

For further exploration, visit the beautiful Kensico Dam Plaza at the base of the Dam in Valhalla, New York. The Plaza is a Westchester County Park where you can see first hand the finished product that the skilled workers completed many years ago. Be sure to observe historical inscriptions in the stone towers and the interesting stonework in the side pools that were once used for town swimming lessons. The Plaza is the northern extremity of the Bronx River Reservation, which is a linear park along the country's first parkway. The Bronx River Reservation opened in 1925 and consists of 807 acres spanning over 13 miles. As Westchester's oldest park, the Reservation was the beginning of the formation of the County park system.



Trail and pamphlet developed by Donna Kowal (2005). Historical photos used with permission of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

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Special thanks go to:
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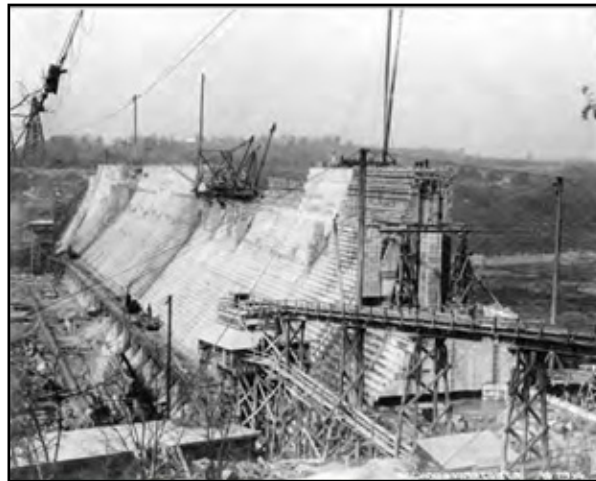
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CRANBERRY LAKE PRESERVE HISTORY TRAIL

LEARN ABOUT THE BUILDING OF THE
 KENSICO DAM AND THE IMPORTANCE
 OF THE RESERVOIR'S WATERSHED

A MODERATE WALK, A FEW STEEP GRADES
 APPROXIMATELY TWO MILES

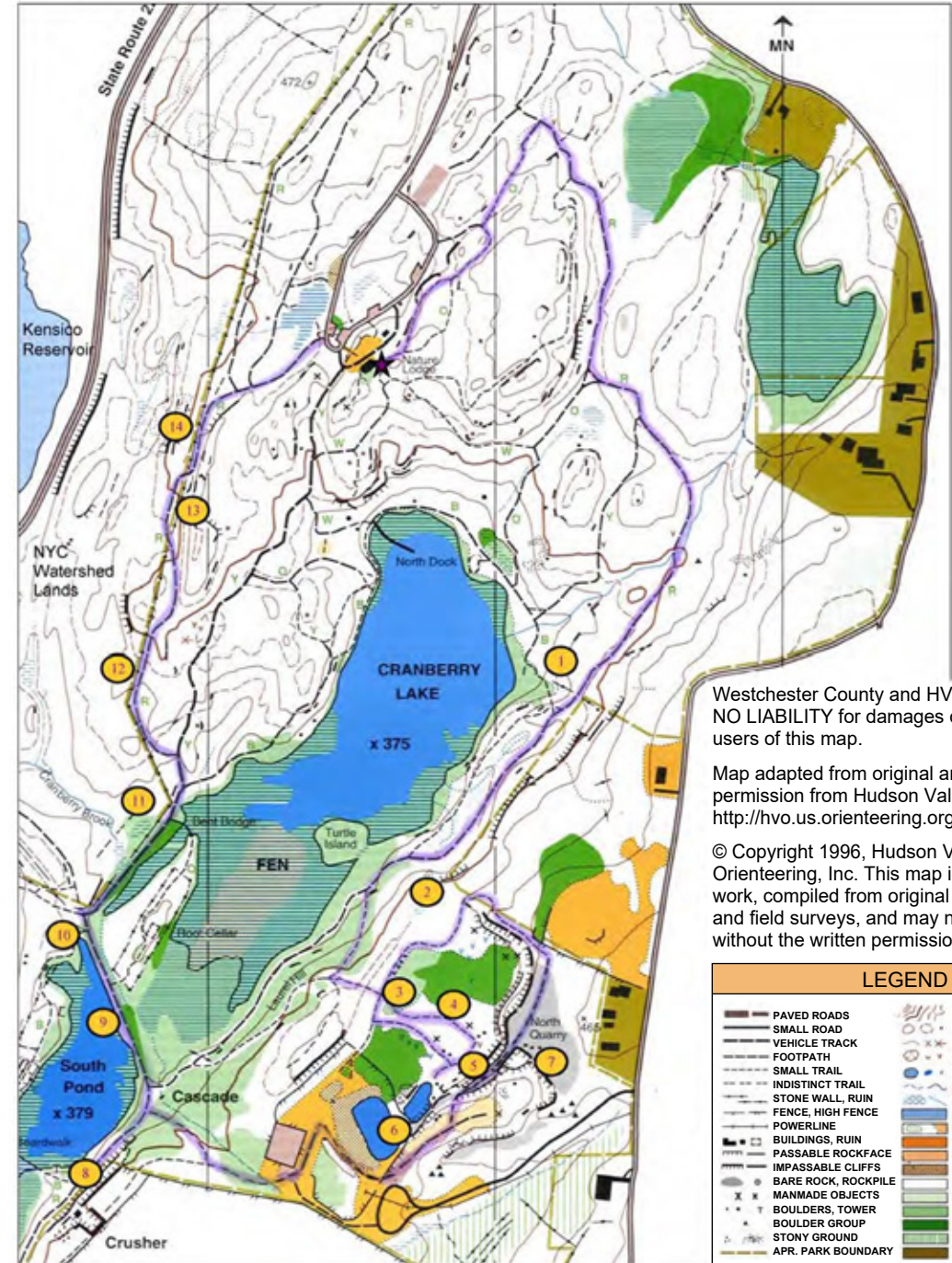


KENSICO DAM UNDER CONSTRUCTION (CIRCA 1914)



The History Trail is marked with purple trail markers along the route and begins on the north side (left) of the Nature Center.

Note that at any point during your walk, green trail markers will lead you back to the nature center.



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TIPS FOR A SAFE and ENJOYABLE WALK

- Bring trail map
- Bring water
- Bring a cell phone if you have one
- Bring binoculars
- Bring out what you brought in
- Wear proper footwear
- Have fun!

HISTORY OF THE PRESERVE

Before Westchester County purchased much of what is now Cranberry Lake Preserve in 1967, the area played an instrumental role in the building of the Kensico Dam. Completed in 1917, the dam stands less than a mile away. Most of the stone used to build it was mined from the area that is now the preserve. Construction of the dam also necessitated an electric plant, sand pit, and stone crushing plant, as well as new housing and schools for workers and their families. More than 1,500 people, most of them Italian immigrants, worked on the dam's construction. Many of the construction families settled in this area after the completion of Kensico Dam, contributing to the growth and character of Valhalla and surrounding communities. As this history walk takes you through the preserve, try to imagine how different the land was as 17 miles of railroad tracks weaved through the area and construction of the Kensico Dam was underway.

POINTS OF INTEREST

1 Cranberry Lake

Formed by glaciers approximately 18,000 years ago, Cranberry Lake is an ancient natural lake, fed by an underground spring. Cranberries grow all around the lake, and are most abundant on the south edge.

2 Stone Cutting Shed

As you walk over the "stump walkway," look up the hill to the left to see an old concrete facade. This remnant was once part of the area where the stone cutting shed stood, where large dimension stones were sculpted and transported to the dam. You can explore more remnants of the shed later in this walk.

3 Quarry Territory

As you enter the quarry territory you can see and feel a change in your surroundings. Notice the stone pathway you are following as you loop around. The mining of this area created a man-made habitat that now boasts some rare and significant species because of the low organic and high mineral content of the soil. You may also notice stones along the way that have dynamite scars. These same markings can also be seen on stones at the dam.

4 Abandoned Cars

Years after the completion of the dam, locals, whether for fun or for easy disposal of their old cars, sent them zooming off the cliffs of the abandoned quarry. In late May, even more striking, are the rare Pink Lady Slippers (*Cypripedium acaule*) blooming amongst the rusted remains.

5 Quarry

The first blast in the quarry occurred in 1913. A dozen huge derricks (large hoisting machines) were used to lift and load large stones for the face of the dam. In 1914, over two months time, 32.5 tons of dynamite were loaded into the rock, creating the largest blast in the quarry - breaking up approximately 117,000 cubic yards of rock - that's over 179 million pounds of stone!

6 Quarry Ponds

Formed during excavation, the larger pond was used by local residents in the 1960s and became the "Birchwood Swim Club." Up until its closure in the late 1990s, members of the club also enjoyed use of the tennis courts, which you will be passing on this walk.

7 Derrick Anchors

As you carefully make your way across the top of the quarry to the other side (follow step-like formations down the left side by the ponds), various metal artifacts may be seen as evidence that the derricks were performing massive duties. Secure in the rock, the metal objects speak of the strength needed to mine the quarry.

8 Crusher Foundation

This is the foundation of the massive crusher used during the dam's construction. It was built in 1912 and was capable of crushing 1000 cubic yards of gravel per day. Stone mined from the quarry that was too small to be used as dimension stone for the face of the dam was brought to the crusher to be minimized and used to make concrete.

Once you have reached the end of the old foundation, turn around and head back the way you came, bearing left at the cascade. Imagine yourself aboard an old steam engine on the tracks that has just received a load of crushed stones from the crusher's large hoppers which would have been hanging over the tracks. You are standing on what was once a railroad bed, constructed exclusively for the purpose of transporting the rock from the crusher.

9, 10 Trestle Remains

About halfway down this stretch you may notice to your left (depending on water level), in South Pond, the remains of old pilings from a 660-foot long, 35-foot high trestle that led trains from the dam back to the quarry (9). Once you reach the end of South Pond, to your left you will notice a mound of dirt. This is where the trestle bridge met land (10, no photo available).

11 Dynamite Magazine (no photo available)

Approximately 25 feet behind the stone wall, across from Bent Bridge, are the remains of the dynamite shed (seasonally visible). This site was chosen because a fault beneath the lake dissipated the vibrations from the blasting activity at the quarry. The walls of the structure were filled with sand to further minimize vibrations. Demolition of the magazine left a large ring of sand showing the outline of where it once stood.

12 Stone Walls

The stone wall you are following was built to delineate watershed property by the workers who built the Kensico Dam. These walls differ from old farmers' walls because they have large flat stones on top and smaller rocks on the bottom.

13 Bedrock

Notice the huge outcrop of rock to your right. The bedrock to the west of Cranberry Lake is mostly composed of Fordham Gneiss such as this outcrop, and Yonkers Gneissic Granite east of the lake. Outcrops of bedrock are visible throughout the Preserve. Kensico Reservoir is to your left.

14 Kensico Reservoir Watershed

You are standing in the Reservoir's watershed. A watershed is the land that water travels over and through, eventually draining into a body of water. The land you are walking through was once wilderness, then farmland, then construction zone, and now an important preservation of open space for the benefit of all living things.

Protecting watershed land is important for preserving water quality and for protecting valuable habitat for the incredible array of plants and animals that make the watershed their home.

