

Mendell's Folly

The largest property belonging to the Bethany Land Trust, Mendell's Folly is a 125-acre site given to the Trust in 1971 by Elizabeth "Tibby" Mendell. One of the original incorporators of the Trust, Tibby and her husband Clarence Mendell, the former Dean of Yale College and Sterling Professor of Classics at Yale, had purchased the property and adjoining pieces in 1936.

In all, the Mendells acquired 190 acres. Some of the land had been a cow pasture, some an apple orchard, some just plain Bethany woods. It's been said that one of Clarence Mendell's students, on seeing this wilderness of muddy fields and rocky hillsides, called it Mendell's Folly; a play on the name Seward's Folly given to the U.S. purchase of Alaska. After Clarence Mendell died, Tibby remained in Bethany on her "Folly."

Mendell's Folly includes heavily wooded hills, rocky outcrops and ridges, a charming brook, a marsh, a beaver lodge and dam, a ravine, and lots of wildlife and wildflowers. Hockanum Brook, or Lebanon Brook as it is sometimes called, flows through the property westward from Bethany's Veterans Memorial Park toward Beacon Falls and eventually the Naugatuck River. The stream widens into a marsh in the middle of the property, where beaver have felled many trees and created a small pond.



Photo by Emmeline Alaconis, SCRCOG

Moderate to Difficult Hike

The hiking trails also have limited biking and horseback riding. Tibby's Trail (0.66 mi) offers good views of Hockanum Brook and the marsh, but becomes somewhat difficult near the beaver dam. The White Birches Trail (0.50 mi) has some steep, rocky inclines and rises to 560 feet. The Beaver Trail (0.36 mi) starts out easy but presents some difficult passages near the pond. western most section of trails.

Directions and Parking:

The main trail entrance of Mendell's Folly can be reached by parking at the end of the paved section of Northrop Road and walking northwesterly along the unpaved abandoned portion of the road. Another entrance is located off Route 42 in Beacon Falls, with limited parking (1 or 2 cars) by the side of the road. There is also parking for 2 or three vehicles on the south side of Rt. 42 in Bethany with access on foot across a field followed by crossing of Hockanum Brook. A previous access from the north along the terminus of Northrop Road in Bethany is now closed.

Permitted/Prohibited Activities:

This land is for passive recreation use only. No motorized vehicles are permitted. Horses are allowed on marked trails only. Dogs are permitted on leash. Please bag and pick up all dog waste. Hunting or trapping on Trust Land is prohibited.

In 2016 the Bethany Land Trust received the Woodward Preserve, 36 acres abutting Mendell's Folly on the south side. Trails are not currently established on that parcel.



Photo by Ray Andresen, Bethany Land Trust

Total Trails Length: approx. 1.52 miles



For more information about this walk contact:

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