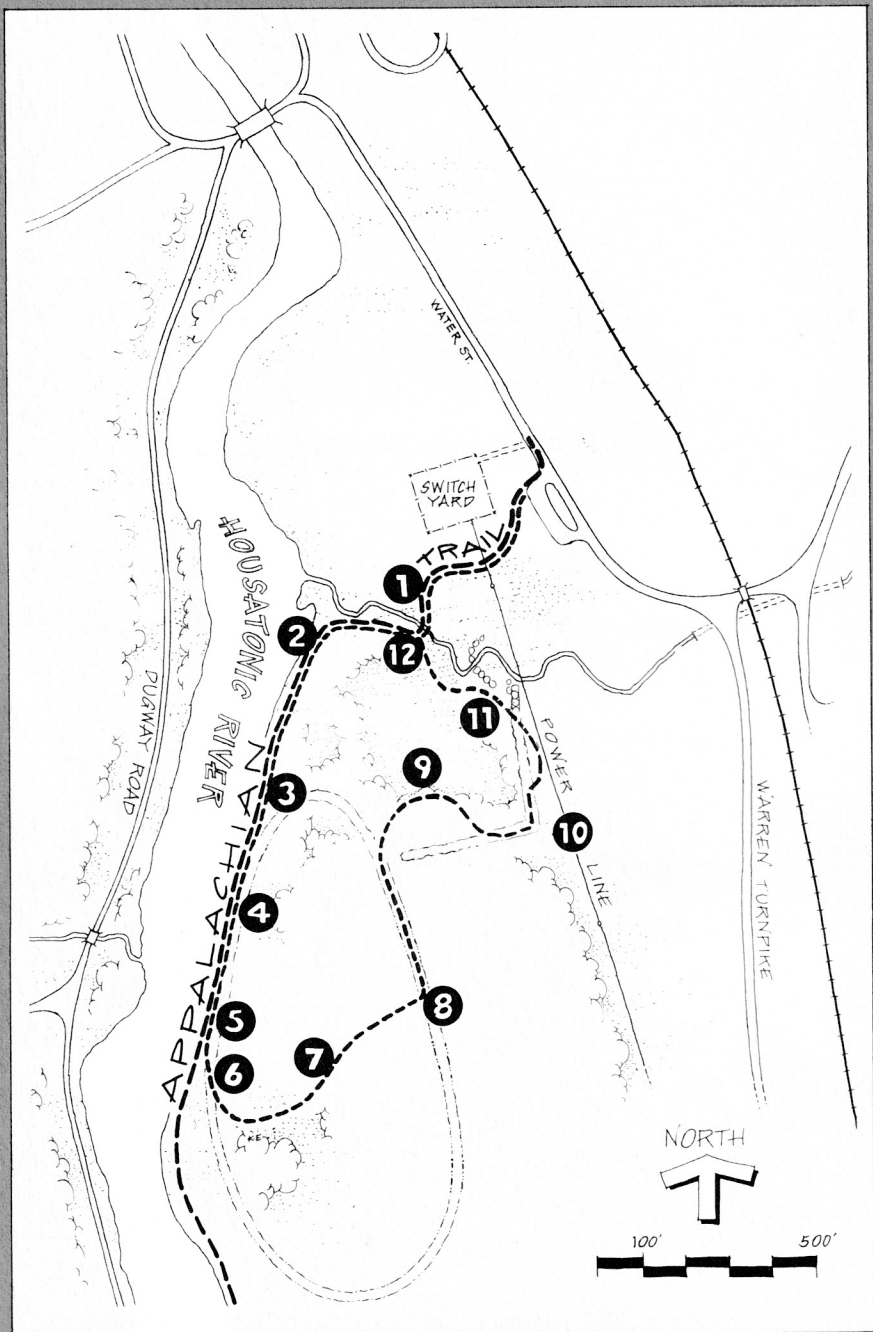


PEOPLE SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE

FALLS VILLAGE, CT.



Stone ruins along the trail



Trail Map

PEOPLE SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE

This $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile loop trail meanders through forests and fields and traces the story of a land rich in history . . . a history of iron, traveling circuses and dreams of an industrial city . . . a land that has been shaped by people. You are invited to discover the past on this short walk back in time.

For your safety and enjoyment and that of others who may follow, please take only pictures and leave only footprints.

POST | Caution

Poison ivy is growing at the base of this post and along the trail. Please take a minute to identify this plant that people have learned to avoid for centuries.



POST 2 Land Beyond the Mountains

The flowing waters of the Housatonic River meant survival to the Schaghticoke and Mahican Indians who lived here. They fished using bone hooks or nets and paddled dugout canoes. These original inhabitants called their river "Ousetonick," "Wussiadenuck," and other names. It later was spelled Housatonic, and means "land beyond the mountains."

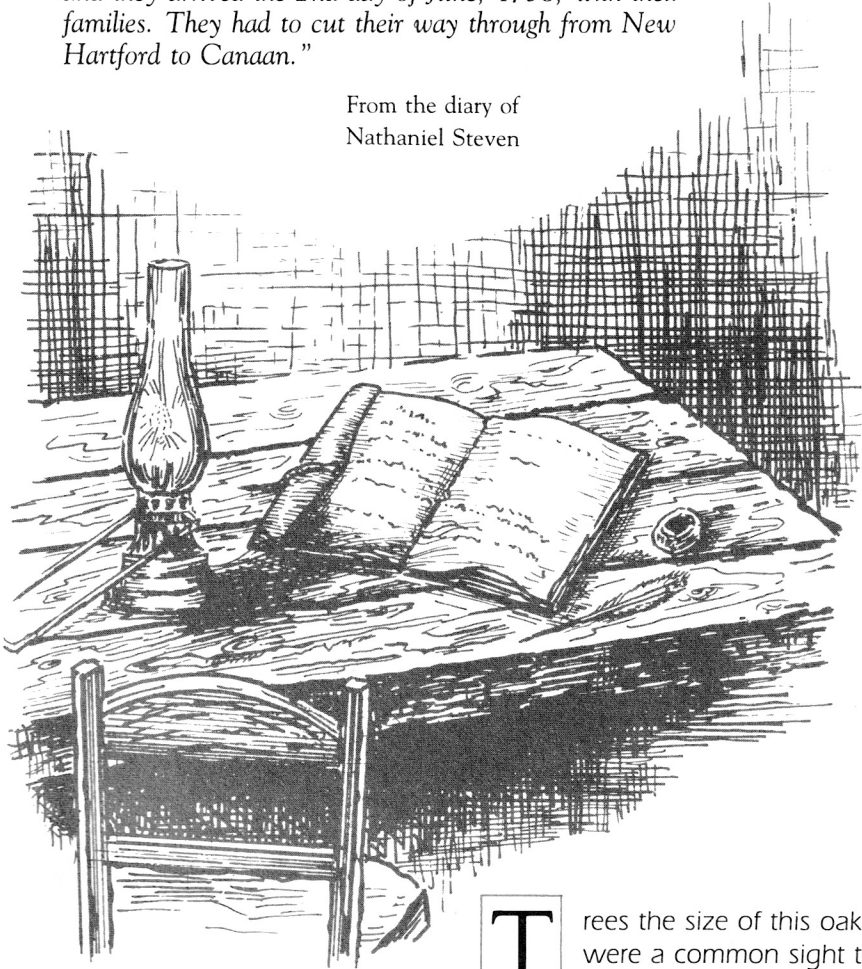
"Wussiadenuck" was a rich land, providing abundant food for those who lived off it. Nuts, tubers, berries and fresh greens were gathered from various habitats, and deer, wild turkey and small game were plentiful.

Imagine how difficult it would be to hunt in the thick undergrowth behind you. To improve these hunting conditions Native Americans used fire to clear the forest undergrowth. The new growth attracted wildlife such as deer.



"When Canaan was first settled it was a wild wilderness. . . . The first family of English that moved into the town was Samuel Bryant from Stamford, Ct. He came in May 1738 and John Franklin drove his ox team. . . . The next families . . . were eleven days on their journey, and they arrived the 2nd day of June, 1738, with their families. They had to cut their way through from New Hartford to Canaan."

From the diary of
Nathaniel Steven



Trees the size of this oak were a common sight to the early settlers.

However, wood was needed for fuel and to build new homes and barns. At one of the first town meetings Humphrey Avery was given permission to build a sawmill on the Housatonic River. The forests would never be the same.

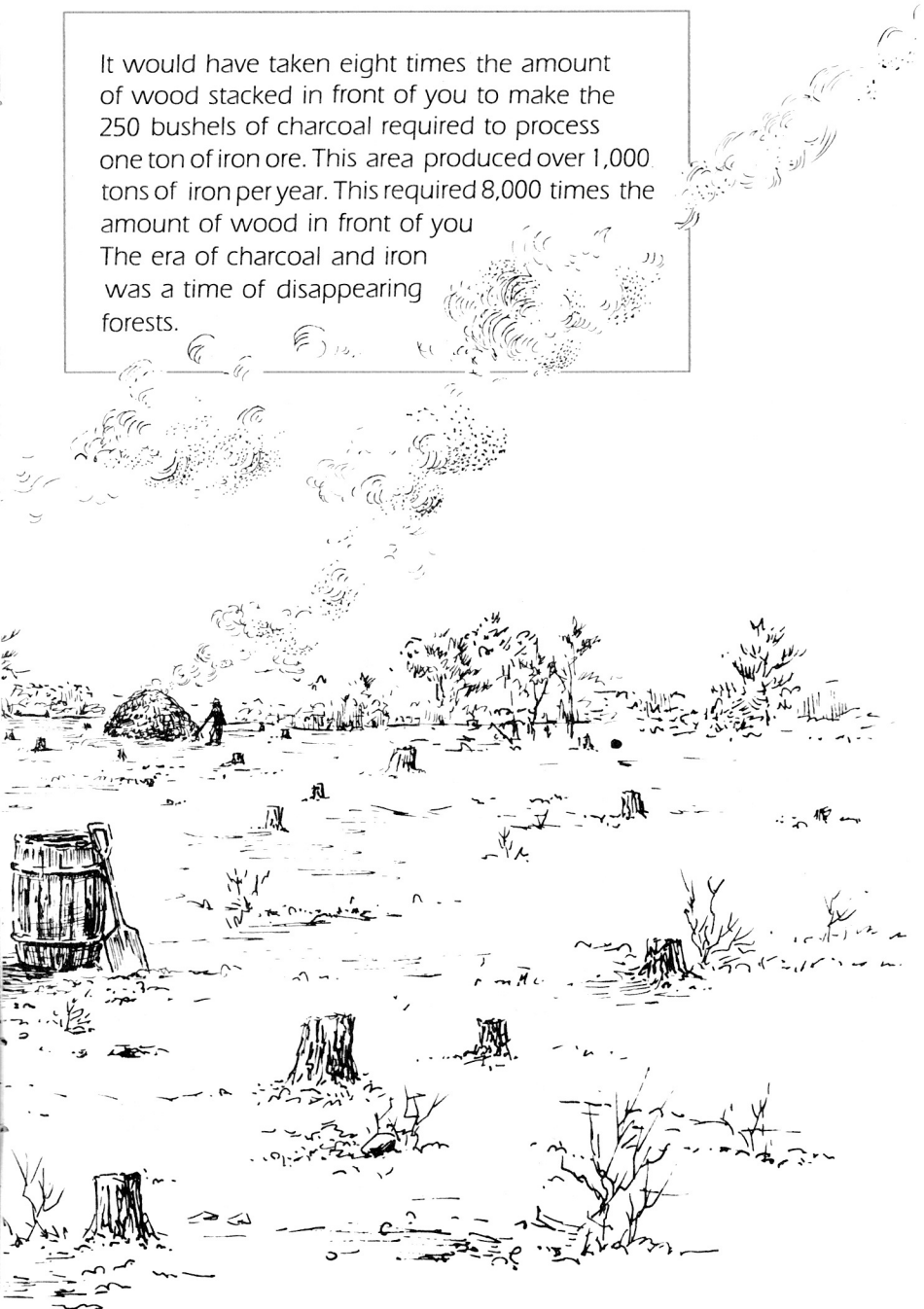
POST 4 Iron Country

In this peaceful setting it is difficult to imagine the roaring bellows, ringing hammers and glowing fires of a booming iron industry. Yet, from the days of the early settlers when iron ore was first discovered in Salisbury, the Upper Housatonic Valley was known as Iron Country. This area had all the ingredients for a thriving iron industry: good quality iron ore, water to power the forges, limestone to purify the iron and charcoal for fuel. The huge supply of charcoal came from the forested hillsides.

Hardwood trees were felled, piled in mounds and slowly burned for weeks. Forests became known as coalbush. So much wood was required to produce the needed charcoal that by the mid-1800s the mountains of the Upper Housatonic Valley were virtually bare.



It would have taken eight times the amount of wood stacked in front of you to make the 250 bushels of charcoal required to process one ton of iron ore. This area produced over 1,000 tons of iron per year. This required 8,000 times the amount of wood in front of you. The era of charcoal and iron was a time of disappearing forests.



POST 5 Abandoned Farms & Forges

By the time the Civil War ended, the landscape had changed dramatically from the forest that greeted the early settlers. It was rare that trees like the pine and hemlock in front of you were spared. Settlers cleared the forested lowlands for farming and turned the landscape into a patchwork of fields and fences. The mountainsides were laid bare to fuel the iron furnaces. Yet, times were changing. As the Erie Canal and the railroads opened up the fertile west and the Industrial Revolution drew people into the cities, farms were abandoned. The end of the Civil War meant the loss of cannon contracts, and the Ames Iron Works, a half mile upstream, closed its doors. Coal was brought from the west and large quantities of charcoal were no longer needed.

The forest began to reclaim the idle fields and hillsides. White pines, like those towering above you, were some of the first trees to return to an abandoned field.





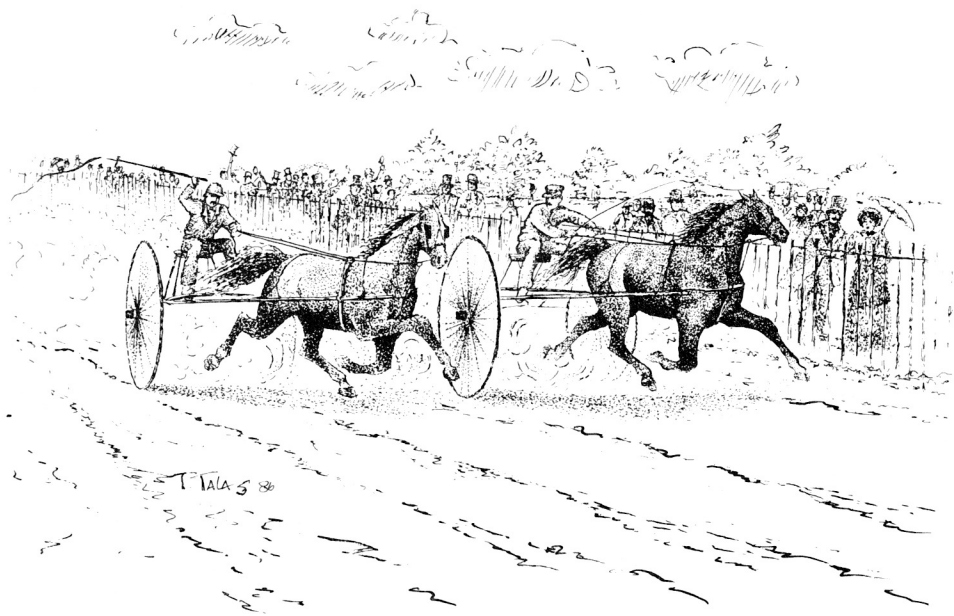
POST 6 Reading the Landscape

Scattered over the New England landscape are a series of puzzles, left for future generations to ponder. The pieces can often be difficult to put together.

An even-aged pine stand, like the one in front of you, is a clue that this area was cleared, abandoned and the trees have since grown back. These sun-loving white pines are often the first trees to reclaim open areas. The raised mound of earth could mean a road, railroad, or canal bed ran through here. However, if you were to turn right or left and follow the raised bed, you would return to this same point after $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of walking. What might this area have looked like a hundred years ago?

POST 7 And They're Off!

I imagine crowds gathered here, the drum of horses' hooves pounding the track and cheers heard from excited onlookers. Music, laughter and the sights and smells of a traveling circus add color to the afternoon. A hundred years ago, you would be standing in the center of a harness-racing track, part of the Falls Village Fairground. During the last half of the 19th century, the Falls Village Fairground was a busy place. Ox-pulling contests, cattle shows and traveling circuses made their appearance.



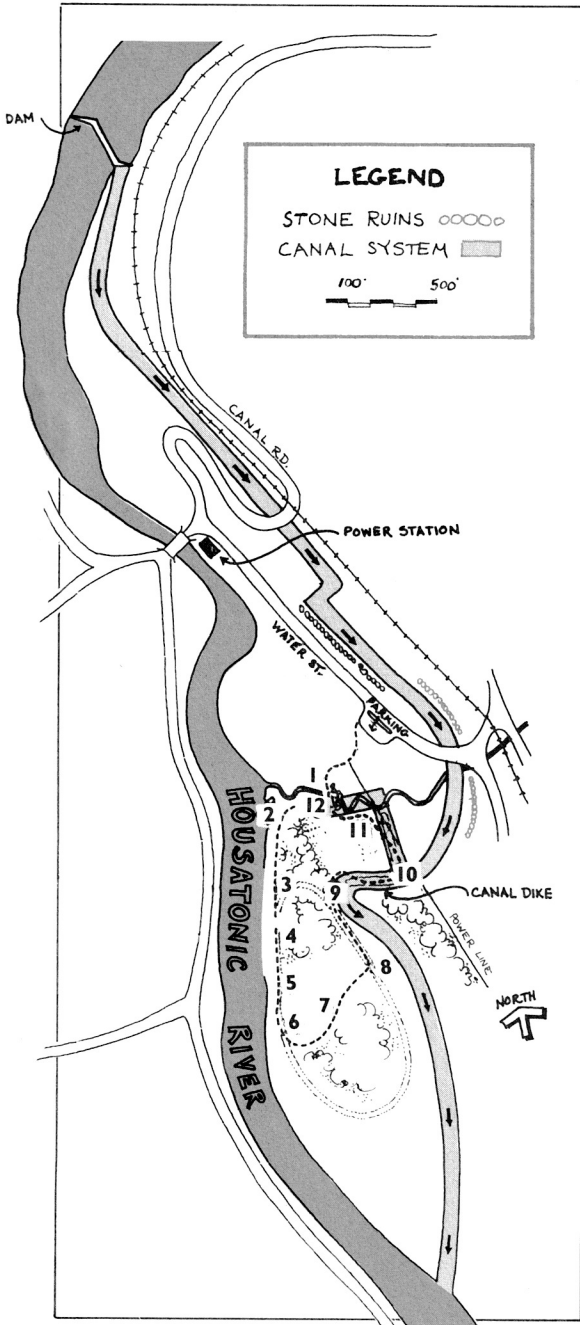
POST 8 Watch Out!

As you step back onto the race track, check to make sure that no horses are approaching! In the 1850s the Falls Village Fairground began hosting harness-racing, a popular sport in Victorian times. Crowds of over 2,000 people gathered on sunny afternoons to watch the events. Anxious moments would follow as races were won and money was lost as the horses crossed the finish line. The last race took place in 1911.

Open sunny fields and cleared mountains were a common sight when the fairground was filled with cheering crowds. By 1860, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the landscape had been cleared. The loss of forest habitat combined with unregulated hunting and trapping meant changes for the wildlife that was once so plentiful. Wolf and bear were hunted for fear they would kill livestock, beaver were trapped for their fur and deer hunted for meat. By the 1860s these animals could no longer be found.

Forests began to reclaim the idle fields and hillsides as farms and forges were abandoned. This process of regrowth, known as succession, is taking place at the edge of this field. Today, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of New England is forested. The regrowth of New England's forests, combined with hunting regulations and wildlife reintroduction efforts by state Fish and Wildlife agencies have meant that, with the exception of the wolf, these animals are once again a part of the landscape.





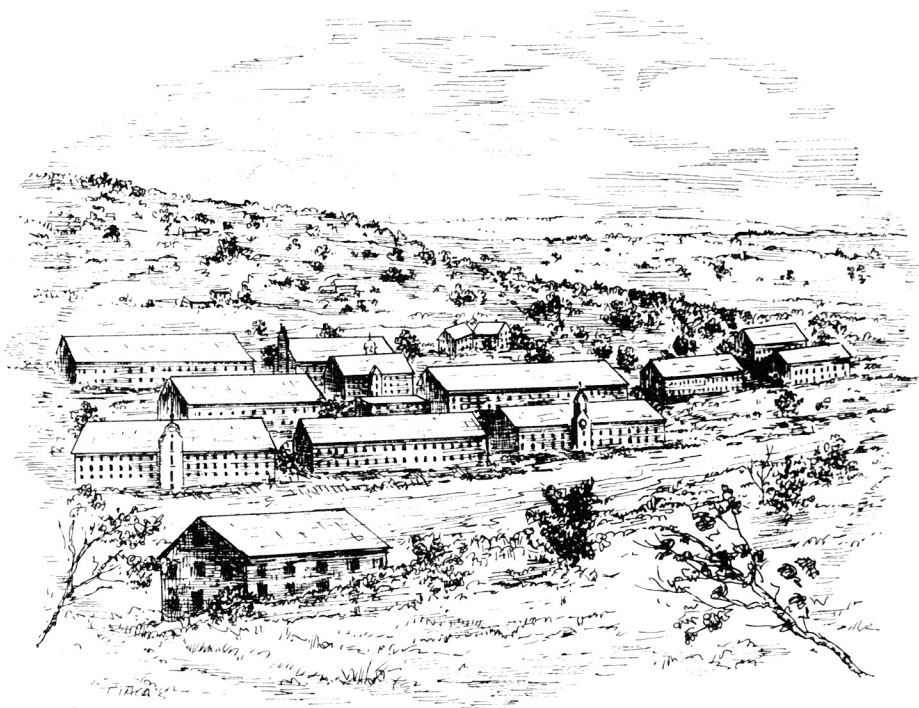
“The people of Falls Village and vicinity are requested to meet at the canal in this village, on Friday next, at 9 o’clock to help repair the big ditch and its little ones . . . [in] time [for] the fair.”

“Come one, come all, and let us see how the ditch will look with the water in, once during the present generation.”

Connecticut
Western News—1859

In front of you is one of the “little ones”. This is part of the lowest level of a 3-level canal system designed to power a giant industrial city at Falls Village. The trail continues along the dike and down into the canal, a canal that represents the dreams of financiers from a century ago.

Map of Falls Village Canal System. Take a minute to orient yourself to this dream from a century ago. You are presently standing at the corner of a dike.



POST 11 Glorious Vision & Instant Failure

The stone remains in front of you and the impressive stone wall across the road in the distance stand as monuments to an extraordinary vision and instant failure. This canal system was patterned after one in Holyoke, Massachusetts, a successful industrial city with a population of over sixty thousand in the early 1900s. However, the Falls Village dream of water power and turning turbines never came to be.

In 1851, as crowds gathered to watch the opening of the grand canal, shouts of enthusiasm gave way to groans of dismay. As the gates opened, water poured into the canal and right out again—the walls leaked. Examine this stone wall closely and you will see why it did not hold water. No mortar was placed between the stones. No factory was ever built and Falls Village never became the giant industrial city dreamed of in the 19th century.

A

t over 150 years
of age this
hemlock tree

has seen the surrounding
landscape shaped by the
hands and dreams of
people.

It has listened to the
ringing hammers and
roaring bellows of the
once-thriving iron
industry, heard the
pounding hooves of the
horses and the excited
shouts of the fairgoers
and, for the past 70 years
has stood in the quiet of
a returning forest, silently
waiting for the next
chapter to be written.



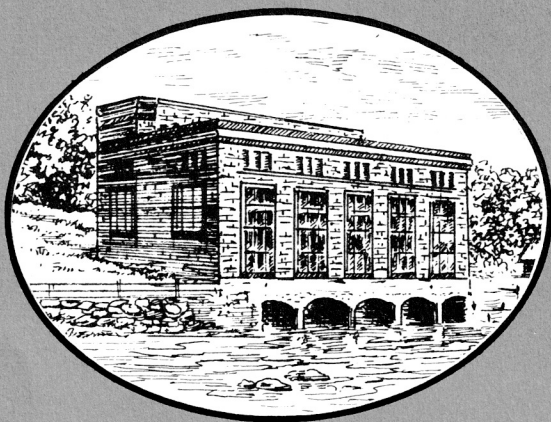
Silent Watcher

*The scenes below might have taken place
at different times during the tree's life.*



How to get there: This self-guiding trail, entitled "People Shaping the Landscape," is located in Falls Village in the beautiful northwest corner of Connecticut.

From Rt. 7 South turn right at the blinking light at the junction of Rt. 126 North. From Rt. 7 North turn left at the blinking light at the junction of Rt. 126 North. Proceed straight on Rt. 126 for .5 miles and turn left at stop sign. Bear right immediately onto Water St. and parking lot is on left.



THE FALLS VILLAGE HYDROELECTRIC STATION

In partial tribute to the industrial canal developers, the first level canal was formally developed in 1914 to serve as the waterway for the Falls Village Hydroelectric Station. It has three generating units with a total station capacity of 10,500 kilowatts.

Artwork by Terri Talas

NORTHEAST UTILITIES



THE CONNECTICUT LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY
THE HARTFORD ELECTRIC LIGHT COMPANY
WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS ELECTRIC COMPANY
HOLYOKE WATER POWER COMPANY
NORTHEAST UTILITIES SERVICE COMPANY
NORTHEAST NUCLEAR ENERGY COMPANY