

Spindle Hill

Summary: A steep climb takes you 190 feet up to the 415-foot summit of Spindle Hill, to a view of the center of town and surrounding land, including Wheeler Pond.

Trailhead Location: On the east side of Gates Lane, 0.1 mile south of Great Road (Route 117), a small roadside pull-off provides room for 1-2 cars alongside a stone wall, below the trailhead kiosk. A second, pedestrian-access-only trailhead is located on Wheeler Road, 0.3 miles west of Gleasondale Road; no parking is permitted here.

History: "In 1956 a sawmill and a gristmill were built on Assabet Brook by Andrew J. Smith. Andrew also built the dam at that time creating Wheeler's Pond. An iron gate was used to control the water level. Edward Wheeler eventually bought the mill and operated it until about 1920 along with a store and a grain business. His name became attached to the mill, as well as to Wheeler Road. After his death it was said that Henry Ford tried to buy the mill from Mrs. Wheeler for his Wayside Inn restoration project in Sudbury, but the asking price was too high. The mill and dam have fallen into disuse and decay. The dam is there, but the gate is broken and the mill is now gone." (Source: History of Stow; Ethel B. Childs, 1983)

In 1995 Donald and Jean Hyde donated a 5.7-acre parcel of land on Spindle Hill to the Town of Stow. In 1999 the Stow Conservation Commission purchased an 8.9-acre parcel abutting Wheeler Pond on Spindle Hill from Sudbury Valley Trustees thus creating Spindle Hill Natural Area. The parcel consists of 15 acres with access on Gates Lane and Wheeler Road. With the assistance of the Stow Conservation Trust and the Stow Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts a trail was created. The hill's name derives from the harvesting of spindles used in the textile industry from dogwood trees on the site in the 1800s; the hill is also commonly known as Juniper Hill. There was once a ski slope with a ski lift on the east side of the hill.

Suggested Route: From the Gates Lane trailhead, follow the red-blazed trail steeply up to the top of the hill.

The public trail is very narrow—25 feet—please stay on the marked path.

The trail curves left around the parcel at the summit, then continues down the far side of Spindle Hill to the edge of Wheeler Road, on an easement through private property. The southern section of trail provides a nice view over Wheeler Pond, but please note that there is no public access to the pond.

Return the way you came, or turn left on Wheeler to Great Road, then left on Great Road and left again on Gates Lane to return to your car via roadways.

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you
 Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,
 And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
 Must ask permission to know it and be known,
 The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,
 I have made this place around you.
 If you leave it, you may come back again, saying, Here,
 No two trees are the same to Raven,
 No two branches are the same to Wren.
 If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,
 You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows
 Where you are. You must let it find you.

Lost—David Wagoner

