

Forge Pond ice sheet breaks early this year

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — An unusually mild winter combined with a strong north wind to break up the ice sheet on Forge Pond this spring at an early date, but not a record.

This year it was March 11 according to Robert Connell and Florian Woltowicz. They have been keeping records for the past 20 years as a friendly guessing game.

Average break up is April 4 but in the past seven years the cover on the 212 acre pond through which the Littleton Westford town line divides has broken in March.

Could this be an indication that the winters are getting warmer? They note that for the 10 year period starting in 1961 only once did the ice leave the pond in March. The latest date was on April 13, which occurred three times.

This past winter, several parts of the pond

one of the largest in this area have been showing blue water all season. The average thickness of frozen sections has been only four inches.

Nevertheless, skaters have had the best winter in many years for skating and ice boating on natural surfaces.

Ice harvesting on Forge Pond was big business fifty years ago. Men, boys and horses worked almost around the clock to fill the giant six story buildings of the Daniel Gage Ice Company where the Westford town beach is now located. The ideal thickness of ice was deemed to be 14 inches.

But the advent of the mechanical household refrigerator doomed the ice business and had Gage depended on a "crop" this winter it is obvious that the season would have been a disaster.