

Westford Wanderings

By Gordon B. Seavey

Safe skating

Boutwell Brook is an unfamiliar name to most. Originally an outlet of Forge Pond, it is a small stream now which originates opposite the Academy, drifts sluggishly through Boutwell meadow, under Forge Village and Cold Spring Roads, then appears again as a miniature cataract as it empties in Blacksmith Pond. Who has heard of Blacksmith Pond? Those who have skated on this acre pond (very shallow) over the years will locate it diagonally across from Graniteville Foundry on Bridge Street. It doesn't show on any map.

As it freezes over early, it is generally a sports target for pre-season skaters -- and learners because of its safety.

Old timers will recall driving the family horse for a set of new shoes to a small shop at the pond's edge, hence the name Blacksmith Pond.

Another pond, also a mecca for pre-season skating, is Grassy Pond off Plain Road. Only seven acres in size, an attractive feature is a small island near the center where weary skaters can locate a few rocks on which to sit.

Owned for many years by the late Edward M. Abbot, a noted sportsman, he had a duck blind on the east side from which he banged away at water fowl. The pond and the surrounding area, now owned by the town, is a popular conservation area.

Lots of grit

Westford's early settlers were mainly farmers. The first to come selected the choicest of lands, naturally. Land near Stony Brook and Greater Tadmuck Meadow (Beaver Brook) areas were composed of Merrimack sandy loam, with few rocks or cobbles. Being level, too, this made for easier tilling of the soil. Parkerville also was noted for good farm lands.

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Ernest Wright, a graduate of Westford Academy in 1915 and a loyal attendant of its yearly alumni meetings, recalls that on his father's homestead (on Route 40 - Groton Road) he, his dad and his brother, using a tripod with a ratchet elevator operated by hand, removed over 100 size-

able stones and boulders from a single acre.

Take any side road in the north part of town, look into the fields (now woods) and you will note that the farmer needed a lot of grit, manpower and determination to till what soil that showed between the rocks.

Their stone walls make up part of the estimated 100,000 miles of these boundary markers in New England. They were carefully put into place, usually during the winter when other chores could not be performed, to designate property lines, to wall-in

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animals - and to get rid of surplus rocks and boulders. Simple as they look, it takes skill and muscle to erect a good wall. Remember, a square foot of granite weighs 155 pounds.