



NPS/Nora Mitchell

View from the porch of the Mansion

A Legacy of Stewardship

Vermont's Green Mountains, with their forested hills, small farms, and picturesque villages, have not always been as beautiful and as green. After the American Revolution, settlers poured into Vermont. By the middle of the 19th century most of Vermont's forests had been cut down causing severe erosion and flooding. Vermonters faced their first environmental crisis.

One of the first to respond to this crisis was George Perkins Marsh (1801-1882). As a child on his family's farm in Woodstock, Marsh became a keen observer of nature. After serving several terms in Congress in the 1840s, Marsh traveled the lands of the Mediterranean as an American diplomat and saw firsthand how the actions of humans had "brought the earth to a desolation almost as complete as that of the moon." On his last diplomatic mission in Italy, Marsh distilled his observations into a classic book, *Man and Nature* (1864). His careful analysis of the human impact on nature and his eloquent plea for responsible land stewardship made this book one of the founding texts of the environmental movement.

In 1869 the Marsh family farm was purchased by Frederick Billings (1823-1890), a Vermont native who had made his fortune as an attorney in San Francisco during the California Gold Rush. Returning to Vermont he found barren hills, silted rivers, and a devastated countryside. Billings set out to build a farm that would serve future generations as a model of wise stewardship. He imported purebred Jersey cows, and he developed one of the nation's first programs of scientific forest management, so that, in Billings's words, "many a barren hillside will once more glow with the glorious autumn foliage, and the quiet village will see itself back in its old life and power." After his death in 1890, Billings's plan was sustained by three generations of



Logging in Vermont, 19th century

remarkable women, first by his wife Julia and their three daughters, Elizabeth, Mary, and Laura, and then by Billings's granddaughter, Mary French.

The marriage of Mary French and Laurance S. Rockefeller in 1934 brought together two families with a strong commitment to conservation. The Rockefeller family had generously created or enhanced more than twenty national parks, and Laurance S. Rockefeller inherited his family's love for the land. As a trusted advisor to five American presidents he helped to make conservation and outdoor recreation an essential part of the national agenda. Together Laurance and Mary made the gift that established Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park as Vermont's first national park.



A portrait of George Perkins Marsh, painted by G.P.A. Healy, circa 1820

George P. Marsh



Frederick Billings, 1885

Frederick Billings

Laurance S. and Mary F. Rockefeller, 1982



Laurance S. Rockefeller



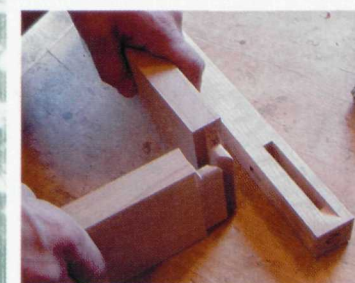
Julia Billings and her daughters continued to pursue Billings's far-sighted approach to farming and forestry well into the 20th century. Pictured from left: Elizabeth Billings, Mary Montagu Billings French, (mother of Mary French Rockefeller), Julia Parmlly Billings, and Laura Billings Lee, circa 1896.

A Vision for the Park

"... there is a mandate to invent an entirely new kind of park. It must be one where the human stories and the natural history are intertwined; where the relatively small acreage serves as an educational resource for the entire National Park Service 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."

John Elder, Professor of English and Environmental Studies, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont, from remarks at the park's opening ceremony.

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is the only national park to tell the story of conservation history and the evolving nature of land stewardship in America. The park operates in partnership with the Woodstock Foundation, Inc., and the adjacent Billings Farm & Museum. The park interprets the historic home of the Marsh, Billings, and Rockefeller families, their conservation work and stewardship of the forest landscape, and the emergence of an American conservation ethic. The 550-acre woodlands continue to be managed for protection of natural resources, education, recreation, sustainable forestry, historic character, and scenic beauty.



Furniture built by Vermont furniture makers from Billings Forest hardwoods shows how value is added to local products through an association with place and regional craftsmanship, promoting conservation and sustainability.



The Pogue on a brilliant autumn day

The Conservation Study Institute was established by the National Park Service to enhance leadership in the field of conservation. The Institute creates opportunities for dialogue, inquiry, and lifelong learning to enhance the stewardship of landscapes and communities. In collaboration with the NPS, academic, and nonprofit partners, the Institute provides a national forum to discuss conservation history, contemporary issues and practice, and future directions. The Institute realizes the promise of Laurance S. Rockefeller that "the message and vision of conservation stewardship and its importance for the future will, once again, go out across the nation from the hills of Vermont."



Workshop at the Conservation Study Institute. The Institute furthers the park's educational and outreach initiatives on its primary message of conservation stewardship.

"We must conceive of stewardship not simply as one individual's practice, but rather as the mutual and intimate relationship extending across generations, between a human community and its place on earth."

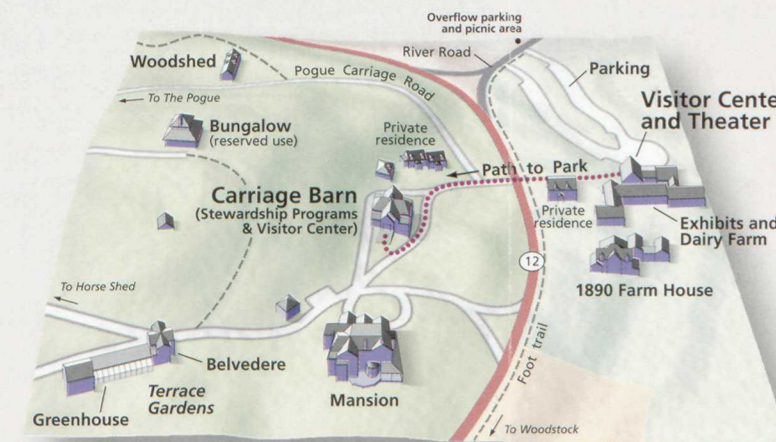
John Elder, *Inheriting Mount Tom*, 1997



"Passing the Torch," a Tiffany window in the Mansion, is symbolic of an intergenerational commitment to conservation.

A Guide to the Park

About Your Visit



Getting Here Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is located off Vt.12 in Woodstock, Vermont. Take I-89 to exit 1 (U.S. 4). From exit 1, take U.S. 4 west (13 miles) through Quechee and Taftsville to Woodstock. From U.S. 4 in downtown Woodstock, bear right onto Vt.12 north. Cross the iron bridge over the Ottauquechee River, bear right onto River Road, and take the first right into the parking area at the Billings Farm & Museum.

Your Visit Begin at the Visitor Center at the Billings Farm & Museum, located next to the parking area. National Park staff can answer questions and help plan your visit. Here you can view the award-winning film "A Place in the Land." From the Billings Farm & Museum you can cross Vt.12 to continue your visit at the Carriage Barn.

Tours The Mansion and gardens may be visited only by guided tours led by park staff. Tours are offered Memorial Day weekend to October 31. Make advance reservations by calling 802-457-3368 ext. 22, or get them in person at the Visitor Center at the Billings Farm & Museum or at the Carriage Barn. Tours are limited in size. Large groups are advised to call

ahead for special arrangements. A tour fee is charged for persons five years or older.

Accessibility Limited parking for visitors with disabilities is available near the Mansion and the Carriage Barn. Parking passes and directions are available from the National Park staff at the Billings Farm & Museum Visitor Center. The Visitor Center, Carriage Barn, and Mansion are wheelchair accessible.

Safety Be alert for traffic when crossing the roads and in parking areas. Trails may have uneven footing. Swimming, wading, or fishing are not allowed in The Pogue. Dogs must be on a leash at all times. Consult park staff for current park conditions.

For More Information
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park
54 Elm Street
Woodstock, VT 05091
802-457-3368
www.nps.gov/mabi

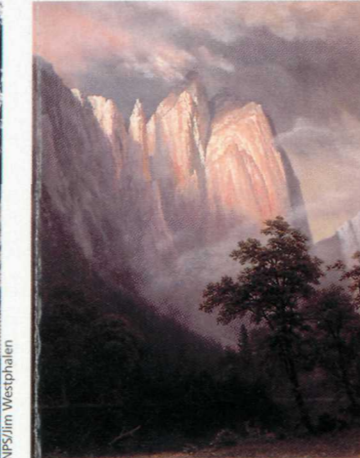
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The Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller Mansion



The Carriage Barn



"Cathedral Rock, Yosemite," by Albert Bierstadt, 1870, on view in the Mansion

Tour the Mansion and Gardens
The Mansion was built in 1805-07 for Charles Marsh, Sr., the father of George Perkins Marsh. For two generations the heirs of Billings have kept the 19th-century Queen Anne style architecture, furnishings, and gardens intact while adding 20th-century renovations that give the Mansion and grounds their present character and appearance. The Mansion contains an extensive art collection with American landscape paintings by such renowned artists as Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, John Frederick Kensett, and Asher B. Durand. The collection illustrates the influence of 19th-century landscape painting, photography, and writing on the environmental movement.

Visit the Billings Farm & Museum
The Billings Farm & Museum is a working dairy farm and a museum of agricultural and rural life, operated as a private non-profit educational institution by the Woodstock Foundation, Inc. The park and the museum work in partnership to carry on the Billings tradition of land stewardship. For information about special activities and programs at the museum call 802-457-2355.

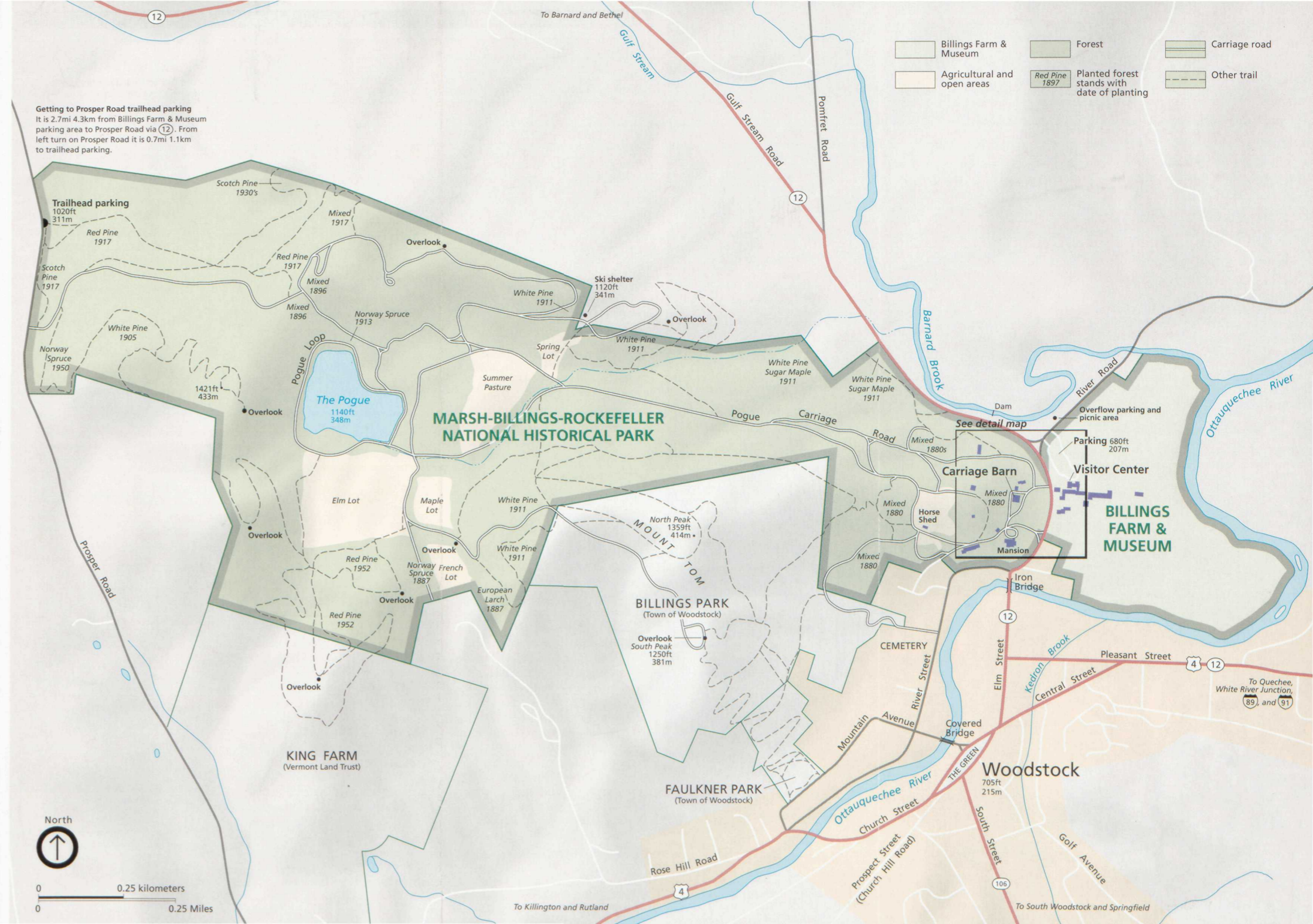
What to Do

Visit the Carriage Barn Built in 1895 and rehabilitated in 1999, the Carriage Barn serves as the National Park Service Visitor Center and features the exhibit "Celebrating Stewardship — People Taking Care of Places." The Carriage Barn also provides offices for park staff, the Conservation Study Institute, and the New Hampshire and Vermont office of the NPS Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program. The Carriage Barn is open daily, Memorial Day weekend through October 31, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Walk the Forest Trails and Carriage Roads A fine way to experience the park is to walk some of the 20 miles of carriage roads and trails that crisscross Mount Tom. You can visit The Pogue, a pond tucked in the cleft of the mountain, and enjoy magnificent views of Woodstock and the surrounding hills from the top of Mount Tom. The system of carriage roads can be approached from the park entrance on Vt.12 or from the parking lot on Prosper Road. No bicycles or motorized vehicles are allowed. In winter, the Woodstock Ski Touring Center grooms the carriage roads for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Contact the Ski Touring Center, Vt.106 in Woodstock, or call 802-457-6674, for trail passes and for more information.



Hiking the carriage roads on Mount Tom



Getting to Prosper Road trailhead parking
It is 2.7mi 4.3km from Billings Farm & Museum parking area to Prosper Road via 12. From left turn on Prosper Road it is 0.7mi 1.1km to trailhead parking.

