



THE LOOP TRAIL

The “L”, or The Loop is a short trail that circles the Highlands pool, providing a bit of history and access to the main hiking trails. If you are at the pool for several hours, the “L” makes for a nice walk between swims. The walk can be done in about 20 minutes.

Starting at the Pool’s main gate, make a right and the “L” blazes will lead downstream of Blue Mine brook. You come to a small brick pumphouse. Plaques on the front are in memory of Beverly Adam, who lived from 1939-1959; and Fred Salvini 1898-1977.

Cross the bridge, make a right and follow the gentle slope upwards, then a right. You will join the Melody trail for a portion of this walk, marked with musical notes.

The vista to your right is the Highlands Natural Pool. Weis’ Karin Ahmed recalls, “The Nature Friends used to swim in the old farm pond, located near the entrance to Weis. It was not very big and when a lot of people swam the water would get stirred up and muddy. They called it the ‘Hunde Bad’, ‘dog’s bath’. Sometimes, they would walk

over to Stephen’s pond (where the quarry is now), and pay the farmer a small fee to swim. However, after some black guests were turned away, the Nature Friends decided to build their own pool. They picked this site and began with a steam shovel. The remainder of the digging, building of the walls and dam was all done by hand. All the work was volunteer. They began in the late fall of 1935 and completed the pool for a July 4 opening in 1936. After the pool was open, the old pond was filled in.”

The Nature Friends was started May 20, 1920 by a worker’s organization with the purchase of Carrigan (Snake) Farm. The camp grew from 11 acres to 170. A center brick dormitory built in 1932 still stands and serves as the headquarters for Weis. In 1940, the Winfield Farm property was added to the property.

The social center of the camp was Carrigan Barn, which housed the office, dining room, social hall, and canteen. The barn burned down in 1965

The American Ethical Union bought the camp in 1968. About 50 cabins were erected on the property, and many more on the surrounding grounds. Many of the cabins which were privately built became the homes seen today along Snake Den Road.

Continue along the “L” making a left up a hill. You may notice some directional arrows remaining on a few trees. These are reproductions of original metal arrow

directional and mileage signs painted by Nature Friends Chairman Hans Wittich. Wittich also revised the trail color marking system in 1942.

Next, you will come upon a water diversion station, or “The Weir”. It serves to direct incoming water either to or around the pool as well as filter silt, leaves and debris.

As you continue to follow the “L”, you’ll come to a round-about of sorts. Here, you can take the green marked Otter Hole Trail to the trail heads for the Mine Trail (Yellow on White) and the trail to Wyonokie High point (Blue). The Melody trail also breaks away and follows the brook up to the back end of Winfield Farm and terminates further up on the green Otter Hole Trail.

If you choose to take either the green or Melody trail to Winfield Farm, it now has little resemblance to a farm. There are still a few ruins, and the barn collapsed in the 1970’s.

Lady Longfellow VIII, No. 51368, a winning racehorse was housed there. She pulled first place on March 28, 1899.

On the mountain front of you, no longer open to hikers is the quarry. Before being blasted away, on the northern side of Saddle Mountain was a popular hiking destination called Wolf’s Den. That is where a Mr. Shippee killed the area’s last she-wolf and her two young in 1819.

Following the “L”, cross the bridge and make a hard right, you will again pass the other

side of the weir and follow the "bypass brook" and waterfall downstream.

About halfway down and across the waterfall is a memorial plaque for Emil Plarre (1871-1941). Plarre was an enthusiastic trail builder and tender. Some of his trail markers, embossed metal blazes may still survive in some of the deep woods. There is currently no access to his plaque or resting place,

You will come out at the base of the old ski slope. At the time, they fashioned their own ski lift by parking a 1936 Ford Model A atop the hill. A rear tire was replaced with a pull wheel, and additional guide wheels were mounted in the trees along the hill, with a rope loop attached. The ski lift was designed by Willie Voelkel who was a machinist and tool and die maker.

Your right turn at the bottom of the hill will bring you back to your starting point.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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