

VAUGHAN WOODS & HISTORIC HOMESTEAD

A WALKING TOUR OF THE WOODS

19. Heifer Field

During World War I the field was the site of a community potato “victory” garden and later part of a ski run that descended from Tea House Hill. More recently, William Vaughan (Elm Hill Dairy Farm) used it as a heifer pasture.

20. Twelve Foot Falls

Twelve Foot Falls, with its cascading water and large pool, is one of several small falls along Vaughan Brook.

21. Louis Phillipe Pool

One of the large pools between Twelve Foot Falls (23) and Arch Bridge (26) is known to the family as the Louis Phillipe Pool. Although not documented, it is believed that while in America between 1795 and 1797, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand and the Duc D’Orleans Louise Phillipe visited Charles Vaughan, probably staying at John Sheppard’s home on Sheppard’s Point. While fishing in this large pool Louis Phillipe is said to have fallen in; hence the name. Louis Phillipe became King of France in 1830 and appointed Talleyrand ambassador to London.

22. Remains of Wire Mill Dam

The remains of Wire Mill Dam are located on both sides of the brook a few feet above Arch Bridge (26). The dam was a major water power source for the factory below it.

23. Arch Bridge

Arch Bridge, completed in 1930, replaced the wooden bridge that surmounted Wire Mill Dam. The bridge was constructed with stones from the dam and is inscribed with the dates 1840 and 1930, the first being the year the family sold the lower brook area and the latter the year they bought it back.

24. Remains of Stone Seat

William Warren Vaughan constructed a stone seat beside the pool below Arch Bridge. He and his wife visited the spot to enjoy the beauty of the falling water.

25. Remains of Mills

Wire, grist, whiting, plaster, and sandpaper mills dotted the south side of Vaughan Brook below Wire Mill Dam (25) during the late 1800’s. In 1878 the Kennebec Journal reported, “The manufacture of sandpaper, a new enterprise established...in the southern section of this city,... promises to become one of our important industries”. Foundations and traces of quartz and flint are all that remain from the day when factories along Vaughan Brook were “...helping materially to all laboring men in the comfortable support of their families”.

26. Critical Area

The Critical Area contains towering “King” pines, hemlocks, and oaks. This area is not part of the land trust and is so recognized by the State of Maine because of its historic and biological significance.



The Vaughan Woods has been a frequent destination for both the Vaughan family and the community for generations. Its towering pines, stone bridges (which are the source of its nickname, Hobbitland), the Vaughan Brook and the falls of Cascade Pond provide a respite from the rush of everyday life. In 1991, a conservation easement was granted to the Kennebec Land Trust to protect the Woods from new land use and development, insuring its continuance as a place of recreation and tranquility for the public. The fate of these woods, however, was not always so secure, and the land wasn’t always forested. Benjamin Vaughan inherited the land that contains Vaughan Woods from his mother’s family, the Hallowells, in the late 1700’s. According to some sources, in the 1830’s, Benjamin’s daughter Sarah lost a significant investment when President Andrew Jackson decided not to renew the Bank of the United States’ charter where she had entrusted her money. As a result, she was forced to sell part of the Woods. The land on both sides of Vaughan Brook was developed into an industrial park of sorts, and a number of mills were constructed, including a wire mill and a sandpaper mill. In the early 1900’s, William Warren Vaughan, Sarah’s great-nephew, spent considerable time and resources buying back the lands that Sarah and other family members had sold. It was he who oversaw the building of the stone bridges. In the 1800’s, much of what is now forested was pasture. While the stand of pines that borders the homestead are thought to be hundreds of years old, another stand near Cascade Pond called the Kelso Pines were set out in 1908 on a bare hillside to prevent erosion. In the late 1800’s, the main trail loop was used to convey carriages and later motorized vehicles up to the “teahouse”, a gazebo that no longer exists which provided a view of the surrounding towns.

POINTS OF INTEREST

1. The Homestead

This historic property, settled in 1794 in Hallowell, Maine, was home to six generations of Vaughans. Today, in partnership with our community, we strive to to make the Vaughan Homestead a place of living history a source of education, tranquility and inspiration for our community today and for generations to come. In 1797, Benjamin Vaughan, a former member of British Parliament, moved into a home on the banks of the Kennebec River, a home built for him at the direction of his brother Charles. While spacious and elegant by the standards of early Hallowell, the house was likely shockingly rustic for a family of wealthy London merchants. However, the Vaughans settled in and began a love affair with the house and grounds that lasted for 7 generations. In 2003, Diana (Vaughan) and George Gibson, created the Vaughan Homestead Foundation with a vision for preserving and interpreting the homestead’s environmental and cultural setting for their historical and educational values, and to make the Vaughan Homestead and its setting relevant, useful and accessible to the people of Hallowell, Maine and surrounding areas.

2. Corniche

William Warren Vaughan carved the upper woods road, known to the family as the Corniche, out of the north hill above Vaughan Brook. He named it after the famous scenic drive along the Mediterranean coast from France to the border of Italy. Mr. Vaughan employed Hallowell Granite Company workers to construct the road and bridges. Three stone bridges span small ravines along the Corniche to the Kelso Pines. The third bridge allows water to drain from the Elm Hill Dairy farm pond into Vaughan Brook. William Warren designed and supervised all the work in Vaughan Woods from the 1890's until his death in 1939.

3. Kelso Pines

The Kelso Pines cover the hillside behind the Elm Hill Farm pond bridge. They were planted in 1908 to prevent erosion and named after the man who planted them.

4. Stickney & Page Dam

The Stickney & Page dam was constructed in 1871. It replaced an earthen one built in 1840 and acted as a reserve reservoir for three dams below it. William Warren Vaughan removed the gate house and boards. Later, a cut was made in the face of the dam to lower the pressure during heavy rains. Commercial use of the dam continued until ice harvesting ceased on Cascade Pond after World War II. The dam is registered under current state laws.

5. Driving Bridge

William Warren Vaughan first built the driving bridge for horse-drawn carriages and then reinforced it to support automobiles. Topped with granite rails, it allowed older family members to ride over the brook en route to Tea House Hill (15).

6. Uncle Sam Vaughan's Bridge

Uncle Sam Vaughan constructed this low but sturdy bridge of granite runners at the turn of the century. Despite spring runoffs, hurricanes, and flash floods, the bridge appears as it did nearly one hundred years ago. Upon crossing Uncle Sam's Bridge, one may follow a trail to the Arch Bridge (26).

7. Bath House and Beach

William Warren constructed a bath house and beach on the western end of the Stickney & Page Dam (4) in the 1920's. A diving board was placed on the dam and the Cascade Pond became a community swimming area. The family provided a life guard, but the project was later abandoned when it was deemed too dangerous. (photo of public nuisance and swimming card.)

8. Remains of Cattle Tunnel

Brothers William Warren Vaughan and Benjamin Vaughan shared ownership of the Homestead. William Warren had a summer home on Mt. Desert Island and Benjamin lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Benjamin did not like William Warren's fenced-in carriage road because it prevented his cows from crossing to an adjacent pasture. William Warren resolved the matter by constructing a tunnel under the carriage road. The remains of the tunnel are visible on each side of the carriage road.

9. Currier Spring

Currier Spring, named after the family that once owned the land around it, provided water for the Homestead. It flows much as it did years ago and drains into Vaughan Brook on the southeast side of the Driving Bridge (5).

10. Road to Farmingdale Property

A right-of-way road connected Vaughan Woods and a large parcel of land adjacent to the Litchfield and Smith Roads in Farmingdale, believed to have once been owned by the Vaughans. Remains of the road and bordering trees may be seen on the Hallowell-Farmingdale line east of the Smith Road.

11. Hall-Dale High School

The woods road that now connects with Hall-Dale High School originally allowed access to Maple Street. Today, students and teachers frequently take field trips through the woods.

12. Old Granite Quarry

The old granite quarry, one of two in the woods, provided foundation stones for the Homestead. Only traces of stone cutting may be found today.

13. Geodetic Survey Marker

Off to the right is a geodetic survey marker. It is secured to a boulder and marks a reference point 319' above sea level.

14. Remains of Stone Seat

The pile of stones beyond the geodetic marker once composed a large stone seat. One could sit on the throne-like structure and view Loudon Hill and the Kennebec River to the East.

15. Uncle Sam Vaughan's Red Pine

The lone Red pine, planted by Uncle Sam Vaughan, stands at the beginning of what was once a small ski run.

16. Old Granite Quarry

The small granite quarry, second of two in the woods, provided foundation stones for the Homestead. Traces of stone cutting are visible today.

17. Rice Pines

The Rice Pines, named after the family that once owned the land, extend on each side of the trail from the old granite quarry (19) to the Heifer field (22).

18. Original Woods Road

A woods road borders the southwest side of the Heifer Field (22) and is hardly distinguishable today. When pasturing heifers was discontinued, the path could then cross the field.