

The Cornwall Dragon

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I and my family are new [Cornwall](#) so perhaps you will not believe me. I know small town America, and I know trust is a thing earned through shared experience and time worn struggle. Or perhaps, when you find out I myself hail from the land of Mark Twain and tall tales you will think this a lark. But I am not that subtle an operator. So believe me when I tell you, as far as I am concerned, the Cornwall dragon is real.

I grant that this is an improbable tale, but one you must think through for yourself, a truth I recommend you consider as possible, even in this day of all knowing, all seeing machines. I suggest you do not believe anyone but your own heart and be true to it. Go out, search and perhaps you too will find the dragon. Though the naysayers of course will come for us, "Windmills Don Quixote! Tilting at Windmills!" it will not deter me, and I hope it will not stop you either.

Now I will tell you the story of my time here in fair Cornwall and of how I happened upon this great discovery, and you can judge for yourself. And if you follow the trail, I promise you will find yourself believing, even if you never see that lives in the next valley over from us all.

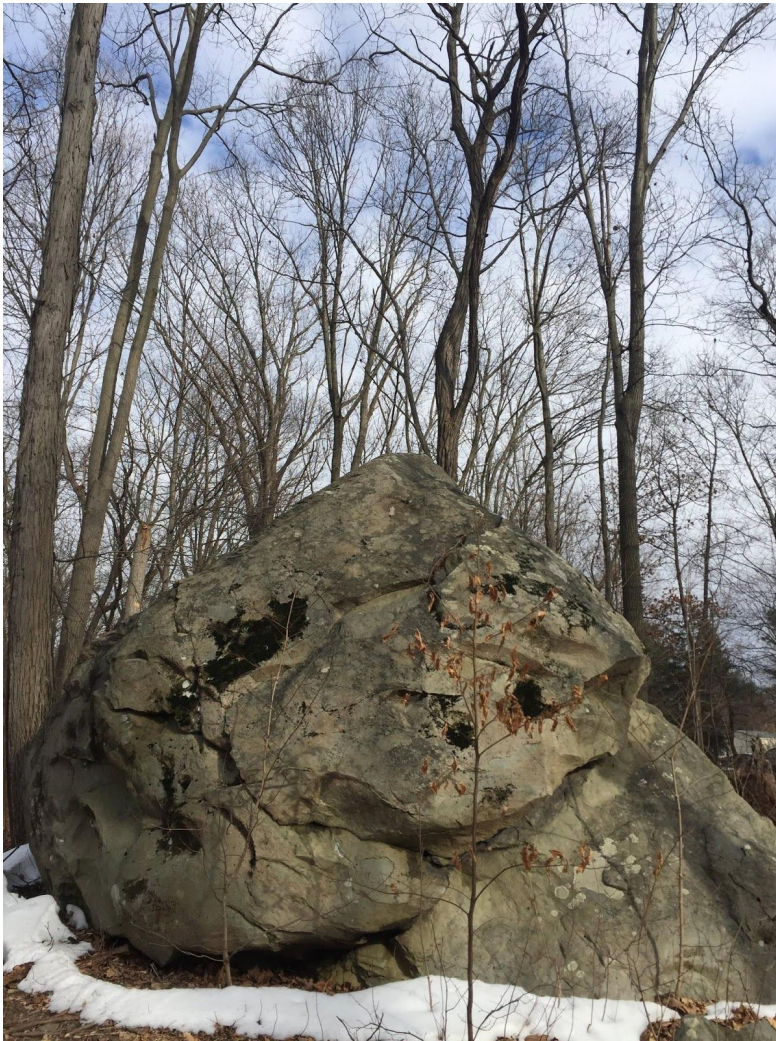


Photo courtesy of [Charlie Stein @ https://lowmileage.com](https://lowmileage.com)

It all started because of gardening. [Permaculture gardening](#) to be specific, because permaculture is all about the soil. The land, the sun, energy, the way water moves across the ground and how that creates the soil. The living breathing humus beneath our feet. My poor wife, she is so sick of hearing the word 'permaculture' that

she is ready to throw me into the compost heap every time I say it. She thinks I will say it is the answer to everything from climate change to a clogged toilet. (It might be actually...) I love her though, and so have stopped using that word around our her, for comity sake if for no other. But in my heart it beats loudly. And so once we were settled into our new home I had (have) resolved to uncover the living soil of Cornwall and environs. Our little plot near the scout cabin was good enough to grow food on, but I knew that it had been well worked by many a cultivator and I wanted to taste the real, untouched soils if for no other reason than my own edification. So, long hikes into the nearby hills and mountains armed with a hand spade and a sketchbook, digging up samples were always part of the plan for me. One thing I have learned about Cornwall, the beauty of this place is boundless once you open your eyes to it. I'm sure you agree.

My favorite walk is still the easiest one for me, right here in town, and it was



where I found the first clue and really the key to my encounter I believe. Along Idlewilde creek, just north of the Cornwall Middle School parking lot, I was walking at dawn with my dog Pirate. I noticed something that didn't seem to make much sense at the time. Along the creek there are certain large rock formations and when the first low rays of dawn hit hit them they put off a distinct, green glow. I took chippings from these and saved the in my sample bag. I meant to send them to a lab at Cornell and have them tested, but I became distracted and forgot. This happens a lot to me. It turns out there is an extremely high concentration of copper in the edges of these rocks that accounts for the aura, but more on this later.

So in my search for pure soils I first went to the old maps. They are harder to find than you might think. Plot lines were not always as fixed as they are today. As I'm sure many of you have noted [there are stone walls](#) crisscrossing the oddest spots in the northeast. These walls were erected by the early settlers and were the byproduct of clearing fields to be ploughed. Deep in the woods, far from any present home, there will be a well constructed, moss and lichen covered partition. Often, you can find these on Google Earth though and they are a sure sign of cultivation. So if there were walls, then it was no place for me. It's hard to comprehend how much of this land was once cleared for farming. This ruled out large portions of our area, but several spots areas still looked promising. The hills just south of Cornwall being the closest.

Also, being of a certain age, I still enjoy books, especially those un-digitized volumes that reside in [our local depository](#) containing stories and happenings mostly specific to our region. Ranging over the selection it became clear that the swale just south of Storm King was exactly what I was looking for. An area that's been mostly devoid of human hands and where the soil will be in a nearly pristine state, and at a distance I can walk to and return in a single day. A veritable gold mine I thought.

Quickly this became my weekend routine. Late last fall and into winter, up early, down through the village and along Storm King Highway. I gathered samples from all over the mountain working from the road up the hillsides. The leaves clung to the trees late this year, even as the temperatures fell, but they had finally dropped and the sun was warming my back as I climbed. It was the last Sunday in November and working along a line I was taking samples at intervals of about 50 paces moving along the contour from south to north. At each mark I would dig down about six inches to where the soil is still warm and full of microbes. The coffee like flavor of good, rich soil is hard to describe. It's a pity that so few have tried it. When you find it though, it is like nothing else. Perhaps not surprising since it is after all where all life begins and ends.

It was just before noon and when a chill struck me. It was so palpable a fear I can only relate it to something raw and childlike, like being locked in the attic by older siblings. Unable to escape, a deep terror of the unknown overtaking you. I knew, I don't know how, but knew, I was not alone. Looking up from my hole, my tongue still brown and gritty, there he was, suddenly. Massive and serpentine, his body long and



dark, a deep green with the sheen and smoothness of a salamander. Wrapping, encircling, and hanging off trees, I could make out only his two massive forelegs touching the ground. His head and face were sleek and covered in a pattern, symbols almost, similar to the hood of a cobra with eyes of gold, red and black. I can still feel how the air around was suddenly warm and wet. And then, as I sat there on my knees, sure I was done for and that my obituary would likely be in the National Enquirer, he spoke.

"Is it good?" he said?

I stuttered out, "The, the soil?", blowing chunks off as I fell backwards down the slope. He encroached slowly.

"Yes, the soil. Is it good?" I could feel the heat of his breath.

"It's incredible. The best I've ever tasted" I said, this seemed to please him, from what I could read of his features.

"Take good care of it. It is all you really have you know." Dumbfounded, I had no response at this point, all I could think was, "How does he speak English?" But I suppose if you are an ancient and wise beast you pick these things up along the way.

"You have something of mine. I can smell it." he said.

"I do?"

"Yes there, in your side pocket of your satchel."

I opened my bag and pulled out the sliver of stone from besides Idlewilde creek.

"This?" I said, "It turns green in the early morning light."

"Why yes, that is a piece of my egg shell. Bury it if you like, and it will warm your garden all year long."

"Thank you." Was all I could think to say.

And then, without another word, he was off. His legs directing his body up the hill to the south and weaving between trees, his body warping and bending the trunks turning them into a wave of leavers he used to propel his massive body without even the slightest discernible effort. And when I could no longer see him, I of course, did what any sane person would do. I ran.

I ran and climbed and ran and didn't stop till I was most of the way up the south slope of Storm King it self. I should say that I have never made it to the so called "Money spot" till that day. If you remember, that November day, where there was no wind, not even a breeze. But as I looked back across the valley I could see trees swaying like a wave. And down there, somewhere just south of Storm King, lives the Cornwall Dragon.



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