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Charles Martin Publishes New Hampshire Rail Trails

Charles Martin, Treasurer of the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail, has just published New Hampshire Rail Trails with Branch Line Press. The following is an interview with him by Myra Mayman, Secretary of the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail.

Myra Mayman: Congratulations on publication of *New Hampshire Rail Trails*! I know you've been working on it for over a year.

Charles Martin: It's been a two-year effort, almost exactly. I started in spring of 2006.

MM: How many rail trails are listed in your guide?

CM: There are 37 full rail trail descriptions plus five descriptions of proposed rail trails. That takes up over 300 pages.

MM: Have you ridden all the trails?

CM: Yes, I have. A couple I didn't give full write-ups because it was impossible to get onto them. But I've been on anything that's usable as a rail trail.

MM: How long did that take?

CM: Riding the trails was the fun part. What took the most time was the writing and doing the maps. There are 95 maps in the book, and each one took between four and 12 hours.

MM: Do you have a favorite New Hampshire rail trail?

CM: I have two that I rated five stars for both scenery and trail surface: the Northern Rail Trail in Andover, and the Windham Rail Trail. All the trails with five-star scenery are my favorites. For scenery, a five-star trail has beautiful things to look at, artifacts from the railroad, is away from the road, and just a real pleasant feel.

On the other end, an example of a one-star rail trail, there's a part of the Piscataquog trail in Manchester that is a bog and a trash heap. Fortunately, the City of Manchester is working to make that a nice trail.

MM: What information do you give in the book for each rail trail?

CM: There's header information about where it starts, where it ends, the mileage, scenery and trail surface, permitted uses, who owns the rail trail, and who maintains it.

In addition, there's a lot of historical information. I found it very useful when riding the rail trail to have some idea of why the railroad was there, whom did it serve, was it a success or not. Did it fizzle or just run out of money, like the rail trail that went from Mason to Greenville, that tried to go to Peterborough but ran out of money. There are 30 railroads described.

I took over 3,000 pictures; there are about 181 in the book, including some historical photos from other sources.



Charles Martin has biked every useable rail trail in New Hampshire.

Photo: Amy M. Webster

Our friends at the Andover Historical Society, for example, gave me a couple of historical shots.

MM: How will you keep *New Hampshire Rail Trails* up to date as rail trails develop and change?

CM: I've set up a Web site at NHRailTrails.org, and this is where I'll post changes from what's in the book. I expect people will let me know about changes they find. And the book will go through subsequent editions when it's appropriate.

MM: Where can people purchase the book? At what price?

CM: The cover price is \$19.95 (which astounds me, given all the work that's been done). It will be available at bookstores and sports shops and at NHRailTrails.org.

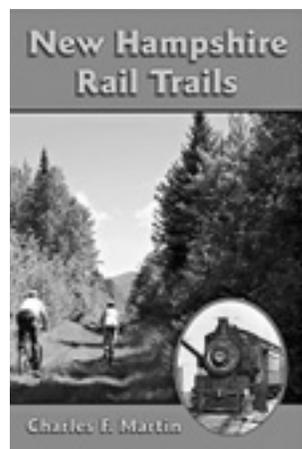
MM: What is your overview after two years of work?

CM: I'm just thrilled at the amount of wonderful work that's going on by rail

trail groups throughout the state. You and I have had personal involvement with the Northern, but there are other groups in Lebanon, around Manchester, on the Hampton branch as part of the East Coast Greenway. The amount of exciting work going on is fantastic, and I've tried to capture the spirit of that activity in the book.

I think New Hampshire is incredibly lucky to have such a wonderful network of rail trails. It's one of the least known attractions in the state. That's one of the reasons I thought the book was needed.

Myra adds: There will be a reception and book signing party at the Highland Lake Inn, 32 Maple Street, on Wednesday, May 7, from 5:30 to 7:30 PM. Come imbibe, nibble, and get your own copy of Charles Martin's New Hampshire Rail Trails signed by the author.



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