

# The Blue Hills - A little general history.

This is just a little 'overview' information about the park, how it was formed, etc. In the future I'll provide more information about these, and many more, subjects.

The Blue Hills is a Massachusetts State Park. It is currently managed by "DCR", the Department of Conservation and Recreation. It is 7000 acres, broken into several 'sections' by the roads that pass through it. It includes parts of Milton, Quincy, Braintree, Canton, Randolph, and Dedham.

The Blue Hills reservation got its start in 1893, when the Metropolitan Parks Commission purchased the lands for the start of the Blue Hills Reservation as one of the first areas set aside for public recreation. But the history of the Blue Hills goes back much, *much*, further. Let's take a look back at some of this history, as well as look at the present.

It's difficult to know exactly what happened millions of years ago. We do have clues, and over the years people have tried to assemble those clues and create a timeline for the Blue Hills. So, let's step back in time and look at how the Blue Hills may have come to be what we know today.

"600 million years ago the Blue Hills did not look like the small hilly landscape of today, but rather a true, conical volcano like you would see on the west coast. After erupting, or rather EXPLODING, the volcano that would become the Blue Hills formed a large Caldera that further collapsed and eroded over hundreds of millions of years leaving behind the mountainous and cobbled surface we all love today."<sup>1</sup>

So, to skip ahead a bit... let's jump to 10,000 years ago. What were the Blue Hills like then? And what was going on here? Well, we know a bit about what was going on back then, because there have been (at least) two significant archaeological digs in the Blue Hills. One near Ponkapoag Pond and the second in Fowl Meadow, near the Neponset River. Future articles will include more details, but for now just note that 10,000 years ago people were in the Blue Hills. Not to 'go for a hike', but to quarry stone to make tools and projectile points. And they made lots of them, for thousands of years. Long before Rome, or the pyramids of Egypt, the locals had a thriving 'business' running in the Blue Hills. We'll come back to this later, but for now let's step forward until after 1620 and the arrival of the Mayflower.

As Europeans moved into the area, towns then cities such as Boston grew up. But much of what we know as 'The Blue Hills' was still rural for many years. Eventually large tracks of land in the area were purchased by several rich families. We will come back to some of those folks later, and you will recognize some of the names such as Hemenway and Eustis from hills and trails in the Blue Hills today.

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<sup>1</sup> I'm going to include occasional 'footnotes', but they won't be formal, really just links to sources of further info that I've drawn on. But if anything interests you, they will give a starting point for more info. The Blue Hills: Archaeological Wonder of Epic Proportions <https://friendsofthebluehills.org/keynote/>

Stepping forward to 1892 we have the creation of "Metropolitan Parks Commission".

[ACTS OF 1892, CHAP. 342.]

**ACT APPOINTING METROPOLITAN PARK COMMISSIONERS FOR 1892-93.**

**SECTION 1.** The governor, by and with the advice and consent of the council, shall appoint three persons, to be known as the Metropolitan Park Commissioners, who shall hold their office for one year from the first day of May in the year eighteen hundred and ninety-two. Said commissioners shall consider the advisability of laying out ample open spaces for the use of the public, in the towns and cities in the vicinity of Boston, and shall have authority to make maps and plans of such spaces and to collect such other information in relation thereto as it may deem expedient, and shall report to the next general court, on or before the first Wednesday of February, a comprehensive plan for laying out, acquiring and maintaining such open spaces.

**SECTION 2.** Said commissioners may employ such assistants as they may deem necessary, and may expend such sums therefor and in the discharge of their duties, including the actual travelling expenses of said members, as the governor and council may determine. Said commissioners shall receive no compensation.

**SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect upon its passage.

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"The Blue Hills Reservation forms a public domain of 3.953 acres. It was taken by the Metropolitan Park Commission in the autumn of 1893, a few months after the passage of the law establishing that board with the authority to lay out public open spaces in the Metropolitan Parks District. It is the largest of the several public reservations and parks in the metropolitan district, and the largest recreation ground possessed by any American city. It comprises nearly the entire range of the Blue Hills, and lies within the limits of the towns of Milton and Canton, and the city of Quincy. It is a diversified tract of hills and woodland, and the greater portion of the region has a mountain-like character, which gives the reservation its distinctive charm."<sup>3</sup>

Well, this gives us a quick overview. I hope you are interested in coming along and learning about the Blue Hills. Until next time,

Bob Vogel

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[https://books.google.com/books?id=yIUZAQAIAAJ&pg=PA63&lpg=PA63&dq=%22Act+appointing+metropolitan+park+commissioners%22&source=bl&ots=c6Elu\\_Hkzu&sig=ACfU3U3w1F3o-MSVbwVhtJbLCkBYphMQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjPudX4ma\\_oAhUPneAKHVZ8CXQQ6AEwAHoECAQQAQ#v=onepage&q=%22Act%20appointing%20metropolitan%20park%20commissioners%22&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=yIUZAQAIAAJ&pg=PA63&lpg=PA63&dq=%22Act+appointing+metropolitan+park+commissioners%22&source=bl&ots=c6Elu_Hkzu&sig=ACfU3U3w1F3o-MSVbwVhtJbLCkBYphMQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjPudX4ma_oAhUPneAKHVZ8CXQQ6AEwAHoECAQQAQ#v=onepage&q=%22Act%20appointing%20metropolitan%20park%20commissioners%22&f=false)

<sup>3</sup> <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=bc.ark:/13960/t3325fn7d&view=1up&seq=84>