

Kingsland Park Waterfalls, Nutley, NJ

By David Wilson



Kingsland Park Waterfalls, Nutley NJ

The Kingsland Park waterfalls area still serves us with its beauty as a backdrop for many celebratory pictures of graduations, weddings, engagements, and nature photos. People fish the dam hydraulics and search for crayfish.

Waterfalls come in all shapes and sizes. They can be found everywhere and many are the focus of world-class tourist destinations. The sights and sounds help block out our industrialized world and allow us to escape into nature's beauty. Negative ions are created that help cleanse the air and stimulate our minds and bodies. Oxygen is infused into the water benefitting aqueous creatures downstream; just ask any fisherperson who has cast a line into the turbulence.

Nutley has manmade waterfalls on the Third River at the Kingsland Manor Historical site. The Kingsland Dam was constructed by Joseph Kingsland II to create the Kingsland Pond aka Yantacaw Pond or Yantacaw Lake and divert water to the Passaic Paper Mills right across the street. Water was used in a patented process to turn wood fibers into pulp needed for paper production. This factory was destroyed by fire in 1873.



View over the waterfalls, factory in distance, John Demmer collection

A partnership existed for a time between the Kingslands and LaMontes for National Safety Paper production in a new facility further up the road. The Kingslands also operated the Yantacaw Ice Company utilizing local ponds.

The Third River, which starts at the Great Notch Reservoir in Passaic County, has served many purposes over the years including drinking and irrigation supply, sewerage discharge, recreation, and hydro power.

The Kingsland Mills were implicated in an 1880 pollution complaint. A process released carbolic acid into the waterway and contaminated the Passaic River drinking water, changing the taste for Newark residents downstream. Some flushing by opening the flood gates in two ponds and water sweetening helped alleviate the condition.



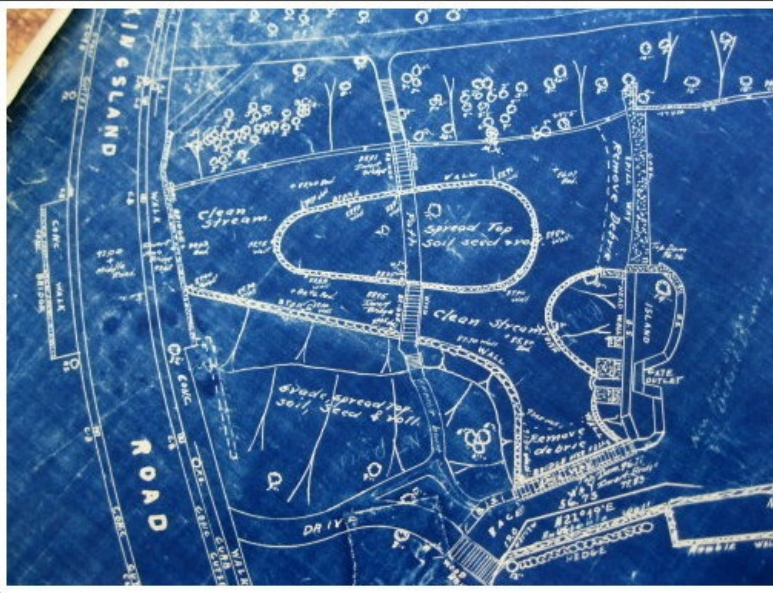
1906 Post Card, Amanda Weischedel collection

Research also shows the Wall Brothers operating a grist mill in the area before Joseph Kingsland Sr. acquired the property between 1785 and 1793. Kingsland was a New York City contractor supplying wooden curbs for the booming metropolis.

Extensive hardwood forests stretching several miles to the west of the Passaic River were harvested by Kingsland's workers. After processing lumber at the mill located near the Third River discharge in Clifton, boards were dragged to an awaiting ketch, The Charming Polly, and sailed over to New York.

The original dam was most likely constructed of wood and stone. Articles from 1843 refer to a great storm that caused widespread flooding and the Kingsland's Dam was "much injured." A later version was constructed of brownstone, probably from the Hochar Brothers quarry located nearby on the west side of Washington Ave. Two separate dams with spillways were constructed with upper and lower observation islands.

A flood gate was included for lowering the pond's water level for servicing and storm relief. The cornerstone, dated 1861, indicates the rebuilding to a masonry structure. The area was deeded over to the township in 1938 to establish Kingsland Park and in 1973 the Kingsland Manor Trust.



1936 Waterfalls Map, Dudley R. Shepard

The pond served many recreational purposes including fishing, boating, ice skating, and even swimming. The 1936-37 engineering plans show some WPA projects for park improvements that included dredging and leveling of the riverbeds, new brownstone access steps, and concrete reinforcement of the main dam. The dredged materials were deposited along the riverbanks for economy and soil replenishment.

Additional improvements in 1957 involved lowering the dam by two feet to help alleviate flooding conditions upstream and more dredging to remove snags and weeds that impeded water flow. Newly exposed brownstone wall was repointed. Much of the dredged material was deposited on the south end of the pond, expanding the area for the future United Nations Garden. Lastly, in the mid-sixties, more dredgings were deposited on the riverbanks to create the channels we have now. The only reminder of the pond is the brownstone stairs-to-nowhere at the bottom of Howe Avenue that used to end at the water's edge and allowed for feeding ducks and recreation access.

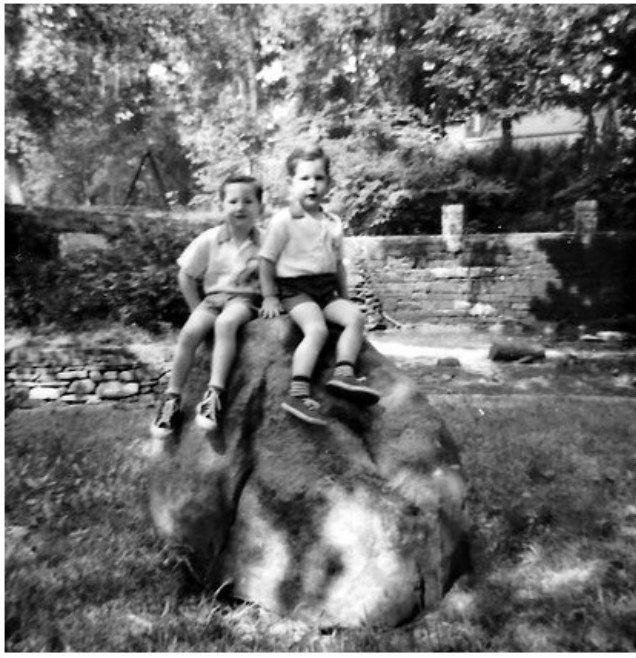


Kingsland Manor, Kingsland Park Waterfalls, 1970s

The area still serves us with its beauty as a backdrop for many celebratory pictures of graduations, weddings, engagements, and nature photos. People fish the dam hydraulics and search for crayfish. The upper island is only accessible for the adventurous that wade the stream and then climb the buttresses to the top. A local kid's goal was to have enough traction, speed, and strength in their legs to make the run up the steep cement ramp with fishing pole in hand. Wow, we were kings of the world!

In the array of pictures, we can see a foot bridge from the late 1940s spanning the secondary dam in front of the Manor.

Another picture shows a great boulder on the lower island that many a child climbed and was photographed on. When the walls of the lower island were raised, the boulder disappeared and I have not found anyone who knows its whereabouts.



Robert and David Wilson on Boulder, 1958

My friends and I spent many hours exploring this kid's wonderland. One time we found a rock conglomerate that had chunks of gold in it; we were rich, until it proved to be fool's gold. The arch bridge under Kingsland Road was our spot for catching twenty-four-inch carp. We accepted the dare to walk the dam and some even rode their bikes across.

During the winter we ice skated until curfew on the frozen channels and tended the bonfires. The clear, cold, starry nights and full moons, with the thunder of cracking ice will forever remain in our memories.

Another personality of this dam arises after storms that either make the water roar or freeze into a magnificent frozen masterpiece. Be sure to bring a camera when you visit.



Kingsland Park Icy Waterfalls, 1940s

This area is so steeped in history and I thank everyone who supplied stories, pictures, blueprints, memories, and news

articles on this picturesque area of Nutley: John Demmer, Leon Kish, Frank DeMaio, Amanda Weischedel, Ray and Robert Wilson.

Adapted from Nutley Neighbors, November and December; Best Version Media, a community magazine serving the residents of Nutley, N.J.



Kingsland Park Icy Waterfalls, 1940s

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