



# The West Branch

By William West



Brewed to the North,  
In ageless springs.  
Steeped for eons,  
This elixir of life.  
It follows its natural persuasion  
Down through once tilled lands.  
Of countless and forgotten  
Landlords of her banks.

Far enough from sight  
To only afford  
An occasional glimpse  
From those who perhaps  
Respect her beauty and her spirit.  
Canopied by bristling willows and alders  
Offering some protection  
From all the callous souls nearby.

Generations of young and old alike  
Have enjoyed the simple pleasures  
Of angling in her pools and currents.  
Winding down behind the old fairgrounds  
Unnoticed and untouched.  
She begins her descent  
Into the public stage of town.  
Always on the edge of everything.

Until she makes her first gathering  
Right at the famous junction.  
Gazed upon by countless souls  
For generations.  
Once harnessed to run  
The mills of yesteryear.



Here she shows her latent power  
Imminently coming to life.

But a few short years ago,  
She begged us to take away  
The waste of progress.  
Scourged with open, human waste  
And seeping oils,  
Coloring the surface  
With rainbow toxins.  
But now we have seen her beauty

And we understand her worth.  
And at last she enjoys her former life  
As progress speeds on  
In its unflinching way  
Just above her flowing waters.  
And then in a grand crescendo  
With sparkling ribbons of plummeting water  
She pronounces her presence

In a rainbow  
Of roaring magnificence,  
As the water cascades  
Down to the floor below.  
And it is here where she enters  
Her clandestine run.  
Through steep, buttressed seclusion.  
Once teeming with brown trout

That witnessed generations  
Of fisherman including men and boys alike.  
This treasure of hidden natural beauty  
An obscure gem,



In the middle of mayhem.  
Defining the border of ever-changing civilization.  
She rambles under the  
Unassuming bridge

And plunges once again  
Around the mall  
Into obscurity.  
Where she finally joins  
The mother stream  
Emboldened by her contribution,  
To continue on for miles  
On her way to the open sea.

Without it we would be less.  
And with it we will be more.  
A shining beacon in the middle of it all.  
Born before any of us  
It will always symbolize  
The contrast between progress  
And the beauty and the power  
Of nature.

*Written for the Riverwalk Committee, 2015*