

Winslow State Park

Winslow State Park is located on the northwest slope of Mt. Kearsarge in Wilmot, New Hampshire. The picnic area is on a 1,820-foot plateau with outstanding views of the White Mountains to the north and the taller of the southern and central Vermont peaks. Mt. Sunapee, Ragged Mt. and Pleasant Lake dominate the closer landscape. A one mile trail leads from the picnic area to the summit of Mt. Kearsarge.

Winslow State Park is named for a nineteenth century hotel, the Winslow House. The hotel was located in what is now the park's picnic area. A cellar hole is all that remains of the hotel that was named in honor of Admiral John Winslow who was commander of USS Kearsarge during the Civil War. The Kearsarge was built in Portsmouth and constructed of lumber milled from trees cut on Mt. Kearsarge. The USS Kearsarge sank the confederate ship Alabama in a decisive battle off the French coast. The victory helped to keep European countries from entering the war on the side of the confederates. Admiral Winslow became a national hero and the USS Kearsarge was known throughout the country. The hotel burned once and was rebuilt; by the end of the century it proved unprofitable, was abandoned and burned to the ground.

In 1933 William B. Douglas gave twenty acres, including the cellar hole, to the state as a memorial to the actress Katherine Raynor. The property abutted lands already in state ownership. The site became a state park in 1935.

Rollins State Park

Rollins State Park is located in the town of Warner on the south slope of Mt. Kearsarge. A 3 1/2 mile long scenic auto road rises from the park entrance through woodlands to the parking and picnic areas. The picnic area, located in a natural wooded glen beneath granite ledges, is historically referred to as the "Garden". It offers views that stretch from Mt. Monadnock to the hills of New Hampshire's coastal plain. The summits of Pack Monadnock, Crotched, and Uncanoonuc mountains, the hills of central Massachusetts and the Boston skyline are visible on the horizon, while the Mink Hills and Merrimack River valley can be seen nearby. A one-half mile trail to the summit of Mt. Kearsarge leaves from the picnic area.

In 1866, the New Hampshire legislature granted local businessmen a charter to build a toll road from Warner Village to the summit of Mt. Kearsarge. The Warner & Kearsarge Road Company was created and construction of the road began in 1873 with the support of the townspeople. The road traversed Mission Ridge to the Garden and continued to within "eight rods" of the summit. The road was poorly maintained and by the early 1900s was impassible. The Tory Hill Women's Club raised funds to repair the road in the 1920s. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) established a camp in Warner in 1935 to finish rebuilding the road to the Garden and from there, the trail to the summit.

The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) purchased land on the mountain including the Garden in 1918. The 521-acre reservation was called Rollins Memorial Park in honor of Governor Frank W. Rollins, a founder of SPNHF. A small log shelter built near the Garden helped make the area popular with hikers. The property was transferred to the state for the establishment of a state park in 1950.

