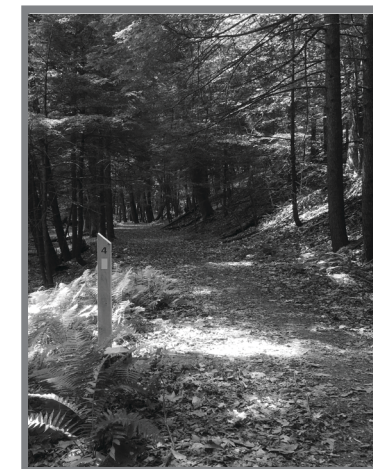


Weeks Forest Carriage Trail

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
- Pets must be on leash and dog waste 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 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 work diligently to remove invasive plants including buckthorn, garlic mustard, bittersweet, barberry, multiflora rose and knotweed.

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

Additional 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.

Please share your thoughts about the Carriage Trail in the trail register in the mailbox at the turnaround.

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 several years, Guilford’s 6th graders spent one day per week in Weeks Forest, where they found a peaceful and ever-changing outdoor classroom. They reserached the history of the Mineral Springs Farm and spent many hours in all types of weather exploring the woods in small groups.

Across the brook, the class built “Guilforts” as part of animal clans. You may see remnants of their stick shelters. In the summer, children in the Guilford Free Library summer camps enjoy activities along this stretch of Broad Brook.

Further along the trail, you may also notice a fire pit. Although fires are not permitted in Weeks Forest, the New England Forestry Foundation gave permission to the 6th grade class to learn to build a campfire under adult direction, and only when the woods are covered in snow. The students built many traditions into their campfire experiences -- making stick bread, giving thanks to each other, and singing a special chant.

7 – Dam & Swimming Pond

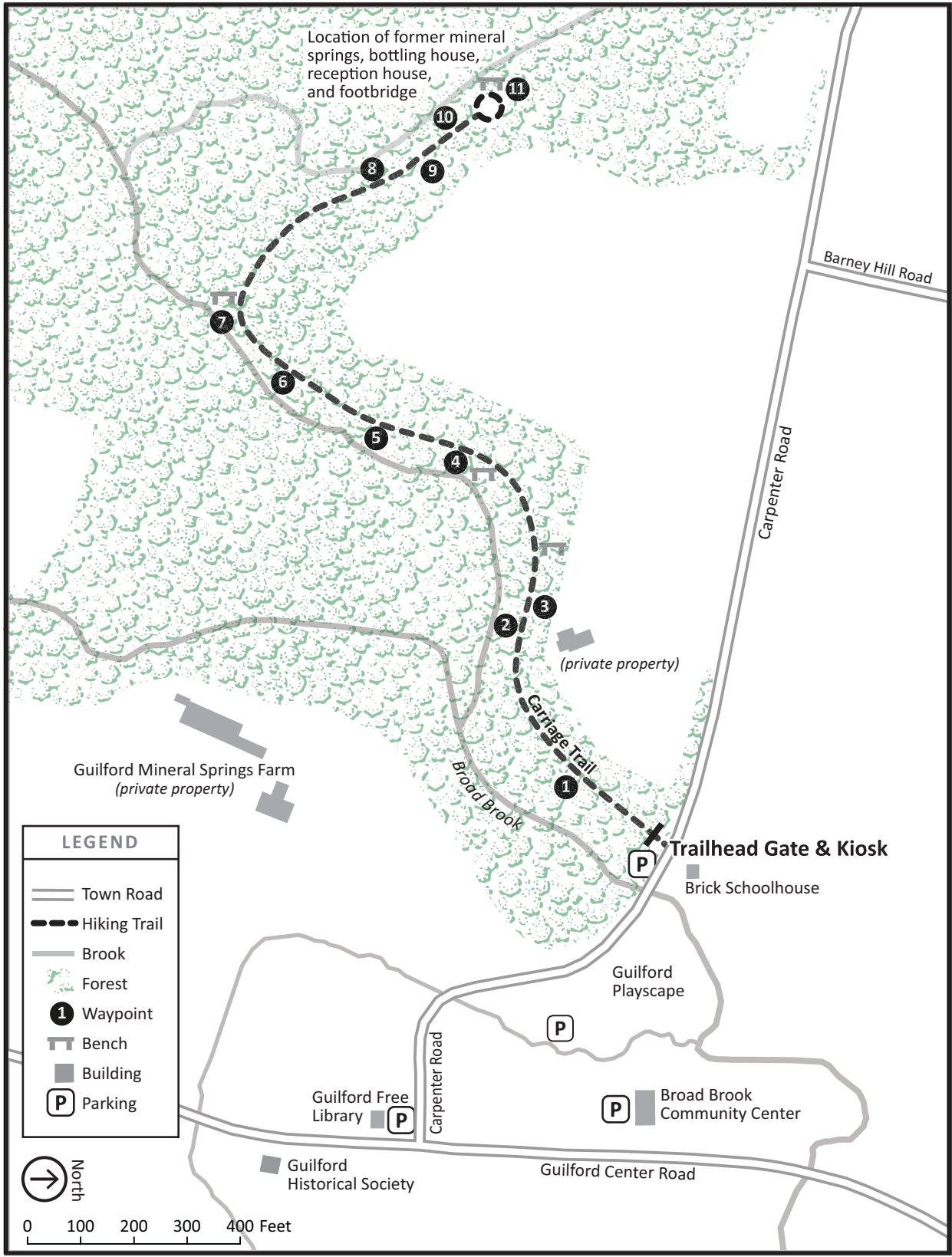
Here you are looking at the remains of the dam and swimming pond that were built on the Broad Brook many years after the Mineral Springs Company closed its operation. According to Reed Anthony, they were built about 1921 by Randolph Frothingham, his paternal grandmother’s second husband. Swimming was 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.

Carriage Trail Map



About the Trail Waypoints & Blazes

Along the trail, you will find 11 numbered wooden posts or waypoints. These numbers correspond to the descriptions in the trail guide. The posts also contain white blazes indicating the start, direction, and end of the trail.

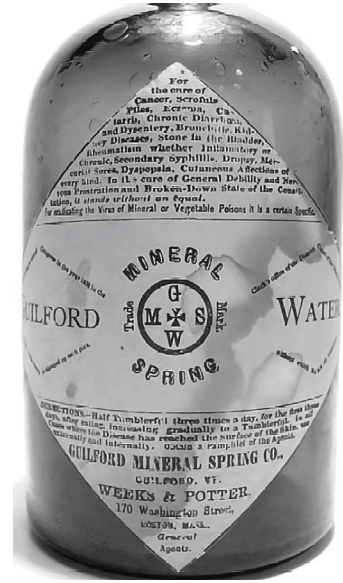
Key to the Blazes



About Weeks Forest and the Guilford Mineral Springs Farm

The Andrew G. Weeks Memorial Forest is a remarkable 175-acre parcel of land in the center of Guilford. The land was donated to the New England Forestry Foundation and the Vermont Land Trust in 1993 by the Anthony family, longtime Guilford residents and descendants of Andrew Weeks, one of the original investors in the Guilford Mineral Springs Company, which operated on this property in the years 1869-1875.

The Carriage Trail, named and improved by the Guilford Conservation Commission in 2016, was once a carriage road that took visitors out to the mineral springs located near the end of the trail. The location and curative properties of the mineral springs water had long been common knowledge in Guilford, but it wasn't until 1868 that "a company of gentlemen of a scientific and business character purchased the estate within which the Spring is situated, for the purpose of bringing the water, with all its health-imparting influences, more directly before the public." (From *Guilford Mineral Springs Farm*, Guilford Historical Society, 1997)



Although the springs dried up long ago, the trail contains the historic remains of this once lively tourist destination and thriving industry in Guilford. The trail also contains some splendid examples of Guilford's natural resources -- mature woodlands, streams and wetlands, wildflowers and wildlife, rock outcroppings, and agricultural land.

Enjoy your walk!

The 2022 edition of the Carriage Trail guide marked the passing of Reed and Barbara Anthony in May of 2020. Weeks Forest is one of their many gifts to the Town of Guilford.

Carriage Trail Waypoints

1 – Maple Trees

You might first notice the beautiful old maple trees along the trail. Historic photographs indicate they were planted in the 1860s to line the carriage road that led to the mineral springs. The trees were probably tapped for maple sugaring through the years, as their location along the road would have made sap collecting easy. Some of the original maples near this waypoint have died, leaving standing snags and fallen branches and logs. These provide important food and habitat for wildlife. If you spend a few minutes here, you might find signs of human and wildlife activity, such as old sheep fencing and woodpecker holes.

2 – Horsetails

If you look down near the edge of the brook, you will see a large patch of dark evergreen plants, commonly known as horsetails. Their scientific name is *Equisetum*, but they are also known as scouring rushes as their stems are coated with abrasive silicates. In days gone by, horsetails were used for scouring and polishing metal items such as cooking pots or drinking mugs.

Horsetail stems are jointed with tiny leaf structures surrounding each node. The stems, rather than the leaf structures, do the photosynthesizing for the plants. On fertile stems there are cone-like structures at the top of the plant that contain spores. These spore-producing plants are called "living fossils" as their ancestors lived over 200,000,000 years ago.

As you walk along the trail, you will find many patches of horsetails. You will also see several species of ferns, such as Lady Fern, Christmas Fern and Royal Fern. They represent another family of spore-producing plants that love the cool, damp woodlands.

3 – Waterfalls

Do you hear the waterfalls? They are ever changing and beautiful in all seasons. In the winter, icicles sparkle; in the spring, as ice melts the water rushes over the rocks; in summer, you can cool off by splashing water on your face; and in fall, beautiful leaves of orange and red cover the water.

In times of drought, the falls may be silent. However, if you look at the rocks on the other side of the trail, you can see evidence of erosion from very heavy water flows in the past. A culvert and new stonework added to this area in 2016 to prevent further erosion have proven unsuccessful. In 2021, the Conservation Commission built a sturdy bridge here for improved accessibility and safety.

4 – Broad Brook

Broad Brook is the second largest waterway in Guilford (after the Green River). You may have followed it on your way here, as it travels most of the length of Guilford Center Road. You are now very near the *headwaters*, or beginning, of Broad Brook. Along the trail you will see many small brooks and streams that combine right here in Weeks Forest to form the main stem of Broad Brook. When it leaves Weeks Forest, the brook travels north and east along Guilford Center Road to Algiers, then along Broad Brook Road, into Vernon, and on to the Connecticut River. All of the small waterways that combine into Broad Brook are called a *watershed*. Broad Brook's watershed area covers 23.8 square miles.

Along the trail, you will see several locations where the waters of Broad Brook served people in years past. When you next travel along Guilford Center Road and Broad Brook Road, take the time to look for other historic locations along Broad Brook. You can spot many large stone foundations that served as supports for waterwheels, providing waterpower for sawmills, gristmills and other Guilford industries.

5 – Rock Ledges

The bedrock ledges across the stream are metamorphic rocks (gneiss or schist) which formed from intense pressure and heat over many millions of years. Over this long time, glaciers advanced and retreated, leaving behind what is known as glacial till. In some areas along the stream, the till formed wetlands. The three mineral springs that attracted many people to visit the Mineral Springs Farm contained minerals dissolved by the acids in the water when it flowed very slowly through the bedrock and up through the wetlands over hundreds or thousands of years.

The waters had their own unique taste due to the abundance of dissolved minerals and decayed organic matter. They were also mildly bubbly and flammable! What did the water taste like? According to the booklet published by the owners of the springs, "It is slightly ironized, with a taste of magnesia, and when drank cold is an agreeable beverage." (From *Guilford Mineral Spring Water*, Weeks & Potter, 1869)