

Schedule B - 32 Mill Pond Images





















Middlesex Heritage Trail

Dorchester Mill Pond

Historically, the Mill Pond has played an important role. The Neutral Indians, an important confederation of Iroquoian Tribes, kept semi-permanent settlements on the creek banks. Hamilton Road was formerly a local trail heading from Lake Ontario to the river crossing at Detroit. There are no records to prove when the mill was built, but a map of 1810 shows the dam and mill were present at that time, and could possibly have been in operation in 1794 or earlier.



In the early 1800's, a popular design for mill dams constructed in narrow streams with deep valleys was a crib structure. In simplified terms, crib dam construction involved a series of alternating timbers, filled with stone and gravel. A finished crib stood well above the high water mark, except at the spillway. The crib dams of the 1800's did not follow any specific guidelines, so it was commonplace to see many variations between dams, depending on cost and location. Since its original construction, many repairs and alterations have been made to maintain the dam. A new dam was built and officially opened in 2005.

The Mill Pond is well known for its cedar and white pine. Many of its trees were floated down the river to be used in the construction of settlements in Detroit.



The parcel of land on which the dam now sits was owned by William Cartwright in 1828. An 1862 map shows a large area of land surrounding the Mill Pond was also owned by Mr. Cartwright. It is believed that a sawmill was located on the pond at an early date. Mr. Cartwright established the first gristmill in Dorchester. His residence was the beautiful stone house just west of the mill. The Georgian-style home was built in 1866 by local stonemason and builder, William Hunt, using river and field stones, complete with 18 inch walls. There are 10 main rooms, many closets and ante-rooms, a stonewalled furnace basement, and a 'widow's walk' with a marvelous view of the river from windows on all four sides. It is presumed that Mr. Cartwright ran the mill for a number of years, and possibly sold it to his daughter in 1881.

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