



Borderland State Park

Self-Guided Secret Garden Tour

About Borderland State Park

Borderland State Park is the former estate of Oakes and Blanche Ames. The Commonwealth purchased the 1250-acre Borderland property from the Ames family and opened it as a state park in 1971. It has since grown to encompass more than 1780 acres. Borderland hosts a number of activities, including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and fishing.

Incorporated in 1972, Friends of Borderland, a 501(c)3 nonprofit group, helps maintain the intrinsic resources and aesthetics of the park through volunteer work, programs and fundraisers. Through their preservation efforts, they are able to assist in the protection of this unique park for future generations. Visit their website at: www.friendsofborderland.org

Borderland is owned and operated by the Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation. For a listing of parks and events, visit the DCR Web site at: <http://www.mass.gov/dcr>

At Borderland, there is a \$5 (MA residents) / \$6 (out of state) per car parking fee payable at the grey machines in the Visitor Center parking lot. Annual and senior parking passes are available in the office.

All pets must be leashed while in the park.

About Oakes and Blanche Ames

Oakes Ames

A prominent Harvard botanist who specialized in the study of orchids, Oakes was a great grandchild of Oliver Ames, who founded a highly successful and well-known shovel shop in North Easton, Mass., in 1804.

Ames shovels played a crucial role in the building of the railroads and in the California and New Zealand gold rushes, and they were, for a time, considered legal tender on the frontier. Other local former Ames estates include Sheep Pasture and Stonehill College, both in Easton.

Blanche Ames Ames

An artist and woman's suffrage cartoonist, Blanche descended from an entirely unrelated branch of Ames. Her father, Adelbert Ames, served in the American Civil War and was the first graduate of West Point Military Academy to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Blanche's maternal grandfather, Benjamin Butler, was a Union general during the Civil War whom President Abraham Lincoln considered for vice president during Lincoln's campaign for a second presidential term. Butler declined, feeling that the nation needed him more on the battlefield than in Washington.

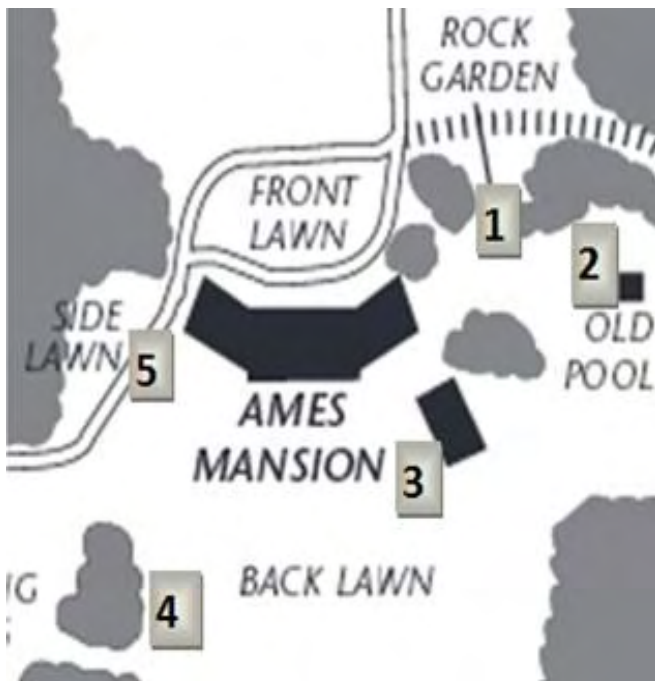


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Welcome to the Ames Mansion at Borderland State Park. This self-guided tour highlights some of the outdoor features that the Ames family created, making a strong connection with the natural world. This self-guided tour takes approximately 15-20 minutes. After your tour, visit the visitor center to see more pictures of the Ames family and the construction of the estate at Borderland

1. Rock Garden

Oakes wanted to build a home that fit in with the natural world. After the mansion's completion in 1912, Oakes was already planning his rock garden. Being a Harvard botanist, Oakes found a rock garden fitting for his new estate, which would serve as a specimen garden and a place in which he sought solitude and reflection.

Oakes built his rock garden right outside his laboratory. If you look through the glass doors, you can peer into what was once his laboratory. He considered this rock garden an outdoor -indoor room. He planted arbovitae (which we replanted in 2013), which acted as a natural wall, making his rock garden a little more secluded from their guests who may have been utilizing their driveway.

Look at the half moon pool. At one time, there was a full moon pool located at the top of the rock garden (there is a rock dust circle outlying the full moon pool that once was).

From 2010 to 2013, the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Friends of Borderland raised funds to rehabilitate the rock garden; to bring this garden back to what Oakes would have had planted, but more manageable and less invasive species. (rehabilitation pictured below)

Now make your way through the wisteria arbor and down the steps to the old swimming pool. Watch your step.



2. Swimming Pool

While Oakes wanted the rock garden, Blanche wanted a swimming pool. To build the swimming pool, Blanche sacrificed her bog garden. Today we are trying to restore a bog garden in the ruins of the old swimming pool. Check out and read the interpretive sign for more information about the swimming pool.

3. Tennis Court

Oakes and Blanche loved outdoor recreation such as golf, hiking, canoeing, tennis and so much more. As you are looking at the tennis courts, look at the bottom of the hill. Originally they had a grass tennis court at the base of this hill. Later they installed a clay tennis court in its current location. Oakes and Blanche won many double tennis tournaments. Today visitors still enjoy using this court which is available to the public on a first come, first serve basis.

4. Trout Pond

Amyas, the youngest son of Oakes and Blanche wanted to raise trout and stock the ponds here at Borderland for fishing. Dismayed that his parents would not finance this endeavor, he became an entrepreneur overnight and decided to start "Borderland Trout Club." He approached family friends and offered them membership to the Borderland Trout Club for \$100 each. Amyas was able to sign up many members and raised enough money to buy the trout. This pond is where the trout would grow, until they were big enough to be stocked in the ponds. After a few years of having no members coming to actually fish at Borderland, Blanche instructed Amyas to shut down the Borderland Trout Club. Blanche thought it would be fitting to invite all the members over for a farewell dinner. Blanche made special plates for this dinner (see picture below) and Amyas was tasked with catching dinner.



5. Old Garden Field

Today there is a bluebird house and old wheelbarrow that rest in this field that once was one of the Ames gardens. Imagine driving up the driveway and gazing upon a colorful, well manicured garden. That would be one amazing welcome to the estate here at Borderland.

This concludes the self-guided tour. Feel free to continue down to the right and explore the home's gardens. Please join us for a guided tour. For times and date, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr.