



HANOVER CONSERVANCY

Protecting land & water
in our community

HANOVER HIKE OF THE MONTH

JUNE – Historic Wolfeboro Road West

An invigorating 2 hour hike on Hanover's most historic road, visiting three cellar holes and an unusual viewpoint.

Hiking distance: 2.8 miles one way

Vertical gain: 600'

Driving directions:

- **Arrange with a friend to leave a car at the hike's end OR give yourself time to hike back to your car.**
- **Car drop:** from downtown Hanover and the Green, take E. Wheelock Street east up the hill; continue as it becomes Trescott Road. Turn L onto Etna Road. Drive through Etna village, pass a cemetery on L, and turn L onto Dogford Road. Follow as it turns sharply R past a farm pond; turn L into the Trescott parking area. To reach the start point, return to Trescott Road and turn R onto Grasse Road. Follow as it turns L and heads down the hill. Stay R for Storrs Pond and Oak Hill. Park at the Oak Hill parking area at R.
- **Starting point for a round trip hike:** from downtown Hanover and the Green, take the Wolfeboro Road (known today as College Street) north through campus past the medical school. At the Dewey Field light, stay straight to join Lyme Road. Drive past the golf course to the rotary and bear R onto Reservoir Road (still on the old Wolfeboro Road route). Turn sharply L toward Storrs Pond and Oak Hill as the road enters the woods. Park at the Oak Hill parking area at R.

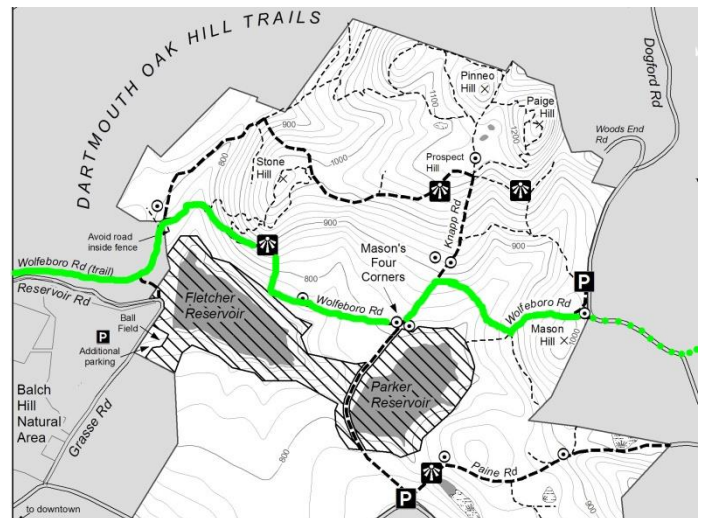
What you should know:

- **Welcome to your water source!** Most of this hike crosses the Trescott Water Supply Lands. Drinking water for much of Hanover and for Dartmouth College comes from this area, so special rules apply for visitors.
- Dogs are welcome but *must always be leashed*; please pick up after your pet.
- You may encounter forestry vehicles; they have the right of way.
- Hiking times are approximate. Plan on 2 hours; longer if you plan to spend time enjoying the views.



HIKING DIRECTIONS – route outlined in green

- Begin your hike by walking back up the lane to a path entrance between the white Storrs Pond sign and the green street sign for Reservoir Road. Five steps in, and you're on the clearly discernable, original route of the Wolfeboro Road. Our forebears chose a good path - it is safely out of the way of Camp Brook, which washed out Reservoir Road a few years back.
- Walk up through the hemlocks that shade the valley of this brook. You can imagine the relief of Royal Governor Wentworth, after several days' ride on the new road, making his final descent toward his destination, Dartmouth College's second commencement in 1772. In hopes of making it to the first one, Governor Wentworth



ordered the cutting of the Wolfeboro Road, from his home in Wolfeborough across to Hanover, in 1770. At a public meeting on July 30 of that year, a committee of Hanover citizens was appointed to “...run a line from near the southwest corner of Hanover to the Great Pond, or Governor’s seat, at Wolfeborough, and view the situation of the land and convenience for a highway, and make return the first Monday in October next.” Members were paid four shillings and sixpence per day (Hanover Center’s Jonathan Freeman earned six shillings and sixpence/day as surveyor) and spent ten days surveying the route. In October, they gained approval to lay it out from the College to the Canaan line. Hanover landowners were assessed a penny and a half per acre to raise the 120£ needed to complete the road.



- **Royal Governor John Wentworth**, appointed in 1766 by King George III to take over management of the colony of New Hampshire from his infamous uncle Benning, helped Eleazar Wheelock secure the charter for Dartmouth College. Here he appears as quite the dandy, but indeed he was an eager outdoorsman and leapt at any chance to go camping and rusticing in his colony’s abundant wilderness. While he was on the trail happily getting dirty and sleeping on the ground, his wife was fixated on having a fancy ballroom at their country estate in Wolfeborough.

- In about a half mile, just as the road starts gently downhill, look R for a trail coming in from Reservoir Road where it joins Grasse Road. If you want to return to this side of the Trescott lands, you can park at the ball field near the water filtration plant and take this path over a foot bridge.

- You are near the foot of **Fletcher Reservoir**, first of two impoundments built on Camp Brook to provide water to downtown Hanover and Dartmouth College. This reservoir flooded a section of the Wolfeboro Road, so we will bear L and head uphill to avoid this section and the protected area around it. Because the public is not permitted within 250 feet of the waters, we’ll have to take a few side trails, but these are not without their delights!
- After six minutes’ walk from the trail junction, a mowed ski trail comes in from the L. A few yards further, look closely for the turn to the R as the ski trail veers off to the L – your goal is a sign, posted a short way into the woods at the **Trescott lands boundary**. Time to leash your dog, if your pup is along for the hike.
- This trail takes you over an old woods road and soon, a newly built bridge over an intermittent stream. The trail is marked in most places with flagging and is well trodden, following the contour of Stone Hill (more about Stone – a person, not a geological feature - in a moment). Side trails built by mountain bikers come in at L in several places; avoid these and stay on the generally straight path.
- Soon, you’ll see a stone wall ahead. Head for the break in the wall and emerge from the forest to a vantage point. This unusual view of **Velvet Rocks**, with the waters of Fletcher Reservoir at R, is your reward for the detour off the old road.
- Head downhill, following stakes in the open field, to **rejoin the Wolfeboro Road** at a well-marked opening in the trees. Look R to see where the old road went west, and turn L to resume your pilgrimage. Red boundary signs on the R and orange blazes on trees indicate the reservoir buffer, not open to the public (or dogs hoping for a swim).
- Walking on the old road is easy and grades are gentle. Keep your eyes out for the cellar hole at L of the **old Stone Farm**, on a small rise (double circle on the map). Plans to dam Camp Brook meant that farmers in its watershed would be displaced. In 1893, Dartmouth College simply swapped farms with Charles Stone. It’s said that he milked his cows here in the morning of the move, then herded his cows down the Wolfeboro Road and through downtown Hanover, and installed them in their new barn near Mink Brook just south of town, where he milked them that evening.

- Continue east on the Wolfeboro Road to **Mason's Four Corners**. Now a log landing, the Four Corners was once a major intersection where the Wolfeboro Road crosses the more recent Knapp Road. Look for a sign posted on a tree opposite, confirming your location.
- **Knapp Road** was laid out Nov. 13, 1793, named for Lt. Peter Knapp of Hanover's Revolutionary War-era militia. The cellar hole of his homestead is on the northeast corner of this intersection. By 1855, J. J. Mason lived here, followed by Charles Mason by 1892. The 160-acre **Mason Farm** had a 100-tree apple orchard and 200-tree sugarbush. Mason also kept 12 dairy cows and 70 Merino sheep. In the days before the Civil War, **Hanover was one of the four top sheep towns** in New Hampshire (after Walpole, Lyme, and Lebanon). The water company purchased Mason's farm by 1903 for \$4000.
- At the NW corner of this intersection stood the one-room **District #4 schoolhouse** (1807). Look for an interpretive sign here for more about these historic sites.
- The Wolfeboro Road was probably only the second road in Hanover not only to be properly laid out but also to be mapped and recorded. Like many early roads, over the years its location has shifted, with and without the benefit of surveys and deeds. The entire road remained in use through the 19th century until construction of Fletcher Reservoir in 1893 interrupted its path.
- As a member of Dartmouth's new Board of Trustees, Wentworth hoped to cross it for the first commencement of four students in 1771, but not all the communities in its path felt obliged to cooperate in its construction (except Hanover, of course!). It wasn't ready for another year, and was still just a rough trace, not a "road" as we imagine it. In 1771 the governor ended up going by way of Haverhill.
- The Wolfeboro Road continues E, still marked by old sugar maples but obscured by brush. Here again, we must take a detour to avoid the reservoir buffer, this time for the Parker Reservoir. After imagining the busy neighborhood that once existed here, continue up Knapp Road, itself lined with stately old maples and stone walls. In a few minutes you'll notice another sign at R for the **trail to Dogford Road**. Turn R here.
- The hillsides beyond are partly open and are being replanted. These lands experienced major blowdowns during the **2007 Patriot's Day Windstorm**. Two million board feet of logs and 3,100 cords of pulp were salvaged. This storm hit heaviest in the plantations, leaving natural stands largely unaffected. The forest management plan calls for creating more natural, uneven-aged stands rather than even-aged plantations.
- Catch glimpses of Parker Reservoir as the trail turns SE to rejoin the old Wolfeboro Road after a short dip.
- Back to Royal Governor John Wentworth - he visited Hanover for the third and last time in 1773, once again for the College's commencement exercises, presumably traveling over his new highway. He was not able to attend in 1774, and by the summer of 1775 he had fled New Hampshire after war broke out with Great Britain.



- Back to the mundane - is your **dog still on its leash**? Give yourself a gold star and know that there are porcupines nearby.
- Turn L, uphill, returning to the old road. It climbs gently but steadily, and stone walls become more impressive. You're seeing the handiwork of one Wright, who owned the farm at the final cellar hole we will visit today. He was there in 1855; by 1892, J.W. and W.D. Chandler had taken over his farm. As the gate and Dogford Road come into view, look for the cellar hole at L – it's the largest yet. Find the threshold stone and admire the drylaid stonework, all done without benefit of power machinery.
- **From here, you have a choice.** If you dropped your car at the Dogford Road parking lot, head N on the light trail that leads from the cellar hole and parallels the road for the short distance to the lot. You can also continue by foot, or in your car, along the route of the Wolfeboro Road by following Dogford Road straight E to where it turns just past an historic farmhouse at L.

- If you are feeling adventurous, have 15 minutes, and seek the very best Wolfeboro Road experience of all, park on the shoulder of Dogford Road at the turn (there is room for one carefully parked car) and proceed on foot up the old road as it continues as a Class VI road through a pasture.
- Note the cattle fence, *which is electrified*. Grasp the gray plastic handle to cross the fence – carefully – and immediately replace the handle behind you. This is the home of Scottish Highlander cattle, but the public is still allowed on the old road, which is easily distinguished by the early stone walls and towering maples that line it. You'll pass pieces of antique farming equipment and sap buckets along the way. Step carefully (for obvious reasons) and do not approach the long-horned cattle if you encounter them.



- Proceed, if cattle and other conditions allow, to the crest of the hill. From here, you can see the path of the old Wolfeboro Road as it continues down into a little valley and then up the other side.
- **Stop here** – this is the one section of the Wolfeboro Road that is no longer a public way, due to town meeting action in the 1980s, when a single vote sealed the road's fate. The road is closed from a small bridge at the end of Elm Road until it joins Hanover Center Road. Yet the Wolfeboro Road, a beautiful scenic and recreational asset for Hanover, remains an important historical reminder of the early regional vision and political leadership that

was to benefit the entire region.

- Turn back toward Dogford Road and enjoy the most beautiful view of all – Velvet Rocks and the lush farm landscapes that seem not to have changed since the early 19th century.

For more about the Trescott Water Company Lands, including a downloadable trail map, visit www.hanoverconservancy.org/calendar/council-updates-2/water-co-land-info/

The Hanover Conservancy, New Hampshire's oldest local land trust, is a private, non-profit membership organization independent of the Town of Hanover. Visit us at www.hanoverconservancy.org.