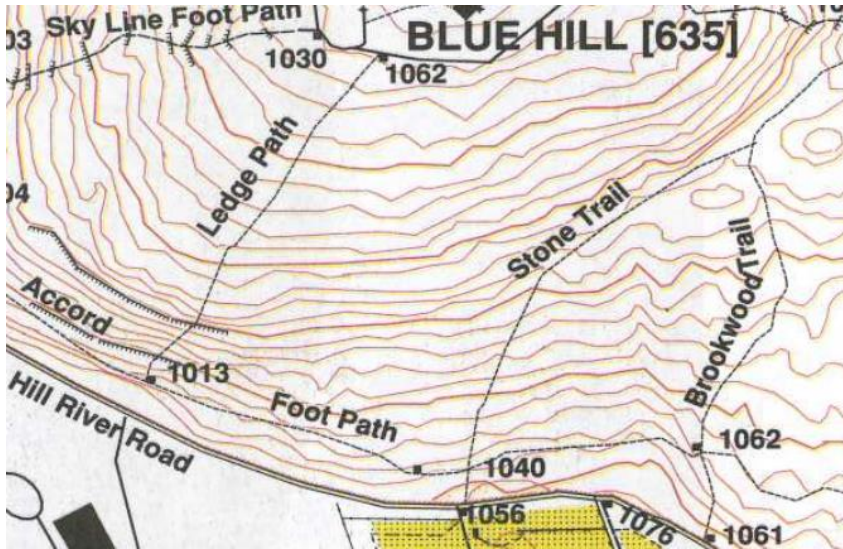


5 Blue Hills History - Some old abandoned trails

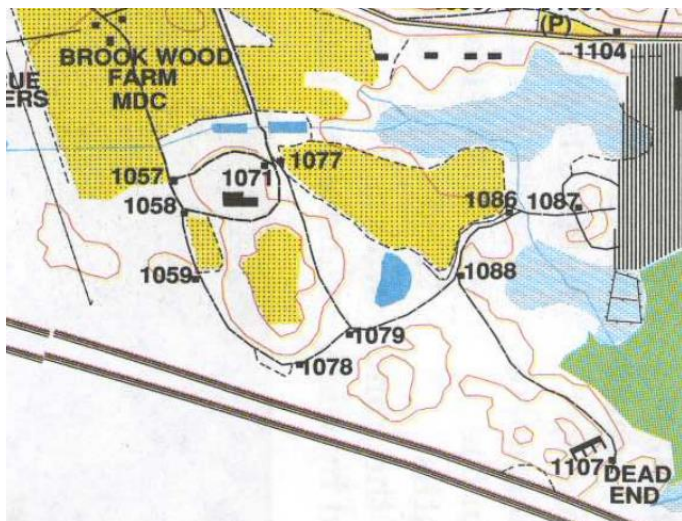
Over the years, for various reasons (The building of Rt. 128 and Rt. 24, trails in poor condition, to separate people from endangered species...) trails have been lost. Here is a look back at some of them.

Ledge Path and Stone Trail



These two trails were on the south sloping section of Great Blue that you can see when you look at Great Blue when driving along Rt 128 (Rt 93) between Rt 138 and the Houghton Pond exit. They were off the map before I started hiking the Blue Hills, but I've always wondered where they were. It seems like it would have been an interesting place to hike.

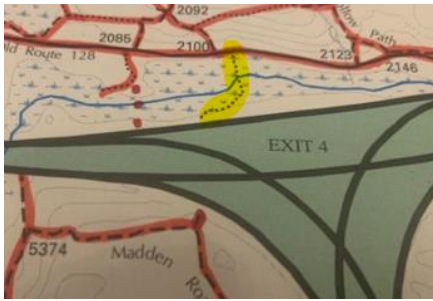
Brookwood Farm



Who knew there used to be a dead-end trail out to '1107', or a loop out at 1087? Before 'new' Rt 128 was built, Brookwood Farm extended even further south, so there were probably even more trails back then.

¹ <https://www.bostonbasinhills.org/pages/blue-hills.html>

The dead end trail from 'old Rt 128' out to 'new Rt 128'...



I sometimes joke that "No one has ever completed Red Lining the Blue Hills!", because when we started in 2006 this trail was still on the map. And no one has ever found it. (Despite my trying quite diligently! From both ends.) On my original 2006 "Red Line" map (above) it is the only trail not colored red. This trail apparently used to connect to the Madden Trail in the Ponkapoag section... before "New" Route 128 was built. I always like to think about what things were like before Rt 128 and Rt 24 split the Blue Hills into four pieces. The Blue Hills must have seemed much bigger then, as one 'whole' instead of the smaller 'sections' we think of today. It's one of the reasons I always do those little 'out and back to the fence' trails along 128/93 and Rt 24. Now that Maplets and gps apps exist maybe I'll go back and look for this one again one winter when the swamp is frozen.

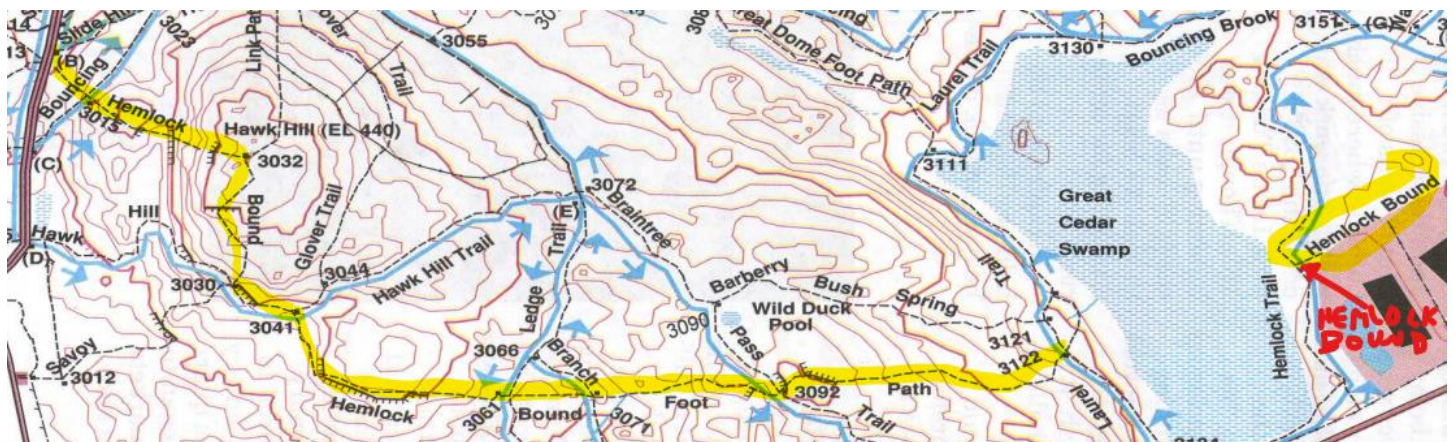
Hemlock Bound Foot Path (1)



Notice the piece of trail missing, marked in red on the new map on the right? Well, the trail is actually still there, and gets hiked frequently, as it is the logical way to get to Hawk Hill from Rt 28. But it's not currently on the map. Why?

[Update: Since this article was first written in 2020, the new 2020 DCR Map of the Blue Hills has been released, and now includes this portion of the trail again!]

Hemlock Bound Foot Path (2)



Once upon a time, Hemlock Bound Foot Path was a long, very nice, trail that led to... The Hemlock Bound. I'm not sure if it once traversed the Great Cedar Swamp... or dipped down below it (on what is just called Hemlock Trail) on the above map. But it led from Randolph Ave (Now Rt 28) to the Hemlock Bound. "What is the Hemlock Bound?" you ask. 😊

The Hemlock Bound – "Beginning at Braintree-Quincy corner 6, commonly known as the Hemlock Bound, thence running along the Quincy-Braintree corporate boundary.." (from the general laws of Massachusetts..) If you have ever wondered why Wood Road, and all that industry/commercial property is located between Rt 128 and the Blue Hills, a look at the map with town boundaries explains it.



All of that commercial/industrial area is in Braintree, in a small sliver of Braintree cut off by 'New Rt 128', AKA Rt 93. And where is that Braintree-Quincy corner 6? At "the Hemlock Bound".



“The Hemlock in the rock, one of the town bounds between Quincy and Braintree, is located in the angle of the town line about 1 mile N Ely from Braintree Point.

The large boulder is approximately 10 feet in girth and is well preserved. As seen in the photo the large roots have grown and thrust the boulder apart and they extend downward to the level of the meadow land at the base of the boulder. This

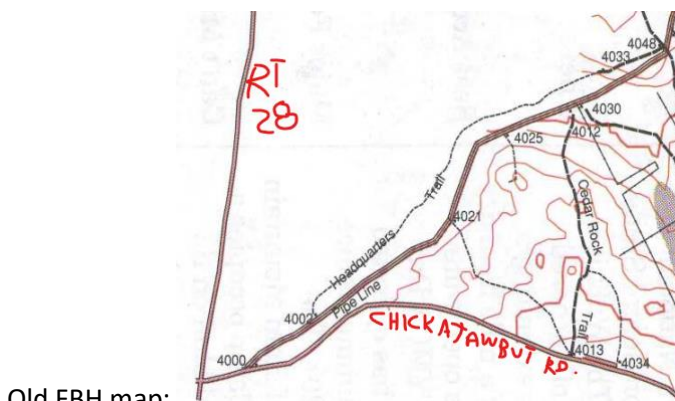
bound has been known as the “Hemlock Bound” from time immemorial.”

It turns out that many of us have hiked right past this important historical rock without ever realizing it. (I had.) But recently when we hiked the Great Cedar Swamp portion of Chickatawbut section on a Tuesday morning we looked and it was right there, along Hemlock Path.

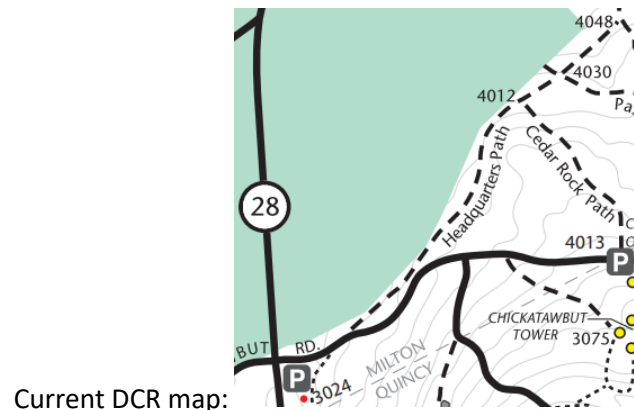


(Photo by Bob Vogel)

Headquarters Path – across from Chickatawbut Overlook. (Bob’s pet peeve. ☹️)



Old FBH map:



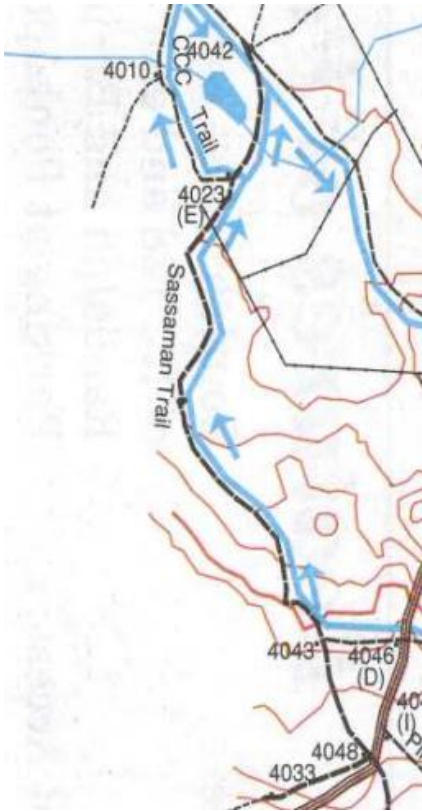
Current DCR map:

These days ‘most’ folks hike the pipeline from Chickatawbut Rd to 4048.. But even the official DCR map calls the one trail they show “Headquarters Path”, and “Headquarters Path” still exists along most of that section (as those that follow when I lead there can attest.) Because it doesn’t get much use, and is sometimes wet (as is the pipeline in parts there.) it gets neglected. I ran a trailwork event that cleared all the blowdowns a few years ago, but more have fallen.

Headquarters Path was the route from the CCC Camp to Park Headquarters, and whenever I hike it, I like to think back to those days, and the people that would have walked back and forth along it. As ‘The History guy’

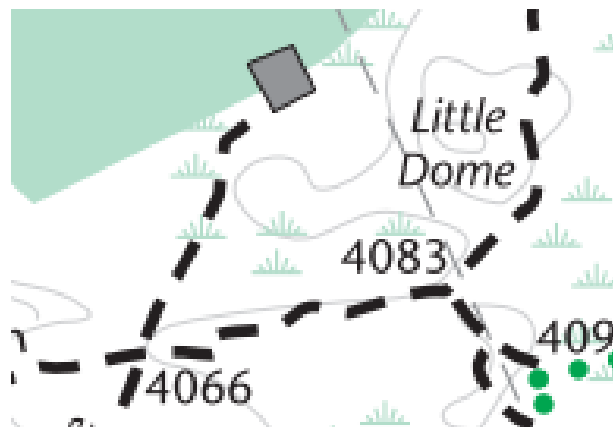
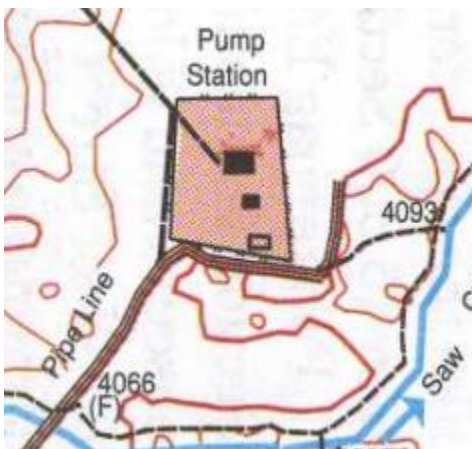
(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4sEmXUuWIFixRIFBRV6VXQ>) would say “It’s history that deserves to be remembered.”)

Sassaman Trail



The other link between the CCC Camp and park Headquarters. This was on the map in 2006, but has since gone away. The trail is still there of course, and people still hike it. (The "CCC Camp 300 Yards" sign was still there in 2020 at the southern end.) But years ago, there were several blowdowns, and the number has only increased over time since no one is clearing it. It's too bad, as it too is part of the CCC history. (And it made a nice loop out to the CCC camp.)

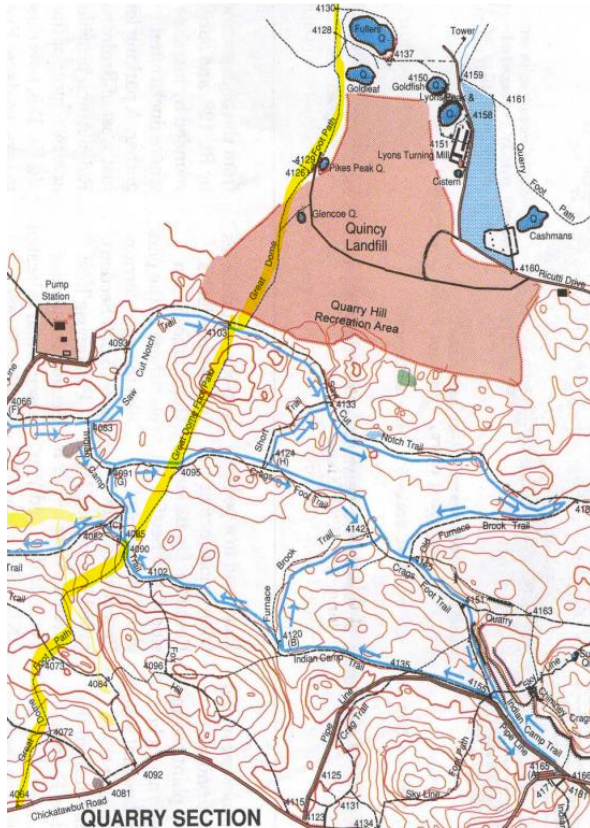
The Gas Plant/Pump Station 'Loop'

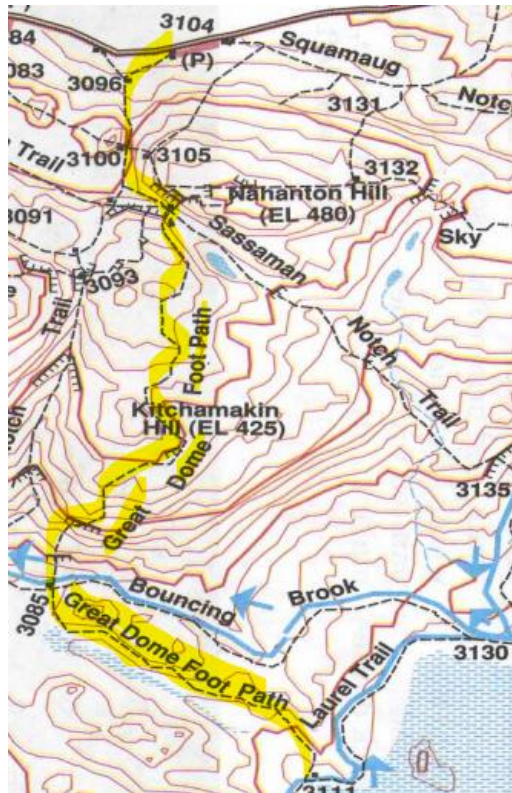


Back when RLBH started there were *two* trails to the gas plant. So we hiked in one and out the other. Since then one has been removed from the map... (but it's still there and well used.) Not sure why it was removed from the map, but it was and we no longer do that loop... we typically wade through the wet pipeline in to, and back out from, the gas plant.

[Update: Again, the 2020 DCR map now re-includes this trail!]

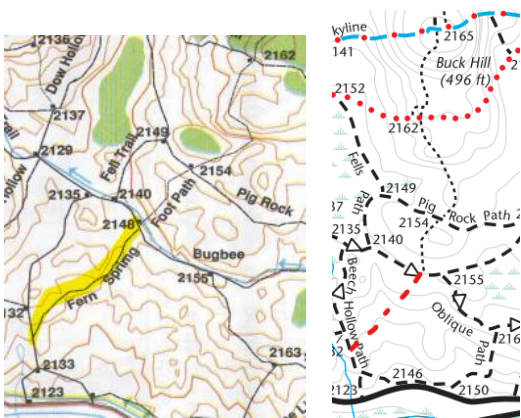
Great Dome Foot Path





“Back in the day” Great Dome Foot Path was a very long, windy, small “single dot” type trail that ran all the way from the Great Cedar Swamp to the Quarries. It must have been a very pleasant walk. Parts still exist today, and they are some of my favorite places to walk.

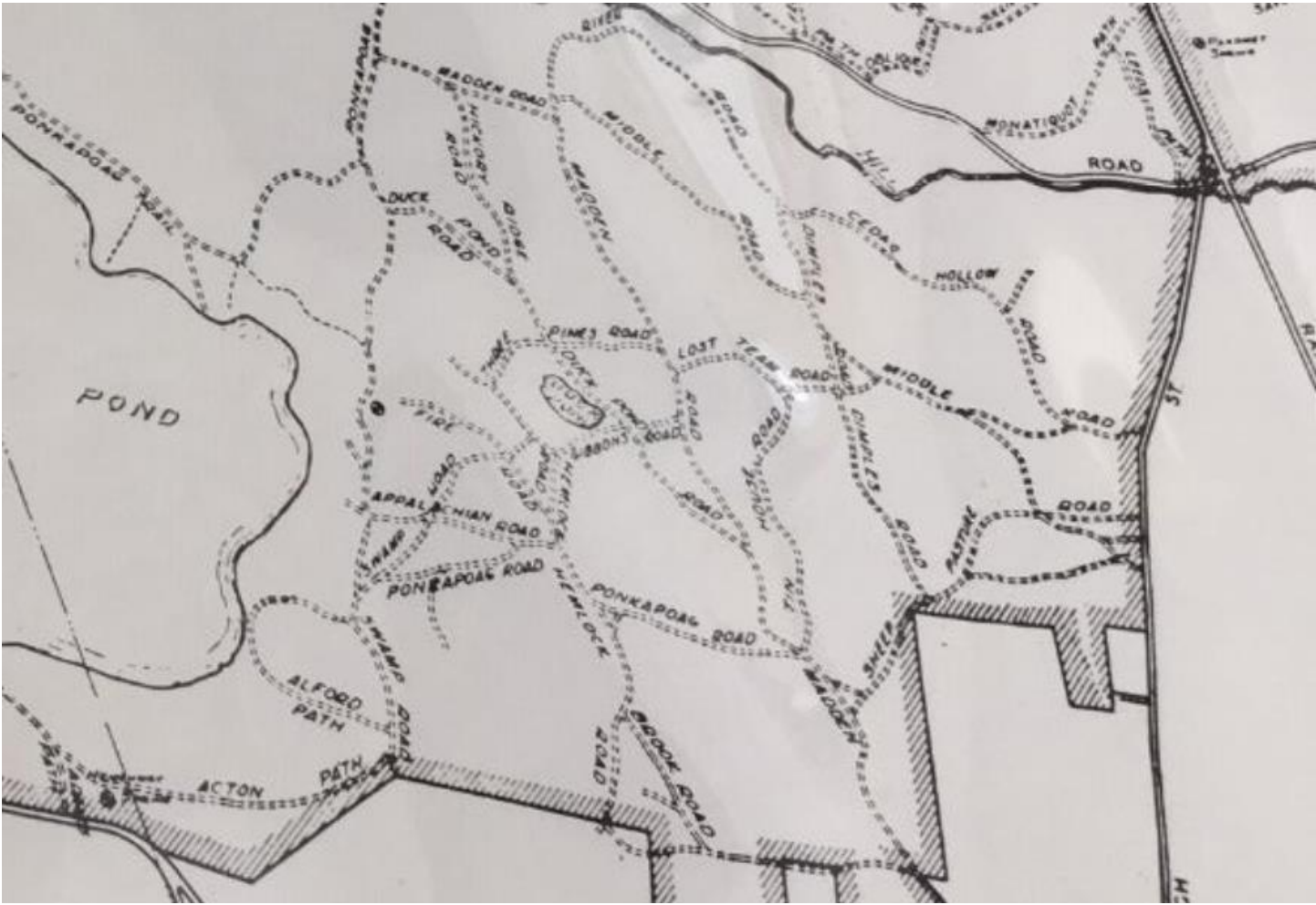
Fern Spring Foot Path – Southern portion



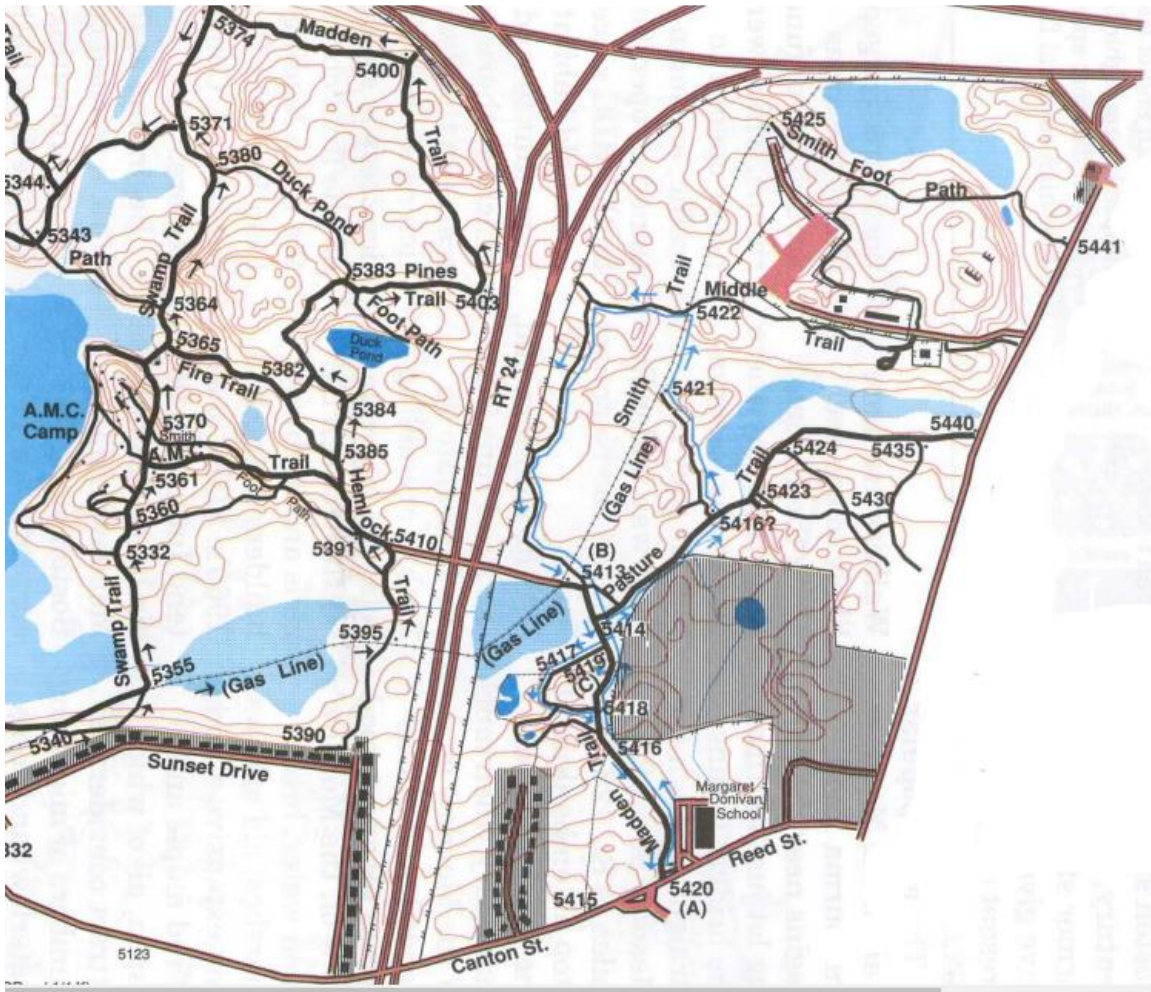
Like many others it is still there, well used, and (until I understood it) it *always* confused me because it isn't on the current map.

Rt 24 interruptions

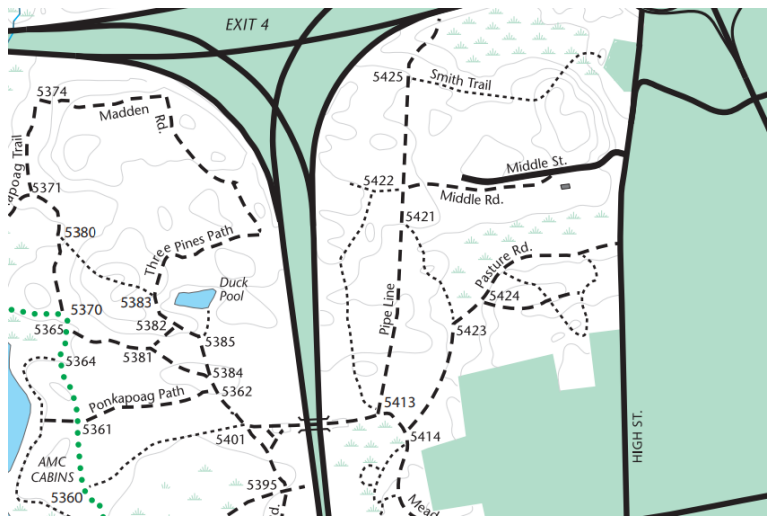
Most of us know ‘The Horse Bridge’. It was built to connect the stables in Randolph to the Ponkapoag section when Rt 24 was built and would have cut them off. (And as many know it was rebuilt recently.) But there used to be other connections across where Rt 24 is now.



Pre "New Rt 128" and Rt 24, from the 1946 Blue Hills map.



The Friends of the Blue Hills historic map



2016 DCR map

As explained in a previous issue, the “Blue Smith Trail” was built to connect High Street in Randolph to the AMC Cabins on Ponkapoag Pond. Unfortunately I couldn’t find a map showing this trail when it was complete, before Rt 24 cut it off.

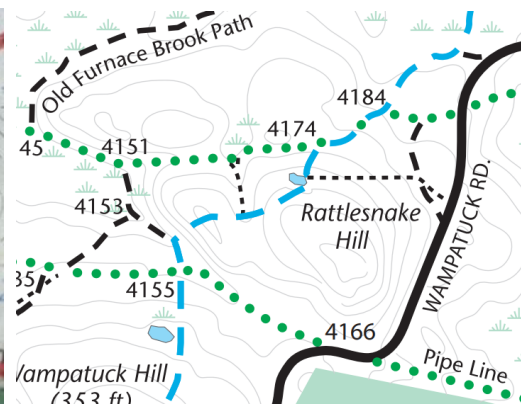
Chimney Crag Foot Path



Above is an old FBH map



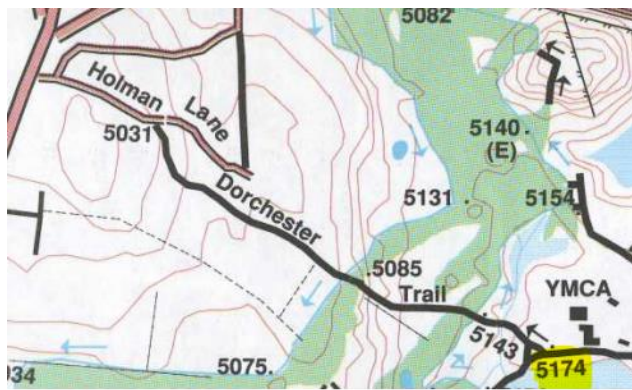
2006 DCR map showing the trail



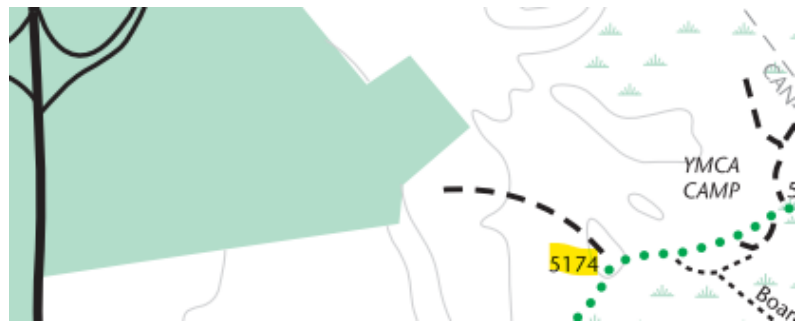
Current DCR map without the trail

There used to be a "Rattlesnake Mountain" trail, called Chimney Crag Foot Path on the old FBH maps. It started (or ended) just below the summit of Rattlesnake, on the 'back side' (Think leaving the top and heading towards Shea Rink.) You come down about 50' and there is a right. It ran along the top of the cliffs, a bit back from the edge, and then made a left and went over and down to Wampatuck Road. When RLBH started it was completely impossible to follow. Joe Keogh and I went and spent an evening finding parts of it. [FYI, Joe is *very* good at finding old paint dots.] We also wandered through waist deep brush looking for the rest! Then I went back with my son Bobby and we found most of the rest. [Bobby is good at finding old cut branches on tree trunks. "Look, it used to go past this tree."] Finally, I went back again alone and found the last 'missing link'. [Well, I'm good at knowing where a trail 'belongs' ... and recognizing an old footbed when I *finally* find it.] I cleared the whole thing and put in the paperwork with Friends of the Blue Hills Trailwork to officially adopt it... and DCR came back and said that they wanted to remove it from the next map. :-| Well, when I was last there a couple years ago it was still cleared and you could still follow it. If they wanted it off the map, they should have taken it off before I found and re-cleared it!

Dorchester Trail (Ponkapoag Section)



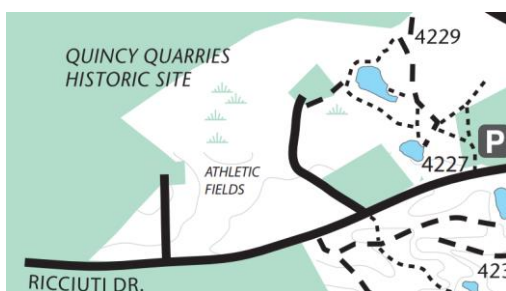
Old FBH Map



vs. current DCR map

When we hike Ponkapoag there is that relatively short dead-end trail which leads out to the golf course. Well, it used to lead *much* further, but has been dropped from the map. Now at least you know why that little piece is there, and what it used to be part of. (That section is an old farm we'll come back to in a later article.)

The trail through the car...

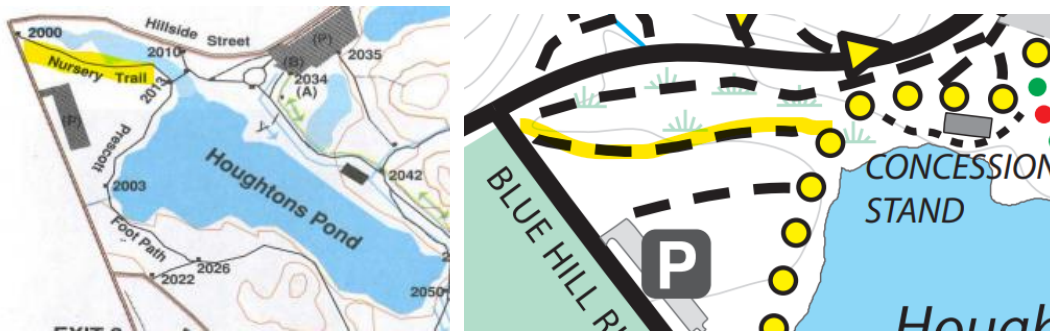


The 2006 DCR map, on the left shows a trail that left from near the top of the inclined railroad and went down, through a lot spot, then ascended up to the athletic field area. What I clearly remember is in that low spot there was the remnants of an old car, and you walked right over what was left of it as you traversed the trail. It was the kind of landmark you remember. Alas on newer maps that trail has gone away, although the portion down to, and including the car, was still there the last time I, for old times' sake, looked.

There are other trails that have gone away over time. Understanding the history of the Blue Hills gives a better appreciation for the trails that are there, even those that are now 'stub' trails out to a highway or the golf course. I'll say it again, the Blue Hills must have seemed much bigger before Rt. 128 and Rt. 24 were built! (And when Rt. 28 and Rt. 138 were just little country streets you could just walk across without taking your life in your hands.)

The old Friends of the Blue Hills maps, available at: <https://friendsofthebluehills.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/trails/docs/fbhmaps.pdf> are very interesting to look at. They show these old trails, and also show names on many of the trails, back before everything converted to intersection numbers.

Some of these names are interesting... for instance:



The 2016 map showed 3 different trails that lead, roughly, from the concession stand to the three way stop sign area. We hike the sidewalk along the road, we hike through the picnic tables out to the parking lot... and we hike what used to be called “Nursery Trail.” “Why was it called Nursery Trail?” you ask... See a future issue for *that* answer. 😊

Bob Vogel

Unless noted map clips are from: <https://friendsofthebluehills.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/trails/docs/fbhmaps.pdf> for the FBH historical maps and <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/10/wj/blue-hills-trail-map-2016.pdf> for the current DCR map.