

Discover the Pioneering Conservation Legacy of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

Saturday, October 1st, 9:35am arrival – 12:00 noon, with optional events after 12:00pm
Trip sponsored by the Cornwall Conservation Commission

Sign up by Sept. 22 for a spot

Visit Description:

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is the only national park in America to tell the story of conservation history and how land stewardship has evolved in the United States. Our October 1st visit will be a unique opportunity-- tailored to the conservation interests of our group--and will include a ranger-guided walk along an old carriage road through a portion of the sustainably-managed forest. The rangers will emphasize the conservation history of the Park and current land management issues including invasive plant species control, climate change and emerald ash borer mitigation strategies.

Schedule of Visit:

9:35am Meet at Billings Farm & Museum parking lot no later than 9:35am.

9:45am – Enter the Billings Farm & Museum to watch *A Place in the Land* film (summary below).

10:30am – Walk up to Carriage Barn Visitor Center to start guided hike with a ranger. Focus on conservation history of the park as well as land/forest management of the park.

12:00pm – Optional (a) Guided Mansion tour including acclaimed landscape paintings that influenced the conservation movement (will end no later than 1:00pm—limited to 12 people, advance signup needed). b) Walk the forest trails and carriage roads on your own. About 20 miles of trails crisscross Mount Tom, with trail maps available at the visitor center (no bicycles allowed on Park trails).

1:00pm – Optional visits on your own. (a). The Mansion is open for visitors without reservation or admission fee between 1:00pm and 4:00pm. (b) The Billings Farm & Museum, a working dairy farm and museum of agricultural and rural life which shares the National Park's tradition of land stewardship, is open until 5:00pm. The Farm has an admission charge of \$17/\$15 seniors 62 and older or (c) Walk the forest trails and carriage roads.

Other Details:

Drive to National Park in your own vehicles; car-pooling encouraged; rain or shine; \$8.00 suggested donation to cover group guided tour fee; additional donations welcomed to support Cornwall Conservation Commission activities; very limited food concessions at Park so consider packing a lunch; 1.5 hour drive from Cornwall Town Hall to the Park.

(Sign up by Sept. 22 to branchkcpc@gmail.com for visit; limit of 24 attendees; indicate if you want to also take the Mansion tour; contact branchkcpc@gmail.com if you have questions)

History of the National Park:

Vermont's national park is named after three Vermont families who pioneered and promoted conservation and land stewardship over a period of 150 years. One of the first to respond to the deforestation of Vermont in the mid-1800s was George Perkins Marsh, who saw first-hand how human actions "brought the earth to a desolation almost as complete as that of the moon." Frederick Billings purchased the farm in 1869 and developed one of the nation's first programs of scientific forest management, which was enhanced and sustained by three generations of remarkable women, Julia Billings, her three daughters Elizabeth, Mary and Laura, and her grand-daughter Mary French. The marriage of Mary French to Laurance S. Rockefeller in 1934 merged two conservation-minded families, as the Rockefeller family had created or enhanced 20 national parks. Together Mary and Laurance made the gift that established this National Historical Park. As described by Vermont nature writer John Elder, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park has "a mandate to invent an entirely new kind of park. It must be one where the human stories and the natural history are intertwined...and a seedbed for American environmental thought; and where the legacy of American conservation and its future enter into dialogue, generating a new environmental paradigm for our day."

Film Summary:

A Place in the Land is the story of George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Billings and Laurance S. Rockefeller, three seminal figures in the history of the conservation movement in America. Though they were born generations apart and lived very different lives, the three were connected by a common vision and a common place. Marsh, Billings and Rockefeller occupied the same home and surrounding land in Woodstock, Vermont—a place that instilled in each of them a determination to preserve America's natural resources and to teach their fellow man to live in harmony with nature. Today, their legacy and the land in Woodstock that inspired them are preserved at the Billings Farm & Museum, a museum of Vermont's rural past and a working dairy farm, and the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park—the first National Park in America dedicated to teaching the concept of land stewardship.

Description of Mansion:

The Mansion, built for Charles Marsh, Sr., father of George Perkins Marsh, in 1805-07 in the Queen Anne style, houses the Billings-Rockefeller art collection of Hudson River School paintings by Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Cole and Asher B. Durand, among others. View works by acclaimed landscape painters in the Mansion and observe how monumental works of art influenced the conservation movement. Original architecture, furnishings and gardens have been preserved.

Park website: <https://www.nps.gov/mabi/index.htm>

Billings Farm & Museum website (optional visit): <https://billingsfarm.org/>

