

Friends of Fairport Fish Hatchery

The **Friends of Fairport Fish Hatchery** (FFFH) was established as a 501(c)(3) organization to support historical and scientific research and preserve historic resources at the Fairport Fish Hatchery, formerly the Fairport Biological Station. FFFH also intends to educate students and the public about the history of the Fairport Fish Hatchery, its ties to the pearl button industry, and conservation efforts at the hatchery to protect mussels from impacts due to pollution, siltation, and over fishing.



1914 view of Fairport Biological Station

FFFH goals include fund raising to support construction of an educational pavilion that will educate the public on the rich history of the Fairport Fish Hatchery. In addition to educational opportunities, the pavilion and trails will promote eco-tourism in the region. FFFH is also hopeful the Great River Road Commission will officially designate the fish hatchery as a Historic Interpretive Center. This designation, coupled with visits by students of all ages and tourists on three cross-country bike trails will elevate the hatchery to a premier destination stop in Muscatine County. The idyllic setting provides a beautiful backdrop for teaching history, ecology, and conservation.



2021 image of Fairport Biological Station Pumphouse

Friends of Fairport Fish Hatchery (FFFH) needs your support. FFFH intends to build an educational pavilion at the Fairport Fish Hatchery. The pavilion, which will be designed in a style to commemorate the historic pumphouse, will include 12 3' x 4' educational panels, a 6' timeline, and 2 artifact display cases. Because the grants awarded to FFFH do not allow for new construction projects, FFFH is asking interested parties to help raise the funds to construct the pavilion.

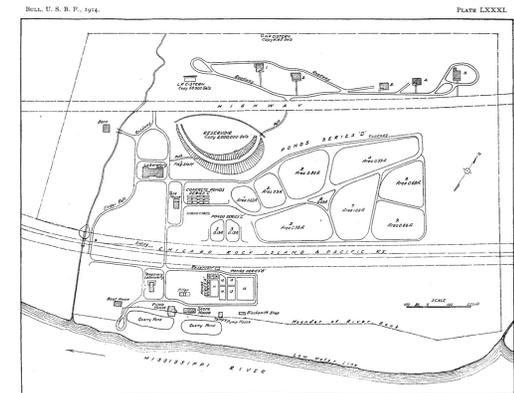
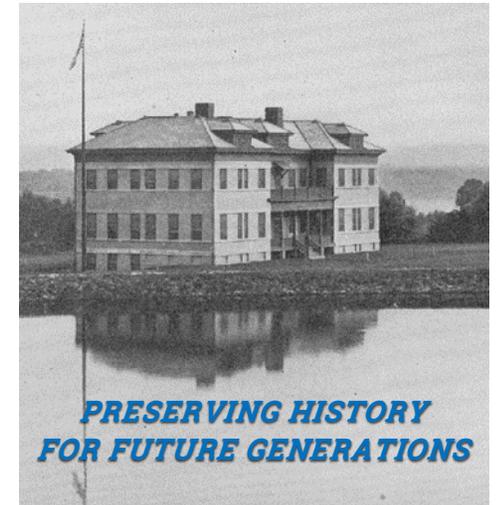
In April 2023, FFFH celebrated Earth Day with a Chamber sponsored Ribbon Cutting ceremony and opening the two historic interpretive trails. In addition, the concrete foundation for the pavilion and ADA parking were completed. At this time, all planned FFFH projects are completed except the pavilion construction. With your help we can build this project and welcome students and visitors to the pavilion in 2024.

Donations, grant awards, and in-kind services are all necessary for FFFH to achieve our goal of educating the public and promoting eco-tourism in Muscatine County. **Monetary donations may be made to the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine, noting "Friends of Fairport Fish Hatchery" in the memo line.** All donations are tax deductible, please help us meet our goals.

For additional information, contact:
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FRIENDS OF FAIRPORT FISH HATCHERY

The Historic Fairport Biological Station



1914 map of Fairport Biological Station
(Coker 1916: Plate LXXXI)



Fairport Fish Hatchery

Fairport Biological Station

In 1891, J.F. Boepple founded the freshwater pearl button industry in Muscatine, utilizing mussel shells from the Mississippi River to create buttons. By 1899, pearl button manufacturing had boomed along the river with Muscatine at the epicenter. In early 1900s, mussel beds were depleted from overfishing, spurring a unique collaboration between the United States Bureau of Fisheries and the pearl button industry.

The Fairport Biological Station was established by an Act of the United States Congress in 1908 and opened with temporary facilities in 1910. The station was established to



Biological Station Director's Cottage from 1941

study the propagation of fish and mussels that were critical to the success of the pearl button industry. The 60-acre research station included a pumphouse, laboratory, tank house, boat house, reservoir, five cottages, a complete water system, and holding ponds for fish and mussel propagation. Studies on means of artificial mussel propagation to restock rivers and support the pearl button industry continued at Fairport until 1931, and fish research was terminated in 1933. Both closures were due to lack of funds because of the Depression. During the Depression, the hatchery focused on raising fish for private farms to help feed the state's population.

Mussel Propagation

The main purpose of the Fairport Biological Station was to research propagation of mussels and reintroduce them into the Mississippi River. The life cycle and procreation of mussels is dependent on a parasitic relationship with a specific fish host. That is, each type of mussel is dependent on one (or at best a few) fish species to carry the larvae (glochidia). The biological station engaged in the artificial propagation of mussels, the cultivation of fish, and the investigation of problems related to mollusks and fish. Increased pollution and sedimentation coupled with overharvesting of mussels throughout the Mississippi River Basin adversely impacted propagation efforts, causing the federal government to shift their focus to maintaining a viable fish hatchery. The property became the Fairport Fish Hatchery in 1933-34, and remained operated by the federal government until 1973 when it was transferred to the State of Iowa.

Goals for the Hatchery

The goals of Friends of the Fairport Fish Hatchery (FFFH) are to support historic and scientific research and to educate the public on the history of the Fairport Fish Hatchery. Research, education, and preservation activities pursued by the FFFH will include origins of the hatchery and its changing functions from 1910-present, the history and need for the artificial propagation of mussels, and the adverse impacts human had on the pearl button industry and water quality in the Mississippi, including dam construction. FFFH seeks to share this information with students, the public, and tourists through the development of a pavilion, interpretive trails, artifact displays, and interactive exhibits. Achieving these goals will promote eco-tourism at the hatchery, the National Pearl Button Museum, and the greater Muscatine and Quad Cities areas.

Recent Trail Grants

In 2021, FFFH received a \$48,500 Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant from the Iowa DNR. This grant covers the cost of 18 interpretive signs for two historic interpretive trails, 12 educational panels for an educational pavilion, and A/V content for QR codes on the signs and panels.



Fairport Fish Hatchery Trail Map:

In addition to the REAP grant, FFFH was awarded a \$6,600 grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine (CFGM) to construct a new replacement bridge across a creek to connect the east and west sides of the South Trail. The bridge, which incorporated trusses from the historic pumphouse, was completed in April 2023 through the cooperation and assistance of DNR staff, numerous volunteers, students, and FFFH members. FFFH also mounted a 3' x 4' trail map next to the future location of the pavilion to allow for self-guided tours. Trail map brochures are available to help visitors navigate the trails.