

The History of Two-Rod Road

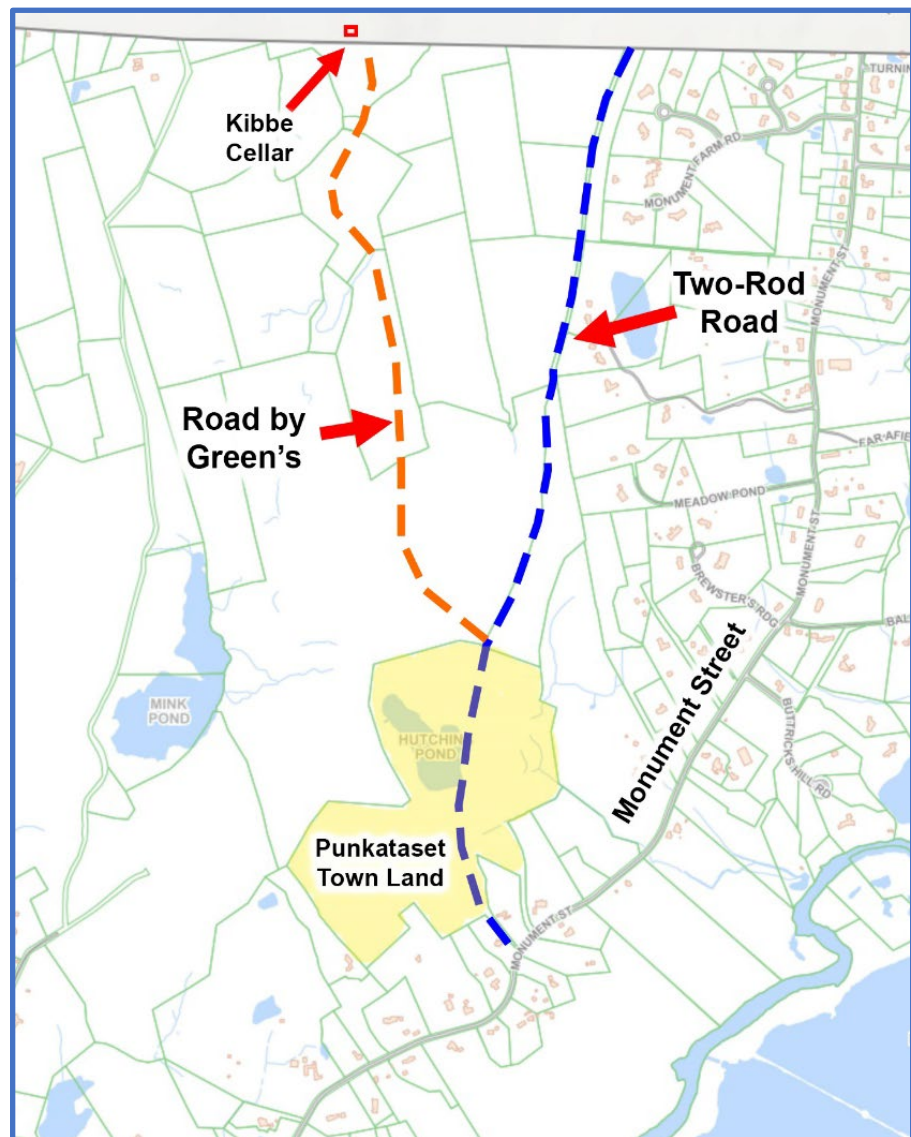
Two-Rod road leads from Monument Street at Punkatasset through the Estabrook Woods to Carlisle. In the early 1700s, what we now know as Monument Street only went as far north as Punkatasset Hill. At that time, the extensive lands around Punkatasset Hill were owned by the brothers Nehemiah and Isaac Hunt. From this ownership the original name of the hill was “Hunt’s Hill.” While some Hunts remained on the land along Monument Street for generations, Isaac Hunt sold his considerable landholdings north of the hill to Mr. Whitaker around 1720, including the and we now know as Punkatasset.

It is not clear when the name Punkatasset was first used to describe the area, but during the 1700s the northern part of what we now call Punkatasset was called “wigwam meadow” and the brook through Punkatasset, now known as the “sawmill brook,” was then known as “wigwam brook.”

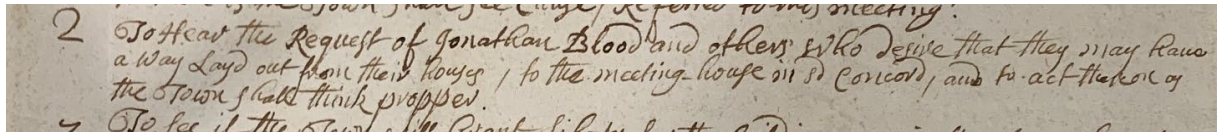
The road we now call Two-Rod Road was first created and recorded as “the second road to Blood’s farm” in the mid 1700s. Blood’s Farm was an extensive landholding by the Blood family from the late 1600s in the area now known as Carlisle.

Concord first created a road to the farm of James Blood in 1734; this road extended from Punkatasset Hill to the Carlisle bound and is now known as part of Monument Street. Ten years later, the Town added an additional road from Punkatasset Hill to the farm of James’ brother Jonathan Blood; this road became known as “the second road to Blood’s Farm” and is today known as Two-Rod Road.

The History of Tw-Rod Road begins in 1739 when the Town Meeting



considered a petition of Jonathan Blood for a new road to his farm. The Warrant explains:



2 To Hear the Request of Jonathan Blood and others who desire that they may have a way laid out from their houses to the meeting house in Concord, and to act thereon if the Town shall think proper.

This article was voted down. Mr. Whitaker maintained an extensive assortment of livestock including sheep, cattle, and oxen on the lands we now know as Punkatasset, which would be disturbed by the new road. A number of additional petitioners joined the petition of Jonathan Blood, including Robert Blood, Nathaniel Taylor, and John Green, and a second request to the Town was made in 1744, in this case permitting Mr Whitaker to retain gates though his part of the land:

“The aforesaid way as it is described and laid out is to be an open way excepting where it goes through Mr. David Whitaker’s land which is to be a bridle way. Said Whitaker declaring he will give the way through his land.”

This road *again* was voted down. The rejected layout describes that a full mile of this road was through Whitaker, who committed to the Town Meeting he would give the land. Nevertheless, acceptance of this road might have required the Town to pay damages to others, and would have created an obligation to make and maintain the road.

Yet another attempt was made to get the Town to accept the road in 1745, with another concession, where the Warrant item was to:

“Hear and consider the petition of Jonathan Blood in behalf of himself and other, who ask for the way laid out by the selectmen on the first day of October, 1744 (from the house of David Whitaker to said Bloods Farm) in case they purchase said way and maintain it upon their owne cost and charges forever.”

To get the Town to reconsider, the petitioner first offered to get the owners to give their lands, or pay the damages. The petitioners then returned with the additional offer to create and maintain the road forever. With these changes, giving the Town no obligation to create or maintain the road, the Town finally approved the way in 1745.

It is interesting to note that partway up Two-Road road there is a road branching to the northwest; this trail is today known as “the Carlisle Trail” but was originally the “road to spruce swamp” and also known as “the way by Green’s” because it passed immediately past the old house of Zaccheus Green in Carlisle which was torn down only recently. Along the way it passes the old cellar hole of Samuel Kibbe from around 1760, just north of the Carlisle Town line, which can still be found today.

On the east side of Two-Rod Road near the Carlisle line was the old homestead of the only person known to have lived along Two-Rod Road in Concord north of Punkatasset, Oliver Barron; his cellar hole from the mid 1700s has not been located.

During the late 1700s, the Two-Road Road was known as “Whitaker’s Road.” On the north part of the road, now in Carlisle and known as Stearns Street, the popular Revolutionary Tavern operated for a brief time. Around 1760, a new meeting house was created at what is now Carlisle center, but was then still part of Concord. The residents of the north began to attend worship there, and eventually successfully

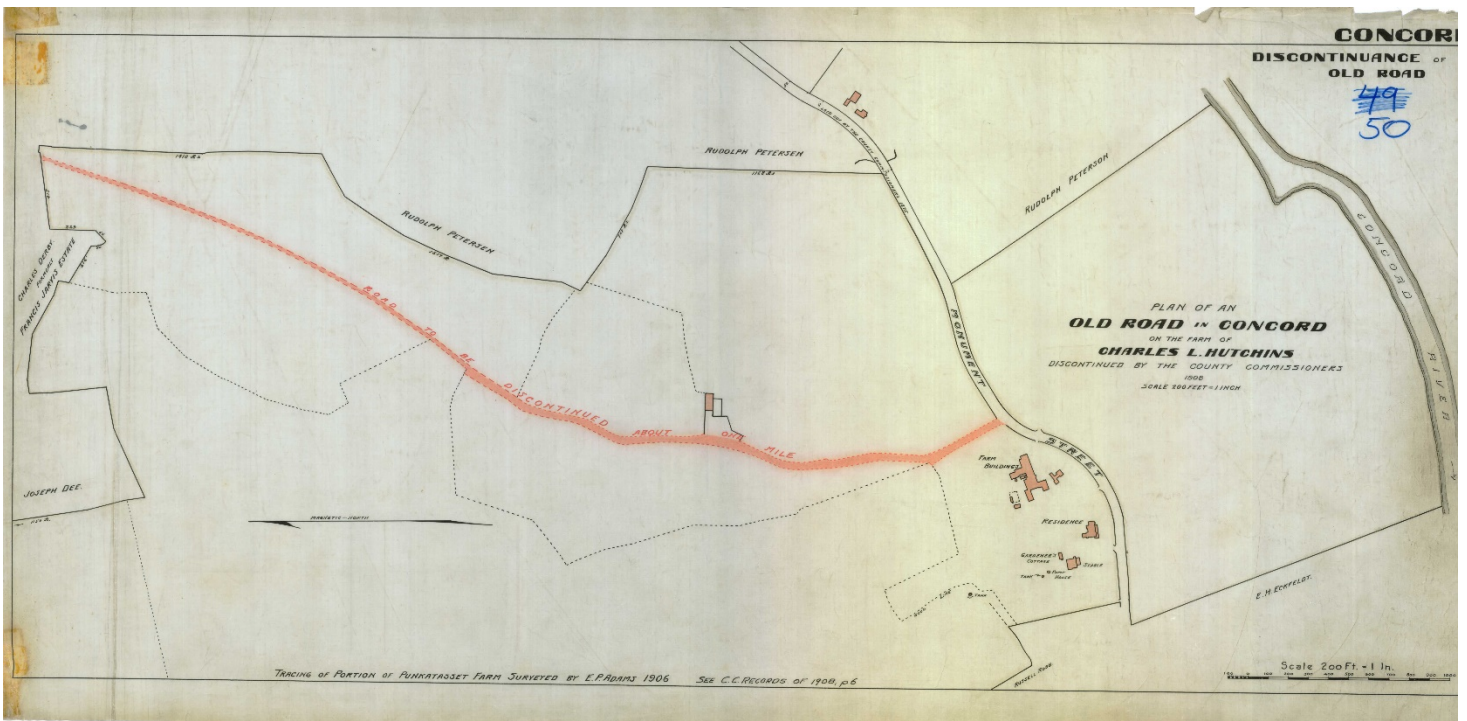
petitioned to be set of as the Town of Carlisle in 1780. During this period, the residents of the north began to focus their efforts on Carlisle center, away from the center of Concord, and as a result both this road and the Estabrook Trail fell into disuse and were never developed.

Around 1800, a causeway was built from Carlisle to Bedford near what is now Route 225. Combined with a number of new farms along the Concord River, this significantly increased the flow of traffic on Monument Street.

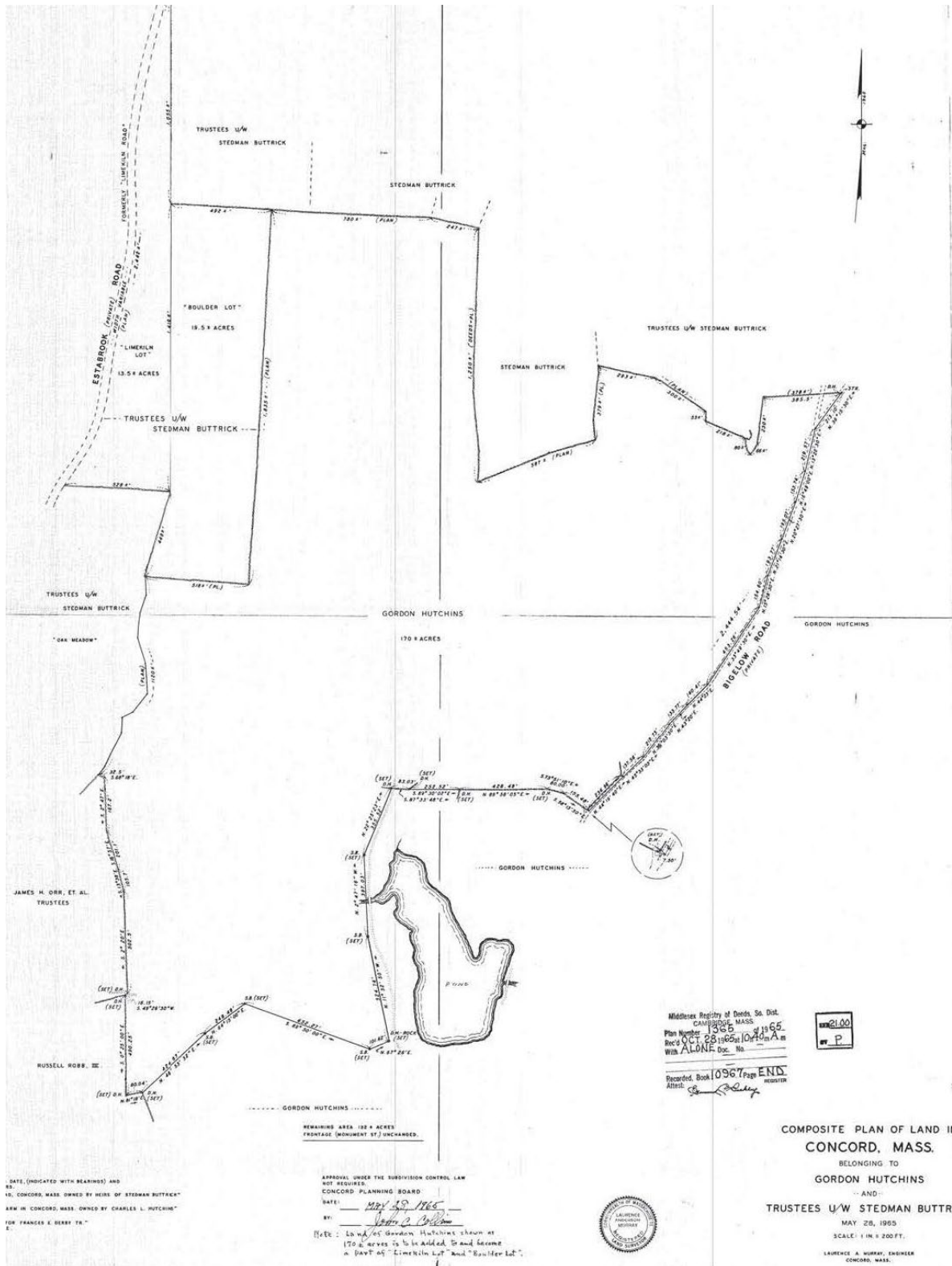
After Whitaker, the land and farmhouse on Two-Rod Road passed through a number of owners including Samuel Buttrick, Mr. Bigelow, William Hunt, and finally in 1890 to Mr. Hutchins. During the late 1800s through 1950 the road was known as "Bigelow Road" and is still noted that by that name on several the surrounding property deeds. Thoreau notes walking in the Estabrook Woods at least six times and describes the old road in his Journal as "the Bridle Way." At one time, the old Whitaker farm was offered to the Town as a poor farm, but the Town rejected the offer saying the condition of the farm was "not good enough for paupers."

There is no record that Two-Rod road was ever used by the public for travel, nor is there any record of it ever being maintained by the Town. During the late 1700s to early 1800s, it did show on lists of roads to be inspected.

Charles Hutchins was a farmer from New Hampshire, who came to Concord in 1886 for a farm auction ostensibly to purchase farm equipment. He found the farm itself for sale, and on an impulse, he successfully bid on the farm and notified his shocked family they were moving. He eventually acquired about 500 acres of farm and woodland in Concord and Carlisle. Around 1908, Mr. Hutchins decided to create an ice pond on his property. He excavated a swamp and dammed the water creating what we now know as Hutchins' pond. At the same time, he re-routed some of the old road near the new pond, and he asked the County to discontinue the old way on the basis that "it is not occupied or admitted to be a Town Road," and that "it is scarcely used by anyone but me." The County agreed and discontinued the way. The plan of the discontinuance is shown below:



In 1968 the Hutchins family conveyed part of the Punkatasset parcel along the old road to Harvard:



Two-Rod Road is on the east side of this parcel, and Estabrook Road can be seen in the west. Subsequently, the Town purchased a portion of the Hutchins land further south “to protect and preserve the priceless resource of Estabrook Woods acquired by Harvard’s Museum of Comparative Zoology;” this parcel, known today as Punkatasset, remains subject to a conservation restriction.

The land on the east side of Two-Rod Road north of Punkatasset was conveyed by the Hutchins family to the Concord Land Conservation Trust in 1971. The land further north along the Trail on the east side near the Carlisle line was conveyed to the Town as part of the 1992 development of Monument Farm Road.

At some time during the mid 1900s, the historical names of the way were forgotten and way became locally described as “the Two-Rod Road,” a name that refers to the old common description of the width of a road layout (two rods equals 32 feet). This is a name typically given to roads whose origins have been forgotten.