

Rice Natural Area

## TWO BROOKS TRAIL

### TRAILS WITH TALES, #1

#### Introduction

*The land you are about to enter is a quiet place. It is also quite extraordinary. Enjoy your visit.*

To understand the tale of Two Brooks Trail, we've got to turn the clock of the land back about 15,000 years. The entire northern region of the North American Continent had, for 70,000 years before, been covered with glacial ice to the staggering depth of at least one mile! The land underneath that weight and mass of moving ice was pushed downward, tortured and molded into the low mountains, high hills, valleys, rivers, brooks and natural ponds we enjoy throughout our Piscataquog River Watershed area today.

It is interesting to know that Two Brooks Trail will take you up, down, and along land that was shaped under the great glacier as it melted away in retreat 15,000 years ago.

*(Note: The trail is only a ¾ mile loop, but is steep in places and appropriate caution should be exercised, especially with young children.)*

#### Tale #1

#### Granite Post Boundary Marker

**J**ust to the left of the trail head sign and across the dirt road, please notice a granite post. Well over a century ago granite post markers such as this one were placed along town boundary lines. The 'L' stands for the Town of Lyndeborough. Were you to stand on the opposite side of the marker you would be in the Town of New Boston.

The dates 1862, 1918, 1939, 1946, and 1956 tell a story. In the early days the boundary lines of the area's towns were often in dispute. Because boundary shenanigans did occur, it became law that "*Every seven years the town boundary shall be perambulated*"... (walked and inspected by the Selectmen), "*and the markers and bounds renewed.*" If they failed to carry out that duty, they were fined.

While that law has since been repealed, the dates on the granite post show that at least some Selectmen took their duty seriously.

#### Tale #2

#### A Special Brook

**S**cataquog Brook Foot Bridge. The temperature of the water in this stream makes it unusual.

Only a handful of New Hampshire streams have cooler water during the summer months. The

reason is that the sources for the water lie deep under sands and gravels left here by the last glacier. Cold-water species live in this brook. They are normally only found far to the north.

### **Tale #3**

#### **Up Steep-sided Hills**

**T**hese ‘hills’ are glacier made. They are called *drumlins*. As the climate-warmed over the ice mass that had pushed as far south as Long Island, New York and into northern Pennsylvania, melted water on the surface made its way downward through massive cracks and fissures in the mile-deep glacier. The amount of water that resulted from the melting mass of ice is probably impossible to imagine.

During the time the massive glacier was advancing, the earth’s surface was stripped clean of trees, soil, and all but microscopic life. Only boulders and raw, ground-up earth remained. When the melt water reached the bottom of the glacial ice, it mixed with the loose soils. Lakes, ponds, even rivers of the earth-water mix were formed under the ice. Often such mixes would get trapped in ice caves along the base of the glacier. The caves would fill up with sands and gravels. When the ice melted, those bread-loaf shaped pockets of materials remained. These are the drumlins, and the Two Brooks Trail will take you up, down, and over two of these unique formations.

The drumlins left here in Lyndeborough are noteworthy for their size. Such formations usually measure between 50’ and 70’ in height. Several of the drumlins in this cluster rise to twice that height, all formed under the glacial ice! Think about it.

### **Tale #4**

#### **Life on a Drumlin**

**R**emember, trees are wildlife too, and the forest growing on these glacier-made formations is a healthy one. The species of trees growing here are mostly conifers, or evergreens. They are tall, and straight, and quite impressive. Also, by looking carefully, some evidence of wild animal use can be seen. As you walk across the steep side of the drumlin, you will see paths cut into the hillsides. These have been made by the sharp hooves of deer and moose. Foxes, a large weasel called a fisher, porcupines, raccoons, coyotes, black bears, along with many smaller mammals also use these paths. These paths are travel corridors used regularly by the area’s wildlife. Making them has taken many years.

There is little food for the larger forest animals on these drumlins, so the corridors are used for traveling between forests habitats where food can be found. By protecting this land, the Rice

Family, with help from the Piscataquog Land Conservancy and the Russell Foundation, has guaranteed that these corridors for the forest animals will stay open.

Here is a good place just to stop — stop to think, stop to listen. Think about the land as a living thing. It gives life to these grand trees. It makes wildlife possible. It makes your life possible. If there is wind moving through the trees, listen to its notes. Listen again and you may be able to hear the voice of Cold Brook far below in the valley.

### **Tale # 5**

#### **At The Top Looking Down**

**F**lowing, tumbling, making music in the valley far below is the most picturesque brook in the Piscataquog River Watershed — Cold Brook. The top of this drumlin is a good place to pause once again. How fortunate we are to be standing here, able to enjoy the land's beauty in a natural place that is now protected.

### **Tale #6**

#### **A Halfway-down STOP and a Strange Tree**

**Y**ou've never seen a tree like this before. A puzzle tree. What is its story?

Here are questions to be answered:

1. *Why did this black birch tree grow this way?*
2. *Why are its roots above ground?*
3. *On the back side of the formation there is a large rock held tightly by roots high above ground. How can that be?*
4. *I see two types of bark. Why?*

Here's the tale: Perhaps 100 years ago an ancient Eastern Hemlock tree grew on this spot. A great wind blew it over. If you stand on the up-hill side of the odd tree and look along the ground to the right, you will see a long, straight lump along the forest floor. This is all that remains of the old hemlock!

When the tree toppled over, its mass of twisted roots brought up mats of soil and many stones. Sometime after the tree fell, a seed from a black birch tree landed on the top of the soil-covered tangle of roots. That seed took root about 80 years ago! At first the birch tree's roots grew through the soil that was lifted up by the hemlock's roots, but over the years, rain, wind, and gravity slowly removed the soil from the uplifted mass. Today the black birch stands up high on those first roots still holding on tightly to its lucky rock.

### **Tale # 7**

#### **The Wonders of Cold Brook**

**H**ere begin the natural wonders of Cold Brook. Your eyes will understand why they are too grand to describe with mere words. Long before the ice sheet had receded, Earth's mantle was bent and twisted, leaving an open crack in its surface. Cold Brook flows through that gap. The type of rock here is very hard. In only a few places has the running water worn its surface smooth. This rock was formed in layers. It fractures along straight lines. Freezing water and the pressures from tree roots cause chunks to break away. The rock formations and the grand trees along this gorge offer a unique natural scene to keep in your memory.

**CAUTION:** Both beauty and danger exist here for hikers are here. Stay strictly on the trail. Close to the canyon's edges the soil may give way and the moss can be slippery. Do not abuse the privilege of being here. Keep the natural treasures you have seen along Two Brooks Trail available for others. **STAY ON THE TRAIL.**

### **Tale #8**

#### **Where Cold and Scataquog Brooks Dump Their Loads**

**F**or 15,000 years following the glacier's retreat, Cold Brook and Scataquog Brook carried loads of soil and forest debris downstream to this flat area at the base of the drumlins. This wide area is called an *outwash plain*.

These deposits continue to accumulate every time there is high water. Often tree trunks catch sideways in the stream, creating a dam, and forcing the brook to make new channels. An outwash plain is constantly changing. This, the last section of Two Brooks Trail, passes through a fine forest that is growing on the soils brought here by these brooks. Looking around at the shapes of the outwash plain will tell you where old stream beds once were.

After you cross the foot bridge for the second time on your way back to the trail head, notice that many of the trees seem to be standing 'tippy toe' on their roots. During flooding, this flood plain is often covered by surging water. The power of the water washes the soil away from the trees leaving the roots exposed, but conditions often change. The next flooding cycle may cover the roots up again.

The waters of Scataquog and Cold Brooks enter the Piscataquog River's South Branch in New Boston and flow through Goffstown and Manchester into the Merrimack River. These waters join the Atlantic Ocean in Newburyport, MA, 80 miles away.

#### **Last word**

**T**his protected land, its glacier story, its forest, its animals and grand and scenic brooks have given you a not-to-be-forgotten day. Share this watershed wonder with friends and consider giving support to the work of the Piscataquog Land Conservancy (PLC) which has brought about

the protection of this special place.

If your experience on this trail has been one you'd like to share (words, pictures), the PWA would very much appreciate hearing from you. Call (603) 487-3331, or send your comments to the PLC at 5A Mill Street, New Boston, NH 03070; e-mail: [plc@plcnh.org](mailto:plc@plcnh.org). For other TRAILS WITH TALES, call (603) 487-3331.

### **Two Brooks Trail — How to get there**

**From New Boston Center and Route 13:** Take Route 13 S towards Mont Vernon 1 mile. Turn R onto Lyndeborough Road (at Baptist Church). Follow 2.5 miles to stop sign at intersection with 2<sup>nd</sup> NH Turnpike. Go straight across onto Wilton Road. Go slow as the road narrows and changes to dirt. Trailhead sign will be on the right. Parking spaces widen up around the corner.

**From Francestown:** Take 2<sup>nd</sup> NH Turnpike towards Mont Vernon. Watch for town line marker – Francestown/New Boston, and a Deland Forest sign. Continue to the next cross road sign. Turn right at the next house on your right; notice 1720 marked on this home. Road changes to dirt. Go slow, watch for trailhead marker on the right. It is suggested that you park up around the corner where the road is wider.

**Guide written by:** Gordon Russell

*Trail guide sponsored by the Gordon & Barbara Russell Piscataquog River Watershed Foundation*

Personal memo: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Day trail walked: \_\_\_\_\_

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Something special to remember: \_\_\_\_\_  
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