

An Analysis of Mill Ponds in Vermont

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Recently, students in southern Pennsylvania located several former mill pond sites and analyzed the sediment which had been trapped behind the dams. Using old maps, they discovered that there was an average of one mill per two kilometers of river. We propose to do the same sort of research on former mill ponds in three counties in Vermont. We will use Chittenden, Essex, and Bennington counties for our research. We will visit a few of the sites we find to look for evidence of trapped mill pond sediments. We hope to make a connection between deposition of mill pond sediments, and a period of increased deforestation in Vermont. Hopefully there will be an increase in sediments trapped by the mill pond during Vermont's period of deforestation.

The UVM library has a good collection of historical Vermont maps, which indicate the locations of old mill ponds. For each county, we will make copies of the maps of each town, then locate and highlight all of the mill ponds present. We will compare the number of ponds in each county and speculate on the geomorphic reasons behind these numbers. Factors such as stream length, average slope, and rock type will be examined to help us draw conclusions as to why certain locations are preferable to have a mill ponds.

Using the online picture database, as well as the library's collections, we will try to find examples of old mill ponds/dams, and attempt to visit these locations for the purpose of comparison. During our visit we will look for evidence of past deforestation

along the banks, and possibly estimate the amount of sediment deposited in the pond.

We will take pictures and present them along with our findings.

We believe that mill ponds will be more abundant in areas with higher energy stream channels, and that deforestation in the mid 1800's contributed to the sediment load deposited in the mill ponds.

The only equipment required will be a digital camera which will be provided by library media services.