

Roger Williams University

DOCS@RWU

Documentation

**Gray's Mill: Letter to Scott Rabideau, Natural Resource Service,
January 2002**

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.rwu.edu/baker_documentation



Part of the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#)

A. W. Baker
29 Drift Road
Westport, Massachusetts 02790
508-636-3272

January 3, 2002

Scott P. Rabideau
Natural Resouse Service, Inc
P.O.Box 311
Harrisville, Rhode Island 02830

Hi Scott.

Thanks for your continued enthusiasm. I feel that this time this project is really going to go somewhere. What better for a new year.

I have enclosed all the original material that I have accumulated to date. Still missing: Letter from Highway Department, Westport Historical Commission and one abutter. I am on their case and will forward them to you as soon as I receive them.

I have talked with Rick Greenwood. He is happy to provide a letter of support to DEM on the millpond clean-up. I have sent him an outline on the scope of work and am waiting to hear from him.

Now I'm about to peruse your request for more info on the grant for a fish ladder.

As I remember you also wanted some history so here goes.

Adamsville (originally Taborville) was settled in the late 17th century when a stream was dammed and a mill was built. The mill pond created power to run a grist mill, a saw mill and was a source for cutting and selling ice. The mill, originally powered by a wooden wheel, ground meal for human use, fodder for animals and sawed timbers for construction. A blacksmith, meat market, bakery, harness shop, and ice houses, etc., where some of the businesses that sprung up around the mill, some of which still exist today.

In the mid 19th century the influence of the Industrial Revolution arrived in Adamsville and the mill building and its works were rebuilt to incorporate a turbine. The turbine, a more efficient source of power, lasted until it was destroyed by the 1938 hurricane. The turbine was replaced with a gasoline engine. This meant that there was no further need to maintain the millpond.

In 1980 the miller, who was then 80, decided to sell the mill. Ralph Guild, a summer resident, remembered the mill from childhood and not wanting to see it fall into ruin, bought it, restored it, and hired a miller to run the mill. For 17 more years the mill continued to produce Rhode Island's famous Jonnycake meal. However by 1999 Guild realized that the mill could no longer be profitable --super markets and fast food had taken over -- and he closed the doors. With nobody in charge at the mill, the community didn't know what to do when the pond flooded or became a mosquito infested trickle. They did know that they didn't want to lose the mill or the pond, which have always been the heart of the village. Consequently various people tried different ways to stabilize the pond, compounding the problem and progressively the life of the pond and its relationship to the mill and the village have deteriorated.

Gray's mill and millpond are rich in historic and cultural significance, and are the heart of the surrounding community. Its resources include, 300 years of community life, industrial technology, archaeology, ecology, sociology, politics, economics, and recreation.

By-the-way, by this summer we expect to have the mill back in operation. Let me know what else you need. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for March 29th.

Pete (Anne)