

The Totoket Historical Society, Inc.

THE BRANFORD RIVER

by

Anita Vergati

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Transcribed and Digitized by
Theodore Groom, Ph. D.
Chairman, Technology
The Totoket Historical Society

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Edward Smith Library
3 Old Post Road
Northford, CT 06472
(203) 484-0469

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Branford River

Begins somewhere near Water Company property at lake site – its mouth is at Branford Point.

Large Dam – west side of river is washed out

Chitsey owned it first. Two brothers Merrick and Walter Hill bought the dam from Chitsey. Dam is built of trap rock – oxen were used to construct it. It was used as:

1. lumber mill
2. cider mill – made hard cider
3. grist mill
4. axe handles
5. cord wood
6. grind corn
7. cut ice

Where large stone is missing abase of dam they had a wheel there that went up to a shaft. The Hills installed a modern wheel with iron cups on it. The water would fill into a flume – a channel for the water that drives a mill wheel.

As a young boy, Mr. Rose would fish the river and when the water turned muddy, they would know that Old Man Hill started up his mill. He would flood the river back to the bend.

Hill bought 10 acres from Stephen Rose's grandfather. Hills farm extended over to valley road. It had virgin timber – this timber was cut at the mill. It was cut at the large dam on the river.

Mr. Rose believes the foundation on the west side of the river to be the site of the old mill. Mr. Rose's father was a tail sawyer at the mill. He thinks this involved straightening out the logs before they were cut. Near this foundation there is an old well – Mr. Rose knew nothing of this.

The cabin next to Steve Syrotiak was owned by Dr. Riley – a surgeon – he drilled a water well and built a lovely dock going down to the river. Mrs. Rose has a photograph of what it looked like just after it was built. Then a Mr. Ellis moved into the cabin. He was a preacher in New Haven.

Between Steve Syrotiak's and Van Wilgin Nurseries there was a cabin – last Indians in North Branford lived there – a disputed fact – They were husband and wife – known as Nab and Pete. He never worked – he would walk to Lake Saltonstall to fish – he would then trade his fish for salt pork and staples. She did all the work.

Near the nursery – at flat part of the river where Oppels once lived – where Van Wilgin's house is now – there was a large Indian camp site – many arrowheads have been found there. Mr. Rose has a collection of arrowheads flint and quarts.

Where Branford Power House is – Thomas Ward had a large ice house.

The second dam on the river – the one that is washed out in the middle was run by John Foote

Charcoal was also made along the river.

Anita Vergati
Woodvale Drive