

# STETSON MEADOWS CONSERVATION AREA TRAIL GUIDE

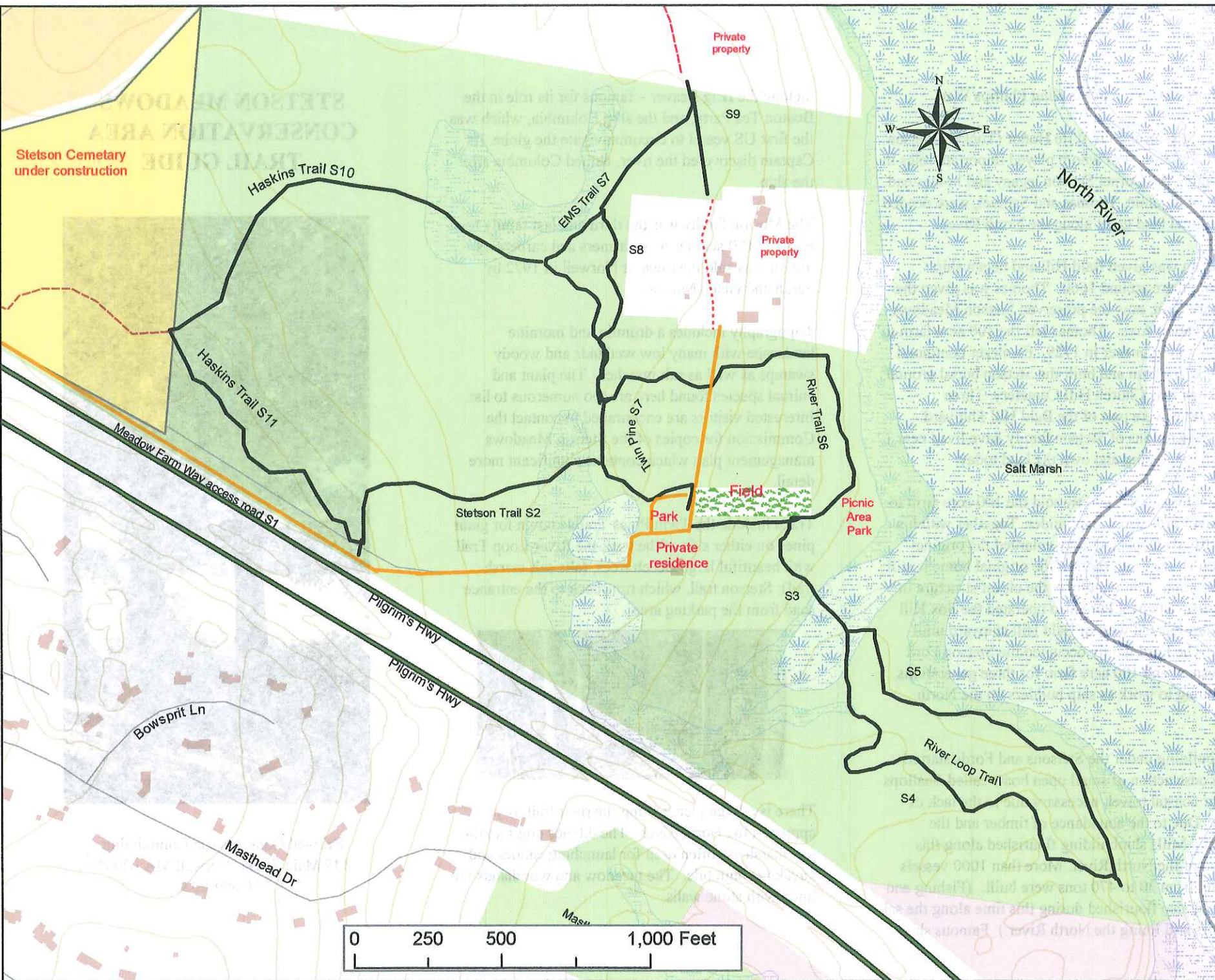
Stetson Meadows is a 184-acre parcel, located along the North River with access from Stetson Shrine Lane.

From Norwell Center on Route 123, turn onto River Street. Follow River Street to Stetson Shrine Lane. Turn left onto Stetson Shrine and follow to end of paved road. Continue on the narrow gravel road, Meadows Farm Way. As you approach the historic Stetson Ford House, turn left to another parking area framed by woods and stone walls. The road is in poor condition. This parking area is in a large, grassy field with plenty of parking.

From the field, the River Trail leads down towards the North River into a picnic area and loops back via the Twin Pines Trail across Meadows Farm Way to the field. There is a clearing which affords a beautiful view of the North River. Trails are through a mixed pine and hardwood forest. The River Loop trail is approximately 1 mile and can be found to the right of the field and picnic area as you approach the North River.

## Legend

-  Elevation countours
-  Mass Highway Land
-  Conservation managed land
-  OtherTown
-  WETLANDS
-  Cemetery Commission managed land



**The Stetson Meadows Conservation Area**, part of the 100 Acre Farm owned by the Cornet Stetson Family was purchased in 1972 by the Town of Norwell to prevent further development of the land along the North River and to provide public access to



Riverfront lands.

From the Stetson Meadows Management Plan - The Stetson Ford property, issued to Robert Stetson as a land grant in 1634, is intertwined with the history of Norwell. The chain of ownership is part of the history of the 100 year tie to the North River shipbuilding industry.

Robert Stetson served the crown of England for 14 years until 1656 in exchange for the 1634 land grant known as the 100 acre farm. In 1656 he helped build two saw mills, one of which was the first in the Plymouth Colony. These saw mills were instrumental in building both dams and ships. In 1658 he was commissioned to the rank of Cornet. He helped establish the permanent boundary between Plymouth Colony and the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He played an active role in acquiring what is now Abington and Hanover from King Phillip of the Narragansett Indians. He also led a

troop of armed men in the King Phillips War.

Robert Stetson and his Wife Honor (Tucker) Stetson had 10 children, 4 of whom played important roles in continuing the Cornet Stetson legacy and homestead. Joseph, Benjamin, Thomas and Samuel, were deeded the original land grant along the North River.

Benjamin was given Bald Hill and began ship building there around 1660. Thomas was given the 100 acre farm, now the preserved Stetson Meadows Conservation Area. Thomas left the 100 acre farm to his 10<sup>th</sup> son Ebenezer in 1729. Ebenezer continued the 100 acre farm and built the Stetson burial ground now known as Church Hill Cemetery. Three generations were part of the Bald Hill Shipyard. Eight generations of Stetson family have lived near the original spring and own the land today.

In 1778 Ebenezer's widow sold the 100 acre farm to Michael Ford, also a shipbuilder. Together with his wife, Rhoda Copeland, they enlarged the original Stetson Homestead, (part of the original home is still standing and is thought to be the oldest structure in Norwell). Michael Ford also operated the Fox Hill Shipyard located west of Bald Hill shipyard until 1883. The Ford family occupied the Stetson Ford Homestead and 100 acre farm for three generations, continuing to work as ship builders on the North River.

Ship building under the Stetsons and Fords started with construction of small open boats called Shallops use for coastal travel, necessary due to the lack of roads. Due to the abundance of timber and the Cornet's Mills shipbuilding flourished along this section of the North River. More than 1000 vessels ranging from 30 to 470 tons were built. (Fishing and mossaing also flourished during this time along the salt marshes still lining the North River.) Famous ships

include the Brig Beaver – famous for its role in the Boston Tea Party, and the ship Columbia, which was the first US vessel to circumnavigate the globe. Its Captain discovered the river, named Columbia after the ship.

The Morton family was the third and last family to own the 100 acre farm, as farmers and carpenters until it was sold the town of Norwell in 1972 by Sarah and Helen Morton.

Topography includes a drumlin and moraine landscape with many low wetlands and woody swamps as well as salt marshes. The plant and animal species found here are too numerous to list. Interested visitors are encouraged to contact the Commission for copies of the Stetson Meadows management plan which contains significant more detail.

Trails include the Twin Pines Trails known for giant pines on either side of the trail; the River Loop Trail with beautiful large Beech trees, (aka salt marsh trail); Stetson trail, which runs back to the entrance road from the parking area.



There is a large picnic along the river trail as you approach the North River. The ditches dug into the salt marsh are often used for launching canoes and kayaks at high tide. The meadow and woodlands are lined with stone walls.

## STETSON MEADOWS CONSERVATION AREA TRAIL GUIDE



Norwell Conservation Commission  
345 Main Street, Norwell MA 02061  
781-659-8022