

TOUR 5: NORTH ALLINGTOWN

This tour can be completed as a loop, or an out and back. Either way covers a lot of territory and it is recommended that you complete Tour Five by bicycle or small motorized vehicle. If you elect the longer loop, its content is slightly greater than the out-an-back as there are a couple of things worth seeing in nearby New Haven, both with Allingtown connections. Let's begin.

- *Please cross Cellini Place at the base of the triangle and begin walking on the near sidewalk of Forest Road. Stop at the first building you come to on the right unless you have already visited this site Tour 2.*
- **Forest School** with its "Girls" and "Boys" on the facades of two entrances is an iconic site and building in Allingtown. The building you see is ½ of the school, this being the complementary 1933 addition of eight rooms added to the 1912 construction of the same size. The older component faced the Green just behind or beside where you now stand. Most of Allingtown's youths were schooled here, with some who lived well up on Milford Hill, attending the other public school, Lincoln. Forest School was fortunate in having a core component of faculty who served for many years. A pair of sisters, the Carrigans and the Squires had such lengthy tenures so as to have two taught two generations of Allingtown families. If you were assigned to a Carrigan classroom, you were pleased. With a Squire, maybe not so much. The Allingtown branch of the town's public library, named for **Louis G. Piantino, Jr.**, named for the son of a long time benefactor, was tucked under the older building's basement for many decades, staffed by a committed team of professional and volunteer librarians. who looked carefully

after their mostly small patrons amidst the asbestos covered basement pipes. After the older part of Forest was torn down, the newer space was converted for use as the home of the library and for the establishment of the Allingtown Senior Center. Forest School's remaining building was sold into private hands in 2020. Experience more about this school and library on Tour 2.

- Before continuing up Forest Road for a spell, as the British regulars did on their flanking march that long ago day in July, here are some observations on things you will see on this segment. The first block of Forest, up to Bristol Street will take you past some period houses that, likely were built by or for a later generation of Allings. Yes, they were here, too, part of their firm footprint in every direction from the Green. Beyond Bristol Street, the housing structures are a mixture of newer and older, some are quite new. They are not thickly placed, partially due on the left side to the steepness of this portion of Milford Hill. Some land here has never been built upon. It is not difficult to imagine how thick with forest the hill was in the past. We know this general area supplied much of the timber used to build ships in West Haven and elsewhere. Parts of Forest Road still make it feel as if it is still a path through the forest the road was named for. Notice, also, that this part of the hill once known in this sector, as **Burwell's Hill** after an early settler, now begins to flatten out some as we continue north. Off to the left, in this section, the **new Forest Elementary** welcomes the latest crop of Allingtown first through fourth graders.
- *Resume traveling up Forest Road to **Oak Street** on the right, just before the cemetery on the same side.*

- This little road, which now comes to a dead end at a newer extension of the cemetery, was once a primary roadway, connecting farmers and timbermen to the nearby West River, and the New Haven side of that stream the two sides being part of the same zone tagged the “Suburban District.” Only in the mid-twentieth century was the small bridge removed. At least one party of two people in the 1940’s, unaware of the teardown, drove a car down Oak Street from here into the water with fatal consequences.
- *Please continue your walk in the same direction as before. You may want to make all or part of this journey in parallel fashion slightly into the cemetery itself and rejoin Forest at the furthest gate on Forest Ave. Stop at the gate.*
- **Saint Lawrence Cemetery** was established in 1891 as a Roman Catholic institution. The rural nature of the area even at this date, some 250 years since the English settlement and at the juncture of two important roads shows how rural the area had remained, less than two miles from New Haven’s center. St. Lawrence’s, modeled to appear parklike, has grown to 130 acres of gently sloping land with the newer section reaching the West River wetlands. Needless to say, many Allingtown families, past and present, have people here.
- By this gate, you are just short of the intersection of Forest Road with another old and important connecting road, know first and still referred to by some as the **Derby Turnpike** although it is now officially Derby Avenue. Whereas the 3.5 mile Forest Road, half in Allingtown, half in New Haven, has always been free for travelers, the Derby Turnpike, like many colonial roads, including the Boston Post Road, where you began this circuit, was a toll road. The turnpike dates to 1798, built then, as customary by a

private company formed to connect New Haven with the Housatonic River town of Derby about eight miles distant. Travelers paid the toll for the next 199 years. After, a trolley line was placed on the turnpike. It ran from the late 19th century until about 1950. Soon, we will be making a right and follow Derby Avenue to the east, but you, particularly if on a bicycle, may want, instead, to negotiate a left turn on the far shoulder of this intersection and travel a few hundred yards to the **Maltby Lakes**, a series of connected small to medium size bodies, long in service to New Haven's water system as reservoirs, but no longer in use for that purpose. Since 1994, hiking and biking are permitted in this area except in winter. The biking trail is 4.8 miles long, in the woods along the water. It's a very different treat for the area. Three towns share this property, New Haven, Orange and West Haven. These three lakes had existed naturally but, were altered for use in the late 1860's by an engineer for the Fair Haven water company, Caleb Maltby. A half century earlier, a fellow named Noah Webster had a crack at hooking up the Maltby Lakes as New Haven's water source, but he did not succeed. Afterward, he made somewhat of a name for himself by composing a useful dictionary. Many a traveler has stopped to watch the water spill over the dam adjacent to the turnpike in route to or from Derby. Access to this recreational area may be gained from a gate off of the Derby Turnpike. Afterward, you may rejoin the tour here.

- Forest Road continues beyond this intersection for a short bit of it still in West Haven. Though it is not on the tour, one of Allintown's nicest residential neighborhoods runs off Forest to its left, tucked in aside the Maltby Lakes reserve.

- *Please turn right at this intersection and pass by the front facing of the cemetery, once again tracing the path of the by now weary English Footguard Regiment in 1779. Continue until reaching on the right, the parking area for Yale Field, the University's baseball and track complex. Stop here.*
- On the way to this point, you've have seen across the road, several Yale fields and sports facilities. A portion of these are in Allingtown, but on this side of the Derby Avenue are two others, one of them, quite famous.
- **Yale Field** was put up in 1882. The game itself was quite young then. The land used for it had recently been an orchard. In its long history, the ballpark has been expanded and modernized twice, in 1927 and 1992. Not only does Yales' nine play here, over the years, many other teams have played ball, including some major league ones back in the day when clubs would barnstorm in the off seasons to keep themselves solvent. Local followers were happy to have the Yankees and the Red Sox come by. Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Ted Williams all have come to the plate here. Ruth actually said onetime it was the nicest kept field he had ever played on. If you had caught the Bulldog's 1948 squad, you would have seen team captain, George Herbert Walker Bush. flashing the leather at first base. Another occasion you might have enjoyed, this one in 1981, was the NCAA Eastern Division final between the St. John's of New York squad and Yale's. The game went into extra innings with both starting pitchers still on the mound and pitching strong. Maybe you have heard of them: Frank Viola for St. John's and Ron Darling for the Eli's. Between them, they later would win over 300 major league games. Viola won this one. If you've completed Tour Three, Allingtown Center, Long Loop, then

you've been to another of the community's time honored ballparks, Quigley Stadium, where, for a time, aspiring New York Yankees polished their game and the oldest amateur league in the country, the West Haven Twilight League has waged its contests for the better part of a century. s Across the way from Yale Field is the bold and massive, arched gateway honoring to a founder of the college game of football. The **Walter Camp Memorial**, dedicated to the famous coach and pundit who was the first person to compile an All-America football team, a tradition the foundation he founded, continues.

- *Please continue a few yards more to the east on Derby Avenue until reaching Marginal Drive, a cordoned-off roadway on the right. Stop here. Should you want a peek at the quite famous, **Yale Bowl**, built in 1913, instead cross Derby Avenue from here onto Yale Street.*
- In a short bit, see on the left, view this ancient, storied gridiron which, every other year is the site of "The Game." Music concerts and other outdoor event attracted those from just over the line in Allingtown. Just before the Bowl, on the right, is the much newer **Connecticut Tennis Center**, annual host to World Tennis Association events. After a look at these two sports venues, return to the front of Marginal Drive.
- Although the surroundings off Marginal Drive are one of the community's most compelling, you are not advised to venture to this now semi-wilderness at this time and is without services or supervision. If you've completed Tours 2 or 3, you know that Marginal Drive connects to Orange Avenue, as it runs roughly parallel to both the West River and Forest Road on Allingtown's eastern edge. Not being able to enter is a loss as this roadway passes through both some interesting and attractive natural features plus

its history of Quinnipiac occupation. Later, it skirts along one edge of a central Allingtown residential neighborhood, which you can visit on Tour 2, Allingtown Center, Short Loop. Due to some failed or confused plans for a new freeway and a lack of agreement of whether maintenance of the parkland portion before you, should be New Haven's or West Haven's responsibility, closure and neglect resulted. The roadway and area have been unusable for about a half century. Within the area is a notable natural feature, the **Horseshoe Lagoon**. Lagoons are small bodies of water in a relationship with a larger one, in this case, the West River. As a collection point for the fresh water, both that draining from Milford Hill and the higher ground to the north and south of it, Horseshoe Lagoon, just yards from the brackish West River, itself, becomes a blend of the two sources and thus, fairly unique and a scientific/naturalist source of curiosity. Before the closure, Allingtowner's used the lagoon for swimming, fin fishing and ice skating. The Oak Street Bridge, we saw the remnant of the street a few stops back, ran through here and across the river. Before any of these uses, the Quinnipiac Indians were frequent seasonal residents, based upon the number of artifacts found since their final departure in the mid-18th century. With shelter and game in the close-by woods, fresh water availability, plentiful plant and nut food, and several types of fish available, including a seemingly endless supply of crabs and oysters, which later became a mainstay commercial enterprise in the area, the Quinnipiac's were sitting pretty while here. Perhaps someday, this portion of the West River Park can be responsibly made accessible. From this immediate area also, some 60 years ago and earlier, two other features of the area. Yale's crewmen used this portion of the river to prepare to outrace

their counterparts from other Ivy waterways, The university put up a **boathouse** to aid in this effort, even altering the river's course to accommodate it. At one time, you could also view in this immediate area, a **second WWI Memorial** in Allingtown, this one for **Timothy Ahearn**, a wounded and much decorated veteran who fought in France. When this portion of the park was closed off, Ahearn crossed a smaller body of water to pose on the New Haven side, where he intrepidly remains. Ahearn did grow up New Haven, so no major grievance is called for. Ahead though, you might see this honored doughboy standing tall and peeking at you from behind some of the park's trees.

- *Proceed now another short distance to the bridge over the West River. Stop for moment here.*
- Like its neighbor to the south, about a mile downstream and further ahead on this loop, this 60' span has always lived a humble existence, non-memorialized in an area of many memorials. By now, you probably know that this is where General Gage's forces crossed into New Haven on their 1779 raid. You might even be ready to bid them farewell or fair poorly. Other than on that day, this bridge has seen centuries of quiet service, only occasionally punctuated by raucous football fans clinging to the sides of trolley cars on their way to a gridiron contest at the Bowl.
- Now, you may elect to return to the Green by reversing the path taken to get here. However, moving forward on Derby Avenue to Ella T. Grasso Boulevard at the next traffic light and turning right onto it, will also bring you back to Orange Avenue and the Green. Let's do that.

- *Continue on Derby Avenue to “ET Grasso Boulevard” and turn right to travel south on it along the West River. Stop at the intersection of Orange Avenue.*
- If you would like to extend this venture a bit more and learn more about the British Raid, you may do so from here, with a slight detour from your return path to the Green. Orange Avenue becomes Columbus Avenue on the left at this intersection. A trip up it of just over a football field’s length will deliver you to **Defender’s Park**, where two cannons were placed to fire on the British at the foot of Milford Hill, while other militia worked on taking down the bridge between the forces. This memorial’s depiction of a field-piece in action is a nice installation, I think you’ll agree.
- Both Tours Two and Three cover this area and some to and from the West River bridge ahead of you. Of the two, Tour Three is the longer and includes the baseball stadium, mentioned earlier at Yale Field, whereas Tour Two has a good deal of content about some of the residential blocks in the village center. You may want to complete one of those next or the next time. Both are easily accomplishable on foot.
- *From the intersection of the Columbus, Grasso and Orange passageways, now travel to the west on Orange Avenue/ aka the Boston Post Road about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, to arrive back to the Green.*
- Thank you for completing Allingtown Tour Five, the North Allingtown Loop. If you have done them all, I tip my cap. If I could, I would treat you to a cherry coke at Mr. Fater’s counter.