Dairy Farming Tradition

Since the settlement of Concord in 1635, the 300 acres that became Mattison Farm was comprised of as many as five separate farms that used the land for tillage, pasture, and woodlots. About 1870, an Irish immigrant farmer, John O'Keefe, assembled the separate lots into a successful dairy farming operation. On O'Keefe's death in 1916 the land and business was sold to Fred Jones who developed Old Acres Dairy, a self-sustaining dairy farm that included every step of the business from growing silage, raising heifers, milking cows, pasteurizing and bottling milk, to delivering it. The Mattison family originally purchased farm property on Williams Road in 1935, adding acreage through the years, including a 1972 43-acre purchase from Fred Jones. This 43-acre parcel of open field is now the Mattison Field Conservation Area, purchased by the Town of Concord from the Mattison family in 1997.

Location and Access

Access with parking for ten vehicles is located on Old Road to Nine Acre Corner (ORNAC) where a split rail fence encloses a parking area and an information kiosk identifies the start of the walking trails. There are other access points on ORNAC that do not offer parking a short distance south and also north at the Jennie Dugan Brook crossing. Mattision Field can also be accessed through a Concord Land Conservation Trust easement off Sudbury Road.

Dog Owners: Keep dogs under your control at all times and away from private yards and buildings. It is the duty of each person who owns, possesses, or controls a dog to remove and dispose of any feces left by his or her dog. ***All dogs must be leashed between April 1 and July 31 to protect grassland nesting birds.***

Wooden Stave Water Tower

Town of Concord

Mattison Field Trail Guide

View across Mattison Field

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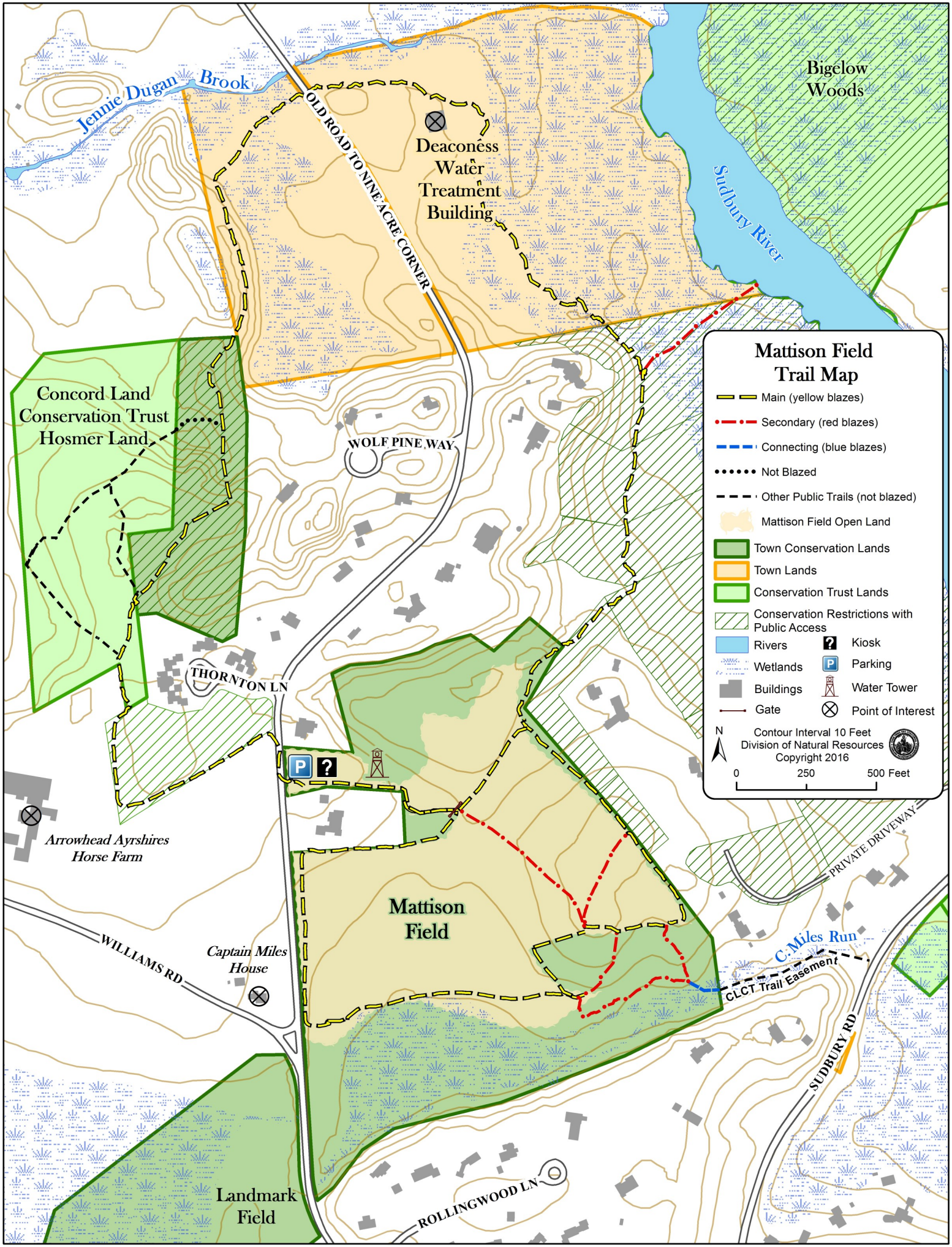
Prepared by the Division of Natural Resources, 2016


Mattison Field
Trail Map
Main (yellow blazes)
Secondary (red blazes)
Connecting (blue blazes)
Not Blazed
Other Public Trails (not blazed)
Mattison Field Open Land
Town Conservation Lands
Town Lands
Conservation Trust Lands
Conservation Restrictions with Public Access
Rivers
Wetlands
Buildings
Gate
Kiosk
Parking
Water Tower
Point of Interest
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Division of Natural Resources
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Jennie Dugan Brook
OLD ROAD TO NINE ACRE CORNER
Deaconess Water Treatment Building
Bigelow Woods
Sudbury River
Concord Land Conservation Trust Hosmer Land
WOLF PINE WAY
THORNTON LN
Arrowhead Ayrshires Horse Farm
Mattison Field
WILLIAMS RD
Captain Miles House
PRIVATE DRIVEWAY
C. Miles Run
CLCT Trail Easement
SUDBURY RD
ROLLINGWOOD LN
Landmark Field

Mattison Field Conservation Land

Mattison Farm
A Grassroots Preservation Effort

At its farming height, Mattison Farm included 300 acres. As it became increasingly difficult to run a profitable dairy farm in the area, the Mattison family ended the dairy operation and sold off 150 acres of woodland in 1986 and 50 more acres in 1987. We now know these developed parcels as the 40 houses on Mattison Drive, Alford Circle, MacMillan Drive and Ayrshire Lane, and the condominium at South Meadow Ridge. When the remaining Mattison property became available for sale, concerned citizens, in partnership with the Concord Land Conservation Trust, the Trust for Public Land, and the Concord Natural Resources Commission worked together to raise the funds necessary to purchase 45.63 acres. The purchase was completed in 1998, preserving the parcel for conservation land - a permanent reminder of Concord's agrarian past in a beautiful, open, rolling hilltop setting.

Suggested Walks

Mattison Field Loop

The Main yellow-blazed trail leaves from the kiosk at the entrance on Old Road to Nine Acre Corner (ORNAC) and passes through and along the edge of the open field. Follow the well-defined trail into the field turning right at an open fence gate onto a mowed field trail that leads back to ORNAC. The trail parallels ORNAC until it turns left back into the field opposite Williams Road. At a trail junction, turn right then immediately left onto a red-blazed wooded trail. Turn right onto the yellow-blazed main trail to continue along the back edge of the field. Turn left at the next fork to return to the entrance. Walking time 30 minutes.

Jennie Dugan Brook and Hosmer Trail Circuit

Follow the yellow-blazed trail from the main entrance into the field turning left at an open fence gate onto a mowed field trail. At a fork, turn left out of Mattison Field Conservation Land. After about 1/3 mile, at a fork in the trail, take the left side to continue, or the right side for a short walk on a red-blazed trail to views of the Sudbury River. (Add 8 minutes for the round trip to the river.) At a section of open damp ground, continue straight ahead passing behind the Deaconess Water Treatment building on the left before crossing ORNAC. The trail tracks along a high ridge beside a Concord Country Club fairway then descends and connects with a CLCT yellow-blazed trail. Follow the CLCT trail behind houses on Thornton Lane to a post for the Hosmer Trail labeled "ORNAC" with an arrow pointing left. Turn left at the post then right at the next post and follow the trail around the field beside the Arrowhead Ayrshires horse farm to ORNAC. Turn right on ORNAC back to the entrance. Walking time 45 minutes.

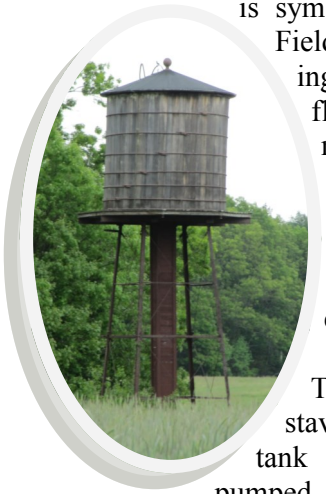
Points of Interest

Scenic Open Field of a Farming Past

The beautiful rolling field of the conservation land was just a small portion of the Mattison's 300-acre dairy farm centered on Williams Road at Arrowhead Ayershire Farm, where a stamped metal sign still bears the name. From its beginning in 1935 the farm had a market gardening operation, in addition to dairy, but went exclusively into dairy farming in 1946. Mattison Field was previously the 43-acre Old Acres dairy owned by Fred Jones that the Mattisons purchased to support the increasing size of their herd. The dairy business was robust throughout Concord for decades until increased operating costs for small family farms in the 1980s caused its decline. Beautiful Mattison Field remains as a reminder of the thriving dairy farming tradition of a bygone era.

Wooden Stave Tank Water Tower

The water tower, dating back to the 1920s, is symbolic both of Mattison Field and of the dairy farming industry that once flourished in Concord for most of the 20th century. Its importance as possibly the only structure of its kind left in Concord led to its extensive renovation.



The elevated wooden stave tank stored well water pumped into it by a windmill pump. Piping distributed water to a cow barn that housed as many as 225 cows at the height of the farm's dairying business. Only the tank remains of the watering system, the barn demolished to make room for construction of private homes.

Captain Charles Miles House

The house at 429 Williams Road, at the corner of ORNAC, was once the residence of the Miles

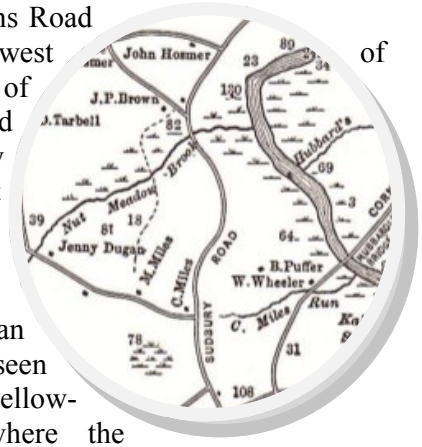
family that farmed these lands as early as 1639 and by 1663 had acquired more than 400 acres. Samuel Miles built the house in the early 1700s. In 1745, Deacon Samuel Miles and 19 other men left First Parish Church in a dispute over theology with Rev. Daniel Bliss and formed the West Congregation or Black Horse Church in a schism that had social implications for many years.

His son Charles, who was born and lived here most of his life, was a well-respected citizen during revolutionary times for Concord. As well as farming 100 acres, he served as hogreeve (Town official who impounded stray hogs), surveyed, built roads and bridges, served as Constable, and established a public school (School #3 in the Nine Acre Corner District). But his military service eclipsed all of these accomplishments when in January 1775, his volunteers elected him captain of the town's first minuteman company. On April 1775 he led his men against the British soldiers at North Bridge followed by the chase back to Charlestown. June 1776 would find Charles raising another company of 60 men to join the march of 5,000 to reinforce beleaguered Fort Ticonderoga. The house remained in the family until about 1858 when it was sold at auction following grandson Charles' move to Fitchburg.

Jennie Dugan Brook

The Nut Meadow Brook was renamed Jennie Dugan Brook to honor Jennie Parker of Acton, second wife of Thomas Dugan (1747 – 1827), for their contributions to the community. Thomas, a self-emancipated African American from Virginia, was the third former African American slave (following John Jack and Brister Freeman) to own land in Concord. Jennie and Thomas were self-sufficient in farming their seven acres and had a significant influence on the community. Thomas advanced farming interests in Concord by introducing the rye cradle (a scythe fitted with a basket that made grain harvesting more efficient) to Concord in the 1790s, taught other farmers the method of grafting apple trees, and was generally known as industrious and a peace maker. Their son George Dugan (1821 - 1863), the only African American man from Concord to serve in the Civil War, was assigned to Robert Gould Shaw's 54th Regiment, and was killed in the attack on Fort Wagner in South Carolina.

The 1906 H. W. Gleason map of Concord shows Jenny Dugan's farm location along Nut Meadow Brook (present day Jennie Dugan Brook) just north of Williams Road about 0.6 miles west of the intersection of Williams Road and Sudbury Road (present day ORNAC).



Downstream, Jennie Dugan Brook can be seen beside the yellow-blazed trail where the brook passes under ORNAC near the Deaconess Water Treatment building.

Bobolink Nesting Ground

Bobolinks and other grassland birds court and nest in hayfields, pastures, and natural grasslands from April through July, and have been confirmed to breed at Mattison Field. With development and fragmentation of farmland in the Northeast, open grasslands like Mattison Field are extremely important for the survival of these birds. **Note the posted requirement that dogs be leashed and kept on trails from April 1 through July 31 to protect these grassland birds from harassment and nest abandonment.**

Sudbury River View

A red-blazed side trail offers a peaceful, scenic, riverscape diversion from the farmland just a short distance back on the trail. This section of the Sudbury River is surprisingly remote and unspoiled. The wild and natural view of habitat downstream is interrupted only by a distant Emerson Hospital, while upstream is Fairhaven Bay. In 1999 this section of the Sudbury River was designated part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, giving recognition to "its outstanding ecology, history, scenery, recreation values, and place in American literature."