

Ice breaks up on Forge Pond

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

FORGE VILLAGE — After laying an icy finger on Forge Pond since Dec. 3, winter finally let go when its months-long ice cap broke up yesterday and more than two-thirds of the pond became open water.

Long a topic of conversation in the village, Postmaster Robert Connell has been keeping an accurate record of the date of the annual break-up for the past 13 years.

Area fishermen and others like to play the local "Game" of guessing when the pond opens each year, but nature threw many of the conjectures out of the window.

With the average date of break-up occurring April 7, most of the participants in the guessing game figured that this year clear water would be seen earlier. This was due to the mild winter and the ice sheet no thicker than a foot. But a lingering spring, with freezing nights, delayed the process.

Postmaster Bob, in the meantime, has been busy crossing off the early dates placed by the guessers as a lost cause. But early on the morning of April 12, he, together with two assistant judges deemed that two-thirds of the water was showing . . . and therefore the ice was "officially" out in 1972!

No one hit it on the nose, but Russell Dodge, a mail carrier in Littleton, had predicted April 11, which was the closest. This makes John Dundas and Harry Aaron of the Village runners-up. Dundas listed the 15 and Aaron, the 10.

Long a spot for fisherman, veterans will admit Forge Pond doesn't have the good fishing as found elsewhere.

Being the northern corner of Nashoba Plantation, set aside for the Indians in 1654, fishing has gone on here for centuries.

Early settlers called it Stoney Brook Pond, because it emptied in a sluggish stream by that name near Sargent's foundry in Graniteville. But when the dam was put in at Forge Village and a bank of forges driven by water power installed in the early 1700's, the body of water, as well as the village, took the name of Forge.

It has been called by other names, but Forge Pond is the only legal and logical name of the Pond.

In the town history, Edwin R. Hodgman wrote in 1883 said that Forge Pond was "the rallying point of the tribes, but it's to be regretted that the Indian name of this pond has not been preserved."

In the 1900's, a real estate developer thinking that an Indian name might be appropriate and appealing, conjured up the name "Matawanakee," which has no basis of fact. There was no Indian nor Indian tribe of that name. To add to the confusion, there have been at least three interpretations of the word "Good fishing," "Smiling blue waters," and from the developer's point of view, "Everyone welcome here!"

But all the records of the three towns in which the body lies carry the legal name, as well as maps, as Forge Pond.