



## WELCOME TO THE BARKERSVILLE TRAILS!

Dolores Arste and David Hickey wanted others to enjoy their land as much as they did. Two trails, together offering 2.5 miles of hiking on the property, were built by volunteers from 2018-2020. Sections of today's trails are located on corridors originally developed for horseback riding and for training sled dogs, pastimes that Dolores and David enjoyed. At one time there were as many 90 dogs living here! Parrish Trail and Derby Path are named after two of their favorite dogs – keeping the “bark” in the Barkersville Trails!

### What is Letterboxing?

*Letterboxing is an old English tradition dating back to 1854, when people began leaving a self-addressed post card in a jar, hoping for them to be returned by mail by the next visitor. Today we've adapted this English tradition to use on Saratoga PLAN's nature preserves and trails. Each preserve has letterbox clues ranging in difficulty and gives each type of adventurer an exciting opportunity to explore our preserves and have fun while doing so. When you find the letterbox, feel free to write us a note in the logbook with comments about your journey. Use the stamp inside the letterbox to mark your PLAN Preserve Passport on the appropriate page. Once you have collected at least five stamps (or listed three species observed during each visit) stop by PLAN's offices in Saratoga Springs for a FREE Saratoga PLAN t-shirt!*

#### LETTERBOX CLUES FOR BARKERSVILLE TRAILS

**1. Begin your hunt at the trailhead kiosk – just a few steps from the parking area. As you leave the kiosk notice the trees' very rough, coarse bark. You'll walk through a small grove of them.**

*These black locust trees (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) are common first colonizers of abandoned farmlands. Black locust has exceptionally hard, rot resistant wood. Butterflies, bees, and even hummingbirds favor its flowers. As you continue, you will see many signs of the agriculture that took place on this property.*

**2. As you pass through the next grove, look for the trees with the smoothest bark. These stand in striking contrast to Black Locust.**

*These smooth grey bark trees are American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*). This shade-loving species is common on dry upland sites. Its beechnuts are favored by a host of animals including bears. You'll see a number of trees with cankers on the trunk. This is a result of beech bark scale disease – an exotic blight introduced to North America in the 1920s. The disease weakens the tree and shortens its lifespan. Roughly 3% of trees are resistant.*

**3. Pass through a stone wall – another field mark of the land's agricultural history.**

*It took considerable effort to build a stone wall – 20 feet a day was average. Walls typically served as stone dumps to clear fields for crop production, or as fences to keep animals in, or out, of crop fields. A wall frequently served both functions.*

**4. As you pass under a powerline, examine the next section of woods for its many fallen trees. Do they seem to point in the same direction?**

*Because of the forest edge here, formed by the road, weakened trees fall with the prevailing winds (west and north). Fallen trees are broken down by a variety of fungal species. They form critical habitat for invertebrates, insects, salamanders, and small mammals. A healthy forest is a messy forest.*

**5. When you have a utility pole on your left, note the trees with PLAN trail markers on your right. Also notice the trees with shiny yellow bark close to the road.**

*The trees with the markers are red maple trees (*Acer rubrum*) – quick colonizers of wet ground. The other tree with the bark that peels in shiny ribbon strips, on the edge by the road, is yellow birch (*Betula allegheniensis*).*

**6. As you leave the roadside, you come to another stone wall. Here, look for a yellow birch growing in close companionship with a tree whose bark is best described as “burnt potato chips.”**

*This new tree is black cherry (*Prunus serotina*). It is common in old fields and abandoned agricultural areas. On account of the stonework, it is right at home among the remains of previous land use.*

**7. While staying on the trail, look to your left and right at the stone wall that stretches into the woods. Can you spot any of the tree species you’ve identified thus far? As you look around, take a moment to imagine what life was like on the farm.**

*This site was part of the farm operation. It was probably a paddock of sorts, for cows, and there may have been a barn here as well. Look for piles of small stones on the edges of these walls. These stones were cleared from the paddock, or perhaps from an area of row crops nearby.*

**8. Continue forward on the red trail and notice how the trail bends to the right. Follow the bend and you will notice another large “burnt potato chip tree”. Do you remember the species? That’s right, it’s another black cherry! Keep going until you see a magnificent red oak tree that has a natural “crown” of six trunks. You can’t miss it! Finally, search for a small beech tree to the left of the grand oak. Attached to this is where you will find the letterbox."**

## **GREAT WORK!**

We hope you enjoyed your letterboxing adventure! Please do not remove the letterbox from its location so it can be found by others. From here, head back to the trail and continue on your adventure!

**Thank you!**

*Your Friends at Saratoga PLAN*

The mission of Saratoga PLAN is to preserve the rural character, natural habitats and scenic beauty of Saratoga County so that these irreplaceable assets are accessible to all and survive for future generations. To learn more, please visit us at [www.saratogaplan.org](http://www.saratogaplan.org).



Thank you for generously  
funding the Passport Program!

**Please return these clues to the kiosk. Thank you!**