

WHITAKER WOODS AND WHITAKER HOMESITE

Originally a farm of 300 acres of pasture and forest dating back to 1830, the Town of Conway purchased 100 acres from Charles W. "Chubby" Whitaker, a lifelong resident, in July 1971. Thirty-six more acres, the Ryefield lot, was purchased in 1979. An additional 44 acres was acquired from Edith Bancroft (the sister of C.W. Whitaker) by the State of New Hampshire and deeded to the Town in 1998. Known as the Bancroft property, the acquisition was given to Conway to mitigate the use of a portion of Whitaker Woods land for State highway construction.

In addition to pasture, the predominately pine forest has been used for timber harvesting. Whitaker heirs may cut wood for domestic use. Most pre 1900 building foundations in North Conway are granite from the quarry - just west in from the end of Oak Street. The original portion of the North Conway Library is constructed of granite from the quarry and was donated by the Whitaker's.

Today the Whitaker Barn and the Horatio Carter blacksmith shop remain. The blacksmith shop is located on the adjoining gas station property. Currently, the barn is used to house trail-grooming and athletic equipment.

The Whitaker Homesite has been redesigned to include parking, a ball field and the Whitaker Meeting house. A warming hut, with toilet facilities, picnic benches and a small office are also available.

The property is accessed from Kearsarge road, John Fuller School and Route 16. The Conway Conservation Commission manages the wooded area while the Recreation Department supervises the six acre open area.

A trail network of about 45 kilometers criss-crosses the entire Whitaker Woods. Originally logging roads; these trails have been groomed, widened, and reconfigured to create a park-like woodland for the enjoyment of walkers, hikers, joggers, cross country skiers, snowshoers and horseback riders.

The deed for the first purchase from "Chubby" Whitaker stated that the land be "used for public recreation purposes and shall be maintained forever in a wild and natural state. All cutting of timber shall be consistent with good forestry practices..." An additional deeded restriction calls for no motorized vehicles except for maintenance

Now as an official "Tree Farm", the Conservation Commission has a Forest Management Plan which calls for "good forestry management practices" consistent with the recreational, cultural and educational uses of Whitaker Woods.

12/29/03