

BALLS HILL RD

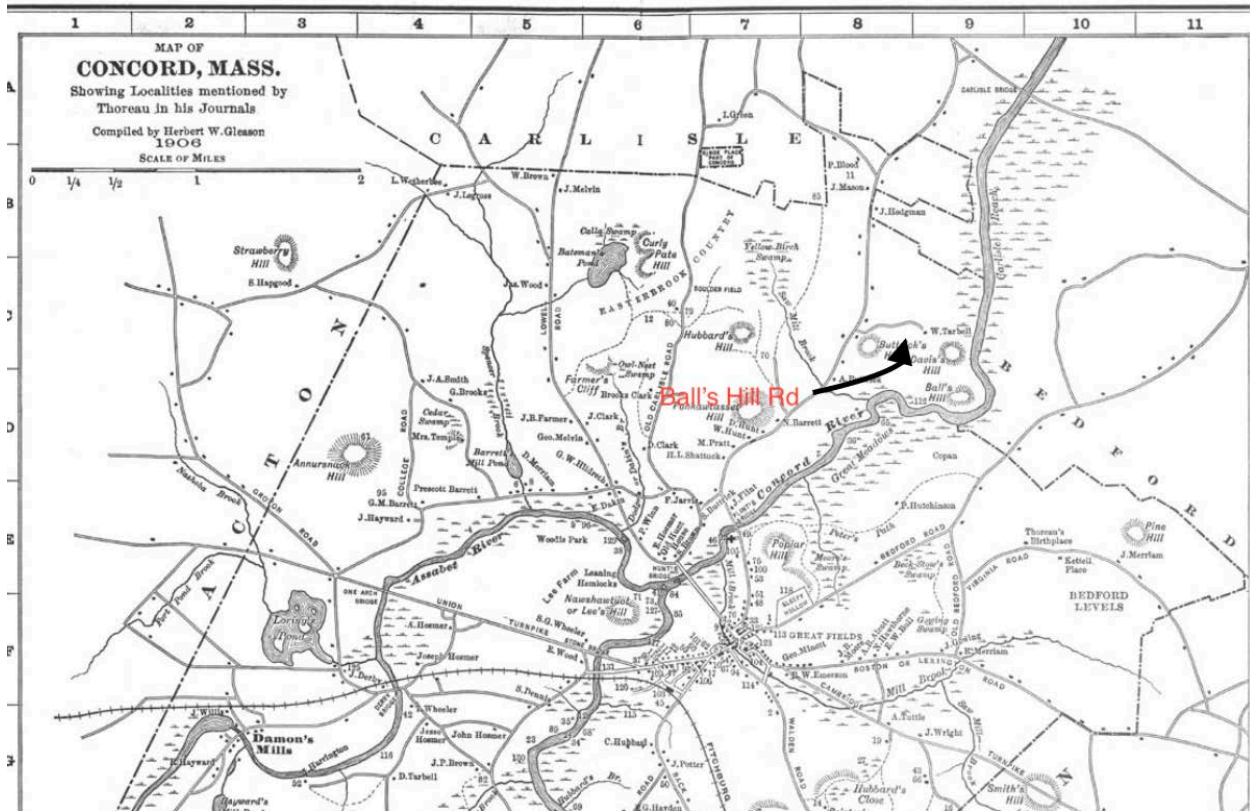
Balls Hill Road is a peaceful, wooded one-lane road, measuring slightly under a half mile in total length. It starts at Monument Street and winds east between ancient stone walls and trees on both sides until it terminates at the October Farm conservation land, owned and maintained by the Concord Land Trust.

Balls Hill Road was first laid out in **1747**, according to Concord historian Sarah Chapin, Claiborne Dawes and Alice Moulton in Concord Then & Now (2001), at p.42. "It is one of Concord's oldest roads". Id. The road can be seen clearly on maps from 1830, 1852, and 1906, as indicated below.



Map of the town of Concord





The conservation land known as October Farm is found at the eastern terminus of Balls Hill Rd. The woods, fields, vernal pools and glacial hillocks (including the steep rise known as “Balls Hill”) were all part of the “special place” of that name along the Concord River visited by William Brewster where he studied and wrote about the area’s birds and small animals in the late 1800s. Concord Then & Now at 42. Brewster was a renowned early naturalist and the first president of the Mass Audubon Society. Id. Brewster’s observations of this area at the end of Balls Hill Rd. are collected in his work titled October Farm, From the Concord Journals and Diaries of William Brewster (1936)

According to the research of the Concord Historical Commission, maintained at the Concord Library, the first known property associated with the road was a property purchased approximately 1723 by Caleb Ball and his wife Experience Flagg Ball. Current research dates construction of a house and outbuildings between 1726 and 1740. https://concordlibrary.org/special-collections/fin_aids/BTBHouse. The house itself was built and stood at what is now the eastern end of the road, right near the current entrance to October Farm trails. It is believed that Balls Hill Road was originally created to connect the Ball property with the farms owned by the Buttrick family to the south and the Bartlett family to the north on what is now Monument Street. See, e.g., Map, Plan of Town of Concord Made by John G Hales, c. 1830.

The house was owned by the Ball family and then by their in-laws the Tarbells for over a century. Subsequently Brewster purchased the entire October Farm area and, upon his death, it is reported that Brewster left 28 acres, including a house at #265 Balls Hill Rd, to Christian Benson, his caretaker, in recognition of his “loyal service.” The road was labelled the “Benson Rd” at that time until March 1952, whereupon it was renamed “Balls Hill Rd” in recognition of the original owner of the property. Concord Then & Now at p.42. The house became known as the “Benson House” and remained in the Benson Family for approximately a century until it was sold to the Town of Concord in 2001. Id. In 2005 the house was disassembled and removed from the location. Id.

Set forth below is a series of photos showing the peaceful and historic nature of Balls Hill Rd:

1. This first shot provides a sense of the character of almost the entirety of Balls Hill Road and its quiet, peaceful nature, its stone walls and ancient trees. This is the view looking west about halfway up the road.



2. Now, starting at the eastern end of the road, at what is now the open space at the beginning of the land trust parking area, here is what the Ball/Tarbell/Benson House looked like in 1902:



Concord Then and Now at 42.

The space is now empty, allowing a view past the trees into the marsh and the woods of the historic October Farm property.

3. Leaving the former location of the Ball/Tarbell/Benson house, with October Farm behind and walking west on Balls Hill Rd, there are stone walls and ancient fir trees of different species leading down first to wetlands where spring peepers make their home.



4. Then the road turns and climbs. Here is a photo of the north side of Balls Hill Rd on this rise, showing the stone walls, the trees, and the woodlands behind:



And here is the view of the same side of the street a little further up the rise, looking back:



5. Here is the view of the south side of the street opposite the same location. You can see the stone walls lining the south side and peaceful woods and additional moss-covered stone walls beyond. These woods are home to owls who can be heard in early evenings and at dawn and woodpeckers heard all summer long.



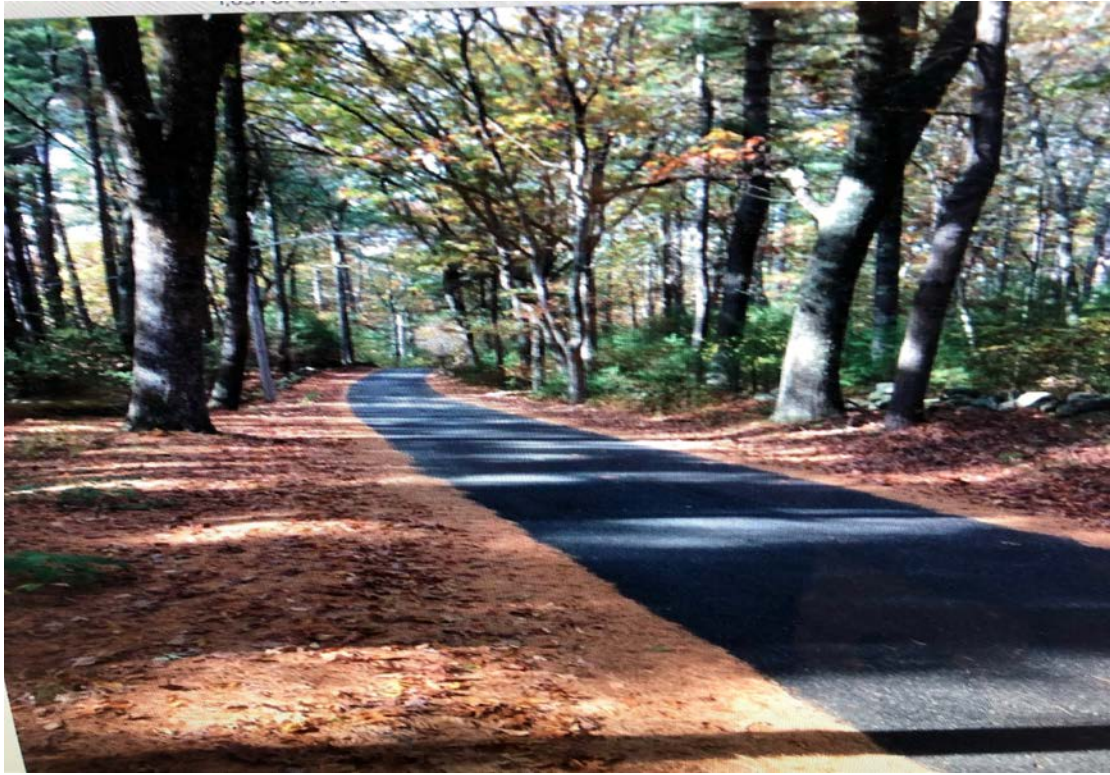
Below is a shot at about the same spot of the entrance to one of the four residences on the south side of the road. This one belongs to Pierce Browne, a life-long resident of Concord, and a classmate of the last of the Bensons. The Brownes have been conscientious stewards of their property on Balls Hill Road for over 50 years.



6. Now here is the view of the stone walls and moss-covered glacial rocks on the north side of the road at the top of the rise, what we affectionately call “the hump”:



7. And here is the view looking west showing both sides of the road as it crests the hill:



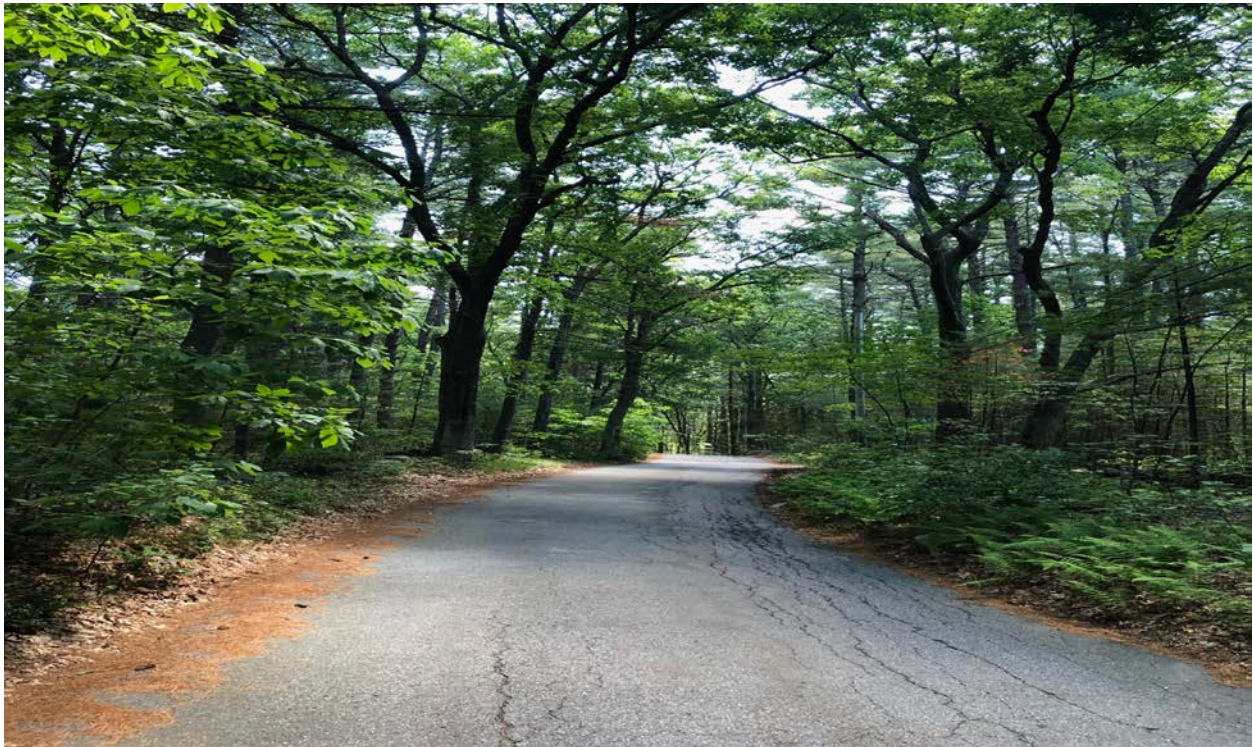
8. Here is a view looking east from the other side of the "Hump. You can see the stone walls and mature trees lining the south side of the road.



9. And further west on the road, here is a view from behind the stone walls on the south side looking across the road into the woods on the north side.



10. And the view in summer with the ferns fronting the walls...



11. This is the same view of the road as it was in Brewster's Day, in a photo taken by Brewster himself (or his assistant) ~ 1900. This photo is proudly displayed by the Mass Audubon Society in a house on their property in the woods bordering October Farm and Balls Hill Rd.



12. Moving further west along the road, here is a classic New England Barn of one of the other four residences on Balls Hill Road, near its connection to Monument Street.



13. Finally, reaching the western end of Balls Hill Rd at its juncture with Monument Street, a residence occupies the southern corner, abutting both Monument St and Balls Hill Rd. This was the spot of one of the very first schools in town, marked clearly on the maps of 1830 and 1852, shown above. According to the Anne McCarthy Forbes' Narrative Histories of Concord and West Concord, the schoolhouse for the "Northern District" school of Concord (District No. 7) – which Ms. Forbes specifically identifies as located at that corner of Balls Hill Rd. (its address is 1234 Monument St.) -- was rebuilt of brick between 1847 and 1858. Narrative Histories at 25. Here is a shot of the corner and the house (which is now a private residence) as it stands today. You can also clearly see the stone walls beginning their run on the north side of Balls Hill Rd, also shown in the last photo below.

