



About This Property

Before there was Social Security and welfare, so-called “poor farms” were a common approach for grappling with poverty. Also called “town farms,” the residents would provide labor to expenses associated with their upkeep. This include raising the fruits, vegetables, and livestock that they consumed.

Sudbury’s own “Poor Establishment” came into being in the 19th century. In 1832, the Town purchased the land of Asa Noyes expressly for this purpose. Later, a house would be set aside for “boarding paupers” as they were sometimes called. Local farmer George W. Barton, of present-day Barton Farm fame, would recall his father regularly travelling to the poor farm to offer assistance. The 1875 Walling map shows that the poor farm(s) covered a broader area extending towards Morse Road. It also shows an alms house near what is now the conservation land.

The property would in 1917 revert to private ownership. However, in a joint venture with the Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program, what had by then become known as the Meachen-Meggs Land was re-acquired in 1999 by the Town and entrusted to the stewardship of the Conservation Commission.

At a little over 55 acres, the Poor Farm Conservation Land is recognized as a prominent example of Sudbury’s agricultural past as well as vital natural habitat. While much of the land has returned to a wooded state, a sizeable farm field of around 13 acres occupies much of southern section. This is leased by the Commission to a local farmer and is in active production.

The land is crisscrossed by intermittent and perennial streams, one of which is a tributary to the Pantry Brook. In its course it flows across nearby Barton Farm, beneath the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail into the Pantry Brook State Wildlife Management Area, to ultimately mingle with the Sudbury River. Bordering the stream is an extensive vegetated wetland.

Poor Farm also hosts Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife, a formal designation assigned by MassWildlife’s Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program. It is one of several such examples in Town, which also include the Hop Brook Conservation Land, the Nobscot Boy Scout Reservation, the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge, and more. This provides an important layer of protection for the rare and charismatic blue-spotted salamander.

Poor Farm is located a bit north and west of the town center, a short distance from Route 27 or Maynard Road. Parking is situated at the southern tip of the property, near the junction of Willis and Marlboro Roads. Sidewalks running along either right-of-way lead directly into the parking lot. A path from the lot takes walkers on a simple loop around the farm field. Please be mindful of working farm vehicles.

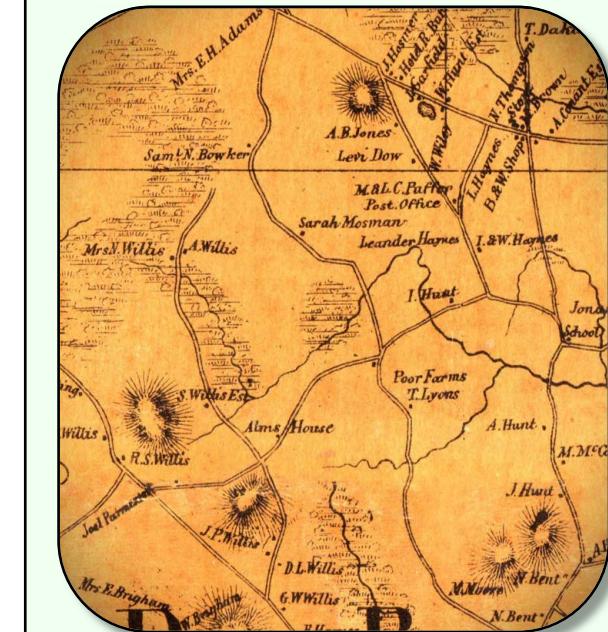
Land Use Regulations

- Conservation Land is open to the public $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before sunrise until $\frac{1}{2}$ hour after sunset.
- No trails shall be cut or marked, nor dams built, nor any structure such as lean-tos, bridges, towers or handrails constructed.
- No person shall cut, break, remove, deface, defile, or ill-use any rock, building, fence, bench, bog bridge, sign or other structure or property, or have possession of any part thereof.
- Depositing or leaving rubbish, litter, demolition or yard debris, garbage, excavated fill or any hazardous waste is prohibited.
- No person shall engage in business, sell, or expose for sale, post, place, or give away any goods, wares or circulars.
- Fishing, trapping, catching, injuring, destroying or interfering in any way with birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals or any other wild animals is prohibited.
- Hunting prohibited except as permitted by the Conservation Commission.
- Horse riding is allowed on designated trails. The Conservation Commission reserves the right to close any trails to horses at any time should trail conditions warrant closure. Riders are expected to remove any horse waste from the trails and not dispose of it in any wetland area. Groups of more than five riders or organized horseback activities require a permit from the Commission.
- Dogs shall be restrained in accordance with the General Bylaws (Chapter 117 – Article II). More than 4 dogs per person shall require written permission from the Conservation Commission. Dog owners/walkers are expected to remove any dog waste from the property. Dog owners/walkers shall yield to horse riders and other trail users. All dog waste must be removed from the property and properly disposed of.
- Possessing or consuming any alcoholic beverage is prohibited.
- Possession of weapons or the discharge of firearms, firecrackers, rockets, sparklers, or fireworks is prohibited, except as permitted by the Conservation Commission.
- No motorized vehicles of any kind are allowed except for government emergency vehicles or vehicles authorized, in writing, by the Conservation Commission.
- Bicycles are permitted on designated trails only. The Conservation Commission reserves the right to close any trails to bicycles at any time should trail conditions warrant closure.
- Public nudity is prohibited.
- Swimming and wading is prohibited.
- All trash, litter, cans, refuse, bottles etc. shall be removed from the land by the user and disposed of or recycled properly.
- No glass bottles or containers or any kind are permitted on conservation land.
- Please park to maximize the space available. Please do not block the emergency entrance gate.
- Camping permitted by permit. Open fires are prohibited.

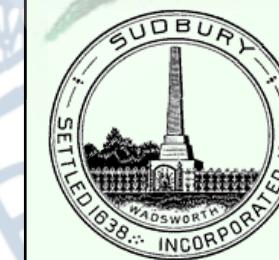
A fine of not more than \$100.00 per day shall be imposed for any violation of these regulations, or of a permit issued under these regulations, according to the following schedule: \$150 for a second offense, and \$200.00 for a third or subsequent offense. These fines may be imposed, under the provisions of MGL Chapter 40 Section 21D, by the Police or by Commission members or staff. Each day shall constitute a new offense.

POOR FARM

Trail Guide



Town of Sudbury Conservation Commission



275 Old Lancaster Road
Sudbury, MA 01776
978-440-5471
<https://sudbury.ma.us/conservationcommission/>

