

Pequonnock River Valley Guides Transcribed and Updated

Transcribed and Updated by Tom Ebersold, April 2022

The Pequonnock River Valley is a popular outdoors recreational area that physically divides the middle of the town of Trumbull in half between Whitney Avenue to the north and Church Hill Road and Daniels Farm Road to the south.

This area was largely closed to the public for most of the 20th century under its ownership by the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company (BHC), now named Aquarion Water Company, usually called just Aquarion. Public access under BHC ownership was limited to seasonal fishing and hunting.

The public finally had full access starting in 1990 because on December 29, 1989, the property was purchased by the state of Connecticut with financial support from the town of Trumbull. As is the case with many state-owned parcels, the property is generally neglected, other than a one-time project to improve the rail trail.

Pequonnock River Valley Guides: 1980s, 1990, and 1996

The former newspaper company Hometown Publications published at least three maps and guides to the Valley in conjunction with public hikes sponsored by the company, some during the time it was owned by BHC and others after it was owned by the state and town. I have seen copies of three guides, and there may have been others.

Hometown Publications was a media company in the greater Bridgeport area from 1979 to 2007 that published about 10 weekly newspapers at its peak. Its flagship paper was the Trumbull Times, in part because this paper was the oldest of the chain, dating back to 1959 when it was started by a prior owner as a stand-alone paper.

The 1980s guide is titled “Hike Through the Valley, Official Guide Booklet” and is undated, but was published sometime in the 1980s, prior to public ownership of the Valley in 1989.

The copy of the 1980s guide that I have was scanned into a letter-sized format with a cover page of that size. The map included in the guide is split into two sections, so the original guide was probably printed in a larger format. The text in the 1980s guide refers to eight numbered posts that were set up specifically for the sponsored hike along the railroad bed and were removed after the hike.

In this guide, there is a reference to the hiker who fell into a mine shaft at Old Mine Park, saying the fall happened 20 years previously. In the 1996 guide, it states the fall was 30 years prior. Based on these references, the earlier guide may have been written in 1986.

This 1980s guide includes a hand-drawn map. I have seen an updated version of the hand-drawn map without any accompanying text that refers to a 1991 footbridge.

The 1990 guide is titled “Hike Through the Valley” with the subheading “Welcome to Hike Through the Valley 1990”. This was the first guide created after the property was open to the public. This guide is also in a PDF format, arranged in landscape

format. The map is spread out over four pages, and the text covers two of those four pages. Some details are lost in the gap between the pages. The 1990 guide had almost no information about the Valley in the text.

The 1996 guide was titled “Your Guide to the Pequonnock River Valley” and was printed on the newspaper broadsheet paper of that day, 22.5 inches tall and 17.5 inches wide. I have a printed copy of this document. This guide had a professionally-designed map with the text on the reverse side of that map.

This unwieldy size makes it difficult to scan and print. The guide has numbered paragraphs, which make references to locations on the map on the other side of the guide. The 1996 guide had overlapping, but different information than the 1980s era guide. In some cases, the 1980s era guide has more details about certain topics.

The 1996 guide states the information was compiled by Ben Gumm, newspaper publisher, with input from his friend, Dr. John Willis, a family physician in Trumbull who grew up in the town and had first-hand knowledge of the Valley.

The 1980s guide lists the names of Gumm and Willis and also includes the name Paul Timpanelli, who was town clerk in Trumbull from 1975-1981 and first selectman from 1981-1987. He worked as president of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council from 1988-2016. The 1996 guide says the map was created by the Trumbull Public Works Department under the direction of then Public Works Director Paul Kallmeyer.

Direct Knowledge of the Pequonnock River Valley

I bring a special perspective to transcribing and annotating this guide because I was editor of the Trumbull Times from 1990-1995 where I worked for Ben Gumm. I also interviewed Dr. John Willis on many occasions related to newspaper articles I wrote about the Pequonnock River Valley.

When the property was owned by the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company (BHC), now Aquarion, and otherwise closed to the public, Gumm and Willis organized a hike along the railroad bed with special permission from the water company. They also continued to organize a hike after it became public property, this time focusing on the eastern side with the trails, located between the Pequonnock River and Route 25.

I interviewed Kallmeyer on a regular basis about any public works related project in town. Timpanelli was town clerk and first selectman before I worked for the Trumbull Times, so I never interviewed him when he was in those roles. I possibly spoke to him when he was business council president, but I do not recall if I ever did.

As a volunteer leader for Sound Cyclists Bicycle Club, the Appalachian Mountain Club, the New Haven Hiking Club, I have led many bicycle rides on the Pequonnock River Trail and led many hikes on the trails. I have also helped out the New England Mountain Biking Association with some trail maintenance projects on the trails on the east side of the river.

Pequonnock River Valley Becomes Public in 1989

The decision by the Trumbull Town Council to purchase the Valley took place prior to my tenure as newspaper editor. The purchase in December 1989 cost \$9,275,000 and was funded 60 percent by the state of Connecticut (\$5.175 million) and 40 percent by the town of Trumbull (\$4.1 million) with the state taking title to the land. BHC was able to sell the land because it was off-watershed land, as it did not have a reservoir. Since the land was relatively undisturbed during the water company's ownership, there are some impressively large hemlocks on the property, those that have survived the invasive woolly adelgid.

Hunting Question Settled With Regulated Access

Following the purchase, I wrote many newspaper stories about the battle over whether hunting should be permitted in the Valley. The state had bought the property with the specific intent of allowing hunting, while town residents were mostly opposed to hunting because the Valley is close to houses on the west side and is bordered by Route 25 and the town's Indian Ledge Park on the east side. Both Gumm and Willis were vocal in their opposition to allowing hunting in the Valley.

The New York Times article of Oct. 7, 1990 (available to subscribers), effectively summarizes the debate:

<https://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/07/nyregion/valley-sees-bitter-fight-on-hunting.html>

The compromise was that hunting was only allowed four days of the week, the season was limited to October to December, permits were required, and only a limited number of permits would be issued per day, either morning or afternoon. The season is Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from the third Saturday in October through the third Saturday in December.

The state also set boundaries to keep hunters 500 feet away from the houses and the highway. This means that there is no hunting west of the Pequonnock River. There is also no hunting in the northern section approaching Whitney Avenue, roughly north of Elizabeth Street. Only 162 acres are open to hunting. Finally, hunting is limited to just small game and waterfowl.

The reality is that hunters are unlikely to use the property because it is so heavily used by mountain bikers and hikers. As an aside, hunters in Connecticut are required to successfully complete a firearms safety course in order to purchase a hunting license.

Park Land Sizes Vary from 2.5 to 407 Acres

According to the town GIS maps, the main Pequonnock Valley property is 376 acres of the state and town land, with another 6 acres of Trumbull-owned land, totaling 382 acres. The town bought those 6 acres off Shelton Terrace in June 2007 for \$1.8 million. The town purchased 25.3 acres of land off Hardy Lane in December 2020 for \$7 million. Both properties border the western side of the rail trail, bringing the total size of the Valley to 407 acres.

The GIS maps also show Indian Ledge Park as 77 acres and Old Mine Park as 101 acres. The Trumbull Parks and Recreation Department states Indian Ledge has 104.6

and Old Mine Park has 72 acres. Both sources agree that Parlor Rock Park is 2.5 acres. There is also a four-acre parcel of privately owned land, extending south from Whitney Avenue along the west side of the river with the western border along the rail trail.

While the guides refer to the Valley as including Indian Ledge Park and Old Mine Park, when most people refer to the Valley as “the Valley,” they usually mean the open space property bordered by Whitney Avenue to the north and Church Hill Road/Daniels Farm Road to the south.

The Route 25 Expressway cuts across the eastern boundary of the Valley, resulting in the roar of traffic being heard in the woods near the highway. The road was constructed in the 1970s and early 1980s and opened to traffic in 1982. When driving north on Route 25 south of Whitney Avenue, the rock wall to the right side has been partially blasted away. The intent was to construct an off-ramp to Whitney Avenue, a project which was never completed.

“Pequonnock River Watershed Based Plan” is a study of the river and its watershed published in September 2011. The study found that the river’s water quality is impaired and contains recommendations for how it may be improved. The 173 page guide is published on the state website and is accessible via at this address (the original link is too long to fit here): <https://tinyurl.com/5n7tpubb>

“King’s Mark Environmental Review Team Report for Pequonnock River Valley Trumbull, Connecticut” was prepared in October 1988. According to the introduction, the report was requested by the town of Trumbull Pequonnock River Committee. The report is a thorough analysis of the property, discussing its natural resources, including the geology, water, plants and animals. The report also discusses the property’s potential for recreational uses and for development.

The report is available at this website:
http://ctert.org/pdfs/Trumbull_PequonnockRiverValley_208.pdf

Ownership Details for the Trumbull Times, etc.

This is some background on the publishing company (feel free to skip this paragraph): The chain was owned by the former Journal Communications of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, from 1979 to 2007 when it was sold to the Fairfield County-based Hersam-Acorn Newspapers. That company, in turn, sold the newspapers in 2018 to Hearst Corporation, which, in 2022, publishes most of the newspapers in Fairfield County as the Hearst Connecticut Media Group. The Journal Company also owned and operated Trumbull Printing, 205 Spring Hill Road, Trumbull, which printed the chain’s Connecticut newspapers, also selling this to Hersam-Acorn Newspapers. Hersam-Acorn retained printing plant ownership when it sold the newspapers to Hearst.

Guides Reprinted and Annotated with Current Information

Any parts of the guide with brackets are annotations by me to clarify and update anything in the guides, as there certainly are changes between its 1980s, 1990, and 1996 publications and this 2022 transcription. Any commentary that ends on a web link does not have an ending bracket because then the links do not work.

My notes within the guides are also printed in a different font (Ariel, if you must know) to help distinguish them from the original text. Before and after the guides, such as this section, use the same font (Book Antiqua) that I used for the wording of the guides.

These annotations include details to the location of the various features by mileage from a reference point. On the western side by the railroad bed, descriptions will relate to distances from Tait Road, Whitney Avenue or Route 25. On the eastern side, distances will relate to Park Street, Whitney Avenue, or Indian Ledge Park. In the interest of not repeating the same information multiple times, most of those annotations are included in the 1996 guide, including the mileage to the various features.

Photos of these historic sites are available on the Trumbull Historical Society website: <https://www.trumbullhistory.org/photographs.html>

These and more photos are also printed in the books the historical society published in the Images of America series entitled *Trumbull* (the 1997 and 2004 editions) and *Trumbull Revisited* (the 2014 edition).

A great project would be to install historical markers at these various sites with this information and photos of what once existed. The photos would also enhance the visual of how nature has reclaimed a former industrial and mining area.

There is a three-sided kiosk by the pond in Old Mine Park with one panel for Old Mine Park, a second panel for the Pequonnock River Valley and a third panel for the Streamside Buffer project completed in 2012 at Old Mine Park in which native shrubs were planted along the west side of the river near the parking lot.

The original guides are reproduced in this order: 1980s, 1990, and 1996.

The 1980s era guide has a cover page with a picture of a wooden building with a waterwheel next to a stream. It is titled "Hike Through the Valley, Official Guide Booklet." Underneath the picture is written, "Sponsored by The Trumbull Times, In Cooperation with the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company and the Town of Trumbull".

Hike Through the Valley, Official Guide Booklet

Introduction

Your hike today through the Pequonnock River Valley will take you by some of the most beautiful scenery in Trumbull as many as well as many historical sites. The historical sites are numbered along the trail and descriptions of each site are printed in this guide booklet. You may walk the trail at your own pace.

Trumbull Emergency Medical Technicians will be scattered along the trail to handle problems and treat minor injuries.

When you reach the Parlor Rock area, please follow the red ribbons tied to the trees. At this point the trail becomes less well defined and hikers must stay alert to avoid getting lost.

To the Trail

As you walk from Trumbull Center to the trail, which begins at Tait's Mill Road, you will pass behind a large white building on your left. This building is now vacant, but once served as Trumbull's Town Hall and later as the town's Public Health Center. The building was nearby the site of Trumbull's first church building. The congregation which built the church is still meeting at the Trumbull Congregational Church less than one half-mile down the road. The first church building was unfortunately built too close to the dirt road, and several unknowing travelers crashed into the building with their horse and buggies in the night. The second church building was built on the same site, but further back from the road. It was constructed in three days for a cost of \$2400.

Just north of the former health center is the former site of the Trumbull Railroad Depot. It was one of two depots that served passengers and cargo shippers through the late 1800s and early 1900s. Not a trace of the old depot remains today.

[The railroad bed begins on Tait Road, near its junction with Tait's Mill Road. In 1989, the white building was named the Helen Plumb Building, in honor of a former Trumbull town clerk. The building is no longer vacant because it is being used by the Trumbull Chamber of Commerce. The road is called Church Hill Road, but no longer has any churches on it.]

General Information

As you enter the trail, remember this is the old Housatonic Railroad bed. The railroad, which connected Bridgeport and New Milford, was originally called the Berkshire Railroad. Later it was purchased by the Housatonic Railroad and finally became part of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. The tracks were torn out in 1941 and melted down for war equipment. The bed is still maintained as a fire lane for the three Trumbull fire departments. [Long Hill, Nichols and Trumbull Center Fire Departments]

As mentioned in the opening remarks, this trail is now private property and is closed to the public. Special permission was obtained from the Bridgeport Hydraulic

Company to open the trail for this hike. [On Dec. 29, 1989, the rail trail and Valley became public property.]

Just a few 100 yards beyond the trail entrance you'll see a large flat area across the river. This was a training ground for the North Stratford militia in colonial days and for Trumbull's militias shortly after the Civil War. In 1980, another kind of militia went into action in the same area Trumbull's Volunteer Fire Departments conducted a massive search to rescue three Bridgeport youths whose pickup truck had been washed away during a torrential rainstorm.

Beyond the militia grounds is one of Trumbull's oldest, yet most obscure burial grounds – Riverside Cemetery. The stone house, which stands just south of the cemetery, was built with foundation stones from one of Trumbull's oldest gristmills that had been located just across the river. The mill was destroyed by a flood in 1906.

[The cemetery is accessed by the private driveway on Daniels Farm Road just north of the bridge over the Pequonnock Valley. A white sign with the words "Riverside Cemetery" points the way.]

While most of the trees in the Valley are younger poplar, birch, elm and hickory, a few giant hemlock, red oaks and tulip trees still stand. They remind visitors of a bygone era when these giants of the wilderness provided shade for the cattle and a perfect picnic spot for young sweethearts. Most of the older trees stand along the railroad, where the grade of the landscape was too steep to graze cattle. These areas are called the "old woods."

Massive outcroppings of giant granite and other igneous rock provide a breathtaking contrast to the heavy foliage. Deer, pheasant, raccoon, muskrat, woodchuck, rabbit, squirrel and red fox scamper through the valley, while trout inhabit the river. Beaver, mink, and porcupine populated the Valley at one time but have since disappeared. [There was a beaver lodge in the old reservoir bed in March 2022.]

Most of the trees in the valley are under 100 years old because the land was used primarily for grazing cattle in the 1800s. However, a few forest giants stand above the younger trees. The severe windstorm in November of 1980 uprooted several of the larger trees leaving gaping holes in the forest floor. Other giants, felled by the hurricanes of 1954 and 1938, decomposed into the soil to give young saplings the nourishment they need to become the forest giants of the 21st century. It has been estimated that through controlled cutting program, there's enough timber in the Valley to heat every home in Trumbull indefinitely.

[The reference to trees being younger than 100 years old was written in the 1980s. As of 2022, there are certainly many trees older than 100 years, particularly the towering hemlock trees.]

Old River Bed

The Pequonnock River has not always followed its present course. Parts of the old riverbed, where rushing, swirling water carved out deep gouges in the rock, are still visible today.

[These carved, circular sections are visible on the Blue Trail on the east side of the river.]

Post No. 1

[The text in this section is similar to the wording in the 1996 guide under 1. Old Trumbull Reservoir.]

Post No. 1 is approximately one mile from the beginning of the trail. It is the sight of the Hydraulic Company's former dam, which held back a huge reservoir that supplied water to much of Bridgeport during the 1800s and early 1900s. When the Easton Reservoir was built around 1930, the Trumbull Reservoir was no longer used. The reservoir was drained by dismantling the dam after a boy drowned in 1935. Most of the brick and mortar was carried downstream by the rushing water or bulldozed into the hills. However, several rusted metal valves and pipes are still visible imbedded in solid boulders.

Thousands of years before the dam was built, the Pequonnock River followed a course that took it about 500 feet east and 50 feet above its present course. The dam builders used this old riverbed, which cuts through solid rock to form deep grooves, as the dam spillway. Towering above the old river bed is a huge flat rock ledge that must have been Trumbull's first billboard. Large, faded letters in the advertisement which was painted on the rock more than 100 years ago, are still visible. Their long life can be attributed to an overlap hanging hemlock that protects them from rain, snow and wind. The advertising is directed toward train passengers riding the old Berkshire Railroad.

If you would like to see more of the remains of the old dam, you may walk down the narrow path at Post No. 1 to the river's edge. If the water is not too high, you can cross the river by stepping across the stones. The old spillway is about 100 yards in from the river. You must return to the railroad bed the way you came to continue the hike. Please do not take any shortcuts. It is very easy to get lost.

Post No. 2

Continue along the railroad bed for approximately 1/4 mile to Post No. 2. Looking left across the valley, you can easily define the water line of the old reservoir. You are now about one mile due east of Town Hall. The foundation you see is 135 feet long and 75 feet wide. It was once the Trumbull Ice House.

Before refrigerators were invented, ice houses were common in America. Ice was cut off the frozen lakes and ponds and winter, and stored throughout the year in ice houses. Sawdust was poured in between the layers of ice to retard the melting process.

Ruins of the Trumbull Ice House foundation (approximately 135 feet by 75 feet) are clearly visible just east of the railroad tracks.

This icehouse was far larger and 50 years older than the original Kaatz Icehouse on Whitney Avenue. The east wall edged up to the shoreline of the reservoir and the west wall was butted up to the railroad tracks. Remains of a horse-powered elevator, which lifted huge chunks of ice to the top of the icehouse and later lowered them down to waiting railroad cars, still exist. The icehouse was staffed by farmers and mill workers who welcomed the opportunity to work cutting ice on the reservoir and then stacking it in the icehouse during the winter months when their primary occupations were dormant.

Because the grade of the railroad bed was a continuous downward slope all the way to the Bridgeport Railroad Station, only a brakeman was needed on the trains that transported ice to the city. Frank Smith, a Long Hill resident for almost 90 years, remembers hearing stories of the icehouse in operation. He said that one night several cars, loaded with ice, broke loose from the Long Hill Depot. They didn't stop rolling until they got to the station in Bridgeport.

[Hiker David Reik displays the outlines of the reservoir on a map at this website. Using the measuring tool of the GIS map, I estimate the reservoir was about 50 to 55 acres, hardly worthy of the "huge" description above. Visually, the reservoir is smaller than the nearby Canoe Brook Lake, which is 72 acres. The map also shows the location of Lake High-High and Lake Low-Low at Parlor Rock Park: <https://tinyurl.com/ycxkvetx>

The numbers on the map are linked to photos on his blog: <https://davidreikphotos.blogspot.com/2021/12/2021-12-17-pequonnock-valley-wildlife.html>

Post No. 3

[This text is similar to the wording that appears in the 1996 guide under 3. Cow Tunnels.]

Continue along the railroad bed approximately 1/4 mile to Post No. 3. This is one of several cow tunnels built beneath the railroad for dairy cattle to have a safe path to take from their grazing fields to the river. When the railroad was built in 1840, farmers in the valley complained bitterly that the tracks cut off their fields from the river. They worried that their cows would be killed crossing the tracks to get to the water. To appease the farmers, the railroad built these cow tunnels.

There are also several other tunnels underneath the railroad which form passageways for small streams to trickle through to the river. The tunnels appear as solid today as the day they were built.

Post No. 4

{This text is similar to the wording that appears in the 1996 guide under 4. Site of Train Wreck — 1905.]

Continuing along the railroad bed approximately 1/4 mile to post No. 4. At 5 a.m. on September 30, 1905, two trains collided head on in Trumbull's worst train wreck in history. A champion bull, on the way to the Danbury Fair, was presumed dead. However, several hours after the crash the bull was found unharmed grazing in a nearby field. If you look hard enough, several fire bricks from the train's boiler could still be found around the site.

You have probably noticed several wildflowers growing along the trail, especially on the west bank. One of the more unusual wildflowers in the valley is the bloodroot. It is a small white flower that exudes a reddish substance when it is picked. (Please do not pick any flowers.) Another interesting flower is the wild lady slipper. It is a pink orchid-like flower that usually grows under the protection of a large hemlock tree. Along the gutters of the railroad bed, you'll see the unique jack-in-the-pulpit flower.

Post No. 5

[This text is similar to the wording that appears in the 1996 guide under 5. Former Long Hill Railroad Depot, but it has additional information in the last two paragraphs describing the vegetation and the witch hazel factory.]

Post No. 5 is at Whitney Avenue, which was the hub of all the valley's industrial activity. By following the path at the post marker down to the river, you'll get a view of many interesting sites. Looking north across the river from the bank, you'll see the remains of the Radcliffe Knit Mill. Long Hill Saw Mill operated directly across the river from Radcliffes, but its remains are difficult to see.

Both Radcliffe Knit Mill and the Long Hill Saw Mill used water power to operate their sewing machines and saws. A dam just below Whitney Avenue created a pond that supplied water to power the waterwheels of both mills. Often the water level of the pond dropped dramatically due to the extra heavy demand from one of the mills. This left the other mill without power because there was not enough water to turn the wheels fast enough. This resulted in an ongoing feud between the two mill owners that lasted until the sawmill closed for an unknown reason.

Whitney Avenue had been named Sawmill Road while the sawmill was operating.

Remnants Visible

Remnants of Radcliffe Knit Mill are still visible today including stone foundation piers, a water wheel shaft and the sluice. Sections of the dam, which like the foundation piers were built without mortar, are also still standing.

Just downriver from the mill site is a small stone chimney standing alone in a private yard. This chimney was once part of a cabin where "Honey" Kaatz was accidentally killed cleaning his hunting rifle. "Honey" was part of the family that owned Kaatz's Ice House.

Also downstream was "Trouten's Hole", the favorite swimming and fishing spot for the Long Hill youngsters in the early 1900s.

Return to the railroad bed and continue north a few 100 yards to Whitney Avenue. This is the location of the old Long Hill Depot. The depot was torn down in 1932, and the lumber was taken to Monroe where it was rebuilt as a private residence that still stands today.

Radcliffe's continue to operate until 1930, when the Easton Reservoir was built and most of the water from the Pequonnock River was diverted to Easton. This left Radcliffes without enough power to power its wheel and the mill was forced to close. The Bridgeport Hydraulic Company paid Radcliffe \$20,000 in compensation.

The pond served as a swimming and skating area until March of 1940 when an accumulation of ice and the spring thaw broke the dam. When you cross Whitney Avenue, be sure to look to your right to see the swamp area that once was the swimming and skating pond.

Please take care crossing Whitney Avenue as cars come around the bend in the road from the west are traveling at a high rate of speed. Motorists will not be expecting hikers to be crossing the road at this point. Just across Whitney Avenue, on your left, is the site of the old Freight House. It was often packed to the rafters with yarn for Radcliffe's Knit Mill, tobacco for Gabler's Cigar Factory, which was located on Broadway, and dry goods for the Long Hill General Store on Main Street. Today, the freight house still stands in Monroe as the Subway Sandwich Store. Before that, it was used as the Stepney Post Office. The Freight House, like the depot, was moved to Monroe in the early 30s.

[Motorists still cross the rail trail heading east on Whitney Avenue from Main Street at speed too fast for conditions, due to the steep hill. Caution is always advised when crossing the road. Visibility is much better to the east and since vehicles are moving uphill, their speed is typically more reasonable. There is flashing beacon that trail users can activate to warn motorists of their crossing.]

As late as 1950, the valley was full of wild grapes, witch hazel brush, filbert nuts and a variety of berries. In the fall, local residents could easily gather several baskets of natural foods on a Sunday afternoon in the valley. But gradually, the edible vegetation mysteriously disappeared. Soon afterwards, the wildlife that fed off the vegetation died off as well.

The witch hazel brush was used to make alcohol. Hoyt Bros. Witch Hazel Factory distilled the brush into an alcohol solution that was used as an astringent and aftershave lotion. Some of the early settlers also use it as a laxative, although this is not recommended today. The factory, formerly located behind the Kimberly Inn on Broadway, later became United Witch Hazel distillers. When the witch hazel brush disappeared in the valley, it was brought in from New Milford. The factory was originally built in the Civil War era and was originally the Tousey Shirt Factory. The factory burned down in 1974.

[The Kimberly Inn was a restaurant located on the east side of Main Street slightly north of Broadway and closed the mid 1990s when the owners retired. The site has been redeveloped into a strip mall. Wild Concord grapes, witch hazel, hazelnut [filbert] trees and berries, including blueberries, huckleberries, blackberries, black raspberries, and blackberries are all common native plants in Connecticut woods. If they disappeared it is most likely because they were overharvested or disturbed by people. Another threat to native plants is invasive species that outcompete them. There are plenty of winged euonymus shrubs along the railroad bed. The former reservoir bed has many autumn olive shrubs. Bittersweet vines can be seen wrapped around trees in different areas.]

Post No. 6

As you continue north along the railroad bed to Post No. 6, you'll notice the bed has been cut out of solid rock. During severe winters, snow would often pile up between the rocks blocking all train traffic. At Post No. 6, there is another small trail that leads down to the river. It will take you to the one of the most scenic points on this hike. At the base of this trail along the river bank, you will see the remains of Beer's Grist Mill across the water. A bridge crossed the river at the mill site and the road then extended all the way into Tashua and Monroe. Looking upstream you will see a huge boulder towering above the river. This is the rock from which Parlor Rock Amusement Park derived its name.

Post No. 7

[This section overlaps sections 7. Parlor Rock Overlook (The Rock) and 8. Old Dam Site and Foot Bridge Ruins from the 1996 guide, but the wording is somewhat different.]

Follow the red ribbons along the river and up the embankment to the top of Parlor Rock. The map at Post No. 7, will show you what Parlor Rock offered pleasure seekers in 1900.

In 1891, for 25 cents you could buy a round trip train ticket from Bridgeport to Parlor Rock and enjoy the day swimming, roller skating, dancing, romancing, fishing, or playing baseball and croquet. For another 25 cents, you could rent a rowboat and spend a lazy afternoon with your sweetheart on Lake High-High. It was a grand place indeed.

The amusement park was owned by the Housatonic Railroad and operated from 1878 to 1908. A dam on the Pequonnock River created Lake High-High above it and Lake Low-Low below it. High-High was used for boating and Low-Low for swimming. A footbridge over the dam provided a perfect place to steal a kiss on a warm summer evening as moonlight danced across the water.

Six gazebos, used as picnic places, were scattered throughout the park. At least four are still standing in the backyards of Trumbull residents. The largest gazebo was 12 feet 6 inches by 10 feet 4 inches. It is now at the home of Roger A. Peet, 87 Broadway.

[The gazebo is still listed on the property card for 87 Broadway, but with a different owner.]

Parlor Rock was more than just a summertime retreat. During the winter, pleasure seekers could enjoy thrills on the giant toboggan slide or skate to music on Lake High-High.

Today, Parlor Rock is engulfed in silence, except for the babbling of the river and the occasional cry of a songbird. Most of the park's natural beauty still remains, although Route 25 cuts through its heart.

[Parlor Rock is anything but silent today with traffic on Route 25 roaring by overhead.]

Following the red ribbons you will come to Post No. 7A which is the site of the old dam and footbridge. The dam created Lake High-High upstream where couples dallied away Sunday afternoons in rowboats and young boys fished. Beneath the dam was Lake Low-Low where children swam and frolicked in the water.

Continue following the red ribbons underneath the new thruway bridge [Route 25] and take a sharp left. Still following the red ribbons you will make your way again to the old railroad bed which will take you into Old Mine Park.

Long before white men came to Trumbull, Indian searched the hills of present-day Old Mine Park for the white quartz rock for their arrowheads. Later the area became grazing land for a wealthy farmer. In the late 1800s, it was a bustling tungsten mine. And today, the northernmost part of Trumbull's Pequonnock Valley is a popular recreation area.

While the area was used as a public park since 1937 when Mickey Sciortino of 6202 Main Street built a small dam and dug out the first swimming hole, remnants of other activities that date back 200 years are still evident today.

Post No. 8

[The notes in this section overlap with some different wording and details information from the 1996 guide in these sections: 23. The Tunnel, 24. Old Kiln Ruins, 25. The Cut, and 26. The Quarry.]

Old Mine Park is Post No. 8. If you do not wish to hike around the park (approximately 1 mile) you may board buses for your return trip to Trumbull Center.

If you wish to hike around the park, follow the red ribbons to Post No. 8A. This is the best example of strip mining in the park. Several boulders that must have been carved out shortly before the mine was closed are still piled at the base of the outcropping. Traces of iron in the rock of oxidized, forming rust-colored veins across the surface of the boulders.

Steam powered drills were used to break off chunks of rock. Cranes, also powered by steam, lifted the rock onto narrow gauge railroad cars. Further down the path, which was once part of the mine's narrow-gauge railroad, is a gaping hole carved out of solid rock 100 feet long, 10 feet wide and 60 feet deep. This is Post 8B. This was a large vein of quartz known as "Champion Lode." It represents a mining technique known as quarry mining.

Twenty years ago, a hiker from Bridgeport fell into the hole and was trapped for more than a full day. Finally, a nearby resident heard his calls for help and notified police. Many animals were not so lucky. Before the town fenced in the hole, animal skeletons could always be seen in the quarry.

At the bottom of the quarry, a tunnel begins that extended a quarter mile to the lower part of the park. Narrow gauge railroad tracks ran through the tunnel that enabled miners to transport stone out of the quarry without lifting it to the top of the hole. Most of this tunnel has long since collapsed.

Up until 25 years ago, most of the tracks and railroad cars were still in the park. The children of Long Hill spent hours riding railroad cars down the hill and then pulling them back to the top for another ride.

You now have about a half-mile walk to Post No. 8C, which is the remains of the old kiln. This kiln was used to reduce limestone to lime by burning.

The third mining technique used in this area was tunnel mining. You will see an old tunnel at Post 8D. John Willis remembers that, as a boy, he would listen politely as his father described in detail the interior of the 300 foot long tunnel. Little John didn't dare let on that he had been in the tunnel many times, because children were forbidden from going inside. The main tunnel had several offshoots from which tungsten was mined.

After the mine buildings burned down in 1916, several companies investigated the possibility of rebuilding it. However as cheaper substitutes were developed for strengthening steel, demand for tungsten plunged. The town of Trumbull finally took over the property to cover delinquent taxes.

In more recent times, geologists from several universities have found traces of uranium, gold, coal, and copper in the hill.

Until about 1970, the Trumbull Police Department used a portion of the park as its target range. When officers were through firing, local youngsters scurried to dig the bullets out of the rock. The lead was ideal for making fishing sinkers.

This concludes your hike through the Valley. We hope you have enjoyed spending this afternoon touring one of Trumbull's most scenic and historic areas. Buses are available to transport you back to Trumbull Center.

Again, thank you for your participation.

Ben Gumm
John Willis
Paul Timpanelli

For extra copies of this guidebook send \$1.00 per copy to:

Valley Guide Book
c/o Trumbull Times
P.O. Box. 298
Trumbull, CT 06611

Allow three weeks for delivery.

[There are no copies of the guidebook for sale in 2022. Further, this is no longer the address of the newspaper.]

Hike Through the Valley

Welcome to Hike Through the Valley 1990

Over 7,200 people have participated in the six previous “Hikes” sponsored by the Trumbull Times. The first “Hike,” held in 1981, grew out of a series of stories published in The Times about the valley.

Since 1981, Trumbull residents have become fascinated with the natural beauty and historical significance of the Valley. When the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company – which owned the Valley up to last year – announced its intention to sell the property in 1987, Trumbull residents rose enmass to insist that the Valley be kept as open space.

The result was an agreement by the State of Connecticut and the Town of Trumbull to jointly purchase 385 acres for \$9.2 million. This is the first Hike Through the Valley since the public purchase of the property.

[The exact cost at the time of purchase was \$9,275,000 for 382 acres.]

All six previous hikes began in Trumbull Center, followed the old Housatonic Railroad Bed into Parlor Rock and ended in Old Mine Park. If you would like a guide booklet for that “Hike,” please ask for one at the registration tables. Today's “Hike” will follow a totally new trail, much of which was undiscovered by hike leaders Dr. John Willis and Ben Gumm until this year. The trail you will follow today is only one of hundreds throughout The Valley.

[The information about the previous hikes refers to the 1980s guide.]

Before the State and Town purchased the Valley, the entire property was off limits to everyone except hunters and fishermen in season. Today, the Valley is open for all to enjoy.

Since the public purchase of the Valley came only a few months ago, there were no trail markers or guideposts anywhere in the Valley. Therefore, it is quite easy for people unfamiliar with the area to get lost while visiting the Valley on their own.

Today's hike is intended to introduce you to the Valley so that you can come back and enjoy this great natural resource on your own many times in the future. The Pequonnock Valley is an unspoiled natural sanctum filled with wildlife, lush vegetation and awesome geologic features. It's a perfect environment for hiking, picnicking and camping.

Pink ribbons and this map will help you to follow the trail for today's "Hike." However, feel free to venture off the trail if you like. But remember, this is an unspoiled wilderness. It is very easy to get lost.

[I have never heard of the Valley being used for camping. The map that accompanies this guide refers to the main trail as "Great North South Trail (Pink Trail), which is currently blazed White at the southern end, Blue and White in the middle section, and White near Indian Ledge Park.]

Please do not litter anywhere on the trail. Portable restrooms will be at the end of the trail in Indian Ledge Park. Buses will transport hikers from Indian Ledge Park back to the commuter parking lot at Daniels Farm Road from 2:30 to 5 p.m.

Hikers are encouraged to explore the ruins of the Radcliffe Shirt Factory that can be found approximately 200 yards east of the trail in Indian Ledge Park. The Schmidt Waterfall in Indian Ledge Park is an [The wording is uncertain at the space between two pages, but I think it says something like "an ideal spot to picnic while waiting for the buses."]

After taking this hike, we hope you'll agree that the entire Pequonnock Valley should be reserved for hiking, picnicking, fishing and camping. Currently, hunting is allowed in this Valley throughout most of the year.

It is clear that hunting poses and imminent danger to anyone who is using the Valley for other activities. If this Valley is to enjoy SAFELY by the great majority of area residents, hunting must be banned. Soon, a public hearing the issue of hunting in the Pequonnock Valley will be held. Please come join your friends and neighbors in attending this hearing and let your opposition to hunting be heard.

This guide map is provided through courtesy of L&J Printers, 1030 Madison Ave., Bridgeport, CT.

[This is the guide from 1996]:

Your Guide to the Pequonnock River Valley

Welcome to the Pequonnock River Valley. Your hike today will take you past many historic sites, while you enjoy some of the most beautiful scenery in New England. The darker green areas on the map are exclusively owned by the Town of Trumbull and are maintained as town parks. The lighter green area had been owned by the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company, the local water provider until 1989. At that time it was sold to the State of Connecticut in partnership with the Town of Trumbull.

The Pequonnock Valley is almost exclusively a passive recreational area. You will see very little evidence of the activities of man. For more than 100 years, most of the valley had been off limits to human activity as was classified watershed land.

Things, however, were much different near the end of the 19th century. At that time, the Valley was teeming with activity from several commercial mills that lined the Pequonnock River. Parlor Rock, at the north end of the Valley, was the area's premier amusement park. Hundreds of miners mined for tungsten in what is now Old Mine Park. A busy railroad operated passenger and freight trains through the heart of the valley.

During your hike, you'll see fascinating remains of the Valley's colorful history. Most of the information in this guide sheet came from information passed out through several generations to Dr. John Willis — a local family physician. It was compiled in 1996 by Ben Gumm, publisher of the town's weekly newspaper the Trumbull Times. The map was created by the Town of Trumbull Public Works Department under the supervision of Public Works Director Paul Kallmeyer.

Most of the red trail traces the course of the Housatonic Railroad bed. The green trail follows several deer, foot and cart paths that were cut through the Valley hundreds of years ago.

[The 1996 map used a red dashed line to represent the railroad bed, formerly known as the Housatonic Rail Trail, in reference to the name of the former railroad, which is now called the Pequonnock River Trail, because it parallels the river. The map uses a green line to show the main trail, which is now blazed White in the southern section, Blue-White in the middle section, and Blue in the northern section. The guide refers to these as the red trail and green trail. The best and only real map of the Pequonnock River Valley was created by Rich Coffey, a mountain biker who organized a series of work parties to improve the trail, and also did all the blazing. He also created a map for Old Mine Park. Rich was very helpful in the preparation of this commentary on the original guides.]

Map: <http://vizettes.com/pequonnockvalley/maps/index.htm>

1. Old Trumbull Reservoir

[The southern boundary of the reservoir bed is east of the rail trail, 1 mile north of Tait Road, extending another 0.5 miles to the north. On the east side of the river, the reservoir bed is 0.6 miles north of Park Street, extending another 0.6 miles to the north. The cliff with the painted billboard is 0.65 miles north of Park Street, just east of the Blue Trail.]

About one mile north of the Tait Road [Tait Road without an s is the correct name] entrance to the red trail [railroad bed] are remains of a dam that once held back the Trumbull Reservoir. This reservoir, which was owned by the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company, provided most of the water to the city of Bridgeport during the 1800s and early 1900s. When the Easton Reservoir was built around 1930, the Trumbull Reservoir was no longer used. The reservoir was drained by dismantling the dam after boy drowned in 1935. Most of the brick and mortar was carried downstream by the rushing water or bulldozed into the hills. However, several rusted metal valves and pipes are still visible imbedded in solid boulders.

[Along the railroad bed, 0.95 miles north of Tait Road, walk directly down to the river. Large flat rocks are piled along the east bank of the river. These are probably the rocks from the original dam. There is no official path to reach this spot. At 1 mile north of Tait Road, a wide path angles down to the river and the former reservoir bed.]

[Along the White Trail, 0.7 miles north of Park Street are narrow twin pipes sticking up vertically from a rock, a wide pipe with a grate projecting vertically, and a section of wide pipe laying on the ground. Another narrow pipe may be seen sticking up 1.25 miles north of Park Street.]

Thousands of years before the dam was built, the Pequonnock River followed a course that took it about 500 feet east and 50 feet above its present course. The dam builders used this old riverbed, which cuts through solid rock to form deep grooves, as the dam spillway. Towering above the old river bed is a huge flat rock ledge that must have been Trumbull's first billboard. Large, faded letters in the advertisement which was painted on the rock more than 100 years ago, are still visible. Their long life can be attributed to an overlap hanging hemlock that protects them from rain, snow and wind. The advertising is directed toward train passengers riding the old Housatonic Railroad. [This advertisement was almost completely worn away by 2022. Visible at the top right side of rock face were the letters C stacked on top of the letter S. The letter O is partially visible to the right of the C.]

2. Old Trumbull Ice House Ruins

[Along the river side of the rail trail, 1.3 miles north of Tait Road]

Before refrigerators were invented, ice houses were common in America. Ice was cut off the frozen lakes and ponds and winter, and stored throughout the year in ice houses. Sawdust was poured in between the layers of ice to retard the melting process.

Ruins of the Trumbull Ice House foundation (approximately 135 feet by 75 feet) are clearly visible just east of the railroad tracks. The Trumbull Ice House was much larger and about 50 years older than the better known Kaatz's Ice House, which once stood adjacent to what is now the Trumbull Veterans Center on Whitney Avenue.

The east wall of the Trumbull Ice House edged up to the shoreline of the reservoir and the west wall abutted the railroad tracks. Remains of a horse-powered elevator, which lifted huge chunks of ice to the top of the ice house and later lowered them down to waiting railroad cars, still exist. The ice house was staffed by farmers and mill workers who welcomed the opportunity to work during the winter months when their primary occupations were dormant.

Because the grade of the railroad bed was a continuous downward slope all the way to the Bridgeport Railroad Station, only a brakeman was needed on the trains that transported ice to the city. Frank Smith, a Long Hill resident for almost 90 years, remembers hearing stories of the ice house in operation. He said that one night several cars, which were loaded with ice, broke loose from the Long Hill Depot. Because of the continuous downward slope of the railroad bed, the cars never stopped until they arrived at the station in Bridgeport.

[The foundation is quite obvious, as a large flat area to the east of the railroad bed, facing the flat area of the former reservoir bed. Long Hill is the name of the western section of Trumbull. From the river side, the foundation is even more impressive. The rocks are piled about six feet high at the southern end and about 10 feet high at the northern end. There is second stone foundation located 1.4 miles from Tait Road that is about 20 feet long and located about 20 feet from the river. This foundation is not mentioned in the guide and I have found no information about it. The Trumbull Veterans Center that replaced Kaatz's Ice House was demolished in 2017 and was scheduled in 2022 to be replaced by another Veterans Center.]

3. Cow Tunnels

[Under the railroad bed, 1.85 and 2.10 miles north of Tait Road]

There are two tunnels in this vicinity with that passed beneath the railroad tracks. When the railroad was built in 1840, farmers in the Valley complained bitterly that the tracks cut off their fields from the river. They worried that their cows would be killed crossing the tracks to get to the water. To appease the farmers, the railroad built these tunnels underneath the tracks so that the cows could pass safely from their field to the river.

There are also smaller drainage channels onto the tracks. All the tunnels appear to be in excellent condition, even though there are more than 150 years old.

Extended Commentary:

The railroad bed has structures underneath it that are mostly focused on drainage: some are pipes and others are rectangular tunnels. Some of the structures are metal pipes with a diameter of about three feet surrounded by granite blocks. Others are black PVC pipes with a diameter of one foot. There is also one concrete pipe. Any of the structures are higher on the east side facing the river than the west side, in part because some of the ground on the west side has been raised by rocks and dirt carried there by flowing water.

I made note of all the culverts and tunnels under the railroad bed, counting some 19 structures from 0.2 miles to 2.3 miles north of Tait Road. Some are culverts with a pipe

made from metal, plastic, or concrete. Some are low granite tunnels about two to three feet in height.

There are six granite tunnels large enough to walk through and I walked through them all. Distance from Tait Road: 1.35 miles, 1.5 miles, 1.85 miles, 2.05 miles, 2.1 miles, and 2.2 miles.

The two tunnels that I would identify as the cow tunnels are the ones at mile 1.85 and mile 2.1, as these are wider than the other four and also have a smooth floor.

The tunnels are the most interesting structures to view, as they are created from rectangular slabs of granite. The first one is located 0.2 miles from Tait Road with stepped walls and is one of the smaller ones, about three feet and two feet wide.

There are six large tunnels with the first one located 1.35 miles and the last one at 2.2 miles from the Tait Road gate.

Tunnel 1 (1.35 miles): West face (46 in. high); East face (66 in. high). Width: 36 in. The rock floor is stepped as it slopes downhill. A steep eroded channel from the west feeds into this tunnel.

Tunnel 2 (1.5 miles): West face (40 in. high); East face (50 in. high). Width: 30 in. The side walls on the west side are stepped. The rock floor is sloped. Water was running through this tunnel on Feb. 21, 2022.

Tunnel 3 (1.85 miles): West face (42 in. high); East face (72 in. high). Width: 45 in. The floor has large rock slabs that are fairly smooth.

Tunnel 4 (2.05 miles): West face (52 in. high); East face (72 in. high). Width: Varies from 34 inches on the west side to 42 inches on the east side. There are small sharp rocks lining the bottom of this tunnel.

Tunnel 5 (2.1 miles): West face (44 in. high); East face (65 in. high). Width: Varies from 50 inches on the west side to 52 inches on the east side. The floor is smooth cement with a moderate slope down from west to east.

Tunnel 6 (2.2 miles): West face (64 in. high); East face (57 in. high). Width: Varies from 42 inches on the west side to 35 inches on the east side. This tunnel has an entry that angles on the west side and the sides are formed from stepped rocks. There are also a few rocks at the west tunnel entry that form steps into it. This tunnel connects to a drainage channel that parallels the railroad bed.

In the 1934 aerial photos, the land west of the railroad bed is mostly cleared and lined with stone walls, clearly being used as farm or pasture land. The area between the railroad tracks and the river was also cleared in the 1934 photo from a point as if one extended Wauneta Road to the river on the north and Gwendolyn Drive to the river on the south. There are two paths to the railroad bed from the western fields, both starting about 0.05 miles west of the railroad bed.

One path angles sharply down the hill from a field to the west of where Gwendolyn Drive is now located to a point opposite where Oakland Drive is now located, coming out to the railroad bed 1.85 miles from Tait Road, the location of Tunnel 3. When traced on a modern map, the path is about 0.08 miles long with a drop in elevation from 330 feet at the farm to 260 feet at the railroad bed.

Another path angles down from the ridge, starting a point to the west of Carmel Ridge and meeting the railroad bed 2.1 miles from Tait Road, the location of Tunnel 5. If

Elizabeth Street were continued, it would meet the railroad bed at this point. When traced on a modern map, the path is about 0.2 miles long with a drop in elevation from 310 feet at the farm to 255 feet at the railroad bed.

In 2022, there are several paths that head west from the railroad bed, and most appear to be recent, informal paths. I did not see the path coming out at mile 1.85. There does appear to be a path that comes out at mile 2.1, but it was blocked with brush a short distance from the railroad bed and I did not follow it further.

These are the links to aerial photos for the Pequonnock River Valley from the website for the Connecticut State Library, Aerial Photographs of Connecticut:
<https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4005coll10>

Photo 03531 Old Mine Park, Parlor Rock and Pequonnock Valley
<https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4005coll10/id/7868/rec/2924>

Photo 03529, Middle Pequonnock Valley down to Trumbull Dam
<https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4005coll10/id/8188/rec/2922>

Photo 03528, Middle to Lower Pequonnock Valley
<https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4005coll10/id/8187/rec/2921>

Photo 03528, Lower Pequonnock Valley
<https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4005coll10/id/8186/rec/2920>

4. Site of Trail Wreck – 1905

[Along the rail trail, 0.35 miles south of Whitney Avenue]

Two trains collided head on in Trumbull's worst train wreck in history. A champion bull, on the way to the Danbury Fair, was presumed dead. However, several hours after the crash the bull was found unharmed grazing in a nearby field. If you look hard enough, several fire bricks from the train's boiler could still be found around the site.

[Along the west side of the railroad bed in this same location is a rectangular concrete block about three feet high and six feet long, which is not mentioned in any of these guides. The block is covered with a large multi-flora rose shrub. Since I could not find any information on the block, I can only guess at its use. Perhaps it was the base of a post for a sign or signal.]

5. Former Long Hill Railroad Depot

[The railroad depot was along the rail trail, just south of Whitney Avenue. The ruins of the Radcliffe mill are best seen along the east side of the river, just south of Whitney Avenue. From the playground at Indian Ledge Park, walk along the unblazed trails that lead over the top of the rock formation and down to the river.]

The area just south of Whitney Avenue was once the hub of the Valley's industrial activity. Two mills were once located at this site – Radcliffe Knit Mill stood on the east side of the river and the Long Hill Saw Mill operated on the west side. The Long Hill Railroad Depot stood on almost the exact location of the present day pumping station. Many ruins from Radcliffe's mill still remain, including stone foundation piers, a water wheel shaft and the sluice. Sections of the dam, which like the foundation piers were built without mortar, are also still standing.

Both mills used water power to operate their machinery. A dam just below Whitney Avenue created a pond that supplied water to power the waterwheels of both mills. Often the water level of the pond dropped dramatically due to the extra heavy demand from one of the mills. This left the other mill without power because there was not enough water to turn the wheels fast enough. This resulted in an ongoing feud between the two mill owners that lasted until the sawmill closed for an unknown reason. Whitney Avenue had been named Sawmill Road while the sawmill was operating. Radcliffe's mill continue to operate until 1930, when the Easton Reservoir was built and most of the water from the Pequonnock River was diverted to Easton. This left Radcliffe without enough power to power its wheel and the mill was forced to close. The Bridgeport Hydraulic Company, which diverted the water into its new reservoir, compensated the mill owners for the closing of their business.

Just downriver from the mill site is a small stone chimney standing alone in a private yard. This chimney was once part of a cabin where "Honey" Kaatz was accidentally killed cleaning his hunting rifle. "Honey" was part of the family that owned Kaatz's Ice House.

Just below the dam site is the "Trouten's Hole", a favorite swimming and fishing spot for the Long Hill youngsters in the early 1900s.

The railroad depot on this site was torn down in 1932, and the lumber was taken to Monroe where it was used in the construction of a private residence.

Just north of Whitney Avenue, you can see the flat area on the east side of the railroad bed that was once the mill pond. In addition to providing water to power the mills, the pond was a popular place for swimming and skating. In March of 1940 however an accumulation of melting ice damaged the dam that formed the pond. The dam was dismantled and the pond passed into history.

On the west side of the railroad bed, just across from the mill pond, stood the old freight house. It was often packed to the rafters with yarn for Radcliffe's Knit Mill, tobacco for Gabler's Cigar Factory, which was located on Broadway, or dry goods for the Long Hill General Store, which was located on Main Street where the Mase Building stands today. The freight house was moved, intact to Monroe in the early 30s. It was first used as the Stepney Post Office and now houses the Subway Sandwich Shop.

[There are no signs of the old freight house. The Mase building is a small office building at 6515 Main St., Trumbull, across from the Long Hill Green. Hometown Publications had its offices there in the late 1980s and through about 1996 before the offices moved to 1000 Bridgeport Ave., Shelton.]

6. Solid rock railroad bed and passage

[Along the rail trail 0.15 miles north of Whitney Avenue, just before the turn to head uphill and under the Route 25 overpass]

About midway between Whitney Avenue and the Route 25 Expressway, you'll notice the railroad bed has been cut through solid rock. During severe winters snow would often pile up between the rocks and effectively block all train traffic. When that happened the railroad company would send out work crews with snow shovels to remove the blockage.

7. Parlor Rock Overlook (The Rock)

[Along the rail trail on the east side, just before the Route 25 overpass]

The enormous rock outcropping, towering straight up from the Pequonnock River, is known as Parlor Rock. This rock was the focal point of the amusement park that took its name.

In 1891, you could buy a round trip train ticket from Bridgeport to Parlor Rock Amusement Park for 25 cents. Swimming, roller skating, dancing, romancing, fishing, softball and croquet were just some of the activities that drew thousands of pleasure seekers. For another 25 cents, you could rent a rowboat and spend a lazy afternoon with your sweetheart on Lake High-High. It was a grand place indeed.

The park was owned by the Housatonic Railroad and operated from 1878 to 1908. Six gazebos were scattered throughout the park to be used for family picnics. At least four of the gazebos were moved to private residences in Trumbull when the park closed. The largest gazebo is 12 feet 6 inches by 10 feet 4 inches.

Parlor Rock was more than just a summertime retreat. During the winter, pleasure seekers could enjoy thrills on the giant toboggan slide or skate to music on Lake High-High.

[The term amusement park as used in the late 1800s to early 1900s had absolutely no relation to an amusement park in 2022 which has mechanically powered rides. The entry above describes what people would do at the amusement park at Parlor Rock. This area is to the east of the railroad bed and the bypass under the Route 25 bridge. The best way to view this area is by following the unblazed trails that lead between the gap in the fence for the rail trail over toward the river.

A map of Parlor Rock can be viewed here:

<http://www.vizettes.com/pequonnockvalley/parlor-rock/index.htm>

The Trumbull Historical Society has a detailed article about Parlor Rock with photos at this link: <https://www.trumbullhistory.org/the-parlor-rock-story.html>

8. Old Dam Site and Foot Bridge Ruins

[Along the rail trail on the east side, just before the Route 25 overpass]

The Route 25 Expressway cuts through the area where Lake High-High once shimmered in the sunlight. Just south of the Expressway are visible ruins of the dam, which created Lake High-High above the dam, and Lake Low-Low below it. A footbridge over the dam provided a perfect place to steal a kiss on a warm summer evening. With the backdrop of moonlight dancing across the rippling water, the park took on a magical aura.

Although Parlor Rock area was virtually deserted for more than 80 years after the amusement park closed, its natural beauty has recently been discovered by hikers and mountain bikers.

[The Lake High-High Dam remains are visible below the house across the river. The Lake Low-Low Dam remains are visible by looking south from the sidewalk where Whitney Avenue crosses the Pequonnock River, just east of the railroad bed.]

9. Wooden Bridge Rails to Trails Project – 1995

[On the rail trail over the Pequonnock River, 0.4 miles north of Monroe Tpke. (Rt. 111) and 0.05 miles south of Spring Hill Rd.]

The course of the old railroad bed extends northwest of Route 111 behind the industrial building just across the from the entrance to Old Mine Park. About one third one half-mile northwest of Route 111 is a foot bridge that was built in 1995. It replaced the old railroad bridge that had been dismantled shortly after the railroad discontinued its trains to the area.

This footbridge is the first phase of a proposed “Rails to Trails” project that would create a footpath along the old railroad bed. The path would extend through the northern part of Trumbull, the entire length of Monroe, and into the old Botsford train station in Newtown.

[In 1996, the railroad bed was unimproved, but had a solid surface from its years of service for the railroad, Over the years and through different projects, the railroad bed was improved to its current condition, which includes bypasses in various areas where the original railroad bed had been displaced. The trail has several on-road sections. The Newtown section remains unimproved, in part because the railroad bed passes by Batchelder, a contaminated industrial site. As of 2022, no government agency has created a useable map for the entire rail trail.]

10. Eagle Bridge – Relocated Eagle Scout Project – 1991

[Along the east side of the river, 1.6 miles north of Park Street]

This is the first footbridge built in the Valley during the modern era. It was constructed entirely by volunteers according to specifications provided by the State of Connecticut.

[This bridge spanning the Pequonnock River was washed away during a flood and was never replaced. I have no information on what year that happened.]

11. Overlook

[Just south of Indian Ledge Park, 1.2 miles north of Park Street]

From this vantage point you can get a panoramic view of the Pequonnock River and the upper reservoir bed. Take a moment to appreciate the awesome beauty and majestic nature of at this site. On most mornings many forms of wildlife are present.

[The flat area of the old reservoir bed with smaller trees is sometimes called the Serengeti, taking its name from the vast area of plains in Africa.]

12. Black Pool and Falls

[East of the railroad bed, 1.5 miles north of Tait Road, and as an outcropping along the Blue Trail, 1.75 miles north of Park Street]

Hundreds of years of rushing water can create well-defined sculptures of solid rock. At this site the process is still of evolving. Throughout the Valley, you’ll see many examples of natural sculptures within dried up riverbeds. The Black Pool is an excellent place to fish for trout.

13. Dry Riverbed and Gorge Area

[Along the southwest border of Indian Ledge Park, 1.4 miles north of Park Street]

Sculpted rock in this area mark the original course of the Pequonnock River. The river emptied into the north end of the reservoir.

14. Tall Pines Area, Inner Sanctum

[Along the west border of Indian Ledge Park, 1.5 miles north of Park Street]

This is one of the most beautiful areas in the Valley. Some of the trees tower over 135 feet tall and are as many years old. Take time to reflect and meditate in this natural cathedral.

[The evergreen trees in this area are impressive, but they not white pines — they are hemlocks. White pine needles are about two to four inches long, grow in clusters of five, and are round. Hemlock needles are about half an inch long, grow in pairs on opposite sides of branches, and are flat. The hemlocks in this area are holding up better than many hemlocks in Fairfield County, but they are still afflicted by the invasive woolly adelgid.]

15. Charcoal Pits Area

[Near the east side of the river, just before the Slant Rock Brook crossing, 1.6 miles north of Park Street]

There are many charcoal pits on both sides of the Great Trail, which was originally a logging road. The pits were primitive kilns that were piled high with smoldering hardwood and covered with dirt. Water was needed to keep the piles from breaking out in fire. Charcoal was used during the mid-19th century in the production of brass and steel. All that is visible today are the large dug circles, which are about 50 feet across. The centers are still very black, once the newly fallen leaves are cleared away.

16. Slant Rock Brook crossing

[Near the east side of the river, 1.6 miles north of Park Street; sometimes there is a bridge at this crossing, when it has not gotten washed away]

Slant Rock Brook got its name from a geologic formation far upstream near the base of the Route 25 crossing.

17. Jeep Crossing Trail

[Along the rail trail, 1.6 miles north of Tait Road and 0.7 miles south of Whitney Avenue. Along the east side of the river, 2.2 miles north of Park Street]

This trail is very short and connects the Great North-South trail with the Railroad Bed Trail. There is no bridge, but the water is usually never more than knee deep.

18. Town of Trumbull Composting Area

[In the southern section of Indian Ledge Park, east of the Red Trail.]

This area is a state of the art composting site which accepts leaves from the townwide leaf pickup held each fall. Through the natural process of decomposition, the leaves are changed into usable topsoil for use in many town projects. [The compost area in 2022 is located south of where it is shown on the 1996 map.]

19. Coyote Crossing, Eagle Scout Project 1993

[Along the rail trail, 0.3 miles south of Whitney Avenue or 2.4 miles north of Tait Road; along the Blue Trail, 0.3 miles south of the junction with Indian Ledge Park Road]

Like the Valley's other footbridge, this bridge was constructed by volunteers as part of an Eagle Scout project. Shortly after construction was completed, the volunteers saw three young coyotes crossing the bridge. This is how the bridge got its name.

[And like the other bridge spanning the Pequonnock River, it got washed away in a flood. In this case it happened in fall 2018 and was never replaced. In Feb. 2022, this bridge was visible along the east side of the river, 1.95 miles north of Tait Road.]

20. Indian Ledge Park Parking

[At the end of Indian Ledge Park Road, south of the BMX track and north of the soccer fields. Parking is restricted to vehicles with a current Trumbull sticker.]

Ancient Indians, who lived near Long Island Sound, once used this area as a campsite during their several hunting expeditions into the interior. More Indian arrowheads have been found in this park than in any other area of Trumbull. The clear evidence of Indian activity at the site, and the dramatic rock ledges gave the park its name. Schmidt Waterfall is an ideal place for a rest stop or picnic lunch.

21. Indian Ledge Park Entrance

[The entrance at 375 Indian Ledge Park Road, is off Whitney Avenue, 0.4 miles east of Main St. (Rt. 111).]

In addition to natural beauty, Indian Ledge Park features a softball diamond, soccer fields, BMX Bike Track, bocce court, and amphitheater. There are washroom facilities at the parking lot which are open in season.

Shortly after World War II, two military aviators were killed in a plane crash in the park. A plaque marks the site of the tragedy. Indian Ledge is one of Trumbull's oldest parks.

[Since this guide was written in 1996, the town also added a playscape, splash pad, radio control track, Teen Youth Center, and dog park. The picnic tables by the playscape are a good spot for a lunch break on a hike.]

[Old Mine Park]

[Distances to features within Old Mine Park are described in relation to the short bridge with the metal gate over the river at the end of the pond (not the large footbridge over the pond). The trails at Old Mine Park are confusing to follow because there are many unofficial, unblazed trails. Further, the two official trails, Blue and Orange, are marked with small circles, which, over the years, are typically in faded condition.

The official town map, which shows just the Blue and Orange Trails, but not the unblazed trails is published here:

<https://www.trumbull-ct.gov/DocumentCenter/View/724/Old-Mine-Park-Map-PDF>

Rich Coffey's Old Mine Park website is here. The site includes a map showing all the trails in the park with numbers to show where the different features are located:

<http://vizettes.com/peguonnockvalley/oldmine/index.htm>

The state has a Bedrock Geologic Map of Old Mine Park available here, which shows the locations of the historic features:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Geology/Bedrock-Geologic-Map-of-Old-Mine-Park>

22. Old Mine Park Entrance

[The entrance road is called Old Mine Road and intersects Route 111 (now called Monroe Turnpike), 0.15 miles north of Route 25.]

Long before white men came to Trumbull, Indian searched the hills of present-day Old Mine Park for the white quartz rock that they used for making for their arrowheads. Later the area became grazing land for a wealthy farmer. In the late 1800s, a thriving tungsten mine was developed. The mine prospered for a while, but eventually demand for tungsten declined as cheaper substitutes for strengthening steel were discovered.

When some of the mine's buildings burned in 1916, the mining company shut down. In 1937, 61 acres of the old mine were turn over to the town of Trumbull in lieu of allegedly unpaid taxes. Soon thereafter, Long Hill resident Mickey Sciortino built the small dam and dug the swimming hole that is still used today.

When the mine was in operation, an extensive network of narrow gauge railroad tracks carried rocks and materials from the mines, to the kiln and eventually the freight cars on the Housatonic Railroad. Most of the narrow gauge tracks and cars remained in Old Mine Park until the mid 1950s. The children of Long Hill spent many hours riding the railroad cars down the hill, and then pulling them back to the top for another ride. Hiking trails around the park are all former narrow gauge railroad beds.

In more recent times geologists from several universities have found traces of uranium, gold, coal and copper in the hill. However, the quantities are not sufficient to be mined profitably.

Until about 1970, the Trumbull Police Department used a portion of the park as a shooting range. When officers were through shooting, local youngsters scurried to dig the bullets out of the rock. The lead was ideal for making fishing sinkers.

In the last few years, the town's Park Commission has clashed with local environmentalists over the feeding of Canadian geese in the park. That controversy has not been resolved.

[The town ended use of the pond at Old Mine Park as a swimming hole in the 1990s before this guide was published, lowering the pond level by removing boards in the dam. The closure was due to concerns of elevated bacteria levels in the water, resulting in part from the Canada geese in the park. The proper term is Canada geese, not Canadian, as the geese are not citizens of that country. The “controversy” was the town discouraging people from feeding the geese. Wild animals should never be fed for various reasons, including the fact that the bread people typically toss water birds is a poor substitute for the green plants that are their natural diet. The planting along the south side of the river that was completed in 2012 blocks the geese from accessing the river from that side. The birds can still get to the river from the grassy field along the north bank.]

23. The Tunnel

Several tunnels were dug into the hill as miners searched for the white quartz rock that once that contain tungsten. However, most have long since collapsed. The one remaining tunnel was dug primarily to store explosives. It is off limits to the public.

[This feature is also called the dynamite storage tunnel and it is located on the Blue Trail at the Orange Trail junction in Old Mine Park, 0.15 miles from the bridge; cross the bridge from the parking lot. Where the Blue Trail splits, follow the right fork to the junction with the Orange Trail where the picnic area with the pavilion is to the right. The ground-level tunnel is on the left behind a fence by a post with the number 3.]

24. Old Kiln Ruins

This kiln was used to reduce limestone to lime through burning. If you venture into the woods across the path of the kiln ruins, you may be able to find the miners’ concrete washbasin. Further east in the woods you can find foundation ruins of an old farmhouse. In the spring cultivated flowers still bloom around the foundation ruins.

[Located on the eastern loop of the Blue Trail in Old Mine Park near the Orange Trail at the northeast park border near Caldron Drive, 0.3 miles north of the bridge. The original guide does not mention the nearby Lime Quarry, which is just south of the Old Kiln Ruins, also on the west side of the Blue Trail. Nor does the original guide mention the Topaz Pit, located to the east of the Old Kiln Ruins, on an unblazed trail, just south of where the Orange Trail heads east toward Caldron Drive. A third feature briefly mentioned in the original guide (and not by name) is Little Eden, located on the Orange Trail, shortly after traversing a wooden footbridge over a small stream on the unblazed trail. About 100 south of unblazed trail on the Orange Trail is a circular stone basin with a fresh water spring, which may be what the guide refers to as the concrete washbasin. The foundation for the house at what the original homeowner called Little Eden is located 300 feet south of the stone basin, also on the west side of the trail.]

25. The Cut

The gaping hole, known as "The Cut" is 100 feet long, 10 feet wide and 60 feet deep. This is a large mass of quartz once known as "Champion Lode." It represents a mining technique known as quarry mining.

Thirty years ago, a hiker from Bridgeport fell into the hole and was trapped for more than 24 hours. Finally, a nearby resident heard his calls for help and notified police. Many animals have not been so lucky. Before the town placed a fence around "The Cut," animal skeletons could always be found at the bottom. At the bottom of "The Cut" a tunnel begins that extended a quarter mile to the lower part of the park. Narrow gauge railroad tracks ran through the tunnel that enabled miners to transport stone out of the quarry without lifting it to the top of the hole. Most of this tunnel has long since collapsed.

[Located on the Blue Trail within Old Mine Park, 0.2 miles north of the bridge. This fenced-in area is quite visible and obvious with the narrow, deep rectangular cut. The original guide does not mention the upper pit known as Lane's Mine, which is along the Blue Trail, 0.1 miles north of The Cut. Heading uphill from the cut, the Blue Trail comes to a T-intersection where Blue goes both left and right. Continue straight for another 200 feet through the woods. Lane's Mine is located to the right and is visible as a low area about 10 feet lower than the surrounding ground. A bit south of The Cut, the Blue Trail has two sharp drops of a foot or two, so be cautious when heading south from here on a bicycle.]

26. The Quarry

Steam powered drills were used to break off huge chunks of rocks from the hill. The rocks were then loaded onto narrow gauge railroad cars using a steam powered crane. The large rock outcropping, which is visible from the parking lot, is the best example of strip mining in the park. Several boulders that must have been carved out shortly before the mine was closed, are still piled at the base of the outcropping. Traces of iron in the rock have oxidized, forming rust-colored veins across the surface of the boulders.

[Located on the Blue Trail in Old Mine Park, 0.15 miles north of the bridge; cross the bridge from the parking lot. Turn left and walk about 150 feet. Where the wide trail starts to descend toward the field with the large pedestrian bridge, turn right and head uphill on the narrow Blue Trail. The quarry is on the right in another 0.05 miles, an exposed rock face about 30 feet high.]

.....
The printing of this map and directory was made possible by a gift from Hometown Publications, Inc. and Trumbull Printing, Inc.

Tom's Suggested Old Mine Park Loop Hike To View the Historic Features

This 1.3-mile loop highlights the major historical features at Old Mine Park. As you tour the remains of the mining operation, look for areas that were clearly excavated or high spots where the excavated dirt and rocks were piled. Some of these features were still marked with numbered wooden posts in 2022.

The numbers do not always correspond to the markers on the map at the kiosk. The map on the kiosk has the wrong location for Little Eden, shown as number 8. Little Eden is south of the unblazed trail, not north of it.

Starting from the three-sided kiosk in the Old Mine Park parking lot, cross the Pequonnock River on the adjacent bridge, which has a metal gate on the opposite side. After crossing the bridge, immediately turn left on a woods road that is part of the Blue Trail. Walk another 150 feet and where the woods road descends toward the open field, turn right and head uphill on the narrow Blue Trail, which soon widens and follows the path of the original mine railroad bed. In 0.1 miles, the Main Quarry and Mill Area is on the right, visible as an excavated area with rock wall about 30 feet tall.

From the quarry, continue along the Blue Trail heading north. The Champion Lode is directly ahead behind a fence, 0.25 miles from the bridge. The trail passes to the right of the Champion Lode and 0.35 miles from the bridge, the Blue Trail comes to a T-intersection.

Continue straight through the woods off-trail for another 200 feet. Lane's Mine is located to the right and is visible as an area about 10 feet lower than the surrounding ground. After viewing Lane's Mine, backtrack to the Blue Trail and since you are now walking south, you have to turn left on the Blue Trail heading east. The trail briefly narrows as it heads east before widening again. The Blue Trail then heads north, and soon loops south.

At the next trail junction, turn right to continue south on the Blue Trail. On the west or right side of the trail are two features: the Old Kiln Ruins, and just south of the old kiln is the Lime Quarry, an excavated area, 0.7 miles from the bridge on this loop. The old kiln has a rock wall made of stacked stones at the back and a lower rock wall made of stacked stones along the side. The lime quarry is an area excavated from the hill.

On the east side of the Blue Trail is an unblazed trail heading downhill. Just as you begin the descent, the Topaz Pit is a narrow, excavated area on the left or north side of this trail. There is a second pit 35 feet to the east of this pit. After viewing the Topaz Pit continue downhill along the unblazed trail, which soon crosses a side stream on a wooden footbridge. Turn right to head south on the Orange Trail.

The fresh water spring is located in a stone circle is about 100 feet south of the trail junction on the west side of the Orange Trail, 0.8 miles from where you started. The cellar foundation is another 300 feet south of this stone circle, also on the west side of the trail.

After viewing the foundation, turn around and head uphill on the Orange Trail, then left on the unblazed trail, over the stream on the footbridge, and then turn left on the Blue Trail by the old kiln, heading downhill. In another 0.2 miles (or about 1.15 miles from where you started), the Dynamite Storage Tunnel is a low opening behind a

fence on the right. In this location, the Orange Trail heads east through the picnic grove with the pavilion.

From the storage tunnel, continue downhill to return the bridge, completing the 1.3 mile loop, which has about 300 feet of elevation gain.

The official town map for Old Mine Park may be found at this address:

<https://www.trumbull-ct.gov/DocumentCenter/View/724/Old-Mine-Park-Map-PDF>

An Old Mine Park map without the trail colors showing the various historic features is here: <https://www.vizettes.com/trailmaps/fcnemba-trailmaps/old-mine/index.htm>

Addendums to the Guides

The various guides do not discuss or describe any of the ruins at the lower end of the Pequonnock Valley on the east side near Park Street. One ruin is the spillway where people cross over a side stream from Park Street to the trails.

Just east of the spillway are several ruins, some of which are surrounded by wooden fences to keep people from falling into them, including a well hole, stone foundations built into a hillside, and a stone cellar. These may be remnants of Tait's Paper Mill. There is also a bridge abutment visible along the west side of the river.

There is a stone foundation 0.65 miles north of Park Street near the metal pipes and the former billboard on the cliff. Along the west side of the river, 1.6 miles north of Park Street is an impressive stone retaining wall, probably constructed to support the railroad bed where it passes close to the river.

I conclude this guide with my personal thoughts on the question of public access to the Valley, which was 60 percent funded by the state of Connecticut. However, Trumbull controls parking options on both nearby streets and its town parks.

Bridges Over the Pequonnock River Would Enhance Access

Recreational opportunities would be greatly enhanced by having three or four bridges installed at the park. One bridge could go over the stream near Park Street, which is now currently only a series of stepping stones. The other bridges should cross the Pequonnock River to link the railroad bed with the trail system east of the river. There were two prior footbridges in the middle and upper sections of the Valley, which were washed away by floods and not replaced.

If someone wanted to do a loop hike or bicycle ride, using both the railroad bed and the trails, they face some challenges making the connection, which involves using Park Street, Daniels Farm Road, White Plains Road, and Tait Road.

Park Street is the road motorists use to access the entrance and exit ramps to Route 25 South. As a result, the 0.1-mile section of the road between the ramps and Daniels Farm Road has moderate traffic flow, but there is no sidewalk for safe walking. There is

a sidewalk is along the east side of Daniels Farm Road, the exception being near White Plains and Church Hill Road where there is a sidewalk along both sides. This means that pedestrians have to cross Daniels Farm Road twice, once at Park Street and once near Tait Mill Road to connect from the single track trails east of the river to the railroad bed.

There is no light at Park Street and Daniels Farm Road to make the crossing safer. There is a light on the north side of Route 25 at the exit and entrance ramps for Route 25 North, which does provide the potential for a brief break in traffic from that direction. After crossing Daniels Farm Road and heading south on the sidewalk, there is a half-mile walk before reaching White Plains Road/Church Hill Road.

At some point, pedestrians have to cross Daniels Farm Road a second time and there is no really good place to do this. The least safe location is by the gas station driveway where the sidewalk officially starts on the north side of Daniels Farm Road. This is the worst spot because of traffic flow: cars are coming out of the gas station driveway onto Daniels Farm Road, as cars from White Plains Road and Church Hill Road are whipping around the corner onto Daniels Farm Road. It is safer to cross north of the bridge by the shopping center driveway and then walking along the grassy path to where the sidewalk begins.

After crossing Daniels Farm Road, and then quiet Tait Mill Road, pedestrians continue on the sidewalk as it turns onto Church Hill Road and the sidewalk extends along Tait Road by the parking area for the rail trail. From there, they can follow the sidewalk along Tait Road past the parking area. A flashing signal light can be activated at the crosswalk leading to the rail trail.

For bicyclists, the preferred direction of travel is heading south on Daniels Farm Road because there is a 95 foot change in elevation in 0.5 miles, which is an average grade of about 3.5 percent with the uphill from White Plains Road to Park Street. The shoulder almost Daniels Farm Road on both sides varies from adequate to non-existent.

Trumbull Excludes Outsiders From Parking in Its Parks

The town of Trumbull has an exclusionary policy for its parks, designed to keep out non-residents. Parking stickers are issued mostly to vehicles registered in Trumbull and people who live in Trumbull, and the stickers are required year-round to park in its parks. A park ranger drives from park to park checking for stickers and will issue a fine (\$25 in 2022) to vehicles without the park permit.

This means non-residents cannot park in the adjacent Indian Ledge or Old Mine Parks, or the nearby Twin Brooks Park to use the Valley. The town has also banned parking along most of Tait Road, resulting in less than adequate parking along the west

side of the Valley. There are 30 dedicated parking space on Tait Road (two of which are reserved as accessible spaces), but on a weekend, those spaces are likely to be filled.

Along the rail trail side of Tait Road, parking is allowed where “No Parking” signs have not been installed, and there is room for about 20 to 25 cars along the road, depending on how carefully people park. There are only about 12 parking spaces for the Valley by the sewer pump station along the railroad bed off Whitney Avenue.

The main parking area for the Pequonnock River Valley trails on the east side of the river is the Park and Ride lot on Park Street, off Route 25, Exit 9, which has 89 parking spaces. From there is a 0.2 mile walk along the quiet dead-end street, which has no sidewalks, to access the trail system, but it does require crossing the brook where there is no bridge, using the stepping stones. This can be tricky at any time of year, and hazardous in the winter when those stones become icy.

Near the northern end of the Valley, there is a Park and Ride lot on Broadway Road, off Route 111, with 100 parking spaces. From this location to the entrance to Old Mine Park is a hazardous 0.2 mile walk along Route 111 where there is no sidewalk, and one has to cross Route 25 which has two southbound lanes and four northbound lanes, separated by a center median.

The “secret” parking at the north end is Tungsten Circle, a town road off Old Mine Road (the road into Old Mine Park). Since this is a town road outside the park, a parking sticker is not required. In 2022, there were no signs along the road to indicate street parking is banned.

Another option for Old Mine Park access is to park in the cul-de-sac at the end of Corporate Drive where 140 Corporate Drive is the nearest address. There is a gate at the end of the road that connects to an unmarked trail in Old Mine Park. From the gate is about a half mile walk along the single-track trails, some of which are unmarked, to the rail trail. For cyclists not on a mountain bike or those lacking the skills or nerve for riding single track trails, this may mean walking the bicycle the entire way. Near the fenced area for the Champion Lode, there are two trail sections where the trail drops abruptly about one to two feet, which is hazardous to someone on a bicycle. For everyone, the return involves a 150-foot gain in elevation.

I prefer for parks be open to all people, regardless of where they live. Even the wealthy Fairfield County towns of Greenwich, Darien, Westport, and others allow non-residents to park at their beaches during the off-season. I support the idea that facilities such as pools, playing fields and tennis courts be limited to the residents who pay the taxes on them. However, people should be able to park in a park without hassle and go for a walk or hike.

Rail Trail Parking Areas Are Limited

The other nearby options for the rail trail are the shopping centers along White Plains Road, the Park and Ride lot on White Plains Road (Route 127) by the Merritt Parkway with 73 parking spaces, or the Park and Ride lot on Park Street.

Each of these had disadvantages: the shopping center is private property and getting to the rail trail heading north involves crossing Daniels Farm Road, which is busy and has a blind curve.

The Route 127 Park and Ride lot currently involves riding along 1.3 miles along a busy road with no shoulder, but it has a sidewalk in places, which is not optimal for cyclists, and a wider pathway near Route 25. That lot is too far away for most people who want to walk the rail trail, and certainly is an unpleasant walk along a busy roadway.

The town has received a state grant for \$1.1 million to extend the pathway along White Plains Road from the Route 127 parking lot to Twin Brooks Park, which will improve rail trail access. Those plans involve also designating a portion of that Park and Ride lot for rail trail use. When the project was announced in February 2022, construction was expected to start in 2023. Parts of White Plains Road in this area have a sidewalk, but there are also sections without one.

The town received an additional grant of \$1.6 to install a traffic light on Route 111 at the shopping center north of Old Mine Road. The rail trail crossing will be rerouted to use this new traffic light when it is installed. The proposal also includes improving the trail within Old Mine Park. The work is scheduled to be completed in late fall 2022.

The one advantage to limiting parking is that it reduces the number of users on a trail, which can have a steady flow of users.

The town has an economic incentive to encourage trail use because having an attraction like rail trails and hiking trails draws people to the town. Some of those people will stay in town after their activity to eat a meal and/or shop. The empty storefronts along White Plains Road and in the Trumbull mall attest to their need for more shoppers.