

Little River State Park

History Hike



VERMONT

AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

www.vtstateparks.com

The Beginning

The settlement of the Little River began in 1790 with the arrival of George Kenyon. Over the next 130 years, the Little River Valley was a very active farming settlement. These farmsteads were primarily subsistence with the exception of a few notable farms, such as Patsy Herbert's farm. Most raised a couple of pigs, three or four milking cows, some young cattle, a horse or ox, up to a dozen sheep and some chickens. In addition to the vegetable garden, potatoes, corn, peas, rye, oats and barley were grown for winter storage. Nearly every farm had a few apple trees and a sugarbush.

Timber was the main industry for the community. There were a number of sawmills in the area cutting lumber for building materials. Some sawmills specialized in cutting lumber to make into gun stocks, cobbler's lasts and piano sounding boards. Wood also provided most families with part-time income. Potash, charcoal and even woven baskets made from ash splints provided necessary revenue. Hemlock trees were used for shingles and tannic acid was extracted from the bark to be used in the tanning process.

Life on Ricker Mountain was hard. By the late 1800s, the loss of soil fertility on the steep cleared slopes prompted some farmers to abandon the hillsides for more fertile land in the valleys or the free land offered "out west". Additionally, around 1920, the Green Mountain Power Company (GMP) started purchasing farmland with the intent to build a hydroelectric dam near the Randall and Roberts sawmill located on the Little River.

The Great Flood

In November 1927, New England experienced a devastating flood. Vermont had experienced above-average rainfall in September and October, resulting in high stream levels, extensive run-off and saturated ground. Torrential rains began on November 2, and lasted through November 4, at times averaging eight inches per hour. The Winooski River Valley experienced the most extensive losses; there was an estimated \$13.5 million in property damage and 55 people died.

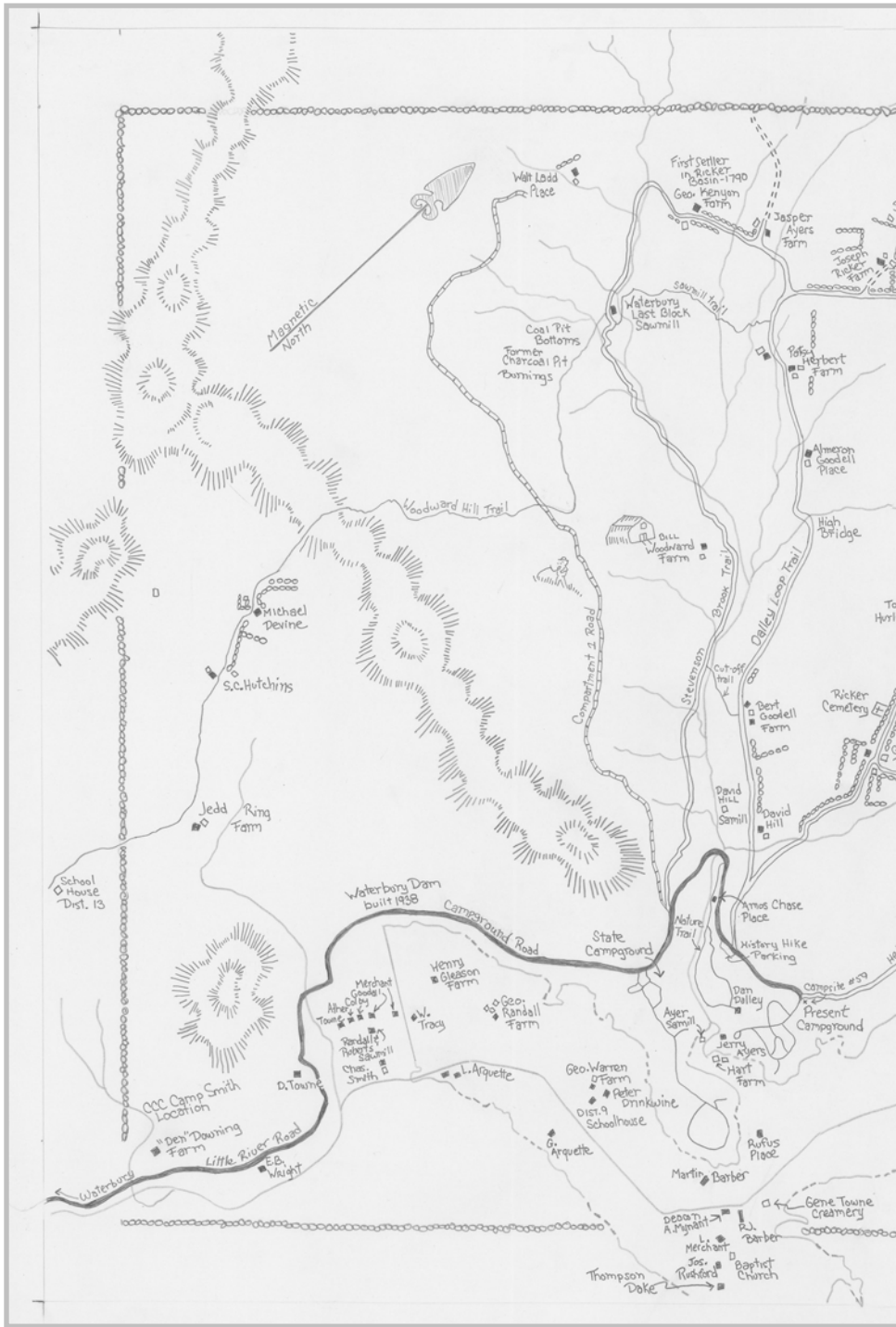
The Great flood of 1927 prompted the state and federal governments to pursue a larger-scale flood control dam. To build the dam, the State of Vermont bought the 10,000 acres GMP had already acquired.

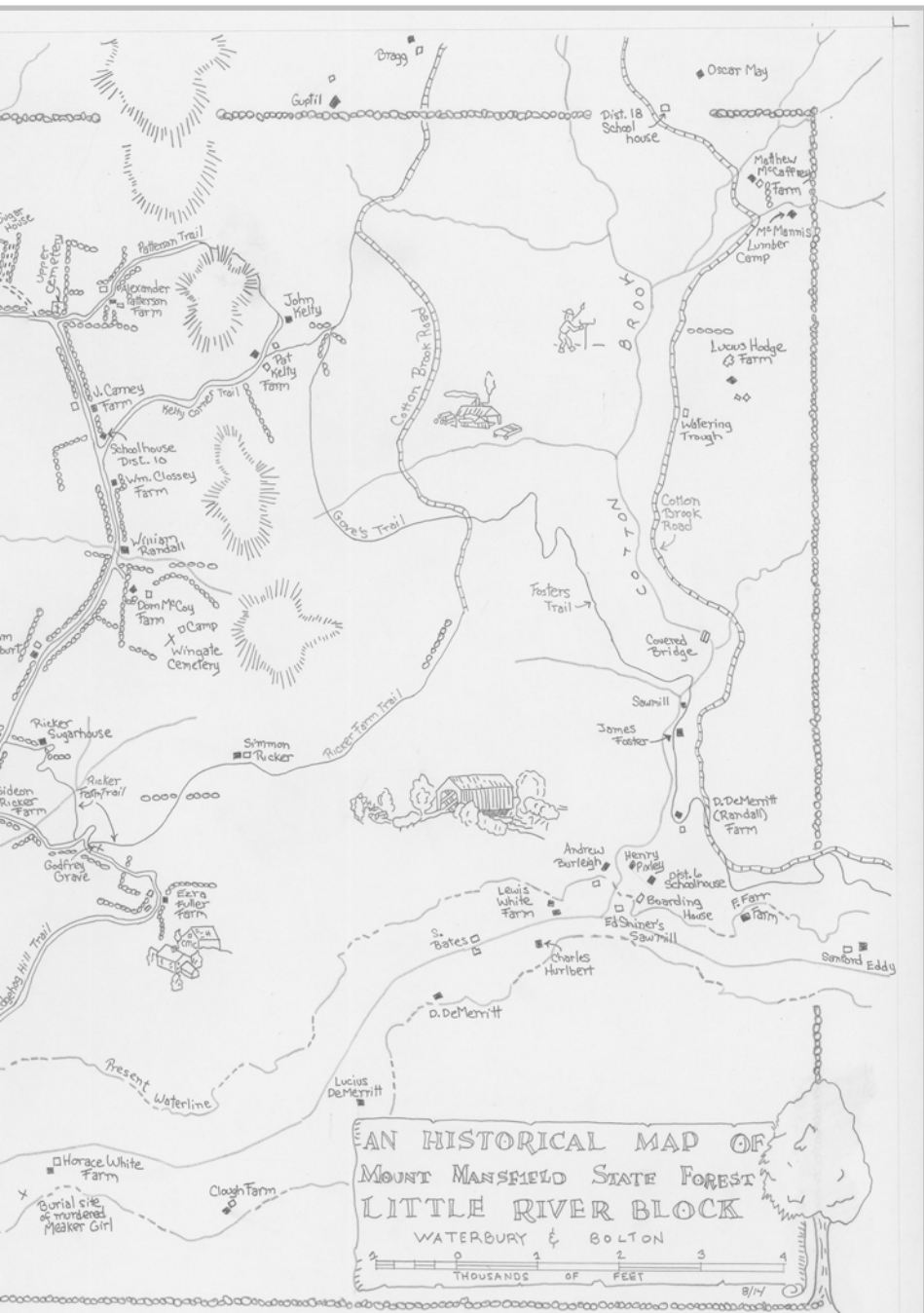
The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in conjunction with the US Army Corps of Engineers started work on the dam in 1934. The dam was completed in 1938, effectively cutting off access to the Little River Valley and the hills above, ending a long tenure of hillside farming.

History Hike and Trail Information

The History Hike is self-guiding. Along the way you will find many artifacts from old machinery to sap buckets. These are part of the history of the land. You are welcome to look at or photograph them, but do not move them or take anything home with you.

More specific trail information can be found at the end of this booklet, along with a guide for teachers and school groups.





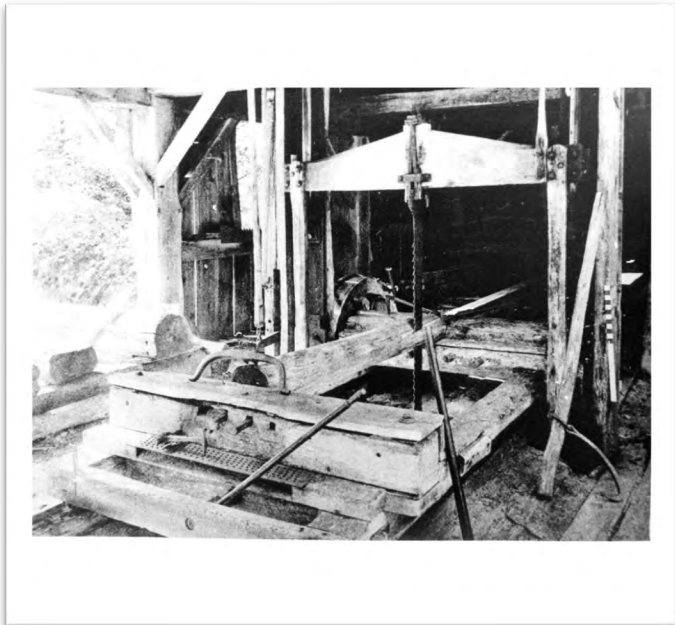
AN HISTORICAL MAP OF
 MOUNT MANSFIELD STATE FOREST
 LITTLE RIVER BLOCK
 WATERBURY & BOLTON
 0 1 2 3 4
 THOUSANDS OF FEET
 8/74

Area “B” near the beach

Jerry Ayers Homestead

Jerry Ayers bought this house site and built an up-and – down sawmill on nearby Stevenson Brook in 1844. He sold it in 1856, then re-purchased the site in 1868. Jerry and his brother Jasper operated the mill until Jerry’s death in 1881. Orville M. Ambler rented the mill from the Ayers family in the 1880s and is believed to have been the last person to operate it. Ambler’s specialty was sawing high-quality spruce logs into sounding boards for the Estey Organ Company.

Read the Landscape. The dam that supplied Jerry’s sawmill spanned Stevenson Brook just above the present waterline of the Waterbury Reservoir. Over the years, flash floods have washed away all evidence of the mill and dam.



History Hike - Dalley Loop Trail

David Hill Farm

David Hill bought this farm in 1837 and ran a small sawmill on nearby Stevenson Brook until 1845. A heavy sawblade, supported within a framework, moved up and down to saw logs. These small, up-and-down mills barely made a dent in the local timber supply and were so slow that other chores could be done while each board was cut. Most of these mills adopted the more efficient circular saw when it was developed in the mid-1800s.

Did You Know? The water turbines in these up-and – down sawmills only operated when sufficient water in the brook filled the small pond behind the dam, typically in spring and fall. Because of this, they were often called “thunderstorm mills.”

Bert Goodell Farm

Bert Goodell, son of Almeron Goodell, bought this 53-acre farm in 1891. Five years later, he bought another house near the Randall and Roberts Sawmill, where he worked (located near the current Waterbury Dam). In those days, houses were rarely abandoned and left to decay. Bert tore down the house here and reused materials for an addition to his new home. Farmhouses were often uninsulated. Up to 40 cords of wood were burned yearly for cooking and heating.

Check it Out! Often the house structure was larger than the foundation due to kitchens, porches, and other additions, which sat on low footings. As you visit each site, look for stone steps or low stone walls near, but not necessarily connected with, the foundation.

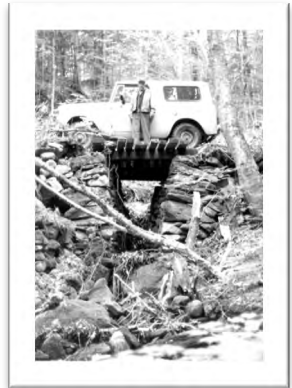
From Hemlocks to Hides

Settlers peeled the bark from Eastern hemlock trees for use in tanning animal hides to produce leather. The bark was loaded onto wagons and taken to C.C. Warren's tannery in Waterbury, where it was dried and ground into powder to extract the tannic acid. Freight cars delivered salted hides for softening in the "sweat room." Little was wasted – hair from the hides was spread in the sun to dry, then sold in bags for making plaster.

Read the Landscape. Notice how shady it is beneath the hemlocks, a result of their dense foliage. Deer take shelter among hemlocks in winter, protected from deep snow and wind.

High Bridge

The farmers in this region had to build bridges across numerous streams. The type of bridge depended on the size of the stream. Bridges like the one before you are essentially stone culverts. A large capstone or wooden planks were used for the top, and other sizable stones pulled from smoothing the road surface served to hold it up on either side. Unfortunately, these bridges and culverts frequently washed out during floods and needed constant repair.



Check it Out! As you hike the trail, notice the different bridges and culverts in use. Are they old or new? What are they made of? Wood? Stone? Plastic? Concrete?

Almeron Goodell Farm

Almeron Goodell bought this small subsistence farm in 1863 and lived here with his wife Lutheria and their two children, Bert and Juliana. Almeron built the house using rough-hewn timbers and split the roof shingles by hand after completing his daily chores. In 1870, they had four cows, one horse, and a flock of chickens – enough to supply the family’s needs. Almeron died in 1910. His gravestone still stands in the old Waterbury Center Cemetery.

Look Around! This is the only farmhouse still standing north of the Waterbury Dam. In later years, the house was used as a hunting camp, dubbed “Camp Comfort.” Notice the old plantings of apple trees, lilacs and day lilies.



Apple Trees

Most early apple varieties were small and tart and did not store well. Settlers produced cider to “put up” the apple crop. It is said cider flowed more freely than water. The apple trees along this hike were planted by early settlers or are the offspring of those trees. They are now important food for deer, bear, grouse and turkeys. The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation maintains these trees by mowing, cutting competing vegetation, and pruning.

Did You Know? Apple trees are not native to Vermont. Crabapples were plentiful, but not tasty. Colonists brought apple seeds and cuttings from England, and eventually nearly every farm grew some apples.

“Patsy” Herbert Farm

In 1897, Patsy Herbert built one of the largest farmhouses in the region. His farm grew over the years, and eventually comprised over 500 acres of land, including the Ayers and Joseph Ricker farms. In 1910, the barn from the Ayers farm was moved to this site. Patsy cultivated about 100 acres of his farm, including eight acres of oats and one acre of potatoes. He also did considerable logging, hiring crews to cut spruce for clapboard manufacturing.



Did You Know? Patsy, a good-natured Irishman, spent years farming Ricker Mountain, often employing homeless men as farm laborers. He never missed a Grange meeting, faithfully walking to Waterbury Center for every gathering.

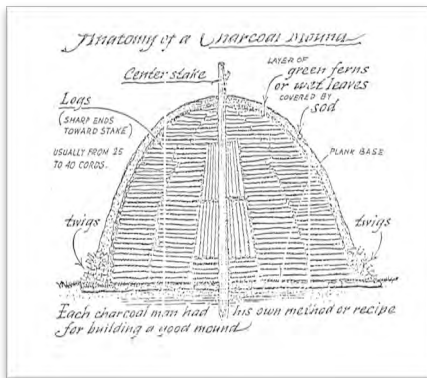
Fields for Wildlife

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation manages this land for many values, including wood products, wildlife, and recreational use. After local farms were abandoned, the forest grew back. As a result, habitat for grassland wildlife declined. The field before you attracts a variety of songbirds, as well as butterflies, bees and cottontail rabbits. Periodic mowing keeps woody vegetation to a minimum, helping these species survive and reproduce.

Check it Out! The forests of Little River attract many migratory songbirds, such as chestnut-sided warbler, indigo bunting, and yellow warbler. In the small forest openings, listen for hermit thrush, rose-breasted grosbeak, winter wren, and scarlet tanager.

Making Charcoal

Although no evidence remains, charcoal pit burnings occurred in this area. It's believed that two or three small shacks were located here, where the woodcutters and charcoal makers, or colliers, lived. While brick kilns were used to produce large amounts of charcoal, pit burnings were often used in small settlements. Blacksmiths prized charcoal for its hot-burning fires. It was also a household staple used as medicine and tooth cleanser.



Did You Know? To make charcoal, wood was carefully stacked in a large pit, covered with dirt, and ignited. The burning process was watched carefully to prevent the wood from bursting into flames. The charcoal was gradually scooped out of the bottom and carefully raked to one side.

Waterbury Last Block Sawmill

George Randall sold 5,600 acres of forest land to this mill, supplying timber for its operation. From 1917 to 1922, the mill produced ammunition boxes and gunstocks used in World War I. Finer-grade maple logs were sledged down to the company's Waterbury plant to make cobblers' "lasts" (shoe forms). The steam-powered band sawmill, employed almost 200 men. They used 44 teams of horses and one truck during the busy season.

Check it Out! Two 150-horsepower boilers powered the sawmill, which John Sweetzer operated for \$5.00 a day. One of them lies nearby. What other artifacts can you see in the area?

Logging Camps

The Waterbury Last Block Sawmill Company had four logging camps. Two of the camps were located north of here and housed up to 50 men and 100 head of horses and oxen. Logging took place during the winter months, since the snow made it easier to haul logs. A bobsled was used to move the logs from stump to a landing point, where they were then loaded onto traverse sleds and taken to the sawmill.



Did You Know?

Commercial logging activities

around the time of World War I removed what was left of the “old growth” timber. Even many sugarbushes were cut down at this time.

George Kenyon

George Kenyon is believed to have been the first settler in this region. He built a log cabin near here in 1790, one year before Vermont became the 14th state. Hillside farming made sense to Vermont settlers of this era because the valleys, while fertile, were areas where cold air collected. They were also prone to flooding. In addition, narrow valleys tended to get dark earlier, a critical factor when combined with Vermont’s short growing season.

Did You Know? Generations later, new settlers moving in along the waterways were referred to by those living on the hillsides as “flatlanders.” Today, the term refers to someone who comes from outside of Vermont and settles here.

Jasper Ayers Farm

Jasper Ayers had many key skills needed for life in the 1800s. His diaries show he was a farmer, shoemaker, and maple sugarmaker. He worked in sawmills, made shingles, and was an expert wood joiner. With such sought-after skills, Jasper was often hired to build neighbors' barns, sheds, and sugarhouses. In 1861, Russ Montgomery took over Jasper's farm until the house burned, around 1910. Jasper's barn was later moved to Patsy Herbert's farm.

Did You Know? If farmers had extra crops, beyond what they needed for their own use, they sold the surplus. In the 1860s, corn cost \$.75/bushel; apples \$.17/bushel; cheese \$.05/pound; butter \$.14/pound; and stove wood \$2.00/cord. How much would you pay today?

Maintaining Town Roads

The trail you are hiking on is an old town road. Initially residents living along town roads were responsible for maintaining their section of road. When heavy snow fell, every able-bodied person was expected to clear his section. The daily stage always tried to make its route, switching between runners and wheels depending on snow conditions. By the 1920s, the town of Waterbury took over maintaining its roads using horse-drawn road graders.



Did You Know? Many woodlands and farms have remnants of old "ghost" roads. They can be identified by researching old deeds and by looking for clues in the field, like stonewalls, culverts, or rows of old trees that once lined the road.

Joseph Ricker Farm

Beginning in 1816, this land was farmed continuously for nearly 90 years. After Joseph Ricker sold the farm in 1828, he moved out of state. When he died in 1852, his body was returned here and buried at the “Old Joe Ricker Place,” near the grave of his wife Dorothy. Around 1902, Peter Tatro was hired to farm this land. Following a disagreement with the owner, Peter is said to have burned the farm buildings out of spite. In 1909, Patsy Herbert bought the farm and likely used it for logging or pasturing cattle.

Read the Landscape. Ricker Mountain was named for Joseph Ricker. If you hike up the road to the house site, you will see well-preserved foundations of the house and barn, along with many sap buckets in the cellar hole of the house.



Maple Sugaring

Originally, settlers gathered maple sap using wooden spouts, buckets, and troughs, then boiled it outdoors in metal kettles. Early settlers made crystallized sugar from most of the sap because it would not spoil in storage. Later as technology improved, they gathered sap in metal buckets and poured it into a tank on a horse- or oxen-drawn sled for delivery to the sugarhouse. Maple sugaring remains one of Vermont’s beloved spring traditions.

Check it Out! Visit a local sugarhouse to see how sugaring has changed since settlement days. Today’s larger sugaring operations often use plastic tubing and vacuum pumps to deliver sap to the sugarhouse.

Upper Cemetery

On a farm, a plot of land was often set aside as the family cemetery. Most of those buried in this cemetery before you were related in one way or another to Joseph Ricker or lived on nearby farms. While no gravestones mark Joseph and Dorothy's burial sites, those of Elvira Town, Joseph's granddaughter, and Theodatea Cole, Joseph's sister, are marked.



Check it Out! Although not always the case, many gravesites face east. This tradition arose from the Christian belief that, when Jesus returns, the departed will rise from the grave facing him. As you explore the cemeteries on this hike, note which direction the gravesites face.

Patterson Farm

After leasing a farm north of here, Alexander Patterson bought this land in 1881. George Randall later purchased the farm and leased it out on shares. John Sweetzer, who worked at the Waterbury Last block Sawmill, leased this land in 1915. If you didn't have the money to buy your own farm, leasing was a common, but difficult, way to make a living. Often, farmers who leased land had to pay landlords half of all field crops, produce, maple syrup, and property taxes.

Read the Landscape. As you hike the Patterson Trail, you may notice a set of parallel stone walls. Many farms had a cow path – a passageway between barnyard and pasture that kept the cows out of the crop fields and mowings.

James Carney

This farm site was originally settled around 1820. In 1863, James Carney emigrated from Ireland and bought the 100 acre property. He farmed here until his death in 1889. In the mid-1800s, Irish immigrants came to this area to build the new Central Vermont railroad from White River Junction to Burlington. Many stayed to farm the hillsides and formed a small Irish community among the Yankee homesteaders.

Read the Landscape. James Carney's farm included a sugarbush with 700 tapped trees. On average, a quart of maple syrup can be produced from each tap. As you walk the trail, notice the numerous old sugar maples and stumps lining this road.

Ricker School House

The Ricker Mountain School was one of five schools in this area. Towns were divided into districts, each responsible for building its school and providing room and board for the teacher. Depending on the number of scholars enrolled, there were between one and three 12-week terms of school per year. Low enrollment closed this school in the late 1800s. It reopened in 1908, when the Pike sisters, Ricker family descendants, came of school age. It closed for good in 1921.



Did You Know? During this time, children were allowed to stay home during the worst of "mud time," and teachers adjusted their schedules accordingly. Today, if busses cannot travel over dirt roads during mud season, parents are responsible for getting their children to school.

Kelty Corners

At one time, Patrick, John, and Tom Kelty lived and farmed in this area known as Kelty Corners, tending livestock, sugar maple trees, and apple orchards. An exceptionally fine barn located on Patrick's farm was dismantled and moved to Waterbury. Today, the wild apple trees descended from the farm's orchard are an important food for wildlife. Resource managers "release" the apple trees by cutting surrounding trees and brush. They then prune the trees to encourage fruiting.

Check it Out! As you walk the steep town road from Kelty Corners to the Ricker School House, imagine children travelling to school on their runner sleds or toboggans on cold winter mornings. The trek home from school in the evening would not have been so enjoyable!

William Clossey Farm

William Clossey owned this farm for 18 years before selling it to John Cameron in November 1912. Born in Quebec, John had spent years logging in the Pacific Northwest before coming to Vermont. In February 1913, he married Minnie Falconer. Their shared life here was brief. In June, John traveled to Boston for tuberculosis treatment. He died there on July 6, 1913, age 46. Minnie buried his ashes at the end of the stone wall, northeast of this cellar hole. White stones mark the spot

Did You Know? In 1882, tuberculosis killed one in every seven people in the US an Europe.



William Randall Farm

George Randall, grandson of William Randall, was born here in 1825. George became a blacksmith, but after being kicked by a horse, decided to teach at the Ricker Mountain school house. He traveled to California during the 1849 Gold Rush, and some say he returned with \$5,000. He bought prime farm land in the area and leased it on shares. He had 700 acres in cultivation, bred cattle and horses, owned thousands of acres of timberland, and owned and operated the Randall and Roberts sawmill on the Little River.

Did You Know? George Randall eventually sold his extensive land holdings to the Green Mountain Power Company when they were investigating building a power-generating dam on the Little River. A street in Waterbury now bears his name.

Wingate Cemetery

Little is known about this cemetery, located a short hike from here. Two stones are blank, and the largest reads "Mary Ann Wingate." An old diary noted her date of death as October 26, 1834. She may have been related by marriage to William Randall. This small cemetery was "lost" for many years, hidden when the forest grew up around it. While many clues to the past are evident on Ricker Mountain, there are undoubtedly more to be found.

Read the Landscape. Fires, pasturing, logging, blights, beaver activity, and blowdowns all leave a mark on the landscape and tell a rich story if you notice them. Look carefully, and you may see evidence of these past events when exploring the forest.



Stone Walls

Though stone walls have come to symbolize the settlement of Vermont, the first fences settlers made were of logs and stumps stacked atop one another. When the rocky soil was plowed for planting, farmers moved the stones to the field edges and built stone walls. These walls kept livestock out of vegetable gardens and crop fields and held them within pastures. Stone walls were also built along many roadways using rock removed to smooth the road surface.

Did You Know? A good wall was a source of pride to its builder, and experts can tell if different walls had the same builder. Even today, you can follow a well-made stone wall with a compass and find that it scarcely waivers in its course for hundreds or thousands of feet.

Thomas Hurlburt Farm

Thomas Hurlburt's two sons, Thomas and Patrick, were born in the house that once stood here. Patrick (Patsy) is presumed to have changed the family name to Herbert, most likely in response to the way people pronounced it. The family drew drinking water from a 27-foot-deep well to the left of the house. To build a well, settlers dug a large cone-shaped hole. Once enough water was found, a circular stone wall was built in the hole and backfilled with packed dirt.



Picture This: The many stonewalls around the Ricker Mountain home sites attest to the extremely rocky nature of this soil. Imagine the challenge of digging a 27-foot deep well here!

Ricker Cemetery

Gideon Ricker Sr. set aside this plot of land as a family cemetery and likely planted the white cedar trees, or “arborvitae,” that surround it. Arborvitae means “tree of life” in Latin and suggests eternal life. Other special farmstead plantings sometimes included a pair of sugar maples, planted outside a newly married couple’s house. These trees, sometimes called “coffin trees,” grew along with the marriage and each was cut upon the death of “its” person and made into their coffin.

Did You Know? Though white cedar is native to the Northern forest, it does not naturally occur in this location. Some of the non-native species settlers planted, like honeysuckle, have taken a little too well to their new home, spreading widely and displacing native plants.



Ricker Sugarhouse

A sugarbush was an important part of most Vermont farms. The traditional time to start sugaring was just after Town Meeting Day (the first Tuesday in March). Herb Pike, the great grandson of Gideon Ricker Sr., developed a large sugarbush here after he purchased the farm in 1910. He tapped 1500 trees, operated two evaporators, made as much as 240 gallons of syrup, and even made maple cream. He emptied his sap buckets into a tank on a sled, drawn by a team of oxen.

Read the Landscape. When rerouting this trail, workers found a large area of dark soil near the sugarhouse. The discoloration was likely caused by years of ashes cleaned out of the evaporator arch, which leached into the soil. What other signs of past land use can you find?

Forest Succession

Before settlers created farms here, forests covered the land, much as they do today (see photo, far right). In the 1942 photo, fields remain visible 20 years after these farms were abandoned. Eventually, however, fields grow into young forest, and young forest grows into mature forest. This process is referred to as succession. If these old fields are not mowed, grazed, or otherwise disturbed, they eventually become forest again.



Read the Landscape. Some of the first tree and shrub species to colonize abandoned farm land include gray birch, dogwood, aspen, cherry, willow and alder. Later sugar maple, American beech and Eastern hemlock take over. Which species do you see around you here?

Gideon Ricker Barn

The main barn's ridgepole was a single, 84-foot spruce log cut from Ricker Mountain. The cow barn was built in stages. It eventually reached 120 feet long with a 30-foot covered ramp. The nearby circular stone foundation was a silo used to store grain. When laying out a farm, the fields closest to the house and barn are tilled and cultivated. The mowing lots lay farther out, then the pasture, and finally the wood lots and sugarbush.

Did You Know? Plants are a good indicator of where the barnyard dump was located. Thistles, burdock, and nettles thrive in rich soils formed by manure, hay and straw. Sudden changes in the landscape, such as a large mound, may also indicate an old dump site of manure and straw.

Gideon Ricker Farm

Gideon Ricker Sr. (brother of Joseph Ricker) and his son Gideon Jr. came from Maine in 1839. They bought this farm from Timothy Chesley for \$1,500 and soon developed one of the biggest farms in the area, with large barns, a sugarbush, and an apple orchard. After Gideon Sr. died in 1862, Gideon Jr. tore down the existing farmhouse and built a large white clapboard house on the same site. Many generations of Rickers lived on this productive 250-acre farm.

Read the Landscape. Look carefully at the rock wall in the picture on the right. Can you find that same wall in the landscape before you? The road you have just hiked on is the same one shown in the photo, in front of the large barn.



Ezra Fuller Farm

Ezra Fuller owned this farm in 1871. Herb Pike purchased it in 1900, and in 1910 combined it with the Gideon Ricker farm, which he purchased for \$3,325. In those days, most rural houses were built with a variation of the end-chimney or center-chimney style. This farmhouse had a fireplace with hearths on all sides, allowing simultaneous heating of the parlor, dining room, and two bedrooms.

Check it Out! A story is told of a young man named Godfrey, killed on this farm around 1860. There is purportedly a large rock on the west side of the road between the Gideon Ricker farm and the Fuller farm marking his grave.

The Final Years

By the end of the 1800s, subsistence farming statewide was declining. In the 1920s, Green Mountain Power (GMP) started buying farms in the area to build a hydroelectric dam near the Randall and Roberts Sawmill. Herb Pike sold first to GMP in 1921. The Great Flood of 1927 prompted the state and federal governments to pursue a larger-scale flood control dam. To build the dam, the State of Vermont bought the 10,000 acres GMP had already acquired.

Did You Know? In 1935, 2,500 members of the Civilian Conservation Corps were stationed at Camp Smith to build the Waterbury Dam. On October 19, 1938, the US government transferred ownership of the completed dam to the State of Vermont.



Sites Along the Nature Trail

Amos Chase Farm

In the early 1800s, hard-working pioneers settled the Little River, Stevenson Brook, and Cotton Brook valleys. These farmers and their descendants made a living in this area until the 1920s, despite the challenges of Vermont's rugged terrain and harsh climate. Amos Chase, a Civil War veteran, owned this 30-acre farm in 1864. Amos lost an arm in the war but was determined to work his farm. He fashioned a shoulder strap that allowed him to swing a scythe with one hand.

Read the Landscape. In addition to the nearby cellar hole, you can find many other signs of the people who lived here. Apple trees line the campground road, and plantings such as lilacs, periwinkle, and daylilies still grow among the forest flora.

Dan Dalley Farm

After surviving 16 Civil War battles, including one capture and escape, Dan Dalley returned to Vermont. In 1878, he bought this farm with the savings from his \$12-per-month military pension. Dan and his wife Sarah raised seven children while successfully managing their farm for many years. Dan planted a potato variety called "Valley Whites," which he boasted produced 20 bushels for each bushel of seed.



Check it Out! This cellar hole appears to have an entrance from the outside, a feature not common in the area. It may have been used as a root cellar, which provided a cool place to store vegetables year-round.

We hope you enjoyed Little River's History Hike. The story has repeated itself all over Vermont; a long history of land use deeply inscribed in the hillsides and valleys. The only difference in the demise of this settlement was the building of the Waterbury Dam and the watery grave it built. Where once there were thriving communities, now stands forests and water.

*There is a house that is no more a house
Upon a farm that is no more a farm
And in a town that is no more a town.....*

From: "Directive", by Robert Frost

This is a story of the struggles and resilience of the early settlers, their relationship to the land, and the recuperative power of nature.

This is a story of who we were, who we are and who we are yet to be.

Thanks to Bill Gove and Patrick Yaeger, whose research turned the Ricker Basin into living history.

A special thanks to Ward Knapp and the retelling of his stories through his book "A History of Waterbury".

For more information on the history of Little River, visit the Waterbury Historical Society, the Vermont Historical Society and the Aldrich Public Library in Barre.

Check it Out! - Teachers Page

The Little River History Hike is a great introduction to Vermont's land use history. It explores natural and cultural histories, many of which have been repeated across the state.

While hiking, take note of the Check it Out!, Read the Landscape., and Did You Know? sidebars. Some may spur a lively discussion, others may encourage students to look at their surroundings in a different way.

We would encourage further discussion in the classroom and on the trail by taking part in any of the following activities.

Additional Reading:

- Read "Directive" by Robert Frost.
- "Reading the Forested Landscape" by Tom Wessels - use skills learned in the book to read the landscape along the trail.
- "That Beautiful Vale Above the Falls", by Patrick Yeager.
- "Stonewalls and Cellar holes" a project of the Vermont Stewardship Program.



Field Trips:

- Visit the Waterbury Center Cemetery to see Almeron Goodell's grave marker.
- Visit a sugar house to see how syrup is made today. There are still a few sugar houses using buckets instead of tubing. Tap a few maples at school and boil it down.
- Find Randall Street in Waterbury.
- Stop at the Waterbury Dam and walk across it.

While on the Trail:

- Compass work: following stonewalls and checking gravestone directions.
- Notice the different building materials used for bridges and culverts along the trail.
- Try to envision the farmhouses and barns by looking at the foundations. Look for any low footings that may have been kitchens or porches.
- Discussion of bartering, trading, and leasing.

Plant Identification:

- Learn to identify birch, dogwood, aspen, cherry, willow and alder. Later sugar maple, American beach and Eastern hemlock.
- Learn to identify apple trees, lilacs, periwinkle and day lilies.
- Discuss the history of apple trees and apple production in Vermont.
- Discussion on invasive species.

Hiking Trails in Little River State Park

When hiking, make sure to tell someone of your plans and estimated return time. Don't hike alone. Check the weather before heading out, dress appropriately and always wear sturdy shoes. Bring a first aid kit, flashlight, map, and plenty of water and snacks.

Woodward Hill Trail (2.12 miles)

Woodward Hill Trail is part of the VT Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) trail system and is not maintained as a hiking trail. Start at the Stevenson Brook Trail near the Last Block Sawmill (0.00 miles). Hike south to the intersection of the Compartment 1 Road (0.63 miles). Turn left to travel down the Compartment 1 Road back to Little River State Park (another 1.11 miles) or cross the Compartment 1 Road and continue another 1.49 miles. Woodward Hill Trail / Road intersects with the Little River Road. Turn left 2.5 miles to return to the Little River park office.

Compartment 1 Road (1.97 miles)

Compartment 1 Road starts 0.25 miles north of the Little River park office on the park road towards campground Area B. This road is not maintained as a hiking trail. At 1.11 miles the road intersects with the Woodward Hill Trail. Turn right to reach the Stevenson Brook Trail in another 0.63 miles, or continue another 0.86 miles to the end of the road (Dead end). Please be aware of possible logging truck activity on this road.

Cut-Off Trail (0.2 miles)

The Cut-Off Trail connects the Dalley Loop Trail and the Stevenson Brook Trail, crossing Stevenson Brook. This can be a dangerous stream crossing during times of high water.

Stevenson Brook Trail (2.5 miles)

Stevenson Brook Trail starts near the intersection of the Compartment 1 Road and the Little River campground road 0.25 miles north of the park office. Travel north 0.63 miles to the junction of the Cut-Off Trail. Turn right along the Cut-Off Trail to meet up with the Dalley Loop Trail or continue past the junction another 1.06 miles to the intersection of the Woodward Hill Trail and the Saw Mill Trail. Bear right to continue another 0.55 miles along the Sawmill Trail to the Dalley Loop Trail, or bear left and continue 0.63 miles along the Woodward Hill Trail to the Compartment 1 Road. Continue on the Stevenson Brook Trail past the site of the Last Block Sawmill another 0.81 miles to the Dalley Loop Trail.

Dalley Loop Trail (3.54 miles)

The Dalley Loop Trail starts 0.75 miles north of the Little River park office on the road towards campground Area B. Parking is on the right hand side of the road; the trailhead on your left. Stop at the kiosk and then hike up the road past the iron gate keeping to your left. The History Hike interpretive signs along this trail begin their story from here. This trail is an old town road that gradually climbs uphill. At 0.44 miles, having passed the David Hill and Bert Goodell farms, you will reach the junction of the Cut-Off Trail that will take you to the Stevenson Brook Trail. There is a dangerous stream crossing during times of high water on the Cut-Off Trail. Continuing straight up the road past the High Bridge, Almeron Goodell and Patsy Herbert farms, you will reach the intersection of the Sawmill Trail at 1.43 miles and the Stevenson Brook Trail at 1.59 miles. Travelling north east past the Joseph Ricker farm and the Upper Cemetery you will reach the intersection of the Patterson Trail at 1.82 miles. The trail continues southerly and slopes downhill from here. At 2.15 miles you will be at the intersection of the Kelty Corners Trail. The Ricker School House was located at this corner.

Dalley Loop Trail (Cont.)

Continuing on past the Randall and Hurlburt farms, you will reach the intersection of the Ricker Farm Trail in 2.89 miles and the Hedgehog Hill Trail at 3.03 miles. In this location is the Ricker homestead. Another 0.51 miles down the steep hill will return you to the parking area.

Sawmill Trail (0.55 miles)

The Sawmill Trail starts at the intersection along the Dalley Loop Trail and takes you over to the Waterbury Last Block Sawmill site. There is a difficult stream crossing just before reaching the junction of the Stevenson Brook Trail.

Patterson Trail (0.79 miles)

The Patterson Trail starts near the Upper Cemetery off the Dalley Loop. This old farm road tops a ridge where the trail turns right and eventually intersects with the Kelty Corners Trail at 0.79 miles. Bear right along the Kelty Corners Trail and head downhill back to the Ricker School House on the Dalley Loop. If you bear left on the Kelty Corners Trail, you will reach Gove's Trail in 0.17 miles.

Kelty Corners Trail (0.56 miles)

The Kelty Corners Trail starts at the site of the Ricker School House and travels steeply uphill 0.39 miles to the intersection of the Patterson Trail. From here go another 0.17 miles on the Kelty Corners Trail to the intersection of Gove's Trail. An additional 0.24 miles will take you to the Cotton Brook Road.

Ricker Farm Trail (1.21 miles)

The Ricker Farm Trail starts near the Ricker Cemetery along the Dalley Loop Trail. After passing the Ricker Sugarhouse foundation, the trail intersects with the Hedgehog Hill Trail. Keep to your left and hike another 0.89 miles to the Cotton Brook Road.

Gove's Trail (0.82 miles)

Gove's Trail starts along the Kelty Corners Trail and continues southeasterly 0.82 miles to the intersection of the Cotton Brook Road and Foster's Trail.

Hedgehog Hill Trail (1.30 miles)

Hedgehog Hill Trail begins next to tent site #59 in campground Area B, travelling steeply uphill to the Ezra Fuller farm and intersecting with the Ricker Farm Trail at 1.03 miles. Hike another 0.27 miles to the Gideon Ricker Farm and the Dalley Loop Trail.

Nature Trail (0.50 miles)

The Nature Trail is an easy self-guided interpretive trail describing the history, geology and natural history of the area.

Cotton Brook Road (6.47 miles)

Starting at the northern terminus of the Ricker Farm Trail, travel north 0.44 miles to the intersection of Gove's Trail and Foster's Trail. Continue northward 0.82 miles to the intersection of Kelty Corners Trail. Continue on, bearing right 4.99 miles along the Cotton Brook Road back to Foster's Trail. Continue on the Cotton Brook Road approximately 1.5 miles to the gate and the Moscow Canoe Access, or turn right onto Foster's Trail travelling 1.4 miles to return to the intersection of the Cotton Brook Road and Gove's Trail. A left on Cotton Brook Road for 0.44 miles will return you to the Ricker Farm Trail.



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