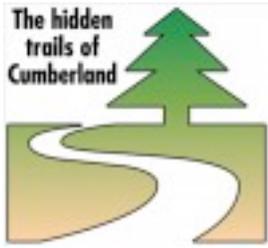


# Warner Trail leads up Diamond Hill, down to reservoir, and beyond



By [MARCIA GREEN, Valley Breeze Editor](#)

Pack a water bottle and take along a walking stick. This next trail is more on the rugged side, but offers a real variety of sights. Last week, Frank Matta took me along the Warner Trail as it loops up and down Diamond Hill and then across Fisher Road and to the Diamond Hill Reservoir.

Wrapped into the two-hour and 15-minute hike that covered 2.9 miles we saw gnawed-off trees felled into Sylvie's Brook by the beavers, glorious regional vistas to western Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts, the graffiti-covered cement stanchions left behind by the old ski operation, the bullet-holed Ski Valley water tank, a pretty condominium complex, and peaceful expanse of the reservoir. But the terrain, while mostly cleared, was rugged not only because of the incline, but the rocks half buried in the trail. It's not one for little kids, although two 10-year-olds were running along just fine in search of a geocache. Frank brought along a Binghamton, N.Y., friend, Joe Galloway, who used MotionX-GPS Track software to track our maximum elevation at 475 feet. Joe also persistently gathered litter up and down the hill, filling up his backpack and hand-carrying the final bits. I have to say we saw more litter - lots from Dunkin' Donuts - on this trek than on any of the five hikes I've done in the past several months.

Diamond Hill Park was created in the 1930s and held by the state until 1997, when it was turned over to the town. Referred to by locals as the "Big Hill," Diamond Hill is an outcropping of quartz with a 350-foot drop. Online web pages report the Warner Trail is 30 miles long, beginning in Diamond Hill Park and ending at Sharon, Mass. Several hikers have posted online descriptions of their experiences, including one who found the starting point difficult to locate. And even seasoned hikers seem to describe the trail as moderate to rugged.

The trail was created by Appalachian Mountain Club members Charles Warner and John Hudson prior to World War II, one section at a time starting at Route 128 in Massachusetts. It reached Diamond Hill Park in the 1950s, according to websites. Friends of the Warner Trail, created in 1994, has taken on its upkeep. Hikers may step on and off it in various spots or attempt the whole 30 miles by camping out. White or silver discs on trees about eight feet up kept us on track, but you have to keep an eye out for them.

To pick up the trail, park at Diamond Hill Park and hug the right side of the park where the lawn meets the trees. You'll see it before you reach the base of Diamond Hill. You'll follow Sylvie's Brook, home to beavers, in southerly direction for a while, then a switchback will take you upward and to the north and the great overlooks. As you continue down from the top you'll see Fisher Road. Walk along the road toward the condo cul-de-sac and look for a trail to the left. The downward trail will take you to the Diamond Hill Reservoir's edge and northward again.

To get back to your car, pick up a trail to your left after crossing the river bridge made of stone. We scooted between two houses on Fenner Grant Lane, and walked to the end of that small street. This is a pretty little neighborhood where residents are lucky to have such ready access to the park and trail. From there, we easily picked up the trail back to the park. If you stay on the Warner Trail, you'll

continue into Massachusetts and the scenic vistas of Wrentham and Franklin, and as far north as Sharon.

\* Just a few notes about the terrain you'll cover: Online sources say two ski slopes were operated here - the Egan family's Ski Valley from 1939 to 1981 on Fisher Road, and the state's Diamond Hill Reservation at the park from the mid-1960s to early 1980s. Initially, skiers had to hike the hill, but later two ropes were offered, followed by T-bars and multiple chair lifts. The remains are evident on the ground and atop the hill. Old ski handbooks seem to always mention the night skiing feature and the steepness of the trail. Pieces of the old ski lift are still there at the top and bottom of Diamond Hill.

Before then, quartz and silica were mined, and it's obvious as you walk that roadways were cut through the woods to accommodate vehicles. Across Diamond Hill Road, of course, was the granite operation that I'll get to on a later trek. The water tank you'll pass by was established for the Ski Valley condo complex, later taken over by the town to service area homes. The Water Department has been patching it, but has budgeted \$500,000 to replace it.

And finally, the reservoir belongs to the Pawtucket Water Supply Board and supplies the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls. Water flows through the southern spillway into the Arnold Mills Reservoir off North Attleboro Road, then along the Abbott Run to connect to Robin Hollow in Valley Falls and the Pawtucket treatment plant. The story goes that selling off Cumberland's rich water resource so angered taxpayers 100 years ago that Republicans never again held power in Cumberland Town Hall. True? Not sure, but the story has persisted for decades.



The Warner Trail takes hikers right up close to the tranquil waters of the Diamond Hill Reservoir.



Walking sticks on this rocky, uphill climb are a big help.



You'll see for miles and miles from atop Diamond Hill. Some hikers report seeing the Providence and Boston skylines.



Bullet hole repairs decorate the Ski Valley water tank that's now the town's responsibility to replace.



Devin Picard, left, and his friend Zachary Siegel had already uncovered one geocache last week and were off to find another. Mom is Karyn Picard. Geocaching is a game put together by volunteers who hide small treasures then post clues online for others to find it. They are hiking the trail at Diamond Hill.