

## Introduction

The walking tour begins at the entrance way to the park which is located on the corner of Morehouse and Center roads, across the street from the Town Hall. Samuel P. Senior Memorial Park has habitats ranging from upland hardwoods to swamp to pond. These habitats are similar to those in the rest of Easton's watershed. The Bridgeport Hydraulic Company has leased these 10-plus acres to the Town of Easton for 99 years. The park was founded in 1963 by the Easton Garden Club. It was dedicated to the memory of Samuel P. Senior who had been the President of the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company. Senior had had the foresight to provide an ample water supply for the Greater Bridgeport area and was a forerunner of conservationists.

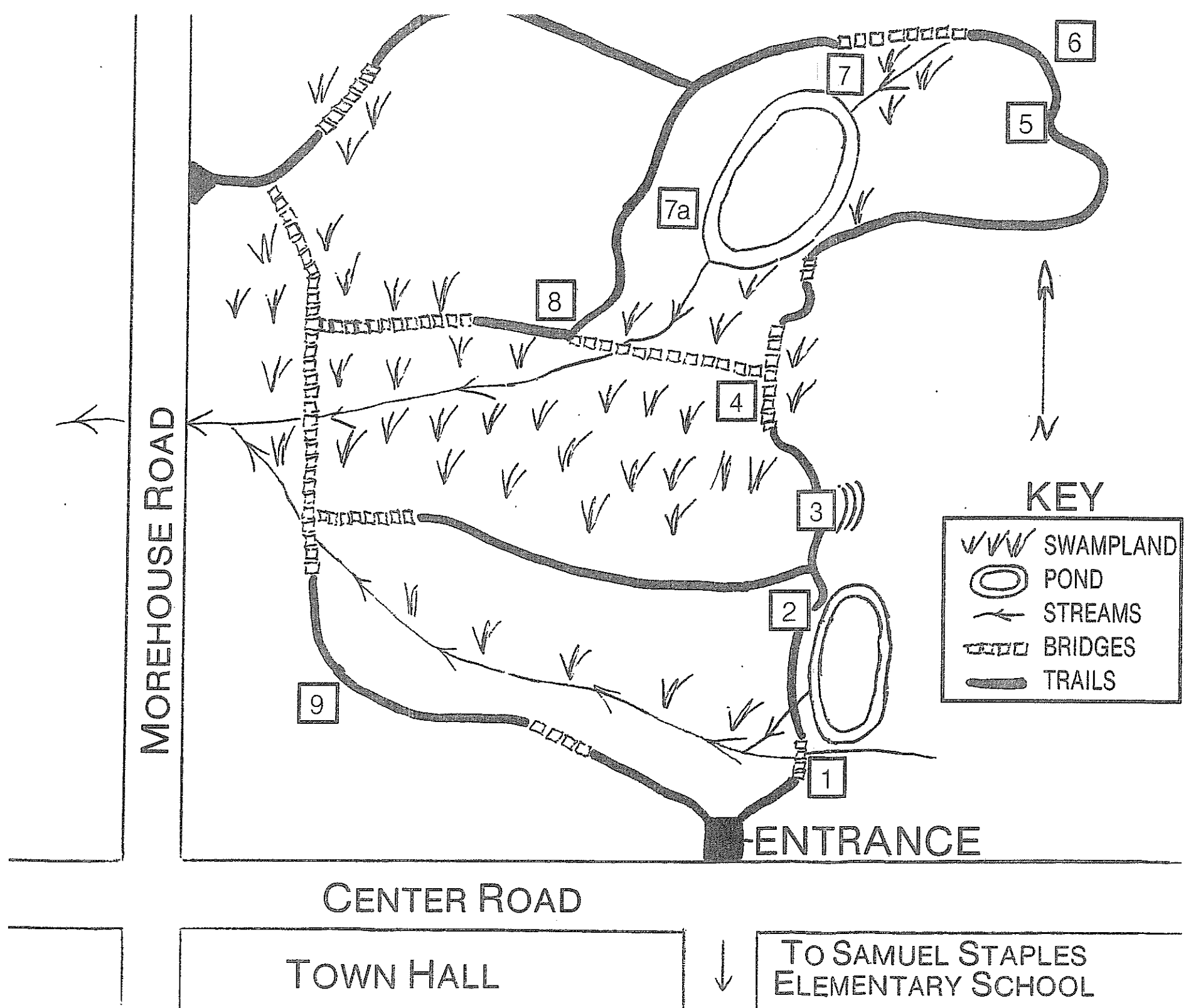
## Station 1

This first stream is an example of the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company's maintenance program which is designed to quickly deliver their product, water, to the reservoir. This is Crickerbrook stream which originates behind Keller's old farm, crosses Adams Road, and then crosses back under Center Road into the park.

In late February, the earliest emerging plant is the skunk cabbage which is a common indicator of wet soil conditions. Through cell respiration, this plant is able to raise its surrounding temperature by up to 20 degrees. Animals who have survived the long winter without greenery would normally be tempted to taste these first bright green leaves as they unfurl, but the skunk cabbage's skunk smell and taste repels the animals, and this results in the continued survival of the plant.

## Station 2

A law of nature states: "All lakes are doomed to die." The pond is at the beginning stages of succession, which in New England involves a predictable change back to forest. In the case of a pond, sedimentation allows wetland shrubs to take hold. Eventually enough sediment is trapped to allow the next stage, trees, to become established.



Some of the more predominant plant species that can be found here are the spice bush, dogwood, and pussywillow. Spice bush is a large shrub which has aromatic leaves and bright red fruit, a substitute for allspice. Its small, yellow, clustered flowers are among the first to appear in the spring.

### Station 3

The amphitheater. This is an example of an upland hardwood forest. You can see shagbark hickory, tulip tree, yellow birch and many other trees requiring cool, moist conditions. The tulip tree has a long straight trunk and the branches start high up on the trunk. The trunk of the tree was used for canoes by the Indians. There are many holes created by woodpeckers and forest dwellers in these trees. The animals usually feed on the insects of dead or dying trees. Woodland wildflowers include trout lilies, Canada may flower, hepatica, and sanguinaria. Be on the look out for multistemmed trees which indicate that animals have nibbled on them. Rabbits make clean cuts at 45 degree angles and deer fray the tips of their food of choice.

### Station 4

Raised wooden walkways travel over the swamps of the park. Swamps are wetlands covered with trees. Here the dominant tree is the red maple which takes its name from the tufts of crimson flowers that cover it in spring and from its foliage of blazing scarlet in autumn. Some shrubs which can also be found here are the spice bush and the sweet pepper bush. Many lovely wildflowers such as marsh marigolds, ferns, iris, and arrowroot can be seen here. Marsh marigold's golden flowers are familiar at the edges of ponds, blooming profusely in April and nearly concealing the glossy kidney-shaped foliage. The arrowroot can be ground into a pulp which when dry forms starch. This is often recommended as a food for invalids and children and can also be used in making cakes, biscuits, jellies, and broths.

### Station 5

Whale rock. This rock was left here by the glacier which retreated more than 10,000 years ago. When glaciers advanced, they carried blocks of stone which were then pressed against each other as well as against the rock bottom, where they dug out pieces which range in size from grains to boulders. As the glaciers melted, rocks were left where they had been dragged, which may have been hundreds of miles away from where they had begun. The large scrapes found on the top of this rock are scrape marks from other rocks dragged within the glacier.

### Station 6

Upland woodland. The leaves of these trees, such as oak, beech, and birch, do not decompose as rapidly as maples. They form leaf litter in which Ground Pine can survive. Both oak and birch keep last seasons leaves until the following spring. In the Northeast, woodlands are the final step of succession.

### Station 7

In this area you can see a large tree which has fallen over. The trees in a swampland environment have very shallow root systems. This can be seen as you look at the base of the trees. This makes the trees victims of high winds such as hurricanes. The direction in which they fall can be determined by two things. One is the way the wind was blowing and the other is by the water currents found underneath the root system which surge during a storm. These "wind throws", which can be found in various places throughout the park, open up the tree canopy and increase available light. Many seedlings can then become established.

### Station 7a

Pond. Mallards, black ducks, and wood ducks have been observed in this sheltered area. Using their broad bill, fresh water ducks, like the mallard, sieveout roots, seeds, and small invertebrate animals from the mud and water as they swim or wade. The mallard

and black duck also visit grain fields for their food. Most nests of ducks are simply a hollow in the ground or are constructed of grass or reeds. A wood duck nests in tree holes as high up as 50 feet. The ducklings make the precarious leap from the nest within 2 days of hatching.

### Station 8

Snaking throughout the park are stonewalls which were built by early settlers. Heroic efforts were made to clear and farm this land. Most walls were made within a period of 50 years, but when the West was opened up the task of clearing was abandoned. Once the land was abandoned, trees grew in. When fields revert from farmland to forest, red cedar is one of the first plants to colonize the old field. There are several straggly cedars remaining here, gradually dying due to lack of light.

### Station 9

White pine grove. The very acidic nature of the white pine's leaf litter and the lack of light prevents most plants from growing here. One exception is the evergreen partridge berry with its edible fruit.

For more information about the park write to:  
Samuel P. Senior Memorial Park  
274 Center Road  
Easton, CT 06612

This brochure was written and designed by Erika Lindeberg, for her Girl Scout Gold Award Project and Allison Thurston-Palermo, who is the director of Community Projects of Samuel P. Senior Park.

Funding for this brochure has been provided by the Easton Garden Club.

Typesetting and printing  
The PrintSmith  
Bridgeport, CT

# A Self-Guided Tour of Samuel P. Senior Memorial Park

"A wetland is a land where water is the dominant factor determining the nature of soil development and the types of plant and animal communities living in the soil and on its surface."

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

"Wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support -and that under normal circumstances do support - a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions."

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers