



Eight Great Open Space Places in Waltham

by
Elisabeth Carter



Photographs by Scott Shurr.

This is the first installment of a two-part article.

If you're looking for a pleasant way to pass an hour enjoying the outdoors, Waltham has much to offer. Many residents take advantage of our woods, river walks and other open space, but some newcomers and visitors might not be aware of the secrets of the City of Choice. For instance, while you probably know that the Charles River runs through town, did you know there's a landscaped walk all along its banks, from Moody Street to Prospect Street, where in summer you can find edible berries? Or that three historic mansions and their grounds of nearly 200 acres are open to the public in Waltham? The Waltham Land Trust would like to encourage every citizen of Waltham, and visitor, to enjoy the open spaces we have today. To help you find them, here is a selection of our favorites. Happy trails!

1 Downtown Waltham



Looking for a quiet spot to hang out with a friend or spend your lunch hour downtown? Visit Veteran's Memorial Park, the pleasant, shady green at Central Square, adjacent to City Hall. It's a great place for strolling all year round. In early spring, the cherry trees are astoundingly pink. During the summer, dozens of trees provide cooling shade for picnicking or chatting on a bench or blanket, and in the fall, the sugar maples burn a glorious New England red. Memorials for the many wars in which Waltham citizens have fought are scattered throughout, and Waltham Concerned Citizens leads a vigil every August 6 here, commemorating the first use of atomic weapons against humanity. Tuesday nights during the summer, enjoy live music and family fun at the Dorothy Slamin Hill Bandstand, organized by the Waltham Arts Council. And on Saturdays from 9-1, just across Moody Street, the Fleet Bank parking lot is transformed into a farm-country oasis, where you can buy fresh produce and other natural treats at the Farmer's Market, June to October. Musical presentations are often featured here as well. Check local listings for upcoming bands.



2 Charles River

Just south of Main Street along Moody Street, you can access the Upper Charles River Reservation, a half-mile paved path from Moody to Prospect Street maintained by the Metropolitan District Commission. Founded in 1893, the MDC protects some 20,000 acres of urban parkland from Lynn to Hingham. Head west along the north side of the river and this wheelchair-accessible path is speckled with benches, flowering trees and exercise stops. Enjoy watching swans, ducks and Canada geese mill about the river's edge. The views are wonderful, especially from the curve by the Nova Biomedical building looking back toward Moody Street. Across Prospect Street, a path continues along city open space (no longer MDC land), inside the Mt. Feake Cemetery.



To the east of Moody, you can head down the steps south of the river, past the tumbling falls of the flood control dam and fish ladder. Here you might catch a glimpse of some of the shyer species of bird—a night heron, a great blue, or wood ducks—that sometimes wander this way. A footbridge farther along will take you back across the river to MDC's Richard E. Landry Riverbend Park by the old Boston Manufacturing Company mill, a National Historic Landmark. This concatenation of buildings from the early to late 1800s once housed the first American power looms built in the US. Here too was the first place in the world to produce cloth with powered machinery from start to finish. Inside you'll find the Charles River Internet Center and the Charles River Museum of Industry. Sit on a bench to read or watch the river pass while the falls drowns out the sounds of downtown.

MDC eventually plans to extend this bike/walking path to connect Waltham with Watertown and Cambridge, although at present you can only get as far as the Museum of Industry to the east. However, you can go to Calvary Street and pick up the bike path at Elm Street by the old Bleachery Dam, which can take you as far as the Newton line

at North Street. Call MDC Reservations and Historic Sites [617/727-5114] for maps and lists of upcoming area events.

On the south side of the river, adjacent to the Cronin's Landing apartments and Ciro's restaurant, is the Cronin's Landing boat launch, if you happen to have your canoe or kayak with you. (Totem Pole Boat Tours was offering one-hour cruises up river to the Marriott in Newton and back, but an episode of vandalism put it out of commission for the rest of this year.)

For both the river walks and city hail plaza, you can find metered parking either near the commuter rail stops or behind the movie theater, still only 25 cents an hour. If you park in the theater lot, a footbridge leads directly from the back of the lot across the river to the mill building area. Of course, you may live close enough to leave your car at home!

3 Forest Grove

This MDC-owned park is located along the Charles River near the Newton line in the Lakes District. Paths along the river take you through the Forest Grove Park by Purgatory Cove. The gravel road at the top of the circle takes you through a wooded area and on to the Auburndale Playground in Newton. Head south through the park and you'll come across a large picnic area along Ware's Cove (Newton). Another gravel path leads on to Lyon's Park and Commonwealth Avenue. For wilder terrain, take the path that heads east into Newton along the north edge of Auburndale Playground, and then follow one of the north trails that loop through the Flowed Meadows Conservation Area. Look for high bush blueberries in summer, a stream, birds and other wildlife. Remember to keep dogs leashed as this is fertile nesting grounds for a number of species. To get here, take Crescent Street to Woerd Avenue. You'll see the Woerd Avenue boat launch on the right, Mt. Feake Cemetery across the river, and Cram's Cove (a.k.a. Packard Cove) on the left. Follow Woerd to the circle at the end, and park. A short way farther south, Purgatory Cove will also be on your left. There are usually anglers along the banks or in boats. In a few minutes, you'll feel much farther away from civilization than you really are. And isn't that an hour well spent?

4 Prospect Hill Park

Over 250 acres of hilly woods stretch along the west side of Waltham, east of Route 128. Roads and unmarked trails offer the rare serenity of walking in a forest without leaving town, all year round. Here and there see old stone walls from Revolutionary times, as well as stone stairways from park development efforts in the 1930s. And there are rumors that a few carefully situated rocks may actually be "standing stones" placed by the ancients for charting the seasons. Who knows!

The two highest points in the park offer views (best when the leaves are gone) from downtown Boston to the Blue Hills, as well as of much of Waltham. In fact, the park holds the highest point between here and the coast. Many varieties of birds and plants can be seen throughout the woods; last spring was a great year for lady's slippers, for instance. Bring a lunch, a mountain bike, or just hiking shoes (in winter, skis or snow shoes), and spend 30 minutes or half a day enjoying the calm, cool forest. In May and June, and again in September and October, Gloria Champion of the Prospect Hill Advocacy Group leads walks here—call her at 781-894-9320 or check the Tribune for dates and hours. Dates and times are also posted on the WLT website at www.walthamlandtrust.org.

For a hand-drawn "picnic permit map" showing paved and unpaved roads as well as the various picnic sites, stop by the Parks and Recreation [781-314-3475] at the Totten Pond Road entrance, a half mile east of Route 128. There are no publicly distributed trail maps at this time, as trails have developed through use rather than by design. A master plan for the park conducted by the city a few years ago includes enhanced handicap access, cleared views and restored pavilions. Soon, we hope!

The main gate off Totten Pond is open for vehicles to enter from about mid-April through mid-October, but otherwise the park is peacefully car-free. You can also enter off Prospect Hill Road, just north of Route 117. From Main Street, take the road directly across from Bickford's Family Restaurant. Then take your first left onto Prospect Hill Road, follow it to the end and turn right. At the end of *that* stretch of road, *still* Prospect Hill, you'll find the gated entrance. You'll need to park along the street as the gate is always locked. If you are new to the park, stay within sight of the paved roads to make sure you don't get lost. The park is on a hill and stretches of the road can be steep. Sunday cyclists and hikers best keep this in mind.

NEXT ISSUE: The Estates: *Paine, Gore and Lyman, and Hardy Pond.*



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