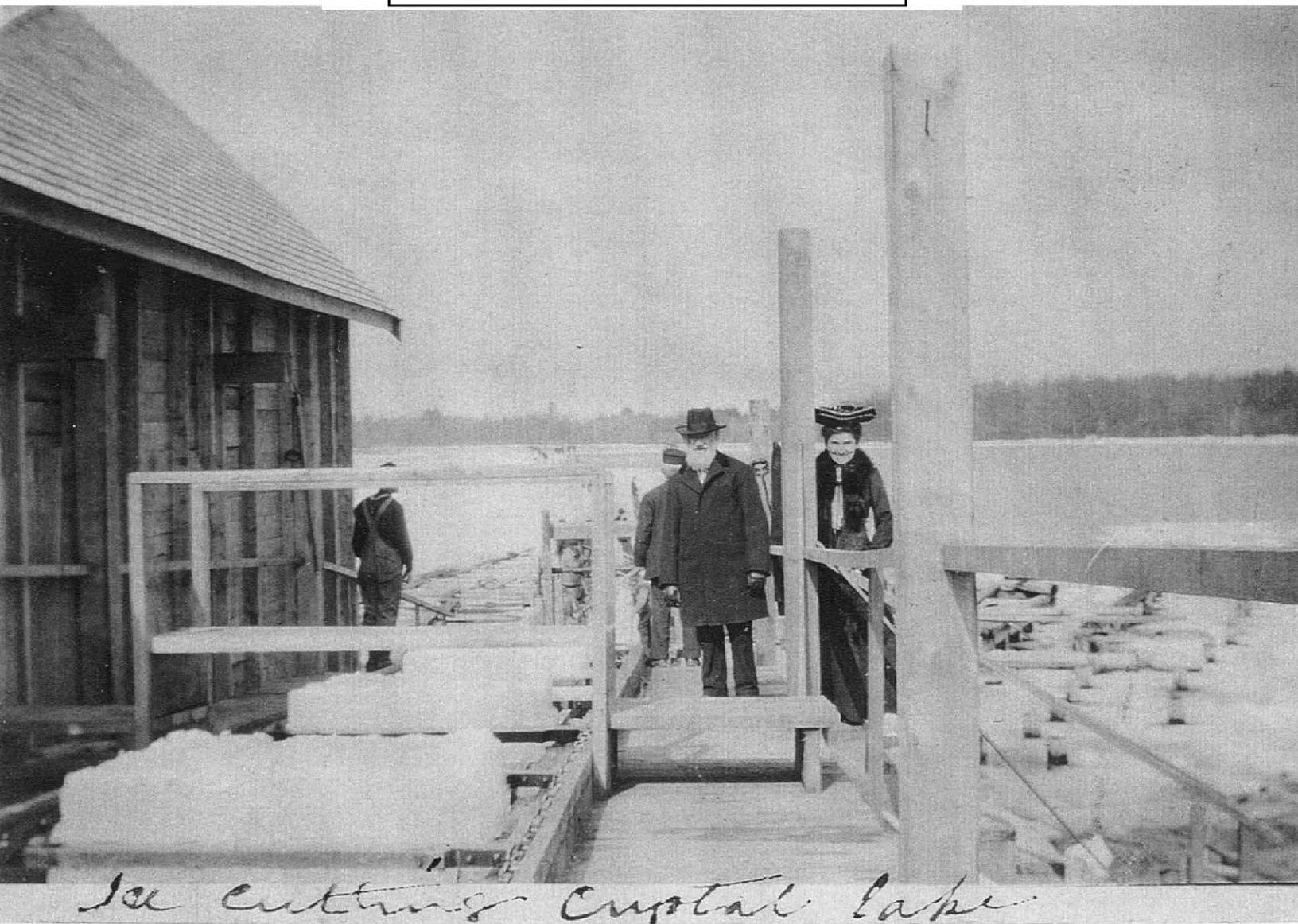


Newfield Pond prior to 1823  
Renamed Leach's Pond About 1823  
Renamed Crystal Lake After 1832  
Renamed Freeman Lake After 1977



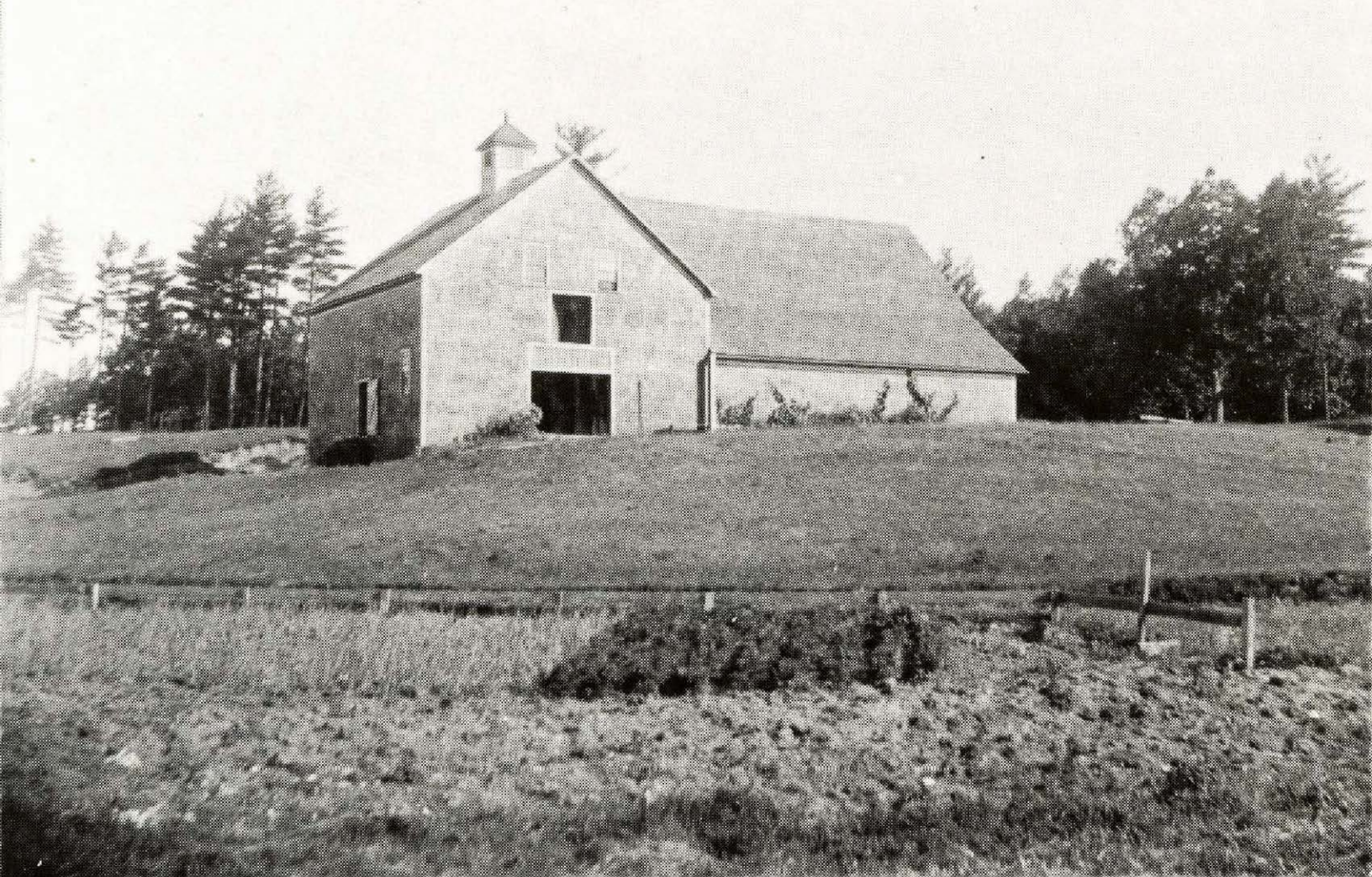
Boston Ice Company Ice Conveyor on Crystal Lake

Courtesy of George Merrill



Boston Ice Co. Plant

Courtesy of George Merrill



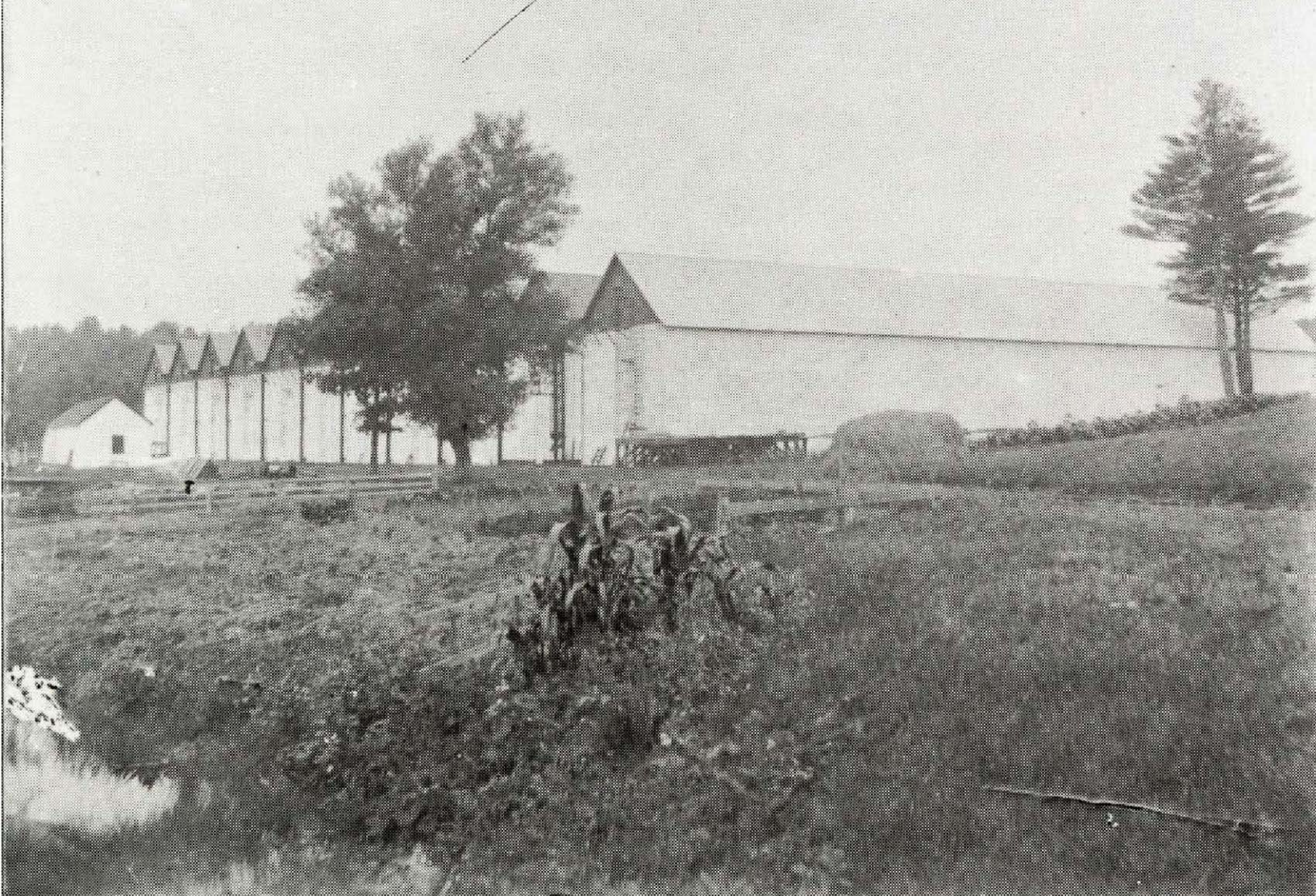
Boston Ice Co. Barn

Courtesy of George Merrill



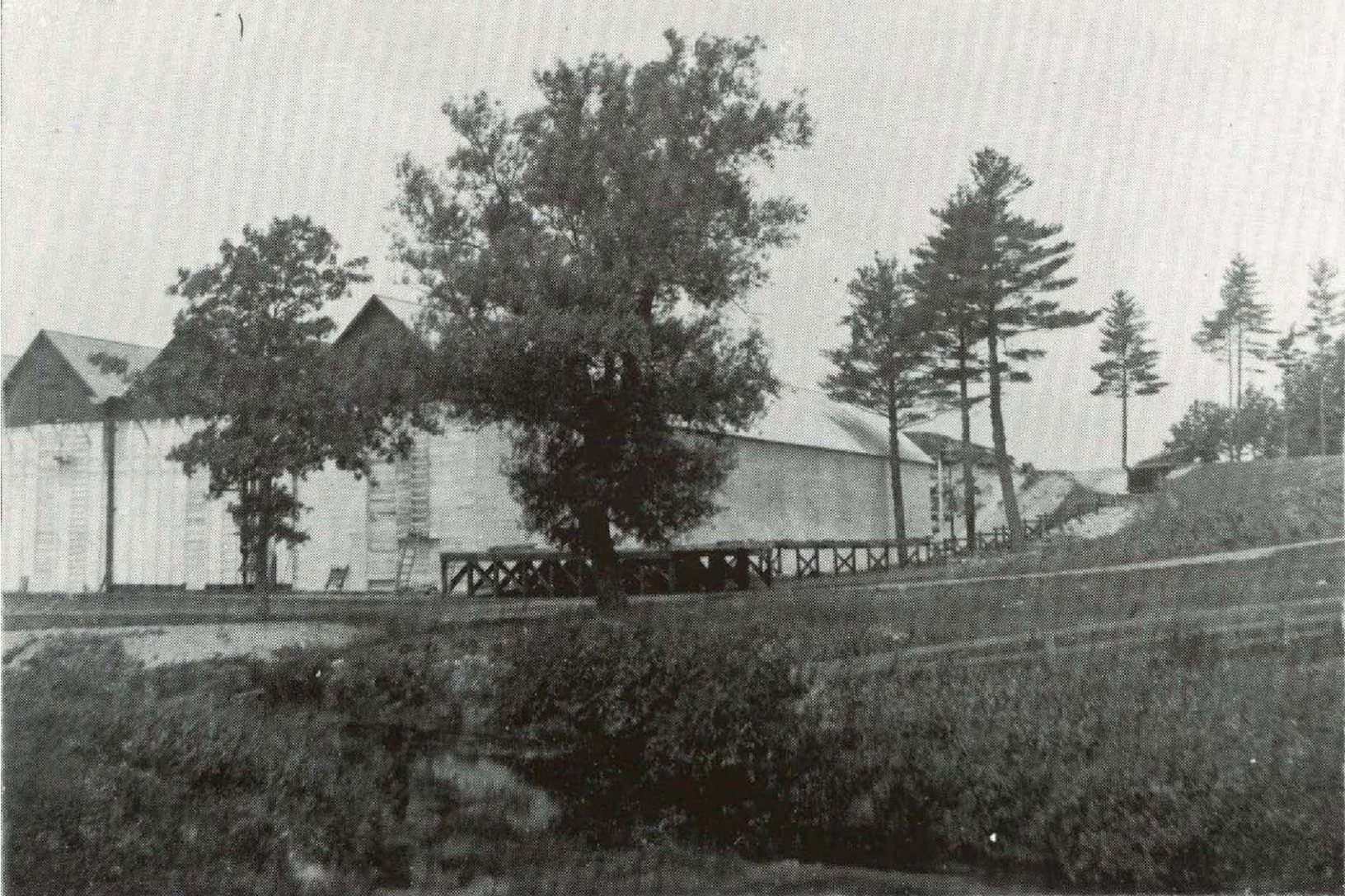
All that remains of the Boston Ice Co. Barn is the foundation (George Merrill standing)

5/6/2005 F. Merriam



Boston Ice Company Ice Storage Sheds

Courtesy of George Merrill



Boston Ice Company Ice Storage Sheds

Courtesy of George Merrill



All that remains of the Boston Ice Co. storage buildings today is foundation blocks

5/6/2005 F. Merriam



Mill Canal and Boston Ice Co. Barn

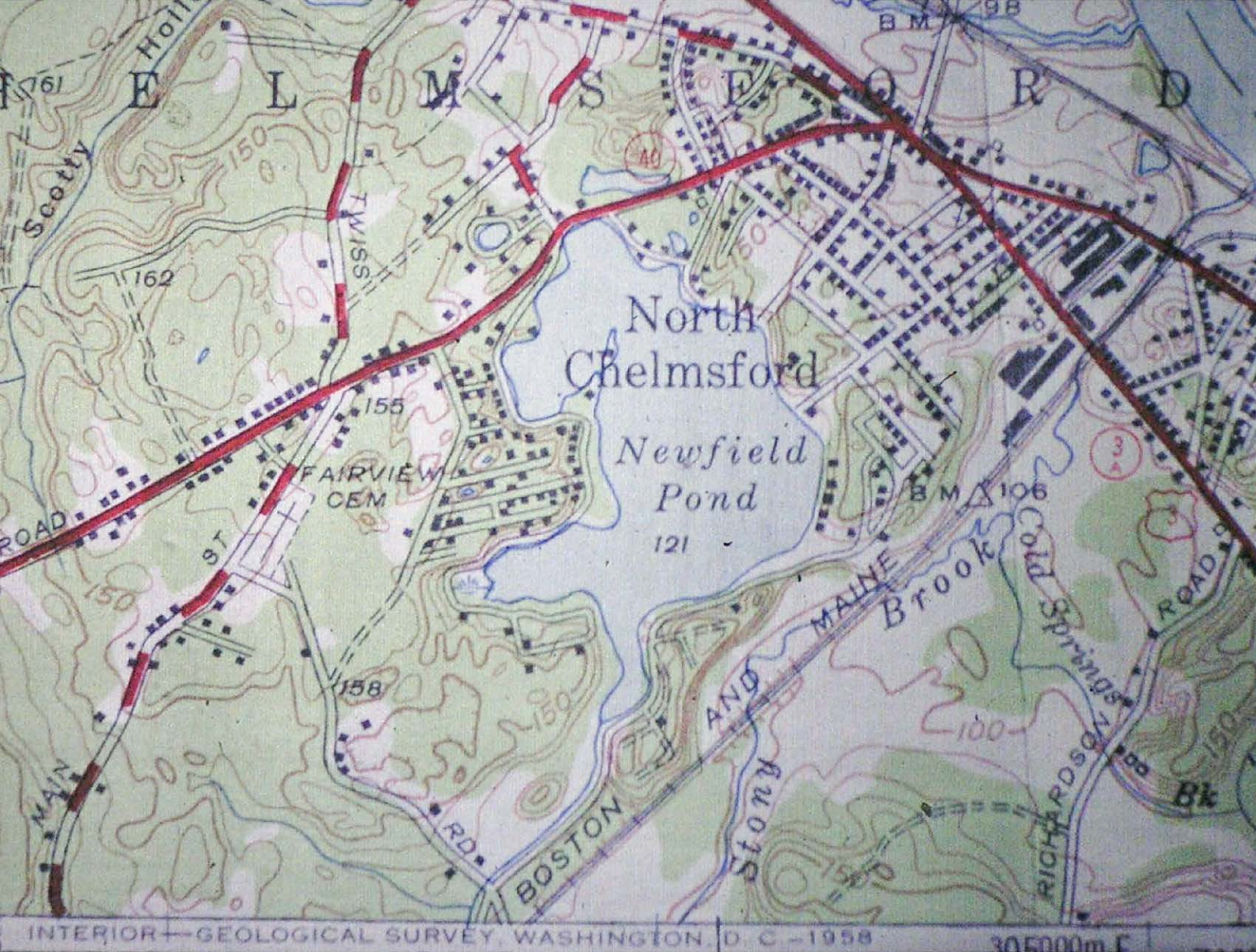
Courtesy of George Merrill





Mill Canal looking toward Boston Ice Co. Barn

Courtesy of George Merrill



INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. —1958

30E000m E

1958 Geological Survey (prior to Route 3)

Courtesy of John A Goodwin

Lowell Sun April 9, 1970

LOWELL SUN

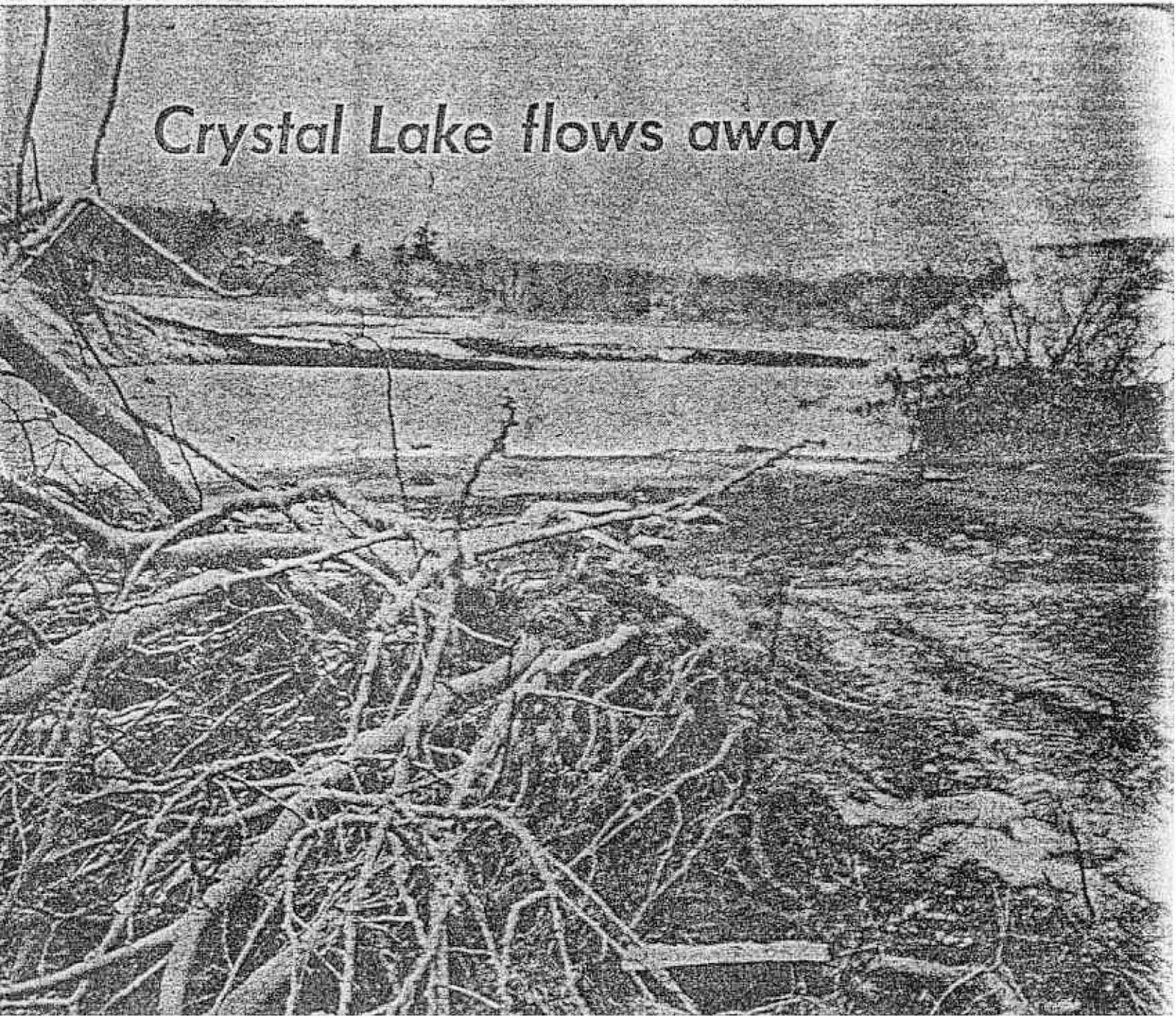


# SUN/day

MAGAZINE

Mass.  
April 9, 1970

Crystal Lake flows away





## Town, state officials weigh results

State Rep. Bruce Freeman, Mass. Gov. Francis Sargent and Chelmsford Selectman Howard Humphrey ponder over what direction to take in assessing responsibility for the de-

pleted man-made lake on which a town beach was located. No owners have been found to date and none has come forward to claim the now slightly-desolate area.

By CAROLYN MIEGEL

Sun Staff Reporter

CHELMSFORD — Natural disasters just happen — and most of the time, the people affected by such disasters just pick up the pieces and put them back together again. But in the case of Crystal Lake, emptied by a break in its banks April 4, the rebuilders, whoever they may end up to be, will have to wait a while — so the lawyers and the engineers can decide what happened, why and who is responsible.

The Chelmsford selectmen and the business affected by the flood have begun the long, involved legal process of finding those legally responsible for the break and the lake is located on.

The Chelmsford Board of Assessors show no owner on their books. Two businesses on the empty lake, Southwell Combining Co. and Gilet Wool Scouring Co. both bought the rights to draw water from the lake from the George C. Moore Wool Scouring Co. in 1959. Gilet bought both the water rights and the Moore plant; Southwell just purchased the rights.

Since the flood, both companies have made do. — Gilet is now drawing water for their processing from Stony Brook, which fed the man-made lake. Southwell has put in town water. For Gilet, however, the disappearance of the lake not only meant a temporary loss of water, but of power too. The large steam generator which gave power to the plant was shorted out during the short flood and Gilet has been forced to bring in power from the outside, adding a substantial cost to their operation.

Gilet was back in operation, after clearing away the mud and debris and trying out most of the machines by April 10, but it will be another week or two before the plant is at full capacity again, according to the owner.

Gilet, like Cal Laughton Florists, is investigating applying for loans under the Small Business Administration. The Crystal Lake area was declared a physical disaster area this week, entitling the area businesses to low interest, long term rates from the SBA.

While Gilet, Laughton's and other businesses have lawyers working to find out who is responsible for the lake property, the Chelmsford selectmen are undergoing an extensive title search. All damage claims can be filed against the owner of the property or the party responsible for the break in the lake's bank, if any. The town has already returned three claims made by local residents, claiming they do not have title to the lake — though they do own the property on the side of the lake opposite the break which was a town beach — Edwards Beach and Varney Playground.

The question of who owns the land, and who is responsible involves a complicated history of the area, which dates back to 1707 and ends in a haze about 1870.

The town story of Chelmsford reads that in 1707 "Jonathan and John Richardson had granted the liberty of erecting iron works on Stony Brook with the convenience of flowing provided it damify none of the inhabitants." In May 1709, the town fathers voted that John

Richardson be allowed to draw on a pond called Newfield Pond to supply his mill with water and shall have the benefit of said pond to the high-water mark."

The Newfield Pond, which covered about 100 acres, suffered the same fate as Crystal Lake, in 1709, when workmen were digging a channel through the bank of the pond when the pressure of the water suddenly burst the weakened bank. The force of the water rushing out of the lake buried a Negro workman in a huge mound of sand. Richardson did nothing at the time to restore the pond, leaving it "covered with a thrifty growth of wood," until an ambitious Englishman, General Sheperd Leach, decided to restore the man-made pond more than 100 years later.

"About the year 1823," the Chelmsford history reads, "William Adams, who owned much of the land in the Newfield section of Chelmsford, including the bed of Newfield Pond, brought the iron deposits in the area to the attention of General Sheperd Leach, who was then carrying on an iron and foundry business in Easton, where he owned seven furnaces, as shown in tax lists for that year."

The industrious Gen. Leach, who was eager to draw on both the water power of Stony Brook and the nearby iron ore deposits, engaged in restoring the pond, which originally was 30 feet above the level of Stony Brook.

The pond was then covered with woods and long grass which was cut and used to pack the products of the Chelmsford Glass Works, which began at Middlesex Village in the early 1800's. Leach, along with Adams, conceived of the idea of filling the old pond bed by bringing the waters of the Stony Brook into the pond through a channel and fill the pond to original capacity.

In 1824, Leach built the canal from West Chelmsford and the pond had been

## The Cover

Sun photographer Dave Brow stood beneath the break in Crystal Lake's retaining boundary to show the impact of the rushing water as it mowed down whatever was in its path, including railroad siding and a roadway. Officials have yet to determine cause or assess responsibility.

filled and renamed Leach's Pond. On the pond, which was later renamed Crystal Lake, Leach built a blast-furnace near the location of the Gilet plant, getting the power to operate his works and the pumps which supplied air to the blast furnace from the water in the lake.

The first iron was reduced from the furnace in 1825 and Leach's business venture on Crystal Lake flowered until the General's death in 1832. The property, including the land the lake occupied was then transferred to his brother-in-law, Capt. Lincoln Drake of Easton. Drake added another furnace in 1842 and continued the business until 1849, when it went into the hands of Williams, Bird and Co. In 1858, George T. Sheldon, a brother-in-law of Bird purchased the plant and land and organized the Chelmsford Foundry Co. which, in 1908, when the town history was written, was still prospering.

Just what happened to the ownership of the lake property, as distinct from the site of Leach's iron works, between 1908 and today, is what the title lawyers, both from the town and the businesses damaged by last week's flood, must find out.

It is clear that the town is not responsible, nor is the state — and until some responsibility — or at least ownership — is established, no town, state or federal grants to the area can be made.

At their meeting this week, the Chelmsford selectmen received letters from Gov. Francis W. Sargent, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the SBA pledging their assistance to restore the area.

Rep. Bruce Freeman of Chelmsford has suggested a more direct means of providing aid for Crystal Lake, but even Freeman's method depends on establishing some title for the property.

Freeman plans to file legislation making Chelmsford residents eligible for

flood benefits appropriate for a similar disaster in Lee, in the foothills of the Berkshires, in 1968. Between \$7 and \$8 million are thought to be left in a state-administered fund.

The Boston and Maine Railroad, whose main freight line between New York and Maine was ripped up and twisted by the force of the water rushing from the break in the lake bank, had service restored on the line in 1½ days.

B and M engineers replaced some 1,500 feet of bent and broken track, and replaced roadbed washed away by the water.

Some of the culverts underneath the roadbed owned by the B and M were filled with silt from the flood and a crane and a work engine spent two days last week clearing out the culverts. There had been some speculation that the culverts, if blocked, could have caused the heavy water pressure in the lake breaking the bank, but it is not known if the culverts were blocked before the break occurred.

Cal Laughton, owner of Laughton's florist shop, said it will take between two and three months to restore his business to normal, since the water flooded many of the plants in the greenhouses. Only time will tell if the plants will be severely damaged by the excess water.

"We got caught right in the middle of our growing season, and the growing schedule is all messed up," he said. "Right now we're trying to salvage our plants damaged by the water. The carpenters and everyone are working hard, but only time will tell how much damage there is."

What happens now — whether an owner, if any, can be established or can be found and what the state and federal officials can do legally even if a owner is found — is still up in the air and will remain questionable for months.



Path of destruction with Route 3 in upper right

4/4/1970 John A Goodwin



Stony Brook Railroad line looking toward Route 3 overpass

4/4/1970 John A Goodwin



Stony Brook Railroad Bed

4/4/1970 John A Goodwin





Stony Brook Railroad Bed

4/4/1970 John A Goodwin



Sun staff photo by Mike Pigeon

### Filling again

Chelmsford's Crystal Lake began filling again yesterday for the first time in more

than five years as control gates were opened after a rebuilding program

resulted in repairs to dike which had broken allowing lake to empty.

## One last lake check planned by selectmen

CHELMSFORD — One last inspection of Crystal Lake has been scheduled before its contracted renovation is formally accepted, to resolve some questions raised by Selectmen Chairman Paul Hart during daily observations at the site.

Hart said he and other officials who were checking the

work as the lake filled were not "really satisfied that the structure is as it should be."

Some seepage at the outlet canal, some loose bolts at the inlet dam and other possible structural flaws were cited by Hart. Another Saturday inspection of the site has been scheduled for the selectmen and engineering consultants.

# Chelmsford-Westford-Tyngsboro Newsweekly

VOL. XXXVII NO. 17

Chelmsford, Mass., March 24, 1977

Price 15c

## Selectmen Say Crystal Lake Problems Still Linger On

In a report to the Board of Selectmen Monday night, Chairman Paul Hart said he was "not really satisfied with the progress at Crystal Lake."

Hart has been inspecting the lake daily with Highway Superintendent Louis Rondeau and found "things not as they should be." There are problems of seepage at the outlet canal running from the Lake towards the mills. "There could be problems of a washout," said Hart. He further explained that boards which are designed to hold the water do not effectively do so. It was suggested that seepage

could be caused by frost or perhaps holes made by rodents.

In addition, there is a great deal of debris coming loose from the bottom of the lake and floating to the edge. This is coming from ungrubbed areas, said Hart. According to the contract, all of the lake was not grubbed. Hart suggested that funding be sought to pay for additional grubbing.

The bolts of the inlet dam are still loose, said Hart, adding that the engineering firm (Fay, Spofford and Thorndike) and DeMatteo Construction Co. have been notified to look into these

matters.

It was agreed to meet with representatives of the engineering and construction firms at the lake on Saturday morning about 11 a.m.

Selectman Currier said he's received information that polluting material was coming into the lake from Stony Brook. This will be investigated. Selectman Murphy inquired as to whether or not the Department of Natural Resources had been requested to stock the lake with fish now that it was again filled. He was told that this would be done a year after the lake was first filled.

Chelmsford-Westford-Tyngsboro

# Newsweekly

VOL. XXXVII NO. 48

Chelmsford, Mass., March 31, 1977

Price 15c



**TAKING ANOTHER LOOK** at Crystal Lake and some of its problems on Saturday, March 26, were (L-R) Sel. William Murphy, Robert Loney, supervisor of the dam project for Fay, Spofford & Thorndike of Boston; Sels. Paul Hart and Philip Currier; Robert Gagnon of the Crystal Lake Committee and Sel. Thomas Palmer. (Photo by TecArt Photography)

# Crystal lake may not be opened

CHELMSFORD — Crystal Lake may be posted with a "No swimming — Polluted" sign this summer as the legal entanglements surrounding

its reconstruction and final completion continue.

There are many problems, not the least of which is that the dam leaks. In addition,

pollution is still apparently entering the lake. A natural form of debris from the lake bed also must be cleared away before the okay for

swimming is given.

The selectmen had planned to extend the original contract for lake reconstruction work to allow for repair of the

leaks and clearing of the natural debris. DeMatteo Construction Co., the contractor, reportedly is willing to do the work.

However, the town officials want a provision in the extension that the extended agreement will not prevent the town from continuing legal action to collect damages against the contractor for not meeting the deadline for construction.

**THE TOWN** is claiming nearly \$7,200 in damages under a "liquidated damages clause" in the contract. The extended deadline for completion was Nov. 1, 1976. The work was not completed until Dec. 8.

Fiscal problems forced abandonment of any plan to provide a beach or formal swimming program at the lake this year.

Now, even the limited policy approved at town meeting, to provide lifeguard protection, may be jeopardized. If the lake remains unswimmable, signs will be posted to keep off swimmers.

Lowell Sun  
Thursday, June 16, 1977



['Newfield Pond' - Bruce Freeman Lake, now unused canal outlet]

8/7/2004 F Merriam



'Newfield Pond' - Bruce Freeman Lake

8/7/2004 F Merriam





'Newfield Pond' - Bruce Freeman Lake, inlet stream

8/7/2004 F Merriam



'Newfield Pond' - Bruce Freeman Lake, Varney Playground



['Newfield Pond' - Bruce Freeman Lake, VFW Hall on far right]

8/7/2004 F Merriam

