

# Newfield, Crystal — one in the same

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Have you been skating on Assanunnick-com-misick Pond recently? Or, perhaps you think of it by its other name: Annannleum-sick. Of course, if you are not fluent in the language of the local American Indian tribes, you may call it Bruce Freeman Lake. We are referring to the body of water along Groton Road in North Chelmsford opposite the proposed Senior Center.

But these are only three of the six or more names by which it has been known over the years. Others are Newfield Pond, Leach's Pond, and Crystal Lake. Newfield Pond was the name given it by the earliest settlers. This was logical since it was located in the "Newfield," the original name for North Chelmsford.

As for "Newfield," history tells us that "A common field was laid out (about 1660)...north of Stony brook. It consisted of 214 acres, in lots of six acres each. It was owned by 22 proprietors, some of whom owned several lots. The largest owner was Benjamin Butterfield, who held seven lots, 42 acres. The field was enclosed by a fence, and, doubtless, used in common, by these owners, for pasturage. It was called Newfield and that name came to be applied to all that part of the town now North Chelmsford."

As early as 1707, "Jonathan Richardson and John Richardson had granted the Liberty of erecting Iron works upon Stony brook with Conveniency of flowing provided it Damnifie none of the Inhabitants," and in May, 1709, "It was voted that John Rich-

## The way It was

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ardson shall have the Liberty of Drawing of the pond Called Newfield pond to suply his mill with Water: And shall have the benefit of sd pond to the high-water mark."

This led to a major catastrophe. Tradition has it that workmen were digging a channel through the sand bank that separated the pond from Stony Brook valley, when the pressure of the water suddenly burst the weakened bank and the water, rushing out, carried with it a black workman named "Jack," whose body was never recovered. The 100 acre pond was all drawn off except for an acre in the lowest part.

The lake bed became a swamp, partly covered, in time, with a heavy growth of wood and long meadow grass that was used by the Chelmsford Glass Works as packing material.

About 1824 William Adams, who owned much of the land in the Newfield section of Chelmsford as well as Newfield pond, sold the pond and 19 acres to General Leach. The breach in the bank was filled and a ca-

nal was dug to bring the waters of Stony brook from West Chelmsford to the pond, which then became known as Leach's pond.

Within the memory of the older citizens, the Boston Ice Company had 10 or 12 ice houses on the shore of Crystal Lake.

An event similar to the previous catastrophe occurred on April 4, 1970. At that time the lake again broke through the sand and was completely drained in a matter of minutes, exposing a veritable forest of tree stumps that had been submerged for more than a century.

Plans for restoring the lake were spearheaded by a bill in the state legislature, introduced by Chelmsford's representative, the late Bruce Freeman. However, the wheels of legislation turn slowly and mysteriously and it was not until February, 1976 that the actual restoration work began.

All that is now behind us and we again have our scenic lake that provides swimming, boating, fishing and, in winter, ice skating. The one person who, through his dedicated and tireless effort, brought the restoration project to successful culmination, was Rep. Bruce Freeman. It was entirely fitting that the lake should be officially renamed Bruce Freeman Lake.

And that's the way it was.

*George A. Parkhurst is a Chelmsford historian whose family has lived in town since 1654.*