



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 School House Museum

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Recreation on the River

According to a 2008 Orange County water quality report, The Neversink River is one of the county's cleanest rivers. This makes it ideal for all kinds of water activities.

Fly fishing has always been a favorite sport, dating from the 1800s when Theodore Gordon, the father of American dry-fly fishing, wrote extensive articles about the Neversink River.



From that same time period, there are photos of people enjoying a quiet stroll along the banks of the river between Godeffroy and Huguenot.



Residents living near quiet pools within the river created private beaches for the enjoyment of their families and friends. One such beach was a favorite for Prospect Hill residents in Cuddebackville near the Roebling aqueduct. In the 1940s and 50s, Mickey and Phyllis McBrair created a small beach and invited the neighborhood to enjoy the cool river on hot summer days.



McBrair's Beach Area

There were beaches open to the public at Oakland Valley

(Case's Beach), Godeffroy (Myer's Beach) and in the Tri-State area (Joyland Beach). Joyland Beach was a big park, complete with a pavilion for music and dancing. For an extensive description of Joyland Beach, and its activities, please read the December 2018 Deerpark Diary. Myer's Beach, located in Myer's Grove, is still used today

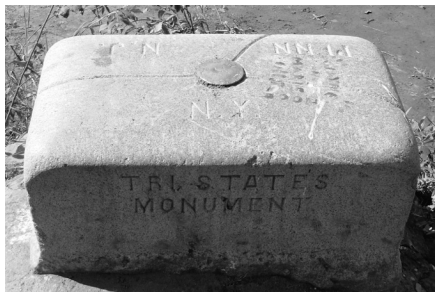


Joyland Beach

On hot summer days tubing and kayaking are pleasant pastimes with trips that can extend to the confluence of the Neversink and Delaware Rivers. A word of caution: Always wear life jackets on the river as there are some turbulent areas along the way.



The Tri-State Monument marking the three line boundaries of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania can be seen in the areas where the Neversink River flows into the Delaware River. The monument was placed in 1882, ninety-nine years after the end of the NY/NJ Border War (1664-1773) which ended when the final survey for the New York/New Jersey state line was completed.



Tri-State Monument

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Logging Attempts on the Neversink

**Source: Assembly Legislature
Document #262**

As early as 1783, loggers rafted their lumber down the Delaware River to the Philadelphia market at a small expense. Local loggers wondered why the Neversink River couldn't be made navigable also. They figured if rocks could be removed, small rafts could run to Carpenter's Point near Port Jervis and then be floated down the Delaware.

With this in mind some residents concluded that the State should remove the obstructions.



A group of citizens presented an application to the Albany Legislature, declaring the river a public highway from the Town of Thompson to the Delaware River. On April 16, 1816, the State granted their application and the "Neversink Navigation Company" was organized. The stock of the Company was \$50,000.00. Directors, Otto William Van Tuyl, Daniel Clark, Richard Voris, Samuel Jones and Jabez Wakeman, Jr., were elected and toll rates were established.

Local inhabitants were either too poor or too cautious to invest in the company stock. Only a few shares were taken. Van Tuyl's confidence and enthusiasm were not enough to raise the necessary money. It brought him nothing but disappointment and debt,

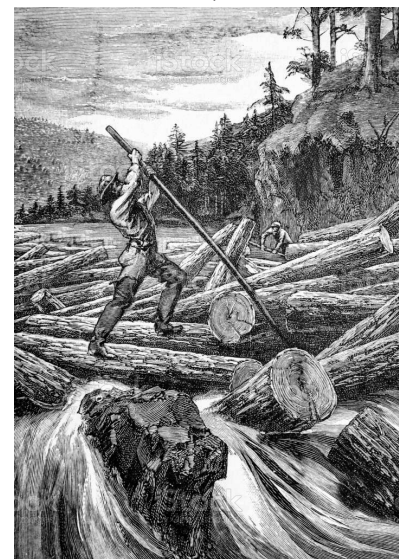
In 1828, Van Tuyl went to Albany with a petition for a loan of \$15,000.00 to the company. The petition was referred to the Senate Committee on canals and internal improvements, chaired by Francis Granger. On March 11th, the Committee recommended a loan of \$10,000.00. On April 5th, a bill providing this sum "for the purpose of rendering the river safe and easy for the passage of rafts thereon" was passed by the Assembly and Senate and became a law.

The State held a mortgage on the Neversink River and all its improvements according to

this law. Two competent and reliable bondsmen secured the State from any loss. On May 6, 1828, the comptroller of NYS issued 20 certificates of stock of \$500 each and gave them to Van Tuyl. It was a 5% stock and was made a part of the canal fund. The Company had 10 years to complete the work and repay the \$10,000.00.



During the fall and summer of 1828, Van Tuyl spent about \$1,000 removing obstructions from the river and in March, 1829, announced that the Neversink River was open for navigation. In April, a raft of one hundred thousand feet of pine boards left Fallsburgh, manned by two men, named Brown and Hoyt. The trip ended in disaster at a place called "Dive Hole" (present location unknown).



A raft, manned by three men, named Mills, Springer and one of Van Tuyl's sons, also met with disaster a short distance beyond the "Dive Hole". The raft collided with rocks in mid-stream and was broken up. Mills drowned and the other two were stranded on the rocks for the night.

In 1832 Van Tuyl revisited Albany with a petition for an additional \$10,000.00. for the Navigation Company. There was an investigation into Van Tuyl's finances. After which a report was given to the New York State Assembly, on March 21, 1833 (Report Number 262).

According to Attorney General Greene C. Bronson, it was found that Van Tuyl had used the bulk of the previous \$10,000.00 State funding to pay off his debts. Only a little more than \$1,000.00 of that money had been used to improve the Neversink River. The Attorney General concluded his report by stating: "To grant this application, might be placing it in his (Van Tuyl) power to commit another fraud in the name of the Neversink Navigation Company. But there is a still stronger objection. With the knowledge that Mr. Van Tuyl has pocketed at least \$8,000.00 of the people's money, the mortgage cannot be discharged for his benefit, without giving some degree of sanction to this plunder of the public treasury."

In disgrace and with his wealth gone, Van Tuyl moved to New York City where he tried unsuccessfully to enlist others to continue in his enterprise.

No additional attempts were ever made to make the Neversink River open for navigation.

The State never received any money from the original loan. On August 26, 1837, The New York State Attorney General discharged all the rights of the Navigation Company.

[Editor's note: \$10,000.00 in 1828 had the buying power of about \$275,000.00 today.]



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The Union-Gazette

July 2, 1974

Neversink release to be doubled
By BOB CROSS
(excerpts)

ALBANY—Releases to the Neversink River will be doubled within a week, New York State Environmental Conservation Commissioner James L. Biggane announced Monday. ...his department has reached an agreement with New York City which will boost releases from the Neversink Reservoir. He called this "The first step" in ending a decade-long battle between the city water department and state and local environmentalists...

A March study called upon the city to release 32 million gallons per day from the reservoir to maintain a sound ecological balance in the stream.

It also suggested the city revise the management of its Delaware River reservoirs of Pepacton and Cannonsville to halt what it called a policy that has "upset stream ecology, caused severe damage or destruction of downstream fisheries and interfered with recreational use of the rivers.".. The city agreed to increase the present summertime releases to the Neversink to 20 mgd, an increase of 100%.



Neversink River at Godeffroy

The city has contended that increasing flows down the upstate rivers could jeopardize water supplies for eight million metropolitan dwellers. However, Biggane said his computer study "clearly shows" that it is possible to have enough water for city residents and also maintain sound ecological practices in the upstate rivers.

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Neversink River Makes Movie History

When working for the Biograph Company, D. W. Griffith brought the film company to Cuddebackville on six separate occasions, three times in 1909, twice in 1910 and once in 1911. Twenty films were completed, which utilized the beautiful unspoiled natu-

ral surroundings for breathtaking location shots of Indian and western films, historical dramas and even comedies. Cuddebackville had everything needed to make films, varied scenic possibilities, housing facilities and accessibility by train from New York City. D. W. Griffith felt that the canal, the Neversink River, nearby rocky cliffs and the colonial stone houses were perfect for films.

Prior to the film company's first trip to Cuddebackville, on June 22, 1909, D. W. Griffith and other Biograph employees scouted the area and spent the night at the Caudebec Inn. The rest of the company came up on June 26, 1909. The filming trip to Cuddebackville was undertaken by Mr. Griffith to show Biograph officials what could be done by leaving the familiar and well used locations around Fort Lee. A number of scripts were collected that called for wild mountainous country.

Because D. W. Griffith felt that films were predominantly educational and should strive to uplift audiences, his films usually made a social comment. This is especially evident in *The Modern Prodigal* filmed at Cuddebackville in 1910, starring Guy Hedlund, Jack Pickford (Mary Pickford's brother) as well as Lester Predmore, a local Cuddebackville boy who received \$5.00 for his work as an extra on the film.

The Modern Prodigal is a film about two young boys (Jack Pickford and Lester Predmore) who go swimming in the Neversink River. When one of the boys (Jack Pickford) has trouble, the other goes for help. An escaped convict rescues Jack from

the water, only to be caught by the sheriff, who is also the drowning child's father. The convict is allowed to escape again by the sheriff's wife, as a reward for saving her son's life.



James Kirkwood as an Indian

The Neversink River was instrumental in making history in film making when D. W. Griffith used three cameras to film one shot in "The Squaw's Love" made at Cuddebackville in 1911. It starred Mabel Normand, Kate Bruce, James Kirkwood and Dorothy West. In this film Mabel Normand, after struggling with another Indian girl, has to do a back dive off a cliff into the Neversink River. Prior to this time only one camera was used in a film shoot, however for this scene three cameras were used for the one shot.



Mabel Normand

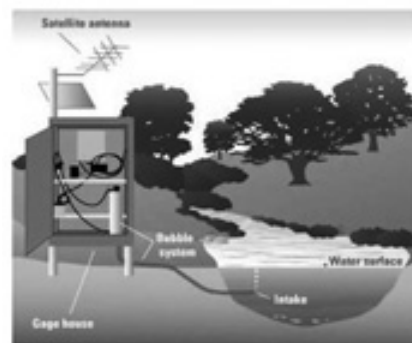
One camera was in back of Mabel Normand, one on the bank of the river for a medium shot, and one in a rowboat in the middle of the river. After the dive

was completed, Mabel Normand was rescued and driven to the Caudebec Inn for a strong drink.

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What's New Waterinsight

Waterinsight is a NY environcom program that strives on several fronts to generate awareness and data about the quality of water in parts of the Delaware and Hudson watersheds. Three water quality monitors have been installed in the lower Basha Kill where it meets the Neversink River, upstream and downstream of the former USGS station in Cuddebackville. The monitors are collecting data about the conditions in the lower Basha Kill. These monitoring stations are examples of information gathering services keeping municipalities informed where land use issues are being decided.



Stream Gauge Sketch (USGS)

An additional three new installations in Godeffroy will be joining the existing Cuddebackville stations. This is important in Deerpark, where there is access to the Neversink River, a nationally recognized trout fishing and recreational river.