

Discover Sparta Brook



Sparta Brook is a beautiful stream that begins in the hills of Briarcliff and runs two major branches to merge in Ossining before descending through a dramatic gorge and into the Hudson River. In 2015 Sparta Brook was the focus of the Discover Your Streams program run by Hudson Valley Arts and Science, a Westchester-based nonprofit organization funded through grants from the Hudson River Foundation and the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Discover Your Streams seeks to bring attention to the small Hudson River tributaries that run through Hudson Valley communities. Streams are surveyed for the wildlife they host and for the pollution they harbor. Additional historical research reveals past uses for the streams, such as power sources for grist mills. The research is combined with extant artwork, historical photographs and maps to create engaging signage to report the findings. The goals are to raise public awareness of these small streams and to restore them to health, making them navigable again for the migration of spawning Hudson River fish.

Research conducted with the help of Ossining High School students and teachers shows that fish are abundant along the entire length of the stream, including Blacknose Dace, Creek Chub, Pumpkinseed Sunfish, American Eel and Crayfish. Aquatic macroinvertebrates (insects in the stream bed gravel) were collected and sent to the NYS DEC WAVE lab for identification and use in characterizing the stream's water quality index. Bacteriological analysis was conducted at 12 locations along the stream, revealing sewage-associated *E. coli* and *Enterococcus* bacteria in concentrations up to 20 times higher than NYS DEC guidelines for recreational waters. Sources of contamination are being investigated. The Riverkeeper organization in Ossining stepped in to help and tracked down and stopped one source of non-sewage contamination from illegal dumping of restaurant grease from the Arcadian Shopping center.

HISTORY AND ECOLOGY

Sparta Brook is a tributary to the Hudson River. The waterway starts high in the hills of Briarcliff Manor in two branches, joining on the east (between the Sunoco gas station and the laundromat) before crossing under Route 9 and reemerging near the historic Jug Tavern.

Called *Sasachem* by Native Americans, Sparta Brook defined the southern boundary of the Sparta community. Sparta was settled as a farm around 1723 and developed into a thriving district in the 1790s due to the Sparta Dock on the Hudson River. The dock was a busy port importing goods into northern Westchester and exporting agricultural and manufactured products. Sparta Brook also provided water and power to a grist mill specializing in grinding mustard seed. The mill was located at the bottom of a dramatic gorge before spilling the brook into Kenney's Cove of the Hudson River. The building of the railroad around 1850 severed access to the dock and supplanted its function, crippling the local economy.

In 2014, Hudson Valley Arts and Science, under funding from the Hudson River Foundation and Entergy, undertook an ecological survey of aquatic invertebrates and fish of the Sparta Brook. Invertebrate results identified the stream as "possibly impacted" by pollution, and bacterial tests revealed very high levels of *E. coli* (8833/100ml). Small fish are nevertheless abundant.

Efforts are underway to identify pollution sources and to restore Sparta Brook to a more pristine condition suitable for recreation. Leaking septic systems, runoff from garden fertilizers and the relentless loss of many small buffering wetlands along the stream's length are thought to be prime contributors to its decline.

Visit the HVAAS.org website for more information on the ecology and pollution assessment report or scan the barcode.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thanks to:
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) program www.dec.state.ny.us
Gardiner
Village of Sparta, Inc. (www.villageofsparta.org)
Village of Ossining
Ossining Historical Society Museum (www.ossininghistoricalsociety.org)
Hudson Valley Arts and Science (www.hvartsandscience.org)
Sparta Brook is a tributary to the Hudson River.
Map made by the Hudson Valley Arts and Science, Inc.
For more information visit HVAAS.org

SPARTA WATERSHED

Places:
1-Hilltop Farm
2-Kenney's Cove
3-Sparta Brook north branch headwater
4-Sparta Brook south branch headwater
5-Site of old grist mill
6-Long Drop Mill outlet
Culverts
Sparta Brook
Roads
Watershed (1000 acres)
Pond

FRESHWATER ANIMALS OF SPARTA BROOK

Creek chub (average size 5 in.)
Blacknose dace (average size 2 in.)
Crayfish (average size 1.5 in.)
Pumpkinseed (average size 3 in.)

Background image: Women by the Sparta Brook in front of the Jug Tavern by Ludmilla Pilat Welch in 1883. Painting looks west from what is now the parking lot of the Westchester Community College satellite campus.

DISCOVER YOUR STREAMS SPARTA BROOK

Subdivision plan of Sparta from 1795 including Jug Tavern (Garrison House) and the Grist Mill, owned by William Kenney after whom Kenney's Cove is named.

Watercolor of the Grist Mill/ Mustard Mill by Ann Wittingham c. 1850.

Nim Lee, a Brooklyn graphic designer and science educator, designed the signage using historical paintings provided by the Ossining Historical Society Museum: the Jug Tavern with the stream in the foreground by Ludmilla Pilat Welch (1883) and the mustard seed grist mill by Ann Wittingham (1870). Jug Tavern of Sparta consulted on the historical content of the sign. The signage is mounted at two locations along the stream: one at the Sunoco station along Route 9, and one in a new pocket park created for the purpose by the Village of Ossining along Revolutionary Road across from the Jug Tavern.

Come see the signs and learn about and enjoy the Sparta Brook.
—Gareth Hougham

The pocket park and signage was created collectively by Village Manager Abe Zambrano, Mayor Victoria Gearity, Village Engineer Paul Fraioli, Doug Turshen of The Jug Tavern, and Gareth Hougham of HVAAS. BELOW: The Highway Department, Jose Costa, Dan Oliveira, Mike Sniffen, Tom Petrovichand.



SPARTA SPEAKS '16

Food, Drink & Song

We are pleased to announce the 2016 Sparta Speaks Series *Food, Drink & Song*: Three great events to invite people back to "The Jug" as a meeting place where history comes alive. All programs will be held at the historic Jug Tavern at the gateway to the Sparta Historic District in Ossining, New York.

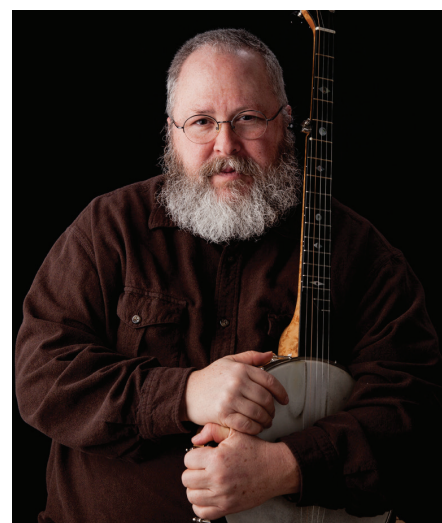
The Jug Tavern of Sparta is pleased to offer these programs to the community free of charge, which is made possible with the help of local sponsors. Seating is limited. Reservations are required and will be accepted approximately one month prior to the event. For more information please visit us at www.jugtavern.org.



Monday, May 2, 2016 at 7:30pm, Annual Meeting of The Jug Tavern of Sparta
Peter G. Rose, historian and author on Dutch-American culinary history will present: *A Taste of Change: Handwritten Cookbooks as Documents of Social and Family History*. Ms. Rose will discuss family cookbooks and how they document the continuation traditions while new influences are assimilated over generations. This program will include refreshments made from authentic recipes found in the author's cookbooks that reflect the distinct culture of the Hudson Valley. Books will be available for sale and signing at this event.



Sunday, September 11, 2016 at 4:00pm
Andy Brennan will present *History of Cider and Cider Apples in New York*. Andy is the owner of the Aaron Burr Cidery in Wurtsboro, NY, located on a homestead farm dating back to the early 19th century. The cidery is committed to growing heirloom varieties of cider apples and preserving the art of making cider as it was enjoyed in early America. This program will recount the history of America's most popular and traditional beverage, perfected right here in New York State, and will include a cider tasting of both hard and sweet varieties.



Saturday October 22, 2016 at 3:00pm and 7:00pm
Tim Rowell, Old-time Music specialist, performer, and music teacher, will present a **program on the roots of American folk music**. Tim, a clawhammer banjo player, will be joined by fiddler Ambrose Verdibello in a program that showcases how the traditional music of British Isle immigrants combined with African influences came together to form the distinct sound of Appalachian folk music in the early 19th century. There will be two shows at 3:00 and 7:00 pm. While both are appropriate for all ages, the afternoon program is recommended for families with children up to the age of 11.



Back to the Future

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, June 18, 2016 at 2 PM

The documentary, *Money Man: Frank A. Vanderlip*, will premiere at the Clear View School located at 480 Albany Post Road.

Frank A. Vanderlip came from nothing and reached success at the highest banking levels in the country. This provocative film, written and directed by Vicki Mack, will trigger thoughts about our financial systems that are in place today.

Vanderlip built the Clear View school (formerly the Scarborough School),

for his children exactly 100 years ago. A reception will follow at the Beechwood Ballroom, built as an addition to the Vanderlip mansion by the famous architect, William Welles Bosworth.

This very special event will be co-sponsored by the Clear View School, Beechwood at Scarborough, The Jug Tavern of Sparta and the Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough Historical Society.

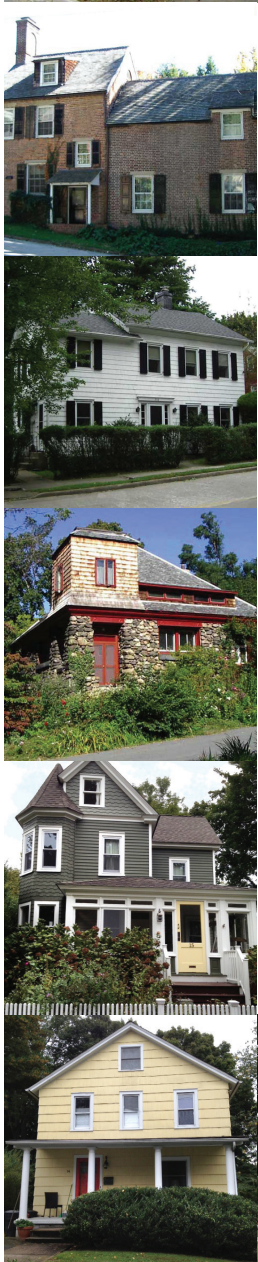
Tickets will be on sale soon.



A Walk In Time

From April through October, the Jug Tavern will conduct monthly walking tours of the historic Sparta neighborhood at the south end of Ossining. Dr. Alan Stahl, a neighborhood resident and former president of the Jug Tavern, who teaches in the History Department of Princeton University, will lead the tours. Each tour will begin at the Jug Tavern (Rockledge Avenue and Revolutionary Road, behind the CVS) at 1 p.m. with a showing of the video "The Battle for Sparta." Participants will then walk about six blocks through the neighborhood learning about the historic homes in the landmarked district; the tour will end at around 3 p.m.

Upcoming dates for 2016 are all Sundays: April 17, May 22, June 19, July 17, August 14, September 18, and October 16; check the Jug Tavern website (www.jugtavern.org) for updates. The tour is free, but participation is limited to 20 people. For a reservation or further information, contact alan@jugtavern.org. Additional tours can be arranged for groups; contact info@jugtavern.org to make arrangements.



Farewell to Flavia

It is with great regret and affection that we bid farewell to Flavia Fiorilli Shulman, Treasurer of the Jug Tavern of Sparta, Inc., for the past four decades. Since participating with her late husband Jerry Shulman in the efforts to save and rehabilitate the building in the 1970s, through the incorporation process and through endless monthly reports and annual accounts, Flavia has given freely of her time and bookkeeping expertise to keep us above water financially while vigilantly seeking methods to maximize our small but crucial endowment. We wish Flavia well as she enters retirement and hope she can find time from her increasing family responsibilities (two infant twin granddaughters!) and choir participation to continue to participate in Jug Tavern activities. In the words of her native Ticino, Switzerland, "Arrivederci, Flavia."

—Alan Stahl

*See You at
the Fair!*

Look for us
on Saturday,
June 11
at the Ossining
Village Fair