



The South River Current

Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship



River Restoration

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Mercury was used as a catalyst in the production of Rayon fiber at the former DuPont plant in Waynesboro from 1929 to 1950. Though DuPont no longer operates the Waynesboro plant, the company (now Corteva) continues its involvement in Waynesboro today with its river remediation efforts—restructuring the riverbanks to remove or cap mercury and prevent it from getting into the river and watershed. Since remediation work began, nearly 6,000 linear feet of riverbank along the South River have been treated to prevent erosion, and the new riverbanks have been replanted and restored to enhance the riverside habitat. These pictures display work at the riverbanks on the Allied Ready Mix property which is located downstream of the 2nd Street bridge.

Did You Know?

- The phrase “mad as a hatter” was coined because many hatmakers in the 1800s experienced neurological symptoms from inhaling mercury that was used to cure the felt for hats.
- Button cell batteries used in watches, cameras, calculators, and toys contain mercury.
- Past civilizations were transfixed with mercury, believing it held wondrous physical and spiritual properties.

Connections

Lots of companies in the South River Watershed seek to protect the environment while sustaining their businesses. One example is Blue Ridge Bucha, a company that creates fresh organic Kombucha crafted by hand and shared sustainably. Established in 2010 and located on Main Street in Waynesboro, the company actively pursues ways to reduce their environmental footprint and support the local economy. How do they do it? “For starters, we screen print our bottles locally, use reclaimed wood to make our tap handles, and compost our brewery waste to grow our gardens. We are committed to a regional distribution model and work with regional distributors that deliver a number of products with each delivery run in order to keep our carbon footprint extremely low. We use recycled cardboard in all of our wholesale packaging. We use stainless kegs that are returned to us for sanitation and reuse for our draft kombucha.” Wow, that’s impressive! Check out more about Blue Ridge Bucha [here](#).



Take a Walk Back

Nearly 300 years ago, settlers began migrating to Virginia looking for land to cultivate. These new farmers raised cattle, horses, sheep, and pigs. They harvested corn, rye, wheat, barley, oats, and buckwheat, which they then sold to local and distant customers. Inspired to find new ways to turn a profit, they built mills to make flour from wheat and distilled corn and rye into whiskey.



Picture taken by Robert T. Kinsey

By the middle of the 19th century, the Shenandoah Valley became widely known as the great wheat-growing section of the state and flour production was in full swing up until the end of World War I. By the turn of the 20th century there were as many as 20 mills along the South River from Waynesboro to Port Republic. The five-story Coiner’s Mill near Dooms on Rt. 340 just north of Waynesboro still stands, offering a snapshot of life during the early stages of industry in the area. For more highlights from the history of industry in the Watershed, watch the 3-minute vignette through the [SRST videos link](#) presented by the South River Science Team.



BLUE RIDGE BUCHA



The Current is a publication of the South River Science Team (www.southernriverstewards.org). To be added or deleted from our distribution list, contact KB at kbaldino@writingunlimitedllc.com