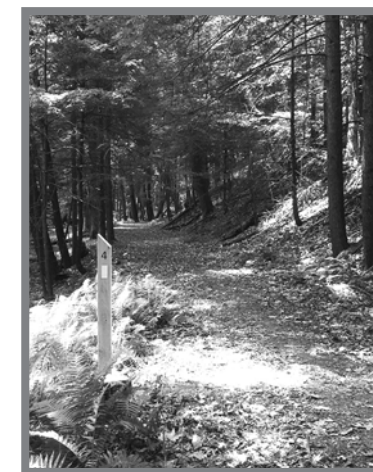


Weeks Forest Carriage Trail

A self-guided tour of the natural and cultural history of this conserved land



The Carriage Trail is suitable for all who enjoy walking. It is an “out and back” trail – 0.4 mile to the end and 0.4 mile back to the trailhead. It is designated as an Easy trail because it is relatively smooth, level, easy to follow, and marked with signage. There are four stone benches along the trail for resting and enjoying the scenery.

Trail Use

Please follow these trail rules:

- Visit between dawn and dusk
- No bicycles or motorized vehicles
- No fires
- No camping
- No alcohol
- Dogs and horses are welcome but must be under control at all times and stay on the marked trail. Dog waste must be removed.
- Take only photographs (This is an historic site and nothing should be moved or taken.)
- Leave only footprints
- Respect wildlife
- Stay on the trail (The Springs Farm buildings and other nearby homes are private property and not part of Weeks Forest.)

Please also:

- Watch for poison ivy
- Do a careful tick check after your walk.

Be aware that hunting is permitted in Weeks Forest.

About the Guilford Conservation Commission

Our mission is to identify, inventory, foster education about, and help protect Guilford’s natural and cultural resources. For many years we have envisioned a network of well-maintained public trails in our town. In 2015 we received a \$500 “Tiny Grant” from the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions to develop the Carriage Trail, our first interpretive town trail. We continue to maintain and lead walks on this trail. We are also working with the town’s Recreation Commission, formed in 2016, to develop more public trails in Guilford.

Our Trail Partners

The Conservation Commission would like to thank the following individuals, organizations, groups, and companies who supported our trail work in 2016:

- Reed & Barbara Anthony
- Windham Regional Commission
- New England Forestry Foundation
- 6th Grade Class, 2015-16, Guilford Central School
- Guilford Historical Society
- Guilford Road Crew
- A Black Locust Connection
- Clear Solutions
- MT3 Unlimited
- Community volunteers

Recommended for Further Reading & Viewing

The Guilford Historical Society has a collection of historic photos and documents of the Springs Farm, as well as several artifacts. The following publications are also available at the Guilford Historical Society and the Guilford Free Library.

1. *Guilford Mineral Spring Water*, a booklet published by Weeks & Potter in 1869, describes the “history and the wonderful cures performed by the use of the water” and a chemical analysis of the water.
2. *Guilford Mineral Springs Farm*, a pamphlet written by Ann and Doug Bonneville and published by the Guilford Historical Society in 1997, contains an excellent summary of the history of the Springs Farm and a warm tribute to the Anthony family and this beautiful place in Guilford’s landscape.
3. *Official History of Guilford, 1678-1961* by Richard Gale gives a lengthy history of the Mineral Springs property on pp. 195-199.

About the Trail Guide

The Guilford School 6th graders and their teacher, Jennifer Kramer, helped us choose the waypoints, write the descriptions, and map the trail. Jeff Nugent of Windham Regional Commission guided our efforts and helped with the trail map. Michelle Frehsee helped us locate historic photographs and resources at the Guilford Historical Society.

10 – Old Gazebo & Pavilions

Imagine yourself standing here in the 1870s when the landscape looked very different than it does today. Much of the land was pasture, and the huge maples of today were young trees then. As you looked across Broad Brook to the bottling house and the small pavilions covering the mineral springs, you would have also seen a footbridge with lattice sides and another bridge with a charming six-sided gazebo built on it. This was known as the Reception House. It had an outside covered lattice porch, many windows, a cupola, and ornate scalloped fascia boards. Although this era of activity at the Guilford Mineral Springs was short-lived, it must have been a lovely place for visitors to gather and socialize.



c. 1869 view of pavilions and gazebo

In 1985, after many decades of disuse, the gazebo and pavilions were razed, along with the bridge.

11 – Carriage Turnaround

The circular shape of this part of the trail is part of its history. Here the old road ended and visitors once stepped off from carriages to walk over the lattice bridge to partake of the mineral springs on the opposite side of the brook.

In May of 1869, the *Vermont Phoenix*, Brattleboro’s newspaper of the day, reported that the Mineral Springs Company employed “about twenty-five men, and some days there are from one to two hundred visitors at the Springs...nearly every house has been painted and repaired since the springs have become so noted.” Guilford Center was a hive of activity as visitors from far and wide traveled by train to Brattleboro and then by four-horse coach to the Mineral Springs Hotel, now part of the historic house and barns that we can see from Guilford Center Road.

The old bridges are gone, as is a logging bridge built by the New England Forestry Foundation, which manages Weeks Forest for timber and wildlife. When the Carriage Trail was developed in 2016, there was no safe or easy way to cross the brook to view the location of the old springs or hike in other parts of the forest. But in 2017, an anonymous donor built a simple footbridge across the brook for all to enjoy. In the future, the Conservation Commission hopes to develop more hiking trails from this starting point in Weeks Forest.

8 – Brook Walls & Bottling House

Along this part of the brook, you can see old, mossy stones lining the water’s edges. Imagine building these walls in the 1860s without machinery and with just the stones that were found on the property.



1869 view of brook walls and bottling house

If you face the brook at this waypoint and look across and to your right, you will be looking at the view of the brook walls and bottling house depicted in this photograph. The walls straightened the brook and served as a landscape feature, along with the rows of young maple trees planted on both sides of the brook. The large white building was built in the years 1869-70 and served as the bottling house for the mineral springs water. The mineral water was put up in quart bottles and sold for \$6.00 per case of twenty-four bottles. It was also sold in ten- and twenty-gallon kegs and forty-gallon barrels.

The small white building beyond the bottling house is a pavilion covering the first of the old mineral springs. The foundation of the bottling house still remains.

9 – Agricultural Fields

This lovely location along the trail looks onto a field that is also part of the Andrew Weeks Memorial Forest. The field is maintained and hayed by the Clark family whose dairy farm can be seen on Barney Hill in the distance. The view toward the farm is especially beautiful.

The open fields are important habitat for many bird species. In spring and summer, you may see colorful black, white, and yellow Bobolinks, along with Red-winged Blackbirds and Song Sparrows. In the winter, when the fields are at rest under a blanket of snow, you may hear blue jays and crows in the surrounding forest.

More than two hundred years of intense interaction of human history, nature, and agriculture are represented at this waypoint.

6 – Guilforts

For the past several years, Guilford’s 6th graders have taken a weekly walk from the school to Weeks Forest where they have found a peaceful and ever-changing outdoor classroom. They have researched the history of the Mineral Springs Farm and spent many hours in all types of weather working in small groups to explore the woods.

If you look over to the hillside across the brook, you may see the many shelters of “Guilforts.” Each year the students become part of animal clans, and each clan works together to build a fort. Every two years they take down some forts to make room for new ones. How do they reach the other side of the brook? They help each other cross over the fallen logs.

A bit farther along the trail, you may also notice a fire pit on this side of the brook. Although fires are not permitted in Weeks Forest, the New England Forestry Foundation has given permission to the 6th grade class to learn to build a campfire under the direction of their teachers and only when the woods are covered in snow. The students have built many traditions into their campfire experiences -- making stick bread, giving thanks and appreciations to each other, singing a special chant around the circle, and keeping warm on the coldest of days.

7 – Dam & Swimming Pond

Here you are looking at the remains of the dam and swimming pond that were built on the Broad Brook many years after the Mineral Springs Company closed its operation. According to Reed Anthony, they were built about 1921 by Randolph Frothingham, the second husband of his father’s mother. Swimming was a recreational activity for both local visitors and those who came to stay at the nearby Springs House.



Dam & swimming pond, date unknown

The dam and pond continued to serve as a swimming hole for local families until the 1960s when beavers moved in and caused the dam to fail. Selectman Dick Clark, who grew up in Guilford Center, remembers swimming here as a child in the 1940s and 50s. He said Reed Sr. used to clean the pond area each year, closing the gates in the spring to fill the pond for swimming and reopening them in the fall to let the brook run free. Dick reports that this part of the brook was also known as the best spot in Guilford for rainbow trout fishing.

