



History Hike at Wahaneeta Preserve

History Talking Points for the Hike:

1. During the 1700s-1800s, this property was used as farmland. The Girl Scouts purchased the land in 1941, when they constructed the cabin, outhouses, and trail system. Westerly Land Trust purchased the land from the Girl Scouts in 2011.
2. *(Take the yellow trail on your right)* Cruickshank Chimney is all that remains of an old farmhouse that once stood here. The house was owned by Stuart Cruickshank until the early 1900s. It is thought that an old gristmill once operated further upstream where an old dam still remains. *(Note the stone walls on the map, which outline old livestock pastures and agriculture fields.)*
3. Native American tribes settled in this area as far back as 10,000 years ago. They established villages along the coast and rivers and used interior woodlands, such as this, for hunting, traveling, and temporary camps.
4. **Guiding Question:** Think about the benefits that this property had to offer its previous residents. What would you need to survive in the 18th & 19th centuries?
This stream would've provided early settlers with fresh water for drinking, irrigation, & dam power. Also needed: fertile soil for farming; stones and wood to build with; pasture for livestock.
5. This is the Thomas Rathbun family cemetery- recorded by the RI Historical Cemetery Commission in 1867. At that time, this property was farmland owned by Case Chapman and the cemetery was recorded as being in an open pasture, much like the pastures that still exist on the other side of these stone walls.
6. **Guiding Question:** The woodlands that we're standing in today consist of new growth. Most of these trees were established after the property's farming days ended during early 1900s. What benefits does this land have to offer today as a nature preserve?
This nature preserve provides wildlife habitat and increases biodiversity while reducing negative impacts of human development such as water and air pollution.
7. *(Note the old dirt road to your left)* This old dirt road was used for logging vehicles sometime between the late 1800s & early 1900s. Look closely and you might see tire grooves. The road is very narrow by modern standards because the vehicles that traveled it were much smaller and may have been horse-drawn.

Activity: Historic Journal Entry

Instructions:

Take a moment to imagine you are someone from this property's past and write a journal entry or draw a picture from their point of view. You can pretend to be a Native American when this was an old growth forest, a member of one of the farming families during 1700s or 1800s, or a Girl Scout or counselor (circa 1900s). Imagine the day-to-day activities of that person and describe or draw them on the property during that era.