

GLOUCESTER'S COLONIAL-ERA MILLS: WALKER CREEK

Walker Creek – 17th and 18th century water-powered mills

William Haskell, Jr. and Mark Haskell were given liberty to “set down and erect” a corn (grist) mill on Walker Creek in West Gloucester at a Town Meeting held on May 13, 1690. In exchange for the privilege, the Haskell’s promised to maintain the bridge and causeway, sufficient for a man and his horse, on the road to Ipswich. According to Babson, John Emerson, William Vinson, and William Sargent, all owners of grist mills on the Mill River, protested against the vote to grant the Walker Creek privilege. As the mills of the latter three gentlemen a) were in Annisquam some distance away; and b) their mills seemed to have been in constant disrepair (see Mill River) it is interesting that they complained of a new mill going up.

The Haskell’s did make use of their privilege, erecting a tide mill at the mouth of Walker Creek. By 1823 (*A Survey of the Town’s Highway. June 12th, 1823. By William Saville*) Burnham’s cornmill is noted at what was probably the original site of the Haskell’s mill. Mason’s 1831 map (*Map of Gloucester, Cape Ann. John Mason. 1831*) shows a sawmill on the upper end of Walker Creek on the more southern of two roads leading to Essex (modern Essex Ave.), probably owned by a Haskell descendent, and Burnham’s Corn Mill closer to the mouth of the creek located by a bridge on the more northern of the roads (modern Concord Street) leading to Essex.

Later, Frederick and Abraham Haskell owned mills at 405 Essex Avenue, 27 Lincoln Avenue, and 10 Walker Street. (*Numbers of the Dwellings, Buildings, & Lots of Vacant Land [...] Board of Aldermen 1878. Vol. 1 & 2*)

From: *Town Records, Vol. 1 & 2. Somes transcription*

April 8.1651

Richard Windo hath givenn him tenn Acres of upland on that sid of Henerie Walker creeke that his house is now sett, being the upper sid of the creeke and tenn Acres of salte marsh on the same sid when Widdow Tybbots tenn Acres that belong to her farme is Laid out: if there be so much Left. (Town Records vol I, p. 37)

Pre-1690

Haskell Brook, Essex Ave. between Sumner & Lincoln Streets built on William Haskell’s pre-1690 sawmill dam. Foundation remnants visible in 1990. Forest Lane follows upstream to William Haskell’s mill pond (Garland, *The Gloucester Guide*, pp. 20-21)

1690

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

Walker Creek

1690

Att a Town meeting held in Gloucester the 13th of May 1690

Given to William Haskell Jun and Mark Haskell Liberty to set down and erect a corn mill upon the creek called Walkers creek and the selectmen of this Town had power given them in the said Town meeting by way of a voite to order and appoint where the said mill shall be erected and set down in the above said /walkers creek and in consideration of the said grant about the seting of there corn mill down upon Walkers creek wee the said William haskell Jun and mark Haskell doe primis and Ingage to the town to keep up and mentain both the bridge and the case way sefecient for both man and his horse that is in the road which is the highway to Ipsuwich over the creeke by deacon haskells his house (Town Records Vol 1 p. 135)

1690

13 may [16]90: at the same Town meeting which is next above expressed Willi: haskell junr. and mark haskell mad request to the Town for to have Liberty to set down a corn mill within the Township of glocester upon a creek called Walker Creek and befor it was put to a voit to try the mind of the Town Mr John Emerson Willi vinson peter duncan and Will: Sargeant senr. did say they did protest against the voit. (l. p. 340)

1690

NOTE: Mark & William Haskell licensed by the Town to build a tide mill on Walker Creek for grinding corn. Reputed to provide corn for the West India trade but shallow water suggests lightering to larger ships. Foundation on private land – access 1/10 mi. from creek off concord St. down and old cart path. Foundation remnants visible in 1990 (Garland, pp 20-21)

1775-1783

MAP: “Gloucester 1775-1783”, no publisher, notes the location of W. Haskell, Walker Creek near the western edge of West Parish.

1823

MAP: “A Survey of the Town’s Highways”, taken June 12th, 1823, by Willm. Saville, Surveyor. The site of the Haskell grist mill is identified as Burnham’s Corn Mill.

1878

Essex Avenue – right. From Western Avenue “between Nos. 113 and 115” running Northwesterly to boundary between Gloucester and Essex . 405 Essex Avenue. Structure – Sawmill. Owner – Frederick Haskell. (Numbers of Dwellings, Buildings and Lots [...], by Orders of the Aldermen, 1878)

Walker Creek

1878

Lincoln Street – right. From Essex Avenue “between Nos. 405 and 407” Northerly to Walker Street. 27 Lincoln Avenue. Structure – Mill. Owner – Abram Haskell. (Numbers {...]1878)

1878

Walker Street – left. From Summer Street “between Nos. 20 and 22” to Concord Street “between Nos. 280 and 282” near Essex line. See Rogers Report 1883. 10 Walker Street. Structure – Mill. Owner – Abram Haskell. (Numbers [...] 1878)

1959

Plan of Land. (West) Gloucester property of Carrie Currier, 1959, Essex Survey Service. “Old Mill Site” identified in the tidal portion of Walker Creek.

2014

Google Earth. Spillway and mill ponds shown in Walker Creek at the site of the Haskell/Burnham grist mill.

Town Records and Maps are available at the Cape Ann Museum and the City Archives.