

# Renewed interest in brook trip

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — Renewed interest is being shown by nature lovers in the three-mile canoe trip on Beaver Brook as paddlers wind their way through historic but abandoned farm lands toward the eastern entrance to Forge Pond.

The recommended starting point is at the narrow cement bridge on Route 119, less than a mile north of Littleton Common. Shortly

after leaving this busy highway for the quiet sanctuary afforded by the little valley, to the right will be seen Fletcher Hill. The Littleton-Westford town line bisects this hill and then continues south to bisect Nashoba Hill.

Not named on old maps, Fletcher Hill no doubt received its name from Samuel Fletcher who settled on the east side of Beaver Brook in 1679 and built a block house for protection against the Indians. He subsequently made additions to his original grant of 26 acres until he

owned some 400 acres. Part of this later became known as the Howard and Flagg farms.

**ABOUT MID-WAY ON** the trip, the stream widens to some extent as the floor of the valley spreads. This divides the lands that later became known as the Parker Farm and is connected by a private bridge.

Gliding beneath the bridge, the stream opens into much marshland and connects with what the early settlers called Great Tadnuck Meadow. It is believed that Beaver Brook split here at one time, with the west branch entering Forge Pond and the other branch continued beneath Concord, Patten and Cold Spring roads to enter Stony Brook near the foundry in Graniteville.

The Fletcher family, through one of its decedents, Sarah Fletcher Parker, donated one-half acre of its land for use by the town in 1761 for the West "Burying-Ground". It is here that one of the area's most outstanding Revolutionary heroes Colonel John Robinson, is buried.

We are nearing the end of this two-hour trip for in the distance is the Beaver Brook Road bridge, the third to have been built on this spot near the eastern entrance to Forge Pond. When reconstructed a decade ago, old logs put in by the colonists when the original bridge was installed, were dug out of the muck.

**BEYOND LIES FORGE** Pond. If there are no kinks in your arms and wish to continue on your trip, paddle southwest on the 212-acre

pond. Mid-way you will recross the town line and again you are in Littleton.

Enter the narrow outlet of Gilson Brook flowing from Spectacle Pond and soon you will be at an old stone bridge. Just beyond are the earthen dam and foundation of the saw and grist mill in use in Revolutionary times.

As you have followed this ancient stream whose headwaters are in Boxborough, you have turned back the calendar for many, many years. You have floated by old farmlands which furnished the livelihood of early settlers for two centuries.

Just two dairy farms now remain in Westford. George S. Fletcher (an old town name) farms 375 acres in the rich Stony Brook valley section to supply feed for a herd of 250 cows, of which 120 are milking. Raymond Wilson has a smaller farm.

In Littleton, Dell Dale, Ashley H. Pickard and Frank W. Matheson (who milks 50 cows out of the herd of 150 animals), are the only dairy farmers in town.

As you lift your craft ashore, pause again for a moment and while you stretch your legs do a bit of meditating. You could have taken the famous Allagash 90-mile canoe trip through beautiful Maine country on a lovely stream — but perhaps too many people for your taste.

Or, you could drive a few minutes' from your homedrop a canoe onto Beaver Brook and float in undisturbed tranquility, all the time absorbing nature and history as you slowly paddle along in a pretty little valley on a stream that is greatly underused!