

Stop #9

Vista #2. This vista, still mostly in Chester, is traversed by the Middle Branch of the Westfield River, although it is not visible below Goss Hill on the left and Little Moose Hill on the right. During the 1890s this view would have been considerably different as the land was cleared into a field system and kept closely cropped by sheep which were grazed on the surrounding hills. Sheep were raised in the hilltowns to provide wool for the local textile mills.

Stop #10

Vista #3. This vista includes the town of Huntington, which lies in the valley at the foot of North Rockhouse Mountain and South Rockhouse Mountain, the latter in the town of Montgomery. The town is set on both sides of the West Branch of the Westfield River. During the first three-quarters of the 18th century, hilltown farmers took in cattle from the towns along the Connecticut River during the summer months to fatten them. Once the railroad came through in the 1840s, however, mills developed along the rivers, and the region's population turned in large part to paper making and textiles.

Along both sides of the trail after Vista #3 is a rich variety of wildflowers. Star flowers, Indian cucumber root, painted trillium, trout lilies, solomon seal, Canadian mayflowers, and sarsparilla flowers are all to be found.



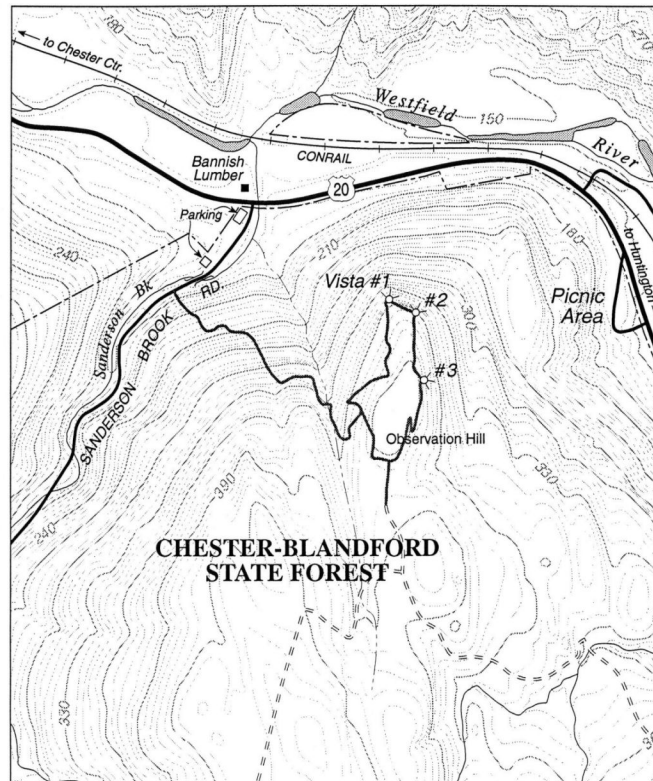
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|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Spring Beauty | 2. Trout Lily | 3. Coltsfoot | 4. Blue Violet |
| 5. Painted Trillium | 6. Bluets | 7. Bunchberry | 8. Canada Mayflower |
| 9. Wood Sorrel | 10. Hawkweed | 11. Deptford Pink | 12. Spotted Knapweed |

Stop #11

The strangely shaped fungus around the lower section of this snag is horse hoof fungus. It is the fruiting body of a fungus which gives off spores to light in the cracks of dead trees, and grow into filaments. The filaments

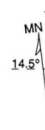
carry minerals from the tree wood to the developing fruiting body. This process eventually breaks the wood down leaving only cellulose to be decomposed by bacteria. Further up on the tree, a second and smaller form is known as Turkey Tail fungus.

This is the last stop on the nature trail, but after you complete the loop and return to the foot of the trail, take a left turn up Sanderson Brook Road to the falls which are one of the most striking features of the foothills.



H. Newman Marsh Memorial Trail

500 0 1000 Feet
Contour Interval 6 Meters
(19.685 feet)



This brochure was published by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission through a grant from the Federal Highway Administration and the Massachusetts Highway Department.

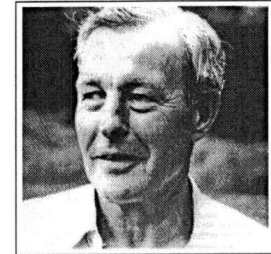
Interpretive Naturalist Consultant and Illustrator Kimberly Jensen.
Redesigned by Steve Hamlin, 2006



The H. Newman Marsh Trail At Chester-Blandford State Forest



H. Newman Marsh



Memorial Trail on Observation Hill

This brochure was published by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission through a grant from the Federal Highway Administration and the Massachusetts Highway Department.

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Welcome to the H. Newman Marsh Memorial Trail, named to honor Newman Marsh (1924-1996), an outdoorsman and patron of the hilltowns who played a prominent role in the development of the Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway.

The H. Newman Marsh Memorial Trail is approximately one and a half miles in length. It begins at the road to Sanderson Brook Falls and makes a steep climb for the first half of its ascent of Observation Hill. It crosses a rocky brook, and levels out to make a broad loop at the top of Observation Hill. The loop of the trail may also be entered from Blandford as the accompanying map shows. Three vistas have been cleared along this loop for views into the Westfield River valley. Hikers may then retrace their steps to the starting point. The trail is marked with direction signs and numbered signs for features of interest which are described in this trail guide. This is a difficult trail from the Chester entrance, and is not appropriate for small children or those for whom climbing is difficult. During rainy or freezing conditions, the trail may become very slippery and hikers are advised to wear proper gear. From the Blandford entrance it is moderately difficult, but the same cautions apply.

The CCCs and the Chester-Blandford State Forest

Between 1933 and 1940 the Chester-Blandford State Forest took shape thanks to the hard work of approximately one hundred and fifty young men who were part of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). With the Depression in full force, the CCC offered these young men work, regular pay, a place to live and the camaraderie of shared experiences. They came mostly from the Boston area, but also from local towns along Jacob's Ladder Trail, and their first job was to build a tarpaper camp in the area now occupied by the Bannish Lumber Company on the north side of Route 20.

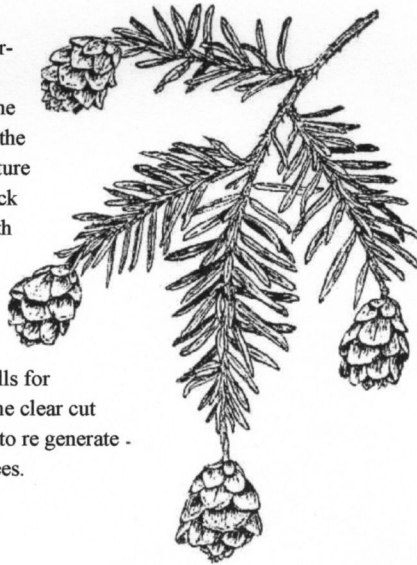
Features of the Foothills

Stop #1

Yellow birch and hemlock trees are particularly suited to the foothills as they adapt well to growing on ledges. Here they share a firm foothold on an outcropping of schist. The golden bark tree on this bit of ledge is a yellow birch, a northern tree that grows to be larger than most other hardwood species. The yellow birch thrives in cool, damp conditions, and its age is signaled by the increasingly shaggy appearance of its bark.

Stop #2

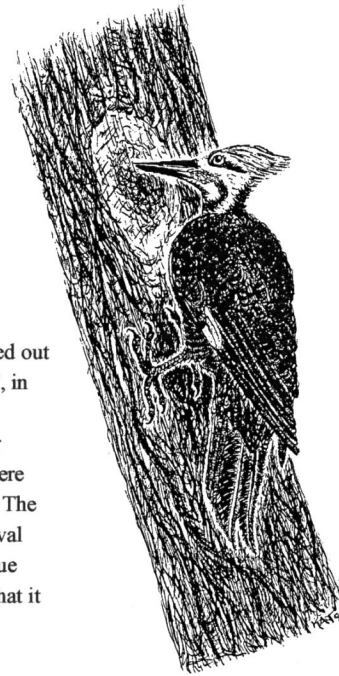
This, the north slope of Observation Hill, was logged over during the early 1930s, and the clear cut land all grew back at the same time to produce the mature hemlocks seen here. Hemlock was heavily logged in the 19th century for its tannin which was used in the tanning process, but by the 1930s loggers had learned to leave patches of trees on the foothills for reseeding purposes. Thus, the clear cut slopes received enough light to regenerate seedlings into these strong trees.



Hemlock

Stop #3

Pileated woodpeckers have carved out this dead hemlock tree, or "snag", in search of beetle and carpenter ant grubs. The pileated woodpecker thrives in a mature forest where there are an abundant number of snags. The bird makes characteristic large oval borings, and with a bristled tongue latches on to the grub or larvae that it uncovers.



Pileated Woodpecker

Stop #4

This is a good vantage from which to appreciate a typical northern hardwood forest. White ash, black birch, yellow birch and white birch, beech, sugar maple and basswood are found within a relatively small radius. After a forest is cleared, birch and ash are among the first trees to reappear, followed by sugar maple and then beech. Understory species, such as striped maple and witch hobble are able to grow in the shade made by the canopy of the larger trees.

Stop #5

The proliferation of ferns, lichens and moss growing in this area of the trail indicate it is something of a micro-climate. The combination of cool air in the valley on the north side of the hill, moisture from the nearby stream, and spring run-off on the upper slopes of the hillside make ideal conditions for these plants to grow. There is a variety of ferns here including marginal wood fern, evergreen fern, New York and Christmas Tree ferns.

Stop #6

Bear claw marks have been permanently preserved in the bark of this beech tree. Bears like to climb looking for beech nuts in the fall and they will sit up in the tree creating a "bear's nest" pulling the limbs towards them to strip off the nuts. Many animals rely on beech nuts to fatten them up for winter, but unfortunately eighty percent of region's beech trees are infected with a fungus disease, which is visible on the bark of the two beech trees to the right of the trail. The eventual loss of these beech trees will considerably change the landscape of the foothills.



American Beech

Stop #7

The very white stone here is a large outcropping of quartzite. Quartzite is formed when the friction of shifting tectonic plates heats the plates' rocks and melts their impurities; the hot, liquified impurities pool, then cool and harden to quartzite. It is often mistaken for quartz by gold seekers who know that stone is associated with gold. But quartzite, a metamorphic rock formed from sandstone, is found at a shallower level, its crystals are smaller, and is not associated with gold. Nearby Gold Mine Brook was probably mis-identified in the late 18th century, and despite its optimistic name, not a lick of gold was ever found in it.

Stop #8

Vista #1. We are standing at an elevation of approximately 1,200 feet (approximately 365 meters). The landscape along the eastern portion of Jacob's Ladder Trail clearly shows its geological past. Over 440 million years ago, due to shifting tectonic plates during the continental drift, the Green Mountain range from Vermont to Connecticut was formed, including what are today called "The Berkshires". Over the years, erosion leveled most of these mountains. However, geologists believe that the region rose again a few million years ago, renewing the erosion process. Beginning about a million years ago, a series of glaciers "scraped" the mountains, but some of the bedrock (granite and gneiss) resisted this erosion and became the steeper hills of the valley. In fact, the scenic hills exposed today are actually the walls of the great canyon of the Westfield River.