

Sharing the Flow



LaChute Riverwalk
Number 3 of 12

The waterfall in front of you spans only half of its original width. The left half disappeared long ago into Ticonderoga Pulp and Paper Company (later, International Paper Company) penstocks. The remainder of the waterfall fed both the American Graphite Company and the Horicon Iron Works on the north shore of the River.



In 1917, M. Y. Ferris drew this survey map of a transfer of land between Ticonderoga Pulp and Paper Company and the Joseph Dixon Crucible Company. By that time, the paper company needed the land to the east of the graphite mill for the disposal of black ash left over from the papermaking process. Courtesy of the Ticonderoga Historical Society.

Such sharing of water was common practice, because mills on opposite banks needed to run simultaneously. In fact, water rights (or "riparian rights") were among the first legal issues raised in a new township. In this case, the island wasn't in the middle of the stream, so a partition dam was constructed to split flow of the River right down the middle.

American Graphite Company and Horicon Iron Works shared the rights for their half of the river, probably because the owner of the Iron Works was one of the original founders of American Graphite Company in 1862. The graphite mill refined ore from local mines from 1863 until 1921, when the mines in Hague closed, then processed imported graphite ore until 1968.



This 1885 engraving recalls a time, ten years earlier, when American Graphite Company and Horicon Iron Works dominated the lower falls of the LaChute. The artist chose to ignore the Ticonderoga Pulp and Paper Company buildings that had stood on the near shore since 1878. Courtesy of a private collection.



The American Graphite Company mill (number 19) was built in 1863. When it burned in 1890, a new mill promptly replaced it. When that mill burned in 1968, Dixon donated the land to the Town. The tailrace that carried water back into the River is still visible as a shallow ditch on the opposite shore. Courtesy of the Ticonderoga Historical Society.



Joseph Dixon Crucible Company bought out the American Graphite Company in 1873, the same year they began to make pencils in their main plant in New Jersey. This "Ticonderoga Flake Graphite" was mixed with grease or oil to improve lubrication of bearings or gears in all kinds of machinery. Photograph by Christopher Fox.