

WILDERNESS ROAD

Lincoln, Massachusetts
2013

by Peter Cunningham



These are the woods where Henry David Thoreau first wanted to build a cabin. Ephraim Flint, owner of the land around Flints Pond in the mid 19th century and my classmate Ephraim's ancestor, turned down his request. Thoreau had a reputation for being a firebug. He subsequently built his cabin a mile away on Walden Pond and drew his revenge ranting on for two pages about the "bourgeois skinflint farmers" who controlled the local land. I believe that phrase pre-existed the incident, but what a fortunate a coincidence of language for a creative writer!

For twenty years they've been talking about building a road through this suburban wilderness in the town of Lincoln, 20 miles West of Boston. It's not a simple case. Safety, not greed is the motivation. The East-West highway, Rt 2, runs just to the North of the house my father built by hand in 1948; he and others built driveways that flow into the big road. That was ok in 1948, but now the cars are faster and the trucks are bigger, and it's no longer a safe situation. The democratic process takes time, com-

mittees and town meetings, state rulings and national standards, but finally, last summer, final decisions were made and the old rumors turned to orange ribbons hanging from trees, stakes driven in the leaves, and spray paint to mark the ledges. I could only guess what the markers meant, but they certainly did go right across the ancient stone walls, the heritage of the colonial farmers who had cleared the land by hand and oxen, the stone walls I had come to think of as "American Ruins". Is nothing sacred? Then, in snow, the machines, big astonishing machines swinging their hungry heads like giant dinosaurs, arrived in Thoreau's woods, the woods I had been born into. The woods where I had learned to herringbone and gotten lyme disease, where I walked with so many now dead ancestors, where I was first taken to the ground by a high school girl who knew desire before I did, these woods were about to change. It was to be neither for better nor for worse, it was just change.

Peter Cunningham

















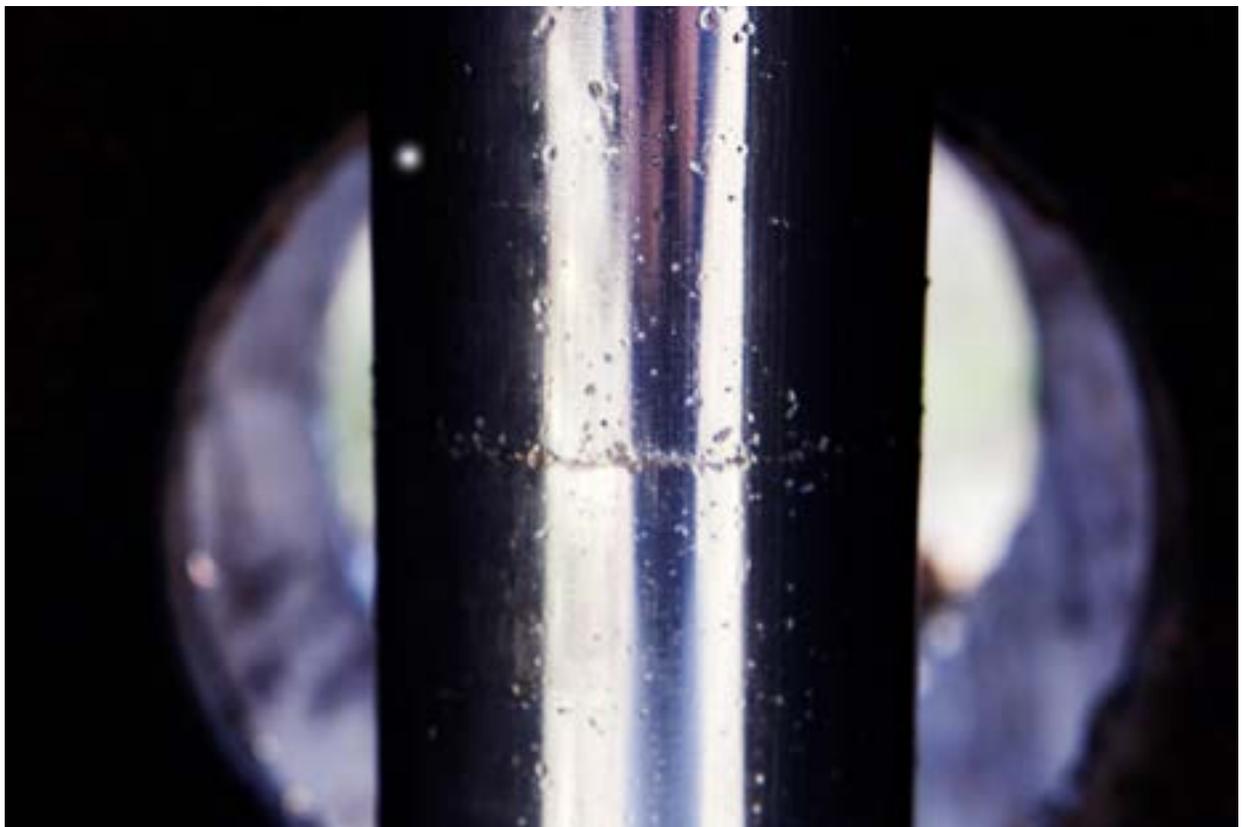
















































































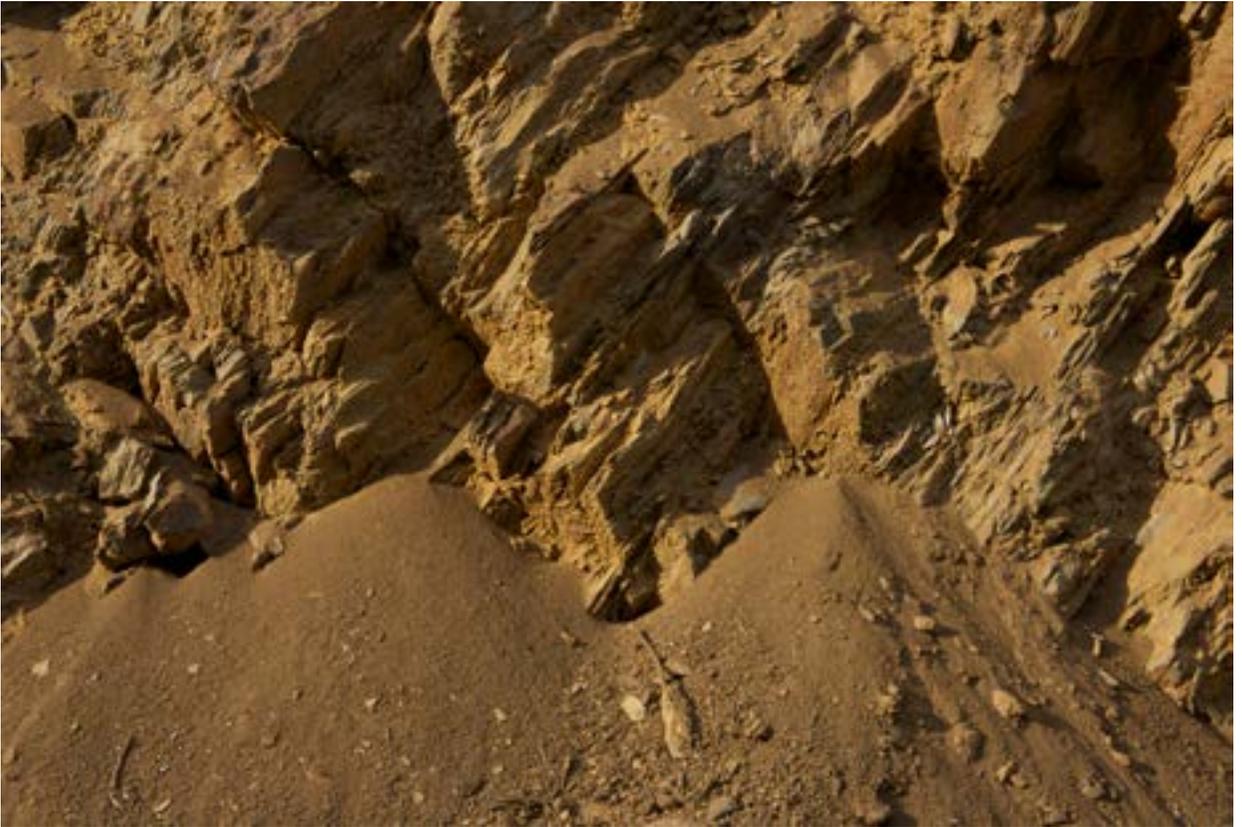






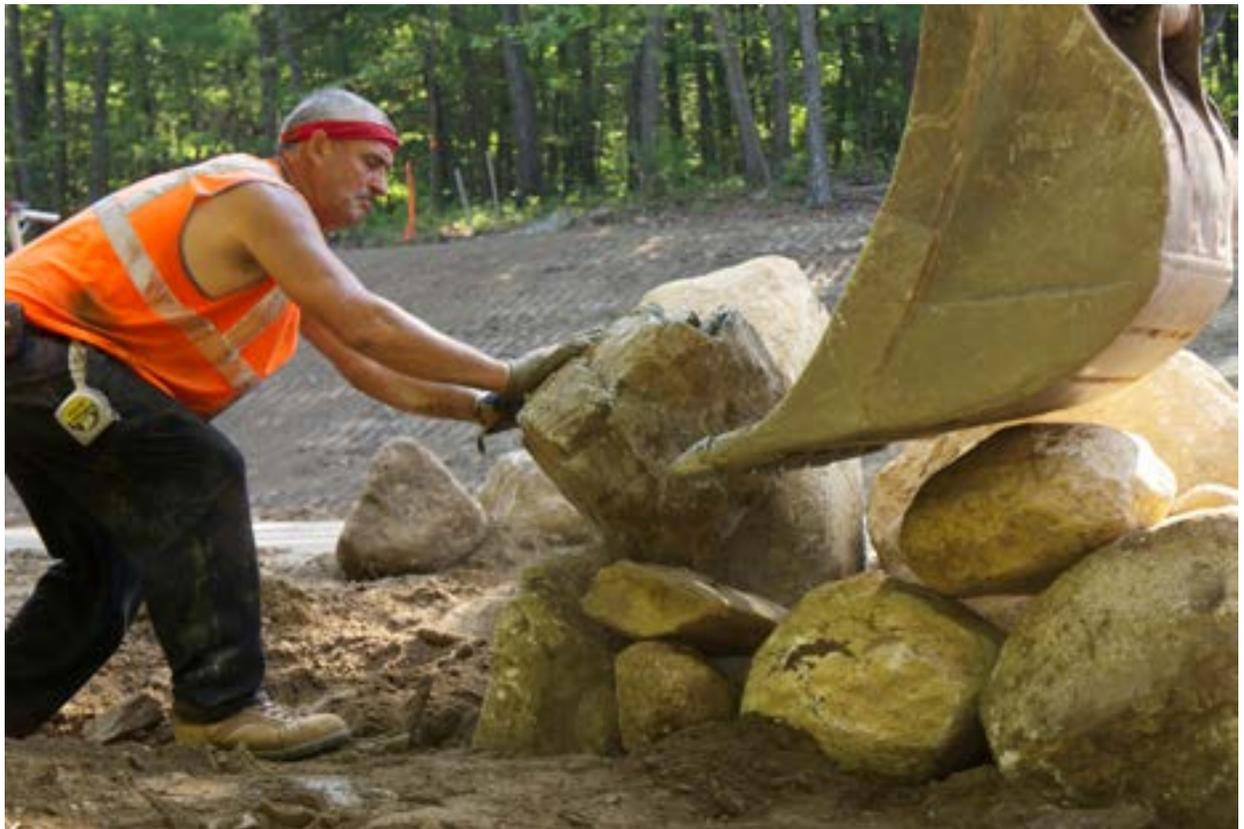






















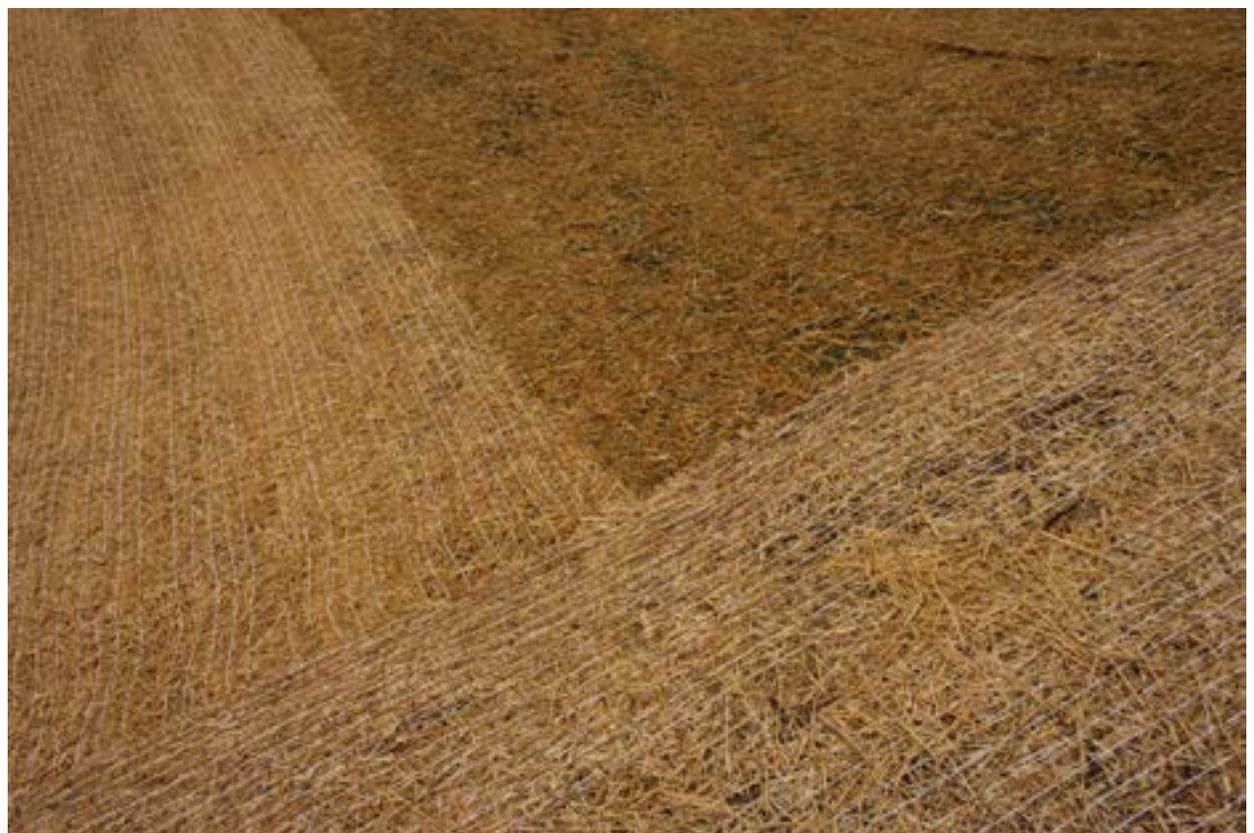
















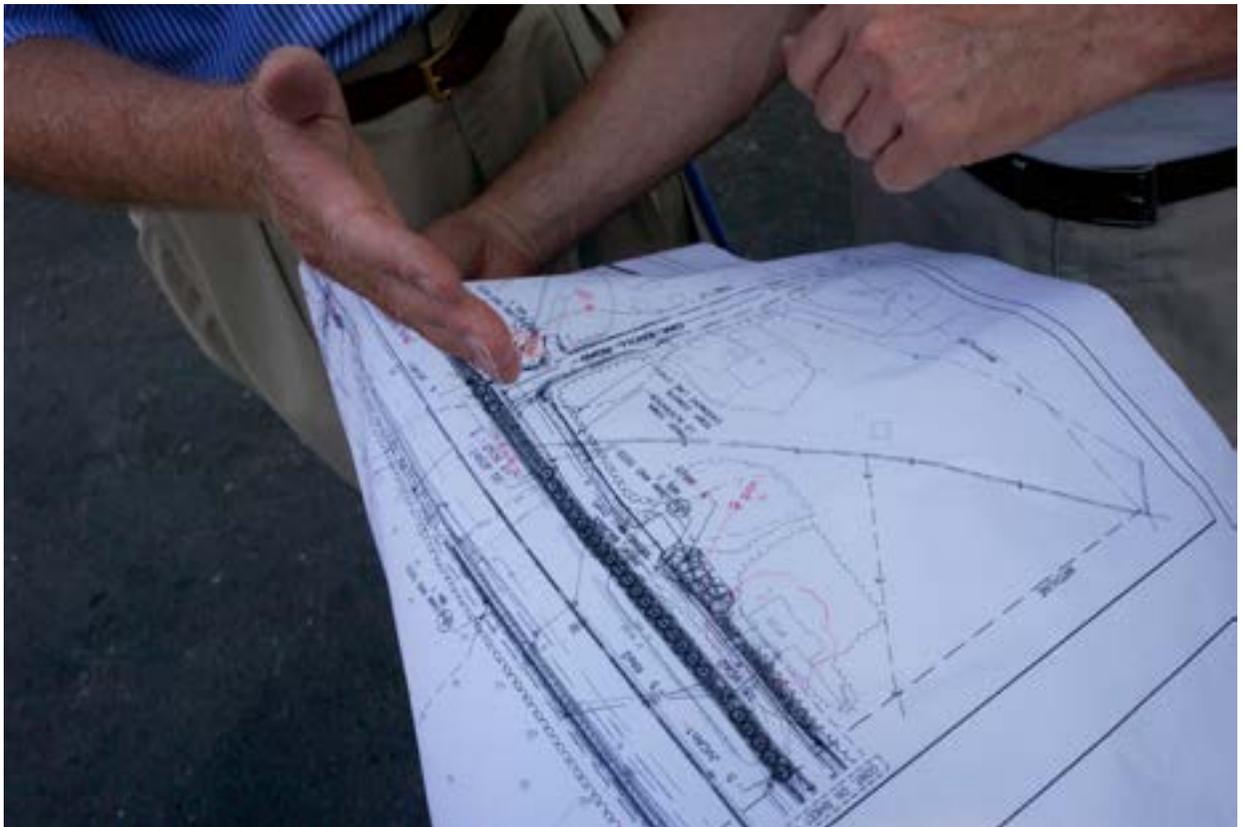














Not The End
8/20/13