

## **Mill or Sawmill River, Fulling Mill Brook or Bennett's Mill Stream, Alewife or Wine Brook**

The history of Gloucester's largest stream is covered by several writers, including Babson, Pringle, and Joe Garland. See also, MHC Reconnaissance Report: Gloucester, 1985 from the Secretary of State's office.

The Mill or Sawmill River saw the earliest industrial development on Cape Ann starting with the grant of specific privileges to Rev. John Emerson, Gloucester's first pastor, in 1667.

John J. Somes, Gloucester City Engineer, compiled a detailed history of the various disputes over Mill River water rights through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The document, [...] *Mills Formerly John Bennett's and Ring, Ring's Mills Now Owned by Alfred Dodge [...]*, 1881, is available at the Gloucester City Archives.

As water bodies were used as reference points for property boundaries, additional information regarding property ownership near rivers and streams can be found at *Gloucester, Massachusetts names & Property of Early Settlers 1642-1714/5* available at the Gloucester City Archives.

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“a very early date”

The first mill in town was undoubtedly erected, at a very early date, on the spot where part of an old dam is still to be seen, at the westerly end of the stream running from Cape Pond. (Babson footnote)

Mill River, Riverdale – pre-1652 – two small mills (Garland<sup>i</sup>)

Mill River, Riverdale – not long after 1652 – tidal sawmill constructed on western end of dam (became known as Sawmill Dam) (Garland)

Mill River, Riverdale – 1677 – Rev. John Emerson given leave to repair sawmill and cut up to 20,000 board feet of lumber every year and to erect a corn mill along side. Emerson ran both mills until his death 1700. (Garland)

1642

Beaver Dam – dam built nearby – presumably a sawmill (Pringle)

“some years later” than 1642 –

Dams are constructed on the Sawmill River, near the present location of the gristmill at Riverdale, at various sections, at West Gloucester, at Freshwater Cove, and numerous other locations. Sawmills and grist mills. (Pringle)

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1643-1650 – [see Town Records pp. 30-32 for several land grants around Goose Cove/Mill River, p. 44 land grant @ Mill River]

Pre-1652

Mill River, Riverdale – two small mills (Garland)

1652

Alewife or Wine Brook – “the colonist’s first dam” (abt. 1652 ) off Old Rockport Road near Blackburn Industrial Park. A “well defined hump.” The city breached the old dam in 1932 to “drain the mill pond that the dam had held back for two hundred and eighty years.” The fall of the dam was about 15 feet. Most of the year used as a sawmill except at harvest time when the mill ground corn. The dam apparently was replaced by the Riverdale tidal mill. (Garland)

“a couple of years after” 1652

Alewife Brook –“a couple of years after” the construction of the 1<sup>st</sup> mill dam, the General Court granted £20 from the gift of Richard Andrews to construct another dam (Babson has the date as 1644). The dam was built across Alewife Brook, about at the west entrance to Poplar Park, an elderly housing development. (Garland)

“not long after 1652”

Mill River, Riverdale – tidal sawmill constructed on western end of dam (became known as Sawmill Dam) (Garland)

1653

Clement Coldham granted parcel upland east of mill river by house. P. 45 (Early Settlers)

1653

15.10.53 Clemond Coldden had Granted By the townsmena prcl of upland Liing By the east side of the mill River By the north end of his own Lott which his house stands upon and Runs down by the River to Mather coes Lott and in Lue heare of sayd Colddem de yeald up to the Town 3 acres of salt marsh Lying in Chebacke next to James Avery’s marsh. (Town Records, Vol 1, p. 45)

1654

5.1mo 54/54 [...] John Walkey sould to Clemond Colddom 3 acres of upland more or lope [?-less] as was given By the towne Liing on the east side of the mill River bounded eith the River on the west and the south and Mather Coes Lot on the east side and a prcll of Land as Coldom had of the towne on the ninth. (Town Records, Vol 1, p. 45)

1661

Town gives William Vinson leave to stop the water at the “fresh medoes,” above his mill, and to make use of it for his mill. (Babson footnote<sup>ii</sup>)

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1661 Fresh Meadow's Wm. Vinson's Dam Built 1661 (map: T. Griffin<sup>iii</sup>)

1663

Head of Goose Cove – “much older: than the 1834 causeway built for the tide mill. Intersection of Denniston, Bennett, & Holly Sts. Dam, sluiceway & mill pond on private property. The house is believed to have been built in 1663. (...)

1664, May

William Vinson sells to Mr. Emerson, for £55, his gristmill and three and a half acres of land; the same being near Mr. Emerson's house. (Babson footnote)

1664

The inhabitants granted the mill then standing and its use, with all rights, privileges, ponds, and streams belonging to it, and all the fresh meadow above the mill to their pastor, Mr. Emerson, on condition that he should maintain and keep that, or some other mill, in such “frame and order” that it could grind for the use of the town. They also signed a document, the intention of which [...] was to secure him the patronage of the whole town. [...] (Babson)

1667

By 1667 Cape Ann had been so de-forested that the town voted to restrict cutting of cordwood from Brace's Cove to Little Good Harbor Beach and in 1669 voted that no cordwood could be sold out of town for less than 3 shillings and sixpence per cord.. For several years after, families were limited to 20 cords cut from common land. (Pringle)

1677

From certain votes of the town, passed some years later, an inference may be drawn that Mr. Emerson did not for a long period make any use of this grant; as, Feb. 18, 1677, the town voted that a cornmill should be set up and erected on the Sawmill Dam: and, “things not being made clear concerning the old saw-mill,” a town meeting was called on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March following; when, “upon much discourse about the mill, Mr. John Emerson, having undertaken to erect a corn mill, did promise in said meeting to set it upon the saw-mill dam, and to supply the town.” At the same meeting, Mr. Emerson, John Fitch, and Thomas Riggs, were named as the proprietors of the old Sawmill, which they were to repair, and to have the privilege of cutting timber enough to make twenty thousand feet of boards yearly, for seven years. They were to saw “at the halves,” and to sell boards on a credit of three months to those who needed credit. (Babson)

1677, Feb 18

Town votes “that there should be a Corn Mill set up and erected on the saw-mill dam,” and “that the town give the stream to belong to the Corn Mill. The “saw-mill dam” here mentioned is the place now occupied by the tide mills of Messrs. Brackett and Brown. (Babson footnote)

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1677

Mill River, Riverdale – 1677 – Rev. John Emerson given leave to repair sawmill and cut up to 20,000 board feet of lumber every year and to erect a corn mill along side. Emerson ran both mills until his death 1700. (Garland)

1677

The 18 of the 12 mo 1677 the general Towne metting was held according to a formrl vott in the Towne met ---

Imprimus [??] it was votted and carried by the vott that there should be a corne milne sett up and erected in the saw mill dam

2ly The Towne by way of vott gave the Streme to belonge to the corn milne (Town Records Vol 1, p. 340)

1677

Things not being mad clear concerning the ould saw mill ther was a Towne metting called againe the ii of march 1677 and upon much discourse about the mils Mr John emerson having undertaken to erect a corn mill up did promis in the town metting to sett it upon the saw mill dam and to supply the Town grinding

the ii of march 1677 Ther was granted to the propertyors of the ould Saw mill that is Mr John Emerson John fitch and Thomas Riggs to repair there saw mill and that They have Liberty to cutt so much pine Timber upon the Towne commons as will make Twenty Thousand foott of bords yearly for seven years and wee the propertyers above mentioned doe ingage to saw to halves for any Inhabitants that shall bringe Logs to saw

1679/80and that the Inhabitants shall have such Tacklin as the owners make use of for to gitt upe there Logs allowinge nothinge for weare and Teare also if any neighborswant bords for ther own use and a—able to pay presently they shall have a quarter of a yeares tim to pay in in such pay as is raised in the Towne for there Labore and when the properiters find themselves aggrieved and find it w--- no quitt cost and refuse to saw to halves then They ar to Leave the mill to the Towne for the Towns use. (Town Records Vol 1, p. 340)

Att a Towne meting held in gloster the 17 of 12: 1678/9

given to anthiny benett six ackers of ground upon the top of the high hill upon the east sid of gouse Cove and Laid out and bounded by the Lot Layers the wester bound. Tre is a mapel standing by the path sid that goeth from gous cove to Lobster cove is a whit oke and att the northeast corner up the sid of the high hill a red oke and so upon the ege of the high hill it coms to a great hemlock (Gloucester Town Records, V. I, pp. 153-154)

1677

[Vinson's?] Corn Mill to 1677. Fulling Mill Later. (map: T. Griffin)

1678

[see Town Records Vol 1 p. 209 for description of Emerson's land grant]

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16:12 mo 1679/80 Anthony benet had given him one acke of upland upon the easter sid of the mill river between the Two wayes over against deacon Stevens his house and bounded by the watter sid with a rock by the way that coms down to the watter next towards the sawmill and a whit pine stump att the other corner next Thimothy Somes and the uper end is bounded with a small hemlock and a pitch pine the acker of Land being about 13 yards square. (Gloucester Town Records, vol. 1, p. 154)

1689

From footnote: A committee chosen “to see that the Corn Mill be fitted to supply the town with grinding of their corn into meal, or els to see that another corn-mill may be set up. (Babson)

1690

No other mention of a cornmill is found until May 13, 1690; when William Haskell and Mark Haskell had liberty to erect one upon Walkers Creek. (Babson)

William Haskell, Jr. & Mark Haskell, made request to have liberty to set down a corn-mill on a creek called Walker’s Creek.” Mr. John Emerson, William Vinson, and William Sargent, sen., “did protest against the voit.” [presumably competition for Mill Brook mills] (Babson footnote)

1694

the 18<sup>th</sup> march 1694:5

given to moris smith 3 acre of ground by the side of the old mill pond and Laid out by the Lot Layers upon the southern sid of the sd pond upon the top of the hill being Twenty four rods in Length and Twenty rods in breadth and bounded att the four corners with a great rock att each corner and Leyeth between the way people halle wood and the swamp of Joseph Eveleth (Town Records Vol 1, p. 165)

1698

In division of Rev. J. Emerson’s estate, John Newman has the fulling-mill. “standing on a creek, or small river, on the northwardly side of a land or highway leading from the Meeting House up to the woods:” and William Cogswell has “ a quarter part of the grist-mill and saw-mill standing on the saw-mill river, so called; and a quarter of the house and three acres of land belonging to said mill.” (Babson)

1698

Att a Town meeting held in glocester June 21th 1698 [...]

John Row had Liberty given him to sell out of town four or five thousand feet of bords out of town to procure wherewithal to repair his saw mill withal without paying twelve pence p thousand. (Town Records, Vol 2, p. 51)

1698

Att a meeting of the selectmen [...] the 7<sup>th</sup> of march 1698/9 [...]

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Thomas witham had given him about a quarter of an acre of ground upon the water side of the brook over against his own land and not to make any stoping in the brook to hinder the stream from running down to the saw mill of John Row  
(Town Records, Vol 2, p. 58-59)

1700

Lane or Highway Leading from The Green up into The Woods. Now Poplar Street. 1918  
(map: T. Griffin)

1704

William Cogswell represents gristmill on Sawmill River out of repair; and proposes to put it in order, and supply the town. (Babson footnote)

1707

Town Records B1 P295

At a meeting of the selectmen of Gloucester Aprill ye 9<sup>th</sup> 1707 for laying out a private highway for the inhabitants of our towne and such others as may have occasion to make use of said way to pass to and from the grist mill and saw mill standing of the stream or river called saw mill river up into the woods along by the new dwelling house of Lt. James Davis the inhabitants having great necessity of said way for transporting there fodder timber & wood which way is laid out wher it hath been used & improved for fifty years last [fract?] as a highway throu the land now in the possession of said Lt James Davis as successor in the right of morrieh Somes late of sd. Gloucester deceased which, said highway has been used and improved as aforesaid by virtue of the highway that was reserved when the said morris Somes had a grant of six acres of upland bought with six acres of upland and given lying to his house where wee have laid out and stated sd way as followeth viz: beginning at a stake with a stone about it about three rods or poles to the eastwardly of the easterly corner of the gravill pit that is att the eastwardly end of the said grist mill dam and said way to goe into ye said Lt Davis field between said stake with stones about it and a black oak tree marked standing within ye said Davises stone wall two rods or poles and halfe to the eastward of sd stake with stone about it and said way to run eastwardly towards sd. Lt. Davises new dwelling house and to be two rods or poles – half in weadth from sd stone wall as now it standeth till it cometh to the westerly corner of ye said Lt. Davises orchard that is within the field and so running along on the southwardly side of said orchard till it comes to a stake standing on the inside of said stone wall two rods or two poles and a half norwood of a frase [?] tree marked standing within said stone wall and to be two rods or two poles and a half in width and so running along southwardly by the westwardly end of said Lt Davises new dwelling house to a great broad flat rock about two rods or two poles to the southward of said dwelling house before the door and to be two rods or poles and half in width till it cometh to the bridge going over the brooke where the way now goeth and hath gon along towards the house of Ezekiall day and from sd bridge over the brooke the said highway to be four rods or poles in width # up to the now dwelling house of said of Joseph Ingerrisoll sr-er excepting only where ye said Ezekiall Days barn now standeth and there the way to be only so wide as is

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between said Ezekiall Days line by his dwelling house and his barne and the above said way wee have stated and settled as a privet townr hoighway for our inhabotants to pass to and froe and such others as shall have occation to make use of it as wittnes our hands.

John Newman Esq.  
Cap. Nathaniel Coit                      Selectmen  
John Ring  
Jeffery Parsons

Att a towne meeting of the freeholders and others inhabitants

# the following words are here omitted by the transcriber “from the bounds of the said Ezekiall Days land as the way now goeth till it cometh”

See also Pages 314, 315, 316 of Book 1 and p. 159 Book 2 Town Records for Highway round the Cape from Mr. Samuel Gott’s to the gravel-pit by the gristmill

1708

Town Records Book 1 P334

Att the town meeting in Gloucester May 3d. 1708. Voted that the towns land lying between the meeting house green and the saw mill standing on the river or stream called squam river that has been made use of and improved along to and from the said meeting house green to the 2<sup>nd</sup> saw mill along between ye land now in the possession of Cat Joseph Allen, John Fitch, Joseph Harvey sr and the heirs of John Stanwood deceased and the land of John and Joseph Day and between the land of ye heirs of Thomas Millet late of Manchester deceased and the said saw mill river is hearby reserved for a highway till such time as the towne shall cause to make an alterationn of said way till it come into the way heading along to the saw mill between the land of Mr. Day by his dwelling house – as also the town common from the meeting house green between the land of Capt Joseph Allen and Joseph Allen Jun. and the land of John Sargent sr and John Fitch and the heirs of Isaac Elveleth and George Harvey sr and Capt Joseph Allen and [rev?] along on the westwardly side of the Land of the said John Fitch and the Land of the heirs of the said John Stanwood deceased and so by John Days land leading along as the fence now standeth is reserved for a town highway and to be three poles wide in width against the westerly end of the aforesd. John Fitch and the heires of John Stanwood ys land till it comes into the way leading along the saw mill to the land of and John Day by his dwelling house.

Pursuant to a vote of the Town of Gloucester bearing date Jany 10<sup>th</sup> 1714/15 We have bounded the neck of Land granted to Mr. Stevens, lying between Annisquam and Chebacco rivers mouth: and having in our former return, omitted to mention the fourty acres of meadow on Chebacco side, which marsh is bounded, at the northwesterly end on 2 Penny Loafe so called, thence running near southwesterly between walkers creek so

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called and bounded at the southerly end or part with meadow in possession of Capt Nathaniel Coite.

	Ezekel Collins	Committee
Signed by	Samuel Sargeant	on
	James Davis	Measure

1709

Children of William Cogswell sell mills, &c., in Gloucester, to John Ring. (Babson footnote)

1720

[T]own grants to John Bennet “the privileges of a brook called the fulling mill brook, whereon to set a corn-mill on the lower end of the brook, near where the tide ebbs and flows, so long as he keep a corn-mill on said stream, and no longer.” (Babson footnote)

1721

Ruth Newman and her children sell Fulling-mill Stream to John Bennet, with mill Bennet built. (Babson footnote)

1724

John Ring, in a lawsuit against John Bennet, claims certain privileges, and the stream on which Bennet’s mill stood, under various grants to Mr. Emerson. Judgment in favor of Bennet is carried by Ring to a higher court. The town favors Bennet’s case. (Babson footnote)

1776

Town chooses a committee to see that Ring’s mills are put in good repair. (Babson footnote)

1776

[Town Meeting, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1776]

[...] Voted that John Low Esq. Samuel Plumar Esq. and James Porter be a Committee to search the original grants of the grist mills and treat with the present proprietors. (Town Records, Vol 3, p. 183)

1777

Isaac Bennet, miller for Ring’s mills, engages to repair the same. (Babson footnote)

1777

[Town Meeting, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1777]

[...] Mr. Issac Bennet Miller for Rings Mills appears engaged to put the Mills in as good order as he can and put in a good miller and do the best he can to grind grain for the town. (Town Records, Vol 3, p. 193)

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1784

[Town Meeting, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1784]

[...] Voted. That the Town are willing to have Mr. Bennett's Mill dam opened, to let fish into the Cape Pond --

[...] Voted. That the Selectmen be directed to prefer [?] a Petition to the General Court, praying for Liberty to have fish let into Cape Pond, thro the dams, called Bennett's Mill dams --

[...] Voted. That the Selectmen be directed to Procure Some Alewives & put them into the Cape Pond this Spring ---

(Town Records, Vol 3, p. 282)

1790

[Town Meeting, March 8, 1790]

[...] Voted to Choose a Committee [??] to agree with Mr Moses Bennett, respecting the Alewives passing his Mill stream.

[...] Voted, That the Town Clerk Post [?] Mr. Moses Bennett's Proposals in the Several Parts of them [?], relative to the alewives passing his Mill Stream and request a general attendance of the Inhabitants at the Adg. of this Meeting (which was accordingly done). The meeting was then adjourned to Monday next at 2 Clock PM and that pursuant to the above adg. Monday 22, March 1790.

[...] Voted that the Selectmen be a Committee to wait on the Owners or Proprietors of the Stream leading from Cape Pond so called to Annisquam River so call and request of them a Passageway immediately to be opened for the fish called Alewives [?] to the said Pond thro Mr. Moses Bennett's or any other Persons Dam or Dams and Report at the adj. of this meeting --

(Town Records, Vol 3, pp. 337 , 338, 339)

1791

[Warrant Town meeting, January 27, 1791]

[...] 3. To see if the town will give Orders to the Treasurer to pay the committee the money they advanced to carry on the Lawsuit against Mr. Moses Bennett concerning his Mill stream.

(Town Records, Vol 3, p. 347)

1793

[Town meeting, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1793]

[Voted that the Selectmen confer with Moses Bennett re: alewives and David Plumer re: road [?] over Ring's Mill Stream]

(Town Records, Vol 3, p. 375)

1794

[Warrant Town meeting, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1794]

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[...] 8. To know what the Town will do respecting the fish going into Mr. Bennett's Mill Streams –  
(Town Records, Vol 3, p. 382)

1794

[Town meeting, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1794]

[...] Voted. That the Selectmen agree with the owner or owners of Bennett's Mill stream upon the fish called Alewives to pass to & from the Cape Pond , the current year, on such terms as they shall think Reasonable –  
(Town Records, Vol 3, p. 387)

1797

[Town meeting, March 13, 1797]

[...] Voted. That the Selectmen be a Committee to confer with the owner or owners of Bennett's Mill Stream, so called , respecting the passing of the fish, called Alewives, passing thro the same to the Cape Pond, and make Report at May [?] meeting next ---

[...] Voted. That in case Mr. Moses Bennett opens a passage way thru his Mill Stream for the purpose of letting the fish called Alewives to pass into the Cape Pond and also of repassing thru the same from said Pond his title to the said Stream shall thereby, by no means be invalidated.

(Town Records, Vol 3, pp. 434 & 435)

[Vol 3, several more committees re repairs, etc.]

1831

Town chooses a committee to appraise and dispose of privileges at Goose-cove dam.  
(Babson footnote)

1833

Town sells to Zachariah Stevens, by quitclaim deed, Bennet's Mill Stream for \$350. Mr. Stevens was then the owner of "Ring's Mills." (Babson footnote)

1856

Remains of [Bennett's?] dam here [head of Saw Mill Pond] in 1856. (map: T. Griffin)

1878

Washington Street – left. From Junction of Main, commercial, and Angle Sts. and Western Av. Northwesterly and Northeasterly to the Rockport Line. 342-346 Washington Street. Structure – Gristmill. Owner – Albert Dodge. (Streets 1878)<sup>vi</sup>

1878

Mill or Sawmill River

Washington Street – left. From Junction of Main, commercial, and Angle Sts. and Western Av. Northwesterly and Northeasterly to the Rockport Line. 510 Washington Street. Structure – Mill. Owner – Daniel B. Hodgkins.

1918

Detailed map of the upper end of Mill River as Fulling Mill Brook or Bennett’s Mill Stream with notes of dams, sluices, remains of mills, etc. drawn by T. Griffin from an 1805 deed. Includes properties of David Allen in 1860, Joshua and Moris Younger in 1860, Beng. Foster in 1740, Tom. Younger in 1820, Bennett’s mill & dam, W, Vinson’s mill & dam. (map: T. Griffin)

1930

Alewife Brook dammed by the city to create Babson Reservoir. (Garland)

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<sup>i</sup> Garland, *The Gloucester Guide*, 2004

<sup>ii</sup> Babson, John J., *History of the Town of Gloucester*, 1860

<sup>iii</sup> Griffin, T. *General Plan of Fulling Mill Brook or Bennett’s Mill Stream as per Deed of Moses Bennett to Joseph Foster in 1805. some additions Made from Earlier & Later deeds of same property. Scale 1”- 100 ft. 1918.*