

Part of the Bay Circuit Trail & Greenway



This one mile trail takes you through the lower section of the former Plymouth County Hospital property and ends at the top of Bonney Hill. The trail is graded and gently sloping through the first half, it then proceeds along the old service road through a level section with meadows and old farmland. At the 0.8 mile mark the trail turns left and climbs the hill to Bonney Hill Lane.

This trail route passes close to private property. Please respect these private properties.

This trail was constructed under the supervision of the Town of Hanson Conservation Commission and with the support of the Plymouth County Hospital Reuse / High Street Park Committee during the summer and early autumn of 2022. Costs were covered through a State of Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program grant, and Hanson Community Preservation funds.

Bonney Hill Trail

Town of Hanson Conservation Commission

Plymouth County Hospital Site



This is your first scenic stop along the 0.8 mile Bonney Hill Trail. You are looking across a meadow that was once the lawn leading to the entrance of the Hospital building. Behind you (and under many yards of fill) would have been the employee and visitor parking lot.

The hospital was built between 1917 and 1919 when the first patients were admitted. The hospital was first built for the treatment of patients with tuberculosis. The large Oak Tree by the Trail and the large Norway Spruce off to the left side of the Meadow bear witness to nearly a century of health care on this site.

Pictures and further information about the hospital can be found on the Hanson Historical Society web site, www.hansonhistoricalsociety.org.

Bonney Hill Trail

Town of Hanson Conservation Commission

Cranberry Country - Southeastern Massachusetts



This vista beyond the trees overlooks a working cranberry bog, privately owned. Canals and ditches can be clearly seen in each bog cell: these are used to manage the water used in harvesting and maintaining various water levels as appropriate for the growing season and in winter.

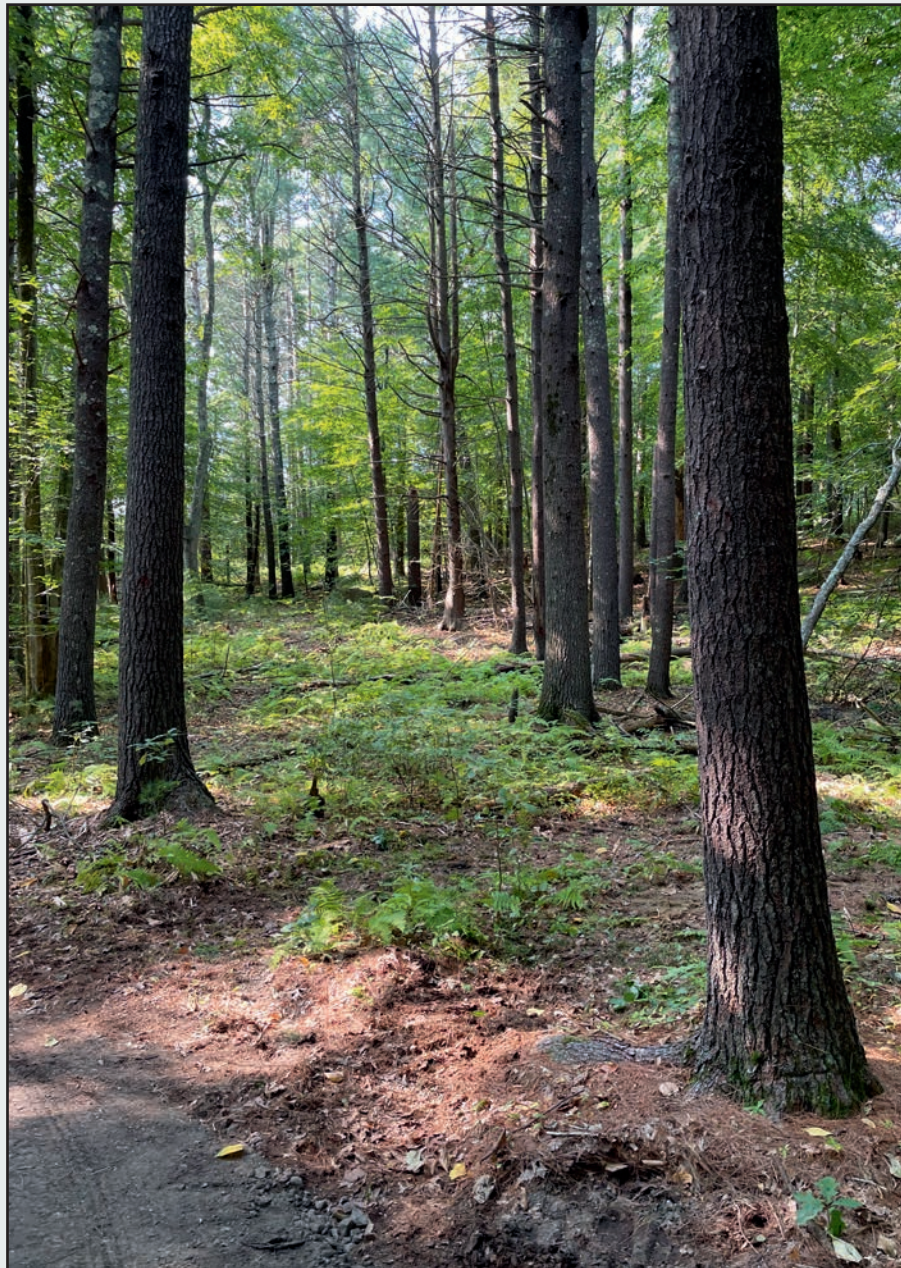
The roads surrounding the bogs provide access for harvesting and maintaining the bogs. Irrigation is provided through piping and sprinkler heads in each bog and water is supplied by the on-site reservoir.

Since the late 1800s cranberry growing has been vital to the economy of southeastern Massachusetts. Canned cranberry sauce and bottled cranberry juice were invented in South Hanson by Ocean Spray, and though their facilities moved elsewhere in 1974, many local bogs remain in active production.

Bonney Hill Trail

Town of Hanson Conservation Commission

Mature Forest Grove



In this restful spot in the woods you are surrounded by large White Pine, Cherry, Black Locust and White Oak trees. These provide cool shade, oxygen from photosynthesis, carbon storage, and food and shelter for forest birds and mammals. “Snags” (standing dead trees) and downed trees on the forest floor are also essential in providing habitat, and recycle nutrients into the forest ecosystem. Thriving in the shade are ferns, other ground cover plants, and saplings which will become the trees of the next generation.

Up on the hill you may glimpse remnants of a chimney and fireplace, all that remain of a summer camp where “City Kids” once came to enjoy nature and fresh air in the summer.

Bonney Hill Trail

Town of Hanson Conservation Commission

Farming at the Hospital



For many years the hospital grounds on this section of the property were farmland, used to provide much of the clean, high quality food needed by patients. In front of you are the foundation remains of the Piggery.

Off through the woods and along the road to the top of the hill are old foundations of other barns and chicken coops. The trail you have walked to arrive here was once the service road for these activities and was access to the old farm field and meadows further along the trail.

Bonney Hill Trail

Town of Hanson Conservation Commission

Meadows



Here in front of you is one of several meadows that were farmed during the colonial and early American eras. In the early 1900s this became part of the farming operation for the Hospital.

More recently, neighbors informally used the site for horse training. Now, this and other open areas are being managed as “early successional” wildlife habitat.

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Wetlands



In this low area you can see two culverts that allow streams to flow under the trail. Because the glacial till soils of Bonney Hill absorb relatively little water, much runs off into these lowlands, creating saturated “hydric soils”. The plant community here is dominated by very different trees, shrubs and ground cover than those found in drier upland areas.

These streams flow east, gradually releasing the runoff from rainfall and melting snow into the swamps and ponds of the Indian Head Brook watershed.

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Town of Hanson Conservation Commission

The Last Meadows



This meadow and the one beyond are two of the last remaining colonial era meadows. Meadows such as these now provide critical habitat for birds (including Eastern Blue Birds), butterflies, White Tail Deer and many other creatures.

Since most of New England's old farms and fields have either grown back to forest or been developed, this kind of habitat has become rare and is worthy of protection.

Bonney Hill Trail

Town of Hanson Conservation Commission

Bonney Hill Trail Extension



Please stay on the trail which climbs to the top of the hill, following a narrow easement across private property which we ask you to respect. This carries the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) to the top of Bonney Hill at Bonney Hill Lane and out to High Street. A right turn down High Street will take you to the Fern Hill Cemetery and relaxing vistas of Wompatuck Pond and the Town Hall. From there the BCT continues north to Liberty Street, then east around Hanson Town Hall and the Nathaniel Thomas Mill, and uphill to Indian Head Street where it swings south through Veterans Memorial Town Forest.

Nearby, on your left just inside the tree line, you will see a circular berm which is the remains of an old Charcoal Pit. In the 1700s and 1800s -- before the fossil fuel era -- blacksmiths and iron forges were fueled by much charcoal. This was produced by covering giant mounds of wood with soil and setting them afire to slowly smolder for several weeks. Once this partial combustion process was complete, soil was shoveled off to the sides and the cooled charcoal was bagged for marketing.

A bit further along you will cross over a slow-flowing stream and bog bridges through the surrounding wetlands. Very soon you will arrive at the set of steep stairs which take you to the top of the hill.

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Please Enjoy The Bonney Hill Trail Responsibly



This is a “carry in, carry out” Natural Area. In order that all may enjoy and appreciate this natural area we ask that you take any wrappers, containers, bottles or dog waste out with you as there are no trash disposal receptacles on the property.

To allow all of our visitors to enjoy the peaceful tranquility of this forested landscape, we ask that all dogs be leashed as required by Hanson by-laws, to avoid any unintentional disturbance of other guests or wildlife.

Unauthorized motorized vehicles of any kind are prohibited, per Town of Hanson by-Laws.

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