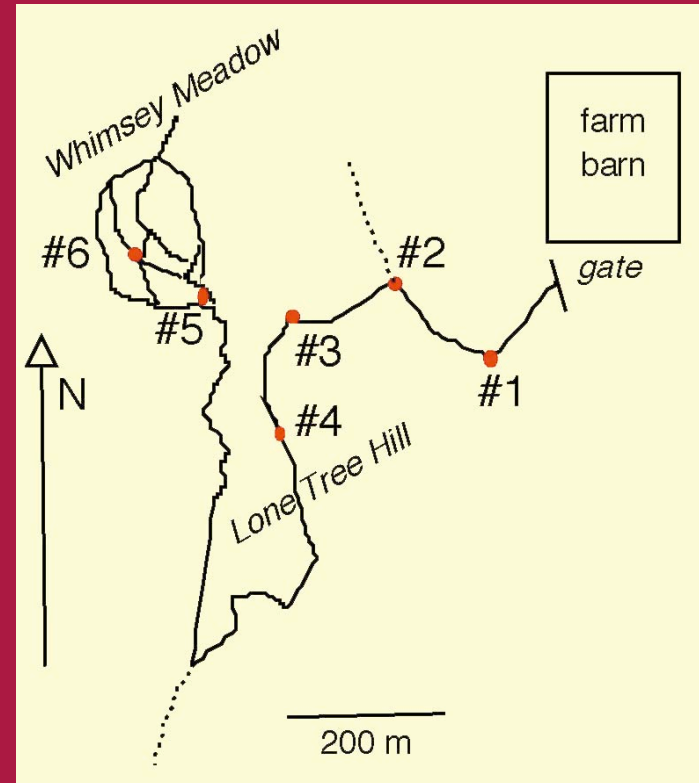
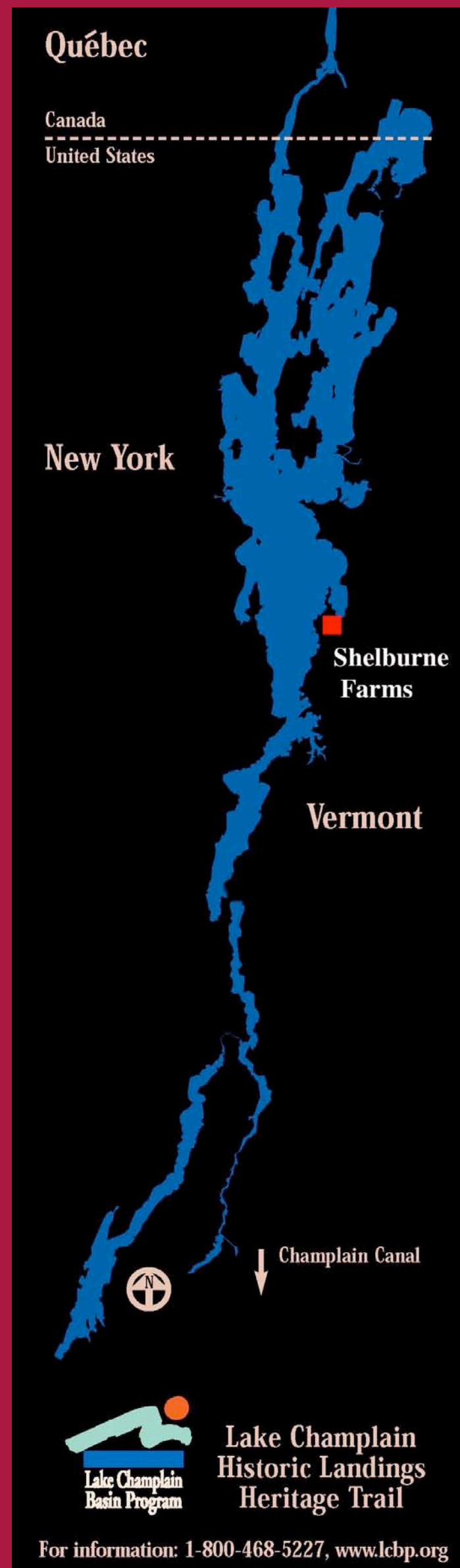


6. From Forest to Field and Back Again



Can you find the newest and oldest edges of the meadow? Whimsey Meadow is an excellent example of succession. In the 1980s Shelburne Farms stopped grazing Whimsey Meadow, starting the transition from field to forest. You too can figure out succession. The layers in the landscape in front of you represent three major phases of succession.



Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*) is a woody tree that grows during the second stage of succession. Contrary to common beliefs, all sumac is not poisonous. Poison Sumac can be distinguished from Staghorn Sumac because it has smooth, not fuzzy leaves.

Once an open pasture is no longer grazed, succession begins, transforming the field back to a forest. This process of growth and change occurs in several steps, creating three distinct layers of plants. First, grasses, goldenrod and milkweed take root. Over time, woody shrubs and bushes, such as honeysuckle and sumac, replace the grasses. Lastly, pines, birches, beeches and sugar maples overtake the shrubs completing the transition from field to forest.



White Pines (*Pinus strobus*) grow during the third part of the succession process. The pines can live for 50-100 years before they are replaced by beech, birch and sugar maple trees.



Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) grows in the first phase of succession. Milkweed is toxic, and is the primary food source of Monarch butterflies. By feeding on the milkweed they become toxic and are protected from predators.