

Mud Cat Lane

The homes which face the 8th Concession road have farm land extending to the south ending in a wooded swampy area. This swamp is divided by a road which more or less follows the river and is a connecting road for Plainfield and Foxboro. The portion of road which divides the swamp has always been known as "Mud Cat Lane". Just how the name originated cannot be determined, but it is probably mainly due to the annual spring flooding which necessitated the closing of the road to traffic until such time as the water had receded and the road-bed made safe for travel.

The land across the Mud Cat Lane, of course, runs down to the bank of the river and is low and swampy also. However, there are a few high spots known to older residents as Howe's Hill and Hambly's Island. On Lot No. 14 there were 2 houses and 2 barns. One of these sets of buildings was occupied by a Thompson family. He grew mainly garden produce as one resident recalls the turnips that were grown there were of enormous size.

This rich moist soil produced lush grass for pasture and the trees provided shade which made this a very good ranch for cattle. The farmers who owned Lots No. 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 not only pastured their own young stock there, they took in cattle belonging to others for the season. Often there would be from 60 - 70 or 75 cattle pasturing in this area during a summer.

It should be noted that fences had to be checked and repaired either late in the fall or as soon after the flooding in the spring as possible because of the mosquito infestation.

The summer of 1912 will long be remembered by the older residents, not only as a particularly wet season but one of terrible loss for those who had cattle pasturing "down Mud Cat Lane".

The cattle had been out to pasture, so the time was probably late May or early June. Then there was a very rainy spell. It rained for days! The river overflowed and the swamp was flooded, all but the high spots previously mentioned. The cattle remained on the high ground but there being so many of them, they soon had the pasture all grubbed off. They were hungry! Suddenly one or two of them must have decided to strike out and look for something to eat even if they had to swim for it - which they did. When a few started to run the others followed and soon the whole herd stampeded in panic. As many as 15 or 20 were drowned. Some were found caught in bushes - unable to go further in the tangled growth. One heifer belonging to Mr. Willett Ketcheson was found wedged between two maple trees which were growing close together.

The owners of the cattle had a treacherous time trying to round up the frightened animals