



Manchester Urban Ponds Restoration Program

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www.manchesternh.gov/urbanponds

The History of Black Brook



Maxwell Pond Dam, approximately 1936 (NHDOT)

A.D. Maxwell, Amoskeag Ice Co., & Maxwell Pond

Blodget Park formerly included a stone and cement dam which created an impoundment known as Maxwell Pond. Maxwell Pond was named for A.D. Maxwell, who owned the Amoskeag Ice Company. Ice harvesting began shortly after the dam was created in 1900 and Maxwell Pond was considered Manchester's best source of pure ice.

Recreation

Until the late 1950's, Maxwell Pond was popular for swimming, picnicking, and fishing. In the winter months the pond provided a spot for ice skating, bonfires and hockey games. It was even considered for a secondary municipal water source for the City of Manchester, but the idea was abandoned in the 1960's. In the late 1950's and early 1960's Maxwell Pond began to change when upstream land uses began impacting Black Brook by washing excessive amounts of sediment into the streambed.



Inside Maxwell Pond Dam, approximately 1936 (DOT)

Degradation & Restoration



Maxwell Pond Dam October 2006

By 2005, the pond had diminished to a maximum depth of less than 4 feet. Water quality had degraded to the point that the pond was listed on the state's list of impaired waters. Refrigeration technology had left the pond's original purpose obsolete, swimming was no longer possible, and fishing was severely impacted. Flooding and the deteriorating condition of the dam had also become significant safety concerns. In response to this situation, in 2002 the city of Manchester and a group of dedicated project partners joined together to undertake a restoration project at Black Brook. In the early spring of 2009, the dam was removed, and Black Brook flowed freely into the Merrimack for the first time in over 100 years.

Changes continue, as the brook evolves and seeks its course, but early indications are that the restoration project has been a success. The restored Black Brook is now poised to continue its path through Manchester's history.