

SHORT WALKS

The Farmington Canal

The Farmington Canal remains one of the most interesting historical features in the valley. Conceived to provide commercial access to the interior of the state, the canal was an engineering feat and a monumental construction project involving the people of all the communities it passed through. In operation from 1827 to 1848, it ran from New Haven to Northampton Mass and carried both freight and passengers. Replaced by the New Haven-Northampton railroad, the canal fell quickly into disrepair and very little remains to be viewed today. There are, however, some interesting points of access:

Simsbury — Enter Canal Place across from The Hartford on Route 10. Follow Old Canal Way to a small parking lot on the right and walk the cinder path to a nicely preserved section of the canal. The canal was typically 36 feet wide at the top, 20 feet wide at the bottom and 4 feet deep. Canal boats were pulled by horses which walked alongside on towpaths. There are benches here to sit and enjoy this pleasant spot.

Farmington — The Aqueduct: Travel south on Route 10 from Avon. Three tenths of a mile past the Farmington line on the right is a sign and a small parking lot. Walk along the towpath to the river where you will see the stone abutments on either side of the river. In order to remain level and cross the river, a twelve foot wide, six foot deep trough with walk-way spanned the 280 feet. The aqueduct stood on six 34-foot-high stone piers and was the longest on the canal.

Bike Path Between Town Forest Road and West Mountain Road

This is a continuation of the bike path through Stratton Brook State Park. Continue west along Town Forest Road for about a mile. The land on either side of the road is a combination of forest and wetlands. At the end of the road is a swimming pond and ball fields. Continue up the dirt road until it meets a former railroad bed. This 3/4 mile trail is flat and ends at West Mountain Road.



Owens Brook Trail

This is a wooded trail to the south of Owens Brook Boulevard. It runs through Town Open space and is red blazed. A trail sign is located west and across the street from Owens Brook Circle. Access here or midway between Musket Trail and Winterset Lane or at the corner of Route 10 and Owens Brook Boulevard.

Farmington River—Tariffville Walk

This is an interesting and beautiful one-mile level walk along the Tariffville section of The Farmington River. Vegetation along the path is indigenous to a flood-plain with a unique mix of shrubs, grasses, and woody trees. Along the way you will spot old railroad river piers from the days when The Central New England Railroad used this route. Park at Tariffville Park and walk past the ball field to the river. The trail starts as a narrow dirt road before it turns to bluestone.

The Ketchin Quarry

Dating back at least to the early 1800s, this quarry was part of a nearby farm and provided stone for various small projects such as foundations, wells, and fences. In the early 1890s William Ketchin and his father, two of the areas well known masons, purchased the quarry and made it into a sizable commercial venture. Over the next twenty-five years stone from this quarry was used to build many of the Ensign Bickford buildings as well as the current Webster Bank, the Methodist Church, Central School, The Belden School (current Town Hall) and the Tariffville Fire Station, among others. Today the quarry is owned by the Simsbury Land Trust. It is located on the east side of Quarry Road just north of Pharos Farm and the Tiny Tots Nursery. Park on the expanded shoulder of the road and walk thirty feet up a narrow landing to view the vertical stone ledges which outline the quarried area. Do not proceed beyond this landing into the quarry or attempt to climb the walls because of the danger of poor footing, vertical drops, and rock slides.

