. Afterwards participants gather at noon at the MWA's River Resource Center in Asbury for hot dogs and sodas. For more information and starting locations contact Adrienne at 908-537-7060 or e-mail adrienne@musconetcong.org.
- **Saturday April 21, 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. Hike at Musconetcong Gorge**
Come out and hike the beautiful Musconetcong Gorge. This preserve, part of the Hunterdon County Park System encompasses 425 acres and has trails that are sometimes steep and rocky with views of a scenic waterfall. We will be led by expert birder John DeMarrais so bring your binoculars. The trails range from moderate to slightly difficult, and take advantage of the smoothest grounds but are steep in some areas. Members are asked to donate \$3, nonmembers \$5, maximum \$10 per family. Call (908) 537 7060 or email beth@musconetcong.org for details, directions or to register.
- **Friday, April, 27, 7:00 p.m. MWA Annual Membership Meeting at Hawk Pointe Golf Club**
Arrive at 5:30 p.m. for a pre-meeting-bird walk. Our guest speaker is Geoffrey Goll, Partner, Princeton Hydro, LLC. will speak about the 2012 dam removals on the Musconetcong River. Members will receive invitations. Not a member? This is a great time to join. Please call 908-537-7060 or e-mail adrienne@musconetcong.org.
- **Saturday, April 28, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Native Plant Sale**
Purchase beautiful native species that will provide lasting enjoyment and will also save you money, water and time. Native plants provide food and habitat for our wildlife and are economical for the homeowner since they do not require fertilizers or pesticides. They are adapted to our local conditions and can withstand our summer droughts and harsh winters. By planting natives, you will provide food and shelter and will help ensure the survival of the wildlife that depend upon them. Experts will be on hand at the sale to help you choose the best plants for your needs and location. River Resource Center, 10 Maple Avenue, Asbury, NJ.
- **Sunday, May 6, The 12th Annual MWA Run/Walk for the River**
Join us for our usual 4mile Run/Walk with a day full of new and exciting activities. Register early to take advantage of pre-registration discounts. All participants are eligible for great drawing prizes after the run. We've added a tethered balloon ride, Lollipop Run, and Family Paddling Adventure. See www.musconetcong.org to register or for details.

Note: If you are not receiving e-mail reminders for these events it means that we do not have a current e-mail address. If you'd like to receive reminders and occasional "Musky News Briefs" please contact beth@musconetcong.org.

- ◆ Save These Dates
 - ◆ River Watcher Training Announcement
 - ◆ Watershed Group chosen to present at National Water quality Conference
 - ◆ Standards in the Nation!
 - ◆ News Alert: NJ Passes the Most Protective Fertilizer Content
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- What's Inside:**

Musconetcong River News



Asbury, NJ 08802
PO Box 113



The Musconetcong Watershed Association

The Musconetcong River Valley is rich in scenery, history, natural resources, and recreational opportunities. The river rises up in Lake Hopatcong - New Jersey's largest spring-fed lake - and is shadowed by 1,000-foot Highland ridges and slices through a deep, limestone river valley, flowing swiftly to the Delaware River. Along the way the "Musky" passes by state and county parks, bustling towns, vital industries, historic villages, and some of the most productive farmland in the state.

The Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) is a non-profit organization formed in 1991 to protect and enhance the Musconetcong River and its related resources through advocacy and environmental education programs, scientific research and river restoration projects. The MWA scope spans the 158 square-mile Musconetcong River Watershed, and includes portions of four counties, and all or portions of 25 municipalities. The Musconetcong River became part of the National Wild and Scenic River System in 2006.

MWA members are part of a network of individuals, families and organizations who care about the Musconetcong River and its watershed. They are kept informed about issues concerning the river and its related resources by receiving quarterly issues of the *Musconetcong River News*.

MWA Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the Musconetcong Watershed Association in which I will receive membership benefits and publications. I have enclosed a check payable to **MWA** for the membership category listed below:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Steward |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Supporter | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Champion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Life Member | |

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Mail to:

Musconetcong Watershed Association
PO Box 113, Asbury, NJ 08802