



## Coburn Trail

Strafford, VT

[Trail Map](#)

**Uses:** *hiking, historic site-seeing*

Considered among Vermont's best-preserved historic villages, Strafford Village was one of the first sites in the state to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The 160-acre Coburn Farm, in the center of the village, includes 25 conserved acres of scenic meadow bordered by woods, forming an integral part of the Historic District. The ¼ mile-long Coburn Trail leads up a steep hillside to the top of the meadow, to a picnic table with a beautiful view overlooking the village and the Ompompanoosuc River Valley in which it lies. A hike here is perhaps best combined with a visit to the adjacent historic Justin Morrill Homestead, and a picnic up on the hillside.



**Photo #1**, *View from the upper meadow, Coburn Farm*

### Directions:

From Route 132 in South Strafford at the Barrett Memorial Hall, take the Justin Morrill Highway north 2.1 miles to the Justin Morrill Homestead on the right (east side of the road) in Strafford Village. Enter the Homestead driveway and park to your left. Walk upslope about 50 yards and cross a stone bridge over a small brook to your left. The trail starts at a gap in a fence ahead of you, where a trail map is mounted on a fence post.

### Exploring Coburn Trail:

Elwin Coburn purchased the Coburn Farm property in 1949 and he and his wife raised five children there. In 1999 Elwin died, leaving the farm to his five children in equal shares. Reluctant to see the property sold and possibly developed, Melvin Coburn and his wife, Sue, purchased the property from his siblings for preservation. In an outpouring of community support, Strafford residents raised thousands of dollars in support of the project, supplementing a generous grant UVLT obtained from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Mel and Sue Coburn sold the development restrictions to UVLT at below market value, in what is known as a bargain sale, ensuring that this historic site with its beautiful views would forever remain an integral part of the charm of Strafford Village.

Once the land was securely protected, a group of students from the Thompson Island Outward Bound program cut the Coburn Trail and installed split rail fence around the picnic area. A local student group from Sharon Academy later built stone steps in a steep section of the trail.



**Photo #2:** *Sharon Academy students work on the Coburn Trail*

The Coburn Farm abuts the 178-acre Justin Smith Morrill Homestead. The trail begins on the Homestead property and runs close to its northern boundary. The Morrill Homestead is the 19<sup>th</sup> century home of U.S. Senator Justin Morrill, who served in the United States Congress and Senate for a combined total of

forty-three years. Morrill strongly influenced the growth of the nation's agriculture and educational opportunities, and was perhaps best known for the Morrill Land-Grant College Act of 1862, the origin to the land-grant college system. The Gothic Revival home, garden, and agricultural outbuildings are owned and cared for by the Vermont Historic Preservation Division. Interesting interpretive historical information is found around the Homestead property.



**Photo #3:** Historic "bank style" barn

When you pass from the Homestead property to the Coburn property, you will hike up a short but steep trail through woods at the edge of a meadow, ending at an open, west-facing viewpoint. Below you will see the Coburn Farm buildings, including a three-story bank-style barn, and a cape-style home built in the mid 1800's. In the 1920's the barn housed the operations of the Strafford Bobbin Mills. A photo montage mounted on a fence post at the top of the trail depicts the barn and several of the village's other

historic buildings. To the far right you can glimpse the tower on the Strafford Town House - built in 1799; it is the pride of Strafford.



**Photo #4:** Town House

The Coburn Farm property was owned and farmed during the early nineteenth century by the Honorable Jedediah H. Harris, mentor and business partner of Justin Morrill. Harris was a prominent local figure and former judge who built the 1883 Town Clerk's Office (once the Harris Library) and the 1834 Brick Store, both across the street from the Coburn Farm. During the latter part of the 1800's the Coburn property was owned by Justin Morrill's son. The house became the residence for the caretaker of both that property and the Justin Morrill Homestead.

**Photo #5:** From stone corner post looking down on the Town Clerk's Office and Brick Store

**Links:**

Justin Morrill Homestead:  
<http://www.morrillhomestead.org/>

**Trail Use Guidelines:**

- Carry out what you carry in.
- Stay on the trail and use only designated trailhead parking areas.
- Stay off trails during spring melt, when soils are soft and easily eroded.
- Be respectful of other trail users and be courteous to trail neighbors.
- Control your dog(s). Do not allow dogs to disturb livestock, wildlife, or sensitive natural areas. Pets are not allowed on some trails.
- Close farm gates behind you.
- For your safety during hunting seasons, wear blaze orange.
- Follow [Leave No Trace guidelines](#).



**Trail Maintenance:** The Upper Valley Land Trust maintains trail with the assistance of volunteers. Trail workdays have previously been organized in collaboration with: [Sharon Academy](#) Community Service volunteers, [Justin Morrill Smith Homestead](#) staff, and [Thompson Island Outward Bound](#).

**While these trails are available for community use free of charge, their maintenance depends on the good stewardship and financial support of users.** Donations for the trail program may be sent to: Trails, Upper Valley Land Trust, 19 Buck Road, Hanover, NH 03755 or [donate online](#).

Please contact UVLT Vice President Stewardship [Pete Helm](#) (603-643-6626) to report trail maintenance needs or recommendations.