

Stony Creek & Hoadley Creek Preserves

The first preserve established here was the Stony Creek Quarry. A granite quarry had operated on this site since the late 19th century but at a time in the early 1970s when the business was declining, a proposal came forth to use the site as a garbage dump. Branford Land Trust president Peter Neill, horrified by the idea, led the effort for the town to acquire the property as open space instead, leasing a 50 acre area in the center for continued quarrying operations. With help from state and federal grants, the town took title in 1977.

The Van Wie Preserve, abutting the Quarry property, came about through a series of donations to the Branford Land Trust from Ray Van Wie and his son, Bill, and daughter-in-law Alice. The Van Wie family has lived in Branford since around 1850, and Ray and Bill spent years together walking the woods, working the land, building walls around springs, thinning cedars to replant native bushes and identifying wildflowers. When Ray made the first donation in 1978, a parcel facing Flat Rock Road, he asked to name the property the Rose Van Wie Botanical Preserve in memory of his wife, who loved wildflowers. Since then, incremental gifts from Ray, Bill and Alice Van Wie have brought the preserve to more than 100 acres. Along with streams and rocks and rills, one of the highlights of this property is an open meadow, maintained by the Branford Land Trust for butterflies and other sun loving creatures.



Photo by Branford Land Trust

When the Stony Creek Quarry Preserve was created, few were aware of a 10 acre privately owned piece completely surrounded by town property. The Branford Land Trust was able to purchase this property in 1997 thanks to a generous gift from Brooks M. Kelley in memory of his son, Brooks R. Kelley, who lived for a time on Quarry Road and loved to spend time on the wooded trails with his young son.

These three preserves, combined with the Hoadley Creek Preserve create one of the wildest natural areas in Branford. Near the Quarry Road parking lot, the woods are littered with eerie remnants of the quarry days. As one continues, however, civilization recedes and visitors will be impressed by the sheer size of the preserve. Extensive wetlands and streams are interspersed with towering ridgelines, offering one of the most dramatic and secluded walks in town.

Directions and Parking:

Take Leetes Island Road (Route 146) from Stony Creek towards Guilford. Make a left on Quarry Road and park in the lot on your right just after the road becomes unpaved. Alternatively, park on Red Hill Road which is off Leetes Island Road, 0.1 mile south of I-95.

Permitted/Prohibited Activities:

Properties are open during daylight hours plus one hour before and after. Stay on the trails and please carry out everything you carry in. Hunting or the use of BB guns and air rifles is prohibited. No open fires or camping. Motorized vehicles are strictly prohibited and violators will be prosecuted. Follow the classic counsel to leave a place or trail better than you found it. The Quarry is an active mining area, and public access is prohibited.



Photo by Branford Land Trust

Moderate to Difficult Hike

The Stony Creek Quarry, Van Wie & Kelley Preserves form a contiguous total of more than 480 acres. The large size, combined with rocky ups and down and occasional piles of granite rubble, make these among the more rugged and remote of the towns walking areas.

Total Trails Length: approx. 15.5 miles

Red Trails: 4.0 mi

White Trail: 3.5 mi

Green Trail: 2.4 mi

Blue Trails: 1.47 mi

Yellow Trails: 1.1 mi

Other Trails: 1.3 mi

Pink Trail: 1.76 mi



For more information about this walk contact:

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