

Coogan Farm Self-Guided Walking Tour

Stop #1: Walk to the top of the parking lot and pause here.



As the first farm along the east side of the Mystic River, the Coogan Farm has a long and interesting history dating to pre-colonial times. In 1902 Thomas Stillman sold the land to Walter C. Morgan. It became the Coogan Farm after Clara Avery Morgan inherited it from her father and then married Clarence A. Coogan in 1918. Referred to as the Village Farm, the property would remain in the Coogan Family until 2013 when DPNC, partnering with the Trust for Public Land, purchased it. The Farm was part of a distinct district within Mystic, known as Greenmanville.

You are standing at the rear of the buildings pictured



here. The house, barn and old stone foundation are attributed to the mid-1800s and the Greenmanville community. Brothers George, Clark and Thomas Greenman came to the Mystic area from Westerly R.I. in the 1830s. They built their homes along Greenmanville Avenue and their shipyard at what is now Mystic Seaport. The Greenmans were instrumental in creating the Greenmanville community along the Mystic River by providing employment, resources and spiritual life as active Seventh Day Adventists.



The Greenmans' farm, including the property that is now DPNC's Coogan Farm, provided fresh meat, produce and dairy for shipyard employees and to be sold in their farm store. The Greenman brothers purchased the land as a working farm to provide food to their shipbuilders. The main farmhouse, which is now the John E. Avery House and Welcome Center, was built in the 1840s as a residence for the farm manager. The large foundation next to the cedar gate supported a barn for livestock, hay and wagons. In the photo above

you can see it in the background just to the left of the farmhouse. The wooden upper portion of the barn was dismantled and sold during the depression leaving the large foundation you see today.



The Jules Xavier Schneider Barn for Nature and the Arts was recently renovated, and retains most of the original features of the circa 1900 structure. The barn or “Butcher Shop” once housed a meat market and dairy.

Stop #2: Walk past the cedar gate and up the old farm road towards the red barn. You will pass under the shade of an American Ash tree growing against a stone wall on your left. Pause to take a peek at the large vegetable garden on the other side of the wall. **The Giving Garden**, conceived, owned and operated by DPNC, is a volunteer-supported project, giving back every day to the

community. Produce grown here is donated to the Gemma E. Moran United Way Labor Food Center and its Mobile Food Pantries, which feed needy families throughout New London County.

Stop #3: Continue along the farm road toward the large juniper tree, just past the red metal shed.

Take a look at the curved section of wall on your left and notice the historic pentway. With walls enclosing former pastures on both sides, lanes like this connected different family farms across the landscape. Walls in this area were likely built by indentured Native Americans. Remnants of these old farm roads are an important part of our cultural landscape. Go right, up the gradual hill and take the time to look at the stone walls along your way.



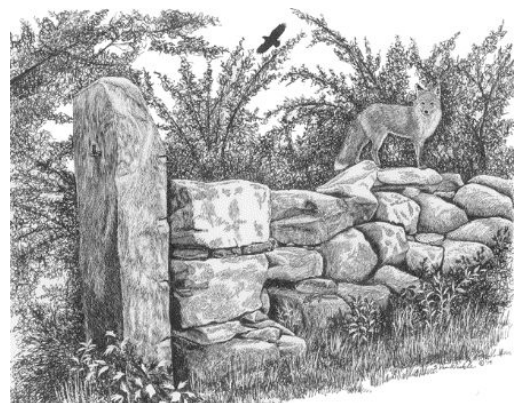
Most of the stone used at the farm was either quarried or removed from fields onsite. Here circa 1912, Walter C. Morgan stands in the quarry which can be found in the cedar forest at the top of the hill. Other remnants of quarrying can be seen in the center of the Giving Garden.



Several types of stone walls were used throughout New England. The terraced wall to your left encloses a meadow. Lace walls created by loosely tossing stones cleared from fields were particularly useful for containing sheep due to the tendency for the stones to tumble off when climbed.

Small animals such as chipmunks, mice, birds and weasels use stone wall for shelter and food

storage. The New England cottontail, the only rabbit native to Connecticut, typically thrives in early successional habitats filled with dense low shrubs and thickets but will also use stone walls as shelter during extreme weather and to avoid predators.



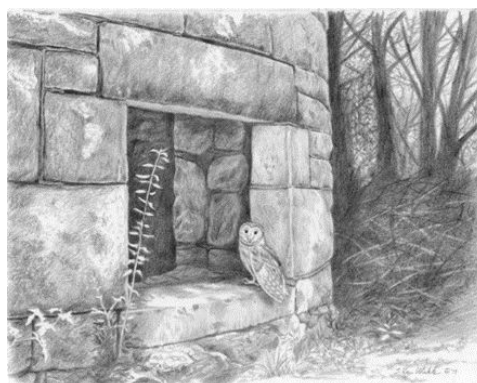
Stop #4: Stop to observe the small chimney, in a clearing, on your right.

When DPNC acquired the Coogan Farm, chimney swifts were nesting in an old deteriorating chimney of the farmhouse. Chimney swifts are small birds that feed on flying insects. They are unable to perch and so cling to vertical surfaces like chimneys, where they attach nests made of saliva and twigs. This chimney swift tower provides habitat for this near-threatened species and was generously built for DPNC as part of an Eagle Scout project.

On your left, notice that each opening through a wall is marked by a pair of stone gateposts. Many still have original iron hardware, dating to the 18th century. As you continue up the hill, notice the height of the wall on your right- historically this was the “bull pen”. At the next fork, keep left (the trail to the right leads to Avalonia and Denison Farm trails, and across Pequotsepos Brook to the Nature Center)

Stop #5 Continue up the hill to your left, through a Red Cedar forest until you come to the clearing on your right.

The elaborate foundation on the hill was built by Thomas and Elizabeth Stillman. In 1888, George Greenman sold the farm to his niece Harriet Greenman Stillman. She in turn transferred the land to her cousin Elizabeth (Charlotte) Greenman Stillman. Elizabeth was the wife of Thomas Edgar Stillman, a prominent New York lawyer. The Stillmans summered in Mystic at Elizabeth’s parents’ home on Greenmanville Avenue (currently part of Mystic Seaport). In the late 1800s they began building a grand 49-room mansion here on Elizabeth’s ancestral property. Reflecting the latest Victorian styles of the day, the house was to have breathtaking views to the south and west over Mystic, Long Island Sound and the Mystic River. Construction stopped in 1894 and Elizabeth passed away in 1901, leaving the mansion forever incomplete. Later the Stillmans’ daughter Mary Emma Stillman Harkness, wife of Edward Harkness, would construct the famed Waterford mansion Eolia, which is now part of Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford. Across the street in Elm Grove Cemetery, you can visit the chapel built by Mary in memory of her parents. After exploring the Stillman mansion foundation take in the commanding view across the River, including another historic Farm (William Fish).



Stop #6 Continue along the main path to your right and head back downhill. As you pass through the stone gateposts, go left into a large meadow. In the distance, you can see the steeple of the Union Baptist Church overlooking downtown Mystic. The property across the River and seen in this historic photo (next page) is known as the Peace Sanctuary, or Great Hill. The small white house is still present and clearly visible in the center of the photo. The Peace Sanctuary has long functioned as an area of respite from the concerns of modern life. In the 1800s the property was purchased by the Universal Peace Union for the society’s peace gatherings, which evolved out of the tumultuous years of the Civil War. Abolitionists, reformers and suffragettes travelled from around the world to attend the annual peace meetings, including William Lloyd Garrison and Belva Lockwood. Though close to 10,000 people attended the meetings in the 1880’s, fewer folks participated as WWI approached. In 1914 Mary Jobe

purchased the property and established Camp Mystic, an exclusive camp for girls. She later married famed National Geographic explorer, Carl Akeley. Upon her death in 1968 a trust was created that preserved the property and DPNC later became the steward. In addition to the cultural significance, the Peace Sanctuary and the Coogan Farm properties together protect open space connecting two watersheds along the Atlantic Flyway migratory route. The Mystic River and Pequotsepos Brook provide critical habitat



and feeding grounds for migratory birds, including shorebirds, waterfowl, warblers and several other species of high conservation priority. The ridgeline running along both sides of the River also provide habitat and hunting ground for birds of prey including Osprey and Bald Eagle that thrive on fish and waterfowl. Both of these raptors have made dramatic comebacks after severe declines in the 1970s due to the pesticide DDT.

Stop # 7 Back on the main trail, continue straight across and visit the Charles and Irene Hamm Pavilion this new structure used for educational programs and events and is the northern terminus of the Greenmanville Trail.

Stop # 8 Continue down the hill to the four-way intersection. You are standing at the crossroads of one of the oldest sections of the farm. In 1647 Capt. John Gallup received this parcel of land in a land grant from the General Court of Connecticut for his service in the Pequot War. Similarly, Capt. George Denison received acreage connecting to the east across Pequotsepos Brook, including the site of the Nature Center's facility on Pequotsepos Road. That property is still owned by the Denisons and is also the site of the Denison Homestead. The preservation of the Coogan Farm, in conjunction with the Denison property and Avalonia Land Trust properties, has helped to create the largest greenway in Mystic, protecting a natural and cultural landscape that connects neighborhoods, schools and commercial areas with more than 10 miles of trails. Here you can see remnants of a large paddock. In the 1600s wolves were still prevalent in New England and farmers would bring their livestock close to home at night for safety. To your right is the Gallup Family Orchard with descendants of heirloom apple and pear trees planted in the 1600s. In colonial times apples were important as a food source and to produce cider. We are still searching for the exact location of the Gallup homestead and suspect it is located nearby. Explore the loop trails through the orchard.

Stop #7: Continue your hike back down the pentway towards the red barn and turn right to follow the main road back to the Welcome Center. Or walk along the gravel road that leads through the Giving Garden, past beehives, staff herb garden and another old quarry.