



Hancock Shaker Trail

at

Hancock Shaker Village, Hancock, MA

A Nationally approved BSA Historic Trail



The Feast Ground at Mt. Saini – the “Holy Hill” at Hancock Shaker Village

Western Massachusetts Council, BSA
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This historic trail is more than a hike (a walk with a purpose). It is a trip back in time to a period around 1845 when the Shaker Community at Hancock was alive and busy with the industries of farming, manufacturing, and services to neighboring areas. The members called this village their 'City of Peace.' You will have to make prior reservations with the museum's Education Department for the visit. We suggest that you arrive at the Visitor's Center at 9:30am for a guided or self-guided tour through significant portions of the restored village. This part of the historic trail will take about an hour.

Your tour will tell you about Shaker and local Hancock community history and also show you examples of their industry products that have retained their values even to the present day. The village tour will end on the other (north) side of the road after a visit to the Meeting House and the rooms of the Ministry. Be sure you have your lunch and hiking gear with you for the other part of the historical trail.

The second part of the historical trail will take you more time. It is a hike over hills and valleys that were at one time the fields and forests of the Shakers from Hancock and Mt. Lebanon to the west as well as the home for several Hancock members of the North Family. It is difficult to image that the wooded hills of today's Pittsfield State Forest and Hancock Shaker Village were once bare of trees and checkered with stone walls that defined animal pastures and cultivated trees.

The wilderness trail is identified along the way by a series of green triangles, each having a large white circle in the center. Special trail markers along the path to be followed will either indicate a right or left change of direction and/or a point of special interest. Your group should pause and consult the trail guide; it will explain what is of interest at each point.

A questionnaire (to be completed during the hike) is enclosed in this trail guide. Return your group's answers to the Western Massachusetts Council to qualify for and purchase Hancock Shaker Trail Historic patches and ribbons.

Contacts:

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Attention Scout Leaders

Please read the following statement aloud to your trail group before starting the second half of the historic trail:

Scouts and leaders should remain on the marked trail while hiking as the historic sites that you are visiting have significant value for future archaeological study. These sites can be easily damaged or destroyed if anything in the area is moved or altered in any way. All historic sites are irreplaceable for future study and recording of the past. Be sure that everyone who hikes this trail after you will be able to enjoy this same natural and historical experience.

While on this historical trail:

- Take nothing with you but photographs and memories
- Leave nothing behind but footprints
- If possible, leave it better than when you passed by

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws: Chapter 9, Section 27C, states, in part:

- a) An annual permit is required for historic activities to be conducted on land owned by the Commonwealth or its agencies.
- b) No person shall “appropriate, deface, destroy, or otherwise alter any site, specimen, or landmark except in the course of activities authorized under said permit.”
- c) Any person willful of the above section “shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished...”

A Short History of the Trail

Your hike will take you past the remains of the Shaker waterworks, bridges, mills, and the North Family residence up to the Holy sites at the summits of what the Shakers called the Holy Mount and Mount Sinai (the latter now known as Shaker Mountain).

Until the early 1960's, the sites of the Shaker rituals had been forgotten. Then John Manners of Richmond came across the overgrown brush covering the foundations on the hill tops. His interest piqued; he became a history buff. He read Shaker manuscripts and diaries at Hancock Shaker Village, the New York State Museum at Albany, and the Williams College Library.

Manners found that the sites dated to 1842, when each Shaker Village was instructed by the lead ministry to establish a place of worship on the highest land in the community. Both Hancock Shaker Village and the New Lebanon Village (across the state line in New York), followed the instructions, ending up less than a mile across the Shaker Brook valley from each other. The two peaks are respectively 1,845 and 1,927 feet in elevation. Both sites are located in what is now Pittsfield State Forest

Manners was also interested in Scouting, which led to his laying out a six-mile trail to the north of Hancock Shaker Village. In 1982 the trail was recognized by the Boy Scouts of America as a National Historic Trail, the first in Massachusetts. Manner's trail partly follows what he believes to be the 150-year-old Shaker roadbeds along the hillsides of Shaker Creek. He has spent untold hours with Scouts and other volunteers over the past 25 years clearing and marking trails. Many Eagle Scouts have conducted leadership projects on this trail and many other projects (such as the foot bridge above the low dam) have been done by entire troops.

Please take note of maps at the end of this guide.

All quotations in the guide come from the Shaker journals, letters, and diaries at the locations mentioned above, with the exception of the paragraphs on the North Family Dwelling House.

The Wilderness Trail

1) Behind the Meeting House

To the east is Pittsfield and closer by, the sites along the Lebanon Avenue of Hancock Shaker's Novitiate Order (East Family) and Junior Order (Second Family). This was an extensive farmland for the village.

To the south is Richmond and closer by, another site of the Novitiate Order (South Family). The valley was crossed by the Tenth Massachusetts Turnpike (ca 1800) between Hartford, CT and Albany, NY.

“Glancing westward from Pittsfield there is not a finer sight in the United States than the long line of serrated peaks and foothills which combine, from the far north to the distant south, to form what is known as the Taconic Range of mountains” (1904).

Close by, along Lebanon Avenue is another of the Hancock Junior Order (West Family) and further on in New York, the location of the senior community of Mt. Lebanon.

“A small stream of water comes down from the mountains north of the town.... The stream is conducted by an aqueduct underground to the middle of the village...to work their machinery. The water is conveyed underground to the washing rooms, for watering the stables, ...supply the mills, ...and afterward conveyed to distant fields to water the cattle etc. Thus is everything under their control so directed that nothing is wasted.”

There is a reservoir to the north-west. Directly north is Mt. Sinai, rising some 700 feet above the village. The flat area just west of the summit is the site of the Hancock Shaker's “Holy Ground”. The first meeting was held there on 19 June 1842. The “Lord's Stone” was erected there on 4 May 1843 probably to consecrate the area and indicate that all work on the site and access road was complete.

“During the fully sixty years since these services were held on Mount Sinai, the highway leading up there to from the village has become a wreck to such an extent that it is now not only inaccessible for travel in a wagon or horseback, but the pedestrian would have a wild scramble over fallen trees, thick underbrush, and dangerous water gullies to reach the summit. The rain shed and fenced enclosures on the summit have long since fallen into ruins, the whole area is covered with small trees and undergrowth, and it would be a hard job for even one conversant with the locality in earlier years to find the site...of the Holy Stone” (1904).

Mount Sinai's winding path and the “Holy ground” were rediscovered in the early 1960's by John Manners of Richmond after being abandoned for nearly 100 years.

We will start our hike north, following a modern access road around the east side of the reservoir and then joining the old road to the North Family leading by the reservoir.

The reservoir to the west has undergone changes from time to time. New pipes were put in to move the water when the old hollowed out tree trunks originally used simply rotted away. In the late 1800's during a period of drought, the size of the reservoir was increased by terracing and raising the height of the sides. The soil used may have come from this field. We wonder about this as the surface of the field is uneven.

“Oh, the weather: well what advantage can one derive from complaints of it? It is true, we have had some dry weather of late and it was just the right time to make some necessary repairs to our reservoir. Twelve men, six horses, and two yoke oxen were employed in taking earth from one side of the pond and carting it to the banks to make them higher. This will add storage room for about two million gallons more water” (1894).

If you enter the West Road near the large steel pipe in the end of the field, you might point out that this is really part of the steam boiler which was once used in the Textile Mill.

In front of us are the remains of an old apple orchard. Turn right and continue north into the woods on the old road. We soon notice remains of the old stone walls on either side that define a wide right-of-way for the road. There is also some old barbed wire fence that defined the pasture boundaries for cattle from the Shaker Dairy Farm (much newer than the period relating to the stone wall). Pass an old cellar hole of unknown origin on the right.

“After a short visit...we pass on to the North Family, the distance of nearly a mile. This family is due north of the church and some distance from the main road” (1856).

Pause here and picture for a moment the way it was in 1845. In front of us are the footings of a bridge over the stream leading to the North Family Dwelling. Some old bridge timbers are still nearby. The bridge's east footing was washed out by an uprooted tree during an annual spring runoff some time before 1960. Across the stream we can see the dwelling's cellar hole; to the south of the dwelling was a flowered green lawn that looked over the fields to the main village. Straight ahead at the base of the hill is the start of the old path to Mt. Sinai.

The wooden dwelling house for the North Family was constructed in about 1821 when the family was established. All members were conventual Shakers, so this was a Senior Order of Shakers. The building, an almost flat roofed three-story house with the kitchen in the basement as was the custom of the time, served as home for varying numbers of the family members. There was a meeting room for the family as well as retiring rooms. The largest number of people living here seems to have been approximately twenty.

“The road leading to the feast ground passes by this family and continues up to the mountains for more than a mile” (1856).

Continue north on the road and parallel to the stream. We come to the lower dam that pools water for the underground aqueduct feeding the village reservoir. Note the riveted

construction of the rolled iron sheets that form the pipe between the silt separation chamber and where it goes underground.

You will notice this dam is built straight across the stream except for a slight curve on the east end. This indicates that the Shakers felt no danger that this stream would ever be strong enough to breach the dam. It was the custom in that time to build dams convex to the flow of the stream. That way if the force of the water was strong enough to threaten the dam there would be resistance to the force of water. A convex dam costs more time labor and material to build than a straight dam. You will also notice that this is an excellent location start steep hills on either side; the streambed seems to fall away naturally so that there may have been a small waterfall here.

Walk still further north along the road and stop at a footbridge recently built for easy access to the east side of the stream. Ahead of us, upstream, is the ruins of the upper (High) dam. This dam is believed to have been built around 1810. Between this bridge and the high dam is the site of the newer sawmill that was powered by water when plentiful or by a steam engine during dry periods. It is shown on a map dated 1876 but not on one dated 1858. This sawmill was bridged over the stream where the stone foundations are still visible. Across the stream by the mill, we can imagine the staging point for logs to be rolled into the mill. Note the high stone wall and access path via the flat ground at the base of the steep hill.

Note the road deteriorates beyond the second bridge. That is because the wagons turned, crossed the bridge, and approached the sawmill from the east side.

There is a lot of stonework to be seen here. First let us concentrate on the dam. Once again this is a good location for a dam. High and steep hills, lots of good solid bedrock. The dam is 120 feet long and may have stood 30 to 35 feet high in the center. Again, the capstones of the dam are found in the streambed.

To the west of the present streambed the dam consists of a high mound of earth, faced to the South side with vertical masonry. Unfortunately, most of the masonry has fallen.

To the east the dam was constructed with a dry-laid masonry wall two to three feet thick. It was built up from the bedrock. Behind this area the wall was filled in with boulders and cobbles tapering down to a place about 60 or 70 feet upstream. On top of this filling large flat stone slabs were placed laying at an angle of approximately 20 degrees to 25 degrees from horizontal.

Behind this was a long and narrow pond. It extended along the streambed to the northwest.

Silt eventually filled in the pond. The dam was damaged by a heavy summer storm in 1976.

Below us to the South is the site of the sawmill. Try to picture the mill here. A former Shaker sister who visited the mill before it burned reported that the mill building was two stories tall.

On the west bank one can see where the housing was built for the overshot wheel. Footing is slippery so warn people to watch their step. In the stream bed one may see a piece of marble that has been hollowed out. This was the base of the support beam as the mill itself straddled the stream.

The stonework on the east bank is slowly falling away. The entrance to the mill was on the east bank. The ground there appears to be filled, which provided a wider area for logs and wagons.

We will return to the point at the end of the mountain trail, so this right turn over the bridge marks the beginning of our loop through the Shaker hills.

Cross the stream carefully on the bridge reconstructed by Troop 8 of Pittsfield and walk downstream along the logger's road and past the lower dam.

Between our path and the stream are several foundations of Shaker industrial sites. Please remain on the trail.

“Near the source (of a small stream) a dam is erected for the use of the thrashing mill.... Behind this stands the corner gristmill, and below that the sawmill” (1876).

“The last mill built along the stream was a brick carding and fulling located...a few rods west of the North family dwelling” (1856).

The ‘brick’ factory was erected in 1845, destroyed by a fire in 1865, and never rebuilt. Today we still see the water wheel pit for the waterpower to run the various operations. It is not known how the water was fed from the dam(s) above to the point but the tunnel in the put that returned the water from the wheel back to the stream is still intact.

Now let us put our imaginations to work. First of all, these trees to the southwest hill have to come down. It is the year 1845. In the opening you will see a group of buildings belonging to the North Family.

Closes to us is a new building made of brick. It is the new Carding and Fulling Mill. On this side of the buildings, we can see the building and stone work which housed the water wheel which provided power to the mill. You cannot help but notice the way in which the water reaches the wheel. It travels through a large cast iron pipe that is supported on posts from a place we cannot see. The waste must travel a good distance through the pipe. It comes from the High Dam.

The wooden posts and the pipe are gone but we can see low stone piers along the east bank of the patch to which the wooden posts were attached. The reason the wooden posts were attached to the stone was that in that way the wood did not rot, and a post could be replaced easily if it were necessary.

In the beginning this mill probably only operated for three months of the year. That would have been when the sheep had been sheared and there was a large demand for the services of the mill. Records of the time refer to the mill as a 'Carding and Fulling Mill.' Because we have no records of the mill, we can only hazard a guess at what was used here and how it was used. Historically we know the kinds of machines used in other small mills and the Shakers undoubtedly used the same commercial machines.

In December of 1865 a terrible thing happened. A fire broke out in the mill. It is not hard to imagine the terror felt by the occupants of the nearby North Family Dwelling. There was no fire fighting equipment and despite their efforts the mill burned to the ground. Even though the Dwelling House was not harmed it was the end. The following year the North Family disbanded, only the sawmill continued to operate. Shakers who worked there walked up for the Village each day to do their work. It is interesting to note that the Dwelling House was moved to the space just west of the Brick Dwelling of the Church Family. It was used as a Sister's Shop and Nurses Shop. In 1958 it was razed.

Further south along our path is the foundation site of the North Family Dwelling. Again, please remain on the trail since the archaeological studies are in progress.

A student report regarding the dwelling investigations in the summer of 1983 suggested the following conclusions:

"The North Family Dwelling House at Hancock Shaker Village in Hancock, Massachusetts has been an enigma in the historical record. Since historical documentation was extremely scarce on the Dwelling house site, various types of information were used to interpret the dwelling and the Shakers who lived there. These types of information included survey comparative, and recorded archaeological site-specific data.

The North Family Dwelling House was erected in 1821 and moved to the Church Family at Hancock in circa 1867, after the North Family was dissolved. When the Dwelling was moved, the majority of its reusable architectural material were salvaged and also moved. The dwelling was probably a three and one-half story, wood-frame constructed building. The building materials used at the Dwelling House site, other than the excavated rough field stone walls and various brick features were removed. These salvaged materials would have been comparable to those used at similar Shaker dwellings. By using comparative data on Shaker Dwelling houses, the location of rooms by floor could adequately be

determined. The basement of the North Family house would have contained the kitchen (located adjacent to the chimney base), food storage rooms, bake room, and one or more dining rooms. The first floor would have had the meeting room, chapel, and a few bedrooms located on it. The second and third floors would have consisted almost entirely of bedrooms, with the attic being used for clothes storage and possibly a couple of bedrooms. Considering the size of the North Family Dwelling House, the building could have housed between 28 and 40 people. The original 1821 structure undoubtedly did not include the northern wing until probably the late 1830's or 1840's. This northern addition would have been built to accommodate the growing membership of the North Family" (1983).

We will now follow the trail up to Mt. Sinai to the Hancock Shaker's Holy Ground. Many places along the way provide evidence of a carefully constructed cart-path; certainly, parts of our trail follow the 1843 route.

The recent logger's track, in many places, has probably covered any evidence of the original path. This present route was cleared in the early 1960's by a local Scout Troop while earning the National Historic Trail Award.

Start up the mountain path.

"Morning fair and pleasant and it is calculated to go up to Mt. Sinai to meeting.... We have a good road to the North Family, then begin to ascend the mountain. The path is tolerably good but the route is crooked or zigzag..." (1853).

"During the fully (fifty) years since these holy services were held on Mt. Sinai, the highway leading up thereto from the Shaker Village has become a wreck to such extent that it is now not only inaccessible for travel in a wagon or horseback, but the pedestrian would have a wild scramble over fallen trees, thick underbrush, and dangerous water gullies to reach the summit" (1904).

As we approach the halfway point in the mountain path, we can see another recent logger's road straight ahead. This may have been another path up to Mt. Sinai for those Shakers walking to the meeting.

"When we move from here in the same way by different courses, we take advantage of the steps of the mountain – some of the way is so narrow that only two can go abreast and the sisters fall behind" (1853).

Turn right at this point and walk another 100 feet to the next stop.

We are now standing on the site of a large charcoal pit. It was conveniently located on the cart-path for good access to remove the charcoal by wagon as an end product of the wood cutting in the woods above this level where the forest began.

Since natural charcoal is not very common today, a brief story of the manufacture of charcoal from a 1890 encyclopedia will help to explain the significant human effort that was required. This information along with notes from a Shaker diary about their production of charcoal are provided after the sketch maps in this guide. Plan to read this in detail during your stop at the 'spring' at Holy Mount.

In front of us is a relatively level ground to the east that possibly may be the site of the 'Walnut Grove'. Today we see many shag-bark hickory trees that in old England would have been referred to as walnut trees.

“...halt at the Walnut Grove, have some singing and some communications from the spirits. A part of Christ's sermon on the mount was head here” (1853).

Continue up the mountain on the path directly to our left. A short way up on the left may be a trace of an older cart-path (the original trail?).

Cross a modern right-of-way for a power line to the aircraft beacon on the summit. Pass another charcoal pit on the left; note the black earth on our path from the charcoal.

Zig sharp left and continue up the logger's road, crossing under the power line again.

Here is an excellent example of what may be the 1843 cart-path. Note the well-made road with carefully laid stone on the left to hold the base in place. No logger takes the time to build a road this well.

Continue along this path as it curves to the right and then aims directly for the 'Holy Ground'. The level area outside and south of the 'Holy Ground' was the area where the horses/wagons were left during the meeting.

But we are soon on Sinai's top. The bowing (in concert makes seven low bows – 1843) is done before we enter which is at the south end” (1853).

This is consecrated ground and no world's man (non-Shaker), no one who has not confessed his sins before God's witnesses, the elders, is allowed within the enclosure” (1843).

“Every society in this denomination has a place for meeting in the open air, usually at some little distance from their village. Where they assemble twice in the year, and sometimes oftener. These

meetings are very curious, and at them this people manifest many of these eccentricities and have many wonderful revelations.”

“About the year 1841, or 42, a very important revelation was received requiring every society in God’s Zion upon earth (The Shakers) to prepare a place upon some mountain, or hill, in its vicinity, for a Holy place of worship.”

“the place pointed out for our society was about a mile-and-one-half from our village upon the top of a mountain, and is named Mt. Sinai. It is in sight of the mountain chosen for their meeting ground, by the Society at New Lebanon, called Holy Mount. But they are too far distant from one to the other; there being a great gulf, or valley between them. The mountain was named Mt. Sinai, after Divine revelation had designated the spot. The brethren went to work and removed the trees and their roots, the stones and other rubbish, smoothed and prepared the ground. It is now covered with a greensward, and surrounded with a plain strip-fence, painted white. It is in the form of a square, and contains I should judge about 3/8ths of an acre. Near the center is a little spot, enclosed with a fence of a single strip, about fifteen inches high, in the form of a hexagon. It is called ‘the fountain’. At the north end of the fountain is erected a marble slab 3 ½ or 4 feet high.”

There is also, a building erected at the north side of the ground with two apartments, or sittings rooms, one for sisters, and the other for the brethren. But the fountain claims our particular notice. It is a fountain not of literal waters, but of the water of life, and is exceedingly productive of spiritual gifts. It serves also, as a center around which they march, dance, sing, and play” (1843).

We will take a few moments here to fully imagine the 1843 scene for those mountain meetings and inspect the area (based on the enclosed sketch) and then leave by way of the northeast corner. Be sure the related hike questions have been answered.

The trail continues for some distance north along the ridge of Mt. Sinai and then swings west and down into the ‘great gulf’ separating Mt. Sinai and the Holy Mount. The trail picks up another possible Shaker cart-path on the way down through a dense grove of hemlock trees.

In the valley we immediately see the evidence of modern logging with no reforestation in the jumbled mess of tree stumps and tops with the encroaching growth of briars and other unwelcome weeds. We will quickly leave this behind and enter the pleasant woods again.

Turn left onto the same road that earlier led us to the North Family; then right after a short distance and walk along another wood road. It is probably not a Shaker road although there is a stone wall to the right that at one time marked the north boundary of the Hancock Shaker

Village property; it may have been opened by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's. They had a camp north of here on the road from Pittsfield to Lebanon Springs.

Turn left again and leave the logger's road. The trail bends to the right, crosses a stone wall (it is an extension of the wall surrounding Holy Mount – now atop the hill to our left), carefully cross the mountain stream (it eventually feeds the brook at the North Family), and continue up the steep road with another stone wall on the right.

Turn left at the top of the hill at a corner of stone walls and follow a narrow path along another stone wall, now on our right.

DO NOT DISTURB a wood post set in this stone wall.

Pause at an opening between a stone wall corner and a single stone wall leading south up to Holy Mount. This opening is probably for the cart-path up the hill from the west and the Mt. Lebanon Shaker Village.

An account of the dedication of the Holy Mount on 1 May 1842 that they continue up the mountain and “against the Little Pond” (possibly Twin Pond on the USGS map) and eventually ascended “the hill this side of the consecrated ground” and “arrived to the Bars that enter into the sacred lot” (1842).

“Brother Daniel Boler invites writer (Elder Henry Blinn from Canterbury Shaker Village, NH.) to accompany him to the place known as the Feast Ground, or Fountain, at a distance or nearly two miles at the top of the mountain east of the village. To know that road, one must walk in it; and we are left to wonder how the society were ever able to take that march of two miles. Indeed, in many cases it must have been at the expense of health and even life. We, however, plodded along over this exceeding rough mountain passage, and finally reached the summit and were able to rejoice that it was no worse” (1856).

We will follow the foot path uphill and to the left of the single wall until we also reach “the Bars that enter into the Sacred Lot.” We now can rejoice, as Elder Henry did in 1856, that we are on top of our trail – everything from here on is all downhill!

When inside the Sacred Lot, bear left and follow the foot path east until the “feast Ground” is reached. We will not inspect the are (based on the enclosed sketch). The pine trees presumably were planted on this summit by CCC personnel some 90 years ago. Growth is difficult on top of this highest point around (elevation 1927 feet) where soil depth is shallow, and winds are nearly continuous.

From Elder Blinn's diary of 1853:

“The sacred spot of ground was a few rods beyond the highest point and contained not far from an acre. All the trees and bushes had been removed and the place had been made suitable for the accommodation of several hundred people. It was known as the Fountain, a spot selected by inspiration and consecrated to the worship of God. A fence extended around the entire acre as a protection against the intrusion of any cattle that might chance to be in the vicinity. At an earlier date, during the time when meetings were being held, the fence was painted white, but as the ground had not been used for several years, the Fountain as a whole had been neglected. A designated spot within this enclosure had been marked by erecting a large marble slab and an area of a few feet had been surrounded with a red cedar fence of about eighteen inches high. This was near the southeast side of the larger lot. The marble slab that was erected in 1843 at great expense to the Society had been broken off even with the bed stone, by some unknown person, and at the present time lays inside of the house which is situated on the north side of the grounds. The stone before its removal had been very much injured by breaking the corners and marring the surface.

Three pine trees are growing inside of the outer fence, the only survivors of a row once planted around the entire ground. The house has never been painted and the inside is still unfinished. It was one story high and about 40 feet long. Two doors and two windows were on the front side, and one window on each of the house. The stone at the Fountain was of American Marble, 5 ft. 3 in. high, 2 ft. wide, and 3 ½ in. thick.

On the top of another mountain about a mile distant in an easterly direction is located the sacred ground belonging to the Society of Hancock. Shouts of recognition have been exchanged between the two assemblies as they have happened to be holding religious services at the same time” (1853).

From Brother Bennett’s account of the first meeting on 1 May 1842 which was a service of song and march and spiritual communion that lasted for over two hours (after the two mile climb up the mountain!):

“It is the will of the Lord that every one here assembled should gather a stone on this holy ground and with the same erect an altar...an Altar...which shall stand as a testimony of the covenant of his people...Let the Altar be erected ten yards west of the Fountain. Here is the place, here shall the Altar stand, and let it be built in a circular conical form... The Ministry and Elders each of them picked up a stone and laid them for the Fountain of the Altar.

The Brethren and Sisters did likewise and soon the Altar was erected. At a later time the Fountain Stone would be put in place., And I will in my own time cause to be written on a pillar of table of stone, my Law and cause it to be placed at the head of the Fountain, and there shall my word stand, visible to the eyes of morals” (1842).

Walk over to the north wall east of the house foundation and downhill a short distance to the next trail point.

Here is a ‘perfectly’ constructed section of stone wall that is 12-18 feet long, 3 feet wide at the base, and tapered to the top. This was probably built by one Shaker in one day’s labor and represents the best example of the stone wall builders’ art to be seen anywhere on our trail. The sacred lot walls required approximately 350 man-days of labor to build!

Return to stop #9 and prepare to leave the Holy Mount. Be sure the related hike questions have been answered.

The return trail down the mountain begins at the southwest corner of the Holy Mount: follow the triangle markers west through the pine grove and downhill through open woods to the single opening in the stone wall on the west side of the Sacred Lot.

This opening is not as wide as the opening for carts and wagons we passed through in the north wall but it does seem to have had ‘bars’ to keep animals out. Note the pockets for rails on the north side of the opening. It may have been for walkers only, but the original path remains to be discovered.

Bear left at this opening and follow the triangle markers south through the open wood west of the Sacred Lot. You may observe but DO NOT DISTURB three posts set within this west wall. These posts are the only remaining evidence of a fence stop the wall to keep animals out.

We arrive at a natural amphitheater in the southeast corner of the Sacred Lot containing a spring that is mentioned in Shaker records. This is a perfect place to sit down in the quiet of the woods and reflect on what we have learned on our Shaker trail.

Cross the small stream gully south of the wall and follow the triangle markers through the woods until a present-day forest fire road is reached. Turn left and continue east downhill towards the North Family. A deep gully/stream is on our right.

Here is the first of several charcoal pits across the part of the trail. Count the number from this point until reaching another signpost.

Continue straight on the Shakers cart-path when the fire road takes a bend uphill to the left. Follow the triangle trail markers.

Carefully cross the stream (it also leads to the brook by the North Family) at a ford and walk along the old path. Take care where the route has been eroded away by flooding action of the stream.

We join another old path (possibly logger of Shaker) and continue downhill on the south side of the stream toward the quarry. At the bottom of the road leading to the quarry. Stop the group so that they may see the clearing to the south. A lot of the trees have grown in, but one can still tell that this area was open. This was the staging area for stone from the quarry. Also, point out that the roadbed, still good after all these years, is only six feet wide, the size needed for a pair of oxen.

As you approach the quarry, point out two locations on the left where a block and tackle were used to remove large solid pieces of marble. These indicate that the quarry was more extensive than it appears with the growth over the stone. Also point out that as we near the top we find large stands of maiden hair fern (for conservation, do not allow anyone to remove any). Maiden hair fern is one of the plants that thrive on limestone. It would be a good indication to a quarryer that he might find limestone here.

On reaching the quarry examine the sample stones from earlier visits. These were taken from the rocks above with a hammer. Notice that these are the same color, texture, and quality as the marble siding, we examined at the brick dwelling. That stone may well have come from this quarry.

This quarry was in use anytime from 1785 onwards for almost one hundred years. A brother from Mt. Lebanon Village recorded a visit to the quarry in 1858. It may have been that after fire destroyed the textile mill in 1867 the quarry was abandoned as there was no need for additional stone.

Geologically this quarry is of interest to us for it represents the results of the shoving, squeezing movements that went on for so many million years.

The quarry is on either side of a great fold in the crust of the earth which left exposed ancient limestone. A lot of cracking, separating, and fracturing occurs on the line of a fold. As it pulls and stretches because of the folding, large rectangular slabs break away which makes for easy quarrying.

Here is the last of several charcoal pits on the return loop of the trail towards the brook. If found, search the outside edge for some bits of charcoal. Record the total number of pits seen on this part of the trail.

Follow the triangle markers on this path back to the main Shaker road. Turn right and walk past the High Dam. DO NOT CLIMB atop this ruin as it is very fragile. Stay on the road and pass the foundation of the newer sawmill (it burned in 1926). Return on the same road back to the village.

Submit the trail questionnaire and the names of our trail guide (and today's date) at the Visitors Center. Trail awards are available here for those Scouts and Scouters who have successfully completed the Hancock Shaker Trail.

Thank you for joining us at this National Historic Landmark!

More About Charcoal

“Charcoal, the more or less impure form of carbon obtained from various vegetable and animal materials by their ignition out of contact with air. Wood charcoal is a hard and brittle black substance that retains the form and external structure of the wood from which it is made. It is infusible and is not dissolved by water or acids.

Charcoal can be made at a temperature as low as 300 degrees C. It is produced in greatest quantity at a heat of just sufficient thoroughly to char the wood. The charcoal so made contains a larger percentage of hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen than that formed according to the nature of the wood employed and the method of manufacture.

Charcoal can be prepared in a variety of ways. In most countries where wood is abundant, charcoal-burning is carried on by firing conical piles or billets of wood, about 12 feet in height and 10 to 40 feet in diameter, from the top of a central hole of chimney. The wood is felled in winter and must be tolerably dry; it is built up with the bark outermost, the largest billets being placed in the interior of the pile; over the hole is laid a covering of turf, or of charcoal-dust (breeze) and soil. The combustion of the wood is conducted from above downward, and from the exterior towards the center; so that the charcoal in a half-burnt heap forms an inverted cone. At the side of the heap are holes for the admission of air, the number and size of which are a matter of importance. The first, or ‘sweating,’ process lasts three to four days, during which the cover becomes moist with condensed water. The openings round about the base of the pile are then covered, and a series of holes are made about halfway from the tip of the heap; as the smoke ceases to issue from these they are closed, and another series of holes are made below, as required. The tarry products which collect towards the close of the operation are removed from the heap by means of gutters or pipes.

Sometimes the base of the heap is made in the shape of a flat funnel, from which proceeds a channel for the tar and acid. When the air holes of the burning heap no longer emit smoke and flame, they are carefully stopped, and the pile is allowed to cool for two or three days. The charcoal is then drawn, and any pieces which may still be glowing are quenched by plunging them into water and sand. By the above-described method, 128 cubic feet (one cord) of wood yield about 30 bushels of charcoal” (1890).

(This yield calculates to approximately 30% by volume of charcoal from the original pile of wood).

Diary Notes About Charcoal

A few short notes from a Shaker diary illustrates how big a task over a long period of time (excluding the effort of cutting and stacking the wood) it was to produce charcoal.

“1832:

- September 21 – James has got his coal kiln finished ready for turfing
- September 26 – James has finished covering his coal kiln
- October 2 – Elder Br. and James have fired the coal kiln
- October 6 – Freegift wells staid at the coal kiln last night
- October 8 – F stays with James at the coal kiln last night
- October 14 – The coal kiln is burnt down and stopped up
- October 16 – Elder Br. and James have keel'd (cooled) off the kiln
- October 17 – Elder Br. and James and Joshua and George have begun to draw the coals out of the kiln
- October 19 – F staid at the kiln last night with James. James has setup a kiln of brands (uncharred wood) and fired it, etc.
- October 22 – James and his company finished drawing home all the coal of the great kiln and raked out their brand kiln this evening
- October 23 – James draw'd home the coal of the little kiln. The wood they burnt according to calculations was 41 cord, in all they have 1600 bushels of charcoal”

(To imagine 41 cords of wood, picture a pile 25 ft. by 25 ft. by 8 ft. high! The Shaker's charcoal yield was 3%, yet another example of their dedicated effort.

The charcoal was used in the village forge, perhaps in the kitchens, and possibly sold to the nearby Richmond iron furnace. The village even had its own iron ore bed by the East Family (where Lebanon Avenue crosses over the railroad).

Timeline

- 1760 First land grant issued in Hancock
- 1783 Mother Ann Lee preaches to the farm families of the area
- 1790 Hancock Shaker Village established
- 1790 – 1810 Great activity in the village. Around this time laundry and machine shot erected. Quarry, dam, and reservoir probably completed earlier and in use. Grist mill below high dam in use as early as 1810.
- 1821 North Family established, and dwelling built
- 1823 Grist and flour mill ceased. Changes made in mill with sawmill taking over building
- 1845 – 1846 Textile mill erected near North Family Dwelling
- 1858 Turbines replace overshot water wheels
- 1865 Fire destroyed textile mill
- 1866 – 1867 North Family closed. Dwelling moved to be used in the village.
- 1926 Fire destroys sawmill
- 1958 North Family Dwelling razed
- 1976 High Dam collapses

Hancock Shaker Trail Questions

1. The 'brick dwelling' was built in _____
 - a. Its approximate dimensions are _____
 - b. The number of floor levels is _____
2. The 'round barn' was built in _____
 - a. The number of floor levels is _____
3. The main road through the village is oriented in the direction of _____
4. The estimated original height of the high dam is _____
5. The approximate diameter of the charcoal pit near the walnut grove is _____
6. The Holy Ground atop Mt. Sinai is oriented in the direction of _____
7. The stone wall at the cart path entrance to the Sacred Lot atop the Holy Mount is oriented in the direction of _____
 - a. The opening is approximately _____
8. The dimensions of the shelter foundation on the Holy Ground are _____
9. The approximate length of the perfectly laid stone wall on the Holy Mount is _____
10. The number of charcoal pits observed on the return trail beyond the Sacred Lot is _____

Our hiking portion of the Hancock Shaker Trail took _____ hours.

Unit type and number _____ Community _____

Leader Name _____ Date _____

Participating Scouts

Hancock Shaker Trail Order Form

Unit Type: _____ Unit Number: _____ Community: _____

District: _____ Council: _____

We would like to order the items below for our unit:

Order Quantity	SKU	Description	Retail	Total
	C120	Hancock Shaker Historic Trail Patch	\$4.00	
	C121	Hancock Shaker Historic Trail Medal	\$10.00	
	188	BSA Historic Trails Award Patch	\$3.29	
	S/H	Shipping and Handling	\$10.00	

Please send our items to:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

Town/City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Email Address: _____

Please send completed questionnaire and order form to:

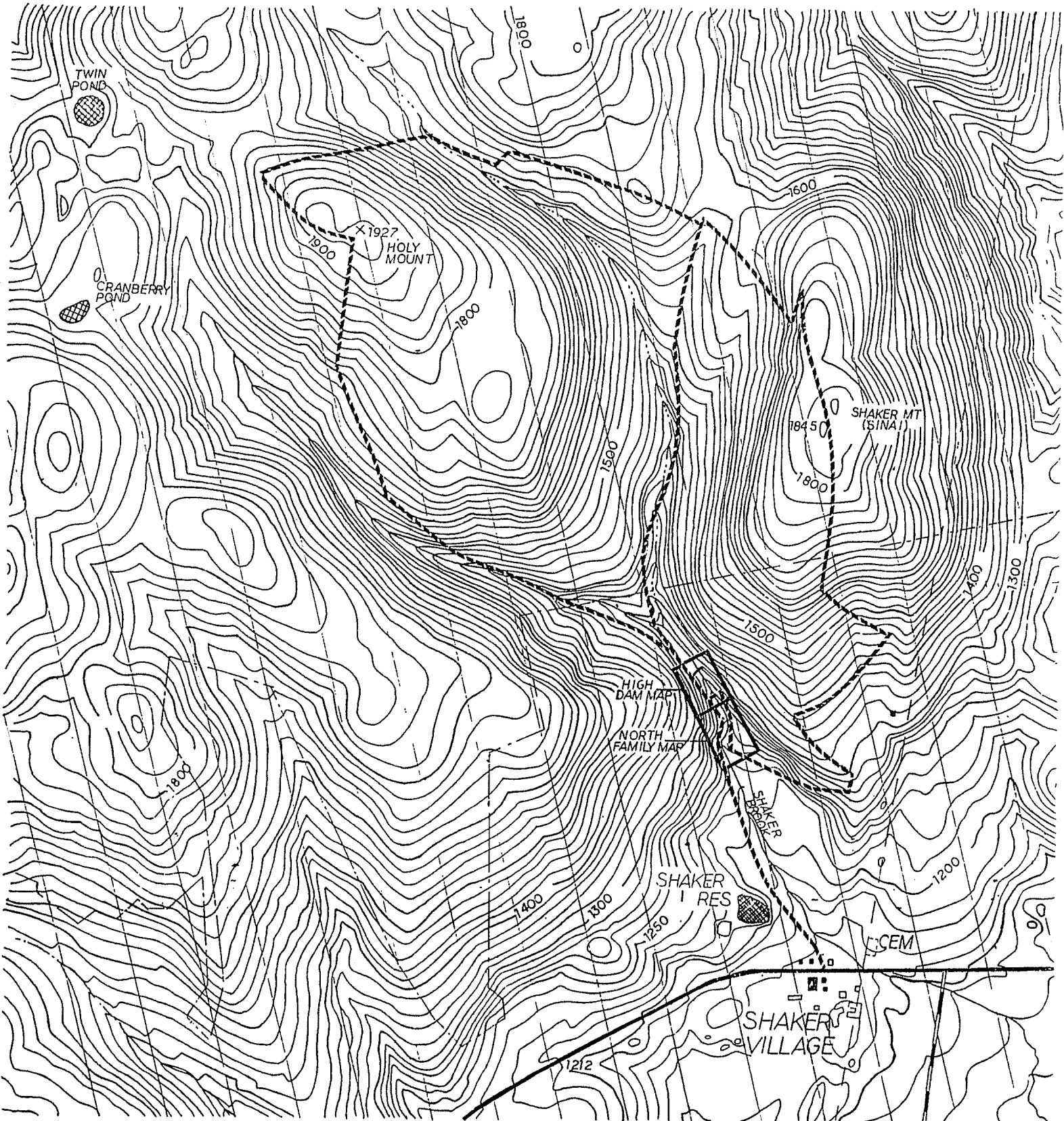
Western Massachusetts Council, BSA

1 Arch Road, Suite 5

Westfield, MA 01085

wmctpost@scouting.org

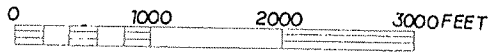
413-594-9196

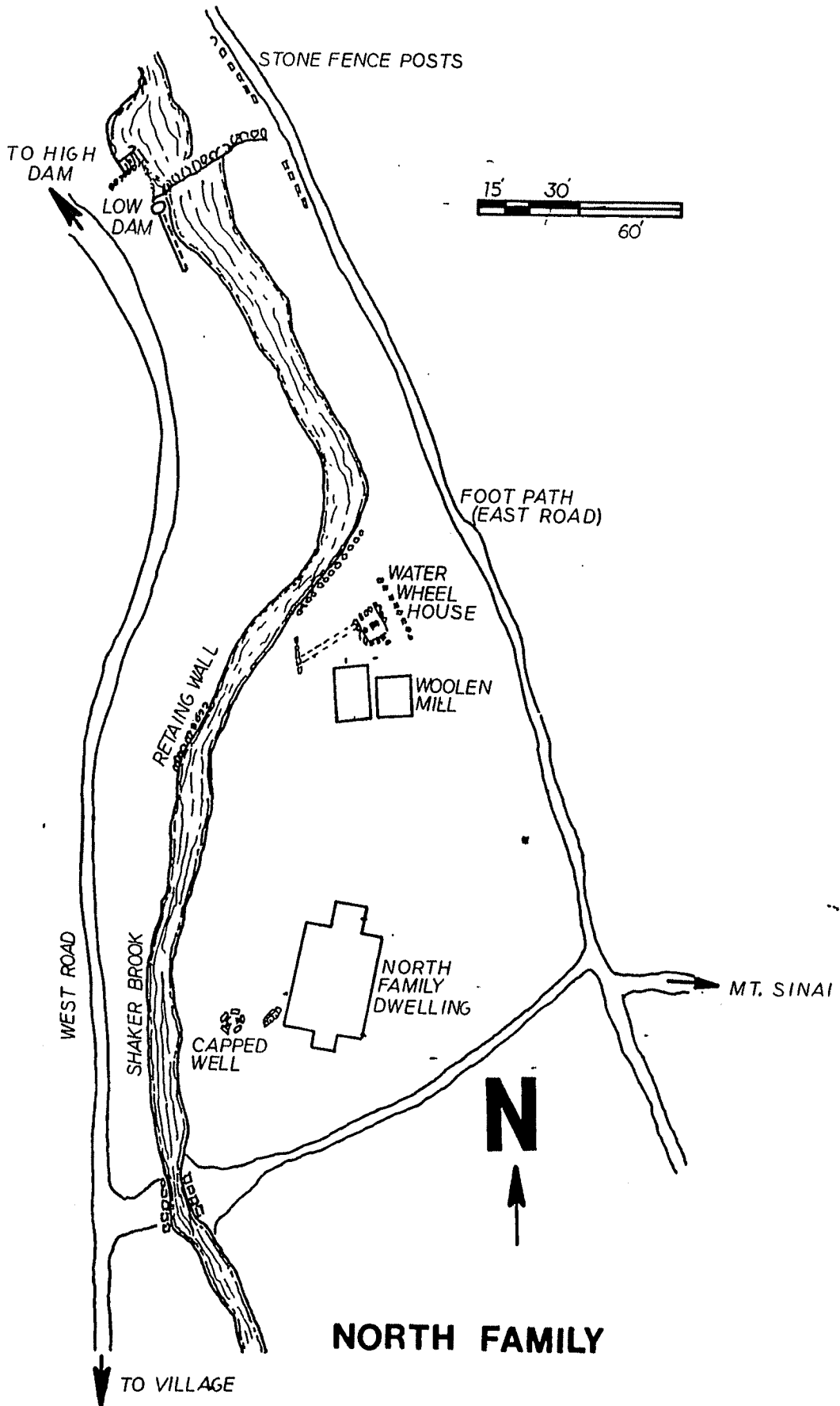


THE ROUTE SHOWN ON THIS MAP IS AN APPROXIMATION MEANT ONLY TO SHOW THE GENERAL LAYOUT AND TRAVEL DIRECTIONS OF THE U.S.V. BOY SCOUT TRAIL.

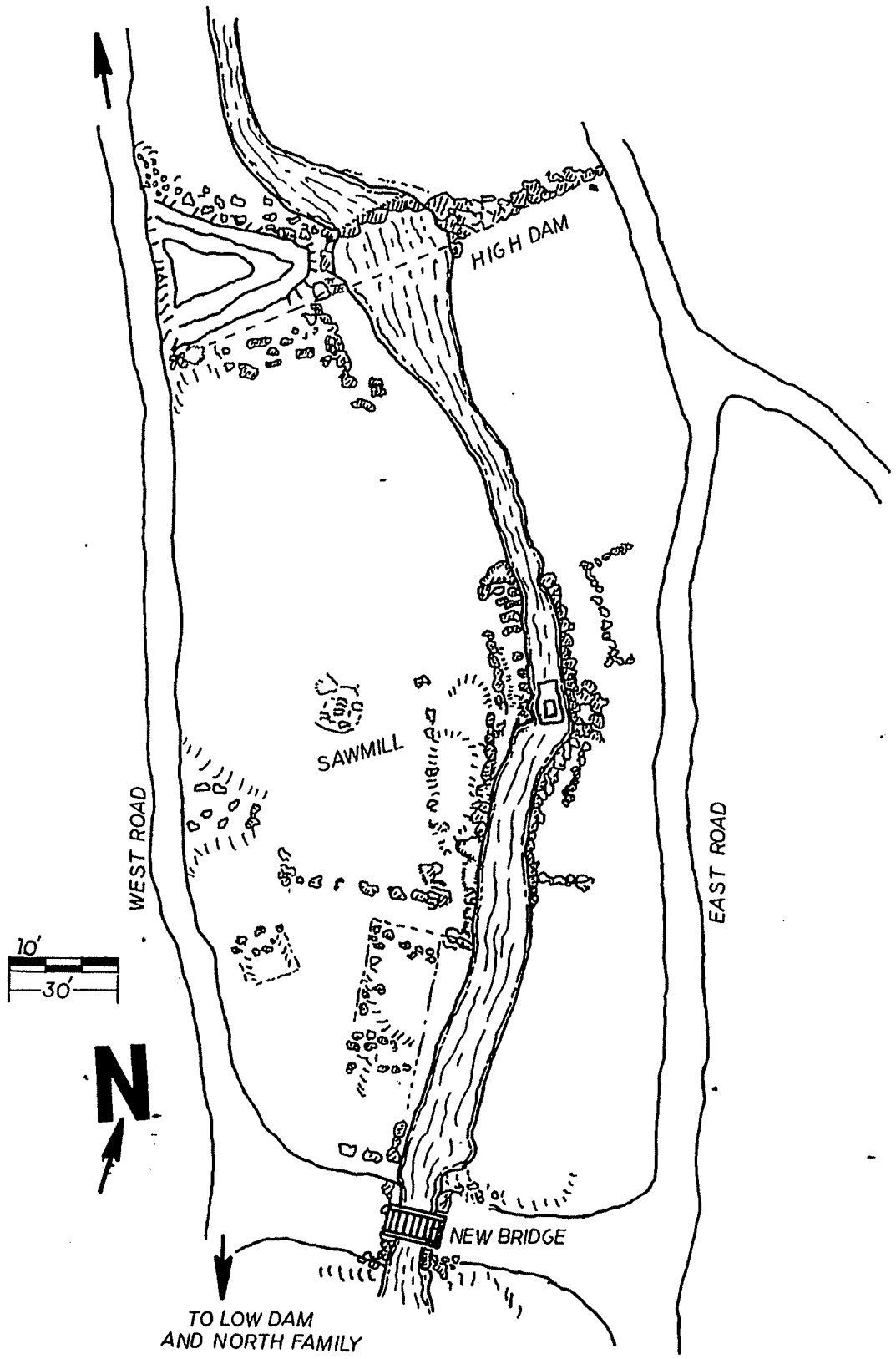


PLEASE FOLLOW TRAIL MARKERS

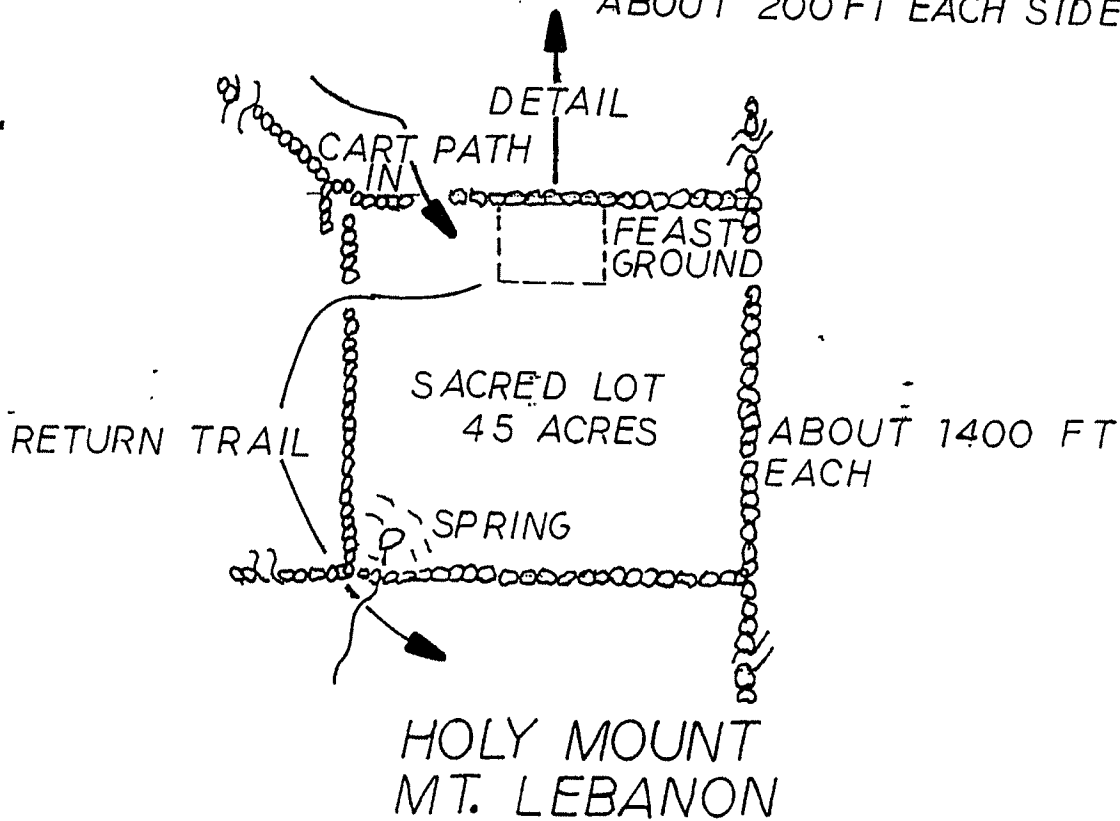
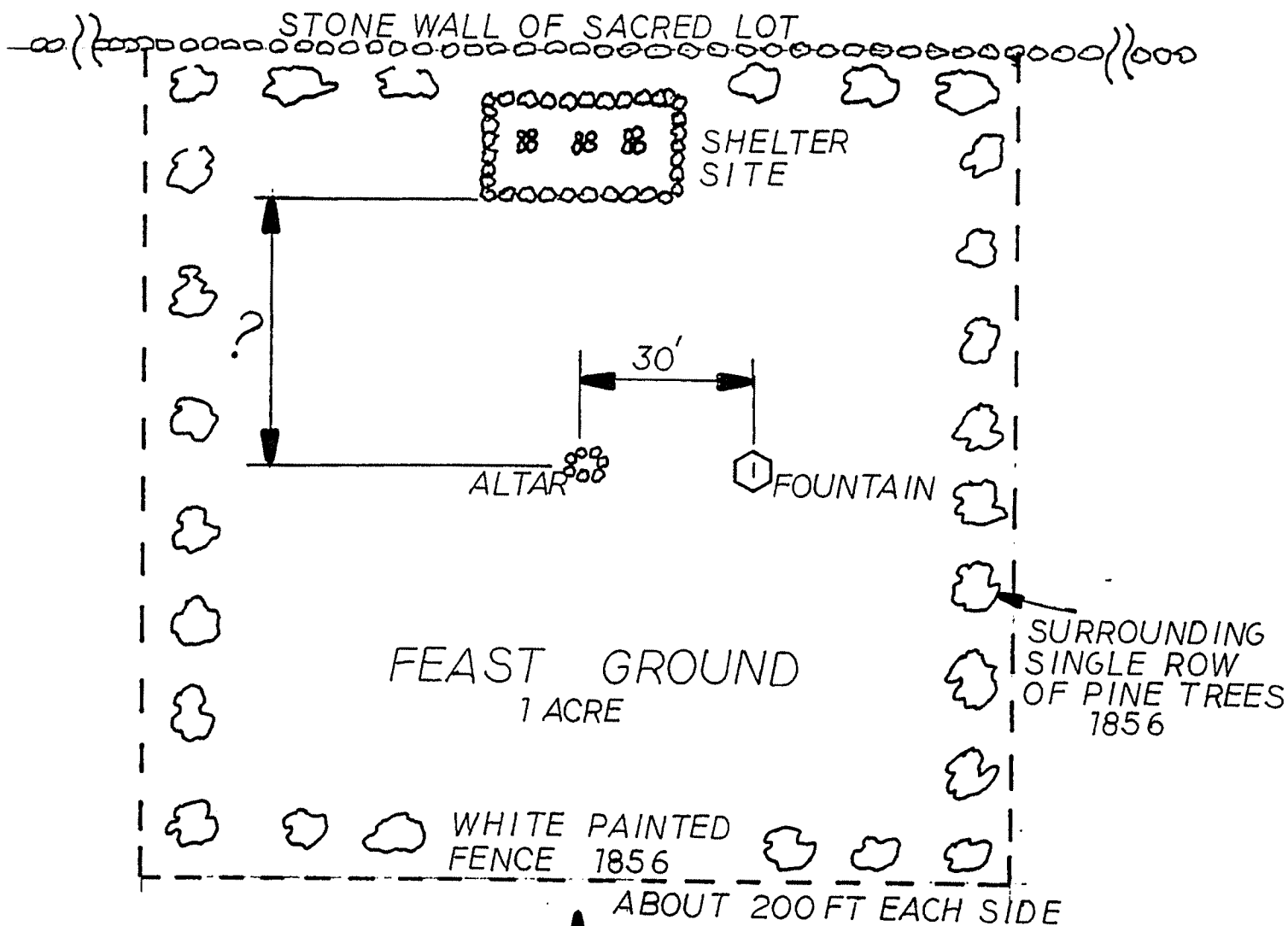


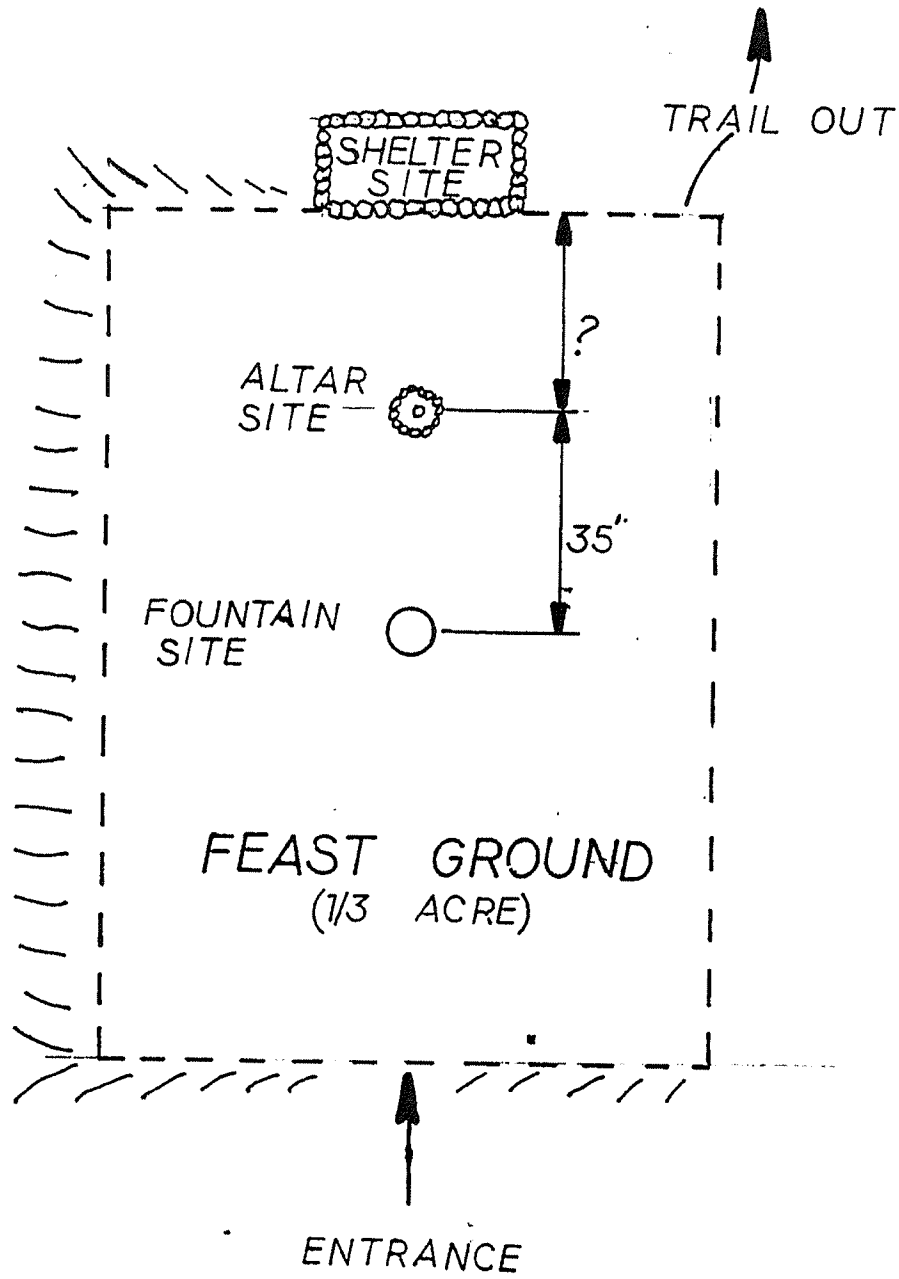


TO HOLY MOUNT



HIGH DAM





MT SINAI
HANCOCK