

The Mystery of the Stone Foundation

1892 Conservation Area &
Sherman Memorial Forest
Wolf Den Land Trust
175 Breakneck Hill Road
Killingly, CT 06241



The walk begins on Breakneck Hill Road and follows woodland trails over moderately rough terrain and wetlands through two connected properties (see maps on reverse). The two open space properties are the Sherman Memorial Forest (175 Breakneck Hill Road) and an adjacent property owned by the Town of Killingly (72 Putnam Pike). These properties are open to the public from dawn to dusk. They are covered by second growth forest dominated by red oak, red maple, white oak, and eastern white pine. Near the streams, sweet pepperbush and many species of ferns can be found.

The Sherman Memorial Forest is owned by the Wolf Den Land Trust and covers 90 acres. The land was given by Shirley DeLuca in memory of her father Rainsford B. Sherman.

The Town of Killingly property covers 72 acres. The Conservation Commission recognized the value of the tract and the town placed a conservation easement on the property in 2009.

History of the Old House and Town Property

Written by: Margaret M. Weaver
Killingly Municipal Historian
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The Town of Killingly has owned this tract since February 1892 when it was acquired from the estate of George Blanchard. It contains numerous stone walls and a house foundation with remnants of a chimney. Who owned this house and property provided a mystery to be solved.

Land records revealed that the heirs of Joseph Leavens, son of Penuel, had quit claimed the property to Blanchard in 1868. The deed mentioned it was "called the Joseph Leevens place" and said it contained an old house (KLR 44-141). The Leavens family was one of the earliest in what is now Northeastern Connecticut. *The Leavens Name ...* by Philo F. Leavens indicated that Joseph died in 1859. He had three wives and

eleven known children. His second wife was Annie, the widow of his brother Oliver who died between 1820 and 1823. Her two children probably were also members of the household for at least a short while. During the 1830's and 1840's a woman in her 70's and 80's also resided with Joseph's family, perhaps his widowed mother Joanna. Census records placed the family in the area from at least 1810. The 1850 census, the first to list individuals by name, gave the following residents of the dwelling: Joseph Levens, 64; Lucina Levens, 52; Joseph Levens, Jr., 16; Dorcas A., 11; Sarah, 8; Harriet, 6. A second family, Andrew and Martha Hunter, both 28, apparently also occupied the dwelling. I've yet to learn if Martha was a relative. Joseph's occupation was farmer; Andrew's occupation was listed as shoemaker.

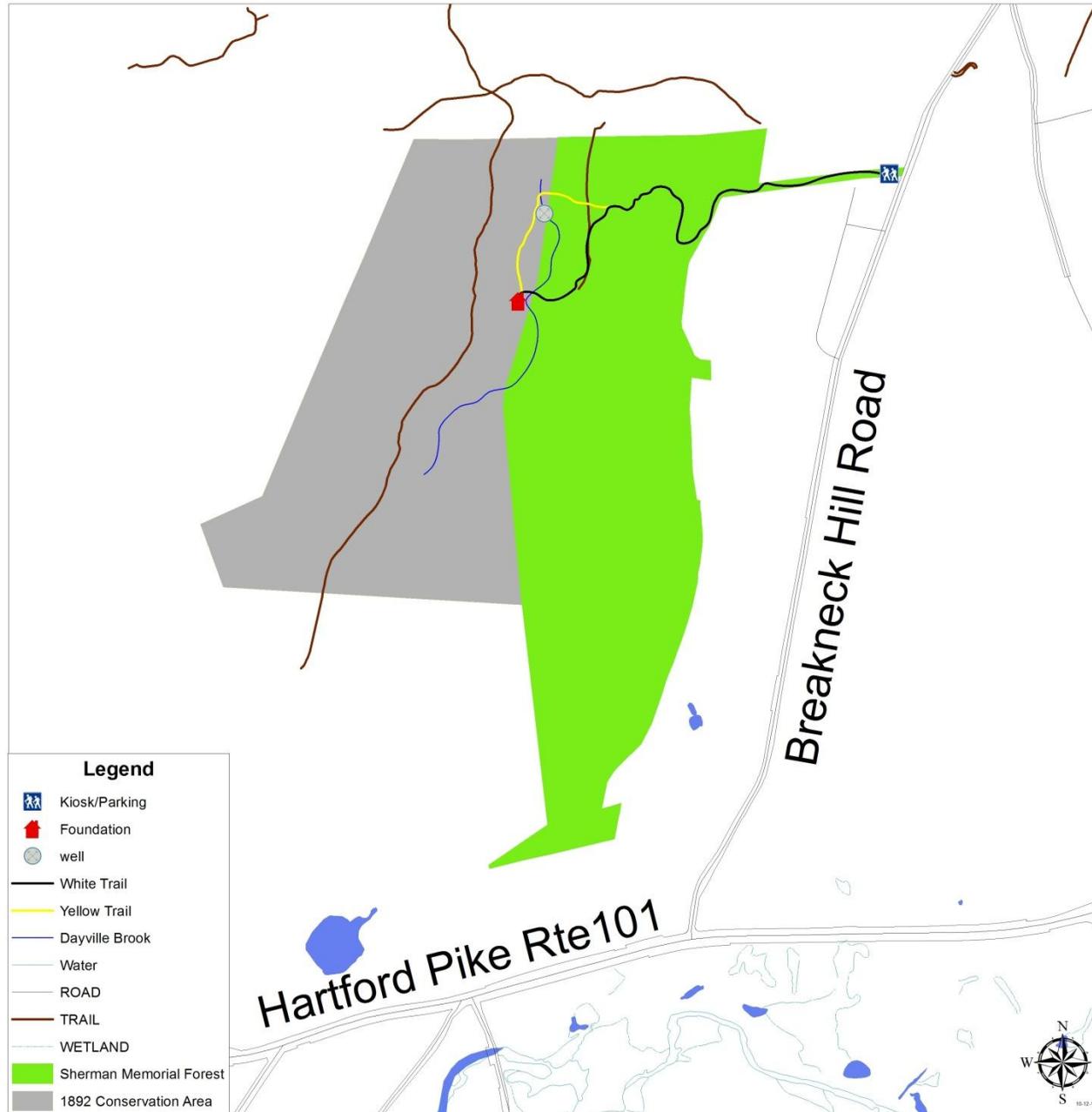
The Leavens Family indicates that Lucina was expecting at the time the census was taken for her son Steaphen was born in November of that year (her age varies with different census years). Following her husband's death, Lucina was granted the customary widow's dower, one-third of the use and improvement of the property. She was given the northerly part of the dwelling house with the privilege of going to and from the chamber overhead, the cellar underneath, the use of the front door and the well as long as she remained a widow. She does not appear in the 1860 Killingly census, but her youngest child is living with his older brother Joseph, Jr. probably in Dayville. Perhaps the farm became idle soon after Joseph's death. Perhaps Lucina moved to the rapidly

growing Borough of Danielson-ville, Dayville, or one of the many mill villages. In 1870, after the sale of the farm, she is living with daughter Annie who works in a cotton mill.

As you walk and view the housesite reflect on the ongoing dynamics of life on this farm and the area. Old Sturbridge Village provides an excellent example of life in the first half of the 19th century, but remember to factor in the births and deaths of children and wives, the rapid growth of the mills along nearby Whetstone Brook beginning in the 1820's, and the advent of the railroad in 1840. Joseph's life was probably difficult, but could not have been dull. The 19th century was quite an exciting time to be alive in Killingly!



This East Killingly house has a center chimney, just like the old foundation. Photo: Courtesy KillinglyHistorical Society



White Trail is 2/3 of a mile from the Kiosk at the parking area to the stone foundation.

1892 CONSERVATION AREA - SHERMAN MEMORIAL FOREST

1892 Conservation Property and Sherman Memorial Forest are a 162 acre woodland preserved in its natural state for passive recreation, environmental and historical education, wildlife habitat and ecosystem protection.

As a cooperative effort, conservation easements protect 72 acres owned by the town overseen by the Killingly Conservation Commission, and the contiguous 90 acres managed by Wolf Den Land Trust.

This nature preserve is open from DAWN to DUSK for activities such as:

- hiking and cross-country skiing
- bird watching and wildlife observation
- pondering the stone foundation and well from an 1860's homestead

Please help us protect this area by:

- not building fires or camping on the nature preserve
- using the trails for walking, not motorized vehicles, bicycles or horses
- keeping your pets on a leash and check for ticks
- avoiding disturbance to wild animals (land trust prohibits hunting)
- removing your trash
- respecting the quiet atmosphere for others to enjoy.

For information about local conservation and outdoor activities go to: www.killinglyconservation.org

To report problems on this property, please call the Killingly Planning Department 860-779-5311 or Resident Trooper 860-779-3900.

For emergencies as always call 911.

Visit: KillinglyConservation.org



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