

Forge Pond breakup set no lateness mark

By GORDON B. SEAVEY
WESTFORD — The Blizzard of '78 in February apparently had no effect on the

ice covering of Forge Pond, for when it broke Thursday, April 13, it set no record.

The annual guessing game as to when the pond would be free of ice, which has been going on for 17 springs, is now over although the date tied with two other years, 1970 and 1971, as being the latest.

The unofficial judges deemed that by sunset on April 13 it could be stated that almost all of the black ice, sodden with water, had been grounded into small floats and cakes. Once again, the water sparkled in the glow of the setting sun.

Postmaster Robert Connell, Dan O'Donnell and Kevin Woirowicz, all residents of the Village, agreed that Forge Pond was officially open for the season and awaiting the fisherman's cast.

AL WOITOWICZ, the mail carrier whose route skirts the pond, and who also is an ardent ice fisherman, reported that the thickness of the ice was 30 inches this past season, which is most unusual. The pond first skimmed over with ice around Christmas but there was very little ice skating because the surface was almost perpetually covered with snow, an insulating material in itself.

The earliest the ice has left

Forge since Postmaster Connell has kept records starting in 1961 has been March 7, in 1974.

Although many had thought the ice would last at least a couple of days longer, temperatures near 70 degrees and a strong southeast wind combined to break up the ice. The outlet, or the canal, was jammed with ice all day, much of it passing over the dam into Stony Brook.

THIS YEAR no one earned the dubious honor of having guessed the closest time the ice would break. Last year, Tony Connell came off with first prize and the previous year, Bruce Johnson. The judges this year felt that it is almost impossible to determine the exact hour and decided not to gather estimates ahead of time.

Forge Pond, one of the largest bodies of water in this area, is crescent-shaped and noted for good fishing. It covers 212 acres and the Littleton-Westford town line splits it nearly in half; it has a mean depth of 15 feet and the deepest spot is 33 feet.

Over the years it has been called by various names such as Swan Pond, Stony Brook Pond and now an unfortunate name, Matawanakee, seems to stick with some.

This "Indian" name has no connection with anything other than in the mind of an overenthusiastic real estate man who apparently pulled the name from a hat.

Both Westford and Littleton, the cartographers and others recognize the official name as Forge Pond.

It received its name from the forges set up by Jonas Prescott around 1710 to manufacture iron from the low-grade bog iron found in the vicinity, mainly in nearby Groton.

Forge Village is the only community in the world by that name, according to Hammond's World Atlas and a map of Westford dated 1730 shows only the name Forge Pond.