

Bolton

Walking Back in Time



Courtesy UVM Special Collections

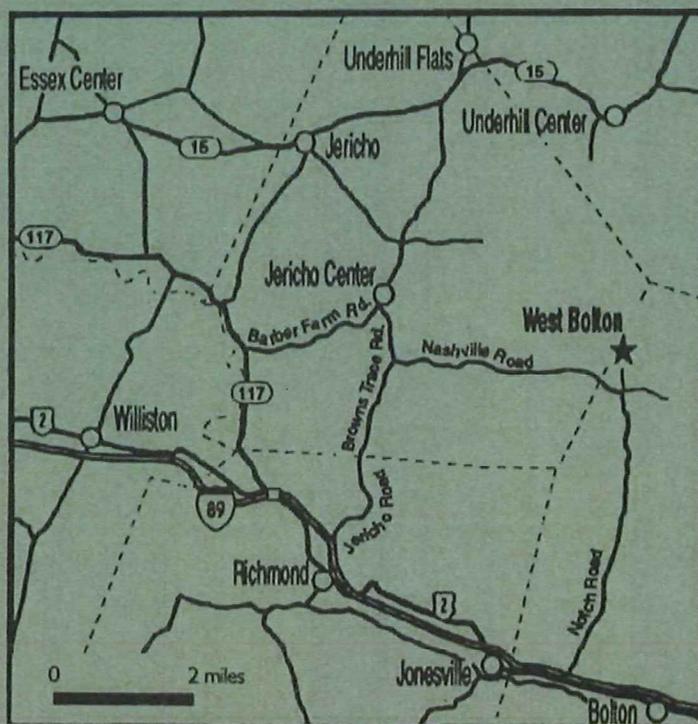
The West Bolton History Trail

Ethan Allen Firing Range
West Bolton, Vermont

This booklet was prepared for the Vermont Army National Guard by the University of Vermont's Consulting Archaeology Program. Colonel Alan Nye and the Environmental Staff provided invaluable assistance. All photos courtesy of the National Guard, unless otherwise noted.

Group tours are available. To insure your safety, you must get permission before you follow the history trail. Please contact:

Colonel Alan Nye
Director of Facilities
Vermont Army National Guard
Building #5, Camp Johnson
Colchester, Vermont 05446
802-654-0306



Directions: From Jericho, take Nashville Road east to West Bolton. In West Bolton, turn left (north) on to Cemetery Road. Cross over a single lane bridge and follow Cemetery Road about ¼ mile to the parking area in front of the cemetery.

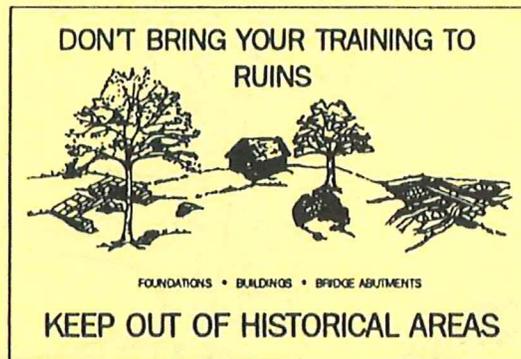
Welcome to the Ethan Allen Firing Range

The Ethan Allen Firing Range is a facility operated by the Vermont Army National Guard. Guard members and other military units and law enforcement agencies train here. The range also includes cross country ski trails used by local schools and the U.S. Biathlon team. General Dynamics operates a test firing facility in the center of the range.



The United States government began acquiring land here in 1926 so soldiers stationed at Fort Ethan Allen in Colchester could safely engage in artillery training with heavy guns. In 1941, when improved weapons demanded longer ranges, additional land was purchased. Today, the range covers 11,000 acres in the towns of Jericho, Underhill and Bolton.

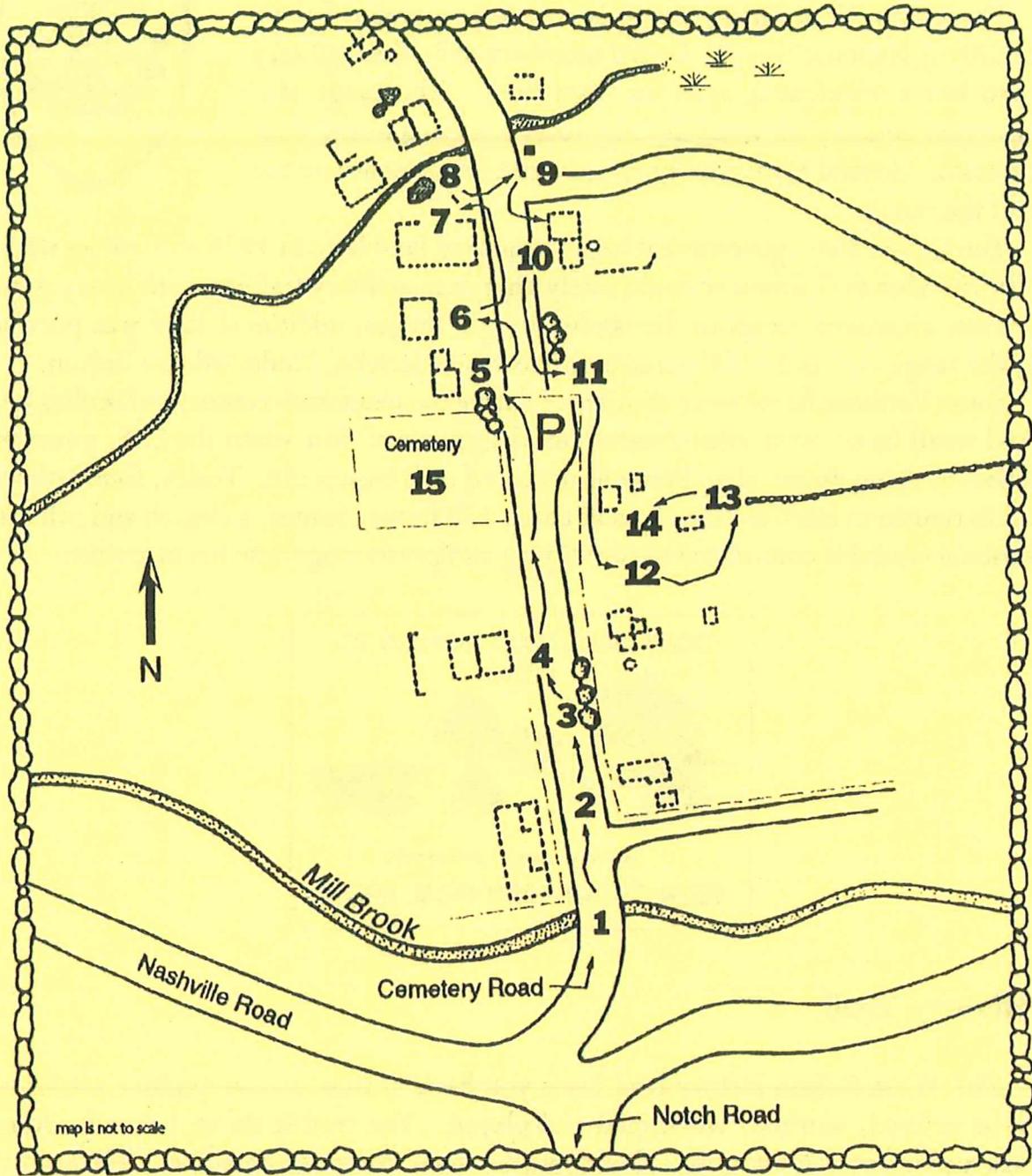
Some Vermont farms were abandoned during the nineteenth century as families headed west and small farms were consolidated into larger ones. But when the U.S. government established the firing range, abandonment occurred on a large scale. Today, foundations and stone walls remain to mark the locations of about 130 farms, homes, a church and other sites. The National Guard is committed to identifying and preserving these historic sites.



The History Trail

The West Bolton history trail leads you back in time as you explore places where people once lived, worked, worshiped and played. The trail is about 1.4 miles long and provides a pleasant 1-hour walk. Comfortable shoes are recommended. The trail is not handicapped accessible.

Please park in the open area in front of the West Bolton cemetery. Walk back down the road to the bridge over Mill Brook to begin the tour. The numbered trail stops in this booklet correspond to signs along the trail. Please watch your step around the cellar holes and wells.



While you're walking, use the map on the back cover.

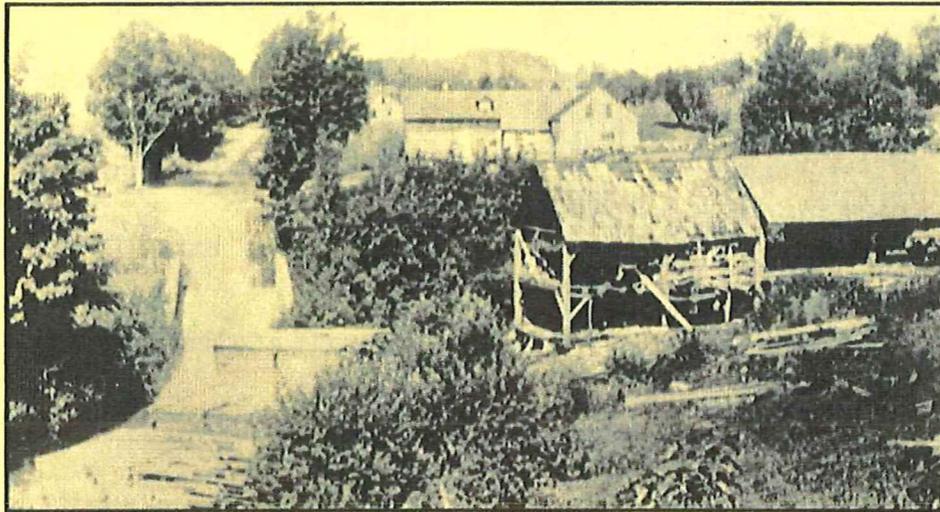
West Bolton, Village in the Hills

In 1762, the boundaries of the town of Bolton were established without regard to the uneven topography. The Winooski River crosses the southern part of town, creating a broad, flat valley. From there, the foothills of the Green Mountains rise to the north, where elevations reach over 1,500 feet. The town's first settlers cleared farms in the rich Winooski valley. The more mountainous area near West Bolton was settled a little later. Many West Bolton settlers arrived by way of the Lee River valley and Nashville Road through Jericho rather than up the long steep grade from the south.

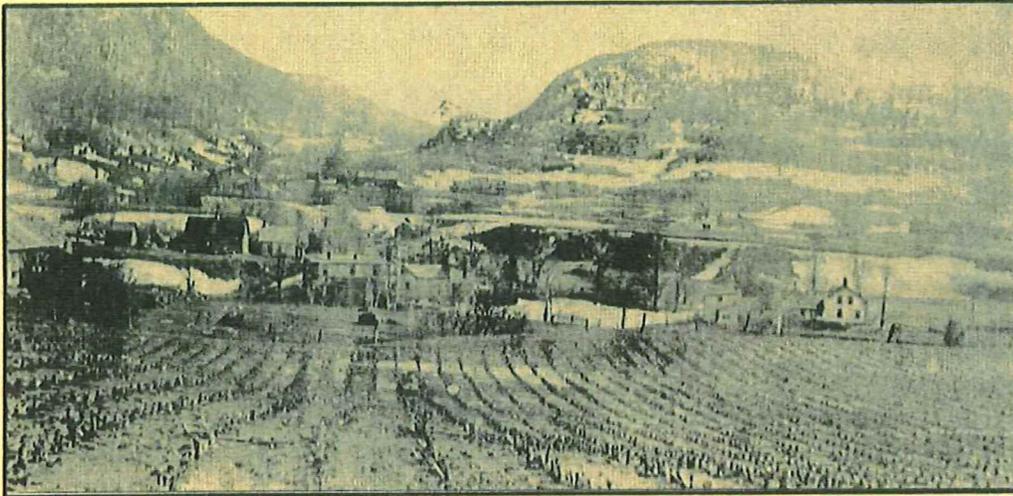
Throughout most of its history, West Bolton was a farming and lumbering community. The village occupied some of the better farm land on the west side of the Green Mountains. Farmers raised potatoes, hay, corn and oats. Where steep and rocky soils made the land difficult to plow, farmers maintained pastures and woodlots.

1. Mill Brook Sawmills

Along Mill Brook, which passes under this bridge, there were several dams and mill sites where lumber was processed. Moses Colton built the first sawmill here in 1829. In 1849 and 1852 he added two mills upstream. The mills processed spruce, hemlock, beech, birch and maple to make shingles, boards, barrels, boxes, butter tubs, and furniture. In the 1880s, the busy mills cut over 450 miles of lumber each year.



Compare this sawmill photo with what you can see today. Stand on the bridge and look to the southeast. You have to imagine the noise of the saw, the piles of lumber, the smell of sawdust.



Mrs. Dewey Nash mailed this post card in 1919. The view looks across the southern part of West Bolton toward Bolton Notch.

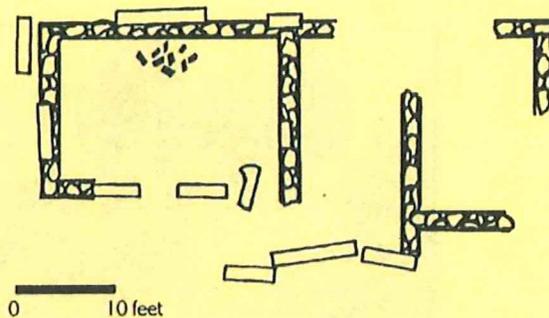
Head north up the road. Stop 2 is on the right side of the road.

2. Forests Hide the Farms

This spot was once in the middle of Moses Colton's bustling 270-acre farm. Today all evidence of the Colton farm is hidden by a forest that is 50-60 years old. Behind the fence to the right is the foundation for his house, built in 1825. Behind the fence on the left are the remains of a large barn. In the photo above, the land around the barn was all open fields.



A family gathering at the Colton house.



Map of the Colton house foundation remains.

Continue north on the road. Stop 3 is on the right side of the road.

3. Living Artifacts

The old sugar maple trees along the road stand out from the younger trees around them. A West Bolton farmer planted these maples about 100 years ago to improve the appearance of his farmstead. Off the road, West Bolton farmers had sugar bushes and sugar

houses where they collected sap and boiled it to produce sugar.

 Look closely at the trunks of these maples to find the remains of an old barbed wire fence.

Other Living Artifacts



Day
Lilies



Lilacs

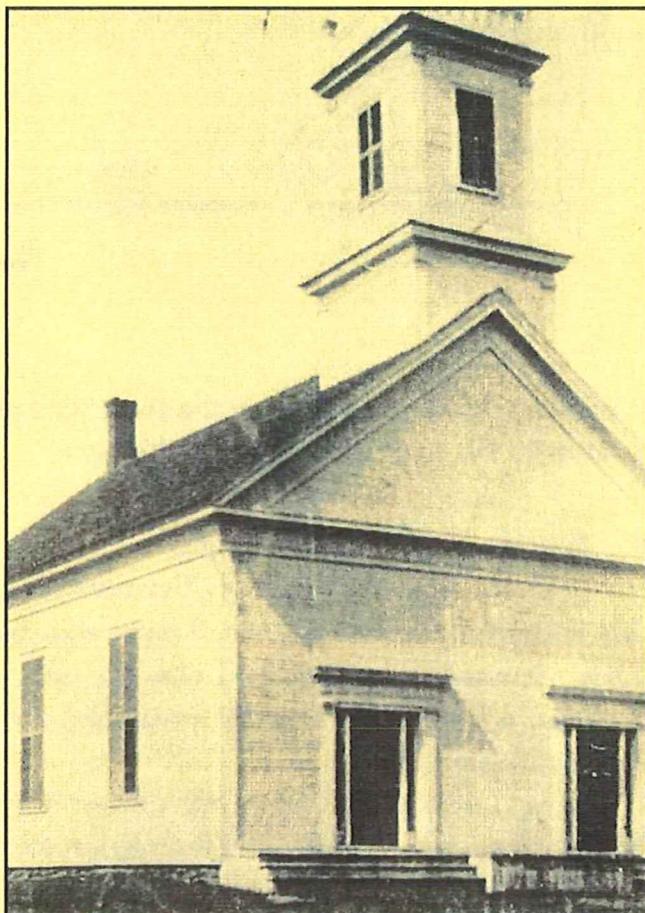


Roses

Head up the road. Stop 4 is off the road to the left--follow the trail markers.

4. The West Bolton Baptist Church

The West Bolton Baptist Church stood on this large foundation from 1867 until the 1940s. The Baptists organized a congregation in the 1840s. For the first two decades, they met in private homes with traveling ministers. The church, built on land leased from Moses Colton, cost \$3,000 to build and held up to 250 people. For years, the church was an important community institution. Members lived in West Bolton and nearby Jericho and Underhill. By 1937, however, the remaining six members were forced to disband the church. The government bought the building in 1941.

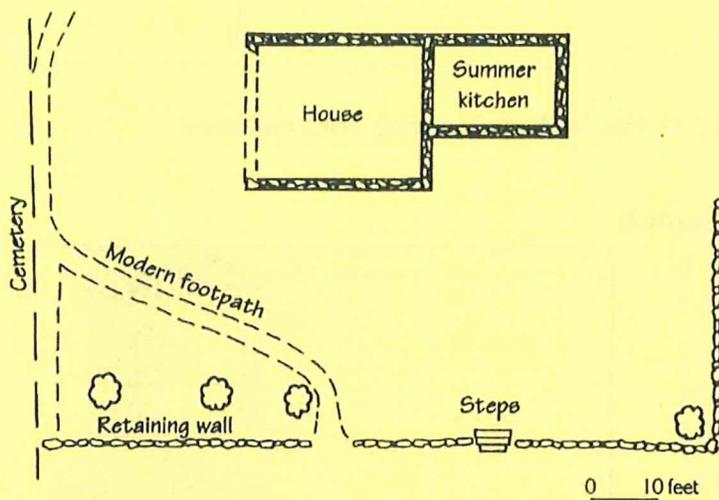


Building Improvements. Look at the church steps in the photograph and the steps in front of you. There are three steps in the photo, but there are four today.

Walk up the road past the cemetery. Go through the Firing Range gate. Stop 5 is on the left.

5. Smith A. Hall House

This is the cellar and foundation for the house Smith A. Hall built in 1864. Hall was a barrel maker, and often had a young apprentice living with his family. He operated the village post office from his house between 1868-1871. Hall moved away in 1889. Jared Tomlinson, operator of a lumber, butter tub and cheese box factory, lived here from 1891-1898.



Look at the stones inside the foundation. Some are cracked and discolored. There is also melted glass around the foundation. This suggests that the house was destroyed by fire. When the U.S. government took over the range property, they removed some buildings and burned others in place. That practice might explain the damaged foundation stones here and elsewhere.

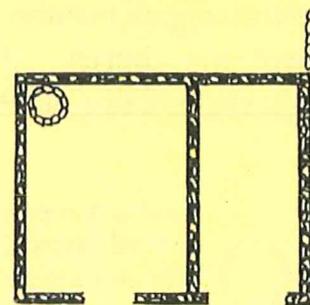
Follow the trail markers through the front yard and down the steps to the road. Follow the trail markers to the next stop, Smith Hall's barn.

6. Smith Hall's Small Barn

Every nineteenth-century Vermont family needed a barn. This is the foundation of a small barn associated with the Hall house. It was big enough for a cow for milk and butter, a pig, chickens, a horse or a team of oxen, and room for feed and a wagon or sleigh.



Look in the back left corner for a small circle of stones. It might be a foundation for a potato bin, part of a cistern for water, or perhaps an early pit silo.

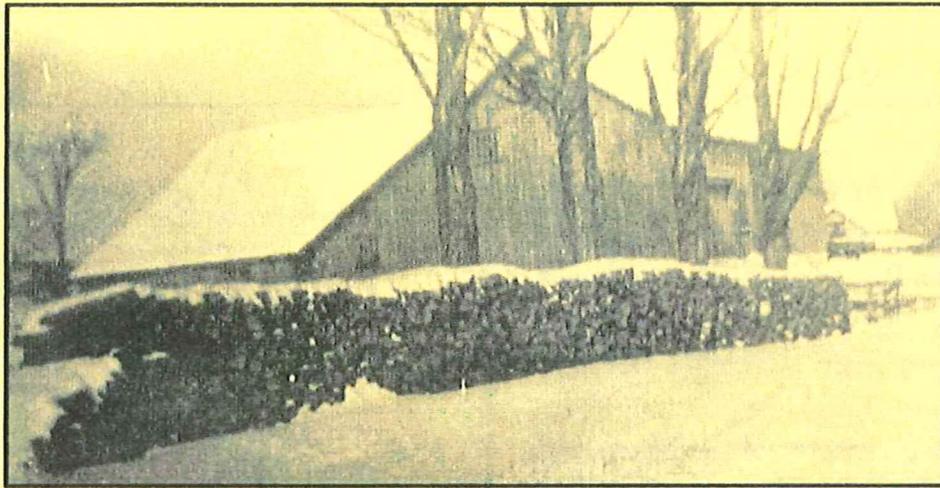


0 10 feet

Follow the trail markers to Stop 7.

7. The Hall-Gile Large Dairy Barn

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Vermont farmers began to focus on dairying. To produce cheese, butter and later fluid milk for urban markets in the Northeast, they increased the size of their herds. They needed larger barns, and often expanded older ones. The barn that stood here belonged to Harmon Hall, who had one of the largest dairy farms in West Bolton. In 1860, he had 17 cows and sold 1,800 pounds of butter.

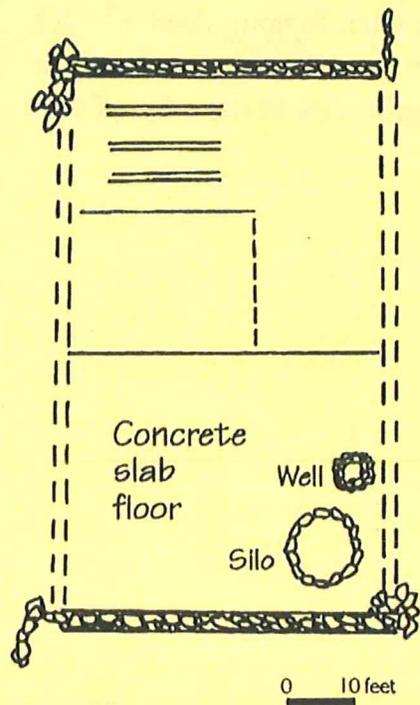


Three clues that tell us this foundation was a dairy barn:

- It's big: 75 x 55 feet.
- There is a large circular depression inside the foundation which may be the base for an early silo where winter feed was stored.
- It has a concrete slab floor, probably added in the early years of this century because it was easier to clean and helped control diseases like bovine tuberculosis.



Archaeologists found the top of a milk can marked "ERD." In the early 20th century, West Bolton farmers like Eugene Davis used metal cans to transport milk to processing plants along the railroad lines.



Follow the trail markers to Stop 8.

8. Rocky Landscape

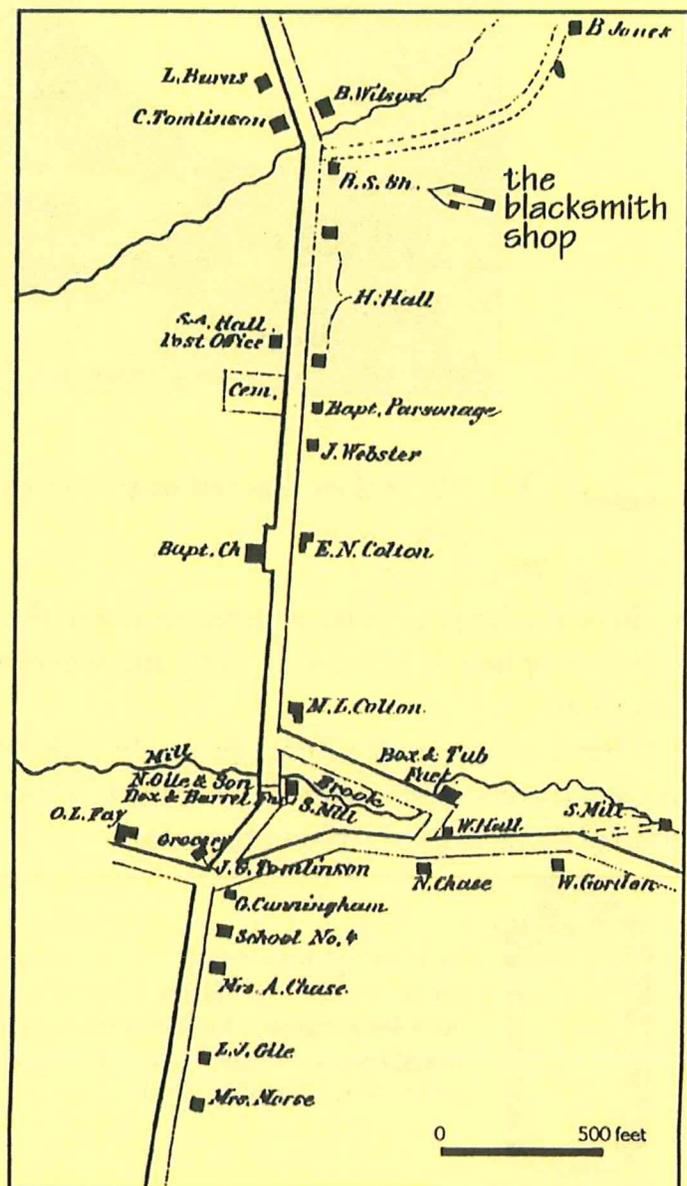
Thousands of years ago, Vermont was buried under 5,000 feet of glacial ice. As the glacier moved, it incorporated sand, silt, clay and rocks. When the ice melted 13,000 years ago, these materials were left behind. Vermont farmers spent many hours clearing rocks from their fields, but some were just too big to move. Large boulders like the one in front of you are called "glacial erratics."

Return to the road.

9. Changing Activities

Today, a sentry might watch over this intersection from the small guard post. In the 1860s, the local blacksmith might have looked up from shoeing a horse or fixing a plow.

Nothing remains of the blacksmith shop. It may have stood in the path of the modern logging road which heads up into the mountains, or in the patch of raspberries at the edge of the road.



West Bolton In 1869

Walk south down the road to the next stop.

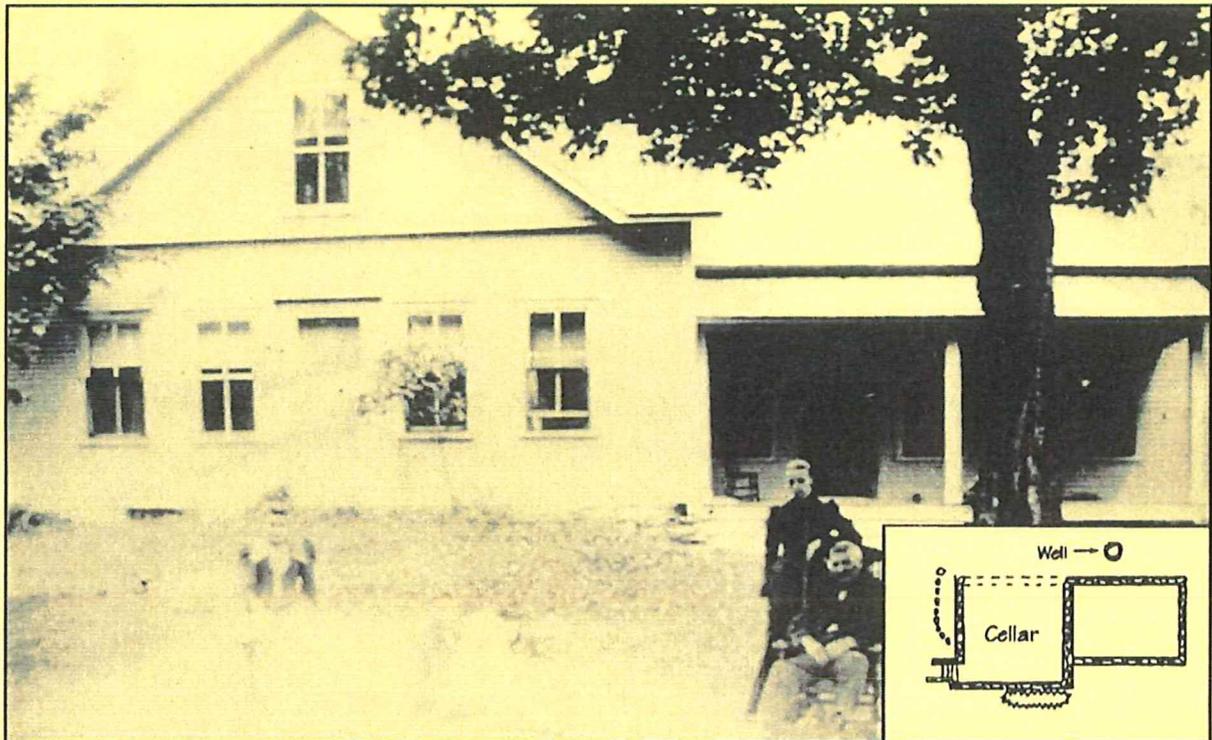
10. The Hall-Gile House

The house that stood on this foundation was probably built by Asher Hall, an early settler from Connecticut. His farm passed to his son, Harmon, in the 1850s. Harmon prospered on the 200-acre farm, producing large amounts of butter and maple sugar. After Harmon died in 1875 from small pox, the farm passed to Perry Towers and then Riley Gile.

The Hall-Gile house grew over time. The main part of the house stood over the deep cellar which is lined with some very large stones. The addition on the south end did not have a deep cellar. Stones and a wall behind the house may be evidence of another addition that just barely shows in the photo below.

Like many of the houses in this part of West Bolton, the Hall-Gile house has a well about 6 feet from the back wall. Covered with a small wooden structure, it might also have provided a cool place to store food.

 Look for the "living artifact" along the front wall.
Can you find signs that the house might have burned?



The Riley Gile family in front of the house. The photograph was taken before 1899 when Nellie, the daughter on the left, died.

0 50 feet

Walk south down the road to the next stop.

11. No Trace of Grandmother Gile's House

In 1857, E. Tomlinson owned a house which once stood in this area. In 1869 it belonged to Harmon Hall. Later, Grandmother Gile lived here. No trace of the house site remains. Bulldozers probably obliterated it when they created the earthen berm or installed the fence which mark the range boundary. Today, the Vermont Army National Guard protects the historic sites in West Bolton during maintenance and training exercises.

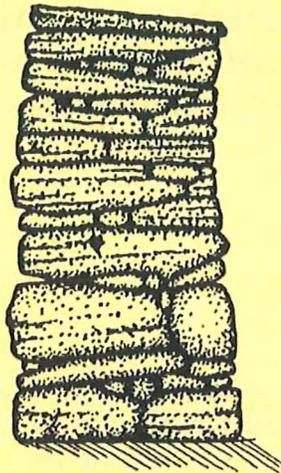


Grandmother Gile is barely visible in the doorway at the left.

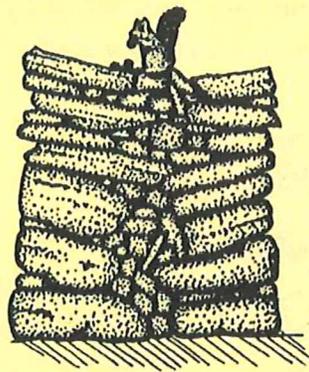
Follow the trail markers to an apple orchard.

13. Good Fences

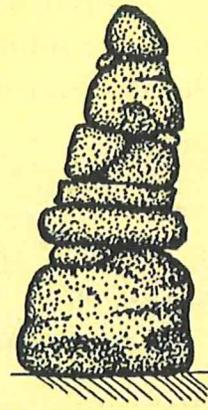
Before farmers could plant crops in West Bolton, they needed to clear rocks out of the fields. They moved the rocks to the edge of the fields, creating miles of stone walls. One survey estimated that in 1871, there were 25,000 miles of stone walls in Vermont. The walls marked property boundaries and kept animals out of the crops. Wall building was slow work. Two men could build only 10-12 feet of wall in one day.



laid wall



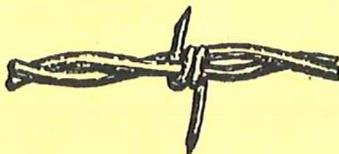
filled wall



single layer wall

Walls around farmyards and gardens were often carefully built. Walls around fields and marking property lines were less carefully constructed. In fields, some stones were simply dumped in piles.

After 1880, West Bolton farmers built fewer stone walls. Wire fencing was less expensive and easier to install and maintain. Often it was installed along the older stone walls. Two kinds of barbed wire have been found in West Bolton.



Glidden. Developed by an Illinois farmer, it was patented in 1874 as "The Winner."



Buckthorn. Patented in 1881 and used as a good fence for sheep, it was expensive and off the market by 1900.

Follow the trail to the next stop.

14. The Baptist Parsonage

In 1863, the Baptist Church built a parsonage for its minister on a small lot on part of the old Daniel Colton farm. The church could not support a full-time minister after 1874, and eventually the church sold the property.

This foundation, which you passed without noticing on your way to the apple orchard, marks the main part of the house. There is a small addition to the north, but only sections of the north and east walls remain. Although the walls used to build the West Bolton cellars and support the houses are substantial, they are threatened by tree roots, frost heaves, and in the past, by people who removed stones to build new walls.



Stone-lined cellars were an important place for food storage. Root vegetables, apples and cider were stored in cellars to protect them from freezing. Butter was stored in tubs or crocks until cold weather, when it was shipped to market.

For more information, look for these books.

Allport, Susan

1990 *Sermons in Stone: The Stone Walls of New England and New York*. W. W. Norton, New York.

Bonfield, Lynn A. and Mary C. Morrison

1995 *Roxana's Children: The Biography of a Nineteenth-Century Vermont Family*. University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA.

Haas, Jessie

1997 *Westminster West* (fiction, grades 5-9). Greenwillow Books, New York.

Hastings, Scott F.

1992 *Up in the Morning Early: Vermont Farm Families in the Thirties*. University Press of New England, Hanover, NH.

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

1994 *A Guide for Landowners on Historic Features and Landscapes in Vermont's Forests*. Waterbury, VT.

Visser, Thomas

1997 *Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings*. University Press of New England, Hanover, NH.

Wessels, Tom

1997 *Reading the Forested Landscape*. Countryman Press, Woodstock, VT.

You may also contact these groups.

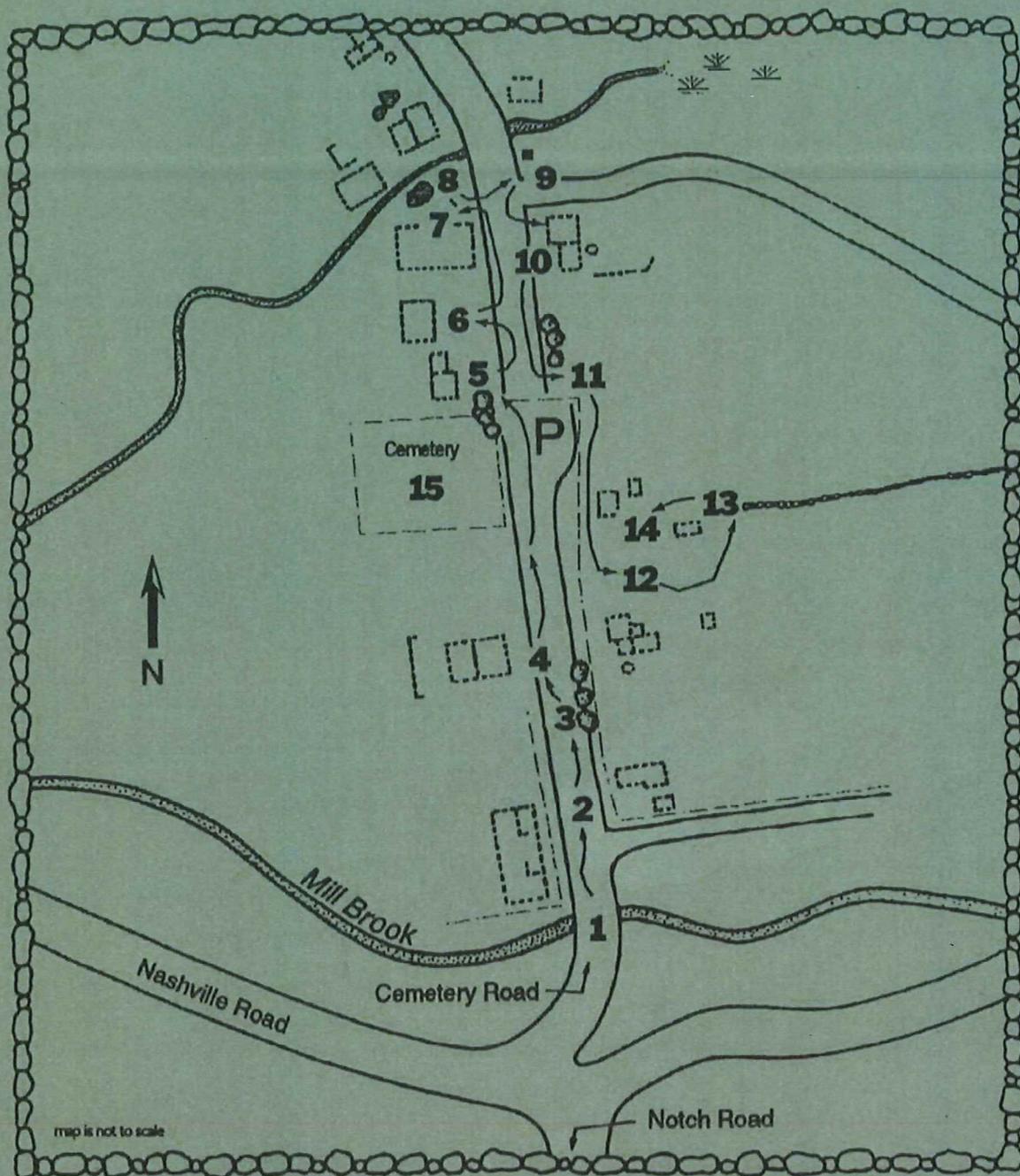
Consulting Archaeology Program, University of Vermont, 112 University Heights, Burlington, VT 05405, 802-656-4310.

Jericho Historical Society, Old Red Mill, Rt. 15, P.O. Box 35, Jericho, VT 05465.

State Archaeologist, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, National Life Building, Drawer 20 Montpelier, VT 05620-0501. 802-828-3211.

Vermont Archaeological Society, P.O. Box 663, Burlington, VT 05401.

Vermont Old Cemetery Association. Membership: Richard Jacobson, 7 Harbor Ridge Road, South Burlington, VT 05403.



Take only pictures, leave only footprints.

Please remember that the Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 prohibit excavation, collection, removal and disturbance of archaeological resources on the Ethan Allen Firing Range without a permit. ARPA also prohibits the use of metal detectors without permission.