

## **The Turtle Effigy Mound**

**A summary by Brenda Toomey, Massachusetts Coordinator for NEARA**

The purpose of this report is to create a summary of the many pages of articles and reports in the NEARA site files on this structure, for NEARA members attending a field trip to the site on September 13, 2003.

The Turtle Effigy Mound is on private property, belonging to Dennis McCarthy, at 7 Lakeside Circle in Andover, Massachusetts. It is an impressive structure. It has been enjoyed, studied, and puzzled over for many years. It is about 400 – 600 feet southwest of Haggetts Pond, which is connected to the Merrimack River by Fish Brook.

In addition to this interesting stone mound, there are said to be a number of Earthworks in this area that were studied and reported on in the past. In our files there is a 1912 report from *Phillips Academy, Andover, MA, Dept. of Archaeology, BULLETIN V*, titled "Certain Peculiar Earthworks near Andover, MA." Another report on these earthworks was published in October 1942, in the *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archeological Society*. This article is titled "Forts, Boundaries, or Ha-Has?"

### **Description**

It is built of large stones, about 11' tall, with a flat top, and has been said to be about 100' by 60' in length. Poorly constructed stone steps allow access to the top in two places. From the air, the shape of its outline vaguely suggests an animal with a tapered tail, appendages, and an open-jawed head. There are two large pine trees growing from within the two curves of the lower and upper "jaws". The finished stonework around them suggests that these trees, or trees like them, were there before the mound was built. A 13' long tunnel separates the head from the body. Two stone "libation bowls" are next to it. There are two chambers built into opposite sides of the mound. The one on the northeast appears to be in its original condition.

The southeast chamber was remodeled and given an arched-mortared entrance in 1914, by an owner named John Harnois, or John Arnois, who kept a Saint's statue in it. Next to the chamber entrance a large stone has been carved to resemble an Indian's head. Goodwin wrote that he believed Harnois "also pointed up a part of the vaulted cell back of his shrine, before he closed it up in order to stop moisture in the vault and so keep out dampness, before he was compelled to build his wall. Certainly there was no cement used originally in building the vault itself."

### **Fact or Fable**

In our files we have a paper in which Goodwin argues against a local legend that a man named Follansbee, who owned the property in the late 1830's, built the structure with the aide of a Scottish friend of his to recreate a Scottish cairn. They reportedly raised imported plants on this land, which the Scott picked up in his travels as a sailor. Goodwin also refers to evidence that at sometime, an owner built a frame summerhouse on the top of it, adding the crude stone steps. He said that stones were removed from the stone appendage on the eastern front of it, for use in building a 50' long path to it. There is a dug well near this path about 25 feet to the east of the mound.

The site received its present name when William Goodwin who wrote about it in his 1946 book "The Ruins of Great Ireland in New England" (pages 100 - 104). He argued that the general shape of the effigy mound is much like the heavy jawed snapping turtle. He pointed out that the turtle was the chief effigy of the Algonquin Indians. What most surprised me was that he wrote: "in April, 1945, we determined to cut through the concrete back of the Shrine to ascertain whether the turtle back was hollow. To our great satisfaction we found that still another long room, all of unmortared stone, goes into the mound at that point similar in form to the Great Chapel

at the North Salem Site." (This is a reference to Mystery Hill, now known as America's Stonehenge, in North Salem, NH.)

Members of the Early Sites Society, and of NEARA, have visited here and made site reports in 1959, 1961, 1965, 1972, 1981, and 1985. The land titles, soil samples, and historical records have been studied, and many guesses have been made about its age.

### **Archaeological Research**

An Archaeologist, Frank Glynn, did excavations here in 1951. His excavations indicated it was built well before colonial times, perhaps as far back as 3000 years ago. He reported that in the dirt floor of the northwest chamber, or cave, he found human bone fragments of an ancient burial. He wrote that the body was placed on an oval shaped bed of cobbles, facing west, with a javelin near its right arm. Soil had been placed over it, on which topped were placed a large number of stone flints, and what he thought were broken grave-goods. Upon this a large fire had been built. He refers to 13 specimens with burnt surfaces he found in this layer. In addition to this startling find, he found and photographed many stone artifacts, which are thought to be in the Peabody and other museums. Frank Glynn later joined NEARA. His paper on this work was reprinted, after his death, in the 1969 NEARA NEWSLETTER, Vol. 4, # 4.

**Denis McCarthy, now 91 years old, has owned this property since 1966.** He built his family home on it, for his three daughters and two sons. His daughter Denise McCarthy, a school Principal, lives with him. Another daughter, June Blake, lives and teaches in Andover. Her daughters, Jennifer Kenny and Jessica Blake live in NH, but also teach in Andover. They say when they were kids; his grandchildren all played on the Turtle Mound. The McCarthy's have generously allowed many people to visit this site, by appointment. They are interested in preserving it. I have given them copies of all the papers we have in our files on their Turtle Mound.

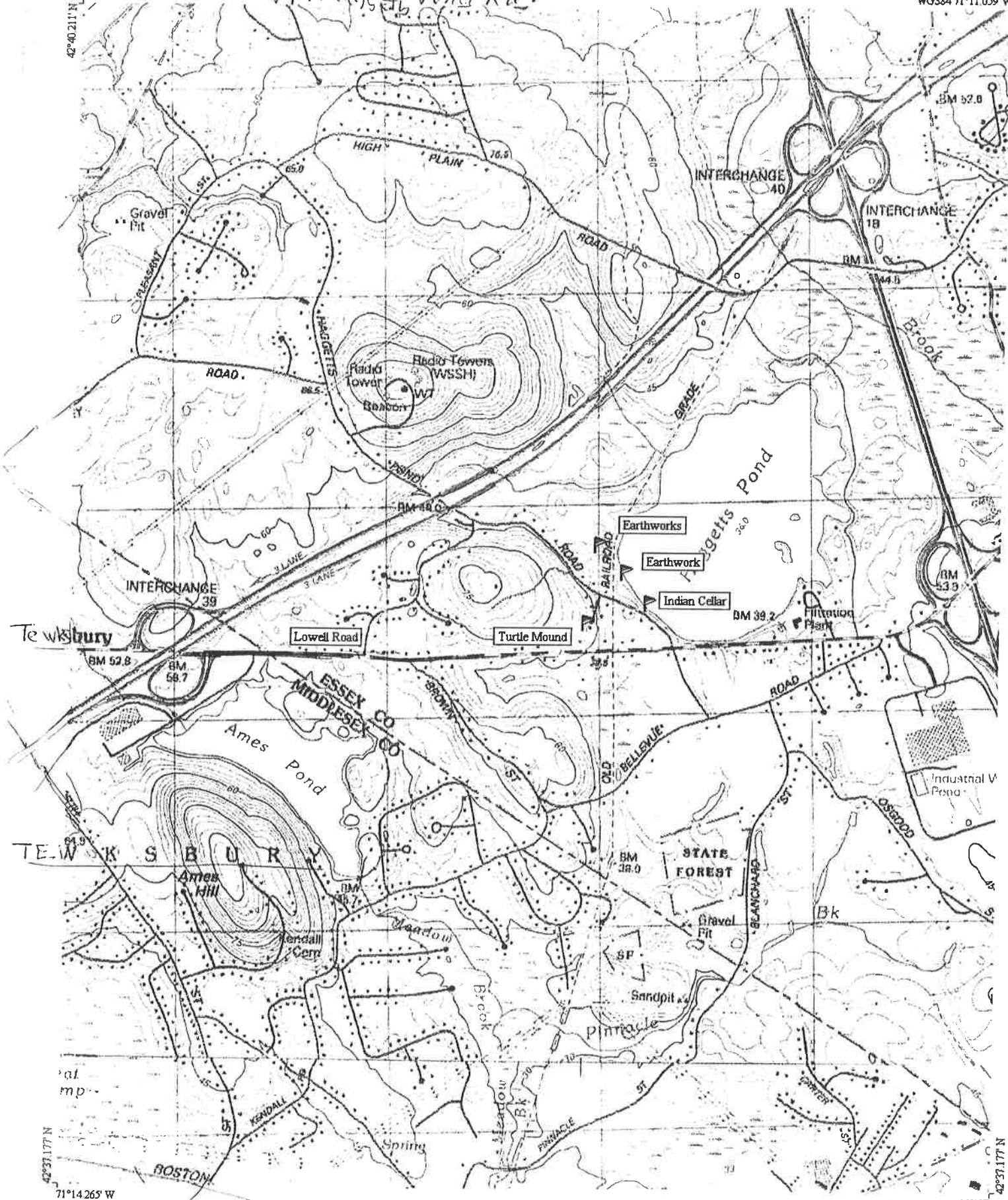
Handwritten notes: *H Lake Side Circle*, *TH 11 0987b Pond Rd*

TOPO! map printed on 08/29/02 from "Boston.tpo" and "Untitled.tpg"

Handwritten initials: *RW*

42°40'21.1" N  
71°14'26.5" W

WGS84 71°11'05.9" W  
42°40'21.1" N



Tewksbury

TEWKSBURY

Lowell Road

Turtle Mound

MIDDLESEX CO

Ames Pond

Ames Hill

Rendall Cem

Meadow

Brook

Spring

BOSTON

INTERCHANGE 40

INTERCHANGE 18

Radio Towers (WSSH)

Argetts Pond

Earthworks

Earthwork

Indian Cellar

Filtration Plant

Industrial V Pond

STATE FOREST

Gravel Pit

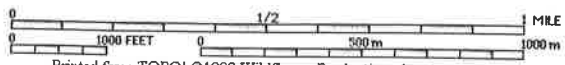
Sandpit

Pinnacle

42°37'17.7" N  
71°14'26.5" W

WGS84 71°11'05.9" W  
42°37'17.7" N

MN TN  
16°



Printed from TOPO! ©1999 Wildflower Productions (www.topo.com)

map 2003