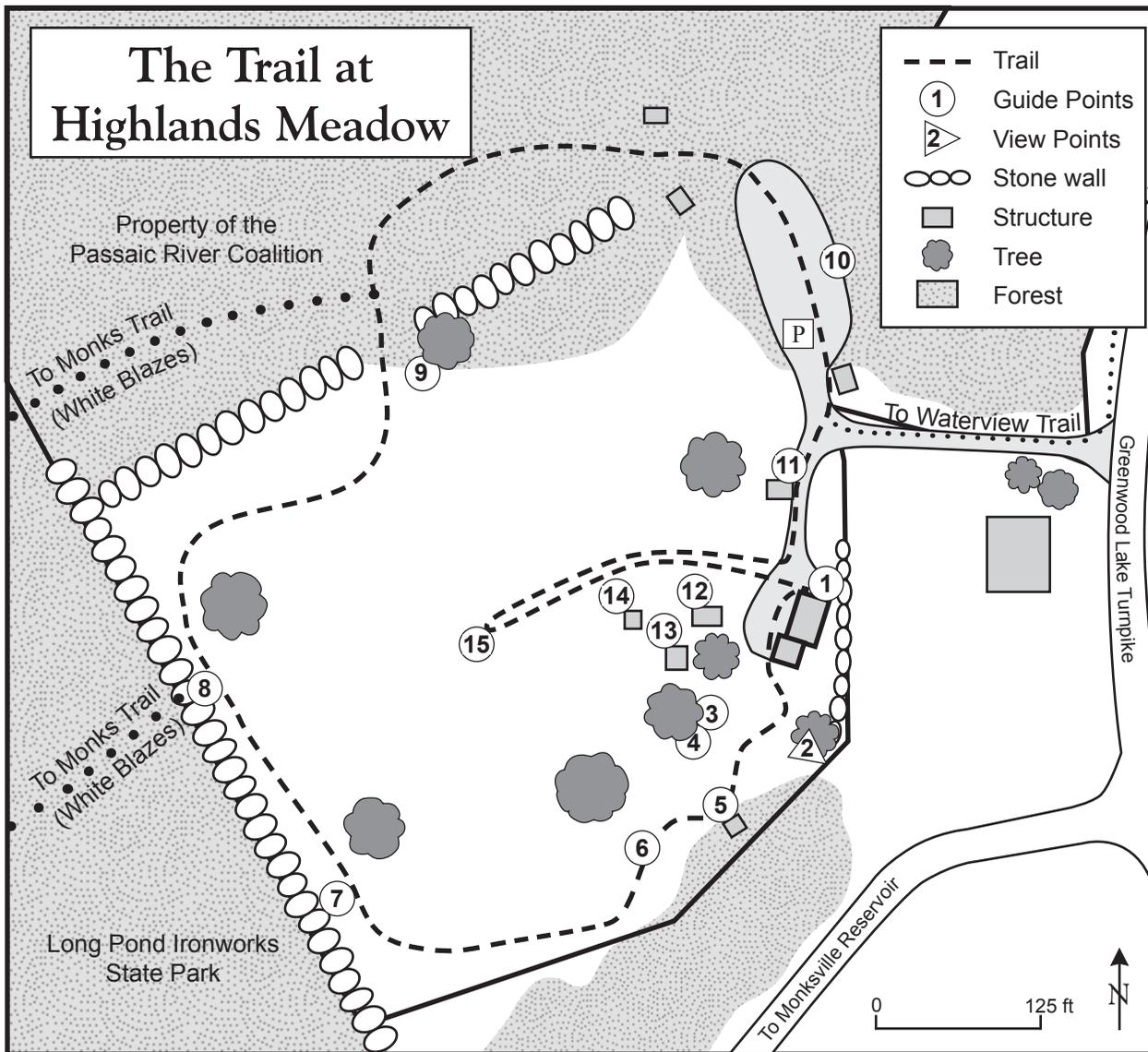


# A Self Guided Tour of Highlands Meadow

Welcome! This walking tour is a short hike taking you back to a late 19th/early 20th century farm. Please respect the buildings and structures still standing here and let your imagination see the life lived here by three generations of the Vreeland-Rhinesmith family.



Note: All locations are approximate. Map created by A. Salisbury, 2010.

## Other places you may want to visit:

**Waterview** Visit the site of the Board Mine and walk through woods cut by the Vreeland-Rhinesmith family. From the end of the driveway, walk north for 125 yards on Greenwood Lake Turnpike. Then cross the street and begin walking up an unpaved road. The Waterview trail head is on the right.

**Winston Mine** Follow the connector trail to the Monks Trail (White blaze), looking at both sections of the Winston Mine.

**Tranquility Ridge** section of Long Pond Ironworks State Park Park at the eastern boat launch on Beech Road and hike along old Beech Road.

**Long Pond Ironworks Historic District Museum** Here in Louis P. West's Old Country Store, Harry Vreeland bought 8 loaves of bread a day.



(From left to right) Harry Vreeland's sons Howard and John, his grandsons Arthur and Harry Rhinesmith on the horses, his daughters Beatrice and Jennie Jane Rhinesmith, an unknown person, his wife Susie Mae, and daughter Elinor. In the front row are granddaughters Winifred Cook, Susie Mae Rhinesmith, Margie Marie Rhinesmith and grandson Allen Rhinesmith.

Highlands Meadow was the Vreeland family farm. Three generations worked this farm from the 1880s into the mid-20th century. Each generation looked after the next as the younger generations cared for the farm and family as time passed.

Peter Vreeland bought the land in 1882 and married Jane Fenner. They raised 8 children in a farmhouse that no longer exists. They gave their oldest son, James, the property below the farm where there

is currently an office building. Their youngest son, Harry, built a second farmhouse (now the red house) next to the original. He and his wife Susie Mae Benjamin raised 11 children there.

Harry's daughter Jennie Jane married Orlin Rhinesmith and they raised their family of 10 in the two Highlands Meadow farmhouses built by her parents and grandparents.

*Follow the trail on the back of this guide and use the numbered markers to learn about life on this farm.*

**1. The Harry Vreeland House** was built between 1905 and 1908. Harry married Susie Mae Benjamin in 1902 and they raised 11 children here. Many of these children lived here as adults. The house did not have electricity until 1948. A well in front of the house, dug by Harry, provided water.

**2.** Looking downhill, the **office building** was originally built by Benjamin Carey in the 1870s and was purchased by Peter Vreeland in 1886. His oldest son James lived here with his family and ran it as a hotel.

Looking across the street, **Waterview** is another PRC property you can hike; you can see it to the east across the Greenwood Lake Turnpike. The Christy Path, a local shortcut, ran through these woods from Monksville to Peters Mine. Harry Vreeland and his sons logged this property, which contains the Board Mine, active in the 1870s and 1880s.

Looking to the right, where you now see the **Monksville Reservoir**, built in the mid-1980s, lay Monks or Monksville, named after the Monks family, which first appeared in the census for this area in 1830. A railroad station built in the 1870s and called “Monks Station” firmly attached the name to the place.

**The Vreeland Homes** were across the water to the far end of the dam where you see a road entering the water. This is a remnant of Stonetown Road before it was rerouted. There, on Ricker Hill, Harry Vreeland bought land to give to his children where they built homes in the 1940s. Standing on his porch, Harry could look across the valley to their homes. Many of these homes were taken by the reservoir.

**3. The Peter Vreeland House**, built in the 1880s, stood between the Harry Vreeland House and the concrete foundation of the outhouse. Harry’s daughter Jennie Jane Rhinesmith and her family lived with her parents, using the two houses as one. This house was torn down in the 1940s. Portions of the house were used in building new homes for the family.

**The Gardens** were rotated every year, the Vreelands

plowed the old gardens under in September and planted different vegetables in each plot every year. The gardens were along the edge of the meadow, but close to the house. Corn and potatoes got their own garden and other vegetables were planted together. Everyone, even the youngest, helped in the garden.

**4.** Behind this tree, where there are now brambles, Orlin Rhinesmith built new **Pig Pens** here in the 1940s. His daughter, Lois, and her brothers, Alex and Orlin Jr., would lie on the roof of the pens and try not to fall in. Two outbuildings stood here to store pig related things like pails. The ruins of one can be seen. The depression below the outbuildings may have been the wallow, a wet, muddy spot where the pigs cooled off on hot days.

**5. The Privy Foundation** (concrete square) of an outhouse marks southern edge of the Peter Vreeland House. Its construction dates it to the 20th century.

**6. Note the successional forest** and small saplings, briars, sticker bushes and vines here. Look back toward the house and the meadow and note “Lone wolf” trees. The farm alone could not support the large Vreeland-Rhinesmith family. Woodcutting was their expertise. They cut logs for building and cord wood for heating. They cleared land others planned to build on and cut off wood lots for themselves and for others. Peter Vreeland first cut over the meadow and the homestead to clear it for barns and a house and pasture land. He planted fruit trees, but kept large shade trees by the house, the pig pens and the chick coops.

**7. This Stone Wall** runs along the southern and western edges of the Vreeland Homestead, makes a turn to the right at a corner and runs northeast along the upper edge of the meadow. Peter Vreeland started it and Harry Vreeland finished it with much help from their families. Stones were gathered on the property and transported by a stone boat drawn by a team of two horses. Examine the wall for evidence of work by changing hands. Does it get higher or wider? Does the choice of stone change? Does the end look planned or unfinished?

**8. The Road to Winston Mine** is on the other side of the wall. The mine was active in the 1870s and the

1880s. This land was owned by the Monks family and then sold to Cooper & Hewitt, a Ringwood Company. Several pits associated with this mine are close to the road and to the Vreeland’s wall. The wall did not just mark a boundary. It kept the Vreeland cows from straying on to the road and into the mine pits.

The Monks Trail around Monks Mountain in Long Pond Ironworks State Park is marked by white blazes and can be accessed from Highlands Meadow by following the yellow Passaic River Coalition fish markers on the other side of the stone wall.

**9. This Formal Break** in the wall was gated to keep the cows in the meadow. Opened, it permitted the cows to walk back to the barns and was also used for wagons. A flattened area north of the gate appears to have been a staging or storage area for work done evaluating this land for development in the 1980s.

**10. Parking lot:** Before this was a parking lot, it was the location of the two Vreeland barns. Peter built the first barn in the 1880s while Harry built the second barn in the early 20th century. Harry’s barn had 5 horse and 5 cow stalls while the older barn was used to store wagons and sleighs. Later Orlin Rhinesmith added a cement floor to Harry’s barn. A hay barrack was located at the west side of the parking lot and wood was often ranked between the two barns. The other marked trail hear also leads to the mine road and the white trail.

**The Spring Pasture** was north and east of the parking lot, and was a cow pasture that had to be hand mowed with scythes while wearing hip boots to stay dry and avoid snakes. The wetlands produced good hay and forage to store for the winter months. The water from the springs was used in Cyrus Vreeland’s Mountain Spring Bottling Works, located in a one story building south of the office building parking lot. As this was not an era of plain bottled water, the water was used to make flavored sodas.

**11. The Granary** was built in the 1880s by Peter Vreeland and stored grain for the animals.

**An L-shaped Chicken Coop** sat behind the large tree behind the granary.

**12. The Woodshed** was built by Orlin Rhinesmith in 1940. It held wood to heat the houses. It was never empty for Harry ran a woodcutting business. The Harry Vreeland House was heated by wood and cooking was done on a woodstove until the late 1940s. The lumber used to build the woodshed came from the “Hay’s Crossing” saw mill next to Monks Pond.

**13. The Grape Arbor** was built by Peter Vreeland. According to family tradition, he penned up the boulder for the amusement of the children.

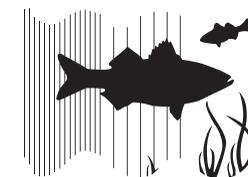
**14. This Old Shed** was salvaged from somewhere by Orlin Rhinesmith. Everything was recycled on this farm. It may have been a playhouse.

**15. The Meadow** was a wooded hillside when Peter Vreeland bought this land in the 1880s. Peter and his sons cut the trees and used horse teams to pull out the tree stumps to create an open pasture where grasses and hay could grow to feed the livestock. The same horses that pulled the logs, wagons and stone boat were used in teams to pull the hay cutter.

**Dog Runs** stood at the edge of the meadow for the coon hounds, rabbit hounds, and fox hounds the family kept and used in hunting. Deer and rabbits were hunted as food and raccoons and fox were hunted to protect the chickens and for their pelts.

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