

attorneys – residents of a place modestly described as a “sleepy rural hamlet” – bought up \$100,000 worth of canal stock in a matter of hours. Eventually local investors bought about 1/3 of the canal’s \$750,000 initial construction fund. The boom of commerce and prosperity that followed the canal’s construction made Providence and Worcester the second and third largest cities in New England.

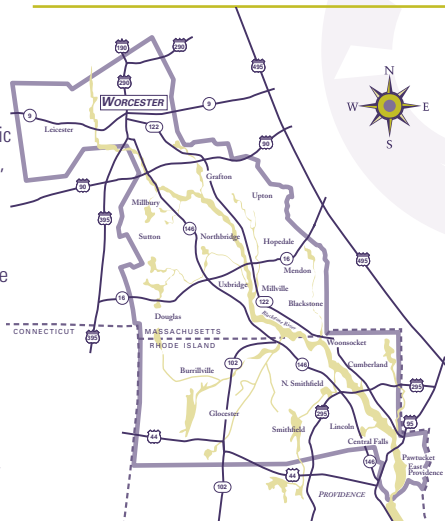
MARKETPLACE Originally on a Nipmuck trail, by 1700 Worcester was a crossroads on the Bay Path between Hartford and Boston. In 1731, less than two decades after its permanent settlement, Worcester was chosen as the county seat because of its central location. Even people who had no transactions at the court house came into the shire town during court week for trading, for entertainment, to catch a stagecoach and, of course, to hear the latest news. Worcester’s small but hardworking manufacturers and fertile farms were eager to reach new customers for their products and produce via affordable means.

Pumping up Worcester’s prestige, the waterway gave the city its first port to the sea, its first low-cost means of transporting materials and manufactured goods to and from markets worldwide, and its first glimpse into the faces of its future generations with the arrival of immigrant workers. However, the canal’s moment of glory was brief. By 1835 competition from the railroads shrank the cargo shipped by canal barges and swelled the company’s losses. Ironically, in 1848, as Worcester reincorporated as a city, the canal venture was deemed a financial failure and soon dissolved. ☀

DIRECTIONS

From I-290 through Worcester, Eastbound, take Exit 17, turn left on Belmont Street; Westbound, take Exit 18, then Concord Street – both exits indicate Route 9 West. At traffic lights, bear onto Lincoln Street, following signs pointing to Route 9 West and Salisbury Street. Continue straight through traffic lights to Institute Park, on the right-hand side. (The campus of Worcester Polytechnic Institute is on the left.) To begin, turn right on Humboldt Avenue. The tour starts at the intersection of Humboldt Avenue and Salisbury Street.

BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR



WORCESTER, MA

Driving Tour & Guide to Blackstone Canal Historic Markers



Solve two of history’s mysteries: Where did the Blackstone Canal flow through Worcester? Where is it now?

ALONG THE WAY

- ✔ **Learn more about Worcester:** the story of Worcester’s industrial heritage told through exhibits, interactive displays, films, audio presentations and a historic house museum. Admission fee for nonmembers. Worcester Historical Museum, 30 Elm Street, Tues, Wed, Fri and Sat, 10am-4pm. Thurs 10am-8:30pm. Salisbury Mansion, 40 Highland Street, Thurs 1-8:30pm, Fri-Sat, 1-4pm. 508-753-8278.
- ✔ **Join a guided walking tour.** Annual summer series. Admission fee for nonmembers. Preservation Worcester, 10 Cedar Street. 508-754-8760.
- ✔ **Meander southward through the Blackstone Valley.** Maps, self-guided tours and information about the National Heritage Corridor are free at the Visitors Center at Broad Meadow Brook Conservation Center and Wildlife Sanctuary. Open Tuesday through Saturday, 9AM-4PM, and Sunday, 12:30-4PM. Admission fee to trails and wildlife areas for nonmembers. Massachusetts Audubon Society, 414 Massasoit Road, Worcester. 508-753-6087.
- ✔ **Learn about canal construction** and how a canal boat is raised and lowered through locks on a self-guided walk along an unspoiled section of the Blackstone Canal and towpath. Then, tour the exhibits about the transition of life from farm to factory in the early 1800s. Visitors Center and the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, 287 Oak Street, Uxbridge, MA. Free admission. Open seven days, year round. Hiking trails, picnic area, canoe launch, free parking. 508-278-7604.
- ✔ **For information on events, restaurants and lodging in Worcester,** call or visit the Worcester County Convention and Visitors Bureau, ground floor of parking garage at corner of Thomas Street and 30 Worcester Center Blvd., Worcester. Free 30-minute parking. 508-753-2920.

Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in 1986, recognizing the national significance of the region between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA - the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an affiliated area of the National Park Service.



This brochure was developed under the direction of the Worcester Historical Museum in partnership with the Heritage Corridor Commission.

www.nps.gov/blac/home.htm

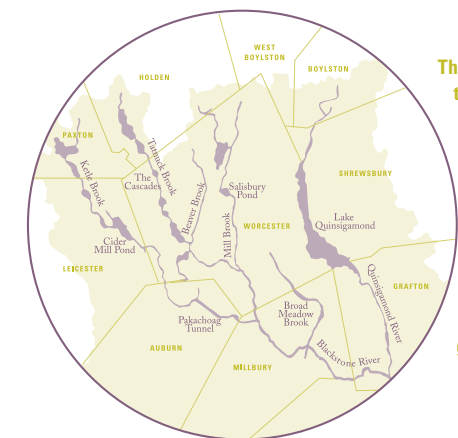
Special thanks to NPS Ranger Ray Boswell, Massachusetts DEM Ranger Val Stegemoen, The Blackstone Canal CDC and Preservation Worcester.

WORCESTER, MA

Becoming a shire town in colonial times put Worcester on the map, but the opening of the Blackstone Canal in 1828 set off the boom that made it a major industrial city. The Blackstone Canal Company, chartered in 1822, based its venture on three key factors: water, wealth, and marketplaces. The 3,000 residents in pre-canal Worcester were landlocked, the setting a mere speck on the landscape by comparison to the grand seaport at Boston, but the spark of an “All-America City” was already glowingly evident.

WATER It’s one thing to propose the building of a navigable 45-mile waterway connecting landlocked Worcester at 450 feet above sea-level to the seaport of Providence, RI, at Narragansett Bay, but it’s another thing altogether to figure out where to get enough water to fill such a big ditch. Around Worcester there were plenty of water resources. The watershed formed by the hills surrounding Worcester, plus natural springs, filled several large ponds. The canal’s engineers were confident that the water supply would be enough for industry transportation, houses and farms.

WEALTH Next, the Canal Company found ample financing for the deal. On May 7, 1825 more than two dozen Worcester businessmen, doctors and



The ponds, brooks and streams that were dammed and channeled to fill the Blackstone Canal and power Worcester’s mills, met the Middle River at Quinsigamond Village – becoming the Blackstone River. Every time a boat passed through one of the 48 stone locks on the canal, more than forty thousand gallons of water flowed with it.

John H. Chafee
BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY
National Heritage Corridor

