

The Pinnacle

Introduction

"The Pinnacle" is a 17.5 acre tract of Town of Walpole Conservation land located along the south bank of the Neponset River in the Plimptonville section of Walpole.

This beautiful and peaceful natural area includes a 200 foot high precipice ("The Pinnacle") overlooking 1100 feet of river front, stands of huge hemlock and beech trees, streams, springs, glacial kettle holes, and signs of Indian use in the distant past. It is part of ancient Indian fishing and camping grounds along the Neponset. It was such a favorite spot with the Indians that it was the only parcel of land between Cambridge and Wrentham not ceded to Dedham by the grandson of the great Indian Sachem, Chickatawbut, in 1685 and it is said he maintained his wigwam atop the Pinnacle. The Indians were driven from the area and onto reservations by Lieutenant Barachiah Lewis in about 1690. A statue of Lieutenant Lewis mounted on his horse stands today at the nearby intersection of Plimpton and East Streets.

Access

There are three means to access The Pinnacle.

The first is at The Pinnacle trailhead is located on the east side of Plimpton Street about 0.7 mile from Main Street (Route 1A) and 0.1 mile from East Street. Look for the trailhead sign and timber steps going up the old New Haven Railroad grade just to the north of the intersection of Plimpton and Hemlock Streets. Parking is limited. Please be sure to get your vehicle off the pavement. Stay on the marked trail and respect bordering private property.

The second location is at the intersection of Pinnacle Drive and Misty Lane. A trailhead marks a 22 foot wide parcel of Town-owned property leading from the curb into The Pinnacle. Out of respect for the neighbors, please park at Ellis Field (the soccer field on East Street) and walk the 300 yards to the Pinnacle Trailhead.

The third means to access The Pinnacle is to park at Ellis Field and walk the 100 yards to Rose Court. Rose Court is a road within The Riverwalk community. Enter Rose Court and bear left and walk 50 feet down the paved foot path in the direction of the Neponset River. At the end of the paved path turn left along the hiking trail identified with blue trail markers.

The compelling feature of accessing The Pinnacle via Rose Court is that you get to enjoy a 250 yard section of trail along the banks of the Neponset, which is very pretty (and very flat!). You'll pass by a large concrete bench area used by ice skaters near the turn of the 20th century. This trail connects you with the main body of The Pinnacle property.

Use

Please treat this area with the respect it so richly deserves and help to preserve it for future generations. Do not litter; carry out any litter that you may see. Start no fires.

Leave only your footsteps. Use of off-road vehicles including "dirt bikes" is prohibited since it destroys the solace of the area and severely erodes the trails, particularly the hills. This leads to further water-induced erosion, and eventually root and tree loss. These resources take centuries to replace.

Suitable walking shoes are recommended since a few sections of the trail afford steep slopes, loose footing, and muddy or slippery areas depending on the season. Hikers should be in good physical condition and should not hike alone since the trail is remote and somewhat difficult in a few spots. The river presents a potential hazard for children and non-swimmers and the river ice in winter should never be trusted.

Trail Guide

Beginning at the trailhead sign on Plimpton Street, climb the timber steps and follow the red blazes on trees. Proceed 960 feet along the old New Haven Railroad bed to a rock cairn on the left of the trail. Note the old railroad ties, cinders from old coal-fired steam locomotives, and the occasional remaining "telegraph" pole along the way. Turn left at a rock cairn into the woods. The trail quickly jogs to the right and back to the left. Proceed 270 feet while rising gradually to a 5-way junction in the trail at a saddle between two hills. Bear right, following the blazes 120 feet up the steeper hill to "The Pinnacle" (elevation 200 feet). At this point the trail splits and is identified by either Blue or Red blazes. The Blue blazes roughly form an outer loop and the red blazes roughly form an inner loop within the property.

The view to your left (to the northwest) from the edge of the Pinnacle is spectacular with a very steep slope dropping 100 feet to the Neponset River below through a magnificent stand of ancient hemlocks and a few huge beech trees.

Follow the trail 120 feet across the flat table top of the Pinnacle. Proceed another 100 feet as the trail descends about 20 feet to a lower table top, and reaches the remains of an old stone circle to the left of the trail. Continue another 70 feet and turn sharply to the right, following the blazes. Proceed 360 feet as the trail bends around gradually to the right. At this point, the trail turns sharply left in a switchback. Proceed 480 feet to a junction with another trail with a stream just beyond. Looking to your right is the old New Haven Railroad bridge crossing Peter's Stream.

Looking straight ahead is the old Bird boiler house and Hollingsworth and Vose chimney in the distance. Turn sharply left and follow the trail, keeping the stream to your right. Proceed 500 feet to the bank of the Neponset River.

Departing from the trail to your right and crossing the stream, you will find a small boulder about 30 feet from the stream. Note the small, round depressions in the stone which appears to have been used as a nut auger by the Indians to grind the prevalent acorns and beechnuts into meal. Returning to the trail, proceed to your left 500 feet in an easterly direction along the river bank, to where a single log crosses the river to a huge boulder on an island in mid-stream. Do not attempt to cross the log since it is narrow,

slippery, and dangerous. Continue along the trail 175 feet along the bog bridge built in October 2011. The bog bridge crosses a small stream issuing from a spring located partway up the Pinnacle on your left. Use caution on the foot bridge, as there is no handrail. Watch your footing!

Continue along the trail 220 feet to Indian Rock, which is a pleasant rest stop and affords a beautiful view of a dog-leg bend in the river. The ledge was probably used by the Indians as a place to dry fish in the sun.

Continue 60 feet along the river bank across some puddlestone boulders (an unusual geologic formation in Walpole). Proceed another 50 feet along the river bank to a small stream where the trail turns sharply to the left, away from the river. Scramble 40 feet up the steep bank over loose footing, paralleling the stream initially. Continue another 100 feet, bearing to the left away from the stream to a windfall which has been cut to allow the trail to pass.

At this point, the trail bears slightly to the right and continues 380 feet in a southeasterly direction up the hill passing several glacial "kettle holes" on the left and rejoins the 5-way junction which was passed earlier along the trail. Take the second trail to your right, following the white blazes. The trail proceeds immediately downhill, retracing steps taken earlier along the trail but in a reverse direction. After 270 feet, the trail rejoins the old New Haven Railroad bed at a rock cairn.

Turn right and proceed 960 feet back to the timber steps and trailhead at Plimpton Street.

Distances

Plimpton Street-

- to rock cairn on RR bed- 990 feet (0.19 mile)
- to 5-wayjunction-1260 feet (0.24 mile)
- to Pinnacle-1380 feet (0.26 mile)
- to switchback-2030 feet (0.38 mile)
- to old railroad bridge-2510 feet (0.48 mile)
- to river bank and nut auger-3010 feet (0.57 mile)
- to log crossing to river island- 3510 feet (0.66 mile)
- to beginning of wet area-3550 feet (0.67 mile)
- to double log foot bridge-3685 feet (0.70 mile)
- to Indian Rock-3925 feet (0.74 mile)
- to puddlestone-3985 feet (0.75 mile)
- to stream at river bend-4035 feet (0.76 mile)
- to sawn deadfall in trail-4175 feet (0.79 mile)
- to 5-wayjunction-4555 feet (0.86 mile)
- to rock caim-4825 feet (0.91 mile)
- to Plimpton St.-5815 feet (1.10 mile)

ROUND TRIP-5815 feet (1.10 mile)

Hiking Time

Round trip of trail -allow about 1 hour.

Original author:

J. Peter Mustonen
September 1996

Ammended:

Gary Riggott
February 25, 2012