

The Legend of Destruction Brook

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Destruction Brook woods; an ancient glacially carved landscape covered by nearly 80 miles of trails, weaving through magical hardwood forests, swampy wetlands, serene vernal pools, and historic agricultural fields. It's a place where local history and the timelessness of nature converge. One could wander through this reserve for hours, and marvel at the wild beauty of this New England landscape. The landscape dotted with historic remnants nestled among the brush might lead one to wonder at the stories hidden deep in these woods. How did a quite gentle stream running through 280 acres of beautifully wooded land get such a dramatic name? What is so "destructive" about this brook? Legends passed down from early colonial inhabitants tell us one possible story...

We don't know what this waterway or the lands around it were called before the settlement of the nearby agricultural village of Russells Mills. We do know though that Native Americans were living here at least 10,000 years before colonial times! Because of the acidity of the soil, little remains of the native settlements. Archaeological findings and oral history tell us though that the area was inhabited by a native population who often fished trout in the deeper stretches of the bubbling stream. Imagine their surprise then, when settlements of foreigners began to pop up along the waterway, these alien inhabitants laying claim to the use of the stream!

Before joining the larger Paskamanset River, Destruction Brook flows through a small pond. Colonialists set up their homesteads beside this river; evidence of this today remains in the form of crumbling stone foundations and overgrown

wells. The early settlers of Dartmouth built beside rivers so that they could construct water-powered mills. Grist mills ground wheat for their flour and sawmills provided them with lumber for homes and barns.

While all was well for the settlers of Russells Mills areas, it comes as no surprise that the natives were not so happy about the usurpation of their land. Would you be?! Legend tells us that it wasn't long before the natives in the area decided to make their resentment clear and get back. Soon horses and cows belonging to the colonial inhabitants of the Russells Mills area began to go missing in the night. And where do you think these valuable agricultural animals were turning up? Tossed into the brook and, well, destroyed! Thus the name "Destruction Brook".

There is no telling for sure whether this story is true or from where it originated. It is always fun though to have some idea of the local history of a place—to give us more a sense of belonging to a place. So we'll leave it that, at the very least, it's truly interesting story!