

On Route 5:

- From Limerick, Route 5 intersection with Route 160: Go 3 miles north; after Red Door Realty, past next house, past metal guard rail, turn right onto narrow dirt road between guard rail and huge rock.

or

- From Route 25 in Cornish: Go total of 5.7 miles south on Route 5, 0.4–0.5 mile from Spur Road, after Beldan Dr. on left, immediately after road curves left around huge rocky outcrop, turn left onto narrow dirt road between huge rock and guard rail.

Parking area is about 200 feet from Route 5.

KEY

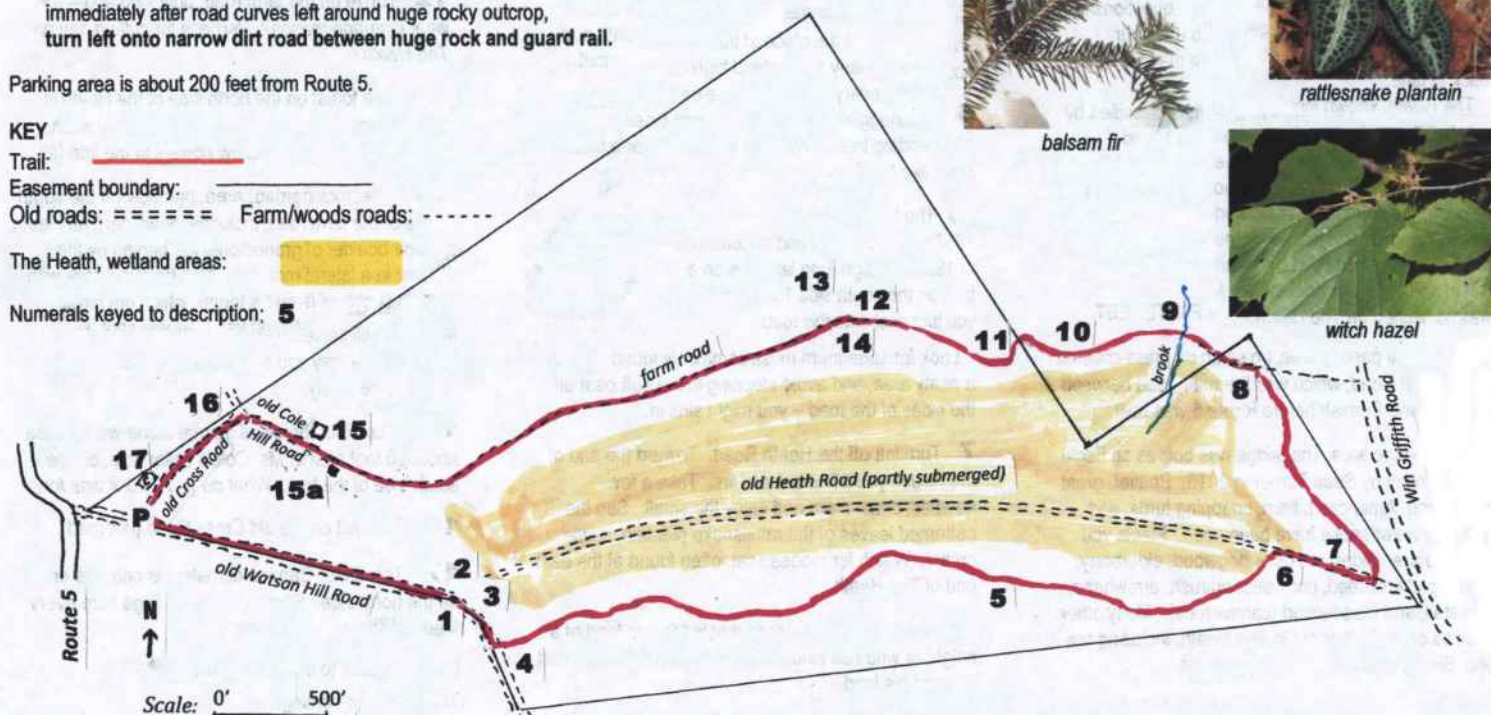
Trail: ———

Easement boundary: ———

Old roads: ===== Farm/woods roads: - - - - -

The Heath, wetland areas:

Numerals keyed to description: **5**



balsam fir



rattlesnake plantain



witch hazel

This property is protected by the Francis Small Heritage Trust. • PO Box 414, Limerick, ME 04048 • 207-221-0853 • info@FSHT.org • www.FSHT.org

Welcome to the Heath Loop Trail!

This land is owned by Tom and Edie Sisson and is protected by a conservation easement held by the Francis Small Heritage Trust.

You can expect a 2-hour walk, longer if you explore. Following are notes of some things of interest along trail, going from the parking area counter-clockwise around the Heath. They include some questions for you to think about. They'll get you to use your imagination, and thinking about them may take you back in time.

The Heath, known locally as a bog, is classified by the Maine Natural Areas Program as a Mixed Graminoid-Shrub Marsh. Lying between two hills, it is nearly 7/8 mile long and encompasses approximately 51 acres. It was formed when the last glacier retreated, about 17,000 years ago. The part that is standing water has expanded and contracted over the years due to beaver activity or the lack of it. The term *heath* (pronounced HAITH) describes a place that is wet in spring, dry or drier in fall. Many years ago hay was harvested on The Heath.

DIRECTIONS AND POINTS OF INTEREST

P From the parking area, go south on grass-covered Watson Hill Road, which was the main road between Limerick and Cornish before Route 5 was built.

1 Bog bridge area. The bridge was built as an Eagle Scout project by Sean Turner in 2013. Beaver, great blue heron, American bittern, snapping turtle, and northern water snake have been seen. Plants you may see are: alder, red osier dogwood, elderberry, cattail, pickerelweed, bur weed, bulrush, arrowhead, horsetail, and bladderwort (carnivorous). Many other species occur farther out in The Heath, including the only Showy goldenrod known in Maine.

2 The beaver pond at the western end of the Heath (east of the bridge) is currently unoccupied by beaver, despite efforts to encourage their presence.

3 Walk a little way off the trail to go down to The Heath. See Zach Wilson Hill to the north and the sunken part of the old Heath Road, which goes in a straight east-west line along the edge of The Heath. Black ducks have been seen from here.

4 Turn left; cross a wall. The forest at the start of the trail is primarily large pines and yellow birch. Watch for little streamlets going to the Heath and notice the many varieties of ferns along the trail.

5 The forest changes to dominating hemlocks. This has been called the place of the dancing trees, because so many trees stand high on their roots. It seems that every rock has a tree on top of it! Look also for snuggling trees (two growing closely together) and bending trees. *What do you think made them bend like that?*

6 The Heath Road was laid out in 1857 as a 3-rod road and discontinued in 1925. A large lung lichen is on a tree on the south side 150 feet after you turn east onto this road.



Look for sphagnum moss commonly found in such a peaty area, and avoid stepping in the soft peat off the sides of the road – you might sink in.

7 Turn left off the Heath Road. Toward the end of the Heath, you'll find balsam firs. Take a few needles, crush them and enjoy the smell. See the patterned leaves of the rattlesnake plantain, a little orchid. Watch for moose scat, often found at the east end of The Heath.

8 Turn onto a woods road that leads into land of a neighbor who has kindly given permission for this trail to cross his land.

9 Cross the Meadow Brook, which feeds The Heath.

10 Here are huge trees felled by beaver a few years back. Poor beavers didn't realize they were too big to take home.

11 Back on the Sissons' land, you have a view across the Heath to Watson Hill.

12 You're on the farm road, built long ago – for what long-ago reason? Perhaps for cutting hay on The Heath?

13 The forest on the north side of the Heath is mixed hardwoods. Look for the occasional witch hazel, which has little yellow flowers in the late fall.

14 The "rock garden" area, primarily on the south side of the farm road, includes, down near The Heath, a huge boulder of granodiorite left behind by the glacier in a lateral moraine. Also here is a rock with *dents de cheval* (horse's teeth), which are large potassium feldspar crystals. *Can you spot a "humpback whale" near the trail?*

15 Ms. Cole's cellar hole: Legend has it that Ms. Cole still serves freshly baked brownies to passers-by – may you be so lucky. In summer her daylilies are lovely.

15a Look for the small square stone-walled area about 80 feet east of Ms. Cole's cellar hole, on the south side of the trail. *What do you think it was for?*

16 Turn left on the old Cross Road (dirt road).

17 The Smith-Gannon cemetery is near the end, on the north side. Someone places flags here every Memorial Day.

Continue back to the parking area: **P**

Thank you for coming!

Tom and Edie Sisson
and the Francis Small Heritage Trust