

Bradley Farm Trail

Mount Greylock State Reservation

SELF-GUIDED INTERPRETIVE TRAIL



Rugged Mountainside Farms

Between 1765-1865 the slopes of Mount Greylock were farmed more than anytime before or since, home to no fewer than 42 farms. Place names across the mountain recall these previous farmers: Rounds, Northrup, Jones and Wilbur. The forested slopes of today obscure the cellar holes and once vibrant lives of these pioneering folk.

Early settlers to this area had an ordeal ahead of them clearing and improving their land. In many cases they carved out a subsistence living on “100 odd acres more or less.” Remnants of stonewalls, cleared while plowing, remain today as evidence of previous use of the land. Stonewall fences often separated orchards of apple and pear trees from fields of grain, corn, potatoes, peas, beans, pumpkins, hops, hemp, turnips and hayfields. Where the rocky soil was tough to farm and pasturing of livestock animals was more common. Pigs and cows were fattened for market, sheep raised for wool.

With poor dirt roads these farming families were often isolated from the “bottom dwellers” in the valley, learning to be self-sufficient. Yet they often had close ties to neighboring mountain farms, critical to surviving harsh winters; they bartered and traded goods and sometimes land with each other.

The Bradley Farm

The Visitors Center and surrounding parkland on this southern flank of the Greylock massif were once part of the Bradley Family farm. William Bradley (1730-1809) a native of Connecticut, was a prominent founder of the town of Lanesborough, acquiring this land about 1762. The land transferred to his son, Capt. Ephraim Bradley (1752-1824), in 1787. Ephraim continued to expand the farm by buying up smaller farms until he had 300 acres by 1800. Although closer to the valley, he probably had many business dealings with farmers further up “Saddle Mountain.”

It often took two generations to clear land for plowing crops: first to clear the trees, second to remove the stones. By looking at the amount of rocks still scattered in this area between stonewalls, it appears Ephraim most probably had cleared the trees and used these upland slopes as pasture for livestock. He used the more arable land closer to the valley for his crops. The Bradley family continued to farm this area up until about 1822. Much of this land continued in agricultural use up until the early 1900s. Now mostly returned to forest, explore the dynamic natural changes taking place here!

About the Trail

The Bradley Farm Interpretive Trail trailhead is located at The Mount Greylock State Reservation Visitors Center, 30 Rockwell Road, Lanesborough, MA 01237. Beginning and ending at the kiosk at the northeast corner of the Visitors Center parking lot, the trail is relatively **easy** for hiking and cross-country skiing (see map). Total length is **1.8 miles, round-trip**. Plan on spending about **90 minutes** if hiking at a moderate pace.

Follow the blue trail blazes and signage at intersections.

- **For foot and ski traffic only.**
- Please stay on designated trails.
- Leave only footprints take only pictures.
- Observe all posted rules and regulations.
- Be aware of hunting seasons and wear blaze orange when appropriate.
- **Winter-use:** when hiking/snowshoeing please keep off cross-country ski tracks, please hike off to the side.

1) Ancient Orchard

Notice the stunted scraggly trees around you? These are remnants of Ephraim Bradley's apple orchard from the early 1800s. Ephraim is now long gone, but the trees remain and animals now tend to his crop of sweet fruit.

The brightly colored, sweet smelling flowers attract pollinating insects to them year after year. Once pollinated, the flower's ovary grows into a small green ball. Over the summer months it matures, and by September it's a ripened apple.

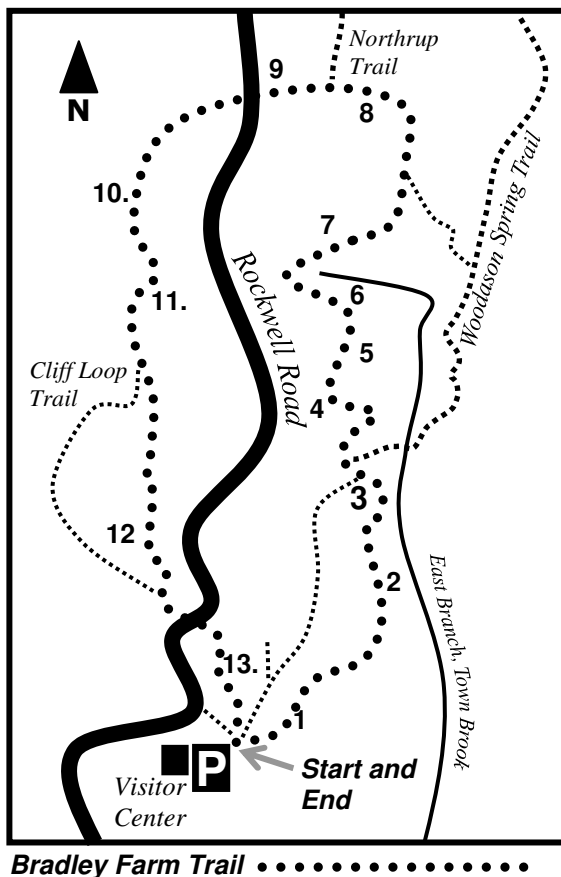
Apples lure wildlife, such as deer. The animals in turn spread the seeds in their droppings. This process happens annually and the orchard continues to grow!

2) Deepening Valleys

Over hundreds to thousands of years water has continued to deepen this ravine through **erosion**, carrying soil and stone along with it, carving it even deeper. Vegetation that grows on the slope slows erosion by holding on to the soil with its roots.

Watersheds are geographic drainage basins that collect and funnel water. This brook located is within the Housatonic River watershed. Water not absorbed by the ground flows into the Housatonic River, which eventually travels to Long Island Sound, about 110 miles away!

More info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drainage_basin

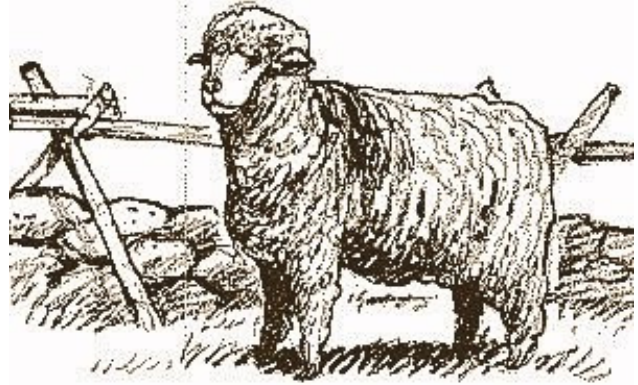


3) Labor of Love

This stonewall is a remnant of Ephraim Bradley's farm, built with rocks that turned up while plowing fields, Bradley and his family created this wall most likely to mark the edge of a field or as a property boundary.

Stonewalls were also used for containing livestock. Between c.1807-1870 the land probably pastured huge flocks of Spanish Merino sheep, important to the Berkshire region's industrial wool manufactories. As the local agricultural economy shifted and declined after the Civil War period, open fields had again returned to forests by the early 1900s.

More info: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merino>



Spanish Merino Sheep

4) Once Beauty, Now Beast

This old Sugar Maple tree was mature when this was open farmland perhaps 130 years ago and was perhaps tapped for sap to make syrup. The once magnificent crown of branches now lies rotting on the forest floor. Organisms of decay are beginning to recycle this tree even before it's completely dead, creating soil for new growth in the forest.

5) Forest Intersection

Look right, then left. See a difference in the type of trees? On the right is an *Eastern Hemlock forest* stand. Beneath its dark canopy little light reaches the ground; not much undergrowth can survive here in the dark. Notice how it feels cooler in the shade of this forest.

On the left is an *northern hardwood forest*. Here light does get through to the under-story, allowing a greater diversity of plant life an opportunity to grow. What do you think influences a forest to grow where it does?

More info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsuga_canadensis
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_hardwood_forest

6) Trees Company

Here's a sensory activity you can touch! Trees grouped here are Sugar Maple, Black Cherry and White Ash. Can you tell the difference by looking? How about by touching the bark? White Ash has uniform ridges and deep diamond shaped furrows. It feels like cork. Black Cherry is like giant cornflakes; and Sugar Maple has narrow scaly ridges and is hard. Examine the different leaves too.

Competition for space between trees often affects their growth. What could have allowed these mature trees to grow so large, so close together?

7) Rock Hard

The Mount Greylock range is made up of mostly grey-colored *schist*, a metamorphic rock (changed through heat and pressure), as in this boulder. According to geologists this rock here was created from what was once part of a muddy sea bottom hundreds of millions of years ago.

Bands of translucent, white-colored *quartzite*, formerly sand, are found here too. Can you find other examples along the trail?

More info: <http://unh.edu/esci/massachusetts.html>

8) Forest Pioneers

Here the forest is reclaiming former farmland. This is an early stage of forest succession. Wildlife is abundant here because food is easy to find. Thick groundcover provides hiding places from predators.

Pioneer trees- Birches, Beech, Maples, and White Pine have little competition, allowing them to spread out their crowns. As this forest matures competition among trees increases, restricting growth and reducing groundcover.

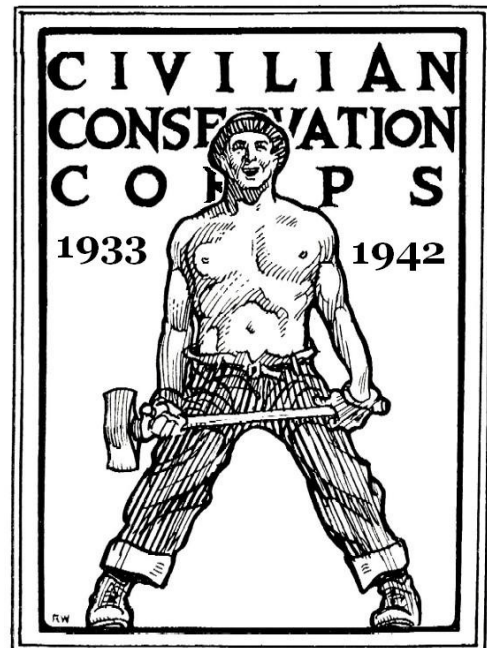
9) Pinecone Johnnies

Soon you cross Rockwell Road, originally built in 1906-07 by Berkshire County's Greylock (Reservation) Commission as an improved auto road to the summit. During the Great Depression in the 1930s it was rebuilt as a two lane auto road by the Civilian Conservation Corps, a federal New Deal program using unemployed men to improve forests and parklands across the nation. The CCC 107th Company camp was located at the present day campground on Sperry Road from 1933-40.

You've probably heard the saying, "*another day, another dollar,*" which originated from the CCC. A hard-working enrollee earned \$30 a month, or a dollar a day, \$25 of which went home to help support their family through the difficult economic times.

The CCC developed many of the recreation facilities still in use today at Mount Greylock, in addition to the roadway, including Bascom Lodge, the expert class Thunderbolt (Ski) Trail and Thunderbolt Shelter.

More info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian_Conservation_Corps



10) Black Death

Look for Black Cherry trees with big black bulges, infected with the disease Black Knot, common to cherry species in N. America. The fungus infects young, succulent twigs and spreads the disease. Fungal spores are produced on living galls, one to several years old, spreading over time to new parts of the tree. If untreated, Black Knot will eventually choke and kill the tree.

More info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_knot

11) Lightning Strikes!

Nearby a Black Cherry tree had an unfortunate encounter with lightning. The bolt followed the trunk from the top crown down to the root system. Look for the vertical scar along the bark and you can see the lightning's route.

12) Evergreens of the Forest Floor

Notice the patches of moss-like plants on the ground. Ground Pine or Running Pine and other clubmosses. Although the name and appearance refers to “pine,” these plants aren't trees or even true mosses, they're actually related to ferns. Clubmosses have a woody stem that transports water, which mosses lack. In the age of the dinosaurs these plants once grew as large as trees. Clubmosses act as a carpet for the forest floor, holding in moisture in the soil for other plants to thrive on.

More info: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lycopodiopsida>

13) Forest Health

You are standing in the middle of a *Continuous Forest Inventory* (CFI) plot. All trees within a 105 foot diameter are marked and given a number. Every 5 to 10 years state foresters visit the plot and record the species' size, new significant-sized trees, diseases of the marked trees. This data allows foresters and scientists to determine the health of the forest and how to best manage it in the future.



A forester surveys a CFI plot.

This brings us to the end of the trail at the Visitor Center parking lot. We hope you enjoyed this self-guided tour.

The Bradley Farm Interpretive Trail and brochure were created in 2002 by Student Conservation Association interns Brian Bodah and Victoria Estok. Thanks to Mr. Mike Whalen of Lanesborough, MA for all of his generous help with the project. This project was funded through a grant from the Fields Pond Foundation, administered by the Appalachian Mountain Club.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) sponsors the Student Conservation Association Mass Parks AmeriCorps. For more program information contact SCA at: (413) 339-6631 or visit www.thesca.org/

MOUNT GREYLOCK STATE RESERVATION

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