

Stories in Stone

Breakheart Reservation

SELF-GUIDED INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

Welcome

Discover the Changes in the Landscape

Breakheart Reservation has been shaped not only by natural processes but by the many people who have called it home. This story is a circle, beginning and ending with stewardship. The journey in between is one of immigration, industry, conservation and public works. If you know where to look, stones can reveal this complex history and the attitudes that informed it.

There are five stops along this self-guided route. Each station has stone artifacts which correspond to an episode in the history of Breakheart Reservation. The map and written directions will help you find each location.



*Ben Johnson astride Duke. Both horse and rider were familiar figures on local bridle paths—
Photo by Sanborn*

About the Trail

The **Stories in Stone** trailhead is located at 177 Forest Street, in Saugus, MA. Beginning and ending at the Visitor Center, the trail alternates between **easy** and **moderate** hiking (see map). Total length is **3.4 miles, round-trip**. Plan on spending about **180 minutes** if hiking at a moderate pace.

Use the map on the next page to help locate the five stops.

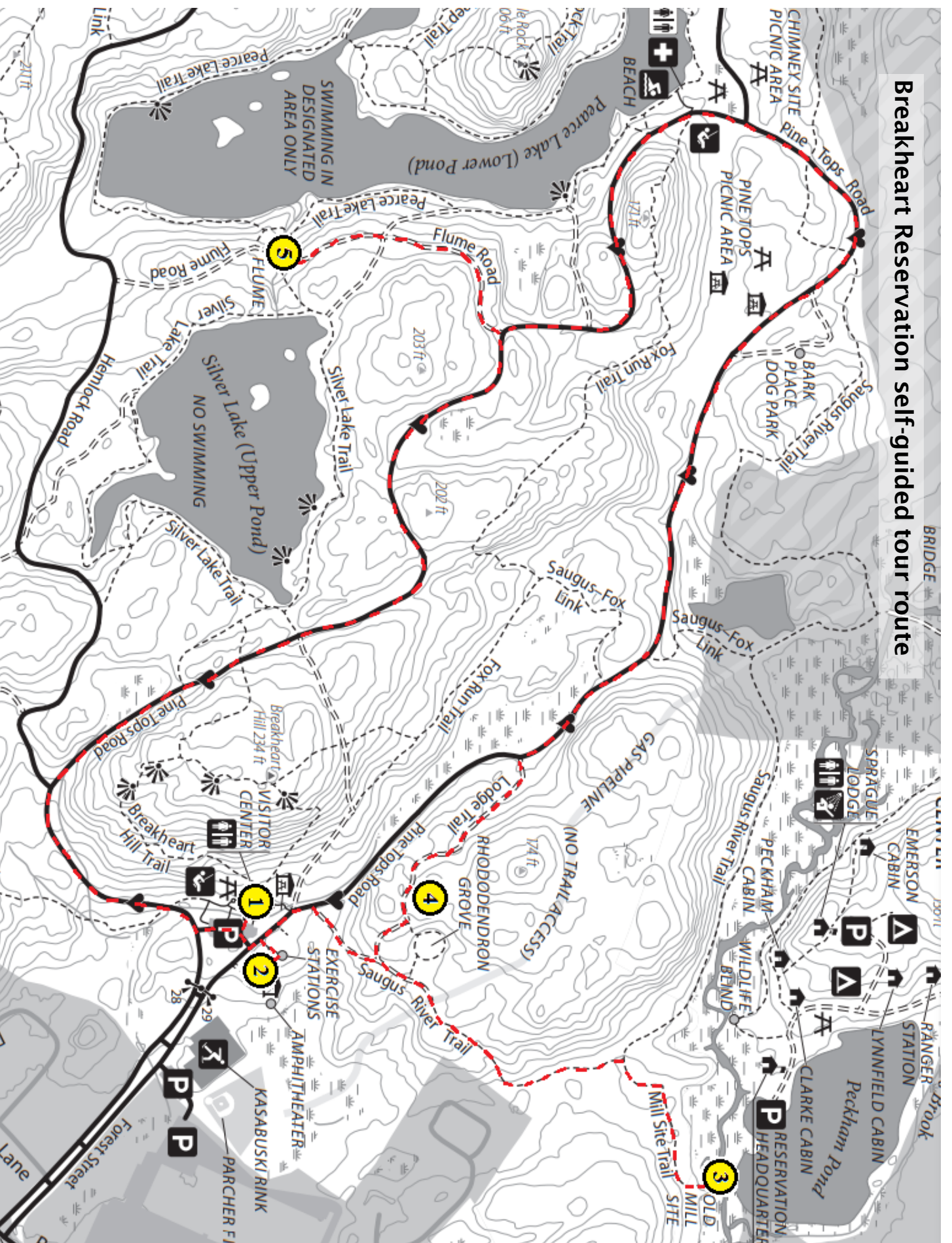
- **For foot traffic only.**
- Please stay on designated trails.
- Leave only footprints take only pictures.
- Observe all posted rules and regulations.
- **Winter-use:** when hiking/snowshoeing please keep off cross-country ski tracks, please hike off to the side.

Begin inside the Visitor Center. Along the back and side walls you will find display cases containing stone artifacts. During COVID, Visitor Center remains closed.

1) Pawtucket—The First Stewards

How do you think Pawtucket people used these artifacts? All were found within Breakheart Reservation and have ages ranging over thousands of years (8,000 to 450 years). Native Americans used Saugus Jasper, a reddish stone, for making tools because this rock easily chips into sharp edges.

Breakheart Reservation self-guided tour route



The Pawtucket were an Algonquian-speaking tribe that lived along the Saugus River, spending summers near the coast and moving inland during winter months. Daily life focused on activities such as planting, hunting, fishing, and making tools.

This sustainable relationship between humans and their environment existed for thousands of years, allowing communities to prosper without depleting their natural resources. Even today, indigenous views on land are based on respect and stewardship, a perspective that still has much to teach us.



Sketch of a Pawtucket settlement on the Shattuck Farm site in Andover

Walk outside the Visitor Center towards the large rock in the parking lot. Take a left towards the exercise area. Follow the boardwalk to the right until you find a bench next to a stone wall foundation.

2) Surviving on Small Farms

Stone walls are familiar to us New Englanders. What stories do you think they have to tell?

In 1706, the rugged common land to the west of the Saugus River (now Breakheart Reservation) was divided among the settlers and named the Six Hundred Acres. Through generations, most of the land remained forested, mainly used for wood fuel. At the southern entrance to the forest was an 18-acre property originally owned by the Hitchings family. It was later named Breakheart Hill Farm.



The original farmhouse built in 1771

Like many small farms in New England, it was located on terrain too rocky to plow. This led to a focus on grazing livestock and growing hay. Dairy was especially important as was the apple orchard. Although these rocks made farming difficult, they were put to good use as building material. Look closely for the stone foundation of the old barn!

These ruins give us a glimpse back in time, when families patterned their lives on the cycle of the seasons in order to survive.

Retrace your steps back to the pavement. Take a right onto Pine Tops Road and continue into the park. After 200ft you will come to the intersection with the Saugus River Trail, take a right. Follow the yellow blazes for 0.3 miles until you come to the intersection with the Mill Site Trail, take a right. Follow the blue blazes for 0.1 miles to the end of the trail.

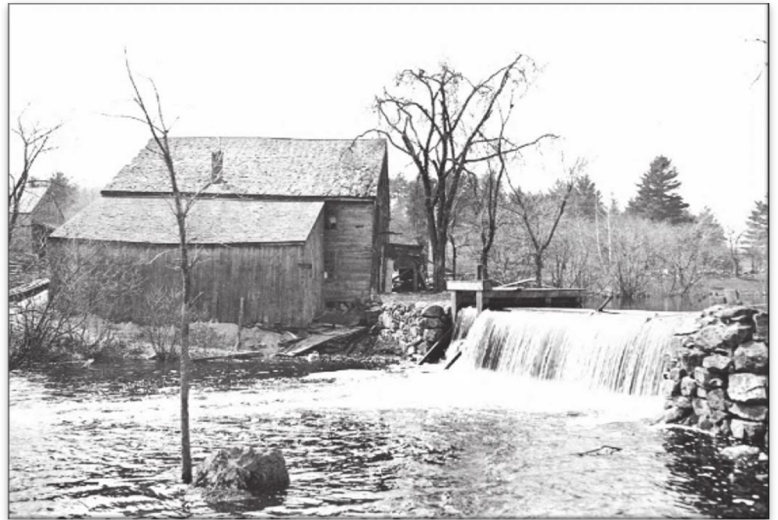
3) Mill Power Changed America

Look around the embankment—can you find the stone milldam? It was built in 1814 for the Linen and Duck Manufactory Company of Boston to produce sail cloth for boats. Mills like this have a long history along the Saugus River.

When Puritan settlers moved inland from Lynn in the 1600s, they followed old Native American trails upstream. While most farmed, some established important mills to process ironworks, lumber, corn, cider, coffee, and even chocolate!

By the time this mill was established, attitudes toward land were shifting from survival to commerce. Mill power began small, but in time radically changed the lives and landscape of the country.

Retrace your steps to the Saugus River Trail, take a left. Follow the yellow blazes for 0.2 miles until you come to the intersection with Lodge Trail, take a right. Follow the red blazes 400ft to the top of the hill.



A similar looking mill on the Saugus River.

4) How Hunting Saved the Forest

A rustic hunting lodge once stood in this spot. What do you think led to its creation?

By the 1850s, cities were crowded and polluted. Wealthy Lynn attorney Benjamin Johnson and his associates decided to create a private hunting retreat in the nearby Six Hundred Acres as an escape. Beginning in 1891, they bought up the woodlots, including what they named Breakheart Hill Farm for \$1. They assumed the mortgage and hired a caretaker to continue farming the land and keep trespassers out of the forest.



Benjamin Johnson's Breakheart Hill Camp

They created both lakes by damming two spring fed marshes, stocked them with fish and named their property Breakheart Hill Forest. The hunting lodge that once stood here was built for friends and family to relax after long days of fishing, swimming and exploring. Some remains of Breakheart Hill Camp still exist. See if you can find them!

As ever-expanding industry threatened the remaining forests, attitudes began to shift from commerce to conservation.

Continue on the Lodge Trail for 0.2 miles until you reach the paved path, take a right. Continue on Pine tops Road for 0.6 miles until you reach the intersection with Elm Street, stay to the left. Continue on the paved path for 0.3 miles until you reach the intersection with a wide dirt path known as Flume Road, take a right. After 0.2 miles you will come to a bridge, look to your left.

5) Without the CCC, This Park Wouldn't Be

The scenic waterway you see here is called The Flume. Its construction was part of a vast effort to turn this forest into the public resource we enjoy today.

In 1934 Breakheart Hill Forest was sold for use as a state park. The timing coincided with the birth of President Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program to employ young men and build much needed infrastructure across the country. The hay fields and apple orchards of Breakheart Hill Farm were replaced with housing for the CCC. Over a six-year period, they built roads and trails, planted trees, and restored the Upper and Lower Pond dams. Their efforts resulted in the return of wildlife that had become rare, including beavers, fishers, coyotes, blue herons and owls!

Finished in 1937, The Flume is an example of the work done by the CCC. It was built to direct overflow from Upper Pond to Lower Pond to help prevent soil erosion. While overgrown, The Flume still serves its original purpose today.

Private conservation efforts evolved into public ones, and the enjoyment of this resource went from the few to the many. Stewardship has once again become the dominant attitude toward the land we now call Breakheart Reservation.



Sketch of The Flume by Joseph Santoro in 1960.

Retrace your steps to the paved path, take a right.

After 0.5 miles you will come to the intersection with Hemlock Road, stay to the left. After 0.2 miles you will arrive back at the Visitor Center.

This brings us to the end of the trail at the Visitor Center parking lot. We hope you enjoyed this self-guided tour! If we all act as stewards to this land we can ensure it is protected and enjoyed for generations to come.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) oversees over 450,000 acres of state parks, forests, beaches, bike trails, parkways, watershed lands, and dams across the Commonwealth. DCR's mission is to: *Protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well-being of all.*

BREAKHEART RESERVATION

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