

Long Pond

In most other places Long Pond's 150-acre area would qualify it as a lake, but this is Cape Cod, and Cape Cod has ponds. The land surrounding Long Pond is the largest piece of town-owned open space in Falmouth—about 750 acres. The old roads and trails that thread through this woodland around the pond are well-used, summer and winter—it is rare not to see walkers and runners, and a mountain bike rider or a cross-country skier, depending on the season. Although the citizens of Falmouth have actively worked to purchase and protect open space in town, that is not how this parcel came to be one of the gems of Falmouth. Much of it was given to the town, beginning with Goodwill Park, by the Fay family, some of the earliest summer people here. They acquired the land to protect the pond, and along with the Beebes, of Beebe Woods, developed the nucleus of the town water system including the beautiful old water department building that sits on the isthmus between Grews Pond and Long Pond.

Long Pond is still the source of much of Falmouth's drinking water. It is not only long, it is also deep, so it contains a large volume of water. The water in the pond is groundwater that seeps into the pond from the northern side and out again on the southern side, following the general direction of groundwater flow in Falmouth. That is why Grews Pond, just to the south, is the swimming pond: the water flows from Long Pond into Grews Pond, so we are not swimming in our drinking water.

The Fays assembled their landholdings here from many pieces of land that had been used as pasture or woodlot by early settlers, and then were abandoned when subsistence farming became less attractive during the mid-1800s. Those former uses of the land can be recognized today all through the woods. Many rock walls cross the trails and disappear into the trees. These rock walls, representing much hard work, were not built in the woods, they were built to keep animals from straying when much of this land was cleared for pasture; the woods have grown up since. In other areas, multi-trunked trees indicate land that was once woodlot. Many town-dwellers had woodlots on the rocky moraine where firewood was cut in the days before central heating and gas cooking—hardwoods trees like oaks and maples sprout from their stumps when cut, and the repeated cutting in woodlots created many such trees.

The north and west shores of Long Pond rise steeply from the water's edge, and are set with many boulders, while the south and east side are gentler, lower, and sandier. This is because Long Pond lies across the contact between the hilly, rocky moraine that forms the "backbone" of Cape Cod, and the flatter, sandy outwash plains that form most of the Cape, and all of Falmouth east of Long Pond. Long Pond is a kettle hole—a pond formed through the burial in moraine and outwash of a block of glacial ice as the rest of the glacier melted away. When the buried ice block eventually melted, the sand and gravel on top collapsed into the resulting cavity. If that collapsed cavity was deep enough, as Long Pond is, to intersect the groundwater table, it became a pond. Other, shallower holes are just hollows or dry depressions.

The woods around Long Pond are doubtless home to deer, coyotes, foxes, rabbits and other mammals, but they are not much in evidence during the day. The most obvious creatures are the birds: you may hear or see a Crow, Blue Jay, Osprey or Ovenbird in summer, and Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers and Chickadees in winter. But whenever you go, Long Pond will reward you with lovely views and an opportunity for some good exercise—it is about 3½ miles around the main trail.

Access to Long Pond is off Gifford Street at the Goodwill Park entrance; another is off Brick Kiln Road. The website of The 300 Committee has a map showing the trails and access points available for downloading at www.300committee.org.