

# Hiking Close to Home

By Gil Woolley

One of a series of occasional articles on less-known, short hikes in eastern Massachusetts. More than a half of our chapter members live within Route 495; these brief pieces are addressed primarily to them. Members living further north, west and south have a variety of well-known state parks close by. People living within 495 often drive a considerable distance to hike, even though there may be interesting, but little-used, trails on their doorsteps.

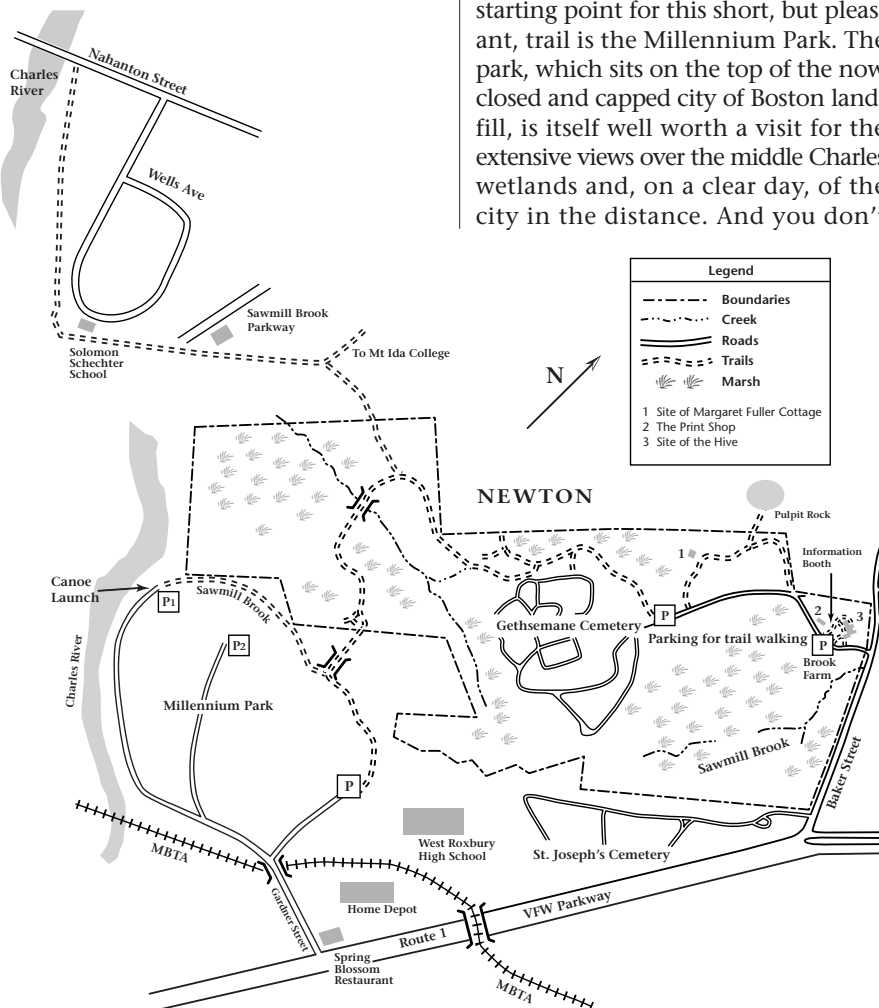
## Blue Heron Trail at Charles River

**Total Distance:** Less than 3 miles to Newton and back; Brook Farm about the same. Unless it's been raining, special shoes not necessary.

**Hiking Time:** 1½ hours

Before the recent government reorganization, the plan was to provide a paved trail along the Charles River all the way from Boston to Medfield. This walk is one of the many segments that have not yet been connected. It is marked by triangular metal plates bearing the stylized image of a blue heron.

The most obvious and convenient starting point for this short, but pleasant, trail is the Millennium Park. The park, which sits on the top of the now closed and capped city of Boston landfill, is itself well worth a visit for the extensive views over the middle Charles wetlands and, on a clear day, of the city in the distance. And you don't



even have to walk: there is a parking lot on the summit of the man-made hill.

Access is from the VFW Highway (Route 1) in West Roxbury along Gardner Street north (on the right for westbound traffic) at a traffic light located about a hundred yards beyond the first entrance to the Home Depot parking lot. The Spring Blossom restaurant is on the corner and there is a large blue sign for the Millennium Park. Gardner Street crosses a bridge over the MBTA line to Needham and enters the park. At the first junction bear left. A few yards further is another junction; bear left to the Canoe Launch. The right turn is to the summit parking lot (P2 on the map) and the view.

Leave your car at the Canoe Launch parking lot (P1), the most convenient lot for starting the hike. Continue on foot for about half of a mile, keeping to the paved trail alongside the Sawmill Brook, and you will come to a foot-bridge over the brook. Crossing the bridge you will find an easy trail (you could ride most of this trail on a bike).

Less than half a mile in is a fork with a sign post. The trail to the right leads to Brook Farm and the Gethsemane Cemetery (access is from Baker Street, West Roxbury); the left fork leads to Newton. In Newton, the first street access is from the Saw Mill Brook Parkway, but you can continue through the woods to Wells Avenue. Access is through the children's playground of the Solomon Schechter School. **A narrow and rough trail continues to Nahanton Street just before the bridge over the Charles River.**

The trail to the site of Brook Farm is an interesting side trip. The site, which is a national historic landmark, was home to the most famous Transcendentalist experiment in communal living from 1842 until 1846, when it was abandoned after a disastrous fire. An information office on the site is open until 4:00 PM daily.

Please send any ideas for this series to the *Sierra* editor: [editor@sierraclubmass.org](mailto:editor@sierraclubmass.org), or to Gil Woolley: [gwoolley@sierraclubmass.org](mailto:gwoolley@sierraclubmass.org).

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