

Walks of the Little Bonnechere River



*The sum of the whole is this:
walk and be happy, walk and be healthy.
The best way to lengthen our days
is to walk steadily and with a purpose.*

CHARLES DICKENS



RENFREW COUNTY
AND DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT



Healthy Living

PARTNERSHIP

Eat smart. Be active. Clear the air.

WALKS OF THE LITTLE BONNECHERE RIVER
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Heading Out

Walking is easy, inexpensive and fun. More than anything, it is a natural and effective way to stay active. It requires no special equipment, membership or instruction and involves little risk of injury. Not only is it an enjoyable mode of transportation but it improves your fitness, health and mental well being.

Walking is an aerobic activity. It increases the body's demand for oxygen and trains your heart, lungs and muscles to work more efficiently. Regular walking increases the number of calories you expend. Combined with healthy eating, walking will help you maintain a healthy weight and positive body image.

Regular brisk walking can reduce blood pressure and elevated blood fats. It reduces fatigue and increases energy. Since more than half your muscles are designed for walking, using them will make you look and feel better. Walking also helps relieve stress and tension, strengthens bones and aids in the control of osteoporosis.

Walking is a four-season activity that can be enjoyed indoors or out, alone or with others, and it's a great way to socialize with family and friends.

WHAT TO WEAR

When you go walking be sure to dress appropriately. These are few things you should consider:

- walking or running shoes
- comfortable socks
- appropriate clothing depending on the weather (cotton for summer, wool/cotton for winter)
- sunscreen, sunglasses, gloves, hat, scarf as required
- reflective clothing for night time walking
- layered clothing that can be easily removed along the way

WHAT TO EAT

Be sure to carry plenty of drinking water with you. If the weather is hot or your walk is vigorous, it will be important to replace the fluids you lose through perspiration. Think about how long you will be walking and bring along suitable snacks and/or a meal. Allow for feeling extra hungry because of the fresh air and exercise. Carry your supplies in a comfortable pack and remember that foods with less packaging are lighter to carry. Some healthy, ready to eat snacks include fresh fruits and vegetables, crackers, rice cakes, muffins, milk-based puddings, snack bars, and trail mix – a mixture of nuts, dried fruit, dry cereal and chocolate chips.

HOW TO PREPARE

Start your walk with five minutes of light to moderate paced walking. Once your body has warmed up stop and stretch your neck, shoulders, chest, hips, thighs and calves. To avoid injury, always stretch slowly and smoothly without bouncing or jerking.

HOW TO WIND DOWN

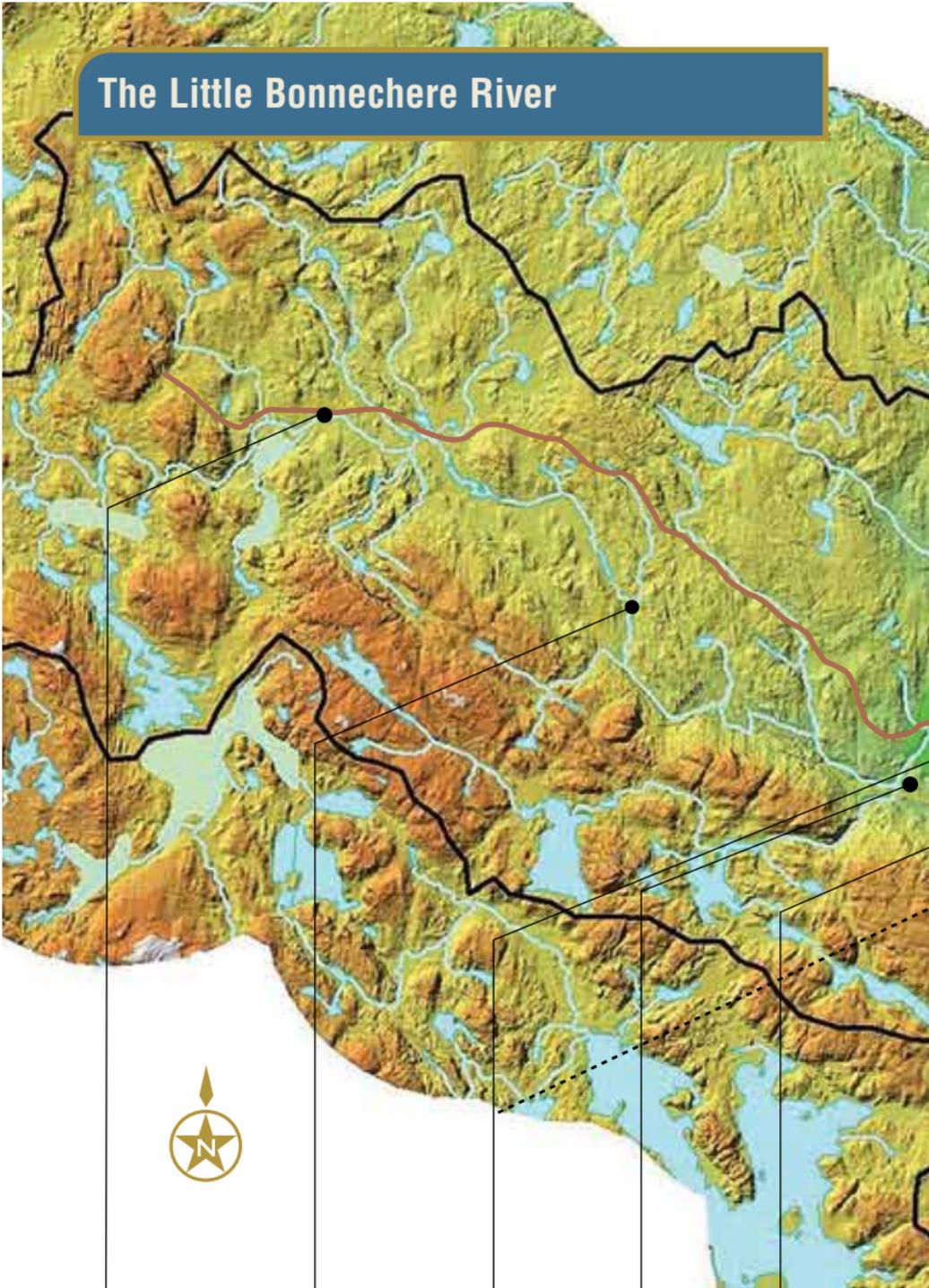
Finish your walk with five minutes of light to moderate paced walking. When your body has cooled down once again stretch your neck, shoulders, chest, hips, thighs and calves.

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS

- Trailhead markers are located off White Mountain Chute Trail and Turners Road/Basin Road (formerly the Old Bonnechere Road), northwest of County Road 58 at Bonnechere, Ontario.
- 
- Trailhead markers feature the pine cone symbol. Note that all distances to start/finish points are approximate vehicle measurements from the intersection of County Road 58 (Round Lake Road) and Turners Road.
- Time allowances are based on round trips at a normal walking pace. Allow extra time for sightseeing, picnicking and resting.
 - Remember, leave only footprints – look don't touch – so that we can preserve our natural and cultural heritage resources for generations to come.



The Little Bonnechere River



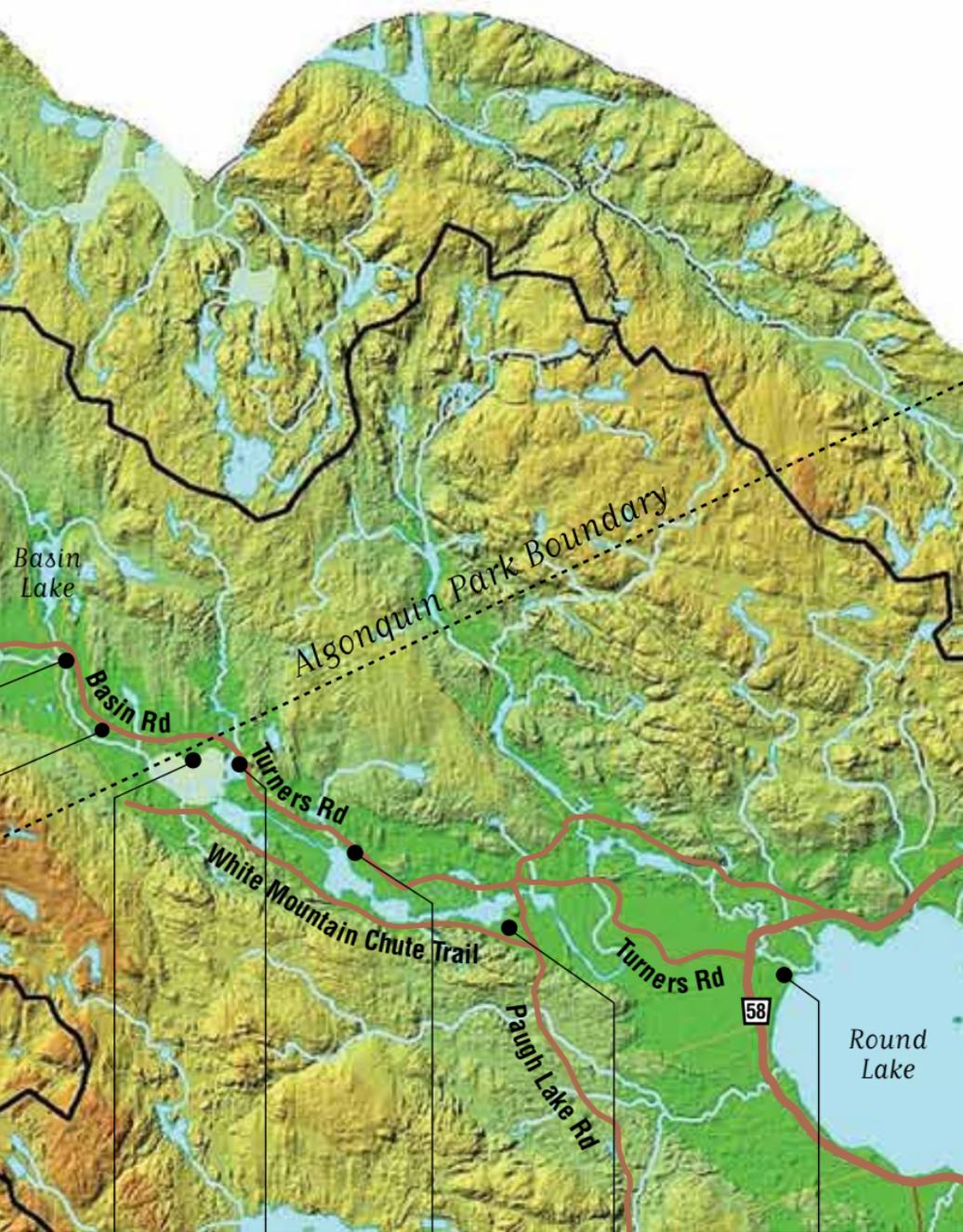
McIntyre
Homestead

McGuey
Homestead

Basin
Depot

High
Falls

Sligo



Basin Lake

Algonquin Park Boundary

Basin Rd

Turners Rd

White Mountain Chute Trail

Turners Rd

Paugh Lake Rd

58

Round Lake

Payne's Pine Whispering Winds Laflour Homestead Omanique's Mill McNaughton's Walk

McNaughton's Walk

RATING

Easy stroll with some hill areas. Excellent trail for a fitness walk.

TYPE

Out and back to loop (~2km).

TIME

40 to 60 minutes

START/FINISH

Trailhead near River Loop campground, .4km from Park beach on Round Lake.

HIGHLIGHTS

- variety of habitats
- home to a diversity of small mammals and birds
- meandering river
- wetlands and beaver pond.

SURFACE

Gravel topped in most sections; needle-topped through pine plantations.



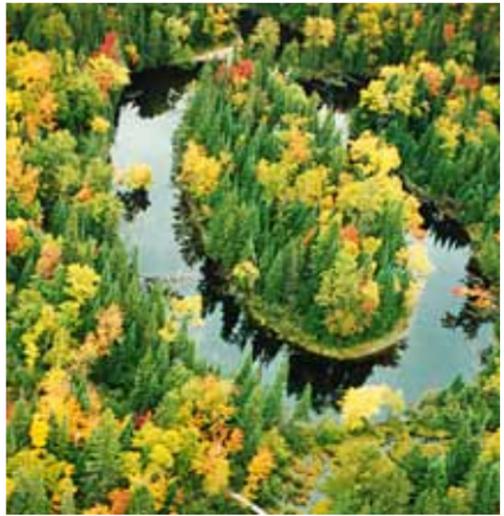
The Sands and Time

As you wander along the meandering shoreline take note of how the Little Bonnechere River has wandered back and forth over time as well.

McNaughton's Walk sits atop a sand delta that formed over thousands of years as glacial meltwater spilled into an ancient lake – a much larger version of present-day Round Lake. Today's shallow ponds and marshy wetlands only hint at the volume of water that this river once carried, but although the Little Bonnechere barely scratches the surface of the 100 metres of sand it flows across, it still leaves its mark.

Alternately eroding and depositing sand, the Little Bonnechere moves repeatedly back and forth across the delta. Sometimes it even loops back on itself to create new streamlined channels, leaving abandoned riverbends in its wake. No wonder early travelers chose the Long Portage over land to avoid the Bonnechere's seemingly endless meanders.

Recently abandoned channels still receive some flow, while older channels have grown into open marshes, cattails, shrubs and eventually treed swamps. Check out these water bodies for turtles and other wetland wildlife.



Historic Footsteps

Although voyages of exploration started up the Ottawa River as early as 1613, these

early explorers didn't record much about the various rivers that fed this historic highway. In fact, it wasn't until 1744 that Bellin drew the general course of the 'R. de la Bonne chere' on a map, but subsequent attempts by other adventurers were often incorrect.

Finally in March 1847, James McNaughton was given the daunting task of accurately surveying the entire stretch of the Bonnechere River. But with each step, new and difficult challenges faced McNaughton and his crew. The snows of March gave way to thick ice in April, and May was a month of forest fires and smoke. And as summer approached, McNaughton described June's swarming black flies as "bad, very bad and exceedingly bad."

In early August the crew began to survey the area from Round Lake upriver to the headwaters – the stretch we now call the Little Bonnechere River. This involved mapping all the meanders along today's McNaughton's Walk and the various park walking trails and riverside campsites.

Finally returning to Round Lake in late October, McNaughton took a sighting of the North Star from the sand beach where the Little Bonnechere enters into Round Lake. Imagine the brightness of the stars against the truly dark sky in that time long before cottage lights and patio lanterns.

 *Photo: A Bonnechere River oxbow set against the fall colours.*

Omanique's Mill

RATING

Easy stroll; some road ruts.

TYPE

Loop.

TIME

30 minutes.

START/FINISH

Follow White Mountain Chute Trail to Omanique Mill Road sign. Park on left upon concrete footing. From trailhead follow blue hiker signs.

HIGHLIGHTS

Remains of a vast mill operation:

- pine plantations
- loading ramps
- apple trees
- inundation's found in forested areas
- hemlock forests
- views of the river

SURFACE

Old roadbed; some wet areas after a rain.



Hidden by Time

It's hard to imagine that this tranquil woodland was once the site of a bustling lumber operation. For hundreds of lumbermen in the mid-1900s this it was home-away-from-home comprised of numerous dwellings and outbuildings including a mill, cookery, bunkhouse and sheds. But time has reclaimed this space and today orderly pine plantations hide the clearings where once row upon row of sawn lumber were neatly stacked.

In 1929 John Omanique founded the Barry's Bay Lumber Company by building a large mill in that town. Soon his business expanded to include a mill operated by his son Joseph at Canoe Lake in Algonquin Park. In 1943, when the supply of Algonquin Park timber had been diminished, this mill was moved to Beaverdam Lake on the Little Bonnechere River.

Today, a large depression near the river's edge is all that remains of the main mill. Step back in time and imagine standing inside this building: the whine of saws, the rumble of leather drive belts and the smell of pine and hemlock resin. From dawn till dusk, smoke and steam billowed against the sky.

In 1955 Omanique's Mill was sold to the Shoosplin Lumber Company, which operated it until circa 1963.

The Unsung Hemlock

Many historic sites along the Little Bonnechere are linked to red and white pine logging but the Omanique Mill site is tied to a different tree species – the unsung hemlock. Omanique processed hemlock at this site for many years, much of it coming from the north facing slopes along the Little Bonnechere.



Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) is a short-neededled, small-coned aesthetically pleasing evergreen tree that grows in cool, moist habitats along the Little Bonnechere. Back when the horse was king of the road and leather was as vital as today's rubber tires, hemlock bark provided tannic acid for leather tanning. Later in the 1900s, huge quantities of hemlock were cut for railway ties and support timbers used in the construction of the Toronto subway.

Today foresters wisely spend huge amounts of time and money to regenerate the valuable pine forests, but not so the lowly hemlock, with its knotty, brittle wood. Originally lost to the axe, now it appears the hemlock will be lost to economics.

 *Photo: An aerial view of the Omanique Mill site; circa 1950.*

Lafleur Homestead

OPENING

Spring 2003.

RATING

Easy stroll through a variety of landscapes.

TYPE

Out and back.

TIME

30 minutes.

START/FINISH

10.9km from Cty Rd 58.

Trailhead at parking area south of Turners Road.

HIGHLIGHTS

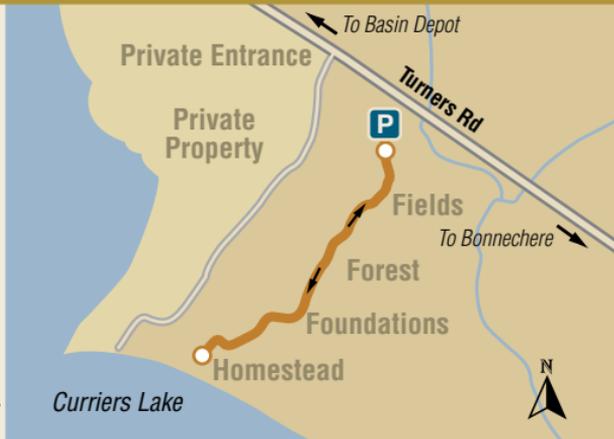
Preserved pioneer homestead:

- old tote road corridor
- original farm field
- barn foundations
- log house and out-buildings

Ideal for birding and vegetation identification

SURFACE

Stonedust.



Halfway to Basin – A Good Place to Stop

Archaeological evidence indicates that for over eight hundred years peoples have stopped over at this scenic site.

When the Township of Burns was surveyed in 1874, this was the only dwelling place in the entire municipality. It was recorded as the residence of Francis and Frances Currier on what's become known as Currier's Lake. Here, they had cleared land where they farmed and ran a stopping place, providing food and shelter for the lumbermen traveling up the Old Bonnechere Road. Their homestead had a "very good house" in which they

also raised a family of nine.

In about 1900 the farm passed into the hands of one Charles Lafleur and it was around this time that the existing log house was built. Within these solid square-timber walls Charles and his wife Martha raised three children: Bella, Josephine and William. Here, as in many homes along the road, travelers were always welcome to warm up by the original Forest Beauty stove. Once inside, the scent of Bella's fresh baking was enough to

convince most visitors to accept her invitation to the dinner table.

In recent years, time has taken its toll on the Lafleur homestead. Several buildings that were still standing in the 1950s, including the summer kitchen and dining



room (used during the summer heat), are now gone. Four barns stood in the fields to the east of the log house until one spring day when a grass fire fueled by a breeze off the lake, razed them to the ground. However, an old drive shed and piggery still stand near the original landing on the waterfront.

Agents of Change

A few paces away from these buildings, the Lafleur Homestead preserves a stand of old pine and other tree species that reflect the forests of the past. Surrounding the homestead you can see evidence of this forest trying to make a comeback, and like the loggers of the past, you will recognize many of these agents of change.

Perennial shrubs grow where park mowers leave grass uncut. Serviceberry is making a go of it where it manages to avoid the branch-breaking black knot fungus. Pin cherry is taking hold only to be attacked by eastern tent caterpillars. Fast-growing poplars are certainly rebuilding the forest, but the voracious appetite of the local beaver population slows their progress. Just like humans, these species are all agents of change along the Little Bonnechere River.

Now look across the river for an example of what the Lafleur homestead would become if it were left alone for several decades, then seek out a healthy pine sapling growing up next to the drive shed as a sign that nature has already started to set its course.

 *Photo: Square-timber log house and milk house at the Lafleur homestead.*

Whispering Winds Lookout on Egg Rock

RATING

Challenging.
Steep rise as trail follows sharp contours up to lookout.

TYPE

Out and back.

TIME

30 to 40 minutes.

START/FINISH

14.7km from Cty Rd 58.
Trailhead off Turners Road east of Algonquin Park Boundary.

HIGHLIGHTS

Spectacular panoramic vista:

- Bonnechere Valley
- Stringers Lake
- Madawaska Highlands
- granite ridge

SURFACE

Natural forest floor; rock/gravel; flat rock plateau at top.



A Faulty Perspective

The Bonnechere River Valley is known for its faults, and you walk right over one on this hike. Here, two such parallel faultlines (cracks in the bedrock) form the sides of a colossal trench which once carried massive volumes of glacial meltwater down from the north.

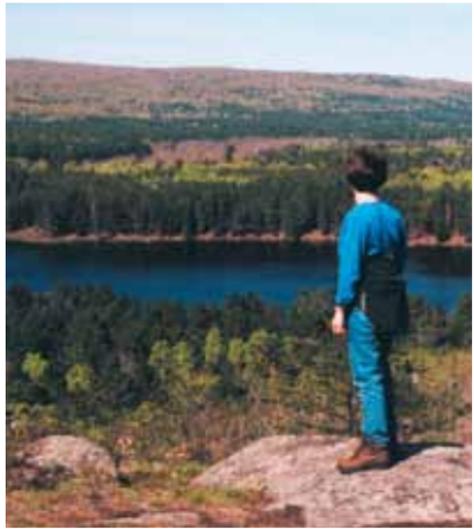
After crossing the undulating valley bottom, climb up the steep granite ridge. When you get to the top, the panoramic vista from the Whispering Winds Lookout awaits. A million years ago you would have seen a much deeper valley, but today the area is filled with

sediment, glacial deposits, water and vegetation.

This barren, breezy lookout has likely provided a welcome respite from biting insects for as long as humans have traveled through the valley. Watch for red-tailed hawks and turkey vultures from this excellent vantage point.

Fruitless Surveys

In 1857 and again in 1874, the Little Bonnechere River valley was considered a potential railway route. In 1874 Mr. S. Hazelwood walked through the area and made a positive recommendation on behalf of the proposed transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway. He often based his reports on what he could see of the countryside from elevations such as this, and it was his



opinion that there would be no difficulty in building a railway here. But steep grades upstream foiled attempts to establish a route up this valley and instead Canadian Pacific Railway built to the north, along the Ottawa River.

It was also thought that the soils of the Little Bonnechere River Valley would be good for agriculture and suitable to sustain pioneer families who depended on the land for growing food. But as surveyors began to divide this area into farm lots, they soon discovered otherwise. During the 1874 survey of Burns Township, only twenty-five percent of the land was deemed suitable for settlement. Similar reports indicated the townships to the west – as far as your eye can see – were too poor for farming.

As a result, in 1893 the Ontario government created Algonquin Provincial Park with a mandate to protect the headwaters of several major watersheds including the Bonnechere River. As one looks across this scenic river valley, is it not fortunate that the plans for a railway or mass settlement proved to be unsuccessful.

 *Photo: A bird's-eye-view from Whispering Winds Lookout.*



From this steep, sandy riverbank look upriver to find the twin trunks of Payne’s Pine, named after local artist Herschel Payne.

One Foot at a Time

In the good old days, everyone traveled by foot – everywhere. In fact, it was not unusual for men to walk thirty kilometres or more to find work in the lumber camps, and the main foreman in a lumber camp was called the walking boss because of the distances he covered on foot. Legend has it that two settlement families who lived



upstream from Basin Depot regularly walked more than twelve kilometres – one way – for their mail. Fire ranger and renowned Canadian artist Tom Thomson walked twenty kilometres from Grand Lake to Basin Depot for the same purpose.

The park rangers who patrolled Algonquin Provincial Park looking for poachers and fires, traveled the dusty trails in summer and snowshoed the same pathways in winter. The late John Joe Turner recalled a chief fire ranger who walked from Killaloe “all the way up... clean through to Alder Creek at Lake Travers, and then he’d go on down the Petawawa and go out the other way” to Ottawa.

One wonders if the old folks who lived such long and productive lives did so because they walked to live.

📷 *Photo: The twin trunks of Payne’s Pine stand out against the landscape.*

Sligo

RATING

Very easy.

TYPE

Walk-about.

TIME

10 minutes.

START/FINISH

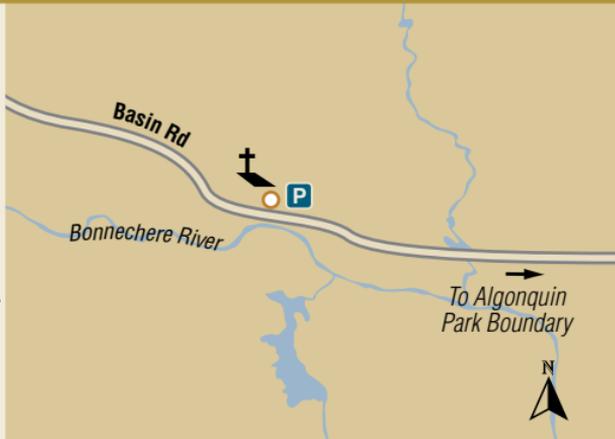
18.2km from Cty Rd 58.
Trailhead off Basin
Road.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Head of Canoe
Navigation rapids
- gravesite

SURFACE

Roadbed; natural
surface.



Dragons in the Sky

Want to experience the true pioneer lifestyle? Try visiting Sligo without using bug repellent! Somewhere along Basin Depot Road you may be bombarded by horse flies and deer flies. Next to the rapids just downstream, you might spill blood with

the black flies. And everywhere in between, mosquitoes will be eager to provide a true taste of life in the Canadian wilderness.

Fortunately the winged predators of these pests live here too in the form of dragonflies and damselflies. Each dragonfly has two sets of transparent wings protruding perpendicularly from its body, which allow it to hover, dive and turn with amazing agility. Damselflies hold their wings together behind their body when at rest. You will recognize them by their daintier, more fluttery flight.

Armed with increasingly powerful binoculars and detailed field guides, today's naturalists are pioneering the observation and documentation of this surprisingly attractive group of species.

Why not join the club? With at least 85 species living in Algonquin Provincial Park, you are bound to see these flying dragons and damsels each time you visit the Little Bonnechere.

Sligo House

In the earliest days rivers provided the only means of accessing most lumber camps. In the heyday of logging on the Little Bonnechere great numbers of men in large canoes traveled upstream with supplies for the bustling square timber camps. Along the way, not far downstream from this spot, where the waters turned white they would disembark and portage around a set of small rapids originally identified by surveyors as the Head of Canoe Navigation.



A log cabin, built just above this take-out point, was named Sligo House after the town and county in Ireland from whence came the famous lumberman Paddy Garvey. It became one of many hotels along the Old Bonnechere Road where men traveling to the lumber camps could stop for a warm meal and a dry bed.

In 1883 Sligo was the site of the funeral and burial of Alexander McDonald, an infant of Ronald and Catherine and brother to their four surviving children. In subsequent years, Ronald and his brother James cleared fifteen acres of farmland here and, according to the 1890 census had “ample outbuildings, cattle, poultry, etc.” Widowed in 1906, Mrs. McDonald and her children lived here until the expansion of Algonquin Provincial Park in 1914. For some years after that the little log cabin was used as a shelter for park rangers, but eventually the buildings were removed and the clearing was planted in pine. This left only the remains of a root cellar and the small fenced-in grave with wooden cross that still stands not far from the road, amidst the raspberry bushes and underbrush.

 *Photo: A simple white wooden cross marks the grave of the infant son of Ronald and Catherine McDonald.*

Basin Depot

RATING

Easy.

TYPE

Walk-about.

TIME

30 to 45 minutes.

START/FINISH

21.3km from Cty Rd 58. Trailhead near historic cabin at Basin Depot off Basin Road.

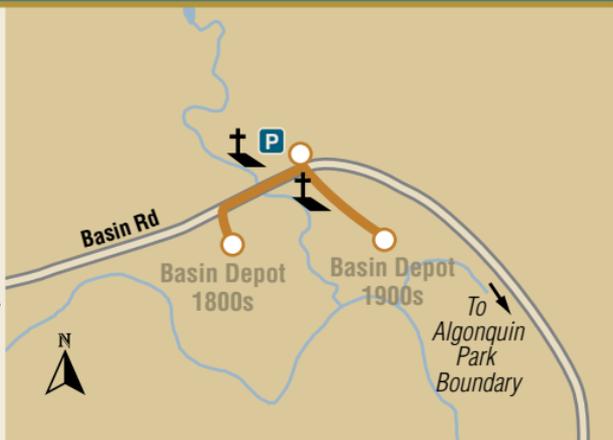
HIGHLIGHTS

Remains of historic logging depot village:

- historic cabin
- gravesites
- logging camp footings
- recovering forest
- Basin Creek

SURFACE

Road and grass field trails.



Ten Acres Cleared

The Basin – as it is also known then – was the most important logging depot on the Little Bonnechere River and the Old Bonnechere Road. Over a span of more than 100 years, successive companies built shanties, blacksmith shops, stables and storehouses on this site. As early as 1852, several roads radiated from here to logging camps on the Madawaska River, the Petawawa and the Barron.

By 1890 Basin Depot boasted a post office, a company boarding house, a blacksmith shop, outbuildings, and “ten acres cleared... partially under crops (potatoes).” In 1892 a small office was constructed. This is the squared log structure which still stands today in the clearing east of Basin Creek. The oldest building in Algonquin Park, it has also served as a harness shop, school house, and in darker times, a hospital. Several of the former residents of Basin – victims of black diphtheria and drowning – lie nearby in two fenced graveyards with wooden crosses marking their final resting places.

Across the road from the Basin cabin is another clearing where W.K. Gunn Limited built a camp of eighteen buildings in 1949. Later, it was operated by the Whitmore Lumber Company and then Shoosplin Woods Limited which eventually ceased operations in 1960. A root cellar and a concrete garage foundation are all that remain.



Post-1914, when Basin Depot became part of Algonquin Park, a park ranger cabin and a fire ranger cabin were built on the northeast side of the road. It must have been a lonely existence, especially in winter.

Wolf Country

Biologists have conducted intensive studies of the movements, pack dynamics, social structure and genetics of wolves in the Basin Depot area. Winter studies have, for example, shown that wolves from this area follow white-tailed deer out of Algonquin Park towards Round Lake and points south and east, where the snows are less deep.

DNA analysis has also determined these wolves to be a different strain than originally thought. No longer are they considered a subspecies of the timber wolf that ranges across northern North America. They are instead more closely related to the red wolf – a species found in the southern United States. Thus the newly named eastern wolf – the Algonquin wolf – is now listed as a species of concern, worthy of special management.

Each August Bonnechere Park staff host evening wolf howls which bring hundreds of people in close contact with the Basin Depot packs.

 *Photo: Basin Cabin, circa 1892 – the oldest building in Algonquin Provincial Park.*

High Falls on the Little Bonnechere

RATING

Challenging walking opportunity based on distance and some rugged shoreline terrain.

TYPE

In and out.

TIME

2 hours.

START/FINISH

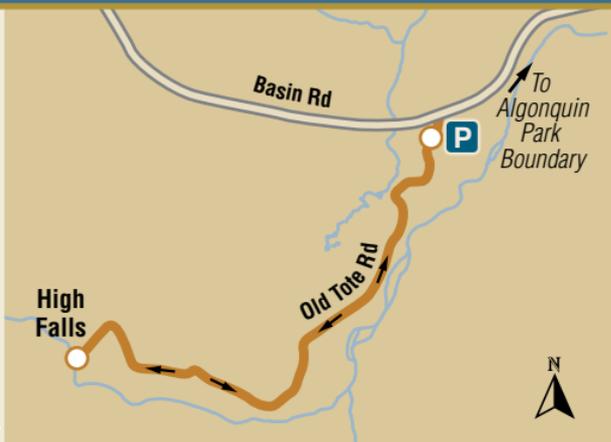
23.3km from Cty Rd 58.
Trailhead off Basin Road approximately 2km northwest of Basin Depot.

HIGHLIGHTS

- original Bonnechere Tote Road
- authentic corduroy bridging
- High Falls

SURFACE

Old roadway turning into natural rocky forest floor near river's edge.



River Improvements

A walk down this original section of the Old Bonnechere Road brings us to High Falls – a scenic vista today, but a problem spot in the past.

Early timber barrons used water to transport their squared logs to market. To carry the valuable pine logs down the Little Bonnechere, local river drivers conducted various 'improvements.' Dams were built to hold back water. Where there were steep bends in the river, glance cribs were built to direct the flow, and obstructing rocks were hauled from the river or blasted with dynamite.

High Falls was one of many spots on this river where it was necessary to direct newly harvested logs around an obstacle. In 1847 surveyor James McNaughton recorded a timber slide – or chute – at this site which did just that. Above the falls a dam would hold back extra water. As this water was released it carried the timber down the wood-framed chute, safely bypassing the rock-walled falls. Similar improvements were made all along the river where needed.

In later years, after the chute had deteriorated, a wooden apron was projected out over the falls as protection for shorter sawlogs which were transported to sawmills at Eganville and Ottawa.



The powerful elements of over a hundred spring floods have removed all but a few traces of this historic dam, apron and chute. Today, only churning waters flow over High Falls, just as nature meant it to be.

Cool Creatures

Ponder the impact log drives, dams and river improvements had on the Little Bonnechere's natural state. Before loggers and engineers arrived, the river's brook trout found ideal habitats in the cool waters, gravelly riffles and rocky rapids of the headwater streams. Thus it's likely that High Falls was an ideal spawning bed for these native trout.

Brook trout (aka speckled trout) seek out cold, clear water that is rich in oxygen, and shoreline debris and overhangs for shaded protection. Each fall they spawn in such riffles and rapids as they cannot tolerate the warm, murky conditions of the shallow, sluggish and more productive waters downstream from here. Bolstered by groundwater and pumped with fresh oxygen from the churning effect of the rapids, waters such as High Falls provide the ideal conditions for the trout and their offspring.

Imagine the damage to similar spawning beds and soft shorelines by the log drives which scoured the narrow creek banks like a pipe cleaner. Think too that most shoreline vegetation was cleared to ease the on-shore movements and activities of the river drivers. But today with the hey-day of the logging era in the past, the Little Bonnechere River runs wild once again.

 *Photo: At High Falls nature is reclaiming the shoreline after a century of log drives and improvements.*



McGuey Farm

RATING

Easy.

TYPE

In and out.

TIME

3 hours.

START/FINISH

31.3km from Cty Rd 58.

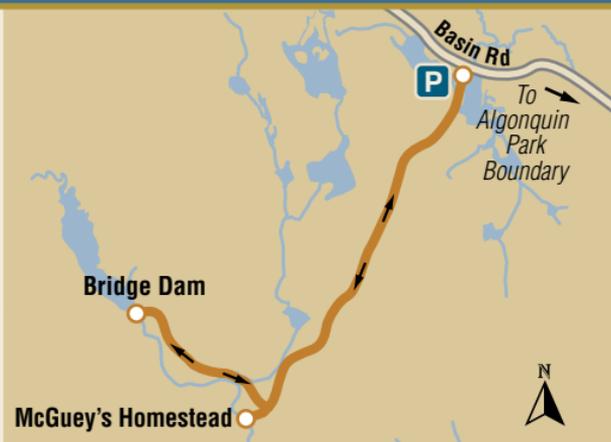
Trailhead located at side of road just up from Foy Lake road sign.

HIGHLIGHTS

- remains of isolated pioneer homestead
- marshland
- moose
- Bridgedam

SURFACE

Old roadway with some washouts.



True Pioneers

Imagine raising a large family in a pioneer home along the Little Bonnechere without electric lights, central heating or the comforts of modern living. Dennis McGuey and his wife Margaret did just that on this homestead. Here they raised a family of nine, in a house of squared pine timbers and under a roof of scooped cedar logs. It included a kitchen, dining room and bedroom, and a large room where transient

labourers stayed over. Men traveling this part of the Old Bonnechere Road would get a meal and a bed at the McGuey stopping place for twenty-five cents a night at a time when they might be earning a dollar a day. Mind you, the bedroom was shared with twenty-five other men and the simple bed was a mattress of balsam boughs topped with a heavy wool blanket.

Dennis McGuey trapped bears, hunted and maintained the two log dams upstream. Margaret McGuey took care of the house, ran the stopping place and made butter to sell to the lumber camps. Their sons helped at home until they were old enough to work in the lumber camps; their daughters assisted with the cooking and cleaning, and cared for the younger children. After the chores were done there was always a little time for some good

old-fashioned play with homemade toys, for this was a time long before video games and other modern-day diversions.

An Opening for Wildlife

Clearing a densely forested area for a homestead was a huge undertaking in the 1800s. Using only horse and manpower, a small plot of land likely took a family an entire summer to cut

and clear of stumps and roots. Over 150 years later, the evidence of such hard labour remains in the form of a forest opening at the McGuey Farm. Here, species that prefer open space to dense woodland habitats, make their home.

On your walk, listen for chestnut-sided warblers or perhaps even a field-loving savannah sparrow or bobolink. In the spring listen and watch for the American woodcock, as the males engage in their phenomenal aerial display in an attempt to impress females probing the moist ground for worms.

As you look around the clearing note the border between woodland and field, where dense shrub growth increases supplies of woody stems. This is a good area to watch for browsing deer and moose. The open field beside the quietly flowing river also provides plenty of opportunity for observing a variety of bird species including the broad-winged hawk.

 *Photo: The homestead which Dennis and Margaret McGuey cleared, circa 1880, is still visible today.*



McIntyre's Clearing

RATING

Easy (wear long pants).

TYPE

In and out.

TIME

1 hour.

START/FINISH

44.5km from Cty Rd 58 (western terminus of Basin Road).

Follow trail markers to parking and trailhead.

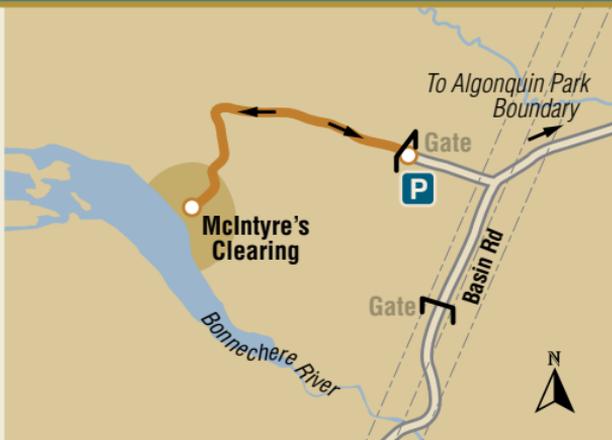
HIGHLIGHTS

Site of remote pioneer homestead:

- beautiful of pine covered hills
- river/marsh habitat

SURFACE

Roadway; natural forest floor; open field.



Recalling the Former Forest

The closer one gets to the headwaters of the Bonnechere the harder it is to believe that this modest creek transported the giant pines of the past. These white and red pines, which were often more than 300 years old, up to 40 m tall and 120 cm in diameter, had to have survived repeated ground fires but likely got their start following a conflagration hundreds of years earlier.

Try to identify the pine trees amidst the cedar, spruce and hardwoods springing up around the clearing. White pine has five long, soft needles in a bundle, while red pine needles are stiffer, stouter and come two to the bundle. White pine has grayish barks, while older red pine trees develop the characteristic reddish bark.

Since loggers harvested the biggest and best trees for decades, you will note that older trees are rare here so it's good to know that the Little Bonnechere River now flows through protected parklands designed to ensure that some of the oldest pine specimens survive for future generations.



Farm... or Village?

Everyone loves a good mystery and McIntyre's Clearing certainly provides one. In the 1870s several lumber companies established a cluster of operations buildings in this area. Almost a century later, while researching *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere*, author Rory MacKay recorded memories of what came to be known as 'the Village' but none of the surviving settlement children could remember its exact location.

The 1889 survey indicates that William McIntyre's family had cleared ten acres, cut the marsh grasses (beaver hay) for their cattle and sheep and ran a successful stopping place on this site. In 1892 when the black diphtheria epidemic struck the McIntyre family, uncle Dennis McGuey made a daily 10-km journey upriver to care for the family and do the chores.

Though the log house and out buildings are long gone, ruins of the root cellar still exist while evidence of the stables is little more than a collection of uniform square mounds scattered across the clearing. It may be that evidence of the long lost village is buried here as well or is it elsewhere along the Little Bonnechere? Either way it's a mystery still waiting to be solved. So while you stand on the shores of the McIntyre clearing looking across the tree lined ridges of the Little Bonnechere River valley ask yourself this question: Am I looking for the Village or am I looking from the Village?

🕒 *Photo: Can you find the Village in this photo of McIntyre's clearing?*



Additional Information

Friends of Algonquin Park

- A Chronology of Algonquin Park History*, MacKay, R., 2002
- Dragonflies of Algonquin Park*, Holter, M., 1996
- Algonquin Story, Second Edition*, Saunders, A., 1996
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- Mammals of Algonquin Park*, Strickland, D., Rutter, R.J., 1976
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- Wildflowers of Algonquin Park*, Strickland, D., LeVay, J., 1986
- Trees of Algonquin Park*, Strickland, D., 1987

Friends of Bonnechere Parks

- Visiting the Spirits of the Little Bonnechere* (multimedia CD), 2001
- Discover the Spirits of the Little Bonnechere: A Cultural Heritage Activity Book for Youth*, Stephenson, S., 1998
- Spirits of the Little Bonnechere: A History of Exploration, Logging and Settlement; 1800 to 1920*, MacKay, R., 1996

Other

- Eganville, Jewel of the Bonnechere*, Bennett, C., Juniper Books, 1991
- The Upper Ottawa Valley – A Glimpse of History*, Kennedy, C.C., Renfrew County Council, 1970
- Algonquin*, MacKay, R., W. Reynolds, Boston Mills/Stoddart Press, 1993
- The Explorer's Guide to Algonquin Park*, Runtz, M., Stoddart, 2001
- Howls of August*, Runtz, M., Boston Mills Press, 1997
- A Driving Tour of the Bonnechere River Watershed*, Stabb, M., Ottawa Valley Tourist Association, 1998

Web Sites

- www.algonquinpark.on.ca/friends.html
- www.bonnecherepark.on.ca
- www.ontarioparks.com
- www.ottawavalley.org

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