

FORM H - PARKS AND
LANDSCAPE FEATURES

USGS Quad

Marlboro

Area(s)

Form No.

Forms within

914

ASSESSOR'S 5-7, 16-19, 30-31

Massachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Town Marlborough

Place (neighborhood or village) _____

Address _____

Historic Name Fort Meadow Reservoir

Ownership: private public

Type of Park or Landscape Feature
(check one):

- park
- green or common
- garden
- boulevard/parkway
- other reservoir
- farm land
- mine or quarry
- training field

Date of Construction 1847-48

Source MDC records; town histories

Landscape architect unknown

Location of Plans _____

_____ unknown

Alterations/Intrusions (with dates) _____

much modern housing construction along
shores of reservoir

Condition fair/good

Acreage ca 308 acres

Setting At N. central border of Marlborough

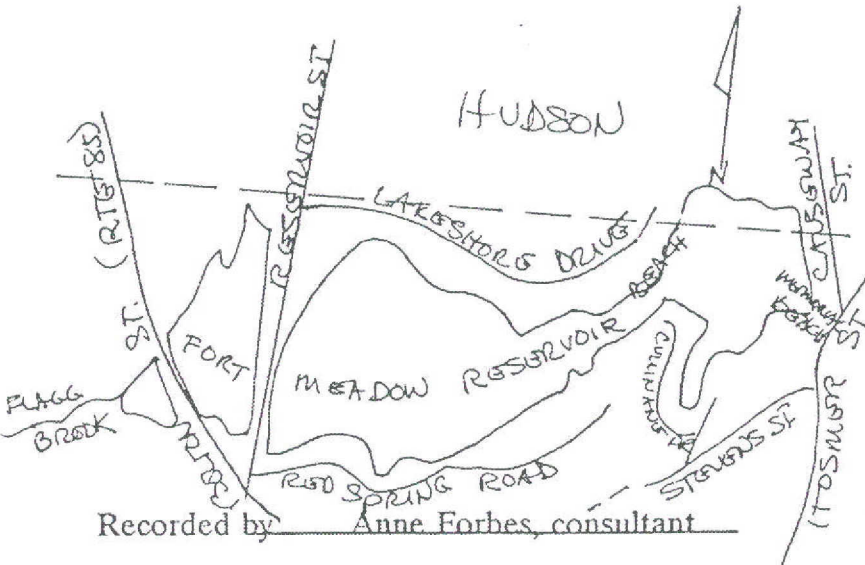
extending NE into Hudson Crossed by three

causeways, ringed with woods and cottages.



Sketch Map

Draw a map of the area indicating properties within it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets, including route numbers, if any. Attach a separate sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate north.



Recorded by Anne Forbes, consultant

Organization for Marlboro Hist Comm

Date 7/14/95

PARKS AND LANDSCAPES FORM

VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT [] *see continuation sheet*

Describe topography and layout. Note structures such as bandstands, gazebos, sheds, stone walls, monuments, and fountains. Note landscaping features such as formal plantings, agricultural plantings, and bodies of water. If possible, compare current appearance with original.

This "capacious reservoir" (Hudson, 230), nearly fifty years older than Marlborough's Millham Reservoir and the Metropolitan District Commission's Sudbury Reservoir, is a long, ca. 308-acre body of water on what was formerly a large wetland area on Fort Meadow Brook.. Most of it is oriented east-west just south of the central section of Marlborough's border with Hudson; a short northeast arm extends into Hudson. In contrast to the primarily natural wooded shores of the quiet Sudbury and Millham Reservoirs, Fort Meadow is a more active, developed place. Three causeways cross the water in a north-south direction. Route 85 (Bolton Street), the major local route north out of the city, spans the narrow west end of the reservoir, and Causeway Street leads north over the east end to Hudson. Between them, Reservoir Street crosses the widest section. Much of the south shore between Bolton and Hosmer Streets, in the vicinity of Red Spring Road, is dotted with former summer cottages of the 1930's through 1950's. A neighborhood of small houses on the north shore developed somewhat later.

The main swimming area maintained by the city, Memorial Beach, is located along the earthen dam off Hosmer Street in Marlborough at the southeast bend of the reservoir.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE [X] *see continuation sheet*

Discuss history of use. Evaluate the historical associations of the landscape/park with the community.

Fort Meadow Reservoir has been significant both locally and regionally at several points in its nearly 150-year history. A very early regional reservoir, it was created in 1847-48, along with Lake Whitehall in Hopkinton, by the city of Boston, which was threatened with a lawsuit as a result of its 1846 diversion of water from Long Pond (Lake Cochituate) in Wayland and Natick for the Boston water supply. The construction of the two reservoirs was part of a series of compensations to mill owners on the Sudbury River. The intent was to use them to build up a reserve supply of water during the wet season, which would then be released into the Sudbury/Assabet/Concord River system in the summer months when water levels were low and the rivers' natural flow was reduced. The total cost to the city of Boston for the Fort Meadow dam and reservoir was \$43,170.00.

Prior to the damming of Fort Meadow Brook for the reservoir, the section of Marlborough and Hudson that it now floods was a swampy area of woods and meadows through which the brook meandered from its origin in Marlborough's Flagg Swamp north toward the Assabet River. The brook was heavily used by the local Indians, who established summer and winter camps along it (one summer camp was located near today's Causeway Street), and it was the origin of their seasonal migrations from the Marlborough area down the Assabet, Concord, and Merrimack Rivers to the seacoast. (Cont.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES:

Maps and atlases: 1856, 1875, 1889, 1900.

Marlborough DPW and USGS maps.

Gutteridge, W.H. A Brief History of Maynard, Mass. 1921. (Cont.)

[] Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Marlborough Fort Meadow Reservoir

Massachusetts Historical Commission
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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

The wide hay meadows here would have been valuable to the early colonists, and were undoubtedly one of the desirable features considered in locating the Marlborough Plantation here. It is believed that the name of the brook, and hence the reservoir, comes from a small fort or outpost that was located somewhere nearby in the very early years of settlement--possibly even before the town was incorporated in 1660.

Water power privileges on the brook had been obtained early for the eighteenth-century Maynard grist mill, which was located east of today's Hosmer Street on what is now the Marlborough/Hudson border. Later converted to a sawmill, its low dam had created a small millpond just off Hosmer Street. It was at the Maynard family mill that the young Amory Maynard (b. 1804) had learned about the uses of water power under the guidance of his father, Isaac Maynard. Amory had left school at the age of fourteen to work in the mill and on his family's farm. His father died when he was sixteen, however, and it was not long before the young man had taken charge of the mill, and expanded its operations to include a lucrative building and contracting business. He had over fifty employees at one time, and his company built many buildings in Marlborough and the neighboring towns in the 1820's through early 1840's. Among those constructed under his supervision were the John Chipman House at 17 Stevens Street (see Form 85), and the New England Carpet Mills, located on the Sudbury in the Saxonville section of Framingham.

Through the Saxonville project he became acquainted with carpet-manufacturer William H. Knight, the mill-owner who apparently received the greatest impact from the 1846 diversion of Long Pond. Knight ran three thriving carpet mills in Saxonville, which were suddenly rendered useless by the loss of water power from the Long Pond project. The \$150,000 compensation paid to him was the largest made by the City of Boston. To a more minor extent, however, Amory Maynard's mill privilege on Fort Meadow Brook was affected, as well. The City paid him \$21,000 for land and water rights at both Fort Meadow and Lake Boon at the border of Stow and Marlborough (later Hudson). The two men pooled their resources, and formed a partnership to develop carpet mills on the Assabet River in Sudbury. There they built the first woolen mills that eventually led to the development and founding in 1871 of the town of Maynard (named in Amory Maynard's honor), and provided the basis of its economy well into the twentieth century. After William Knight's retirement in 1852, Amory Maynard continued to expand the mills and acquire more land and water rights. In an ironic twist, even after a brief business failure, in 1858 he purchased the Fort Meadow Reservoir back from the City of Boston for \$8,000.

By the end of the nineteenth century, as it was not a source of drinking water, the reservoir was used for the water sports that were becoming increasingly popular at that time. Residents of Marlborough and Hudson skated there in the winter, and there was extensive boating in the summer. Sailboat races were held on the reservoir for years, and the newspapers even give accounts of semi-organized horse races along the shores. (Cont.)

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914**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.**

In this century, land around the reservoir, as well as some of the flooded section, was gradually sold off. Much of the south shore was developed in the late 1930's and '40's for a lakeshore cottage community (see Area Form AP), and building in the Lakeshore Drive neighborhood on the north side began in the early 1950's. In 1953, the American Woolen Company, et. al., (Amory Maynard's successors on the Assabet in Maynard), sold 13 acres of land at the southeast end to the city of Marlborough for \$1,000. That parcel, which had 800 feet of waterfront, had formerly been leased by the city for a beach. After the purchase it officially became the World War II Memorial Beach, which is still a major recreational facility for the city of Marlborough.

BIBLIOGRAPHY, cont.

Hudson, Charles. History of the Town of Marlborough, Mass. 1862.

Hudson, A. Sereno. Annals of Sudbury, Wayland, and Maynard, Mass. 1891.

Hurd, D.H. History of Middlesex County. 1890.

The Marlborough Enterprise. 9/22/1985.

McAdow, Ron. The Concord, Sudbury, and Assabet Rivers. Marlborough: Bliss Publishing Co., 1970.

Metropolitan District Commission. Letter to Marlborough Historical Society. 6/29/1977.

Temple, J.H. History of Framingham. 1887.

