

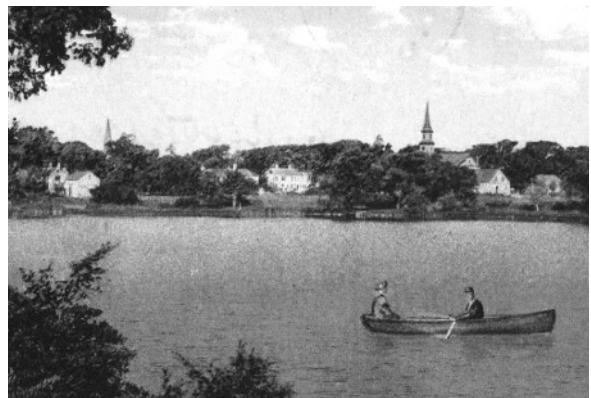
A Brief History of Shiverick's Pond

By Paul C. Dreyer

Geologic History

Cape Cod was formed late in the Pleistocene Epoch in the final ice-age period known as the Wisconsin Stage, which began roughly seventy-five thousand years ago. For several thousand years, the internal ice movement toward the edge of the glacier balanced the ice lost by melting. This resulted in the buildup of glacial deposits of sand, gravel and boulders forming Cape Cod. About twelve thousand years ago, the world climate warmed and the ice sheets disappeared, causing the sea level to rise and outline present-day Cape Cod.

A terminal moraine, a hilly area which marks the end of the glacier's advance, runs from Woods Hole north-east to West Falmouth and North Falmouth. Beyond the edge of the terminal moraine, streams carried great quantities of sand and gravel (as thick as 280 feet—see schematic on page 22) to a large area and there created an irregular surface called the outwash plain. It is on this outwash plain of Cape Cod that lakes and streams developed. In some places the sand and gravel covered large blocks of the ice; when these melted, a kettle hole pond was formed. The fresh water ponds, several feet above sea level, are fed by ground-water while salt water ponds are connected to the sea. Native Americans, to extend the run of herring from the sea, may have dredged and opened sluice ways between the ponds as early as 2,000 years ago.



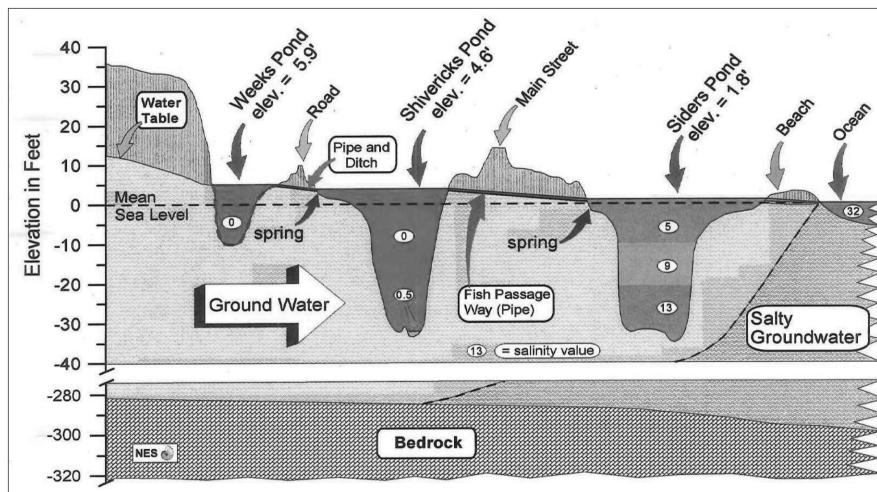
Boating on Shivericks Pond (1916).
Courtesy Falmouth Public Library.

Cape Cod Ponds

The Cape Cod Commission has estimated that Cape Cod "has 994 ponds covering nearly 11,000 acres." Ponds greater than 10 acres are owned by the public, and the legislature has named 164 "Great Ponds" on Cape Cod. There are 142 ponds listed in Falmouth with 23 "Great Ponds" including Shiverick's Pond.

Long Pond, covering 150 acres, is Falmouth's largest; it is over 66 feet deep. Falmouth's Ashumet pond is Falmouth's second deepest and Cape Cod's fifth deepest. Long Pond is the primary water source for the Falmouth Water Filtration Facility, completed in 2018; it provides over one billion gallons of drinking water per year to the Town or 50 to 60 per cent of the water supply.

There are many kettle ponds on Cape Cod and especially in the Town of Falmouth. A small drainage system from Weeks Pond to Shiverick's Pond to Siders Pond (formally Fresh Pond) in downtown Falmouth discharges into Vineyard Sound. This small system is shown below.



Cross-section of Shiverick's Pond System and Aquifer. Courtesy Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Early Falmouth History

The earliest records indicate that the first lands developed in Suckanesset (now Falmouth) were between Salt Pond to the west and Fresh Pond (now Siders Pond) to the east when settlers from Barnstable landed on Falmouth shores in 1660.

One of these settlers was the Reverend Samuel Shiverick (1650 - 1712). Educated in France, he came to the New World as a Huguenot refugee. He served various communities as they were developed before becoming pastor of the First Congregational Church, gathered in

1708. Shiverick's Pond, named after him, soon became a center of social and recreational activities in the community.

Asa Shiverick (1790-1861), a descendant of Rev. Shiverick, was born in Falmouth. He moved to East Dennis during the War of 1812 and began building schooners and brigs in 1815. His three sons, David, Paul, and Asa Jr.,

all learned the trade. From 1815 until 1863, the family enterprise produced dozens of vessels for fishing, commerce, and international shipping. The only builders of clipper ships on Cape Cod, they built eight vessels from 1850 to 1862. They built the hulls that were towed to Boston to be outfitted. The third clipper ship, *The Bell of the West*, was built in 1853.

This ship was 182 feet long and 936 tons made of "oak and copper fastened" and was captained by William Howes. Each ship was profitable, traveling around the world from Peru to Singapore to Australia and other ports, returning with valuable goods. In 1863, because of



The Belle of the West (1853).

Courtesy Dennis Historical Society.

the Civil War, the brothers closed the Shiverick Shipyard in East Dennis, and two sons, Asa, Jr. and Paul, joined the Pacific Guano Company in Woods Hole. The main ingredient in the fertilizer produced there was the guano transported from the South Pacific to Cape Cod on the clipper ships they built.

As Falmouth became a popular vacation town, after the Civil War and aided by the arrival of the railroad, Shiverick's Pond retained its importance for recreation for the town residents.

The Falmouth poet, Frances E. Swift (1880 – 1962), wrote about Shiverick's Pond in 1894 in her *Rhymes of Falmouth*:

*How oft I longed to dip
My fevered brow in this cool pond
And of the waters sip.*

An Early Proposal

In February 1905, Henry Fay recommended that the Town "take a strip of land along the border of Shiverick's pond for a park ... with a winding walk along the border of the pond, planted with hardy shrubs and trees. What more simple and beautiful in the center of our village than this could be made." And "I should be willing to donate my land on Main Street for this purpose." Unfortunately, the citizens didn't enthuse over Mr. Fay's scheme, because they thought it was "too expensive."

In June 1930, 25 years later, Sarah Fay commented that "years ago my brother had the same plan of a beautiful park around the pond. He and I offered to give our holdings ... and we both would have done considerable to make it a go. It was absolutely turned down; thought chimerical, a useless thing! How lovely it would have been all these years."



Skaters on Shiverick's Pond (1900).

Courtesy Donald Fish.

Changes to Shiverick's Pond

The saga of a wastewater system in Woods Hole and Falmouth continued for many years beginning in 1927 with studies, debate, and threats from the State Board of Health due to the danger of epidemic diseases. In 1938 the Works Progress Administration (WPA) offered to allocate a grant for 45 per cent of the cost, but the Town voted down the project.

In the summer of 1949, hundreds of dead fish were found floating on Shiverick's Pond due to "hot weather and lack of oxygen in the water." The odor from the pond was "apparent in the school department offices high above the pond." This was "primarily caused by the septic systems from Main Street leaching into the pond."

Again, in the summer of 1973, "raw sewage was bubbling up through the area behind the Eastman block." Finally, in 1984 after over fifty years of problems, the wastewater system in Falmouth Village was completed and water quality improved in the Pond.

In 1956, the Falmouth Planning Board recommended the construction of Katherine Lee Bates (KLB) Road as an alternative to the traffic on Main Street. The road was constructed by filling in a section of the Pond on the south side. The former road on the east side of the Pond along the school property was developed as a walking trail in this area. A recent aerial view of the pond between Lawrence School and Mullen-Hall School north of KLB Road is shown below.



Shiverick's Pond in Falmouth Village. Google Earth photo.

Educational Aspects

The Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (WBNERR) Interpretive Programs Coordinator has been working with Lawrence School teachers and students for many years, including facilitating a long-term study of Shiverick's Pond that began in 1996.

Every year since then, Reserve educators visit the school three times a year to lead students in data collection and observations of the Pond and human impacts on it. Every 8th grade student is able to study the pond in different seasons, collect samples, investigate water chemistry, and measure the depth of the water table at three test wells installed more than 20 years ago for the students' use. This educational program at Shiverick's Pond has been ongoing for almost 25 years.

Summary

Shiverick's Pond has been an important natural resource in Falmouth's 300-plus-year history. Though its rich potential has never been fully developed, the Pond has long been the center of environmental and recreational activities for Falmouth village and in recent years has also been a valuable educational resource.

A group of Falmouth citizens who saw the potential in Shiverick's Pond supported a project to provide safe access for these various activities in the middle of Falmouth Village. This proposal is that the Pond will have "a walkway that serves as a park." With the approval of

Town Meeting in September 2020, the Pond will become once again a centerpiece for residents and for visitors to the Town, realizing a concept originally envisioned by Henry Fay 115 years ago.

About the Author: Paul C. Dreyer is a Professional Environmental Engineer in private practice with extensive international experience, and is a member of the Falmouth Planning Board, the Coastal Resiliency Action Committee, and the Transportation Management Committee in Falmouth, MA.

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