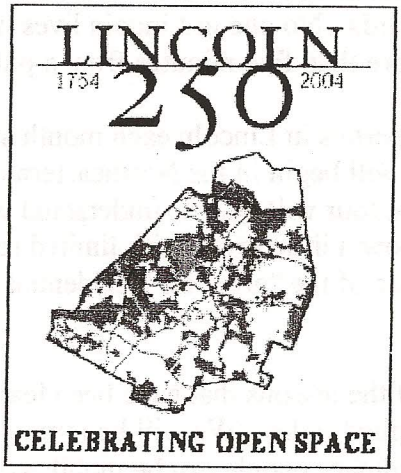
LINCOLN
1754 250 2004

A Virtual Tour of Lincoln Conservation Land Written for Lincoln's 250th Anniversary Celebration



By
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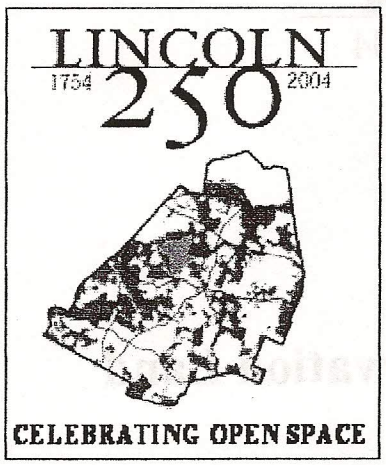
*Published in the **Lincoln Journal** throughout 2004*

250 YEARS OF
CARING FOR COMMUNITY AND LAND

A Guided Tour of Lincoln's Open Spaces: Introduction



"250 Years of Caring for Community and Land" is the theme chosen for the year-long celebration of Lincoln's 250th anniversary. The phrase expresses the unique qualities of our town. Lincoln would be an ordinary town of 5,000 people and a very different place if it were not for the extraordinary character of the community and the extraordinary appearance of the land.

As the town faces the challenges of the future, the story of the relationship between a caring community and its land has real value. The story is inspirational because so many good things have been done, but equally important, it is instructive – because it offers useful ideas for future action by the community.

For some people in Lincoln, this is a favorite tale, told often and often told well. For others, it's a new story, full of surprises. Working on the theory that everyone is interested in what is happening next door, Lincoln's conservation organizations will tell the story in 2004 by taking Lincoln residents on a tour of their own back yards. No one in Lincoln lives more than five minutes from a protected open space. No one lives more than five minutes from a public trail.

We will select different conserved properties in Lincoln each month and tell the story about how they came to be the way they are. We will begin in the Northeastern quarter of the town and work our way around clockwise. This virtual tour will help us understand what lies outside our back doors and it will also help us to understand how a little town, with limited resources, could withstand the onslaught of urbanization to become one of the "greenest" residential communities in the United States.

Along the way, we will be reminded of the lessons that have been learned over 250 years and the ways in which those lessons can be applied today. We will be reminded that:

- Problems can be anticipated and ordinary people can be mobilized to act soon enough to forestall a crisis;
- There are endless creative ways to solve a problem—there is always another approach to try;
- Almost every adversarial situation can be turned into a collaboration;
- The well of generosity is deep and is hardly ever tapped to the bottom; and
- The community almost always does the right thing if the issues are explained well.

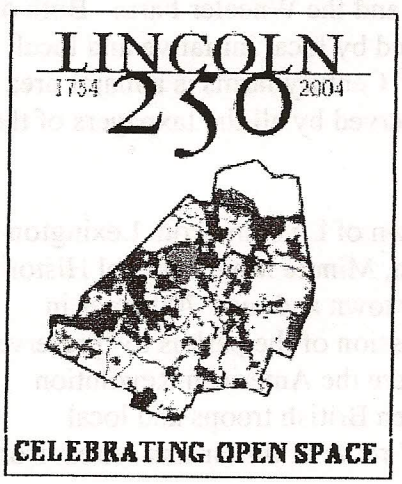
Attention to these points, as well as others that will be revealed in the story of each protected Lincoln landscape, enabled our predecessors to care for the community and its land for 250 years. If we continue to pay attention, we can look forward to a glorious 300th anniversary celebration.

Our virtual tour begins with the stories of two of the oldest family farms in America, the Flint Farm, which is still a working farm, and the Wheeler Farm, which was creatively developed to save half the land as open space. As the year goes by, we will tell the story of different Lincoln landscapes.

Flint Fields and Wheeler Farm

The First Stop on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln's Open Spaces

The story of caring for the land and community in Lincoln begins with two beautiful conservation properties in the Northeastern quadrant of the town: Flint's Fields and the Wheeler Farm. Much of the way the Lincoln landscape appears today and how it was created can be understood by sharing the story of these colonial farms.



To see Flint's Fields, park at the library or Bemis Hall and walk down the hill on Old Lexington Road. The 35 acres of open field that you see on your left is part of one of the oldest continuously operating family farms in America. Thomas Flint was granted 750 acres here in the 1640's, less than 30 years after the first European settlers came to Massachusetts. His descendants have farmed the land ever since.

The crops have changed over the years. The fields have been used to grow apples, strawberries, pickling cucumbers, tomatoes, and flowers. At one time, a row of large greenhouses stood at the north end of the fields. Today, hay and corn crops share the fields with a newly planted vineyard. Walking the public trail along the western edge of the fields, it doesn't take much imagination to picture the scene in the early 1700's when the oldest of the white farm houses was built.

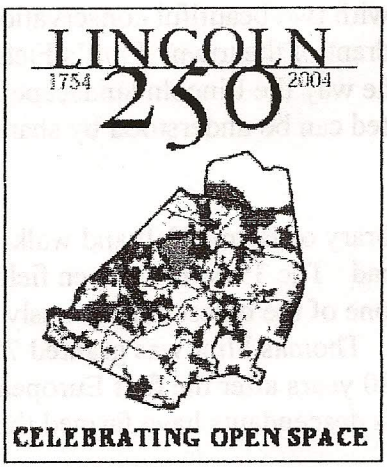
Flint's fields, and several nearby open fields, are still used for agriculture because the Flint family has repeatedly chosen to preserve the agricultural heritage of the land and the character of the Lincoln community rather than reap the potential financial harvest from their farm. Over generations, the family has donated some of its land, sold parcels at well below market prices, and arranged conservation restrictions on other sections so that the core of the 17th Century farm is now permanently protected from development. In 1989, the Town played its part by purchasing some of the land. Town Meeting voted to raise funds through a multi-year bond and individual citizens made substantial private donations to complete the purchase.

Not far away, on Wheeler Road, 54 acres of open space are preserved at the site of another colonial farm. Settling on the land in 1717, the Wheeler family stayed in town until 1965, when the land was put up for sale. Realizing that the complete preservation of the farm was economically unrealistic, a group of Lincoln citizens formed a new organization, the Rural Land Foundation, to buy the 109-acre farm on behalf of the community. Sale of a limited number of house lots in a carefully designed residential development financed the acquisition. Houses were sited so that open fields and public hiking trails could be preserved for the benefit of the people of the town. This practice of "conservation development" was a radical innovation at the time. The technique has been copied across the country and has been employed many more times in Lincoln.

The preservation of the Flint Farm and the Wheeler land required willing and generous land owners, an organized and creative community, and a vision that a rural community could survive next to a metropolis. While these lands were preserved through local initiative, our next stop on the virtual tour will take us to land preserved the federal government, the Minuteman National Historical Park.

Minute Man National Historic Park

The Second Stop on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln's Open Spaces



In the first stage of our year long tour of conservation land in Lincoln, we visited the Flint Farm and the Wheeler Farm. Both of these properties have been preserved by local initiative and local generosity. Not far from these 17th Century farms is a major area of open space which has been preserved by all the taxpayers of the United States.

Creating a green belt across the town of Lincoln, from Lexington on the East to Concord on the West, Minute Man National Historic Park owns 250 acres of land in our town and over 700 acres in neighboring communities. The mission of the park is to "preserve and interpret" the historic sites where the American Revolution began in 1775 with fighting between British troops and local Minute Man in Lexington and Concord, and along the "Battle Road" route of the British retreat from Concord.

It was nearly 200 years after the battle when Congress created the park in 1959. Development over those years made the "preservation" of the landscape impossible. Hundreds of buildings, including homes, businesses, a motel, a car dealership, and a restaurant and bar stood within the planned boundaries of the park. Only 13 of these structures were actually built before the day of the April 19, 1775 battles which the park was created to commemorate. The National Park Service was faced with the challenge, therefore, or "preserving" a landscape that really didn't exist anymore. In addition, Route 2A, a major transportation corridor, and the entrance to civilian and military facilities at Hanscom Field both cut through the park.

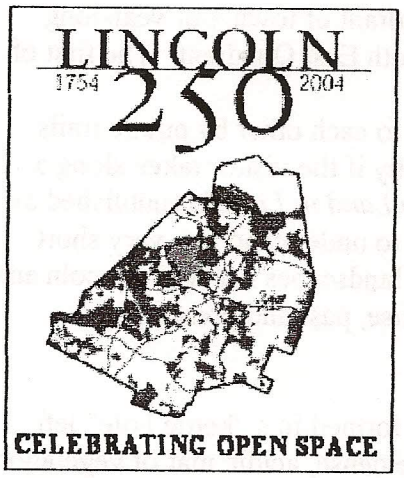
The visitor to the park today can see that substantial progress has been made in developing a landscape that captures the feel, if not the complete recreation, of the scenery of 1775. Over 100 structures have been removed. A few more disappear each year as landowners who have sold their properties to the federal government under long term occupancy agreements move out. Paved roads have been changed back into colonial lanes. 18th Century farmers' fields have been cleared again. Stone walls have been restored. There are now places in the park where a visitor can stand, look in all directions, and feel surrounded by the same environment as the local farmers and the representatives of a great empire who clashed along a Lincoln cartpath in 1775.

New developments at the park in 2004 will include the completion of a continuous footpath from Fiske Hill in Lexington to Meriam's corner in Concord with a pedestrian underpass permitting safe travel across the Hanscom access road. For up to date information on the park, visit their website www.nps.gov/mima.

From land preserved by the entire community and land preserved by the nation, our tour will move next month to a beautiful space preserved by the concerted action of a neighborhood.

The Osborne Property

The Third Stop on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln's Open Spaces



The third stop on the *Lincoln Journal* virtual tour of protected open space in Lincoln is the Page Road/Osborne conservation area. Driving westward along Trapelo Road, a motorist senses a difference immediately after crossing the Cambridge Reservoir. There are more trees and the houses are farther apart. On most days, the depth of the tree canopy actually causes the temperature to be noticeably cooler. A little further down the road, you definitely know you're in Lincoln when you pass cattle grazing on the north side of the road.

The field where that small herd of cattle can be seen much of the year is the most visible feature of 58 acres of conservation land. Most of this area was assembled as a farm in the middle of the 20th century by Gordon and Dorothy Osborne. Living in an 1820 farmhouse on Page Road, the Osbornes had created an idyllic mix of open fields, ornamental gardens, and untouched woodlands. Starting in 1973, the Osbornes worked with neighbors, the Rural Land Foundation, and the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust in a series of transactions that preserved most of their lands as open space while allowing the addition of several new houses. The homes that were built were carefully sited to preserve the rural look of the property. The final piece of the conservation puzzle was put in place in 2003 when the RLF worked with the Osborne family to complete the protection of the area.

A visitor to the property today will need the 2003 version of the Lincoln trail map in order to enjoy newly created trails. Walking these trails, you will see that the land is being managed to continue the many uses of the Osborne era. A portion is fenced off and used for cattle grazing. Two ornamental ponds and a stone bridge between them are being restored in another area. Finally, a major section of the new trail network winds through woods that remain in a natural state. The Osborne property is an introduction in microcosm of the variety of uses of open space in the town.

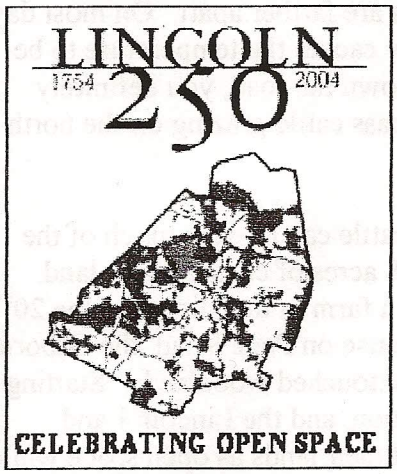
Our visit to the Osborne lands completes a tour of some, but by no means all, of the conserved open space in the north east quadrant of Lincoln. The lands we visited were preserved with a mix of neighborhood action, landowner generosity, creative action by Lincoln's private conservation organizations, town meeting appropriations of funds, and purchases by the federal government. In the process, some of the land was developed for homes and some of the land was set aside for conservation purposes. Both the limited development and the conservation were done with the intent of protecting and sustaining the rural character of Lincoln.

Next month, we will begin visiting conservation lands in the south east quadrant of the town, where we will see even more variety in the types of property that have been preserved and the ways in which that preservation happened.

Silver Hill and Pigeon Hill

The Fourth Stop on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln's Open Spaces

After making three visits to conservation land in the North East Quadrant of town, our year-long virtual tour of open space in Lincoln will make three stops in the South East Quadrant. The first of these virtual visits will be to the Silver Hill and Pigeon Hill areas.
Accessible from Weston Road and Silver Hill Road, they are linked to each other by public trails.



A visit to these properties, especially if the visitor takes along a copy of the *Guide to Conservation Land in Lincoln* (published by the LLCT in 1992), is a great way to understand in a very short walk how many different types of landscapes occur in Lincoln and how many different types of land use, past and present, have occurred in a very small town.

One section of the Silver Hill bog formed in a "kettle hole" left when the last glaciers melted. The dense, acidic mat of vegetation formed deposits of peat, which was harvested to burn in Lincoln's stoves and fireplaces. The peat harvesting left rectangular holes filled with water that were used to harvest ice at a time when Lincoln had several insulated ice houses that kept pond ice frozen well into the summer. Now the same bog hosts aquatic plants and birds on the old ice ponds. Where the bog wasn't cut by the peat harvesters, sundew and pitcher plants thrive, eating insects for part of their nutrition.

A short walk away, the visitor will be reminded of the many different ways in which Lincoln farmers made a living from the soil. One section of the property was a hay meadow for generations. Another section is still used as a sheep pasture. In this area, please remember that dogs and sheep don't mix. Gates must be left closed, trail signs honored, and dogs not allowed free the pasture. The fascinating mix of public and private spaces and agricultural and recreational land use in Lincoln has endured because of the good behavior of the people who pass through multi-use areas like Silver Hill.

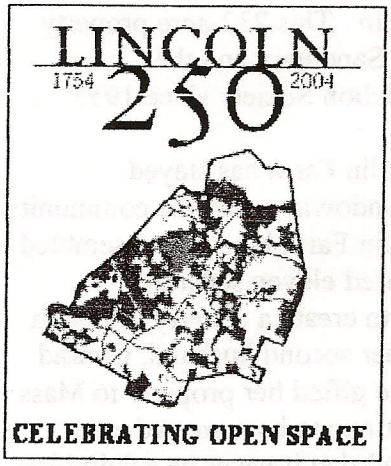
A short walk south from Silver Hill is Pigeon Hill. Also used in the past for grazing and haying, the land here holds another kind of history. The trail passes the ruins of a stone house. Although it might look like part of a colonial farm, this structure is actually all that remains of an attempt by the Merrill Hunt family of Conant Road to build a retreat in the woods in the 1920's. The project wasn't complete when the Great Depression brought it to an end. The craftsmanship of the stone work and the beauty that still apparent in the design reminds us that Lincoln's open spaces have served as the inspiration for artistic expression for a long time.

Thanks to the efforts of neighbors, the Conservation Commission, and the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust, the Silver Hill and Pigeon Hill areas have been preserved since the 1960's so that they can inspire all of us.

Beaver Pond and Browning Fields

The Fifth Stop on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln's Protected Open Spaces

The Lincoln Land Conservation Trust and Rural Land Foundation continue their year long, 250th Anniversary Virtual Tour of Lincoln's open spaces with a visit to Beaver Pond and Browning Fields. These two properties are very near each other, on either side of Weston Road. They are easy to see in a single short walk.



These two conservation areas feel quite different. Beaver Pond is surrounded by deep woods and the trails to the pond shore pass under a tall canopy on cushions of fallen pine needles. On a quiet morning, when mist often rises from the surface of the pond, a walker will be reminded of morning in the North Woods of Maine. In contrast, Browning Fields is cleared from one end to the other. The fields are mowed every year and one corner is set aside for a riding ring, used by generations of Lincoln horse owners.

This contrast between wild spaces and agricultural land occurs throughout Lincoln. Appearances can be deceiving. At one time, both of these properties were completely cleared. The stream flowing south from Beaver Pond was the home of a grist mill, a saw mill, and a "rope walk" where fibers were twisted into rope. The stream that looks so natural now was dammed and channeled and used for irrigation as well as for power to the mills. Browning Fields were cleared in the 17th century and have been clear since.

The two areas differ today because they were managed differently when they were no longer used for commercial farming and small scale industry. The Beaver Pond area came into the ownership of several families who allowed the land to "go back to nature." In particular, the late Bill Preston and his wife Jean Wood Preston delighted in the secluded and wild character of the land which they guarded for years and then donated to the LLCT. The LLCT continues to manage the land in a predominately wild state, as do several land owners who have chosen to permit public walking trails to cross their properties. The opportunities to see wildlife and to feel remote make this one of the most beloved areas in Lincoln.

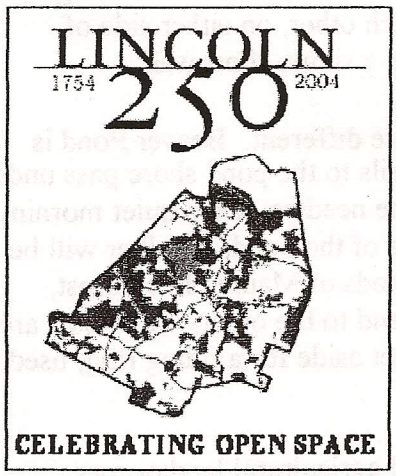
On the other side of Weston Road, Browning Fields are beloved for different reasons. The space is open enough that it is one of the best places in Lincoln for sky gazing. Several years ago, a spectacular meteor shower was forecast for an early Summer evening and the Browning Fields saw dozens of Lincolnites lying flat on their backs staring into the night sky. The fields host wildlife too. Bobolinks, who depend on open fields for habitat, often nest there. The mowing schedule of the Fields is planned around the Bobolinks' nesting season, even if it means the farmers get one less cutting of hay.

Open fields and deep woods. Browning Fields and Beaver Pond are very different kinds of "open space." It is one of the great glories of the Lincoln landscape that there is enough protected land so that different types of open space can be maintained.

Mass. Audubon / Drumlin Farm

The Sixth Stop on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln's Open Spaces

With a visit to Drumlin Farm, we reach the halfway point on the year long tour of conservation land in Lincoln published by the *Lincoln Journal* in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Town of Lincoln. This 232-acre property has housed the Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary and the headquarters of the Massachusetts Audubon Society since 1955.



Like most open space in Lincoln, Drumlin Farm has stayed undeveloped due to the generosity of landowners and the community. Most of today's Mass Audubon/ Drumlin Farm land was assembled when Louise and Donald Gordon acquired eleven separate contiguous parcels, totaling 175 acres, to create a country retreat in Lincoln. Louise outlived Donald and her second husband, Conrad Hathaway. Upon her death in 1955, she gifted her property to Mass. Audubon with the provision that it continue to be managed as a teaching farm and wildlife sanctuary and that it never be subdivided for housing. Since that time, several additional properties have been purchased for the farm with donations from Lincoln residents, Lincoln's conservation organizations, the Ogden Codman Trust, and other supporters of Mass Audubon.

In the 1940's, some of the Gordon land was taken over by the U.S. Army when they built a Nike radar station to operate in conjunction with a missile launcher site on Oxbow Road. When the base closed in the 1970s, the radar site land reverted to Mass Audubon.

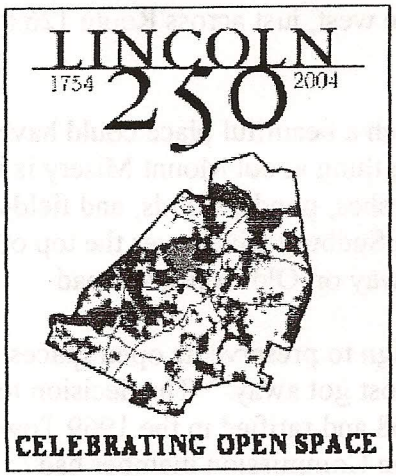
Today, Drumlin Farm includes displays of native birds and other wildlife and a demonstration working farm visited each year by over 100,000 people. Educational programs for all ages and school vacation and summer camps, along with a popular gift shop and frequent special events, enable Mass. Audubon to introduce people to its mission to "protect the nature of Massachusetts."Lincoln's special relationship with Drumlin Farm has been recognized by the society in that residents of the town receive free admission to the sanctuary. In spite of the free admission offer, 638 families in Lincoln pay annual dues to Mass Audubon to support the society's wider mission—further proof that Lincoln is one of the "greenest" communities anywhere.

Although most visits to the sanctuary involve taking the kids to see the animals or dropping them off for a class or day camp, Lincoln residents are missing a great opportunity if they don't wander more widely on the trail network that crosses the farm and provides a critical link to other conservation parcels in both Lincoln and Weston. The property offers spectacular views of Mount Wachusett and Mount Monadonock from the top of the drumlin, and more intimate views on the banks of several small ponds. A trail map is available at the admissions window.

A Tale of Two Farms: Codman Farm and Flint Farm

Stop Seven on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln Conservation Land

Halfway through our year-long tour of Lincoln Conservation, we enter the South West quadrant of the town with a visit to the Codman Estate.



The first thing to notice about these lands is that the look and feel of a great country estate has been preserved. Although the buildings and lands of this once substantial property have been divided among several owners, a drive down Codman road from the Fire Station takes a 21st century visitor through scenes of working agriculture and pastoral luxury that would look familiar to a guest on the estate one or two centuries ago. It's not hard to stand in front of the Codman house and imagine a satisfied country squire looking in one direction to see his barns and stables and then looking in another over vast meadows and farm fields. All in all, nearly 200 acres are preserved. This preservation required cooperation between Codman Community Farms, Historic New England, the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust, and the Town of Lincoln, all of which now own pieces of the estate.

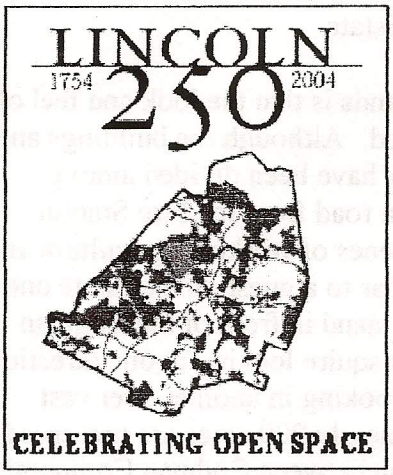
It's interesting to compare the Codman Estate to another conserved Lincoln farm. When we visited the Flint farm earlier in our tour, we saw one of the oldest continuously operated family farms in America. The buildings and grounds of the Flint property are solid and simple and speak of generations of earning a living from the unforgiving New England climate and soil. The Codman estate, in contrast, was always a show place, a location where an international family of merchants, authors, and artists made an art out of the display of their bucolic property. Starting in 1708, the Russell family, ancestors of the Codmans, amassed a 700 acre property called "the Grange" that shows up on many historical maps of Eastern New England as a landmark country estate.

All of this fancy living was risky, however. The family lost the property when Dr. Charles Russell backed the crown during the American revolution, regained it when a more patriotic relative stepped in, and then lost it again a generation later only to have a descendant buy it back 50 years later. In 1968, Dorothy Codman died and the property passed out of family hands. After extensive planning and discussion, some of the land was used for public purposes such as the Mall at Lincoln Station and the Lincoln Woods housing development. Historic New England received the main estate buildings. Codman Community Farms began to operate the working portion of the farm and the remainder of the land was preserved as open space. A proposal for a golf course was pursued by a contingent of residents who perhaps didn't understand the "Lincoln Way."

So, we have in one town two very different farms. One has been managed for the long haul and is still in the family. One has been the scene of great drama, political crisis and financial gymnastics. Both are part of the history of Lincoln and both are now preserved for posterity.

Mount Misery

Stop Eight on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln Conservation Land



From the manicured grounds of the Codman Estate, our virtual tour of Lincoln goes a short distance to the west, just across Route 126 to Mount Misery.

Leaving aside the question of how such a beautiful place could have such a dismal name, the most striking thing about Mount Misery is its size. Encompassing 227 acres of marshes, ponds, woods, and fields, it stretches from the low valley of the Sudbury River over the top of a steep hill to farm fields over a mile away on Old Concord Road.

To veterans of Lincoln's long campaign to preserve its open spaces, Mount Misery is a property that "almost got away." The decision to acquire the land was made late in 1968 and ratified in the 1969 Town Meeting because an alert Conservation Commission member had noticed that Massachusetts was about to forfeit a $1 million federal grant for open space acquisition because no one in the state had put forward a proposal to use the money. The town acted fast and was granted not only $900,000 from the federal program but an additional $450,000 of state funds against a total purchase price of $1.8 million.

Just after the acquisition was completed, the Massachusetts DPQ came forward to with a plan to build an 8 lane highway down the Sudbury River Valley. The highway planners were forced to retreat when they discovered that a large property in their path had been placed in conservation protection and would therefore be very difficult to take by eminent domain for road construction. The western half of Lincoln would be a very different place today if the 1968-69 Conservation Commissioners had been less opportunistic.

Today the land supports a wide range of uses including: a canoe launching site on the Sudbury River, Community Supported Agriculture organic farming, hiking, biking, and an annual game of capture the flag that sweeps back and forth over the property like a medieval battle. The size and beauty of the property has also caused it to become well known in the Boston region. The Conservation Commission and their staff have wrestled recently to with which trails are suitable for mountain bikes, overflow parking issues on some weekends and an influx of professional dog walkers, who bring van loads of animals out from Boston and surrounding suburbs.

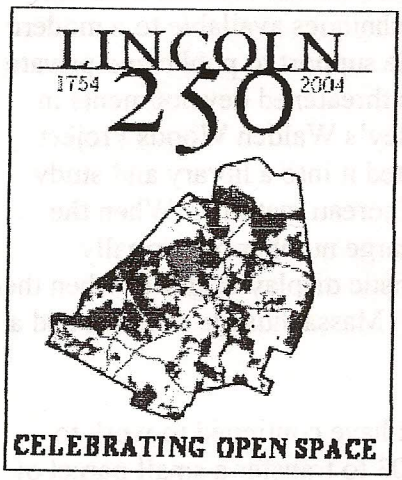
Most of the time, however, the Mount Misery area is big enough to hold all those who want to use it and is treated with respect by its visitors. It is inevitable, as open land elsewhere continues to be developed, that the pressure on Lincoln's conservation lands will increase, as will the challenges of wise stewardship and responsible shared use.

The name? Local tradition holds that Thaddeus Garfield, who owned part of the land from 1788-1819, lost two oxen when the animals became tangled in a tree and died.

Walden Pond and Adams' Woods

Stop Nine on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln Conservation Land

A very short walk from Mount Misery, the site of the previous stop on our virtual tour of conservation land in Lincoln, will bring a visitor to the most famous open spaces in town, the lands surrounding Walden Pond. Although Walden Pond will be associated forever with Concord because of Henry David Thoreau, part of the pond, and much of the surrounding "Walden Woods," are in Lincoln.



Lincoln's role in the story of Thoreau is extensive and will be the subject of a lecture by noted Thoreau scholar Thomas Blanding on November 7th at 4 PM in Bemis Hall.

Although Concord gets all the glory and most of the tourists, it was probably Charles Stearns Wheeler of Lincoln, a Harvard classmate of Thoreau's, who planted the idea of livng in the woods when he talked on campus about his own sojourn in a cabin on the shores of Flint's Pond.

The possibility of a literary classic called *Flint* was lost, however, when Thoreau accidentally started a forest fire that burned a large swath across the shores of Fairhaven Bay on the Sudbury River. According to family tradition, Captain Ephraim Flint was aware of the young Concord resident's lack of woodsmanship skills and denied him permission to build a cabin on Flint land, forcing him to build his cabin on the smaller Walden Pond. Although Jeffrey Cramer, the editor of the latest annotated edition of *Walden*, was unable to find documentary proof of this story, it is hard to see any other reason for Thoreau's overwrought attack on Captain Flint ("the unclean and stupid farmer") in the book.

Leaving legends aside, many of the locations mentioned in *Walden* are on Lincoln conservation land and a hiker on the Lincoln trails will encounter literary pilgrims from all over the world who are intent upon a personal visit to the Andromeda Ponds, Pleasant Meadow, or the Beech Spring.

The lands on the Lincoln side of the pond remained open for permanent conservation in large part because of the wise stewardship of the Adams family. Descendants of two presidents and Lincoln residents for several generations, the Adams provided much of the leadership for Lincoln's early land conservation efforts and sold 87 acres of woodlands to the town at a price well below market value in 1979. An additional large parcel was kept open into modern times as a fox hunting preserve by Henry Lee Higginson, founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Walden Pond and Adams' Woods – p. 2

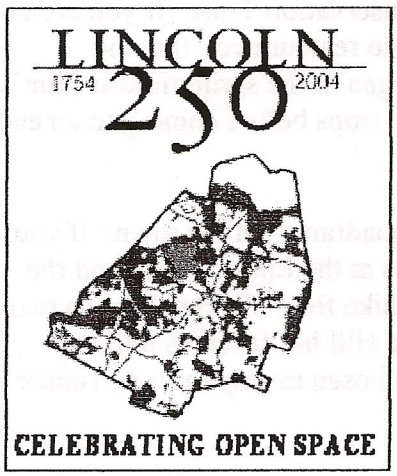
As if enough famous people weren't involved already, the lands around Walden Pond drew the attention of Don Henley, drummer of the Eagles, in 1989 when development projects in Concord threatened to despoil land very close to the pond. Henley, a committed conservationist who had been inspired by Thoreau as a college student, called upon all the techniques available to a modern celebrity to enlist rock stars, literary giants, and politicians to provide support to public and private fund raising to purchase threatened land in the Walden Woods. The threatened developments in Concord were beaten back and Lincoln benefited as well when Henley's Walden Woods Project purchased Henry Lee Higginson's former hunting lodge and converted it into a library and study center which now houses one of the World's largest collections of Thoreau material. When the Thoreau Center formally opened in 1998, an audience containing a large number of normally publicity-shy Lincoln conservationists was treated to an uncharacteristic display of glitter when then President and First Lady Bill and Hillary Clinton appeared with both Massachusetts senators and a host of other celebrities to mark the occasion.

The Walden Woods Project and the citizens of Lincoln and Concord have continued to work to preserve the area. Lincoln Town Meeting, for example, voted in 2003 to transfer a small parcel of town owned but unprotected land in the area to the Massachusetts State Department of Environmental Management for permanent protection.

Pine Hill

Stop Ten on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln Conservation Land

The year long virtual tour of Lincoln's open space lands that began in the Spring time here in the pages of the *Lincoln Journal* comes this week to the 10th of 12 stops.



In our last visit, to Walden Pond, we learned about the authors, presidents, and rock stars that have frequented that famous place. This week, in a very short walk from Walden, we return to the isolated quiet that is more typical of Lincoln by climbing to the top of Pine Hill.

Rising nearly 200 feet above the waters of Walden Pond, this hill has been known since colonial times as a place to see a long way. Although the gradual reforestation of the hillsides has blocked some of the views from the summit, it is still possible to gain a unique perspective looking down into Concord or off to Mount Wachusett and even far away Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire.

The open space on the summit of the hill is provided for our enjoyment courtesy of the Concord Water Department because we are walking on the top of one of its underground storage reservoirs.

The grassy field on top of the reservoir is not only a place to contemplate the horizon, it is also a place in which the water under our feet reminds us of the importance of water to the town of Lincoln. Our landscape of hills, ponds, and swamps sends water flowing out in all four directions. We provide part of the flow of the Sudbury River and the Charles River. We also play host to portions of three municipal water systems. Of course, we host our own wells and reservoirs. In addition, we host the Concord reservoir here on the top of the hill and, a few miles to the east, a major portion of the water system for the city of Cambridge draws from Lincoln's Hobbs Brook watershed and the reservoir that sits in Lincoln and Waltham.

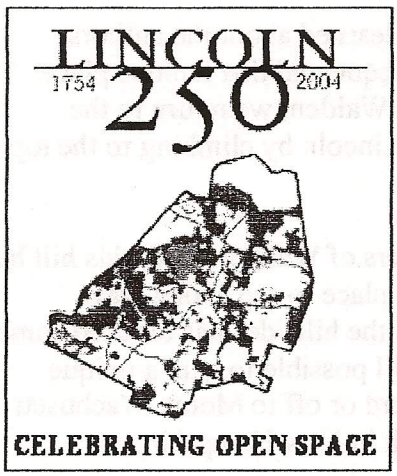
Maintaining the quantity and quality of the water in all these systems is one of the major challenges facing the people of Lincoln. Every decision we make about the management of our open space, the enforcement of our wetlands regulations, and our own consumption of water has an impact on this scarce resource. Residents who attended the recent "State of the Town Meeting" learned that higher water costs, regulation of lawn irrigation systems, and limitations on private wells (which draw from the same aquifers as the municipal systems) may lie in our future. Lincoln's open spaces, once thought of as scenic assets, may have even more values as the protectors of our water supply.

Inspired by the view but sobered by the challenges of preserving a resource as essential as water, we can walk down the east slope of Pine Hill and be very close to the next stop on our tour, Tanner's Brook.

Tanner's Brook: A Neighborhood Treasure

Stop Eleven on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln Conservation Land

A surprising number of people have told us that they are actually following along on the 250th Anniversary virtual tour of Lincoln's Open Spaces which has been sponsored by the Rural Land Foundation and the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust. If you are one of those vicarious voyagers, we need to reassure you that the destination is near. A journey that began in the springtime at Flint's farm will pass through only two more stops before coming to an end later this month.



Today, we are in the fourth of four "quadrants" of the town. If you are following the tour on the signposts at the Lincoln Mall and the transfer station, you will see that our hike from Walden Woods two stops ago through our last stop at Pine Hill has taken us into the Northwest corner of town. We have chosen to stop there at Tanner's Brook.

The Tanner's Brook conservation area is a 110-acre parcel that sits between Route 2 and Minuteman National Park. Small public parking areas on Brooks Road and Sunnyside Lane provide access to a network of trails that winds through much of the area.

If there is one thing to notice in Tanner's Brook it is that this land, unlike some of Lincoln's more publicized open spaces, is truly a neighborhood asset. Most of the people you meet on the trails have walked to Tanner's Brook from their near-by homes. On a recent visit, several people on the trails mentioned being there every day as a matter of personal routine. It is a wonderful thing to live so close to a major city and have a 110 acre wood lot to share with neighbors.

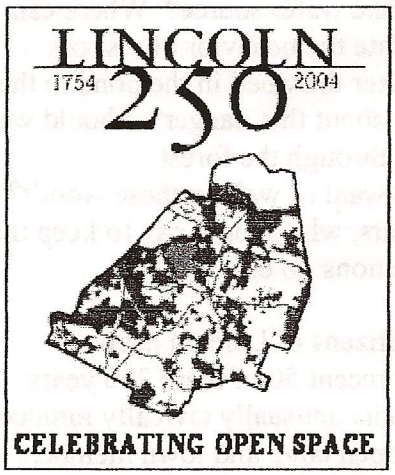
After spending a minute to think how nice this is for one neighborhood, take another moment to realize that every house in Lincoln is within a ten minute walk of a trail into conservation land. Every neighborhood in town has its equivalent of Tanner's Brook.

Lincoln Journal columnist Sue Klem has organized a series of neighborhood meetings for the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust over the last five years and each time that she has convened one of these, a living room full of people has expressed a deep appreciation for "their" local conservation land. This kind of very localized support is the key to Lincoln's conservation efforts. Almost every one of the approximately 150 conservation parcels in town was acquired not only through the efforts of town wide organizations but also because neighbors could imagine how good it would be to have some green space to walk to. As the town works to complete its preservation of the few remaining open parcel that have been officially designated as being of "Conservation Interest" success or failure in preserving these properties will depend to a great extent on the sense of collaboration and generosity of the neighborhoods that are closest.

Flint Farm at Flint's Pond

Final Stop on a Virtual Tour of Lincoln Conservation Land

Early this year, in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the incorporation of our town, the Rural Land Foundation and the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust offered to take *Lincoln Journal* readers on a virtual tour of Lincoln's conservation lands. Starting with the Flint Farm, readers of the series have been taken to eleven protected open spaces in Lincoln. The variety of ways in which the land in our town was used in the past, the many different ways in which people now enjoy our open space, and the amazing generosity of Lincoln's citizens in paying to protect these lands over the last 50 years have been made apparent as we looked at parcels of property that ranged from places like the Walden Woods, that are known throughout the world, to other, more secluded lands that serve to make a neighborhood more livable.



Today, our tour ends back on the original Flint Farm at Flint's Pond. This 251 acre parcel is both a beautiful place to visit and an appropriate place in which to think about the future of our open lands – about 40% of Lincoln's land is protected.

A seasonal home site for Native Americans, the pond has provided sustenance for thousands of years. It was used as a water source for colonial farming and once supplied the public water systems of both Lincoln and Concord. Its shores have been ringed with hayfields and apple orchards. In the 19th century, a boating clubhouse was decorated with Japanese lanterns for summer dances and the fine homes of Lincoln's elite were built on the hills overlooking what was then called "Forest Lake." Henry David Thoreau visited his Harvard roommate Charles Stearns Wheeler at a cabin by the side of the pond and (perhaps) got the inspiration to do a little waterfront living himself a few years later. In later years, the town would be the beneficiary of the legacy of Julian De Cordova and his home would become the nucleus of the present day De Cordova Museum, on a hill overlooking the pond.

In the 1950's, it became apparent that the next use of the pond might turn out to be a dense development of new homes, which would threaten the quality of the town's water supply and also change one of the prettiest views in Lincoln. In 1957, the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust acquired its first landholdings when part of the pond shore became available for purchase. In the ensuing half century, most of the watershed of the pond has been laced in conservation ownership and a deep belt of green woods has replaced the fields and orchards that once ringed the pond.

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Walking the trails that wind through these woods provides an opportunity for citizens of Lincoln in the year 2004 to be profoundly grateful that this place, like much of Lincoln, has been saved from indiscriminate development. The same walk, however, can lead to the asking of some important questions, such as: How close can a hiking trail safely come to a public water source? Where can we safely allow dogs and horses to use the trails? How can we regulate the behavior of visitors without diminishing the natural experience? Given that a winter walker drowned in the pond in the 1990's, what makes a natural area dangerous? What should be done about that danger? Should we do anything if the deer that live near the pond are chewing their way through the forest undergrowth? Where can we provide parking for all the people who want to walk in these woods? Or should we? Given the many competing demands on our tax dollars, who should pay to keep the trails cleared, the litter picked up, and the maps up to date? The questions go on.

How will we answer these questions? Over the past 250 years, the citizens of Lincoln have cherished and celebrated the town's rural character. During the most recent 50 of these 250 years, intentional action has been taken to sustain that character. Thanks to its unusually civically minded citizenry, individual property owners have made significant gifts of open land, and town members have made financial contributions to the preservation of open space. Lincoln has become increasingly distinct among the towns within the greater Boston metropolitan area. It is important to recognize, however, that Lincoln's conservations leaders realized that rural character is more than simply the ratio of developed land to open land. They realized that Lincoln's rural character was also defined by the composition of its citizenry and their shared sense of community.

Only a few critically important parcels of land (identified in the Town's Open Space Plan as lands of "conservation interest"), remain to be saved from over-development in the next few years. When those lands are protected, we will be left with one of the prettiest towns in America, only minutes from a booming city. What will we do with that treasure? Take a walk at Flint's Pond and you will be ready to make that decision.