

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Heywood Meadow in Concord, Massachusetts has a remarkable history that extends back to the earliest use of the area by Native Americans. It is a surviving feature from one of the first inland settlements in the United States, established in 1635; it was part of the Mill Pond, constructed in 1636 to power Concord's early industries; it was witness to the events of April 19, 1775; it was a source of inspiration to Concord's nineteenth century literary figures; and it remains an evocative link with nearly 370 years of Concord's history. It is also a significant natural resource that is valued for its role as wetland, flood storage area and wildlife habitat, and as a unique open space prominently located near the center of town.

Heywood Meadow remained in private ownership for over three centuries and was used for agricultural purposes into the early twentieth century. After World War II it was perceived as "vacant" land, with proposals made for various uses, including a fire and police station in the 1950s; a county courthouse in the 1960s; and an expanded visitor information center in the 1990s. In 2000, after several decades of intense debate, the town of Concord designated the final parcel of Heywood Meadow as conservation land, thereby placing the entire area under a permanent conservation restriction. Now that consensus has been reached about preserving Heywood Meadow as open land, attention has turned to stewardship of the property.

In early 2004 the Heywood Meadow Stewardship Committee, in conjunction with the Natural Resources Commission, commissioned Hines Wasser and Associates LLC and Shary Page Berg to prepare a landscape preservation plan for Heywood Meadow. This project is envisioned as the first step in developing a long-term preservation strategy for the meadow. Subsequent efforts will be needed to develop a landscape maintenance/management plan and to fund physical improvements. The Landscape Preservation Plan includes:

- documentation of the physical evolution of Heywood Meadow
- evaluation of the meadow's historical, environmental and landscape significance and the elements that contribute to its character
- a sustainable plan that evokes the historic appearance of the site and addresses issues of ecological health, public use and interpretation

Extensive work has already been done on the history of Heywood Meadow. This project focuses on reviewing and synthesizing previous research to provide an understanding of the appearance of the meadow at various points in time. Primary sources were Richard Forman's "Concord's Mill Brook: Flowing Through Time" and the work of historian Anne McCarthy Forbes, which is documented on Massachusetts Historical Commission inventory forms. The files of the Natural Resources Commission and Heywood Meadow Stewardship Committee provided valuable information about recent events. Leslie Wilson at the Concord Free Public Library graciously provided access to materials in the Special Collections during a difficult transition period for the library.

Funding for the Heywood Meadow Landscape Preservation Plan was provided by the Town of Concord through its Natural Resources Commission. Markus Pinney, NRC Administrator, was the town's project manager. Members of the Heywood Meadow Stewardship Committee provided input to the plan.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

At one time Heywood Meadow was part of a much larger meadow that extended along the Mill Brook watershed. Now it is a remnant of this historic landscape that has increased in value to the community as it has become more unique. Heywood Meadow has evolved over time but for more than three centuries its essential quality has been as an open meadow. Over the past century many pressures have been brought to bear on the meadow. Fortunately major development has been averted but incremental change has subtly altered the character of the landscape. The stream edge has grown up with invasive vegetation, the meadow grasses have become mowed turf, and stone walls have crumbled and been poorly repaired. The landscape around the meadow has changed as well. Activities that occur around the meadow, such as road improvements and increased traffic, also intrude on the strong sense of place.

The mission statement of the Heywood Meadow Stewardship Committee offers a simple but powerful vision for the future of the meadow.

“To rehabilitate all of Heywood Meadow (Lots A, 1, 2, 3 and Ford Park), so as to evoke the Meadow’s historical and agricultural past. This historic landscape should reflect the period from Colonial settlement through Concord’s Literary Renaissance (late 1800s). The rehabilitated meadow will accommodate passive recreation and further the conservation goals of the Town of Concord.”

This is supported by the following goals.

- Emphasize Heywood Meadow as the welcoming entry to the Town of Concord and a prominent reminder of Concord’s agrarian past.
- Unify the Meadow’s separate parcels with the use of common plant treatments.
- Evoke the agricultural past of Heywood Meadow through the addition of historically appropriate plantings, fencing, walls, and field management practices.
- Protect the Mill Brook Corridor and its watershed to promote an ecologically sound and scenic stream environment.
- Reconnect Heywood Meadow to other historic landscapes and structures by selectively creating open views to related areas and making recommendations to the Town Manager regarding maintenance of adjacent town parcels.
- Enhance the Meadow’s scenic and contemplative qualities and highlight its historical relationship with adjacent 18th and 19th century structures and roads, especially the historic Bay Road (Lexington Road) and Potter’s Street (Heywood Street).
- Remove structures and associated landscape elements that do not relate to the time period established for the rehabilitation. These will include, but may not be limited to: the garage on Lot 3, the information booth on Lot A, and associated paved areas. The Concord Gun House will be retained.