

Mill Pond

For much of its history, Mill Pond had neither a pond nor an associated mill. The Indian River appeared on the [1729 map](#) of West Newbury with neither pond nor mill shown at its intersection with Main Street, then the Bradford Road. Two 1830 maps showed a small oblong pond—[Moody's pond](#). Across the street (which was then unelevated, sitting on the Indian River valley floor) was [Moody's mill](#). Though referenced in an [1846 newspaper](#), by [1856](#), the pond and mill were gone.

In [1903](#), when Main Street had been raised at the Indian River valley and lowered at Pipestave Hill, E. Moody Boynton (an entrepreneur and self-styled "[sage and inventor of West Newbury](#)") successfully petitioned the Town to "consent to the damming of Indian River in order to make an ice pond." Though more modest than Boynton's scheme to dam the Merrimac River for ice harvesting, Mill Pond did not rematerialize until William Stanton Rogers, a wealthy New York City attorney, [purchased the property as part of the Pipestave Hill complex around April, 1909](#). It was then a summer home and working farm.

The 1909 [subdivision plan](#) shows an 18.4 acre "Mill Pond Meadow" bisected by the stream, apparently channelized. Mill Pond [dam's Historic Sites Survey](#) says that it was used as part of the Rogers family farm. This would date the pond and dam, which was built of stone, concrete, and cast iron, to construction by the Rogers in the 1910s. After the Rogers family sold the property to an arm of the Catholic Church in 1925, [the pond became part of an orphanage and then boys' school campus](#).

Conservation Commission Chair Peter Haack wrote in the [1969 Annual Town Report](#), "In July we began talks with Cardinal Cushing Academy about a possible town swimming area in Mill Pond. By October ... we worked out a tentative scheme that would allow us to use part of the pond and develop a picnic and parking area in the pines between it and the Town Forest.... Draining of the pond preparatory to cleaning the bottom and repairing the dam was underway as this was

written, and we hope that next spring will allow continued work."

The Town bought the Academy's Pipestave Hill complex, including the Mill Pond, in [1972](#). The Mill Pond area had the rustic 1955 "bath house" building, still standing, as well as camping cabins, which were razed. In 1976 the Town voted to establish a permanent Mill Pond Committee. Improvements in the 1970s included picnic tables, new trails, plumbing and septic systems for the bathhouse, and installation of a viable roadway and parking.

Delight ensued. Mill Pond has served not just as a refuge for such passive activities as hiking, dog walking, and, weather permitting, kayaking or iceskating. The 1980s and '90s featured merry events, including children's celebrations ranging from a wild west day to the haunted hay ride—and, of course, the winter carnival.

Major repairs and maintenance—often deferred at greater ultimate cost—formed a large part of Mill Pond's modern story. Initiatives to repair the dam began in 1973, were voted down, and raised with increasing urgency over the next two decades. The dam was finally repaired in FY1995. In 2002 a new leak was identified and fixed within the year.

Dredging presented similar issues. By [1983](#) Mill Pond was "in the middle stages of filling in and dying." Draining and dredging were proposed, and defeated, time and again. It was not until 2000 that a coffer dam was built, the pond drained, and over 5,700 truckloads of sediment removed. A \$600,000 grant, of which the Town paid 25% (plus \$105,137 in additional state monies to construct sediment basins) funded this operation.

Mill Pond has overcome many threats in its long history as wet meadow and pond. Arguably most important to its preservation have been the Town's investments, whose dividends may be expected to enchant future generations with pine-scented trails, diamond-chipped waters, reflected sunsets, and mist-filled mornings.

