

SITE #1: THE MAILLEY PROPERTY

The Mailley homestead was a working farm prior to the creation of Black Rock Forest in 1928. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Mailleys lived just south of Mountain Road below what is today the Black Rock Forest parking lot.¹ The two stone foundations just off to the southern side of the road are remnants of their house. Upstream on the runoff brook from the Upper Reservoir the Mailleys built and maintained a dam, part of which is still visible. Whether this dam provided water power for a grist or sawmill, or was used to create a pond for fishing or ice cutting is difficult to ascertain, but it is probable that the pond served utilitarian rather than aesthetic purposes. The Mailleys also farmed a number of fields in this vicinity, most of which were uphill from their residence. One such field encompassed the area which is today the Black Rock Forest parking lot.² Another agricultural plot is visible farther north, up on the top of the hill at the back end of the parking area. The young growth on this field, which includes many barberry bushes, suggests that the land here was farmed for a number of years. The stones comprising the rock walls that border this field, most of which are small and most probably taken from the field as Mailley's plow uprooted them year after year, also indicates this was agricultural land.³ The Mailley's barn was also up in this area, suggesting that the family most probably combined some dairying along with their small-scale agricultural practices. William Thompson Howell, who hiked extensively throughout the region in 1908, mentioned the Mailleys in his diary. After buying a dozen eggs from the Mailleys Howell wrote, "James Mailley is not a native of the Highlands but of Erin . . . He is a decided character, his brogue and whiskers are equally admirable, and his flow of philosophy a delight to listen to."⁴

¹ The location of the Mailley Place is noted on Black Rock Forest Compartment III Map, Black Rock Forest Archives, Cornwall, New York. This location is confirmed by William Thompson Howell in an entry in his diary dated May 3, 1908. Excerpts of Howell's diary were subsequently published and titled *Memorial* (New York: Lenz & Riecker, Inc., 1934), 46 & 116. Buster Babcock also placed the Mailley home in this area, interview by author, Tape recording, Cornwall, New York, 20 May 1995. This tape is located in the Black Rock Forest Archives, Cornwall, New York.

² Babcock, interview with author, 20 May 1995.

³ On determining land use from stone walls see Stephen Spurr & Burton Barnes, *Forest Ecology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), 568. According to Spurr and Barnes, stone walls made up of rocks taken from cultivated fields contain a greater variety of stone sizes and a greater number of stones than do simple stone walls that were erected to mark property lines or to fence in cattle and sheep.

⁴ Howell, *Memorial*, 46.

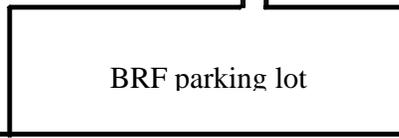
Site #1: The Mailley Property
 Location: Just Below Park Gate on Reservoir Road
 Map Created by Neil M. Maher

Legend

- stone wall 
- water 
- trail 
- scale 

uphill


small
 wallstones
 & barberry
 bushes
 suggest
 former
 farmland



BRF gate

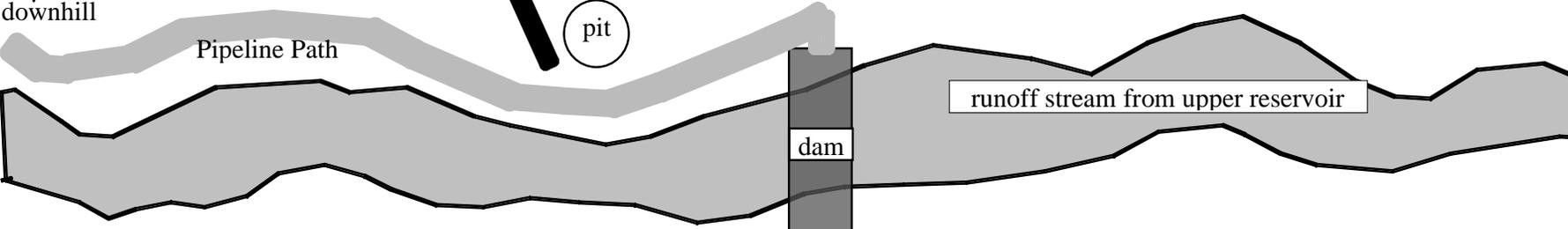


stone foundations

young tree growth, lack of
 stone walls, and steep grade
 suggests logging rather than
 farming area

downhill


North

pit

dam

runoff stream from upper reservoir

potential power
 source for grist or
 saw mill



