The Thomas Hart Gristmill is located on the east side of the Farmington River at the west end of Mill Lane. A dam exists to the west of the building. To the north and south of the mill lie other historic nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildings.
This shingled building features a gable roof. The largest part of the mill is rectangular in form and the smaller building is joined to it at the eave line and northeast corner. Six-over-six sash are found throughout. Note the double doors underneath the balcony on the west elevation and on the south elevation. Remodeled several times, many of the older materials have been replaced. Its original appearance is unknown.

Although previously dated about 1650, new evidence suggests that the mill was erected around 1690. In 1682(3) Deacon Stephen Hart, Sr. (1605-1682) left a will stating that his sons were to receive his farm. John received a half interest and Stephen and Thomas inherited a quarter interest each (Manwaring 1:320). Deacon Hart was a prominent figure in Farmington having been one of the first proprietors and a part of Rev. Thomas Hooker's group which moved to Hartford from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was born in Essex, England and married Margaret Smith. By 1689 his son Stephen quit-claimed his "more than an equal part . . . a double portion" to his sisters and brothers, leaving himself a single portion of his father's estate (Manwaring 1:464). No mention of a gristmill exists in either of the above referenced deeds. However, in 1696, it is recorded that Thomas Hart (1649-1724) was fined for overcharging the grinding of corn (Bickford p. 83), evidence that the gristmill was then standing and operating. Thomas married Ruth Hawkins and raised six children: Josiah, Mary, Margaret, Hawkins, Thomas, Hezekiah, and John. He served as a deputy, speaker at the General Court, and justice for Hartford County (1698-1706). He also gained the rank of captain through military service. After his death in 1726, his son Josiah received the "cornmill at ye lower end of my homemolt" and the "remaining part of my homelott that I have not given by deed" (Manwaring 2:520). Captain Josiah Hart (1686-1758) married Sarah Bull (1684-1737) and later Lois Goodwin. He raised six children: Thomas, Ruth, Mercy, Josiah, Jr., Sarah, and Jonathan. He was a wealthy man who served as justice of the peace and later as a representative to the General Court from 1731-34. In 1757.(SEE CONT. SHEET)

he sold the "mill place to the west end of my lott where I now dwell" to his son-in-law, Roger Hooker, the husband of his deceased daughter Mercy (1719-1740) for L100 (FLR 10:1). Hooker (1710-1774) later married Anna Kellog, after his first wife's death in childbirth. Eventually his family totaled ten children. In 1770 Roger Hooker sold the "grist mill, dam, [and] utensils . . . at the west end of Thomas Hart Hooker's homelot" to his son Thomas Hart Hooker for L300 (FLR 17:350). Thomas Hart Hooker (1745-1775) had married Sarah Whitman in 1769 and raised two children: Abigail and Thomas. Two months after his purchase, he mortgaged the property to Samuel Deming for L350 (FLR 17:352). Perhaps due to lack of thriftiness, Hooker lost the mill. Deming, a farmer who also dealt in trade with H.L. Bidwell, gave the six acre property with dwelling house (66 Main Street) and grist mill to his sons John and Chauncey Deming (FLR 26:462). These brothers were prominent import and export merchants who traveled to the West Indies. The property remained in the Deming family until March of 1862 when it was sold for $10,000 to Clarissa Williams of New Jersey (FLR 57:218). By August of the same year, she sold it to Robert M. Taylor of New York (FLR 57:245), who sold it in 1864 to John E. and Edmund B. Cowles (FLR 57:446). They were the sons of Col. Martin and Harriet (Wells) Cowles. Upon Edmund's death in 1895, the estate was sold to Gustav A. and Paul F. Wollenberg of 125 Garden Street (FLR 70:517-20). The Wollenbergs sold the mill to Anne F. Richardson in 1913 (FLR 78:366-7) and she later sold it to the Farmington Mills Corporation (FLR 77:574). In 1915 it was sold to William S. Parsons (FLR 77:574), who later quit-claimed it to John J. Dwyer of Hartford (FLR 76:543). Little is known about Dwyer except that in 1917 he sold the grist mill and an adjoining property to noted playwright, Winchell Smith (FLR 78:646). It is said that Smith kept the mill operating and flour could be purchased there. Smith lived at 188 Garden Street in a large Neo-Classical-style house on the Farmington River. He died in 1948 and his administrator, the Phoenix State Bank and Trust Company, sold the property to Emmett D. and Mary M. Rourke (FLR 102:85). Since that time it has changed owners several times.

Although it has been renovated and older materials have been replaced with new materials, the Thomas Hart Gristmill is an extremely significant component of Farmington's eighteenth-century commercial development. The building is also historically significant due to its association with the Hart and Hooker families.
OWNER'S NAME: Rourke, Emmet & Mary

ADDRESS: 40 Mill Lane

DATE BUILT: ca. 1650 FOR: Deacon Stephen Hart

FORMER OWNERS:
- Rourke, Emmet & Mary, from Est. Winchell Smith, Trustee's Deed 5/18/1948, Vol. 102, p. 85; Smith from John J. Dwyer of N.Y. 5/23/1917, Vol. 78, p. 646; Dwyer from William S. Parsons 2/28/1916, Vol. 76, p. 543; Parsons from Farmington Mills Corp. 6/29/1915, Vol. 77, p. 574; Farmington Mills Corp. from Anna F. Richardson 2/1/1913, Vol. 78, p. 372; Richardson from Gustav A. Wollenberg 1/9/1913; Vol. 78, p. 366, "mill and all buildings except a small one occupied by Yandow which he shall remove in 30 days"; G. Wollenberg from Edmund B. Cowles, ½ int. and from J.E. Cowles ½ int., Vol. 70, pps. 517, 18, 19, 20; F.B. & J.E. Cowles from Robert M. Taylor 10/28/1865, Vol. 57, p. 446, mill, house, etc.; Taylor from Clarissa and Francis A. Williams, Vol. 57, p. 215, 8/19/1862, "the grist-mill, saw-mill, dwelling-house, barn, water-rights, reserving to Samuel Deming, his heirs and assigns, the right to pass and repass over the road from Farmington to said mills, also

REFERENCES:
- "Farmington Town Clerks, 1943", p. 65
Previously extracted text:

Former Owners, cont.:
the right of crossing and recrossing said Farmington River, also reserving to said Deming, his heirs, the foundry building on said premises which said foundry said Deming or his heirs is to remove on six months' notice being given him by the owner of said premises."

Williams from Samuel Deming 3/27/1862, Vol. 57, p. 218; S. Deming from John Deming; J. Deming from father, Samuel, 4/6/1786, Vol. 26, p. 462; S. Deming from T.H. Hooker; T.H. Hooker from Roger Hooker, 5/14/1770, Vol. 17, p. 350, - in 1759, Roger Hooker, son of John Hooker, owned the mill and dam on the Farmington River "a little west of the meeting house where for time out of mind there has peaceably been kept up and maintained ye principal gristmill in said Farmington by virtue of an ancient grant, and the town approve the said Hooker repairing the dam and approve to Hooker his heirs and assigns full power and liberty to keep up and maintain forever said dam."; R. Hooker from Josiah Hart 3/17/1757, Vol. 10, p. 1; J. Hart by inheritance, from the Hart ancestors back to 1650.
Westward from Main Street on Mill Lane, you will find the town's sole surviving early industry, "Winchell Smith's Mill," of which Playwright Smith was only one operator in an unbroken line since 1650. The floods of 1955 caused a longer work stoppage than the mill had ever had, but it is turning out its daily five tons of water-ground grain again. (P.S.: In case you wonder why water grinds better meal than an engine, the present owner, E. D. Rourke, explains that the cool stones produce no heat to kill the grain germ, and they grind coarsely, to give texture to the bread.)

Calvin Coolidge knew that. His last signature, written the day he died, was on a check to this mill for $1.39 worth of whole wheat flour. Not $1.38 or $1.40. Not Calvin.

His son John lives here now, by the way.
The GRIST MILL

The Farmington Valley Herald of November 9, 1972, carried this re-print of a pen and ink sketch of the mill, taken from the Farmington Magazine of November, 1900, Volume 1, Number 1. It was captioned "The Mill -- Wollenberg Brothers". Note: They were Paul and Gustavus Wollenberg, now long deceased.

This was provided to the Herald by Mabel Hurlburt with the following statement:

"This too has the semblance of the pencil of R. B. B. (Robert Bolling Brandegee). The little old mill pond fully reflected in the quiet pond - the rush over the dam and the turbulent water below - all framed in little fishes capped with one big one, the one that got away, with two tails and two eyes, the height of imagination".
The old grist mill is pictured on page 53 of the Farmington Book, and partially visible to its left is the house now known as 36 Mill Road, moved from its original site, which is that shown in this photo.

Date of construction of the first dam and grist mill here is given below as 1650.

Mrs. Hurlburt says on page 361 of "Town Clerks", of early settler Deacon Stephen Hart, that "His land extended to the river, where he maintained the first grist mill on the site of the present mill, if indeed the present mill is not part of the original".

Julius Gay speaks on page 51 of the Farmington Book, of "the first dam which interfered with the ascent of fish, was that which turned the wheels of the corn-mill of Capt. Thomas Hart, and which we hear of in 1701 as lying not far from Indian Neck. When built we know not... In 1767 this dam was complained of as a nuisance by those who traveled over the Litchfield Road". The writer believes that he was speaking of what is now known as Meadow Road, which crosses the meadow from the south end of Garden Street. The dam may have caused high water in the Pequabuc River.

Mrs. Hurlburt's statement on page 65 of "Town Clerks" is as follows:

"In 1759 Roger Hooker, a son of John Hooker, owned the mill and dam on the Farmington River 'a littel west of the meeting house, where for time out of mind there has peacably been kept up and maintained ye principal gristmills in said Farmington by virtue of an ancient grant, and the town approve the said Hooker repairing the dam and approve to Hooker his heirs and assigns full power and liberty to keep up and maintain forever said dam' ".

The records of ownership shown on the library card starts with:

1757 purchased by Roger Hooker from Josiah Hart (see 66 Main Street) to whom it had descended from the Harts since 1650, built by Stephen Hart in that year, and the records continue as follows:

1770 Thomas Hart Hooker from Roger Hooker,
1770 Samuel Deming purchased,
1786 John Deming from father Samuel Deming,
1862 Samuel Deming from John,
1862 Francis A. Williams from John Deming,

March 25, 1972
Francis and Clarissa Williams to Robert M. Taylor, August 8, 1862,

Robert M. Taylor to John E. Cowles and Edmund B. Cowles, three acres and gristmill, sawmill, dwelling house and barn, October 28, 1865,

Grace Cowles, Executrix of the estate of Edmund B. Cowles, to Gustava A. Wollenberg and Paul F. Wollenberg, March 10, 1894,

John E. Cowles to same, February 5, 1895.

(Note--The dwelling house was sold by the Wollenbergs on April 5, 1899, to Lorenzo Warren, who sold it to Guiseppi Mastrobattista on September 12, 1912.)

Gustave Wollenberg (this was after Paul Wollenberg's death) sold to Anna F. Richardson January 9, 1913, two acres and the mill, including the water power,

Anna Richardson to Farmington Mills Corporation (Winchell Smith's company) on February 1, 1913,

Farmington Mills to William S. Parsons, June 29, 1915,

William S. Parsons to John J. Dwyer of New York, February 28, 1916,

John J. Dwyer to William B. Smith (also known as Winchell Smith, on May 23, 1917,

Winchell Smith probably operated the mill more as for publicity than for profit, enjoying the owning of the old mill as an antique. It did get publicity, and Mrs. Hewes states that one of the last checks written by President Coolidge was in payment for flour sent him from here.

It was near this site on the river that the scene of Lillian Gish being rescued from and ice-filled river was filmed somewhere around 1915 or 1918 for the movie "Way Down East". Winchell Smith, friend of D. W. Griffith, was the influence in having it filmed here. The company took over the Elm Tree Inn, almost, for a few days and caused quite a stir in town. The simulated ice cakes were made of wood, covered with white canvas, glue and mica. The rescue was made by Richard Barthelmes, the scene being shot late in the afternoon after most of the spectators had been called home for supper. Dorothy Gish's death in Rapallo, Italy, in June 1968, was a reminder of the incident, and the Hartford Times wrote of it in their issue of June 21.

Jesse Saunders, who came to Farmington as Winchell Smith's chauffeur, became the operator of the mill for him, and perhaps continued for some time after his death in 1933. The house at 199 Garden Street was built by Winchell Smith as a home for Mr. Saunders, and sold by the Smith estate in 1934 to Charles E. Burt.

March 25, 1972
Emmett and Mary Rourke purchased the mill in 1948, perhaps from the estate of Winchell Smith, Mr. Rourke having been working there for some time prior to this purchase. Emmett Rourke was of the John Rourke family of Farmington Avenue, his wife being the former Mary Jane Mulcunry, whom he married in 1938.

Winchell Smith in his renovation of the mill when he purchased it, had added some height to the building housing it. Emmett Rourke put in large concrete piers (every one thought him crazy, to do it) with long reinforcing rods, which he wrapped around the beams. This work probably saved the mill from destruction during the disastrous 1955 flood. Water was up to the upstairs windows. One resident tells how the Rourkes laboriously carried sack after sack of grain as far upstairs as possible, but finally had to throw it out into the river, as it would have swelled and been ruined. As soon as the water had receded the grain was found by passing Canada geese, and they stayed several days devouring it.

The Rourkes continued their residence here, and their operation of the mill, until around 1961, when Mr. Rourke's failing health forced him to retire, and he died in 1962.

Mrs. Rourke stayed in residence here, continuing her life-time work for Travelers Insurance Company. The mill was succumbing to the ravages of time and dis-use.

An article in the Hartford Courant of January 18, 1970, told of the Town of Plainville's wish that the old dam be removed, claiming that it was causing the Pequabuck River to back up and overflow Plainville's new sewage treatment plant, preventing its satisfactory operation.

This called attention to the worsening state of the grist mill, and again brought up questions as to its ultimate disposition. Some had hoped that the historical society would purchase and preserve it, but there seems little indication that this would be done.

Mrs. Rourke had been willing to sell it ever since the death of her husband, but satisfactory offers had not been received. One prospect wished to convert it to an inn, but needed a liquor permit, and that could not be obtained. Another wished to tear it down entirely, and build high-rise apartments on the site.

Mrs. John Winter, operator of the Helen Winter gallery on Farmington Avenue, had never particularly noticed the old grist mill before this time, but now she visited it and fell in love with its possibilities. She and her husband considered the matter fully, and the actual purchase of the mill was consummated on July 27, 1970.

March 25, 1972
An article in the Hartford Courant of July 30, just three days after the purchase, is partially quoted to show Mrs. Winter's thoughts and plans. She said that her love of old things, and desire to preserve an important historical landmark, prompted the purchase. The article says:

"The ponderous machinery and the huge grindstones used to crush wheat into flour are still in place at the mill, and will be left intact for visitors to the antique shop showroom on the ground floor of the two story mill. Many other historical features of the mill... also will be restored... A new feature she said will be a wall of windows on the west side of the building to afford visitors a view of the river. 'I don't intend to change an inch of the mill's historical flavor. It's just like stepping back into the 17th century'.... The mill will house other shops in addition to the gallery".

James McA. Thomson, past president of the Farmington Historical Society, and a longtime advocate of the preservation of the mill, said the sale to Mrs. Winter "insures the preservation of an important part of Farmington's colonial history".

The opening of the Grist Mill took place in late November of 1970, and it is called "Helen Winter's Grist Mill". She speaks of it as follows in her opening brochure:

"The mill has a fascination for everyone, there is something about it, perhaps its location, literally standing in the river between the millpond and the waterfall -- perhaps that lovely sound of water, which drowns out all the sounds of today. Everyone feels the magic, everyone wants to linger.

"And now the old mill starts on a new career, as a spot which really will mix business with pleasure, a place where one may find the unusual things which are not to be seen in supermarkets and shopping centers. There's a place for Nancy's gold-leafing and expert repair work, a corner for the lovely Thai silks and cottons and handmade things which we have so little room for, and a gallery where paintings may be seen to their best advantage.

"In the balcony, looking over the millpond and the waterfall, is the Needleloft, where Barbara Eyre, Maggie Wall, and Charlotte Westerfield design original and unusual needlepoint.

"Then there is Soupcon, where you may sit and enjoy the mill over a light luncheon or a cup of tea. And in the spring and summer Soupcon serves on the lawn beside the river, where there is always shade and a cool breeze from the water.

"With the dress shop and the bookstore we have a full house -- one which we hope will have something of interest for everyone. But most of all we hope that the old mill will always fascinate those who come here, and that this bit of our past will continue to add magic to our present".

March 25, 1972
The writer will tell of the various shops as he knows them, which is truly not very thoroughly, his visit was too short.

Mrs. Nancy Williams is the associate of Mrs. Winter in the Helen Winter Gallery. She is a native of Salem, Massachusetts. She says: "I grew up with antiques -- my parents were interested in them -- their friends had antique stores --. Our house was "The East India House", and my mother and grandmother were both active at the House of Seven Gables, on Essex Street. Mr. and Mrs. Williams live at 17 Main Street, her husband being head of Panloc Company, Collinsville. The Helen Winter Gallery is on the first floor, but also occupies some space on the second floor, adjacent to the Needle Loft. It handles antiques and old paintings, Thai silks and cottons and handmade things -- plus many more.

The Grist Mill Art Gallery has been operated by Mrs. Charles Ferguson since October 1971, handling "original paintings in all media, graphics and sculpture, including Eskimo art", all by current, living artists, including her husband. Mr. Ferguson is Director of the Museum of American Art in New Britain, but also is himself an artist, principally of land- and sea-scapes.

Alice Ferguson, director of the Grist Mill Gallery, is the former Alice Jobs, born in New York City, reared in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and a graduate of Smith College. Almost directly from there she entered the U. S. Intelligence Service in Washington, where she was stationed during World War II. The Fergusons were married in 1946 after his return from military service. They have lived in Old Deerfield, Massachusetts, Hill School, Pennsylvania, and New York City, before coming to live in West Hartford. Just prior to coming here to operate this art gallery in Farmington, Mrs. Ferguson had a similar one at Fishers Island, off New London.

The Martha West Shop, dealing in "Fashions for Ladies", is owned by Justin Levy, one of four shops of this name in various localities. Mrs. Jane Lubin is the manager of this store, which opened here in the spring of 1971.

Soupcon is part of the Helen Winter enterprise, and operated under her direction.

One millstone, removed from the main floor, is now embedded in the ground in front of the entrance to the Grist Mill. The timbers and beams of the old mill are preserved and in view. Part of the floor of the second story was removed to provide more light, and to add height to parts of the lower floor.

June 10, 1972
The Needleloft is the brainchild and property of Barbara (Mrs. James) Eyre, Maggie (Mrs. Wayne) Wall and Charlotte (Mrs. John) Westerfield, all of Farmington. Their card reads "complete line of needlepoint designs, yarn and accessories". (Error - the Westerfields live on Deercliff Road, Avon).

The millstone casement, in which operated the millstone which is now embedded in the ground at the front entrance to the Grist Mill, has now been converted by John Westerfield and used in the Needleloft as a unique display case filled with yarns.

To illustrate some of the activity of the Needleloft owners, the following is told, based on an article from the front page of the Women's Section of the Hartford Courant.

The Farmington Garden Club sponsored a "Fairly Floral" garden fair in Farmington which took place on Tuesday October 3, 1972. Its purpose was the raising of money to supplement the available funds for the preservation of the beauty of the landscape of the Farmington Village Green. A fund had been set up by bequest of the late Miss Sarah Porter, who died in 1900, but that fund is now inadequate, due to such a rise in costs since 1900. An exquisite needlepoint rug, designed by Mrs. John R. Westerfield, Jr., of the Grist Mill, but actually made by 16 members of the Garden Club, was "the big money raiser" for the Fair. Workers on the rug include the following people whose homes are included in the collection of houses written up in this series:

Mrs. Robert Aspinwall, 16 Main Street,
Mrs. Wallace Barnes, 50 High Street,
Mrs. John Hornblow, 2 Colton Street,
Mrs. Lucius Whitaker, 8 High Street.

October 10, 1972
The Millrace, "A complete bookstore, unusual books, cards and maps", is the way John Chapin and Ryan Kuhn speak of their shop. The two young men became acquainted at Trinity College, Hartford.

Ryan Kuhn was in military service after graduation, stationed at Fort Ord in California, and at Fort Lewis in the State of Washington. After his service was completed, and after some experience in creative writing for advertising, he came back to this area just when the Grist mill was being remodeled. Unfortunately the writer did not get back to meet Mr. Kuhn a second time, at which he had hoped to have an interview. The information which follows, regarding his partner, was taken from a Sunday Courant article published on October 31, 1971.

John Carsten Chapin, Jr., is the son of John C. Chapin, Marine Corps captain in Pacific combat duty in World War II, who later was with a prominent Detroit advertising agency, and as of October 1971 was special assistant to Secretary George Romney of HUD, Washington, D. C.

His grandfather, Roy Dikeman Chapin, founded the Hudson Motor Company, was its head for 26 years, and then became President Hoover's Secretary of Commerce.

John Chapin, Jr., of Grosse Point, Michigan, finished St. Paul's School in New Hampshire and was then graduated from Trinity College. He had expected to be called into military duty, but a casual conversation drew his interest to police work, and when he found that he would not be drafted he joined the Hartford police force, and likes the work.

The two young men got together again after both were back in the Hartford area, and conceived the idea of a bookstore. The writer does not know the circumstances of this, but he does know that they had a long consultation with Miss Hyatt at the Village Library regarding the feasibility of such an enterprise, and whatever she said -- it did not discourage them.

They opened the shop in the spring of 1971, and at the present they both live in the apartment above the Grist Mill. It appears that Ryan Kuhn perhaps spends more time in the store than his partner, but both are very interested in the business, and attend to it well. Both are interested in Farmington, and in its history as well.

October 10, 1972
Mrs. Winter in front of her mill-powered shop.

Scenic Farmington River provides power for turbines in the grist mill's hydro-electric system.
OLD MILL STREAM
TO BE TAPPED AS NEW POWER SOURCE.
by
The Hartford Sunday Courant
September 4, 1977
OLGA R. PANNONE

Down by the Old Mill Stream in Farmington, Helen Winter will soon be taking advantage of a backyard resource that could eventually save her thousands of dollars in electric bills.

Mrs. Winter, owner of the Grist Mill shops on Mill Lane in Farmington, dug up the mud-covered turbine that once ground corn and wheat into flour, hired two hydro-electric engineers and had a generator installed in her antique shop, located on the site of the old mill.

Water from the Farmington River will turn the turbine, thereby operating the generator and providing the electrical power needed for the antique shop and the other stores located in the grist mill. Plans are for the system to be working at peak efficiency by winter.

Mrs. Winter and her husband John, bought the mill in 1971 and converted it into an antique shop, restaurant, book store, handicraft store, art gallery and dress shop. The mill, built in 1650 by Deacon Stephen Hart, is believed to be the oldest grist mill in Connecticut.

In 1917 the mill was bought by actor Winchell Smith and provided the setting for the silent movie "Down East", written and produced by Smith and starring Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess.

While living at the mill Smith kept the mill stones turning, his flour much in demand by Farmington housewives. The mill continued grinding grist flour until 1963, when it could no longer compete with mass production.

Mike Harper, of Ontario, Canada, President of Niagara Waterwheels, Ltd., which installed the electrical system at the Grist Mill, described briefly how it will work. The 1907 "New Success" style turbine, cast in pig iron, will be moved by the rush of water over the dam beside the mill. The turbine, located beneath the antique shop, will drive a steel shaft which is connected to the electrical generator on the first floor and visible to customers. The hydro-electric system, although expected to be adequate to supply heat and power for the entire Grist Mill complex, could be switched back to power supplied by the Hartford Electric Light Company (HELCO) at any time. For a few days each spring, said Harper, when the flood level is too high to provide the necessary rush of water over the dam to turn the turbine, the generator will not run.

Harper and his assistant, Ashok Ghate, began work on the hydro-electric system last November and completed the job in March. Harper, originally from Devon, England, and Ghate, a native of India, have installed similar systems in Harrisville, N. H., and at the Hagley Museum in Wilmington, Delaware.

Mrs. Winter first got the idea for the generator from a feature story on the utilization of water power on public television's MacNeil/Lehrer Report last year. She then contacted Harper who at first thought the idea of water power was not feasible. The turbine, inoperative for several years, was buried deep in mud.

"Last fall everybody here at the mill mucked in with me to dig it up and get a size on it", he said.

The 39" diameter "New Success" proved sufficient. Harper procured a generator the size of an oil drum from an old steel mill. The generator is on display in the antique shop, where the mill stones used to be.

Mrs. Winter, who lives in Farmington, said that the generator will pay for itself in six years at current electrical rates.

"The river is there, so why not use it?" said the practical businesswoman.