

WALKING THE HERITAGE TRAIL

The description below begins at the north end of Short Beach and traverses 1.4 miles south to Bailey's Hill through five Trail Sections. Parking is available at the Short Beach lot off Ward Road; Playing Fields lot off Flash Road; Bailey's Hill lot at Trimountain and Bass Point Roads. A permit may be required at certain times of year.

1. SHORT BEACH | 0.4 mi. Begin at the Trail Marker at Little Nahant Playground. Follow the sidewalk past the Life Saving Station and Castle Road. Cross Nahant Rd at the crosswalk to the parking lot Trail Kiosk.

Note | To walk a loop from the parking lot, walk north on the beach itself and follow the above to return.

Midway along the Beach is the historic Nahant Life Saving Station, built in 1898, transferred to the United States Coast Guard in 1915, and deeded back to the Town in 2001.

Short Beach is a splendid barrier beach. The dunes support a stunning mix of wild flowers including Beach Pea, Sea Rocket, and Wild Radish. The Milkweed attracts Monarch Butterflies, and Bayberry attracts flocks of Tree Swallows. Thousands of migrating shorebirds depend on this beach from July through October. Look for terns and dainty Bonaparte's Gulls during the warmer months.

2. LOWLANDS | 0.3 mi. Begin at the Trail Kiosk at Short Beach parking lot. A few yards along the Trail, choose either side of the fork to merge back onto the main trail. Follow to Flash Road and cross to the Trail Marker.

From 1905 through 1930, the Nahant and Lynn Street Railway ran on a wooden trestle through what is now the parking lot. Over the years this area has hosted sporting events, military exercises, and circuses - complete with elephants.

The diverse wetland and woodland habitat attracts many birds during spring and fall migration. Yellow Warblers, Robins, Goldfinches, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Grackles nest here. Warm sunny days bring Monarch and Red Admiral butterflies.

3. PLAYING FIELDS | 0.2 mi. Enter the Flash Road Playground. Follow the Trail Markers to the rear of the Fire Station, along the border of the parking lot to the ball field, and between the two rows of trees to the Trail Marker behind the Johnson School.

This area was part of Fort Ruckman, active during the two World Wars. South of the playground were a mess hall, an infirmary and movie theater! The Nahant Fire Station was once a military fire house. The ball fields were once Parade Grounds.

Canada Geese, Brant and Snow Geese forage in winter and Tree and Barn Swallows fly in search of insects in summer.

4. COMMUNITY GARDEN & BIRCH WOODS | 0.2 mi. From the Trail Marker behind the Johnson School follow the line of trees to the Community Garden and through the birch woods. Wooden steps lead up a short slope to Goddard Drive and the base of the Fort Ruckman Bunkers.

The wooden steps follow the former World War II wooden plank walkway to the Fort Ruckman barracks located along Goddard Drive. Listen for the very vocal House Wrens.

5. FORT RUCKMAN & BAILEY'S HILL | 0.3 mi. From the intersection of Gardner and Trimountain Roads, follow the gravel road to the top of Fort Ruckman to the Trail Marker on the left. (Before continuing, explore the spectacular overlooks to the south and to the northeast.)

Proceed down the steep switchback trail to Bailey's Hill Park and follow the Trail Markers to Bailey's Hill. Ascend the hill on the asphalt path. For a less demanding hike, return to Trimountain Road and walk to the Bailey's Hill Park entrance on the left.

From Bailey's Hill Park, look back to the switchback trail for remains of Gun Number 2 of the underground fortification, Battery Gardner. The flat green of the park housed soldiers in tents, then a rifle range. Bailey's Hill itself was used for surveillance and weaponry in the two World Wars and as a Nike missile site in 1955. Currently, the green is much loved as a park highlighted by the lovely Sears Pavilion Gazebo.

The wooded hillsides attract birds and butterflies and the shoreline is active with terns and shorebirds in summer and a variety of waterfowl in winter.

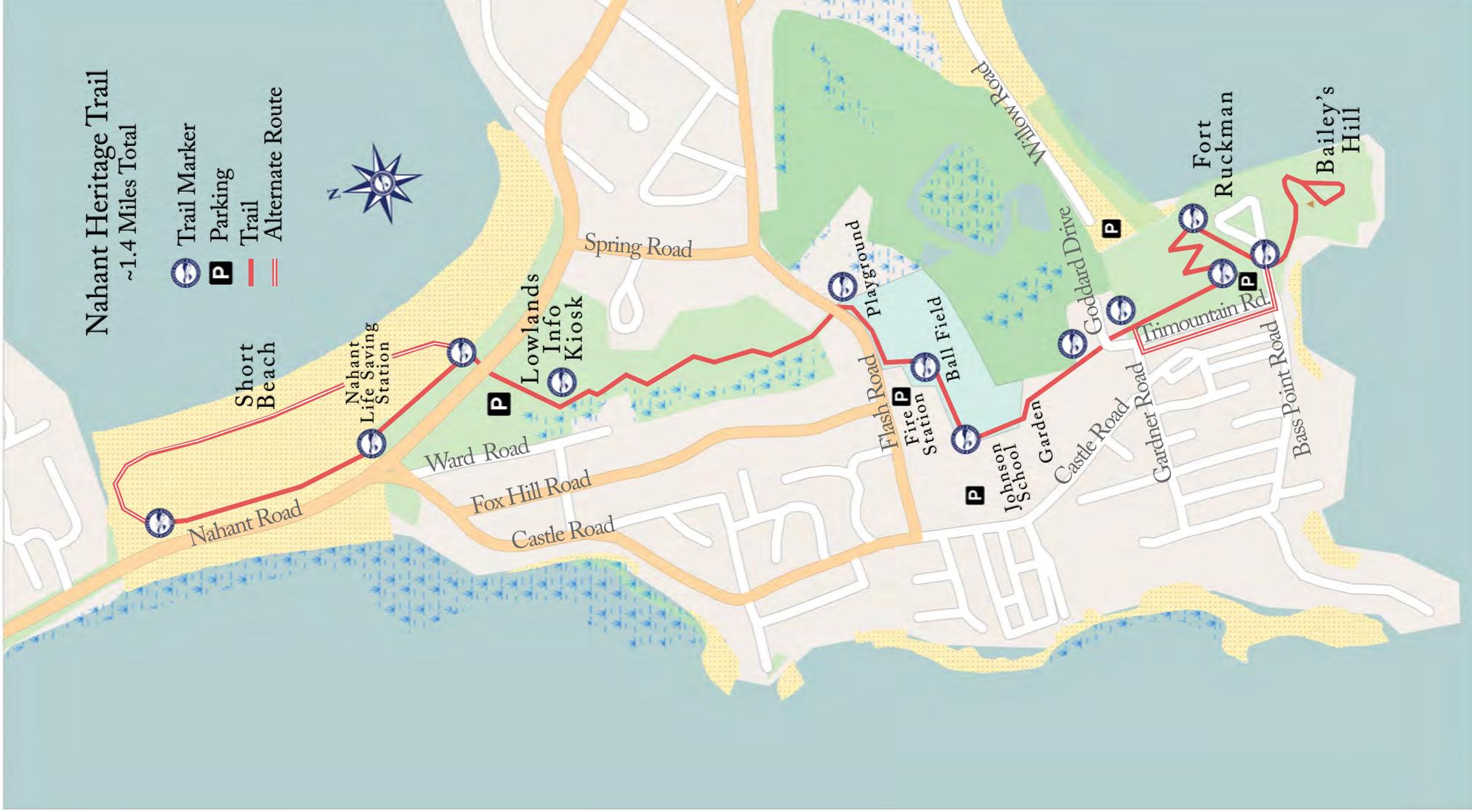
End at the top of Bailey's Hill | ~1.4 Miles Total

Nahant Open Space Committee | June, 2012



Nahant Heritage Trail
 ~1.4 Miles Total

- Trail Marker
- Parking
- Trail
- Alternate Route



Short Beach



Lowlands Kiosk



Lowlands Trail



Butterfly Garden



Fort Ruckman



Bailey's Hill