

SPENCER

MASSACHUSETTS

PARKS & RECREATION GUIDE

ENJOY THE GREAT OUTDOORS IN SPENCER, MASSACHUSETTS

SPENCER, Massachusetts, is located twelve miles west of Worcester on Route 9. Once a thriving farming and industrial community, Spencer retains its identity as a vibrant and prosperous small town. The downtown area boasts antique and other specialty shops, the historic district contains houses dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, and the town's parks, waterways, and woodlands offer plentiful opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Spencer is well known for its annual agricultural fair during Labor Day weekend. It is also rich in natural resources and man-made facilities that make for an enjoyable out-of-doors experience year round. Residents and visitors are encouraged to explore Spencer's recreational treasures and experience for themselves the beautiful outdoors in Spencer, Massachusetts.

PARKS

BEMIS MEMORIAL PARK, located on a knoll on the north side of Route 9 just west of the Seven Mile River, commemorates Samuel Bemis, the first permanent European settler of Spencer, and Captain Edmund Bemis, who served in the French and Indian War. Designated a state roadside rest area, the small park contains monuments and two Parrott guns (cannons) used in the Civil War.

BUCK HILL CONSERVATION CENTER consists of 128 acres of the Camp Marshall 4-H Center. Located in north Spencer on McCormick Road, Buck Hill features nature trails and a 10-acre fish pond.

BURNCOAT POND WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, a 64-acre parcel purchased by the Massachusetts Audubon Society in 2006, includes woods, a small pond, and trails. It is accessible from Greenville Street and also from the Midstate Trail near the Leicester line.

CAMP MARSHALL WORCESTER COUNTY 4-H CENTER, located at 92 McCormick Road, encompasses approximately three hundred acres of pastures, woods, and ponds. Established on the site of the former Civilian Conservation Corps and National Youth Administration camp in 1945, Camp Marshall is a traditional camp featuring swimming, fishing, horseback riding, and barnyard and nature programs.

FOUR CHIMNEYS RECREATION AREA is a 200-acre wildlife management area managed by the Commonwealth Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Located on Borkum Road, a designated scenic road, Four Chimneys is traversed by a section of the Midstate Trail.

HOWE STATE PARK, also known as Spencer State Forest, is a scenic 965-acre recreational area offering hiking, canoeing, fishing, and picnicking, as well as cross-country skiing and snowmobiling in the winter. It contains a fieldstone monument marking the birthplace of Elias

Howe (inventor of the sewing machine) and the original stone doorsteps of the house. There are picnic tables and barbeque pits. The park is located on Howe Pond Road, off Route 31 south of Route 9.

ISAAC PROUTY PARK, located on Main Street near the old David Prouty High School, was a gift to the town from Isaac Lothrop Prouty, a nephew of Isaac Prouty, a prominent boot manufacturer. The park was presented to the town in 1905 and laid out with walkways, trees, and shrubs. On Patriot's Day in 1911, the town honored the 319 Spencer men who had served in the Civil War by erecting a Soldiers Monument in the park.

LUTHER HILL PARK, which borders Lake Whittemore in the center of town, is a 14-acre recreational area with a pine grove, public beach, picnic tables, play ground, skateboard park, and disc golf course (donated and installed by the Spencer Lions Club). Named for judge, businessman, and civic leader Luther Hill, who donated the land to the town in 1888, the park is located at the end of Park Street off of Route 9. Parking fees apply during the summer months.

MOOSE HILL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA, managed by the Commonwealth Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, is a 560-acre property that straddles the towns of Paxton, Leicester, and Spencer. There is a levy (crossed by the Midstate Trail) and a small reservoir created in the 1960s for flood control. Spencer access is on Moose Hill Road. From Route 9, follow Donnelly Road to Donnelly Cross Road.

O'GARA PARK originated in 1886, when the Spencer Baseball Association leased approximately eight acres at the end of Water Street for a baseball park. Eight years later, businessman and civic leader John O'Gara purchased the property for use as baseball and circus grounds. The town purchased the property in 1934, and many baseball, softball, and youth football teams play there today. The park's historic wooden grandstand, constructed in 1931, is one of only three in the nation.

POWDER MILL PARK, on the southwest corner of Meadow Street (Route 31) and Smithville Road, takes its name from mills that made gunpowder along the nearby Seven Mile River. It contains playgrounds, picnic tables, and cookout facilities.

RALPH WARREN PARK is a small nature preserve featuring woodland trails. Located on Wire Village Road, across from the Seven Mile River and historic mill sites, the park was named for former Conservation Commissioner Ralph Warren. It was dedicated in 1978 by the U.S. Young Adult Conservation Corps.

VIETNAM MEMORIAL PARK, located on South Spencer Road beside the South Spencer School, was the first of its kind in the nation. Dedicated on April 27, 1975, it pays tribute to the three Spencer men who lost their lives in the Vietnam War.

RIVERS & STREAMS

TURKEY HILL BROOK flows from Paxton into Spencer in the northeast corner of town. Dams were erected along the brook to power the wire mills that dotted this area, but the only

remaining dam is the one that forms Thompson Pond. The brook joins the Seven Mile River northeast of Pine Grove Cemetery.

THE SEVEN MILE RIVER originates in Rutland and was dammed to form Browning Pond. It merges with Turkey Hill Brook and connects to the Quaboag River in East Brookfield. Seven miles from Brookfield, the river served as a landmark when Brookfield was the only settlement between Worcester and the Connecticut Valley.

CRANBERRY RIVER flows from Charlton and was dammed to form Cranberry Meadow Pond in the southeast corner of town and dammed again to form Howe Pond at Howe State Park. It joins the Seven Mile River near Route 9.

TRAILS

THE MIDSTATE TRAIL is a scenic footpath extending 92 miles across central Massachusetts, from the New Hampshire border on Mt. Watatic to the Rhode Island border in Douglas State Park. Marked with yellow triangles, the trail enters Spencer from Oakham above the western shore of Browning Pond, just past a well-known landmark known as Sampson's Pebble. The trail exits into Charlton through the Four Chimneys Recreation Area on Borkum Road.

THE SPENCER SNOWBIRDS SNOWMOBILE CLUB, a private organization, maintains a network of snowmobile trails throughout the town, crossing both public and private property.

THE SOUTH SPENCER RAIL TRAIL is a 2 ½-mile walking trail along an abandoned railroad bed. It runs from South Spencer Road to Chestnut Street, with parking on South Spencer Road.

LAKES & PONDS

BROOKS POND, located primarily in North Brookfield, was created by damming the Five Mile River. A favorite with canoeists and kayakers, the pond has a small beach that is open to the public but not staffed by lifeguards. It is located on Brooks Pond Road, which forks off Northwest Road off Route 31.

BROWNING POND, created to power a nearby sawmill, is located on Browning Pond Road off Route 31. It offers boating and fishing.

CRANBERRY MEADOW POND, created to power a nearby shoe peg factory and gristmill, is located on Cranberry Meadow Road. There is limited fishing from the shore.

HOWE POND in Howe State Park was created to provide water power for the mills of the Howe family. In recent years it has become unsuitable for swimming, but fishing is still allowed. It is located on Howe Park Road off Route 31.

STILES RESERVOIR was created to provide water power for the mills at Rochdale and North Oxford. Located on Chickering Road, there is limited fishing from the shore.

SUGDEN RESERVOIR, located off of Paxton Road, was created to provide a “reserve” water supply for the wire mills of Richard Sugden, a Spencer industrialist and philanthropist. While most of the shoreline is privately owned, shore access is available near the dam. Small boats can be launched from a gravel ramp off Donnelly Cross Road at the northeast corner of the lake. From Route 9, follow Donnelly Road to Donnelly Cross Road.

THOMPSON POND was originally created to run a sawmill and later expanded by Richard Sugden for his wire mills in Upper and Lower Wire Village. It is located on Thompson Pond Road and offers limited fishing from the shore.

LAKE WHITTEMORE, Spencer’s only natural lake, borders the north end of Luther Hill Park. The Town Beach is accessed through the park, where there are lifeguards and swimming lessons in the summer. There is no public boat access, but fishing is permitted from along the shore