Howard Swain Memorial Forest was donated to SELT in 2011 by Howard Swain’s widow Marguerite and their daughter Deborah Fexis. The property was family land that dates back to John and Sarah Churchill who lived nearby in the early 19th century.

Howard was an avid outdoorsman who loved Pawtuckaway State Park and always wanted to conserve his family land, which directly abuts the park and shares much of its unique geologic features. The southern boundary line runs along the top of Rocky Ridge, part of the circular “ring dike” formation which is evidence of a long extinct volcano.

The Swain Forest also includes the northern shore of Dead Pond, a large bog-like fen with floating mats of decomposed peat moss that support numerous bog plants, black spruce, and tamarack.

Geology Meets Genealogy

Trail Descriptions

- Howard’s Path: This trail begins at the kiosk and follows logging trails in a meandering path out to Dead Pond. The beginning of this trail is a well-defined woods road. The trail widens out at a log landing which has been mowed periodically to maintain the opening for wildlife. From here the trail descends for a short distance, crosses a stone ford and then rises up sharply. Large boulders and ledge outcrops now dot the landscape. At the top of this hill is the first intersection with the Quarry Trail. Look for wood frogs and peepers in season as this portion of the Swain Forest has an unusually high incidence of vernal pools. At the next intersection with the Quarry Trail, bear left to stay on Howard’s Path and continue southwest toward Dead Pond.

The trail crosses two bog bridges and passes by a series of impressive boulders before emerging on a large outcrop at the edge of Dead Pond. Directly across the pond are great views of Rocky Ridge, North Peak and the ledges that include Devil’s Den.

- The Quarry Trail: leaves Howard’s Path a short distance after crossing the stone ford. The first half of this trail follows the edge of a granite ridge line. Note there are very steep drop-offs and small cliffs along this section of trail. Use care during icy or wet conditions.

The trail begins with a great wildlife viewing spot above an active beaver flowage. Just after the pond overlook the trail ascends sharply and joins an ancient cart path on the edge of Churchill’s quarry, an old granite quarry.

From here the path continues northwestern along the ridge top before turning west and connecting back to Howard’s Path. From here, one can return to the gate and parking by going straight, or to go out to Dead Pond by turning right.