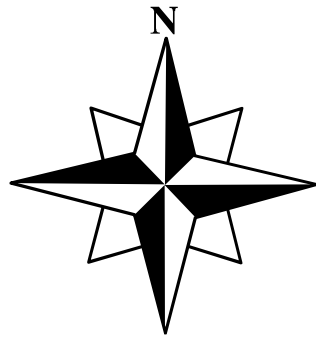


# Hampstead, New Hampshire Recreational Trail System



Hampstead Trail Association



Prepared by  
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January 2001

## **Introduction**

Woodlands, wetlands, fields, brooks, ponds, granite outcrops, historic foundations, birding, nature study and miles of trails abound in Hampstead. In the HTS trail system there are nine separate parcels of land. Many of the parcels connect to other parcels via trails on opposite sides of the road and several have extended trail systems by connecting with Atkinson and Derry trails. The trails are easy to moderate, some are wide old dirt roads, others are narrow paths winding through the forest. Walking, running, bike riding, horseback riding, x-cross country skiing, snowshoeing are all encouraged.

New trail maps have been designed using a different format than the previous maps. The major roads that are the boundaries of each area are used as the title for these maps. The maps all have the same uniform scale to aide in matching one map up to another map. The maps reflect new housing development where old points of entry have been blocked and show many of the unofficial trails and old roads in each area for safety purposes. In case of an emergency or being caught out at dusk these unofficial trails can get you out to a road and help. Since trails and old roads often mesh together, they are all shown as trails.

## **MAP 1 - Stage & West Roads, Hampstead Conservation Area**

This is a widely diverse area with good birding, trees ranging from seedlings to 250 years old, old farm fields, woodlands, swamps, granite outcrops, an old foundation and well, and a self-guided trail with numbered points of interests (separate sheet). Hogg Hill Meadow, a flooded wetlands attracts many birds and has a quaint history, see point of interest #26. In the fall visit Cardinal Flower Bridge named after the beautiful fire-engine red flower growing nearby. Piano Bridge has 88 boards (i.e. “piano keys”) and is located at point of interest #10 “a good place for close study of wetland plants”. At #20 is an old house foundation circa 1770’s and a few paces beyond is the old well. Note the ground level well cap, only one half of this well cap remains, the other is lost. In New Hampshire well caps were common. They came in two pieces like this one or as a single piece, and were placed at ground level on top of the well. This protected the walling stone from caving into the well from years of use. Across from the foundation is the 250 year old tree planted about the time this farm was settled. Miles of old stones walls from this old farm and others add to the quaintness of the trails.

“Conservation Land” has a few Rules and Regulations.

- 1) No hunting or target practice; no firearms or bow and arrows.
- 2) No motorized vehicles.
- 3) Organized groups who desire campfires will coordinate the location with the Conservation Commission first and then will apply for a permit from the Hampstead Fire Warden.
- 4) Hikers, snowshoers, skiers, joggers and horseback riders are encouraged to use the area.

Parking: Stage Road Parking Lot, West Road Parking Lot.

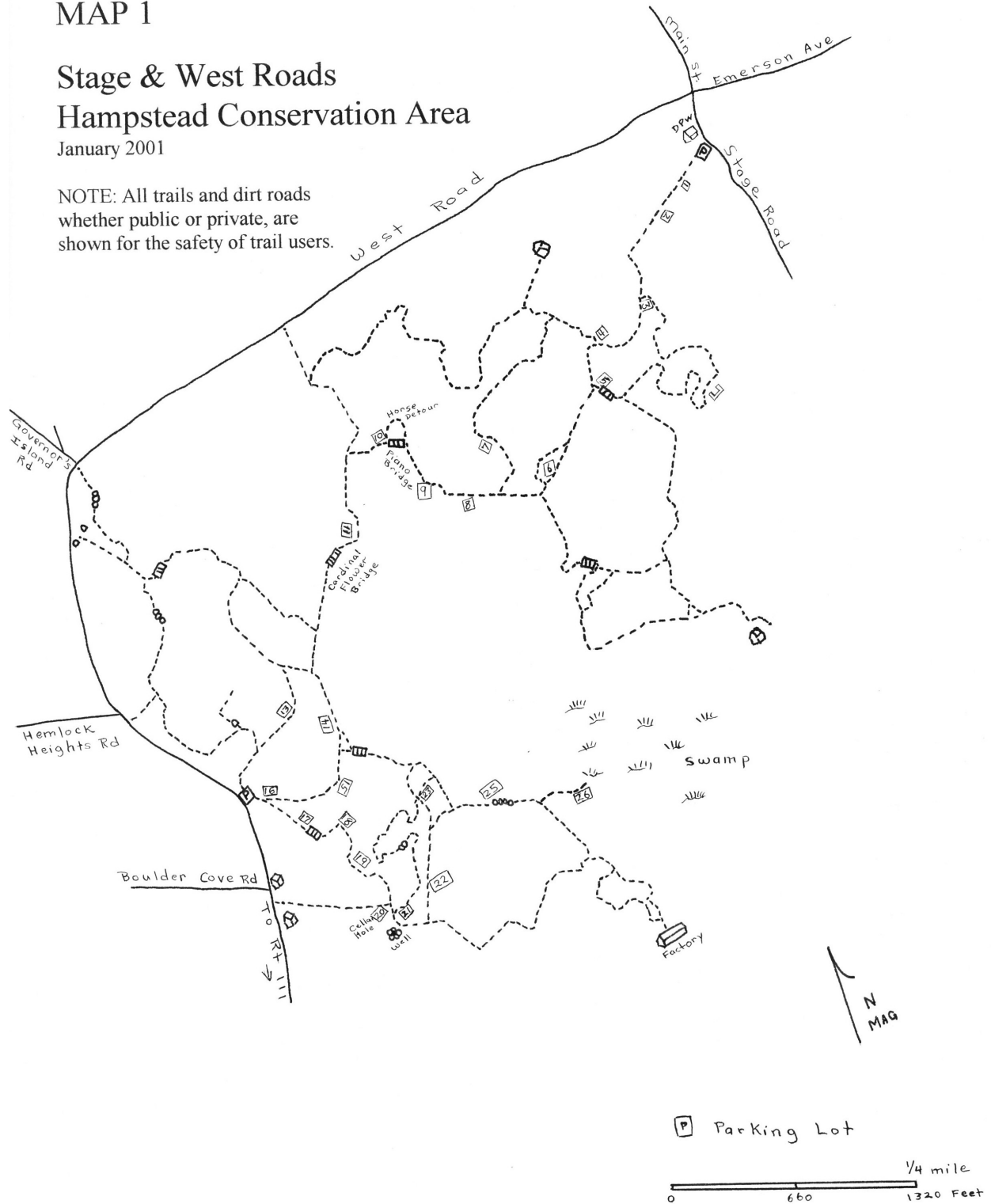
Distances: 6.5 miles of combined trails

# MAP 1

## Stage & West Roads Hampstead Conservation Area

January 2001

NOTE: All trails and dirt roads  
whether public or private, are  
shown for the safety of trail users.



## Hampstead Conservation Area “Points of Interest”

Text by Kathe Cussen (1986) Abridged Version

1. The exposed bedrock opposite sign #1 serves as an unlikely growth medium for this **Pitch pine** (3 needles to a bundle). Gradual weathering of the rock resulted in small cracks in which soil and leaves collected. Here the pine seed was dropped perhaps by a squirrel or chipmunk where it eventually germinated and grew.
2. These **Eastern white pine** (5 needles to a bundle) flourish in an area that was an open field over 40 years ago. Their needles, a form of leaves, make up the canopy or top layer of this small forest.
3. Evergreen **Christmas ferns** can be found year-round and are named for the Christmas stocking shape of the individual leaflets or pinnae. Mosses and leathery aromatic **Wintergreen plants** provide ground cover under the fast-growing but relatively short-lived white **birch trees**.
4. This station was once the site of a portable **sawmill**. The fire of 1947 burned an area from West Road to Atkinson, including this site.
5. A short distance off the main trail to the south is a **seasonal waterfall** which runs from mid-fall through mid-June, depending on the rain and snow fall. The constant flow of water has eroded the rock to a smooth surface on which various mosses and algae thrive.
6. This large **boulder** was possibly deposited here by a glacier -a slow moving sheet of ice and snow- which covered New England at least 10,000 years ago. Natural forces such as water action and seasonal temperature changes gradually split the rock. The crusty **green lichens** that cover the surface are so-called “pioneer plants” surviving on bare rock to further prepare its surface for the growth of other plants, such as mosses and ferns.
7. A shallow soil layer in this extensive area of **rocky ledge** supports the growth of club mosses, brittle reindeer moss (a lichen), and other non-flowering plants.
8. This large **flowering dogwood** was no doubt “planted” by a bird who had enjoyed the red berries from another tree. The dogwood is memorable in every season: green leaves with smooth edges in spring; pinkish-white *leaves* which surround the inconspicuous true flowers in late spring/early summer; bright red clusters of berries and reddish-purple leaves in the fall and in the winter gray bark streaked with white, topped by branches that clearly grow opposite each other.
9. The rocky ledges opposite the sign are composed of natural cavities which are ideal homes for **porcupines**. A sign of porcupine activity is foot-long sections of hemlock branches on the ground with chewed-off tips. This ground litter aids deer, providing them with winter browse they could never reach.
10. Bridges make possible a closer study of wetland plants. **Red maples** are the dominant tree here and their red buds and leaves provide stunning color in spring. **Jewelweed** with its succulent stems and spotted orange tube-shaped blossoms is praised by many as a “before-and-after” poison-ivy remedy. Deer browse on it and another plant nickname of “**Touch-me-not**” refers to the spring-loaded green seed pods that spontaneously release when lightly touched.
11. This area in past years had charred tree stumps from the **1947 fire**. Although that fire was a destructive agent in this forest, controlled burning of certain areas as a management tool is used to develop openings and browse plants for wildlife, to maintain certain shrub communities such as blueberries and to stimulate various evergreen cones to release seeds.
12. Many plants and animals found in streams are different from those that live in ponds, as water movement, oxygen content, water temperature and available food vary. Creatures that live in fast-moving streams must be able to hold onto rocks or vegetation. The **Caddisfly larva** (a caterpillar-like stage) builds a “house” on its back of rocks or sticks. The weight of these materials prevents the larva from being washed away in the stream currents. Look to the bottom of this stream among the rocks and see if you can spot the crawling houses of the caddisfly larva. A noteworthy event here is the July-September blooming period of the **Cardinal flower**. The 2-4 foot plant produces a slender spike of intense scarlet flowers which must be seen to be appreciated. At the other end and upstream side of the bridge the tall yellow **Canada lily** blooms from June through August.
13. **Black birch**, one of the 5 types of birch found in New Hampshire, is a common tree in the Conservation Area. Also, known as “Sweet Birch” its sap is rich in oil of wintergreen.
14. The large tree on the opposite side of the trail near the opening in the stone wall and the group of trees on the hillside with furrowed gray bark are **Sugar maples**. Maple sugar comes from this type of tree.
15. The pioneer plants that first began to grow on this exposed granite bedrock are called **lichens**. They are composed of microscopic algae and fungi cells. The algae manufacture food used by the fungi and the fungi in turn supply the algae with minerals and a protective covering. This cooperative plant relationship is called “**symbiosis**.”

16. These open fields are living communities that are active by day and night. Most small nocturnal field rodents such as mice, moles and voles feed on a variety of plant and animal materials including seeds, berries, nuts, roots, worms, caterpillars, and snails. In turn, the rodents serve as meals for larger night hunters such as owls and foxes. A complete list of “who-eats-who” is termed a “**food chain.**”

17. As late as 1957 these fields were actively grazed by cows. Then the constant trimming of the vegetation ceased, shrubs, small trees, and herbaceous plants began to grow in the fields, the first phase in a process called “**succession.**”

18. The expanse of wetland area you are overlooking and the adjacent fields are the feeding and courtship territory of the **Woodcock**. This nocturnal bird is stocky with short legs and neck and a long hinged bill used in probing the ground for earthworms.

19. This diverse area with a forest edge, shrubby growth and field is used by a variety of animals for food and shelter. The thorny barberry shrub opposite provides a favorite ruffed grouse food, and rabbits, mice, and other small mammals reside in the brambles and field grasses. Animals and plants from these three habitats occupy this area and the abundant variety of life found here is referred to as the “**edge effect.**”

20. At the top of the rise you will see the remains of an overgrown **cellar hole** circa 1770’s. The old foundation is thought to have been built by Mr. Job Kent, who bought these 65 acres from his father in 1768. If you continue past sign #20 approximately 20 paces on the trail, you will see the old **well hole** used for the household water. Note the half-moon shaped well cap of which the other half is missing. Ground level circular well caps were once common in New Hampshire.

21. This **Northern Red Oak** was about 25 years old when the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776! It measures 13 1/2 feet in diameter and provides a large supply of acorns, shelter inside the hollow areas of the trunk and countless nesting sites in its many branches. **Artist or Bracket fungus** may be seen growing on the trunk. Artist carve pictures on the flat white underside of the fungus.

22. To some, **dead trees** may not be an attractive part of the forest, but they are nevertheless important to its ecology. Woodpeckers are primary cavity nesters; they excavate their own nesting holes and rarely use artificial nesting boxes. Secondary cavity nesters use holes previously excavated by woodpeckers and include such birds as the chickadee, nuthatch, house wren and screech owl. Squirrels and raccoons are mammals who prefer hollow trees for their dens. Through the process of **decomposition**, the dead wood will be decayed by bacteria, fungi and insects and in time, will help make soil from which other plants will grow.

23. Twenty paces left of sign #23 is a high portion of land overlooking a steeply wooded slope. This **scenic out-look** is noteworthy throughout the year for its view of the forest below.

24. Try looking *down* and around you to discover the variety of plant materials here. You may find tree “fruits” such as acorns, hickory nuts and maple “helicopters,” or samara. The many types of leaves on the ground are in well-defined layers-the newest being on top. Pick up a few layers and observe that the older, bottom leaves are crumbling and decomposing and eventually will become part of the soil layer. When leaves have fallen from the trees, a rocky ledge is visible across the low wetland area. porcupine activity has been noted in the natural caves there.

25. Under the trail is a “stone bridge” which is not at all what we think of today as bridge, but a **stone culvert**. It was constructed many years ago to convey water under the road in this low wet area. Crouch down near the culvert to locate **sphagnum moss** with its palm tree-like structures. It is capable of storing quantities of water in its leaves and was used during the Civil War to effectively pack wounds. Another wetland plant, **Winterberry (Black Alder)** is in fact a member of the holly family, but loses its leaves in autumn. Bright red berries remain on the stems throughout the winter. [As of January 2001, the date of this printing, beavers down stream dammed the water supply and flooded the road and stone culvert out]

26. **Hogg Hill Meadow**, is an interconnected wetland system totaling 100 acres. In earlier days, Hogg Hill (also known as Parsonage Meadow) was owned by the Church as one parcel of land. In 1752 it was voted to subdivide the land into 16 lots to be sold. Hay was harvested in the meadow portions to feed horses and sheep.

Today this wetland area is one of the largest in Hampstead. It performs such critical functions as trapping sediments, filtering pollution, recharging the water table, storing and then gradually releasing flood waters. A great variety of plants and animals live in our wetlands. Among the plants are unusual orchids and insectivorous plants as well as trees, shrubs, vines flowering and non-flowering species. Spectacular egrets, herons, various waterfowl and songbirds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, insects, spiders, fish, etc. rely upon the wetlands for food and shelter. We cannot afford to overlook their critical ecological, geological, recreational and educational roles in our community.

## **MAP 2 - Shop Pond to Governor's Island Road & West Road**

In this section hard wood trees dominate the hilly landscape. Through it runs the Old County Road from the corner of Governor's Island Road and West Road to Main Street. Following the Old County Road from Governor's Island Road, you first encounter a curious standing stone on top of the hill that denotes the highest point of land. The Old County Road takes a sharp right hand turn at the stone. The next point of interest along the Old County Road is Hampstead's Town Pound (circa 1756). The section of the Old County Road between the Pound and Main Street is now private property. On the trail paralleling the Old County Road is an old mica mine about 100' off the trail. Another set of trails takes you out to Shop Pond and Main Street. These trails offer some nice long distance hikes or rides. One word of caution, part of this area is comprised of a tree farm. A tree farm uses its resources, the trees, through controlled logging. This occasionally disrupts sections of trails and often creates new unmapped dirt roads.

Parking: Quarry Road, beside Shop Pond on Mill Shore Road (not Main Street)

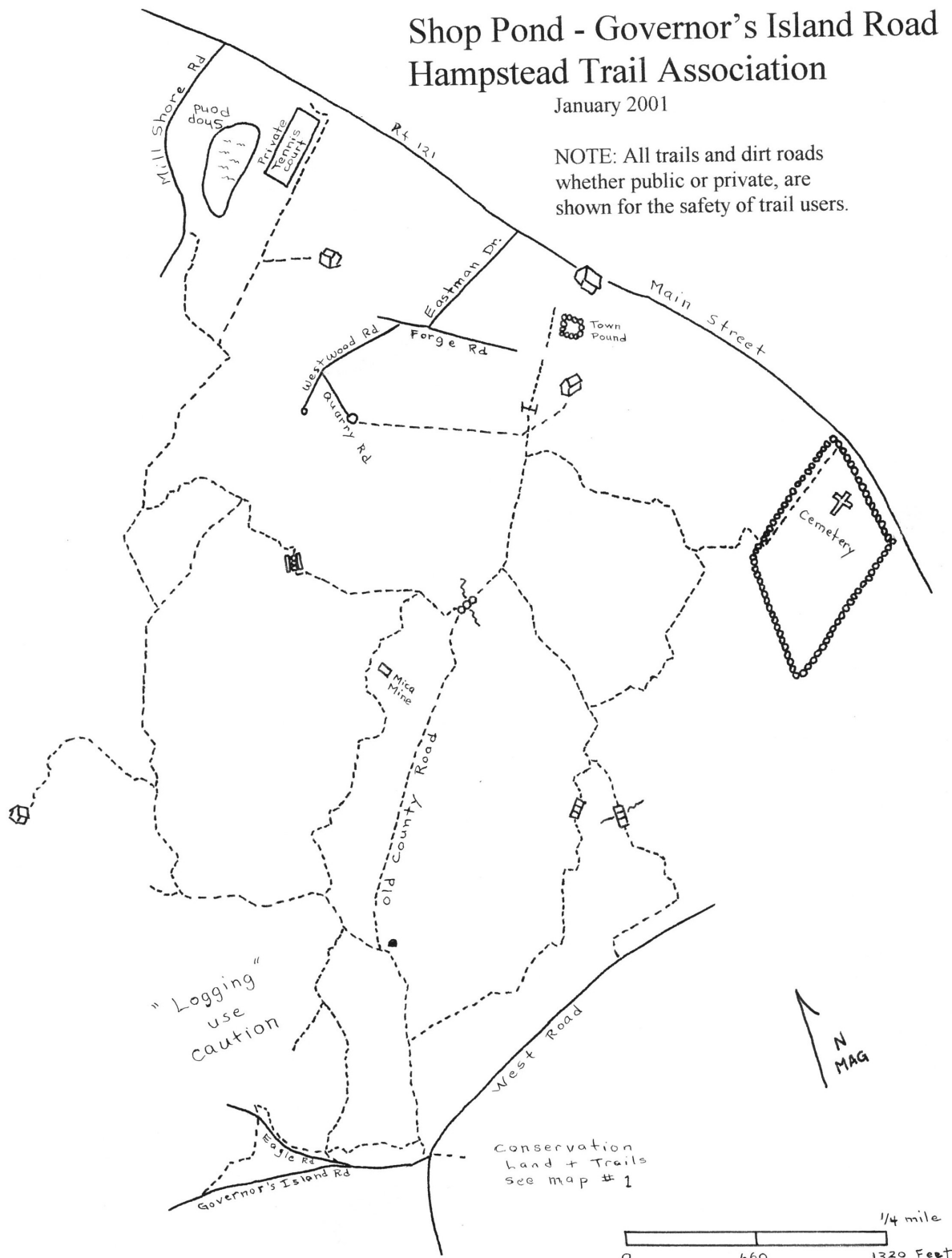
Distance: 5.5 miles of combined trails.

# MAP 2

## Shop Pond - Governor's Island Road Hampstead Trail Association

January 2001

NOTE: All trails and dirt roads  
whether public or private, are  
shown for the safety of trail users.



## **MAP 3 - Governor's Island Road to Hemlock Heights Road to Boulder Cove Road**

### Governor's Island Road

A great scenic view of Island Pond can be accessed by a short spur trail across the peninsula jutting out into the pond. There is one other view of the lake on a high knoll overlooking another cove. This can only be used if there is no one using the small archery range on this knoll. There are signs on the trail warning people to "YELL OUT", for your safety please yell out because the trail comes extremely close to the target set on the trail side. One other word of caution this is a tree farm which is logged periodically.

Parking: Hemlock Heights Road across road from trailhead.

Distance: 1.5 miles of combined trails.

### Hemlock Heights Road to Boulder Cove Road

The trail that parallels Hemlock Heights Road leads to a cove on Island Pond. This is not Boulder Cove but on this trail and the one leading away from the pond are some large glacial boulders. In this section on Boulder Cove Road are the remains of an old foundation with an unusual large flat boulder in it. This section has both Hampstead trails and Atkinson trails which connect to form uninterrupted and continuous pathways. The area is interspersed with woods and inland wetlands.

Parking: West Road Parking Lot on Conservation Land, Boulder Cove Road, Hemlock Heights Road.

Distance: 2 miles of combined trails

### Boulder Cove Road to Route 111

There are two sets of connected trails in this section, one is a private set of trails open to public (no motorized vehicles allowed) and the second crosses the condominiums land by agreement with the town of Atkinson. They are best suited for mountain bikes and/or hikers, and are a nice extension of the trails on the opposite side of Boulder Cove Road.

Parking: Boulder Cove Road on opposite side at second trailhead.

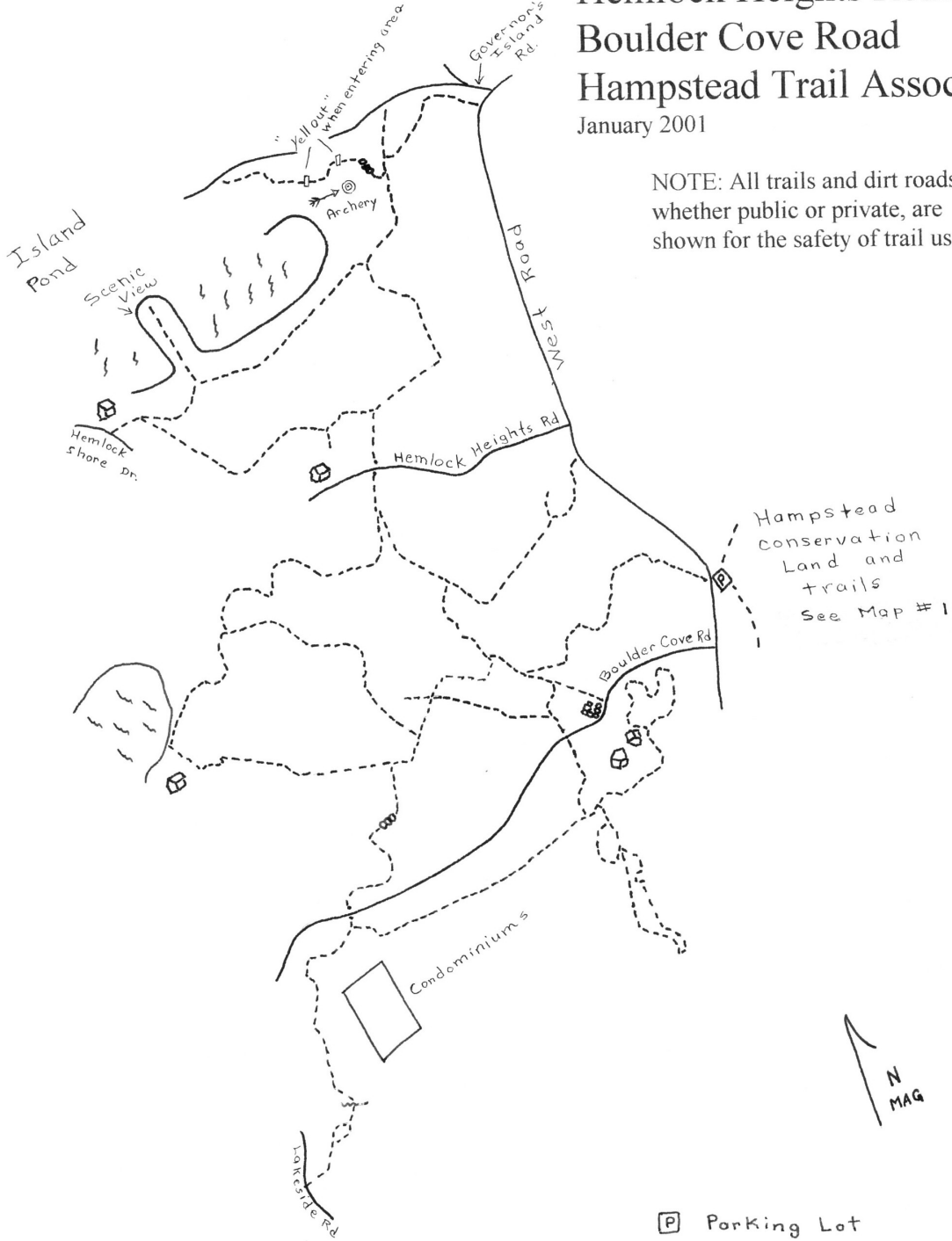
Distance: 1.25 miles of combined trails.



# MAP 3

## Governor's Island Road Hemlock Heights Road Boulder Cove Road Hampstead Trail Association January 2001

NOTE: All trails and dirt roads  
whether public or private, are  
shown for the safety of trail users.



#### **Map 4 - 366 Main Street (to Collette Grove Road and Collette Drive)**

This section's main entrance is beside the Manestay Farm (circa 1850's) at 366 Main Street. The trail starts out on the old road to Derry. Note both sides of the road are lined with a stone wall evenly spaced, a common practice in the horse and wagon days. Another feature of this section is Howe's Hill the highest point in the area. It has trails over its top and a good look out off a granite ledge with a view of the back waters of Island Pond, however, the trails are not part of the HTS trail system. The HTS trails are easy, whereas the trails over Howe's Hill are very steep especially off Collette Grove Road.

Parking: 366 Main Street next to trail

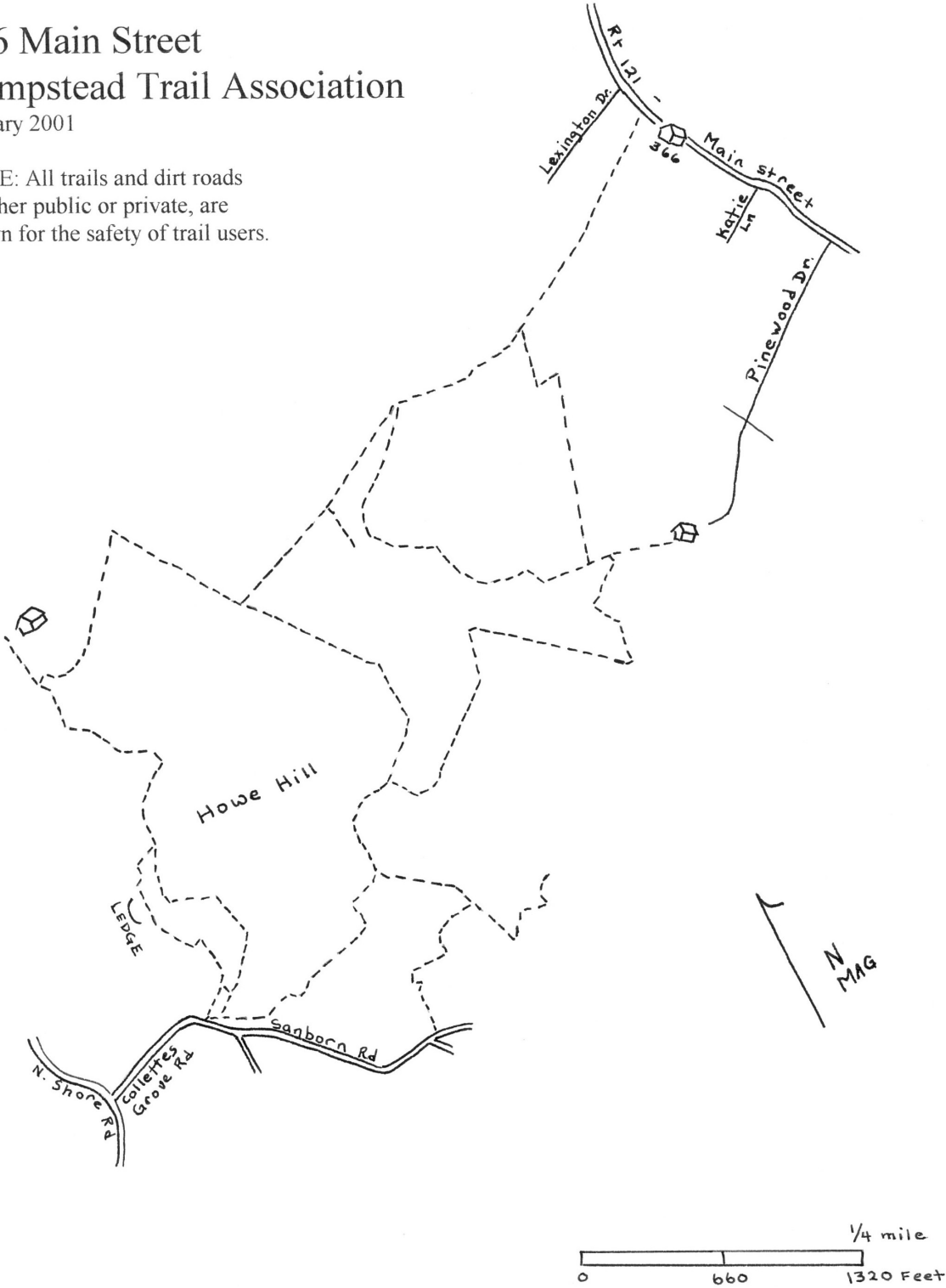
Distance: 3.75 miles of combined trails (including trails on Howe's Hill)

# MAP 4

## 366 Main Street Hampstead Trail Association

January 2001

NOTE: All trails and dirt roads  
whether public or private, are  
shown for the safety of trail users.



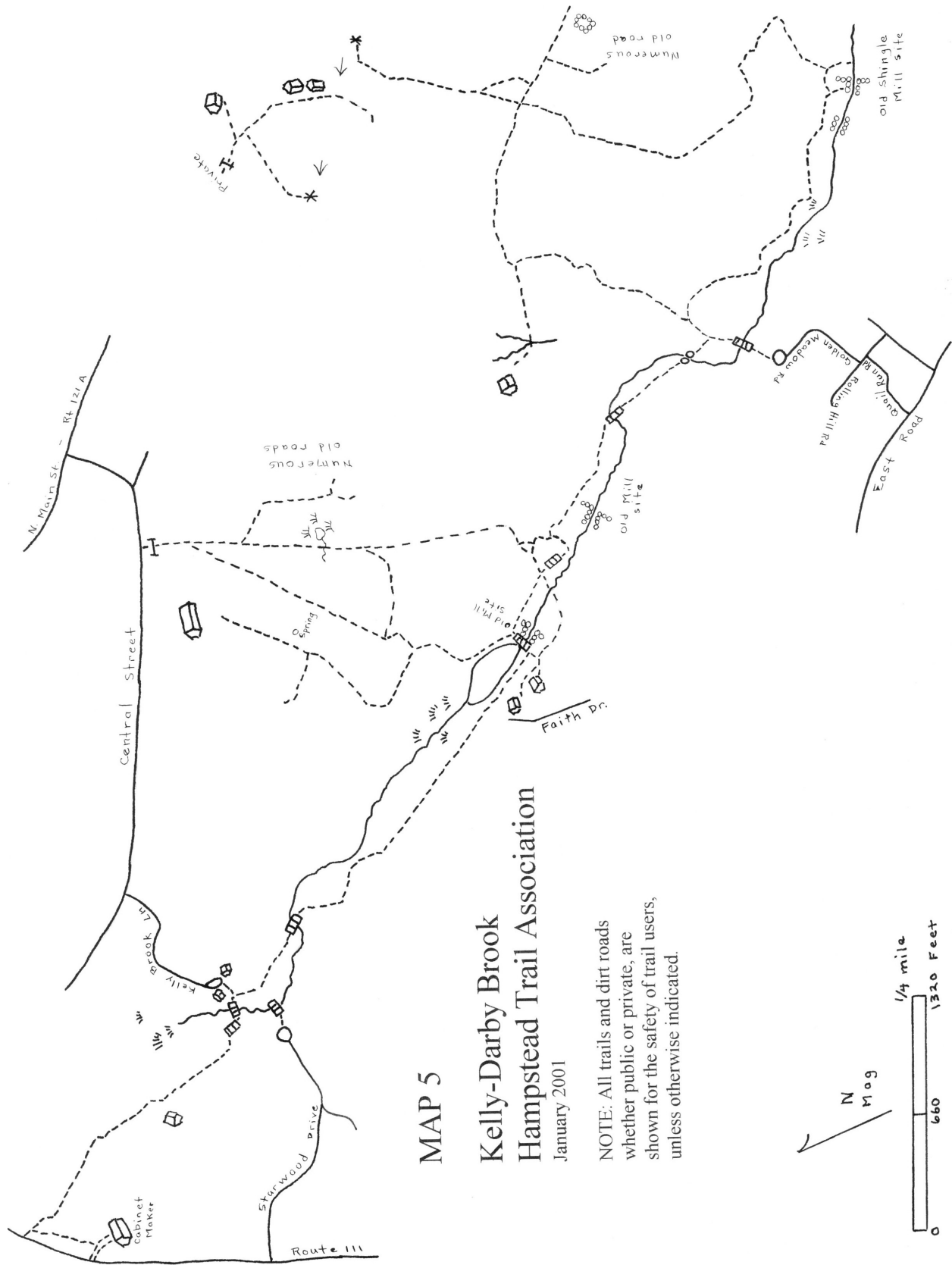
## **MAP 5 - Kelly-Darby Brook**

A babbling brook, a pond (mid-stream), a glacial boulder field and three old mill sites await the user of these trails. History and nature combine on the loop trail where the foundation of a shingle mill can still be seen. For this mill, the lowest on the brook, a retaining wall was built along the brook before the mill complex to keep the water in a tight channel and fast moving which it relied upon instead of a mill pond. On the lowland part of this loop trail, it skirts a hill with a boulder field on its steep slopes with the babbling brook on its other side. At the shingle mill site the trail veers away from the brook and climbs the hill. The trail meshes with an old dirt road, which is part of a much larger network of old roads on top of the hill. Along one is found several foundations of an old farmstead.

The other section of this trail system follows the low land near but not beside the brook. Half way is a beautiful, deep pond in the valley between two low hills. At the pond is one mill site and further down the brook is another mill site. Note there are no dams on this brook, the mills utilized the natural elevation drop in the brook which creates a steady flow of water. Leading out from the mill site at the pond is an old road on both sides. One side now ends up in the backyard of a house. The other side goes for a fair distance and connects with other old dirt roads in the area. These old roads are not apart of the HTS trail system.

Parking: Golden Meadow Road, Starwood Drive

Distance: 5 miles of combined HTS Trails only



## **MAP 6 - Rockingham Recreational Trail (Hampstead Section)**

This trail is the old B&M railroad of which a section goes through Hampstead. It is heavily used by motorized vehicles on weekends. The track is designated by the abbreviation "RRT" on the map.

Parking: In designated lot beside trail on Main Street (Route 121)

# MAP 6

## Rockingham Recreation Trail (Hampstead Section)

January 2001

NOTE: All trails and dirt roads whether public or private, are shown for the safety of trail users.

