

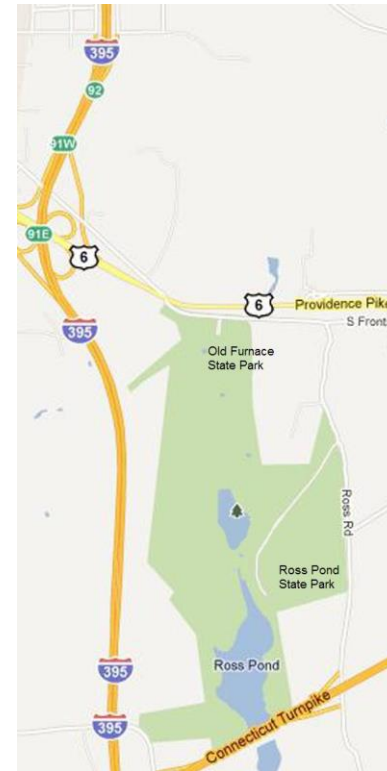
**Nature:** Old Furnace State Park contains a mixture of deciduous and evergreen forest trees that are typical in much of eastern Connecticut. Stone walls and other relics show that farming and industrial activities have taken place, resulting in the second growth forest and man-made ponds that are visible today.

The most notable tree throughout the year is the Canadian (Eastern) hemlock. These majestic evergreen trees are found in many spots along the trail and the cliffs and can be identified by their flattened needles, small cones and dark cinnamon-brown bark. Unfortunately, the damage of a non-native insect, the hemlock woolly adelgid, is very evident in the park. The feeding activity of the hemlock woolly adelgid causes severe thinning and stress on the hemlocks. Other evergreen trees include two species of pine; eastern white pine, which bears soft blue-green needles and long narrow cones and the pitch pine which grows in a few places along the edge of the cliff. The pitch pine has stiff, dark green needles and rounded cones which cling to the branches. Deciduous forest trees throughout the park include various species of oak, birch, beech, maple and hickory. Common understory shrubs include witchhazel, blueberry and mountain laurel.

Several streams, wetlands and man-made ponds can be found along the trail. They contain an interesting mix of native plants including skunk cabbage, cattails and waterlilies. Unfortunately, several invasive plants have colonized the ponds, including phragmites and purple loosestrife.

**Geological History:** Two 600 million-year-old metamorphic rock units that were once part of the joined African and North American continents (Pangea) underlie Old Furnace State Park. The “Scituate” Granitic Gneiss underlies the western half of the park, including Half Hill. The eastern portion of the park is underlain by the Quartzite Unit of the Plainfield Formation. These rocks were metamorphosed (changed) during the continental collision that formed the Appalachian Mountains about 300 million years ago. Over the past 150 thousand years, two glaciers have rounded and smoothed the landscape and deposited till on the hills and stratified drift in the valleys.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The terrain of the park is at times steep, uneven, and rocky. Walkers are asked to stay on the marked trail(s). Participants must sign in before the walk begins. If you decide to turn back early, please tell one of the Walk Volunteers so we can keep track of all participants.



#### DIRECTIONS

Old Furnace State Park is located in the Town of Killingly, Connecticut on the South Side of South Frontage Road off Route 6, approximately ½ mile east of Exit 91, I-395.

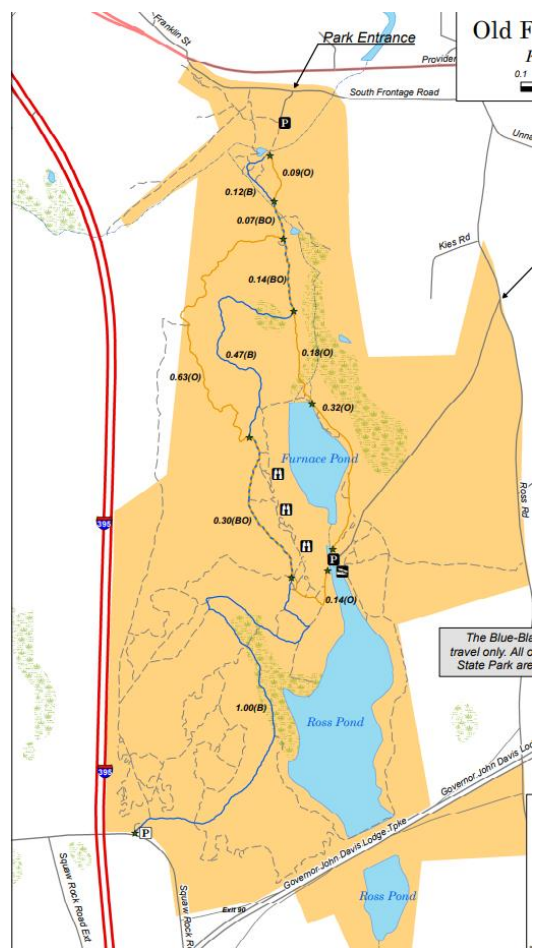
Special Thanks to:  
Maggie Weaver, Town Historian  
Norman Spraske, Friend of Conservation

## Old Furnace and Ross Pond State Parks



Old Furnace State Park,  
539 So. Frontage Road  
Killingly, CT

## WALK ROUTE:



## History of Old Furnace:

Originally a Town Park in 1909. Old Furnace State Park was the site of an iron furnace during the 1830's and 40's. Through the efforts of Reverend Charles Hutchinson, Jr., the Danielson Methodist minister who was then serving in the Connecticut Legislature, it was made a State Park in the early 1940's. Although remnants of the stone furnace are still visible adjacent to Fall Brook, extensive landscaping during the beautification of the park destroyed many of the features.

## PARKS TODAY:

Old Furnace and Ross Pond State Parks contain a variety of natural habitats and landforms that provide interesting opportunities for exploration. The Blue-Blazed Trail Connects these two parks and runs through a beautiful Hemlock Grove, along a scenic stream, wetland and pond area. The trail continues on to the summit of Ross' Cliffs where visitors take advantage of the spectacular panoramic view above Half Hill Pond. A more gently sloped Red Trail breaks off from the Blue Blaze Trail and leads to the summit. For those who enjoy long hikes, the trail continues south through Ross Pond State Park and terminates at Squaw Rock in the Town of Plainfield.

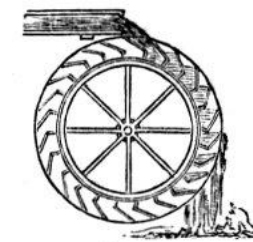
The trail from the Old Furnace parking lot to the top of the cliffs is approximately 2 miles. Round trip is approximately 4.5 miles.

## TIME LINE

- 1809** – A grist mill is erected on the property, perhaps by owner Samuel Titus
- 1830** – Zephaniah Young, now the owner of the property, leases the land to Caleb Fenner for 3 years. The property consists of a dwelling and a grist mill.
- 1831** – The iron furnace has been constructed.
- 1833** – Both the furnace and and forge are in operation on the property.
- 1834** – Young sells 2 acres with a dwelling house and a furnace to his daughter Reba Hubbard.
- 1835** – Hubbard sells 7 acres with a dwelling and a furnace to Parsons Brainard.
- 1840** – Census reports 8 persons employed at the furnace.
- 1847** – Foundry moves to a site adjacent to the railroad on present day Furnace Street in Danielson.
- 1909** – After changing ownership several times, William Pike, now the owner of the “Old Furnace” property, sells it to the Town of Killingly for use as a park.
- 1918** – Town of Killingly sells 4.5 acres comprising “Old Furnace” to the State of Connecticut as a State Park.
- 1964** – The Ross Camp area is added to Old Furnace State Park.

## THE FURNACE:

Numerous small iron furnaces were constructed in the Northeast during the eighteenth century. Most had similar shape and basic method of operation. Iron ore frequently found in swamps and bogs, fuel; often charcoal from nearby timber stands, and flux such as limestone or a Gabbro rock were fed into the top of the furnace. Blasts of hot air from enormous water powered bellows fanned the fire. Molten iron was either hardened into long cast-iron bars called sows or it was immediately poured into molds and cast into a variety of products. The slag produced during the operation was frequently disposed of in a nearby river.



Although long removed from the site the furnace was powered by an overshot wheel, the furnace converted iron ore to molten iron which was then cast for multiple uses. The 1830's saw a number of small cotton mills being established in Killingly. This period also marked the peak of the furnace operation so it was thought that much of the finished product from the furnace was utilized in the construction of mill machinery.

More efficient technology and the completion of the railroad through the present day Danielson in about 1840 hastened the demise of the furnace.