

3. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Like many cultural landscapes, Heywood Meadow has multiple areas of significance that encompass historical, natural and open space values. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Concord Monument Square/Lexington Road National Register District and is included in the American Mile Local Historic District. Part of Heywood Meadow is a protected wetland, and portions have been designated conservation land by the town of Concord. The multiple areas of significance provide an understanding that is fundamental to stewardship of the site.

- ***Pre-Concord History***

The Mill Brook valley, which includes Heywood Meadow, was an important Native American hunting area and campsite for centuries before European settlement.

- ***Settlement History***

Heywood Meadow was the houselot of Luke Potter, one of Concord's first settlers, and is a surviving feature of the town's 1635 English settlement pattern, which served as a prototype for subsequent land division and early town planning in New England. It has survived as a recognizable piece of land that was in private ownership for over 300 years.

- ***Revolutionary War History***

The meadow is adjacent to Lexington Road and was witness to the events of April 19, 1775.

- ***Literary History***

All of Concord's prominent literary figures lived on Lexington Road at one time and walked past the open land of the meadow, deriving inspiration from its pastoral beauty.

- ***Agricultural History***

Heywood Meadow was in continuous agricultural use for over 300 years and is one of the few surviving remnants of that use located near the town center.

- ***Pivotal Element in Concord's Historic Scene***

Heywood Meadow lies at a major entrance to Concord, is a pivotal element in the community's historic scene and functions as a setting for some of its most historic houses.

- ***Environmental Values***

Heywood Meadow is part of an extensive system of wet meadows and wildlife habitat, and an important link in the Mill Brook valley drainage area, which provides critical flood control and storm damage prevention for the town.

- ***Open Space and Aesthetic Values***

Heywood Meadow is a critical component of the town's open space system and is recognized both for its recreational value and its visual prominence near the center of town.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The period of historical significance for Heywood Meadow extends from 1635 when the town was established to the late 19th century, which marks a transition in the appearance and use of the meadow. There may also be earlier significance derived from Native American use of the area. A period of significance that extends over nearly 300 years is remarkable for any property, but especially for one as fragile as a meadow located in the heart of a community.

SITE BOUNDARIES

During Concord's early years the Mill Brook served as a boundary between properties located on the north and south sides of the brook. While this division is strongly reflected in early land ownership patterns, the Mill Brook valley has always been perceived as a single visual and ecological unit and should be treated as such. Lots A, 1, 2, 3 and Ford Park (shown in the darker tone below) are town owned and have been designated as conservation land. The narrow strip of land between Parcel A and the Mill Brook (shown in lighter tone) is town-owned land that is functionally and perceptually part of Heywood Meadow. The parcel along Walden Street south of the Mill Brook next to the police/fire station (shown in lighter tone) is town-owned but is not conservation land.



Figure 11. Map showing the extent and status of Heywood Meadow land parcels. Dark tone indicates town-owned conservation land. Light tone indicates town-owned land that is not conservation land, although part of it is wetland. (Concord GIS base map)

INTEGRITY

For more than three centuries there has been a consistency in the boundaries, land use patterns and appearance of Heywood Meadow as a meadow and agricultural land that is truly remarkable for a New England landscape. While there have been changes, Heywood Meadow is noteworthy as a surviving cultural landscape with features that date to the 1630s. Many Concord properties have strong historical associations, what distinguishes Heywood Meadow is the extent to which it still reflects its historic appearance. This quality is called integrity, which is the authenticity of a property's historic identity or the extent to which a property evokes its appearance during a particular historic period. While evaluation of integrity is often a subjective judgement, particularly for a landscape, it must be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they related to its significance. The challenge is even greater when the landscape has evolved over several centuries and has an extended period of significance. The analysis of character defining features that follows illustrates key aspects of integrity.

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

A character defining feature is a prominent or distinctive aspect, quality or characteristic of a historic property that contributes significantly to its historic character. Before modifications are made to the landscape, changes should be carefully evaluated for their impact on character defining features, which fall into four broad categories:

- ***Setting and Spatial Organization***

Spatial organization is the arrangement of elements within and around the site. The spatial organization of Heywood Meadow was established in the early seventeenth century by the presence of the Mill Brook, the location of the major roads, the arrangement of lots and the siting of houses. This pattern is still reflected in the landscape today (see diagrams on next page).

- ***Landscape Character***

The enduring landscape character of Heywood Meadow as a natural and historic resource is its quality as an open meadow. Meadow land was what drew settlers to this site in 1635 and what existed into the early 20th century (see Figure 16). Over the past 50 years, this quality has been altered by the growth of vegetation along the stream bank. Other features including vegetable gardens, tilled fields, orchards, houses and outbuildings have occupied Heywood Meadow at various times but do not have the same enduring quality.

- ***Mill Brook***

The Mill Brook was a narrow sluggish stream in 1635 and is essentially the same today. From 1636 to 1828 the western portion of Heywood Meadow was occupied by the Mill Pond.

- ***Walls and Fences***

Various types of enclosures have been used over the years to define the edges of Heywood Meadow. Dry laid fieldstone walls were most likely the first, there is also evidence of vertical board fencing and post and rail fencing in the late nineteenth century.

Setting and Spatial Organization

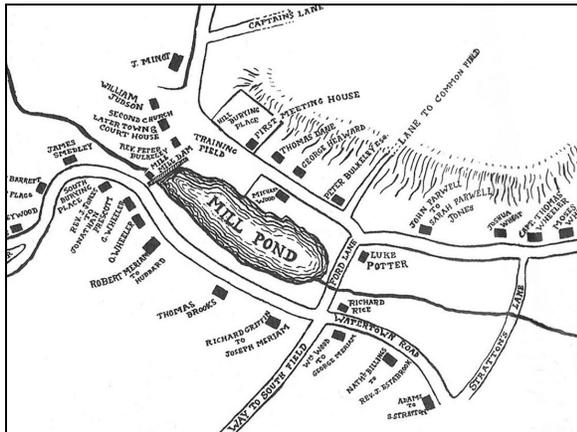


Figure 12

Detail of 17th Century Map by Ruth Wheeler

- Bay Road (Lexington Road), Watertown Road (Walden Street) and Ford Lane (Heywood Street) already extant
- Mill Pond located west of Heywood Street
- Houses located primarily north of Lexington Road and south of Walden Street
- Luke Potter house (burned 1731) on Heywood Meadow north of Mill Brook, Richard Rice house south of brook

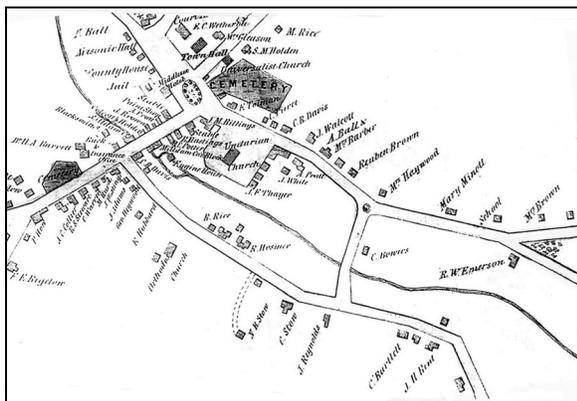


Figure 13

Detail of 1852 Walling Map

- Lexington Road, Walden Street and Heywood Street still clearly defined, Concord Turnpike visible at far right
- Mill Pond has been drained
- House number and locations similar to above
- Potter and Rice houses no longer extant, Bowers house has been built east of Heywood Street
- R. W. Emerson house at east end of Heywood Meadow



Figure 14

Detail of 2004 Map by Concord GIS

- Older roads as shown in 1852, many new roads added
- Mill Brook as shown in 1852
- Many more house lots, including on Revolutionary Ridge
- No buildings on Heywood Meadow except Gun House
- Heywood Meadow far more overgrown and no longer used for agriculture

Landscape Character and Mill Brook

The landscape character of Heywood Meadow is largely defined by patterns of vegetation and land use. During the settlement period the landscape was that of a wet meadow, flooded in winter and grassland in the drier summer months. In fact it is these very grasslands that gave the area its original name, Musketaquid, or “marsh grass river” and caused the English colonists to settle here. Meadow land is an essential and enduring characteristic of Heywood Meadow.



Figure 15. 1904 view of the Mill Brook upstream from Heywood Meadow, which might have looked similar when English settlers arrived in 1635. Note the meandering quality of the brook. (Concord Free Public Library)

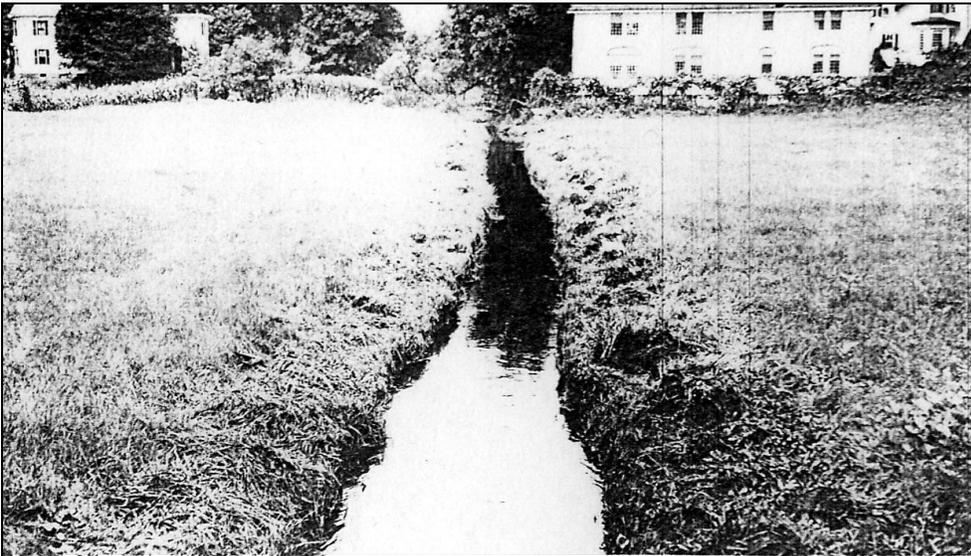


Figure 16. 1942 view of Heywood Meadow looking west from Heywood Street. Although the grasses are different species, the quality of an open meadow is visually similar to what it had been for centuries, except that it is more enclosed by perimeter trees and buildings. In this view the brook has been dredged and straightened to increase flow. (Concord Free Public Library)

Walls and Fences

The stone walls around of the perimeter of Heywood Meadow are only remnants of the earlier walls. It is unknown when they were erected, although such walls were common in eastern Massachusetts by the mid-seventeenth century. Post and rail fences appear in several early twentieth century pictures of Heywood Meadow (see Figure 17 below and Figure 5 on page 9). A vertical board fence appears in an 1880 view along Heywood Street (see Figure 6 on page 9, probably to enclose an area for animals or a vegetable garden). The walls are now seriously degraded, with stones missing or fallen over and some sections capped with concrete.



Figure 17. Early twentieth century view of Lexington Road showing the stone wall in front of Heywood Meadow at the far right. (Concord Free Public Library)



Figure 18. Circa 2002 view showing deteriorated condition of the stone wall along Lexington Road.