

TEN MILE RIVER HERITAGE TRAIL



The Ten Mile River Watershed Alliance

This guide was originally published when the trail was dedicated in 1996.

The Ten Mile River Watershed Alliance is a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to environmental education and the preservation of the Ten Mile River Watershed.

2025 Note: There are currently no signs or markers on this trail, and some information is out of date, but this guide still serves as useful guide to the history of each stop on the walking tour.

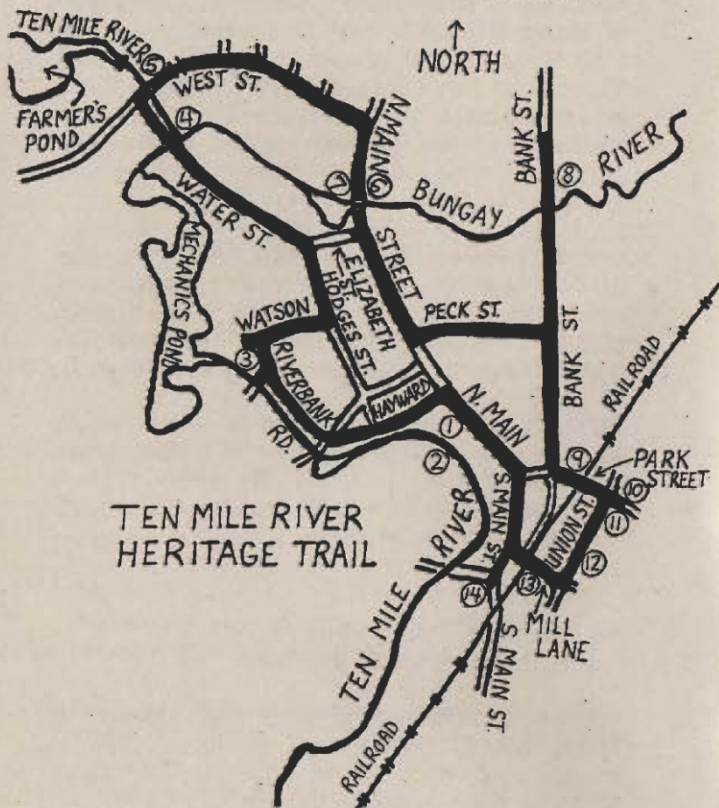
The Ten Mile River Heritage Trail is a 3-1/4 mile walking tour. It is designed for community use as a recreational introduction to the history and ecology of this vital river system.

Beginning near downtown Attleboro, it visits historic urban sites and quiet natural areas on a sidewalk route following gentle terrain. The Trail begins at the Attleboro Public Library.

Sites 1 & 2: Balfour Riverwalk Park & Attleboro Public Library; Attleboro's Future Urban Trail. Begin at Attleboro Public Library. Left of the entrance is a view across a field to the Ten Mile River. The field, soon to be Balfour Riverwalk Park, is former site of the L.G. Balfour Company which employed hundreds in the riverside manufacture of college jewelry. From the first colonial saw mills, to technology later employed in fine metal work, this river has been a source of industrial power, cooling, cleansing, and waste-water disposal. Across the river is the City's proposed, quarter-mile Urban Trail.

Site 3: Mechanic's Pond outflow, Willett School & Sandy Point. Near the bridge's NE corner, a channel from the background factory shows the historic importance of the river for manufacturing. A water fall, long-ago modified by a dam to power industry, sits just upstream on Mechanics Pond. Iron smelting was the first industry here, succeeded in the early 1800's by cotton milling. Oak woods roll back to the falls and Sandy Point on the pond. Mechanics Pond supports Belted kingfishers, Double-crested cormorants and Muskrats. Large-mouth bass swim its waters bordered by Monkey flowers, Sweet Pepperbush,

sycamore, and Red maple. The School is named for Capt. Thomas Willett, who succeeded Miles Standish as head of Plymouth's militia. Willett, later the first English mayor of New York, negotiated the Rehoboth "North Purchase" from Wampanoag leader Wamsutta, Massasoit's son.



Site 4: Confluence of the Bungay & Ten Mile Rivers. North of Water Street bridge, wetland plants stabilize the river's banks and act

as its filtration system. Duckweed, Pickerelweed, Coontail and Arrow-arum provide food for waterfowl and other wildlife. Swamp azaleas, alders, and True Forget-me-nots, brighten the summer shoreline. The stronger flow of the Ten Mile River (on the left), made it the choice for industrial sites. Its tributary, the Bungay, merges at right.

Site 5: Ten Mile River Bridge, Massachusetts Electric Substation. The walled-in river runs down from Farmer's Pond, a few hundred yards upstream. Electricity has been generated or distributed from this area, known as Farmer's Village, for over a century--the Ten Mile's water used to provide steam to power turbines. That electricity ran the Gee Whiz Trolley Line to North Attleboro, and later Plainville, beginning in the 1870's. North, a single power line follows the trolley path that linked River towns for over half a century.

Sites 6 & 7: Bungay River & Blackinton Inn; Shuttle Factory & Peck House. The Blackinton Inn sits next to a bridge over the Bungay River. Opposite, the area's original wood-working industry--part of Colonel Willard Blackinton's Shuttle Factory, sits to the rear of a park and today's Knobby Krafters. This riverside operation began making power loom shuttles for textile processes in 1827. South on N. Main is Elizabeth St., where the Peck House--red, with sloped roof, dates from 1723.

Site 8: Bungay River & Floodplain. The Bank Street bridge overlooks rich wetlands filled with a great variety of trees, plants and animals. Green frogs hunker down in the shallows,

sheltered beneath Tussock sedge, cattails, Arrowheads, and Duckweed. At dusk or dawn, a River otter is occasionally spotted here, scouring the channels for live prey.

Miles upstream, groundwater draining to the upper reaches of the Bungay nourishes Atlantic Salmon eggs at the North Attleboro National Fish Hatchery.

Site 9: Historic Downtown. (Bank & Park Streets). Right, down Park St. toward the N. Main intersection is the Bates Opera House Building. It was built in the last century, destroyed by fire, then rebuilt in 1913. Opposite, on N. Main and County St., the Bronson Building once housed the Bronson Museum of Archeology. Ten Mile River sites have yielded artifacts from former Native American cultures.

Before the underpass on Park St. is the Second Congregational Church, and Kirk Cemetery. Graves and markers of prominent Attleboro families were moved here from sites a few hundred feet east when the railroad was built through town beginning in 1831.

Site 10:
Attleboro Museum.

The Attleboro Museum, 86 Park St. is open Tues.-Sat., 10-5 (except Weds., 10-8), and Sun. (12-5). It features a variety of art exhibitions.

Site 11: Government Center. City Hall, Police Station, GATRA Bus Transfer Station. Cradled on the SE side of Park and Union Streets is the heart of Attleboro's civic center.

Site 12: Attleboro Area Industrial Museum
42 Union St.

The Museum is open Tues.-Sat., 7:30 am-Noon. It has a large collection of industrial products, machinery and displays--dating from early machining days. A 1934-video features rare footage of ice cutters on Cooper's Pond.

Site 13: MBTA Station, AMTRAK. In 1835 the railroad to Boston and Providence was completed. The stations date from 1905. Today, sixteen daily trains link Attleboro with Boston and Providence--nine trains run weekends.

Site 14: MBTA Lot & return. Left on S. Main St. is a parking area for MBTA users. Turn right on S. Main, passing the Attleboro Sun Chronicle, then left on N. Main to the Library. Total distance: 3-1/4 miles.

Special thanks for support and assistance from: Mass. Department of Environmental Management; Mass. Electric Company; The City of Attleboro; Mass. Audubon Society.