

Farm Pond

Sherborn, Massachusetts



The handwritten photo caption reads:

"Camp at Farm Pond, Sherborn, Mass. July 22, '86.

Instantaneous View, Farm Pond, Sherborn, MS — July 22, '86"

About Farm Pond

Farm Pond is a “kettle” lake, meaning it was formed by the melting remnant of one of the glaciers that departed from New England more than 12,000 years ago. Because it was formed between the late oligotrophic and early mesotrophic periods, Farm Pond is a “young” pond. As shown by the map on the back cover of this booklet, the pond is about 58 feet at its deepest. The pond covers about 124 acres.

Local folklore claims that Farm Pond is spring fed, but limnologists say this is not so. The pockets of cool water, which swimmers often feel, are the result of thermal stratification of water layers, due to water density differences. Fed by a small watershed of about 380 acres, Farm Pond is actually about 35 feet higher than the surrounding ponds, streams, and the Charles River. An estimated 80 million gallons of water per year flow out of Farm Pond or are lost to evaporation, resulting in a dependence of about 45-50 inches of annual rainfall to maintain the pond’s normal level.

Farm Pond has always been a very active wildlife area, providing habitat to fish and many birds, including geese, blue herons, eagles, and hawks. Some species of fish and amphibians that inhabit the pond are relatively rare. The island in the southern portion of the pond is private property; its owners maintain it as a sanctuary for the numerous birds that nest there.



History of Farm Pond

The name “Farm” Pond may come from the early colonial era, when land grants were given out as payment for favors done for crown or colony. “Farme” was the name for a grant outside of incorporated towns. The land around Farm Pond was part of Simon Bradstreet’s “farme,” which he sold to the Morse family in 1658. In the Colonial Ordinances of 1641–1647, the Great and General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony declared that Farm Pond and others like it were “Great Ponds,” and that all settlers had the right to fish in them.

In the 19th century, Farm Pond provided fish as well as recreational swimming and skating to Sherborn residents. It was stocked with fish several times in the 1870s. By then, ice harvesting was an important Sherborn industry. Several ice houses were located on the shore near Lake Street. The foundation of one can still be seen there. The Clark family, among others, harvested as much as 3000 tons of ice in a good year, storing the chunks in sawdust-insulated barns, packed in meadow marsh hay and sawdust. As much as 1/3 of the ice would melt before it could be sold at \$.30 per pound. A 50 or 100 pound chunk could last in your ice box as long as a week.



In the late nineteenth century, picnic areas were established at private beaches at several locations. From 1880 until 1893, launches took families and groups for sightseeing outings on the pond. In 1893, one of the launches, the 30-foot, wood-burning, side-paddle steam launch *Atlanta*, was broken up and its engine converted to run a cider mill.

From 1897 to 1935, only fishing and ice harvesting were allowed on Farm Pond. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts took control of the water rights so that the pond could be used as a reservoir by the Medfield State Hospital. Water was taken to the hospital from the brick “pumphouse” (actually, it houses a valve not a pump) on the eastern side of the Pond, but it was used only for the hospital’s boilers. Water continued to be drawn from the Pond until the Hospital was closed in 2003.

In the Depression of the 1930s, unemployment plagued Sherborn, as elsewhere. WPA projects used local labor to enlarge the beach and build the stone bath house, and to construct the stone retaining wall along the back of the beach.

While Farm Pond more closely resembles a lake, its name is probably due to its “Great Pond” status. In 1935, the Commonwealth authorized the Sherborn Board of Selectmen to administer Farm Pond and to establish rules and regulations for its use and protection.

In 2010, an Act of the Legislature transferred the Farm Pond water rights back to the Town of Sherborn.

Fun at Farm Pond

The **Town Beach** is located on the Reservation at Farm Pond, on Lake Street. While swimming is permitted year round, the beach is patrolled by lifeguards from early June until late August. Please observe the rules for the beach, which are printed elsewhere in this booklet.

The Town conducts a program of **Swimming Lessons**. Red Cross-qualified instructors teach at a variety of levels. Please note that enrollment may be limited for certain swim lesson groups.

A town sponsored **Swim Team** conducts swimming meets during the summer for Sherborn and Dover youths.

The **Sherborn Yacht Club**, a private club adjacent to the Reservation, is the center for boating activities.

The **Sand Sculpture Contest** gives families and groups of children and adults an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and imagination at building fantastic sand sculptures.

Penny-a-Rock Day gives children an opportunity to earn a bit of pocket change while removing rocks from the swimming area and beach.

The **Admiral Funbelow Perimeter Swim** is an annual fundraising swim around Farm Pond (approximately 1.5 miles). Highlights include three refreshment stops along the way at lovely private beaches.

The annual **Fourth of July Events** at the beach include water games, scavenger hunts, swim races, and other fun activities for all ages.

Skating, ice hockey, and ice fishing are favorite **winter activities**.

Watch local newspapers and bulletin boards for announcements of scheduling and signup days for activities at Farm Pond.

Friends of Farm Pond

The Friends of Farm Pond is a community organization dedicated to the stewardship and enjoyment of Farm Pond. It sponsors numerous annual events including the Spring Clean Up, Penny-A-Rock Day, the Lap Swim, Sand Sculpture Contest and The Admiral Funbelow Perimeter Swim. Through these activities, it raises funds and coordinates volunteers who implement ideas and improvements. It also serves as an advocacy group for the preservation of the Pond.

Sherborn Yacht Club

The Sherborn Yacht Club provides recreational sailing, weekend racing, and social events for its membership of Sherborn residents and their families. Intended to promote safe and enjoyable boating on Farm Pond, the club offers a popular Instructional Sailing Program. Four two-week sessions are offered for youths 9 to 15 years of age, with classes organized for both beginners and advanced students. Group sessions are offered for adults, and private lessons are by appointment. Members enjoy the use of a fleet of two-person sloops, Sunfish sailboats, rowboats, kayaks, a paddleboat, canoe and windsurfer. The Dover-Sherborn High School Sailing Team uses the SYC boats and docks in the spring and fall for practices and races. The Yacht Club operations are centered on private docks adjacent to the Reservation. For more information, contact the Sherborn Yacht Club at 508-653-7069 or visit their website at www.sherbornyachtclub.com.



Boating Has Long Been a Favorite Activity: sailing photos from 1886 and 2010.

“Instantaneous View, Farm Pond, Sherborn, MS – Aug. 28 ‘86.”



Farm Pond Advisory Committee

The Farm Pond Advisory Committee (FPAC) is a seven-member board, plus one or more Associate Members, appointed by the Selectmen to advise the town on matters relating to the use and protection of Farm Pond. The Committee, representing a broad range of Farm Pond and community constituencies, meets monthly and encourages residents to share their concerns and suggestions.

A volunteer monitoring program regularly tests and documents the pond's water quality. Particularly noteworthy, in comparison to many other lakes and rivers in eastern Massachusetts, are the observed low total phosphorus values (5 to 10 ppb) and high Secchi disk transparency depths (4 to 8 m).

The committee's oversight of Farm Pond Reservation operations has yielded valuable improvements in recent years. The committee has helped increase the swim area, recruit the Waterfront Director, develop the Ranger position, increase parking for overflow occasions, consolidate signs to enhance visual compatibility with the environment, control erosion at the beach, make stickers available via mail-in, and open the Reservation to community access year round from 6:00 AM to dusk. Finally, the Farm Pond Advisory Committee has developed and implemented numerous strategies for protecting the pond in the future, including educating abutters and the general community, mitigating geese impact, and inspecting boats to minimize the threat of aquatic weed transfer.



Information for Boaters & Fishermen

Sailing, rowing, kayaking, canoeing, and fishing are popular recreational activities on Farm Pond. There is a boat ramp on the north edge of the Reservation for launching. Moorings are available for those who wish to leave their boats at Farm Pond.

Motor boats of any kind are prohibited on Farm Pond. Craft powered *only* by sail, oar, or paddle are allowed. This prohibition extends to all electrically powered boats.

You need a **permit to operate a boat** on Farm Pond. Permits can be obtained at Town Hall, beginning April 1, for a small fee. Keep your permit with you, as you will be required to show it at the Farm Pond gate when you bring your boat in. Boats must have an identifying number, issued by the Town with the Boat Permit.

Near the boat ramp, the Sherborn Yacht Club maintains **moorings** for the town. If you want to moor your boat, ask for a mooring application when you apply for a boat permit. Mooring applications are available beginning April 1, for a small fee. Moorings are usually in place in Farm Pond by the end of May. Boats must be removed from their moorings by October 1.

Fishermen are asked to respect the pond and its other users. Please be careful when casting, and do not leave anything behind, such as monofilament line or hooks. Use of unbarbed hooks is recommended to avoid the possibility of harm to small children. Fishermen are encouraged to return their catch to the water. There is no fishing allowed from the docks at the Sherborn Yacht Club or at the beach.

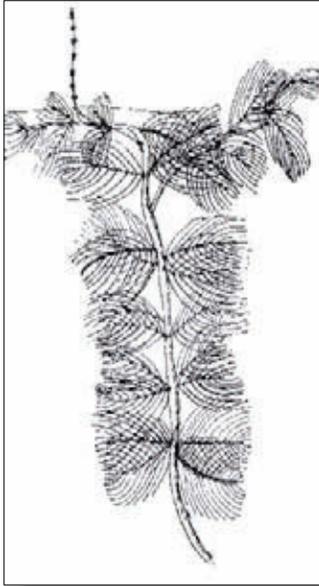


**The Steam Launch at
Clovernook Grove, a 19th
Century Picnic Area**

Protecting Farm Pond

To maintain the pond's high water quality, excessive nutrients must not be introduced into the pond from activities in the surrounding watershed. Activities of particular concern in terms of potential nutrient contributions include new land use, failing septic systems, excessive lawn fertilization, and the increasing size of the resident goose population. Increasing nutrient levels (total phosphorus) would lead to decreased water quality caused by eutrophication.

**Eurasian
Watermilfoil**



Another threat to the pond is a nuisance exotic aquatic weed called Eurasian watermilfoil, which has caused serious problems in several lakes and ponds in New England, other parts of the United States, and Canada in the past thirty years or so. It is commonly spread when fragments adhere to boats, motors, and trailers. When the boat is taken to another lake, the plant gets an opportunity to infest that lake. In some states, it is actually illegal to put a boat in the water if it has Eurasian watermilfoil on it.

Milfoil growth is accelerated when it is cut into pieces and left in the water. The best way of protecting Farm Pond from this infestation is to be sure that it is not accidentally brought in. For this and other reasons, motor boats are prohibited on Farm Pond.

👉 Boats powered by electric motors are prohibited. All boaters and fishermen must ensure that their boats and trailers are free from any vegetation before entering the Reservation.

Access to Farm Pond

The Reservation is open to the general public year round, from 6:00 AM to dusk. Public access to Farm Pond is permitted only from the Reservation. Please do not trespass on private property. Also, please note that the island is private property. Please do not swim or boat to the island.

Please Observe the Rules of the Reservation

These rules have been adopted and monitored to emphasize and blend the priorities of safety, public health, user enjoyment, ecology, and limitation of public liability. A more complete document describing the rules and regulations governing the use of Farm Pond in general may be obtained at the Sherborn Town Hall.

- No dogs or horses are permitted anywhere on the reservation.
- No food or beverages permitted except water.
- No smoking; no fires; no littering.
- No motors of any kind on pond.
- All boats must be washed at bath house before launching.
- Town of Sherborn Boat Permit Required
- Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.
- Swimming in designated areas only.
- No swimming under docks or perimeter lines or hanging on ropes.
- Artificial flotation devices are not permitted in water.
- Diving permitted in designated areas only.
- Balls and frisbees may be used only at discretion of lifeguards.
- Babies and toddlers must wear swim diapers.
- Use of radios or audio devices with headphones only.
- Low sand chairs only.
- No bike riding on the beach.
- No running on docks.
- No personal belongings on docks.
- No introduction of foreign substances into pond including soap, detergents, gas or oil.
- No fishing from beach when swimmers are present.

Please also note:

- Reservation rules are in force at all times all year long.
- Violators may be fined \$200 and/or be prohibited from use of the Reservation.
- Beach personnel are not responsible for lost or stolen articles.
- Visitors are reminded that restroom facilities are located adjacent to the parking lot.

*Please Keep Your Beach
and Your Pond
Safe and Clean*

Volunteers Needed

Farm Pond is a cherished natural resource of exceptional beauty and enjoyment for our community. Its stewardship is a responsibility and joy that we all share. To this end, volunteer assistance is needed in two essential areas:

Carrying out testing procedures for water quality.

To volunteer, please contact a member of the Farm Pond Advisory Committee.

Running the various “Fun at Farm Pond” activities.

To volunteer, please contact a member of the Friends of Farm Pond.

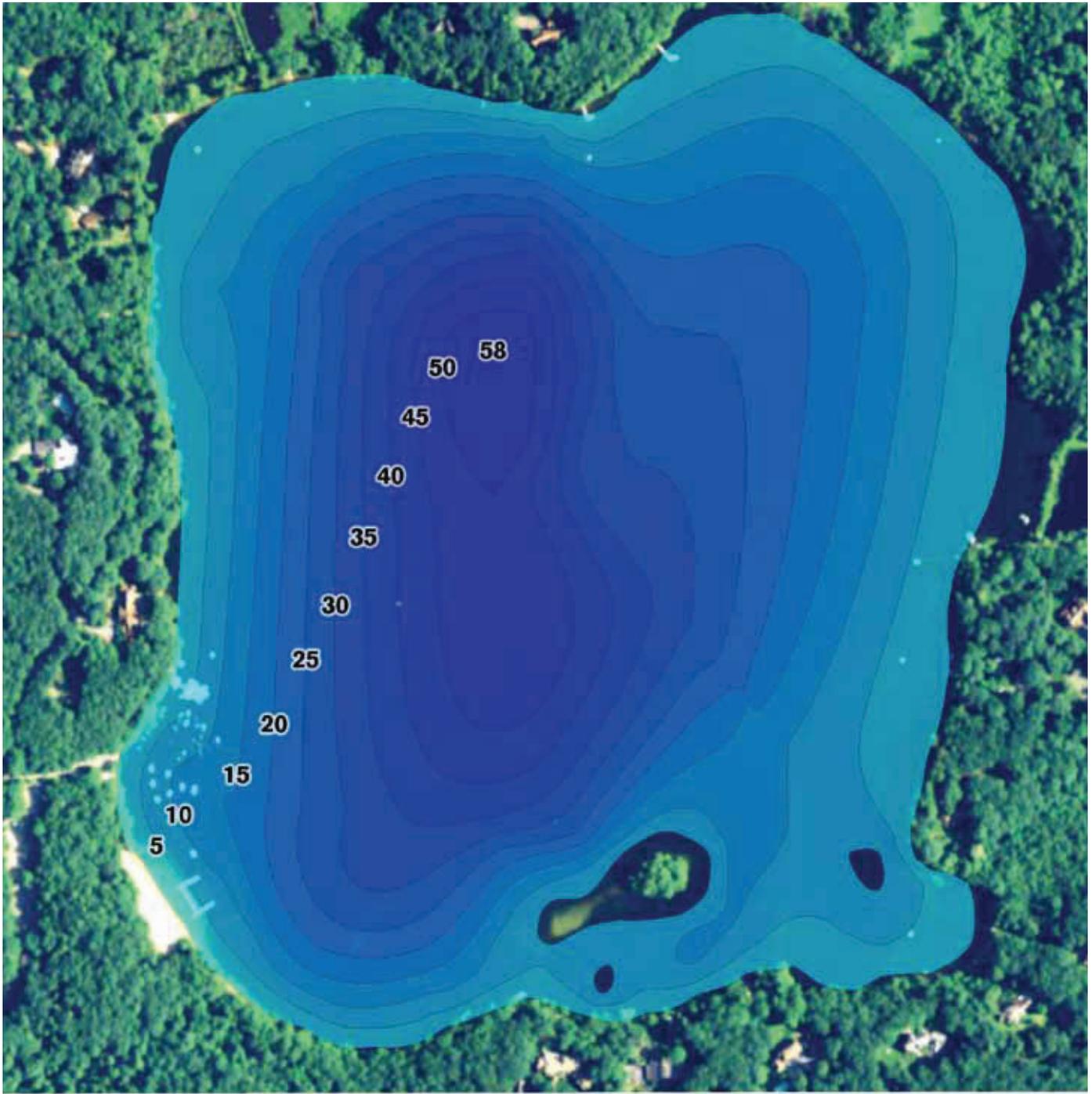
For more information about Farm Pond activities and organizations, please visit the Farm Pond Advisory Committee (FPAC) web page. Go to www.sherbornma.org, click on Boards and Committees, then click on Farm Pond Advisory Committee. Alternatively, click on the following link, http://www.sherbornma.org/Pages/SherbornMA_BComm/Farm/index

About This Handbook

The Farm Pond Advisory Committee developed this handbook in 1997, under the leadership of Douglas Cassell. The handbook was revised and updated in the winter of 2001 by the Farm Pond Advisory Committee under the leadership of Dusty Burke, Jr. The current version was updated in June, 2011.

Special thanks to Betsy Johnson of the Sherborn Historical Society for her Farm Pond history research and memorabilia.

Contour Map of the Bathymetry of Farm Pond in Sherborn, Massachusetts



250 ft

750 ft

1250 ft

1750 ft

Contour Interval = 5 feet

Depth data points were collected using a Trimble GeoExplorer II GPS and a weighted measuring rope. Contours calculated using Vertical Mapper and MapInfo.

Map Produced by Matthew Neutra and Adam Seering, 2001