

BOB LYON'S WORK ON LOVEJOY TRAILS 'RANGE WAY' 11-02-2019

On Saturday afternoon, November 2, 2019 Bob Lyon had set out to cut up a tree after Craig Mabie alerted him it had fallen across the Lovejoy White Trail in an area beyond the dug canal.

After he finished that task, he still had plenty of gas left for his chainsaw work, and he then headed up the hill on left side of the White Trail Loop so he could spend some time working on an interesting stone wall-lined farm trail near the top of the hill that used to lead to the former Lovejoy Bed & Breakfast, now known as Lovejoy Farm. That particular area isn't currently part of the Lovejoy Trail system, but thanks to the work Bob did that day, a new side trail he cut has the potential to allow hikers to access a scenic view of Oak Hill.



The area is heavily forested, and some time ago, a strong windstorm felled a number of tall, thick trees across that farm trail, and for at least 15 years, the way had been blocked to all but difficult passage. But after Bob finished working there that day, he succeeded in clearing much of the blocked trail, though not all of it, allowing hikers to reach an end point where they couldn't accidentally walk the entire trail's length and find themselves in the back yard of a newer home that sits near to where an old barn once stood.



I was out walking along Lovejoy Road the same afternoon and happened to meet up with Bob just as he emerged from the trail after he'd completed his work for that day. He told me he'd spent two hours working, first on the fallen tree on the main trail and later on the 'range way', as we Trails Committee members tend to refer to it. A range way suggests an old roadway that used to allow passage between separate properties, and that may possibly have been the case long ago at Lovejoy Farm. It's also possible the entire hilltop was once the property of that same farm, and the double stone wall was put in to prevent erosion on the steep hillside.

Bob then told me that the Trails Committee could always plan to return there sometime later for the purpose of better cleaning up the area so it could be accessed more easily and eventually be used as a side trail.

Eager to see what Bob had accomplished that day, I finally had a chance to make it up the hill the following Wednesday afternoon while taking a number of photos, as shown here. It was a beautiful time of day to visit, and I was able to walk much further down the trail, finally reaching a well-designed break in the wall that might once have been a gated entrance to an upper pasture. While the trail itself was comfortably level and sloping downhill toward the back of the farm, the land on the opposite sides of the two walls either rose or fell off steeply.



The farm had changed hands several times since the late 1700's, and perhaps it was in the early days that the farm trail with stone walls on each side was needed in order to access the higher ground on the hill, probably for the purpose of reaching cleared pastures for adding stone walls to corral livestock before a forest eventually overgrew the area.

The farm trail began between the mansion and an old barn that used to exist there and continued to a point where a break was constructed in the stone wall on the side nearest to the hill, as shown in the above photo on the left. Its appearance seems to indicate an entrance to an upper pasture that would have been part of the farm, rather than someone else's property, as it is today.

I soon came to the spot, as shown in the photo to the right, where Bob had stopped cutting the fallen trees so the trail would go no further, thus avoiding opening it into someone's back yard. The area where he stopped was not far from the opening in the stone wall, a perfect place for the trail to take a turn to the right and continue through the opening.



From that spot, I had to proceed very carefully to make my way through the opening, as there was much fallen debris all about and more clearing would need to be done above the wall in order to be able to walk easily through that area. The Town's property doesn't end at the stone wall but extends some feet further up the hill, and an accurate GPS reading would determine where the dividing line would be.



There is a spot where a path could continue along the upper side of the stone wall, allowing a hiker to proceed further toward the south and up the hill a short way to an overlook point where a nice view of Oak Hill exists in the distance.

At that point, the trail would come to a dead end, and the hiker would then return to where the side trail started and connect with the White Trail Loop once again. It requires a bit of imagination to see

through all the trees, as shown from the photos, but it would be a very pretty side trail in both directions, adding to the entire hiking experience.

The photo on the right shows how the opening in the wall appears from the opposite side. Also included are more photos of my walk back, as it continued further up the hill to other stone wall-lined former pastures where the White Trail and Blue Trail Loops were recently completed.

