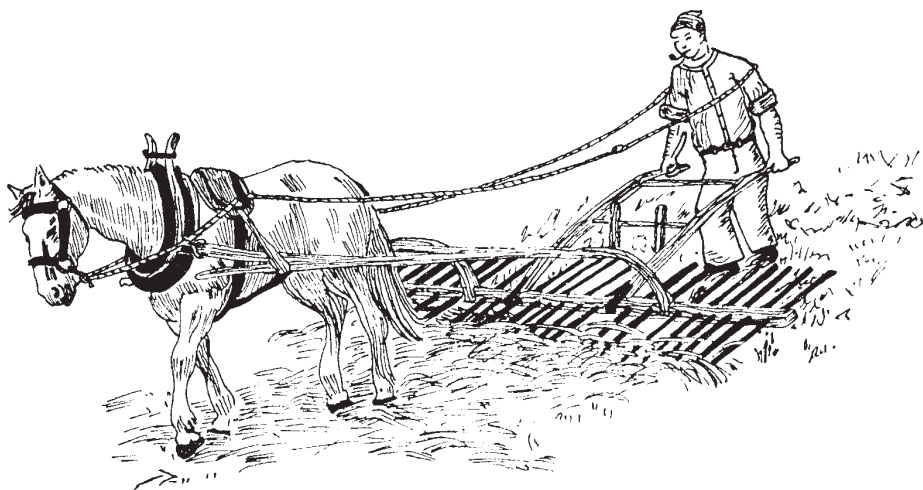


Little River State Park

History Hike



AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
www.vtstateparks.com

The Beginning

The Little River History Hike is a journey through time. The miles of stone walls, cemeteries, cellar holes and orchards give evidence of life one hundred years ago. The pioneers cleared the fields and roads of rocks and stumps without the aid of machinery. The younger generations were not as prone to such laborious work and abandoned their farms, leaving them for the forest to reclaim.



Farms and Forests

Joseph Ricker broke ground (site 8) on Ricker Mountain in the early 1800's, but it was not until the mid 1800's, when the railroad came through Waterbury, that farming here really took hold. The farms were primarily subsistence. Most homesteads raised a couple of pigs, three or four milking cows, and some young cattle, a horse or ox, up to a dozen sheep and some chickens. In addition to a vegetable garden, potatoes, corn, peas, rye, oats and barley were grown for winter storage. Nut and fruit trees were planted, many of which still grow today.

Timber was the main "industry" for the community. They fashioned their tools of wood and used the by-products: soaps, tannic acid, building materials, maple syrup and sugar, and the basin's three sawmills. The extra pennies would be used to purchase wagons, whiskey, and other essentials.

Life on Ricker Mountain was hard, and by the late 1800's the families began to abandon their homesteads. The streamside mills and schools closed. The strenuous life, and the loss of soil and soil fertility on the steep, cleared slopes did not offer the same attraction to the pioneer's children. The flatter, richer, and free lands to the west lured them away.

The Flood

On November 3 and 4, 1927, torrential rains created a disastrous flood that paralyzed Vermont. Little River's rising waters drove the valley residents to their roofs and isolated the hillside farmers. Fifty-five people in the Winooski Valley (beside Route 2) lost their lives, and property damage was estimated at \$13,500,000. A second flood in 1934 spurred the construction of Waterbury Dam. Five thousand men of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Civilian Conservation Corps (C. C. C.) completed the dam in 1938. A power plant was added in 1956.

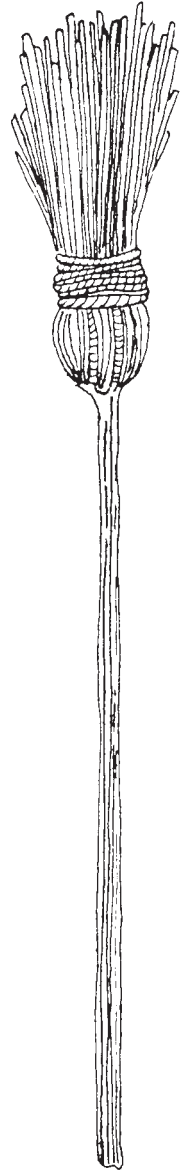
Little River State Park

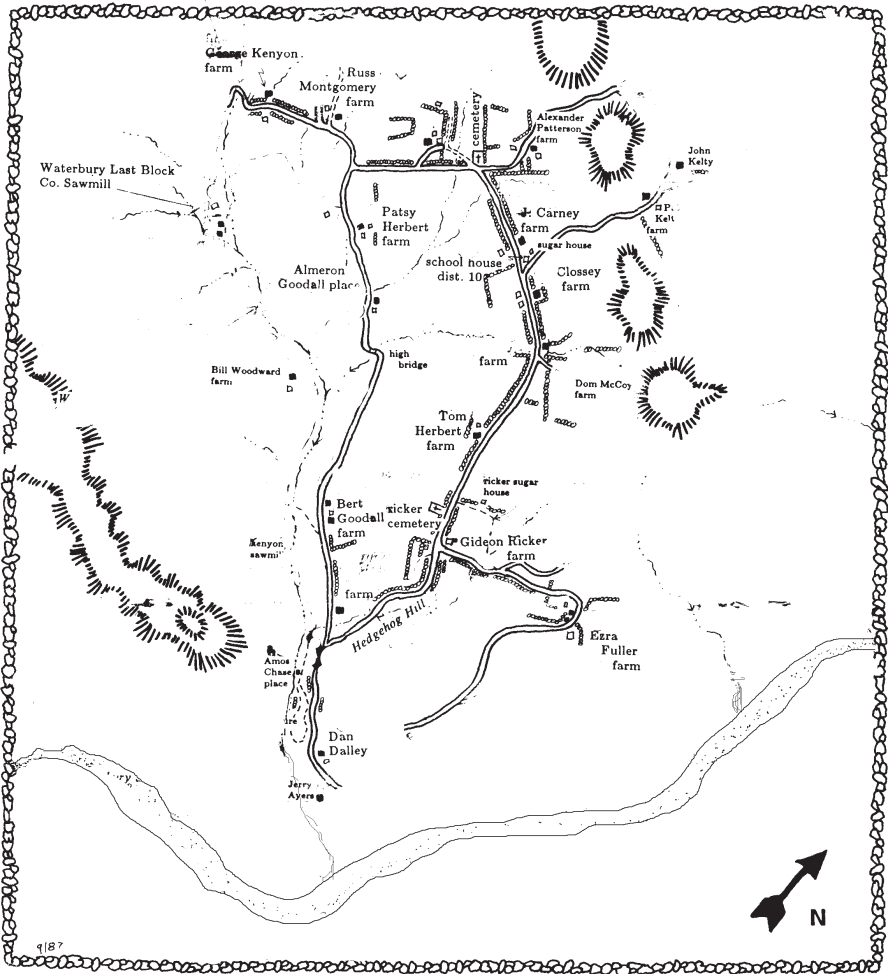
Little River State Park was built in 1962. It is located in the 4000 acre Ricker Block of Mount Mansfield State Forest (37,000 acres), a forest used for timber, wildlife, and outdoor recreation.

Because this area , so rich in natural and social history, is open to the public, please take nothing but photos and leave nothing but footprints. The artifacts which you may find along the trail are for the pleasure of everyone. Please leave them for the enjoyment of all.

History Hike and Trail Information

This hike is self-guiding: numbers in this booklet correspond to numbers along the trail. Begin with stop #2 on the Dalley Loop Trail. The whole circuit takes four to five hours of pleasant walking. More specific trail information is located at the end of this booklet.





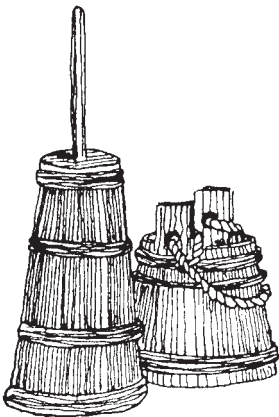
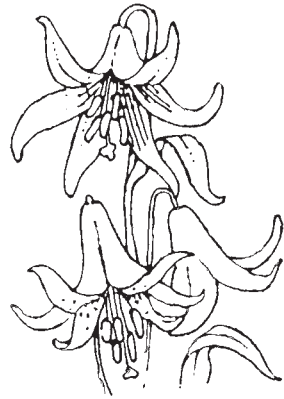
historical settlements in the Little River area

1) Dan Dalley Farm: 68 acres

Dan Dalley was a Civil War veteran who had survived 16 battles and escaped one capture. He bought this small farm in 1878 and remained here until his death in 1925. The foundations of the farmhouse are on the Stevenson Brook Nature Trail.

2) David Hill Farm

This small house was built in the mid-to-late 1820's, and David Hill bought it in 1837. There was an old road that went from this farm to the Gideon Ricker farm (site 16) that was used when the Hedgehog Hill Road was washed out. The farm was abandoned in the late 1800's, and a butternut tree and some day lilies still stand as evidence that someone once lived here.



3 Bert Goodell Farm: 53 acres

This site was first settled in the 1840's. Bert Goodell bought it in 1891, farmed here for a while, and sold out in 1913. The fourteen acre piece of land that Almeron Goodell built his farm on (site 4) was once part of this property.

4) Almeron Goodell: 14 acres

Almeron Goodell bought this land around 1863. The house frame is of hewed timbers. Goodell hand-split the original shingles during his evening hours. This is the only farmhouse still standing in the Little River area. All other buildings were destroyed or moved when the land came into public ownership.



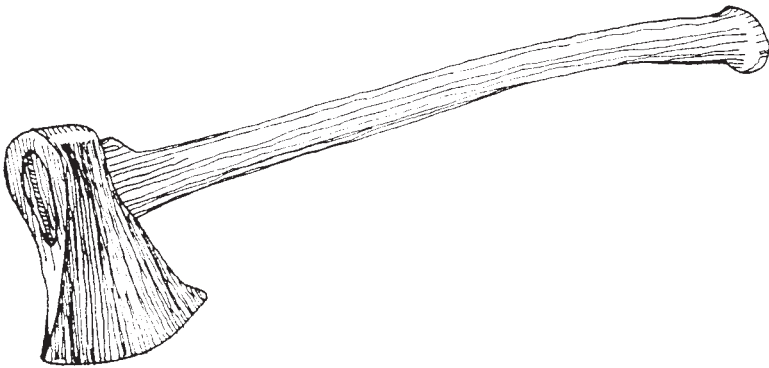
5) Patsy Herbert Farm: 119 acres

Patsy spent many years farming on Ricker Mountain, more than most farmers here. His large barn was moved from Russ Montgomery's place (site 7) about 1910. When Patsy's farmhouse was torn down, the barn was dismantled and moved to a site east of Waterbury where it stands today. Patsy, a good-natured Irishman, was fond of tipping whiskey . . . and was fortunate enough to have a faithful horse that always got him home!



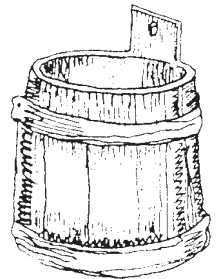
6) Waterbury Last Block Co. Sawmill

This steam-powered sawmill was constructed in 1916 and remained in operation until 1922. Run by two 150 hp. boilers, it was important in milling timber for ammunition cases and gun stocks during World War I. The finer wood was hauled to Waterbury to make cobblers' "lasts" (molds for shoes). The mill employed 35 men, 44 teams of horses, and one truck. Now, only the large boiler, truck chassis, band saws, and concrete foundations remain.



7) Russ Montgomery Farm: 313 acres

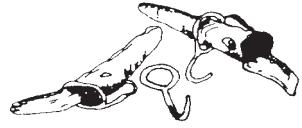
This land was first farmed in the 1820's. In 1861, George Montgomery took over and made a fine reputation as a calf-raiser. His son, George H., then managed the farm until the house burned down in 1910. Following that, the barn was moved to Patsy Herbert's homestead (site 5).



wooden sap bucket

8) Joseph Ricker Farm: 100 acres

Beginning in 1816 this land was farmed continuously for nearly 90 years. Peter Tatro was the last to live here and reportedly burned the house down in an ownership dispute. Extremely well preserved foundations of the large barn and house remain, with many sap buckets still in the cellar hole of the house.



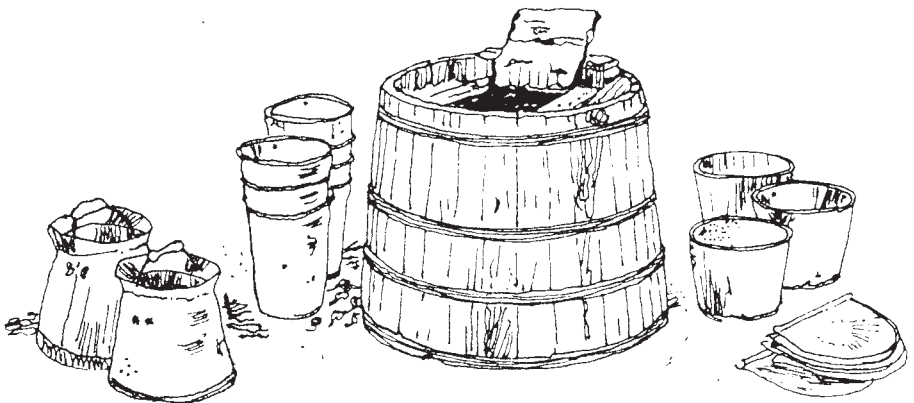
sap spouts

9) Upper Cemetery

Most of those buried in this cemetery were related in one way or another to Joseph Ricker (site 8) or lived on nearby farms. Joseph died away from Ricker Mountain, but requested that he be brought back and buried at the “Old Joe Ricker Place” next to his wife and granddaughter, Elvira Town. The graves of Joseph and his wife are unmarked.

10) James Carney Farm: 100 acres












This farm was first settled around 1820, and James Carney, who came over from Ireland, bought it in 1863 and farmed it until 1889. There were reportedly 700 sugar trees on the farm, and a nice row of stately old maples still line the road past the site. There were many other Irish immigrants who settled near here, and together they made up a little Irish community nestled among the Yankee homesteaders.

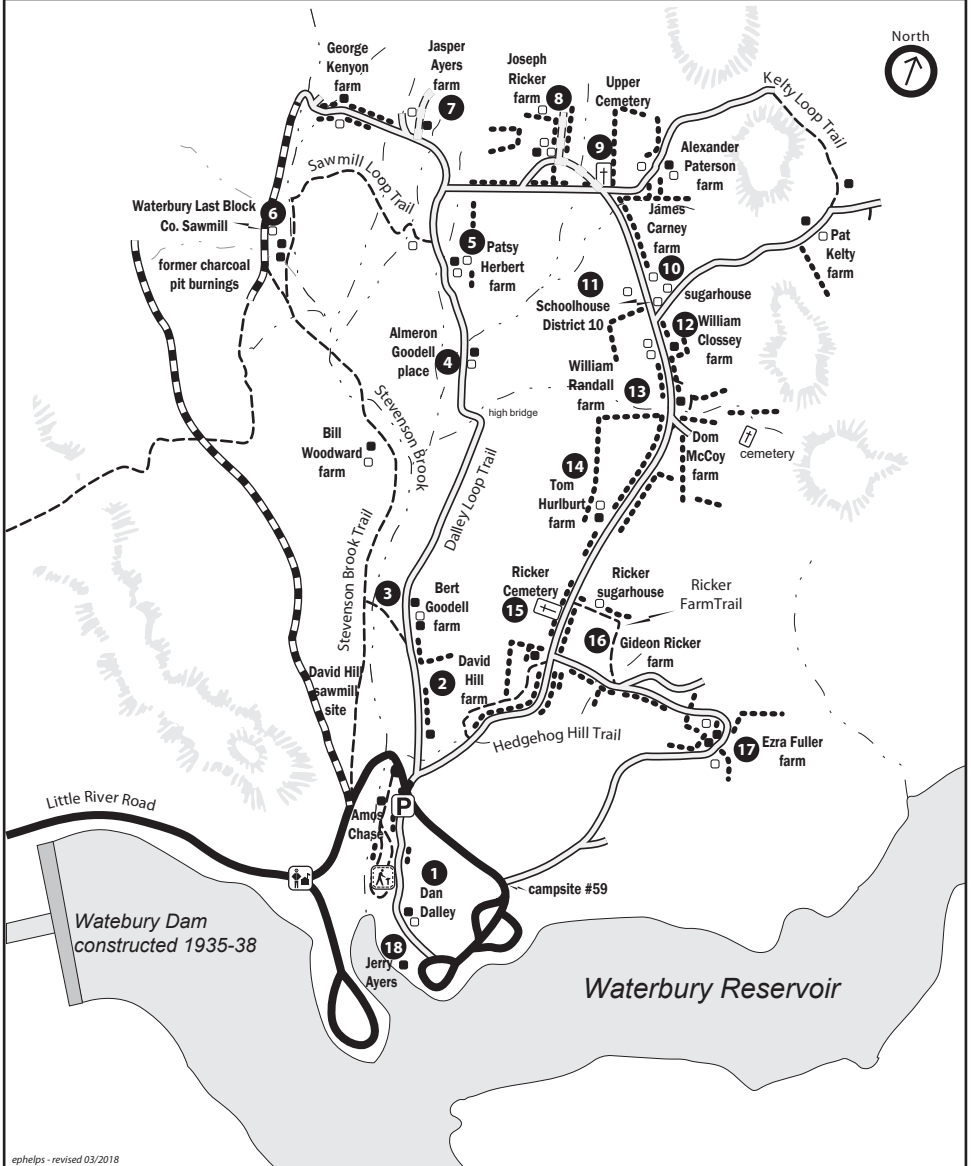


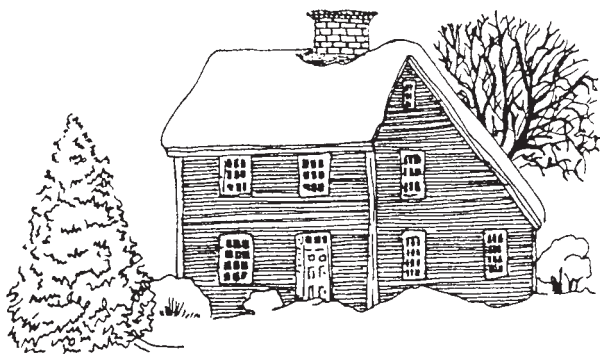
LITTLE RIVER HISTORY HIKE

Historical Settlements and Modern Trails

Legend

-  Multi-use trails
-  Walking trails/Historical road location (some sections may be logging roads)
-  Historical road - impassable
-  Trail
-  Stream
-  Stone wall
-  House site/foundation
-  Barn or outbuilding site/foundation
-  Park office
-  Parking
-  Self-guided nature trail





11) School House, District #10

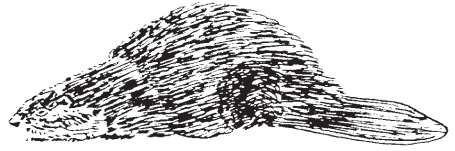
The Ricker Mountain School was one of five in the area. Each town was divided into districts, with each district responsible for building and maintaining its own roads and schools, and providing room and board for the teacher. This school was closed in the late 1800's due to a lack of pupils. It reopened in 1908, but was permanently closed around 1921.



12) William Clossey Farm: 50 acres

Jack Cameron, a westerner, bought this land sight-unseen from William Clossey in 1912. He was unable to make a living on this unyielding land, and died a poor and homesick man. He was cremated and his widow buried his ashes at the corner of the stone wall, northeast of the home site. A small ring of stones marks the spot.

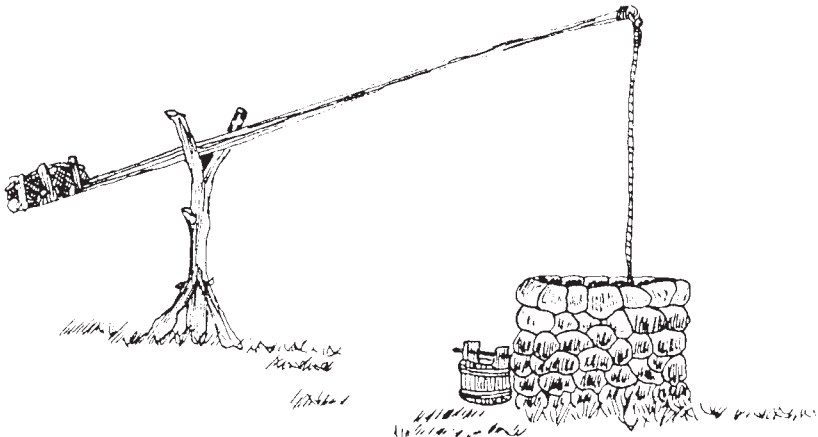
13) William Randall Farm: 62 acres



Oliver Randall bought this site in 1823, and his father, William Randall I, bought it two years later. Oliver's son, George Randall I, was born here in 1825. He went out west during the "gold Rush" and reportedly brought back \$5000. He bought this property in 1859 and sold it in 1870. It was eventually combined with the William Clossey Farm (site 12) in 1871. Most of the foundations are now submerged or obscured by the work of busy beavers.

14) Tom Herbert Farm: 95 acres

This farm was first settled in the 1820's. Tom Herbert, Patsy Herbert's father, bought the place in 1860. A stand of roses occupies the site now, and the two cellar holes are surrounded by young hardwoods. The Herbert's well is approximately 50 feet to the southeast of the house. Be careful . . . it is 27 feet deep!



15) Ricker Cemetery

This was a family cemetery. One tombstone reflects the sadness of a child's death in the 1800's. The cemetery is surrounded by white cedar, a species uncommon to these maple/birch forests. Also known as "arbor vitae" ("tree of life"), it was planted for symbolic reasons, to give life to the dead.

16) Gideon Ricker Farm: 250 acres

The original house was built in the 1830's. Gideon Ricker purchased this land in 1839 for \$1500. He added a two-family house, increasing the size of the farm. The main barn's ridge pole was a single eighty-four foot spruce log that was cut on Ricker Mountain. The cow barn was built in stages, eventually becoming 120 feet long with a thirty foot covered ramp. An impressive stone base for a silo can be found at the northernmost barn site. Three generations of Rickers lived their lifetimes on this once-productive farm.





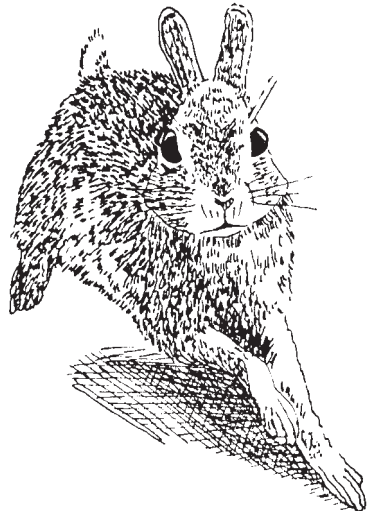
17) Ezra Fuller Farm: 124 acres

This house had an interesting interior fireplace. It had hearths on all sides, allowing simultaneous heating of the parlor, dining room, and two back bedrooms. Herb Pike consolidated this farm with the Ricker farm when he bought it in 1910.

18) Jerry Ayers Home

Jerry Ayers first bought this site in 1844 and operated a small up-and-down sawmill, which was located on Stevenson Brook not far from here. He ran the mill with periodic help from his brother, Jasper, until he sold out in 1856. He bought the property back in 1868, and ran the mill until 1881. Jerry died alone in his house on March 17, 1881. His daughter Alice lived there for a while after that.

*thanks to Bill Gove, whose
research turned Ricker Basin
into Living History*



Little River State Park Trails

Nature Trail (.5 mile, 45 min.)

This self-guided nature trail describes the history, geology, and nature of the park. Booklet is available at the office. Easy walking.

Stevenson Brook Trail (1 mile)

Begins 0.1 mile from the park office. Trail heads uphill through a hemlock grove. Shortly after it meets Stevenson Brook, a connecting trail heads right to join Dalley Loop Trail. The Stevenson Brook Trail continues to parallel the stream for the rest of its length to the sawmill site and loop trail. Difficult stream crossings and occasionally muddy. Moderate uphill walk.

Sawmill Loop Trail (0.3 mile)

Begins either off the end of Stevenson Brook Trail or from the Dalley Loop Trail. Some steep sections. Moderate walk. Difficult stream crossing during times of high water.

Dalley Loop Trail (2.8 miles)

Begins 0.2 mile after park road crosses Stevenson Brook. Heads gently uphill on logging access road (an old town road). At 1.1 miles meets Sawmill Loop Trail on left. At 1.3 miles, turn right continuing past Montgomery farm. Trail veers right. Level walking, then downhill steeply in places to Hedgehog Hill loop. Moderate walk.

Hedgehog Hill Loop Trail (2 miles)

Starts off Dalley Loop Trail. Heads steeply uphill before turning right to Fuller farm site. Easy walking for remainder of trail. Check trail condition between Ricker and Fuller farms before walking this section. Moderate walk.

Ricker Lot Trail (0.1 mile)

An easy connector trail between the Dalley Loop and Hedgehog Loop.

Kelty (Patterson) Loop Trail (1.5 miles)

Begins off the Daley Loop Trail at the Upper Cemetery (site 9). Old farm road tops ridge where trail turns right through dense woods and downhill to connect with multi-use trail. The goes back over the ridge meeting the Dalley Loop Trail at the school house (site 11). Some steep sections. Moderate walk.

Trail Notes

Trails for foot traffic only are marked with blue blazes.
Orange triangles indicate multi-use trails.



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