

22 Crown Point Military Road

Across Vermont a chain of markers stretch from the banks of the Connecticut River to the shore of Lake Champlain. Erected at different times, by different people, and made of different materials - granite, marble, stone, wood, metal - the markers serve as a visual reminder of the Crown Point Military Road.

Built in 1759-60, during the French and Indian War, the Crown Point Military Road was of great importance in the early history of Vermont. It was ordered constructed by General Jeffrey Amherst following his capture of the French forts at Ticonderoga and Crown Point. Its purpose was to connect the great stone fortress at Crown Point with Fort No. 4, now Charlestown, New Hampshire. There was a suitable branch nearly straight west to Fort Ticonderoga.

This military road was of prime importance in the plans of General Amherst. The new fort at Crown Point was to be a strong point in the defense and future development of the colonies, and a jumping-off point in the campaign against the French in Canada. The new road to No. 4, then the northernmost outpost in the Connecticut River Valley, would serve to bring much needed supplies to the fort at Crown Point, as well as troops from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.



The road, though a poor one by today's standards, was built well enough to serve its purpose. Portions of the road were graded, trees cut, stumps removed, bridges and causeways built, and corduroy sections laid in swampy areas. Over this road, in the 1760 campaign, passed Colonial troops with supplies, munitions, cattle and sheep for the support of the army at Crown Point.

The Crown Point Road was again used for military purposes during the American Revolution when troops and supplies were sent over the road from Fort No. 4 to support the American position at Ticonderoga.

But perhaps the road's most lasting contribution to Vermont's history was its use by settlers in the period between the French and Indian War and the Revolution. The road opened a large area of Vermont for settlement and, with the defeat of the French and the lessening danger from Indian raids, settlers were soon traveling the Crown Point Military Road and building their homes in the valleys and on the hillsides of Vermont.

The Crown Point Military Road of today has changed greatly. Much of the road has disappeared entirely, reclaimed by the forest. Other parts have been plowed under or bulldozed away to meet the needs of the expanding population of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some sections of the road are marked and can be followed as trails, while other sections are barely discernible paths through the woods, marked only by the lilac-fringed cellar holes and stone walls of abandoned farms. A few short stretches of the old military road are still in use as town roads.

In the late 1800s, several markers were placed by individuals to mark the route of the road and supplemented the original milestones set by the builders. Only two of the original crude markers (#18 and #22) remain today in Weathersfield, Vermont.

One hiker's description of typical sections of the present Crown Point Road, which winds through the Connecticut River Byway territory between the Connecticut River from Fort No.4 to the North Springfield Lake Flood Control Reservoir, is as follows:

One half mile north of the Cheshire Toll Bridge is a tablet set in stone marking the site of the ferry and block house. This is where the Crown Point Road crosses the Connecticut River from Fort No. 4 and starts winding its way over the Vermont hills toward Crown Point, New York, on Lake Champlain.

The hiker will take a logging road a few yards south of this marker and climb the hill about 1/2 mile to the old cemetery. From the small cemetery the hiker follows the logging road northwest about a mile to Interstate 91. One has to watch very closely for the orange paint marks on the trees which mark the road through the thick woods. At times some of the original logs that were used for the road-bed may be found. This type of road, with log crossways, is called a corduroy road, and was used to keep the heavy cannons out of the mud. A few hundred yards past I-91 the hiker crosses Spencer Hollow Brook and climbs the hill through an open field to the Bullard place on the Spencer Hollow Road. For the next two miles the Crown Point Road follows closely, and sometimes exactly, the present town roads. Most all evidence of the old road is blotted out by more modern roads.

Just north of Peggy's spring the road takes to the open pastures, cuts across the corner by the old cemetery, and over the hill through more open pasture. On this section the hiker may see some evidence of the road where it cut into the land on the hillsides. There is an old corduroy road visible in the swamp.

The next section, in the Town of Weathersfield, from the golf course to the Crown Point Camping Area, is a fine hiking trail through a heavily wooded area. Here much evidence of the old military road may be seen as the trail winds its way around and over the steep hillsides. Beyond the golf course the hiker must

watch for the orange paint markers on the trees and rocks in the thick woods. This section is cleared by the Boy Scouts and the old Indian Road is very clearly defined in spots.



The wooded trail continues to a famous wild flower garden and through a gate in a deer fence through an apple orchard. From here one follows a dirt road north to marker then into the woods. It is a short walk to a small brook crossed by an old stone bridge. From here it is a fairly easy trail down the hill to a town road leading to the wild pine plantation that is now the Crown Point Camping Area. The road passes here through the northeast corner of the adjoining cemetery. The original ten mile marker on the Crown Point Road is still there about a half mile on the other side of Branch Brook.

The road continues for about 1-1/2 miles through North Springfield Lake Flood Control Reservoir over varying

terrain. It closely parallels the original Indian Road most of the way through heavy woods where it has been designated by orange paint markers on the trees. In other places it follows newer dirt roads or open fields. Part of the original Crown Point Road is still evident in the reservoir area.

Sources:

<http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V08-7.htm>

<http://www.crownpointroad.org/history.htm> (permission granted for copy use by Elaine Purdy, CPRA)