

Carpenter and Sawmill Owner

When he was 17, Calvin Swan began a four year ‘apprenticeship’ to Calvin Stearns and helped build some of the fine 19th century homes on Main Street in Northfield. With this experience he was able to establish his own sawmill and carpentry business. Over time, he purchased 186 acres in the area (as well as real estate in Greenfield), starting with these 2 acres around his homestead.

Among his most impressive building projects was the Unitarian and Episcopal Meeting House on the Montague village green, an elegant Greek Revival church with pointed Gothic windows (now the Grange Hall).



Photo: www.montaguecommonhall.org/

Stones in the Woods

Along with colonial stone constructions, Brush Mountain contains stone groupings, and evidence of quarrying of surface boulders. The majority of the previous Methodist community is on private property, but one additional cellar hole can be seen from the town trail on the right, just after the power lines. This cellar hole, the structures associated with the Swan Family, and all stone structures in the town of Northfield are protected as cultural resources and should not be disturbed.



This brochure was produced by the Northfield Open Space Committee with help from the Northfield Historical Commission. It summarizes Elizabeth A. Congdon's research on Calvin Swan.

You can find more information about Calvin Swan in the Dickinson Memorial Library.

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Calvin Swan

1799—1875

A free black man

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This area was once the home of Calvin Swan and his family. Calvin Swan's choice of homestead location was no accident. A founding member of the Methodist Church in Northfield, which openly opposed slavery, he lived in a community of like-minded individuals on the outskirts of town.



As you walk south on the New England National Scenic Trail from the parking lot, you will shortly arrive at the Swan homestead site. On the right is a well-preserved cellar hole which may mark a barn or a house, and across the road is a bubbly spring which may have been the family's water source.

If you continue on you will see an L-shaped stone foundation on the right (photo on back). This may have been the main house, indicated by remnants of bricks and a central chimney mound.

The Anti-Slavery Movement

Several decades before the Civil War broke out, the abolition movement in the north began to grow. Swan helped to found the Mountain Chapter of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and was a charter member of the Anti-Slavery Society in Greenfield MA in 1836.

Swan and his wife Rhoda had six children, but only two survived to adulthood. His children attended School #6 just down the road at the intersection of Gulf Road and Orange Road. Swan served on the school board and took minutes. Calvin Swan is buried in Center Cemetery in Northfield; his grave is marked with a nine-foot monument.



Photo James Bianco
<https://www.findagrave.com/>

Swan was a well-respected man in the community here at a time when African Americans were not well-integrated into society.

Map of Brush Mountain Conservation Area and Calvin Swan Homestead Site

