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Item 1



**HISTORY AND LEGEND OF THE WHITE POND AND
NINE ACRE CORNER AREA, CONCORD, MASS.**

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is written to serve as a reference work for Mr. Richard Walton's Environmental Study Program for the teachers and children of the Willard School. The area of Concord whose history is covered here is principally the White Pond-Nine Acre Corner area. However, since Willard School draws children from a wider area, the author has included a little of the history and origin of names from elsewhere within the school district, which roughly outlined is as follows: bounded by the Sudbury River on the east, the Concord town border on the south, Hayward Mill Pond and the Assabet River on the west, and on the north Main Street and Route 2 to Sudbury Road.

The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of several people who have contributed materials or assisted in other ways: Mr. and Mrs. Russell Wheeler, Mrs. Dean Bensley, Mr. Benjamin Smith, Mrs. William Curtin, Mrs. John Ruze, Mr. Elmer Wetherbee, Mr. Thomas Worthley and Mr. Hal Stoors of the Concord Department of Public Works, and Mrs. Moss and Mrs. Barker at the Concord Public Library.

This edition is by no means complete and the author hopes to continue adding materials and indeed invites anyone else to do so also.

1--Early Inhabitants and Settlement

Thoreau, Emerson, and Channing all wrote of the beauty of White Pond. Emerson called it a "pretty little Indian bath..." where one "could almost see the sachem in his canoe in a shadowy cove."¹

Indians were indeed the first inhabitants of this area. It is believed that they have been here since at least 1000 B.C. Their wigwam homes were rounded frames of saplings covered with skins. They were built on the very plain where Willard School now stands and along the Sudbury River and its tributaries. This was the Musketaquid tribe of the Nipmuc branch of the Algonquin family. Theirs was a stone-age culture, involving both hunting with bows and stone-headed arrows, spears, and knives, and a simple agriculture. Their diet was varied, consisting of vegetables such as corn, beans, squash, and a multitude of wild fruits, nuts, seeds, and roots, and drawing upon the abundant fish and game, such as bear, deer, lynx, wolf, beaver, otter, muskrat, and grouse, all of which were found nearby. The Indian population was kept low by a low birth rate, disease, and war with other tribes. Thousands of Indian relics, such as spearheads, and arrowheads, have been found around here.² Even the most recent farmers have discovered these relics under the prying blade of the plow.

As soon as the Pilgrims landed they began having dealings with the Indians, trading with them and learning their way. In a few years the colonists decided they wanted to expand westward and after making trips inland, decided to make a settlement here in Concord. Thus, Concord has

¹Swayne, The Story of Concord Told by Concord Writers, p. 250.

²Smith, Benjamin, personal conversations. Mr. Smith is a recognized expert on local Indian history and culture.

the distinction of being the first inland settlement on the northeastern seaboard.¹

The two men most instrumental in making a satisfactory agreement or covenant with the Indians for the purchase of the six miles square that was Concord in 1635 were the Rev. Peter Bulkeley and Major Simon Willard. Rev. Bulkeley, for whom a nearby street is named, arrived in Boston in 1634. He was learned and wealthy, a distinguished minister of a noble English family. He left England, however, because he had been silenced as a preacher and sought religious freedom in the New World. He became the first minister of the First Parish Church of Concord. In 1646 he wrote the first book published by a Concord author, a copy of which is now in the Concord Library. Ralph Waldo Emerson is a descendent of his about seven generations later.² Rev. Bulkeley died in 1659.

Major Simon Willard, for whom this school and a street near Concord center are named, was a shrewd man of affairs. He was instrumental in picking out the Concord site and was one of the first great men of Concord.³

In 1635, the going price for the six miles square that was Concord was some hatchets, hoes, knives, wampumpeag, cotton cloth, shirts, a hat, shoes, and stockings.⁴ The deal was made under Jethro's tree in what is

¹Scudder, Concord: American Town, p. 7

²Swayne, op. cit., p. 24, 25, 44.

³Scudder, op. cit., p. 7.

⁴Swayne, op. cit., p. 25.

now called the Milldam. There is a bronze marker on the spot. Standing on that spot and pointing three miles to each of the four points on the compass, Simon Willard made the early definition of boundaries. Squaw Sachem, Tattawan, and Nimrod, the Indian representatives, were satisfied with the agreement and welcomed the white man to their hunting ground. On September 2, 1635, the general court granted a township to Peter Bulkeley and Simon Willard,¹ and the town of Concord was incorporated.

Peter Bulkeley owned a nine acre meadow in the southwest part of Concord. The path to his meadow was known as the Way to the Nine Acres. The area around it became known as Nine Acre Corner. George Wheeler bought this land from Peter Bulkeley ~~some time before 1667~~ ^{in 1667} when the road was laid out officially. There are slight variations to this story and some difference of opinion as to exactly where the original nine acres were. However, according to several old maps, it appears to have been centered around the triangle formed by the present intersection of Sudbury Road, ^{OLD RD. TO PAC.} ~~Powdermill Road~~, and Seven Star Lane.²

The Road to Nine Acre Corner started from about where Emerson Hospital is presently located and followed the route it still takes today. One may wonder why the road took such a circuitous route. A look at the rivers and the earliest maps reveals that the closest way to get across the Sudbury River, called variously the South River and the Concord River, was by the South Bridge. The North Bridge and the Derby Bridge in West Concord

¹Swayne, *ibid.*, p. 24, 25

²Wheeler, Russell and Marian, personal conversations.

over the Assabet near the present fire station were the other original bridges in town.

In 1653, the Second Division of Concord divided the town into three quarters. Nine Acre Corner and White Pond were part of the South Quarter.¹ Reference is made in the document describing the boundaries of the quarters to "dongye holes," a name applied to swampy lands shut in by hills.² "Dunge Hole" meadow and brook in the Nine Acre Corner area still retains this strange name. It may be seen by standing on the curved rim of Plainfield Road and looking southward.

The Wheelers were among the first settlers of Concord. In fact Shattuck wrote in 1832 that the Wheeler "name originally and has ever been borne by more persons than any other in town." George, Joseph, and Timothy came in 1639. Because there were so many Wheelers it makes tracing their geneology difficult. For example between 1650 and 1670, the town records indicate the birth of no less than six John Wheelers. According to Shattuck, William Wheeler, who married Hannah Buss in 1659 and his descendants, of whom Noah is presently living (in 1832) included all the Wheeler families in Nine Acre Corner.³ The Noah Wheeler house is located on the north side of Route 117 near the intersection of ^{Plainfield} Wheeler Road. It is presently owned by the Ruze family. A comprehensive Wheeler geneology

¹Wheeler, Ruth, Concord, Climate for Freedom, pp. 34, 220

²Walcott, Concord in the Colonial Period, Being a History of the Town of Concord, Massachusetts, 1635 - 1689, p. 72, 73.

³Shattuck, A History of the Town of Concord, Middlesex County, From its Earliest Settlement to 1832, p. 386-387.

is being prepared by Mrs. Russell Wheeler.

Relations with the Indians were peaceable from the settlement of Concord until the outbreak of King Philip's War in 1675.¹ The Indians brought berries, grapes, and venison to market. In addition, they would hunt, fish, and make brooms, staves, and eel-pot baskets. Farmers would also hire them to help with haying and harvesting.

However, the colonists didn't see much good^{ness} in the Indians. They were despised as heathen and feared to be in league with the power of Darkness. Simon Willard and Thomas Flint drew up a code of conduct for the Indians to be taught along with Christianity and "decency."²

Because relations with the natives had been peaceable, many towns, including Concord, were built without defenses. Therefore, when King Philip's War broke out the townspeople made plans for defense. They chose houses in different sections of town that would be the garrison in time of attack. The garrison house had an overhanging upper floor. It also needed a well close at hand in case the people were trapped in the house. The garrison in this section was the home of Silas Holden, for whom Holden Wood Road and Lane are named. He lived on Garfield Road, so named because the Garfield family lived at the corner of this road³ where it presently intersects with Sudbury Road.

¹Walcott, op. cit., p. 100.

²Walcott, op. cit., p. 102-103.

³Wheeler, Ruth, op. cit., p. 220.

No attack was made on Concord by the Indians but many Concordians were involved in the fighting. ^{At least one} About one-sixth of Concord's men were killed.¹

By the outbreak of King Philip's War, the Nashoba Indians, formerly known as the Musketaquids, had returned to Concord. John Hoar took charge of them, providing them with shelter and food in return for their labors and exemption from some tax. Concordians were much upset by the presence of the Indians, however, and after the February, 1676, massacres in Lancaster in central Massachusetts, the Indians were forcibly removed from Hoar's care, over his objections, and carried off to the misery of Deer Island in Boston Harbor along with any other Indians that could be rounded up. From there they were sold in the West Indies.² By the end of the summer of 1676, remaining bands of fugitive warriors, their squaws and children, were either killed or also sold into slavery.³ Thus, these Indians had managed to survive here for *at least* 3000 years or so, but, within 80 to 100 years of the arrival of the white man, this tribe had disappeared.

¹Scudder, op. cit., p. 36.

²Smith, Benjamin, personal conversation.

³Scudder, op. cit., p. 35.

Chapter II--King Philip's War to the Revolution

The Nine Acre Corner area was and is principally a farming community. More is said about that in a later chapter. However, since not all the soil in Concord was fertile, some people tried mining in the "vain hope that the earth would be found to compensate for its lack of fertility by disclosing mineral wealth."¹ Bog iron ore and ~~copper~~ were found nearby at ^{MINE} Lee's Hill near the present bridge on Route 117 near the Lincoln line. Mining in this area was carried on before 1700 and lasted about 50 years. ^{Nowadays Mine Hill is} ~~In those days, Lee's Hill~~ ^{called Lee's Cliff.} ~~was called Mine Hill.~~ The mining operations were never very successful and when a better grade of ore could be had at less cost from other sources the mining operations closed down.

The waterways of Concord played a significant role in determining placement of roads. Flooding was a problem then as now. According to Shattuck, "in times when the river overflows it is more than one mile wide. Great inconvenience results to the town from this circumstance."² It was difficult for wagons to ford streams and some considered it bad luck to cross a stream with a corpse. In some towns in the earliest days, people were buried in unmarked graves and sometimes in the middle of the road so that the wheel tracks would obliterate any sign of the burial. This was done in order to keep the Indians from knowing how many settlers had died.³ By the late 1600's, though, Concord had set up the Old Hill or South Burying Place on Lexington Road and the Main Street

¹Walcott, op. cit., p. 137.

²Shattuck, op. cit., p. 200 - 201.

³Wheeler, Marian, personal conversations.

Burying Place opposite the savings bank. It was necessary for funerals from Nine Acre Corner to cross the Sudbury River to reach either of these but by this time the South Bridge was built. The graveyard was the only place where it was proper to walk on Sunday, except to church. Therefore, the gravestones "were inspected and admired by all, and...the inscriptions were chosen to point a moral for the living as well as memorialize the dead."¹ A stroll through the old burying grounds is always interesting.

Education in the latter part of the 17th century was accomplished within the neighborhoods by the women teaching the local children reading and writing. By the early 18th century most of the paid teachers were men. If a woman was qualified to teach, she received half or less than the man's salary. One such was Mrs. Billings, who had one of the two schools in the South Quarter, beyond Lee's Bridge.²

The other school, at Nine Acre Corner near where Sudbury Road and Nine Acre Corner Road come together, was used until 1840.³ After that the school was located down more toward Wheeler Road on the west side of Sudbury Road.⁴ Since the school did not have a well, every morning the school children had to take a pail and go fetch water from a house near the school

¹Wheeler, Ruth, op. cit., p. 96.

²Lee's Bridge crosses the Sudbury River at Route 117. The first bridge here was probably built about 1800 at the end of Garfield Road. A picturesque old house built by Woodis Lee, Jr. overlooks the river and bridge. In Joslin's street records, the present bridge is noted as being built in 1912.

³Wheeler, Ruth, op. cit., p. 77.

⁴Wheeler, Marian, personal conversations.

for drinking and for washing the slates which they used in those days. Mrs. Anderson¹ tells how children went to school ^{with the school children} in horse-drawn barges or wagons and how on the last day of school these barges were decorated with flowers and daisy chains. If a child rode horseback to high school, the horse was kept in a stable near the school during the day.²

The first section of Sudbury Road, then called Sudbury Way, was laid out in 1735, starting south from Concord Center about where it does today. It turned southeastward toward the Fairhaven Hill area and continued along what is presently Fairhaven Road. The section that ^{presently} turns south from the fork with Fairhaven Hill Road and proceeds to the Sudbury River began as a right of way through Hubbard's pasture to give the Wheelers access to riverside pasture. Sudbury Road from Concord Center to the Sudbury boundary was completed with the building of Hubbard's (now Heath's) Bridge in 1802.³

The Nine Acre area has a number of intriguing street names. Seven Star Lane was probably laid out in 1745. It gets its name from a legend that seven stars were seen to fall in this area in one night.⁴ ^{another legend} ^{attributed to the name of an area where the original plot was indicated by 7} Jennie Dugan Brook was indicated on the earliest maps as Nut Meadow ^{outcross} Brook. Nut Meadow Crossing at one time went through from Old Road to Nine Acre Corner to Powdermill Road.

¹Mrs. Leslie Anderson of Garfield Road.

²Wheeler, Mrs. Caleb (Ruth), Brigham, Mr. George, and Anderson, Mrs. Leslie, "Conantum and Nine Acre Corner Through the Changing Years," Panel Discussion, Nov. 2, 1964, p. 9.

³Wheeler, Ruth, op. cit., p. 220.

⁴Joslin, "Notes on Acceptances or Layouts of Public Ways in the Town of Concord," no pagination.

Two other old roads seen on maps of the early 1700's are those presently called Old Marlboro Road and Old Pickard Road. Pickard was named for Dr. Isaiah Pickard who had a farm ¹⁶¹⁻¹⁶⁵⁰ on this road near the Sudbury line. It was formerly called Old County Road. *now Lane Pickard Rd.*

Old Marlboro Road obviously was the way to Marlboro. Although it was a very old road, by Margaret Sidney's time it was still in very rough condition. In 1888 she wrote of her determination to explore Thoreau's country out that sandy rough Old Marlboro Road with a fellow "pilgrim." It was a "thorofare nobody repairs" calculated "to cause the pilgrim to take up his cares and troubles again." A friend offered to prepare a "soothing herb which on their return will waft them into a sweet forgetfulness of the misery into which they were being lured."¹

It is interesting to note that portions of these very old roads and parts of Powdermill Road, also one of the earliest roads, were paved only in the last five years. *(since 1969)*

¹Sidney, Old Concord, Her Highways and Byways, p. 159.

Chapter III--American Revolution through the Civil War

One man involved in the Revolution for whom we have a nearby street named is Deacon Haynes. He commanded a group of West Sudbury men on April 19, 1775. Although they arrived at the North Bridge too late to fight there, they pursued the British back toward Boston. Deacon Haynes was killed in this encounter. He was 80 years old.¹

William Parkman is another interesting example of a colonist of this period. He operated a tavern located at the corner of Sudbury Road (then Old Road to Nine Acre Corner) and Powdermill Road from 1770 to 1795. He bought the farm from Francis Wheeler. The house is still there, and now belongs to the Trustman family. In fact, their address in the telephone book is "Parkman Tavern." Although the road at that time was a wood path, it was still a main travel and transportation route. Wagons, pulled by as many as 10 or 12 horses, would stop here. Sometimes there were as many as 40 teams of horses housed in the barn across Powdermill Road, the foundation for which may still be seen.

In addition to the tavern, Mr. Parkman also maintained a farm. In February, 1775, as Concord was preparing for possible war, William Parkman was a member of the Committee of Inspection to return the names of those not signing articles of association (of Minutemen) indicating their willingness to serve the Colonial cause: "Such would be treated with neglect and detestation."²

On April 19, 1775, he was one of the messengers sent to Sudbury to report the approach of the British. In 1788 he was appointed a deacon and

¹Wheeler, Ruth, op. cit., p. 122.

²Shattuck, op. cit., p. 94.

for much of the time that he had the tavern he also served as a deputy sheriff. After 1795 he completely changed his way of life, sold the farm, opened a country store in Concord center, and ran the post office from 1795-1810. He was admitted into the Social Circle in 1798.

The Social Circle was an organization begun in 1782 as a continuation of the Committee of Safety of the Revolution. Membership is limited to a maximum of 25. The organization is still in existence today. Deacon Parkman had three successive wives "as becoming in an ancient member of the Social Circle." He died in 1832 at the age of 92.¹

Another tavern in the Nine Acre Corner area was the Whipple Tavern on the Fitchburg Turnpike (Route 117) near Lee's Bridge. It was a stopping place for stage coaches on their way from Boston to Fitchburg. It burned down in the latter 1800's and the present yellow house of the Anderson's was built in its place.²

Slavery was abolished in Massachusetts in 1780. Black men and women had lived in Concord prior to this time and quite a few runaway slaves sought refuge in Concord and other northern communities. One such was Thomas Dugan, born around 1747, who escaped from slavery in Virginia and came to Concord in 1787. He married Kate and had a son Elijah, born in 1800. Kate died and sometime before 1807, Thomas married Jennie, a free black woman. In 1807 Elisha was born. Thomas raised rye and was the first person in Massachusetts to own a rye cradle, a large tool, similar to a scythe. He was also admired for his

¹ Wheeler, Ruth, op. cit., p. 122.

² Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord, from 1795 - 1840, p. 22-27.

expert ability in grafting apple trees. His wife Jennie was an honest, shrewd, and energetic woman who made him an excellent wife, according to the Concord Enterprise. They lived in the southwest part of Concord, not far from Nut Meadow and Nine Acre Corner. Thoreau visited Jennie's springhouse at the invitation of Jennie's sons and found it a "delectable place." Butter and milk, cool and sweet, were there, "but there was a leopard frog swimming in the milk and another sitting on the edge of the pan." Jennie probably outlived Thomas and thus the springhouse, brook, and eventually the street were named for her.¹

Another area frequented by Thoreau on his many walks was a pine clad hill on the southwest side of Fairhaven Bay which was part of a large farm owned by Eben Conant.

In 1845 when Thoreau and Channing started rambling around the countryside, they thought that every pretty spot should have a distinctive name. Jackson's "History of Newton" had just come out... (It) told that the old Indian name of Newton was Nonantum, so when Channing and Thoreau were talking over a good name and wondering if the Indians had a special name for the area, they thought that they themselves would make one that would² be just as good as Nonantum. They called the area Conantum.

The fact that awareness of the fragile beauty of the countryside is not an invention of the 20th century is reflected in Emerson's Journal when he says, "On the steep park of Conantum I have an old regret--is all this beauty to perish?"³

¹Elliott and Jones, "Concord: Its Black History, 1635-1860," no pagination.

²Wheeler, Brigham, and Anderson, op. cit., p. 3.

³Swayne, op. cit., p. 278.

Ebenezer Conant figures in another interesting story of this period. He held the mortgage and was able to foreclose on the land of Charles Miles located at the corner of Williams Road and Old Road to Nine Acre Corner. When the Miles house (now the Waldron MacDonald's) went on the auction block, Eben Conant thought he could get it very cheaply as there were almost no buyers. He bid \$250. Sam Staples, the auctioneer, didn't get any other bids. He looked across the street and saw John Keefe digging potatoes in his own field. Sam called John over to the auction and asked him if the house was worth \$500. "It is that," said John. "Sold," says Sam Staples. That is how the house came into the Keefe family, where it stayed until the present century.¹

Around 1840 some powder mills were established just over the southwest corner of Concord in Acton. Sometime before that a road leading from the Nine Acre Corner area to that section of Concord and Acton had been laid down but after the advent of the powder mills it was called Powdermill Road, the name by which it is still known. There were frequent explosions at the powder mills and occasionally people were killed.² The powder mills ceased their operations sometime after the beginning of the 20th century. *Remnants of powder houses remain still visible, nestled along road by Keefe's.*

During the period leading up to the Civil War feelings were beginning to run high over the slavery question. In Concord, black men and women had lived in freedom and with respect for many years. Concord was on the underground railway from the south to Canada, and many were the adventures of those in Concord, who helped the escaped slaves along their way or who

¹Wheeler, Brigham, and Anderson, loc. cit., p. 3.

²Wheeler, Ruth, op. cit., p. 158

sympathized with the abolitionist movement. One such was Frank B. Sanborn. He had supported John Brown and when deputies of a Senate Investigating Committee came to subpoena him in 1860 for failing to appear as a witness, he was seized in front of his house but his sister beat off the deputies with a whip. Judge Hoar, living across the street, got a writ of "habeas corpus" and ruled the next day in court that the deputies were improper.¹ Frank Sanborn's life work was prison and institutional reform and it is for him that one of our middle schools is named.

Sanborn - journalist, author, scholar, teacher

¹Wheeler, Ruth, op. cit., p. 190.

Chapter IV--Civil War to the Present

In the 1870's the Framingham and Lowell Railroad, now the New York, New Haven, and Hartford, laid out its track close to the western edge of White Pond. A train or two a day still chugs by, blowing its mournful whistle.

Farmland has dwindled, making way for many houses, but farming continues to be an important part of the area. In the 1920's and 1930's there were probably several stills in the area.¹ Possible evidence of one was found on the northwest side of the pond where old liquor bottles in large numbers have been dug up. According to Mr. Russell Wheeler, White Pond was a very lively place then.

In 1930 the White Pond Association was formed as a non-profit organization for the purpose of saving the beach for local people. The beach is a large sandy cove on the eastern side of the pond. At that time busloads of people from out of town were coming to the pond to swim.²

In 1931 Thomas Reilly divided up some of the land on the north and east sides of the pond into small lots and sold them for about \$75 apiece as sites for summer homes. Some of these lots were given away in a contest. *He called the development - from local names - called Pine Knoll Shores*
Willard School was built in 1958, and an addition completed in 1966.

In 1972 the town of Concord funded a professional water and watershed analysis of White Pond. The findings indicated the waters of the pond were still very clean. One of the recommendations was to preserve some of the large parcels on the south and east sides of the pond, and so in 1973 the town bought

¹Russell Wheeler, personal conversation.

²Elmer Wetherbee, personal conversations.

about 10 acres of land from Mr. Quirk, including frontage on the pond for \$125,000.

White Pond is called a "great pond" by the state of Massachusetts because its 41 acres exceeds the 20 acres the state defines as a great pond. This permits the state to have a public right of way to the pond (on the northeastern side). In the 1950's the State Department of Fish and Game began stocking White Pond with fingerling trout and continues to do so almost every year.

After almost 340 years, Nine Acre Corner amazingly still retains its rural character. White Pond is still a lively place. In the summer swimmers flock to the White Pond Association Beach on the eastern side and to the private land on the south shore. Sperry Rand Corporation maintains the beach in the cove on the south side of the pond and allows swimming there for its employees and their families. The rest of the shoreline ^{is part of the town portion} is privately owned and maintained.

The area identified as Nine Acre Corner seems to have shifted in recent years to the intersection of Sudbury Road and Route 117, perhaps because there is a market there with that name.

Chapter V--Farming and Recreation

From the earliest settlement this flat, rather sandy plain, for which Plainfield Road is named, and the land in the south corner of Concord, bounded by the river and extending over to Sudbury, has been used for farming. It is rich, fertile land because the lower elevations were once a lake bottom following glacial times. When this glacial lake dried up, the Indians moved in to farm the land and fish the river. The early settlers who followed the Indians continued to farm this area.

Over the years the main crops raised on local farms were cucumbers, tomatoes, rhubarb, corn, potatoes, and turnips, *asparagus, strawberries.*

Most farmers had an apple orchard. By careful searching through our local woods these old orchards, or what remains of them, can still be found. One of them is right out in front of Willard School; you reach it by walking into the woods from the farthest parking lot and heading a little to the left.¹

Willard School is built where once was an asparagus farm, and asparagus can still be seen growing wild around it.

Many early farmers also raised grapes. The remains of these vineyards are found growing wild all over Concord. There are some right along Powdermill Road on the school grounds.

Most farmers in this area also raised cows and sold dairy products, the same as today. But in those days before refrigeration, each farmer built himself an ice house on the side of a hill where he could store his dairy products and keep them cool. He did this by harvesting blocks of ice from shallow ponds in the middle of the winter, then storing them in the ice house where it would

¹Wheeler, Brigham, and Anderson, op. cit., p. 6.

last through the summer. Snowstorms added to the work and someone falling in added to the excitement.¹ An old ice house can still be found beside the Verrill barn on Plainfield Road.

Since the families cut their own ice and raised their own cows, making homemade ice cream was a favorite activity. July 4th was a big picnic day with fireworks. Mrs. Anderson writes that if a thunder shower came up, the men would have to leave early to get the hay in. After the farm work was done the families enjoyed getting together for square dancing, card games, and candy making. A big event was the Fall Festival, which was a corn husking party. People from all over town would gather at someone's home. The host and his family would have been preparing for days, making certain that all necessary food, drink, and corn were available. The younger people did most of the corn husking. Whenever anyone found a red ear everyone in the room made some sort of forfeit. Great diligence ensured that no one escaped the forfeit. It was even said that occasionally and mysteriously an unusually high number of red ears would be found. Refreshment and dancing followed the husking.²

The old settlers got apple and cider mills going early as a relic of England and her ale. They "made preparations to drink a good deal, and they did not disappoint themselves."³

Thoreau adds to our understanding of his time by mentioning that Francis Wheeler sold two fox-skins to a tin-peddler for a dollar.⁴ Such were

¹Wheeler, Brigham, and Anderson, op. cit., p. 5.

²Hudson, The History of Concord, Massachusetts, Vol. 1, p. 188-191.

³Wheeler, Brigham, and Anderson, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴Thoreau, Men of Concord, p. 135.

the good old days.

The Derbys, who lived on Garfield Road in the latter 1800's and early 1900's, were very different from most of the farmers. There were two bachelors ^{brothers} and an unmarried sister. They always did things differently from others. Most farmers milked early in the day and later afternoons, while the Derbys milked around 11 o'clock in the morning and 11 o'clock at night. They always did their haying late and usually had hay to get in when snows started. The Derbys were very patriotic and always shot a cannon at the fort in the woods across the road on national holidays, especially the 4th of July. Harvey would blow the bugle too. They always flew a flag in front of their house on holidays. They had a 13 star flag in the window over the front door for many years.¹

At one time there was a Nine Acre Community Club where everyone would get together; but according to Mrs. Anderson the most fun was having a beach and swimming party at White Pond.

The Irish men and girls who worked on nearby farms would congregate near a large stone at the entrance of Wheeler Road. This stone was called the Blarney Stone.²

In the latter 1800's "the Corner" gained a statewide reputation for market gardening and as a greenhouse region. Anson Wheeler, born in 1863, was a scientific farmer, known all over New England for his excellent products and sound agriculture. He was the first in Middlesex County to successfully

¹Wheeler, Brigham, and Anderson, loc. cit., p. 6.

²Wheeler, Brigham, and Anderson, op. cit., p. 12.

grow cucumbers under glass, his maximum yield being 64 bushels a week! He also grew rhubarb, lettuce, radishes, and beets under glass.¹ He lived in the old house on the west side of Plainfield Road at the intersection with Wheeler Road. The house was built in 1803 by his grandfather, Cyrus.

Alva Wheeler, brother of Anson, built his home at the corner of Wheeler Road and Plainfield Road around the mid-1850's. This house is presently owned by the Steven Verrills.

Anson's sons were Raymond and Alden. All three have streets near their homestead named for them. Raymond died in 1957 and Alden in 1967. Raymond's son, Russell, a tenth generation Wheeler ^{with lines on Hazard Ct., Concord}, all of whom were born, lived, and (except for Russell) died in Concord. Russell and his wife, Marian, have helped provide material for this paper.

Anson Wheeler decided one year to try growing watermelons. However, he noticed that the melons all were rotting before ripening. Several times he'd chased some boys from the melon fields. Then he discovered the reason for the mysterious rotting. Each watermelon had had a square plug cut from it by the boys in search of a ripe melon. He lost his whole watermelon crop that year.

Russell Wheeler tells another story of damage caused by some boys that was considerably more costly and dangerous. One summer in the 1930's, his father decided to log the area around the pond and on the ridge north of it. During these logging operations about one million board feet were cut and stacked in piles on the plain. Corn was grown nearby and some boys decided to take a few ears and roast them over a fire. Their fire got away from them

¹Conklin, Middlesex County and Its People, Vol. 5, p. 172-173

and spread to the lumber. Rusty, as Russell is known, was swimming in the pond at the time, saw the smoke, and rushed home to call the fire department. However, almost all that lumber was lost.

In the 1940's German prisoners from Ft. Devens were hired to work in the fields for summer crops. They were driven down daily in a bus with an interpreter and guards.¹

Between 1942 and 1948, Mr. D'Arrigo lived in the Noah Wheeler house and raised celery and broccoli for the Andy-Boy farm. It was located across the Fitchburg Turnpike from the house and in the area that is now Nashawtuc Country Club.²

Present day farmers include the Steven Verrills, Giurleo's, Brighams, Tarantos, and Mattisons.

¹Wheeler, Marian, personal conversations.

²Mrs. John Ruze, personal conversations.

Chapter VI--White Pond, Stories and Legends

White Pond gets its name from the whiteness of its sand, the purity of its waters, or, some say, from Mr. White, but the latter is unlikely. White Pond, frequently called White's Pond incorrectly, while much less famous than her sister, Walden Pond, was nonetheless immortalized in the writings of Thoreau, Emerson, and Channing.

When Emerson and Channing went to White Pond, Emerson writes that they "saw marvelous reflections of colored woods in the water, of such singular beauty it held us fast to the spot. It was a world seen through a prism and set Ellery on wonderful Lucretian theories of law and design."¹ Channing said, "White Pond is exceedingly beautiful, and especially its green ban with the pine. This is one of our finest ponds."²

Henry Thoreau visited the pond many times and knew its length, breadth, area, and depth (having sounded it) well. He tells an amusing story of a farmer who decided to pull out a tree whose end was sticking up above the surface in 40 feet of water out toward the middle of the pond. According to an old-timer the tree had been there many years. The end was large and the farmer expected to get much wood from it, judging the end in view to be the tree's top. However, after great labor, when he finally got the tree out he discovered that instead the tree had been stuck upside down in the bottom of the pond and all he had for his labors was waterlogged rotten wood not good for much of anything.³

¹Swayne, op. cit., (Emerson's Journal), p. 250.

²Swayne, ibid., (unpublished Journal of Ellery Channing), p. 279.

³Thoreau, Walden, p. 198-199.

Mystery surrounded the source of water for White and Walden Ponds, since there were ^{no} visible inlets or outlets. Some thought that Walden was bottomless or that it had some underwater connection with White Pond. Thoreau sounded Walden and very accurately measured its depth and graphed its bottom, showing its depth to be at the most about 100 feet. There is the legend, however, which gave support to the idea of an underwater connection with White Pond. It was said that a farmer had driven his horse and carriage out onto the ice at Walden, had broken through and sunk, and sometime later had been found in White Pond!

Another mystery, this one with more basis in fact, surrounds the story of pirate treasure. Edward Rowe Snow tells the details in his book True Tales and Curious Legends. Thomas Tew, a famous pirate in Captain Kidd's day, and his pirates captured a Moorish vessel off the coast of Africa, robbed it of its treasure, killed almost everybody, and scuttled the vessel. He rescued only a beautiful Moorish lady and brought her on board his ship. His booty consisted of three treasure chests filled with gold, diamonds, and other precious jewels, valued in today's market at about a quarter of a million dollars. Tew sailed back to New England and was hit by a violent storm off the New Hampshire coast. His pirates got drunk and one by one were washed overboard. When his ship was finally wrecked on Boon Island, Maine, only he, his first mate Juan Carlos, and the Moorish lady were alive. The survivors collected all the booty they could from the wreck and hid it in a chest on the island. Soon after, the Moorish lady killed Captain Tew and then committed suicide, leaving only Juan Carlos alive on the island. Juan Carlos was finally rescued and after three years was able to go back to Boon Island to collect his treasure. He put the treasure

in deerskin pouches and a week later went to White Pond in Concord where he had friends. There they buried it on the shore. Digging for the treasure went on for many years. Thoreau, many years later, tells of seeing holes at the beach made by treasure seekers. The fate of the treasure is unknown. Many are sure that those who dug up the treasure rowed out to the middle of the pond and dropped the sacks into 60 feet of water to what may still be their final resting place!¹

Thoreau said that "Since the woodcutters, and the railroad, and I myself have profaned Walden, perhaps the most attractive...of all our lakes, the gem of the woods, is White Pond."² The waters of White Pond remain even today luckily and surprisingly, considering the building that has taken place around it in the last 40 years, clean. We cannot assume they will always remain that way, however, without sufficient protection. Thoreau, again in Walden, said, "White Pond and Walden are great crystals, Lakes of Light...precious stones... but being liquid, ample, and secured to us forever we disregard them."³ Let us hope that this precious stone is not disregarded but preserved for as many future generations as have enjoyed its beauty in the past.

¹ Snow, True Tales and Curious Legends. p. 12-21.

² Thoreau, Walden, p. 197.

³ Thoreau, op. cit., p. 199.

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