

Old Bottles Fragile Bit Of History

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WEST HARTFORD — Crews dredging the Beachland Park pond have unearthed artifacts that, while not as exotic as the fossilized remains of some prehistoric creatures, certainly are items that reflect the town's past — hundreds of milk bottles.

About 1,000 milk bottles from the old Vine Hill Farm were uncovered by workers for Bourgeois and Shaw of Simsbury, the company dredging the pond.

About 1,000 mucky milk bottles from the old Vine Hill Farm were discovered when the pond was dredged.

Some residents went to the site this week to recover some broken glass mementos of the farm, part of which was located on the Beachland Park site.

Betty Healey of Hampton Avenue, whose grandfather was the dairy manager for the Beach family, said the Beach farm was one of the nation's top dairy farms at one time.

The farm, started in 1885, once covered an enormous part of the Elmwood section, but it shrunk over the years as the Beach family sold off much of their property, Healey said. The family donated the land that is now Beachland Park to the town.

The farm was not only a dairy operation, but included orchards, vegetable gardens and a gristmill, Healey said, adding that the dairy's creamery was located in what is now the Beachland Park clubhouse, very close to the pond.

Healey said she is uncertain when the farm stopped operating, but there still was farming being done in 1936. She estimated it was the mid-1940s by the time all the farm's pasture lands were gone.



COURANT PHOTO BY RICHARD BERGEN

Workmen dredging the Beachland Park pond in West Hartford have found almost 1,000 old milk bottles, the remains of the old Vine Hill Farm that once had its creamery near the pond. The Beach family, which owned Vine Hill, donated the park land to the town.

Workers for Bourgeois and Shaw found the bottles, most of them broken and cracked, while digging a trench for a pond drainage pipe.

"This pile is just ashes and bottles," one of the workers said, pointing to the pile of debris that had been lifted from the trench.

He said there were bottles about two feet deep about three feet down into the trench.

One of the workers said the bottom of one bottle showed a 1801 date, but Healey said it almost certainly was not a Vine Hill Farm bottle. She said it could have come from a creamery that may have existed on the same site years earlier.

She said she poked through the debris this week and found a bottle dated 1889, which she said is closer to Vine Hill's period.