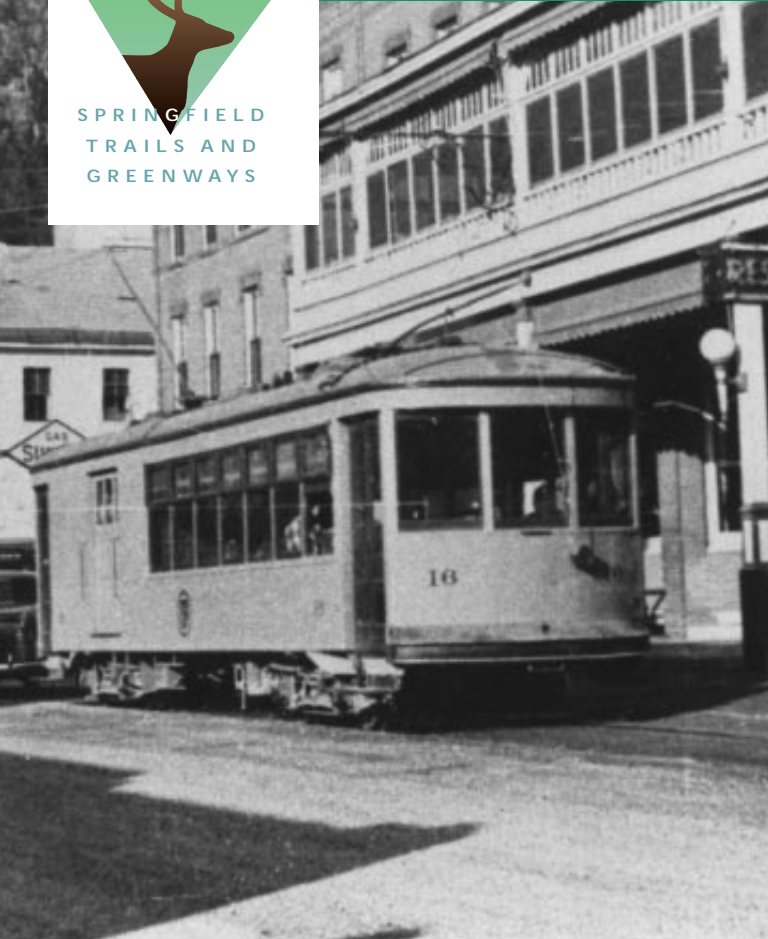




Who is Springfield Trails and Greenways (STAG)?



Toonerville trolley, downtown Springfield, 1941

We are a group of citizens interested in developing trails and greenways in our community to provide safe recreational opportunities close to home. STAG was formed in 1990 as one of three model efforts around the state to develop town trails and greenways plans. This planning led to a 1993 award from the VT Agency of Transportation to develop the abandoned railroad corridor along the Black River into a biking and walking path. The 10-foot wide, paved path is called the Toonerville Trail. The major part of the trail's route was formerly the railbed for the Springfield Electric Railroad. The trolleys that ran on that line from Springfield to Charlestown were affectionately called the "Toonerville trolleys" after a cartoon strip popular during the early 20th century. The Trail is 3 miles long and connects the downtown business district with residential areas, the Meeting Waters YMCA Lewis Day Camp, Route 5 and the Cheshire Bridge that spans the Connecticut River to Charlestown, New Hampshire.

In May, 2000, the Toonerville Trail was designated a Community Millennium Trail as part of the White House Millennium Trails 2000 project! The Town of Springfield will maintain the Trail in perpetuity along with the assistance of various civic groups, organizations, and clubs.



Gould's Mill fire

Welcome

Enjoy and Protect Your Path Please:

- ◆ Stay on the trail to minimize erosion and vegetation disturbance.
- ◆ Keep our path free of litter. Carry out what you carry in.
- ◆ Keep pets under control, all dogs must be leashed.
- ◆ Respect animals, and their habitats.
- ◆ Respect the rights of the private property owners by following the paths guidelines and regulations.
- ◆ Use the trail for walking, bicycling, rollerblading, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing only!

No motorized vehicles

Many thanks to Joseph Schweiterman, Fred Richardson and Rick White for the interpretive information.

Springfield Trails and Greenways
Springfield Parks and Recreation
96 Main St., Springfield, VT 05156
802 885 2727

For information about the Springfield area,
contact the Springfield Chamber of Commerce

802 885 2779

www.SpringfieldVT.com

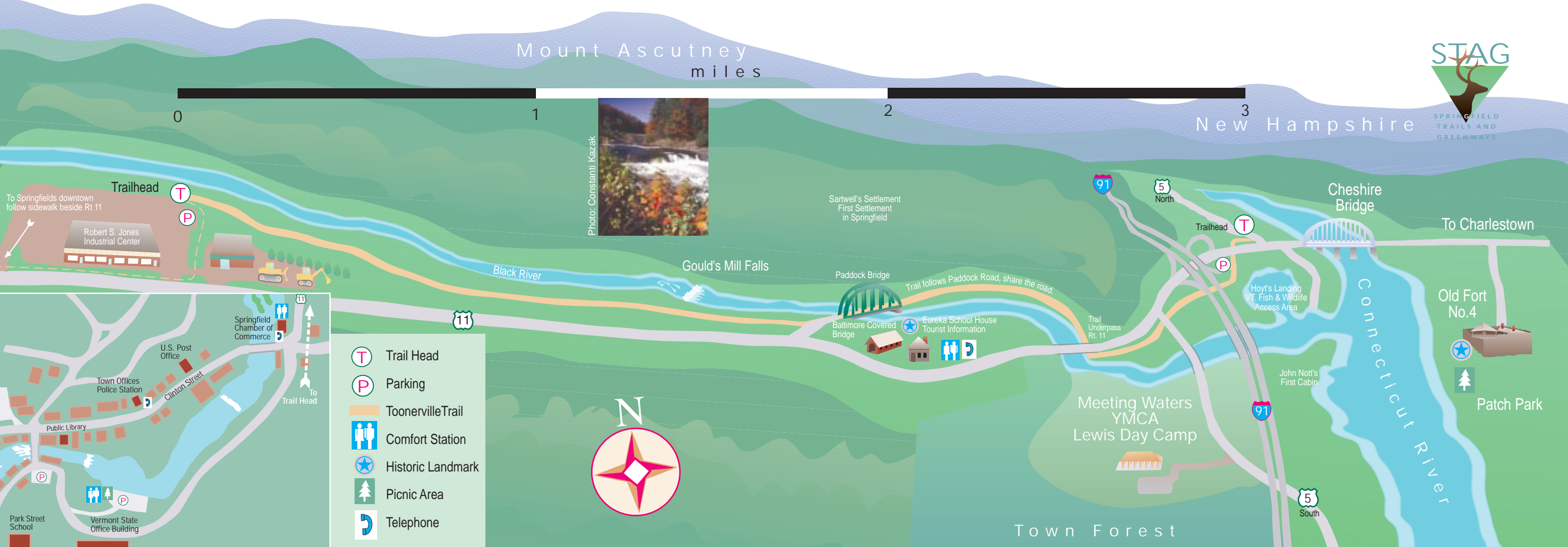
Brochure Design: O'Donnell Design with assistance from
National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program

Cover art: Gil Perry



Toonerville Trail

Springfield's Bicycle and Walking Path



Mount Ascutney
miles

New Hampshire

Where you walk on the Path now was the “Great Indian Road”, a favorite trail of the Abenaki. They followed this River (“Kas-Kact-cha-Wwak”) to Ludlow, and headed north via Otter Creek and Lake Champlain into Canada to spend the winters. Summers were spent fishing at Bellows Falls. Many Abenaki artifacts have been found on the north shore of the Black River where it meets the Connecticut.

South of the Gould’s Mill bridge, a road can be seen winding up through the hills. This is where other early settlers, who had left the crowded Fort No. 4 across the River in Charlestown, beached their canoes at the river’s edge and climbed to the summit. Here they established **Sartwell’s Settlement** – its location offered some protection against potentially unfriendly travelers along the River.

In the late 1800s, Springfield needed a railway in order for the town to grow. Across the River, tracks of the Sullivan County Railroad were already laid north as far as White River Junction. Establishing a rail connection from Springfield became such a priority that **in 1896 the Town created the Springfield Electric Railway Company**, and gave municipal funds to support building a 4-mile link to Charlestown. The power house and dam at Gould’s Mills supplied the power to run the railway.

Running a dozen round trips to NH a day at its height in 1910 (they even built an amusement park east of the Cheshire Bridge), the rail line declined until 1947, when it became Vermont’s last surviving passenger trolley. **In 1984 the last freight train ran over the weed-covered tracks.**

The River’s source is Black Pond in Plymouth, Vermont, over 25 miles northwest. It flows through 3 lakes and 4 towns before joining with the Connecticut River here.

In 1774 Gould’s Mill and a sawmill opened for business, and a settlement sprung up, including a school and several houses. Nearby, Paddock Bridge is one of only two surviving Baltimore Truss bridges in Vermont.

The rail service gave rise to an industrial boom that gained Springfield the title “**Precision Valley**”, on account of its reputation for industrial craftsmanship and precision manufacturing. **Look at the list of what was invented here!**

Fortunately the story didn’t end there - the route of that rail line is reborn today as the Toonerville Trail!

In 1751 John Nott and his wife Ruth left Middletown, Connecticut and canoed up the Connecticut River to become the first white settlers in Springfield. Nott built his cabin by the mouth of the Black River (just below the present YMCA recreation area).

The oldest existing one-room schoolhouse in Vermont is the Eureka Schoolhouse, built in 1795. It was restored and moved to its present location to be more accessible to interested tourists and Springfield citizens.

- The Clothespin
- Mop Wringer
- Sandpaper
- First cotton cloth made in Vermont (1820)
- Steam Shovel
- Gear-Grinding and Shaping Machines
- Sheep Shearing Machine
- Safety Razor

Keep your eye out for some of the wildlife found along the Path and the River corridor:

- Moose, Deer, Mink, Otter, Beaver, Muskrat, Raccoon, Turtles, Frogs, Osprey, Blue Heron, Kingfisher.