



# Manchester Urban Ponds Restoration Program

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[www.ci.manchester.nh.us/UrbanPonds](http://www.ci.manchester.nh.us/UrbanPonds)



## The History of Maxwell Pond

Maxwell Pond, like the six other urban ponds, has been an essential part of Manchester's long history. Both recreational and occupational uses have flourished here in decades past. Recorded accounts of Maxwell Pond's history are few and difficult to locate, but much of the pond's history lives in the hearts and memories of those living in surrounding neighborhoods.

### Fishing at Maxwell Pond

Maxwell Pond was created by the installation of a dam on Black Brook in 1900. In 1954, a NH Fish and Game Department survey noted that the pond contained only warm water fish species, such as: chain pickerel, horned pout and sunfish, but was a marginal salmonid water body. There are reports, however, of fishermen catching trout here and especially upstream in Black Brook where conditions most likely would have been ideal for a trout fishery.



### Historical Uses

Maxwell Pond was reportedly named for A.H. Maxwell, who owned the Manchester Coal & Ice Company at the time ice was harvested there. Ice harvesting took place in the 1930's and '40's, when Maxwell Pond was considered the best source in Manchester for pure ice. The company, located upstream, would keep the ice cold with haybales and sell it year round (Drociak, 2000).

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

Today, the pond (which had a maximum depth of 8 feet in 1954) has a maximum depth of just 4 feet. Clearly the land uses upstream have had an impact on Maxwell Pond. Few people still fish here, but with limited success. Neighborhood children use the steep hillside adjacent to the pond for sledding in the winter, but the numerous historic uses of Maxwell Pond are greatly diminished. The shoreline is much the same as it was a century ago, but characteristics of the pond itself have changed immensely. The obstacles facing the pond are relatively few, so restoration of the pond's historic uses is certainly possible in the near future.