

Ecology & Geology

The Howard Hill Park, with its large undeveloped block of forestland is both geologically and topographically diverse.

Due to an extensive timber harvest in the 1980's, and a post-ice-storm harvest in the late 1990's, the upper portions of the Park are dominated by even-aged forest stands of American beech which currently have limited diversity. The steeper, boulder-strewn and rocky eastern slopes, where loggers chose not to navigate the terrain, are ecologically diverse, with larger red oak, eastern hemlock, and white pine trees.

The ridgeline summit above the older hemlock, pine, and red oak forest features two scenic overlooks, a granite bench and plaque, and offers unparalleled views of the State Capitol and the Kennebec River Valley.



*Jerry Bley, Creative Conservation & Steve Pelletier, Stantec
Howard Hill Ganneston Trail ~ Photograph: Brian Kent*

Eastern portions of the Park include a series of topographically high, steep, and eroded former marine terraces dominated by mature, mixed hardwood and softwood trees. The scenic, winding Sewall Street Trail traverses this portion of the property before reaching the overlook.

The northeastern corner of the property features a portion of a forested floodplain wetland associated with Kennedy Brook, with a mix of mature and large diameter red maple, white pine, black cherry, yellow birch, and white and green ash.

Wildlife

The mixed conifer and hardwood forest, wetlands, and rocky ledges and boulder fields found throughout Howard Hill offer protection from the elements for a variety of wildlife and are important nesting habitat for songbirds, including numerous warblers and other species.

Signs or sightings of a wide variety of wildlife species have been documented in the Park, including white-tailed deer, moose, red fox, snowshoe hare, and coyote.



Photographic: Cait Smith

The older growth hemlock and pine stand beneath the rocky ledges supports over-wintering habitat for white-tailed deer and features snags and woody debris that benefit many plant and animal species. Over a long period of time, as the forest in the Park once again ages and diversifies, its ecological values (including carbon storage) will also increase.

A Partial list of bird species:

Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Turkey Vulture, Broad-winged Hawk, Least Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Eastern Phoebe, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Ovenbird, Black-and-White Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Palm Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow



*Pileated Woodpecker
Photograph: Phil Downes*

Conservation History



*KLT donates Howard Hill to the City of Augusta
March 22, 2017 ~ Kennebec Savings Bank*

Augusta's Howard Hill Historical Park was protected thanks to Robert G. Fuller, Jr., and many other generous donors to the Kennebec Land Trust's Howard Hill campaign, including The City of Augusta, The Land for Maine's Future Program, Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, The Betterment Fund, Davis Conservation Foundation, Elsie and William Viles Foundation, Kennebec Savings Bank Foundation, Maine Community Foundation, and The Windover Foundation.

The cities of Augusta and Hallowell view the Howard Hill and Effie L. Berry properties as a unique opportunity to connect the two communities. Together they protect one of the area's last large blocks of open space east of the interstate. The newly constructed Howard Hill trails offer walkers access to the Berry trail and, a little further on, to the Kennebec River and Rail Trail.

The **City of Augusta** is located at the head of tide on the Kennebec River and has a population of 19,000 residents. It is the capital of Maine, the county seat of Kennebec County, and the eighth-largest city in Maine. **The Kennebec Land Trust** protects land permanently, offers opportunities for people to learn about and enjoy the natural world, and works with partners to support sustainable forestry and farming. The Trust has conserved over 6,700 acres, has constructed fifty miles of trails, and is supported by over 1,100 households and business partners.

Brochure text: Sept. 2019 ~TK



HOWARD HILL HISTORICAL PARK



*Maine State Capitol and Howard Hill
Photograph: Norm Rodrigue*

City of Augusta

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Welcome to the City of Augusta's
Howard Hill Historical Park



Charles Codman painting: Maine State House & Howard Hill, 1836

The City of Augusta's 164-acre Howard Hill Historical Park is a landmark of statewide significance. This iconic forested landscape, which has changed throughout geologic time and human history, is now permanently protected for the benefit of Maine's wildlife and people, and will forever serve as a natural backdrop to Maine's State House.

Almost a century ago, Maine legislator William Howard Gannett acquired Howard Hill and, noting the property's remarkable forests, geologic features and streams, he created Ganneston Park overlooking the Capitol. Ganneston Park was known for its carriage trails, its tree house, and its woods, ponds, and other natural wonders. Today this City park, which is permanently protected with a conservation easement held by the Kennebec Land Trust, connects the cities of Hallowell and Augusta, and features a newly constructed network of trails and scenic viewpoints.

We hope you enjoy your visit!



Ganneston Park tree house, circa.1920s; site of today's vista, granite bench, & plaque

People and the Land – A Brief Timeline

For thousands of years before Europeans came up the Kennebec River to the head of the tide, Algonquian-speaking Native Americans, known as the Wabanaki or "People of the Dawn", were using the River and the woods around Howard Hill for water, transportation, a fishery, and for hunting. It is from the Abenaki language that the Kennebec derives its name, which means "long quiet water."



Photograph: Dale Waldron

Late 1700s – Captain James Howard purchases land on the east side of the Kennebec River, including Fort Western. He is recognized as the founder of the City of Augusta. His brother, Samuel Howard, owned the southern part of Howard Hill. Samuel named Howard Hill for his daughter, Betsey.

1890s – William Howard Gannett and his wife, Sarah Neil Hill Gannett, reside on 500 acres with extensive gardens on "Betsy Howard Hill".

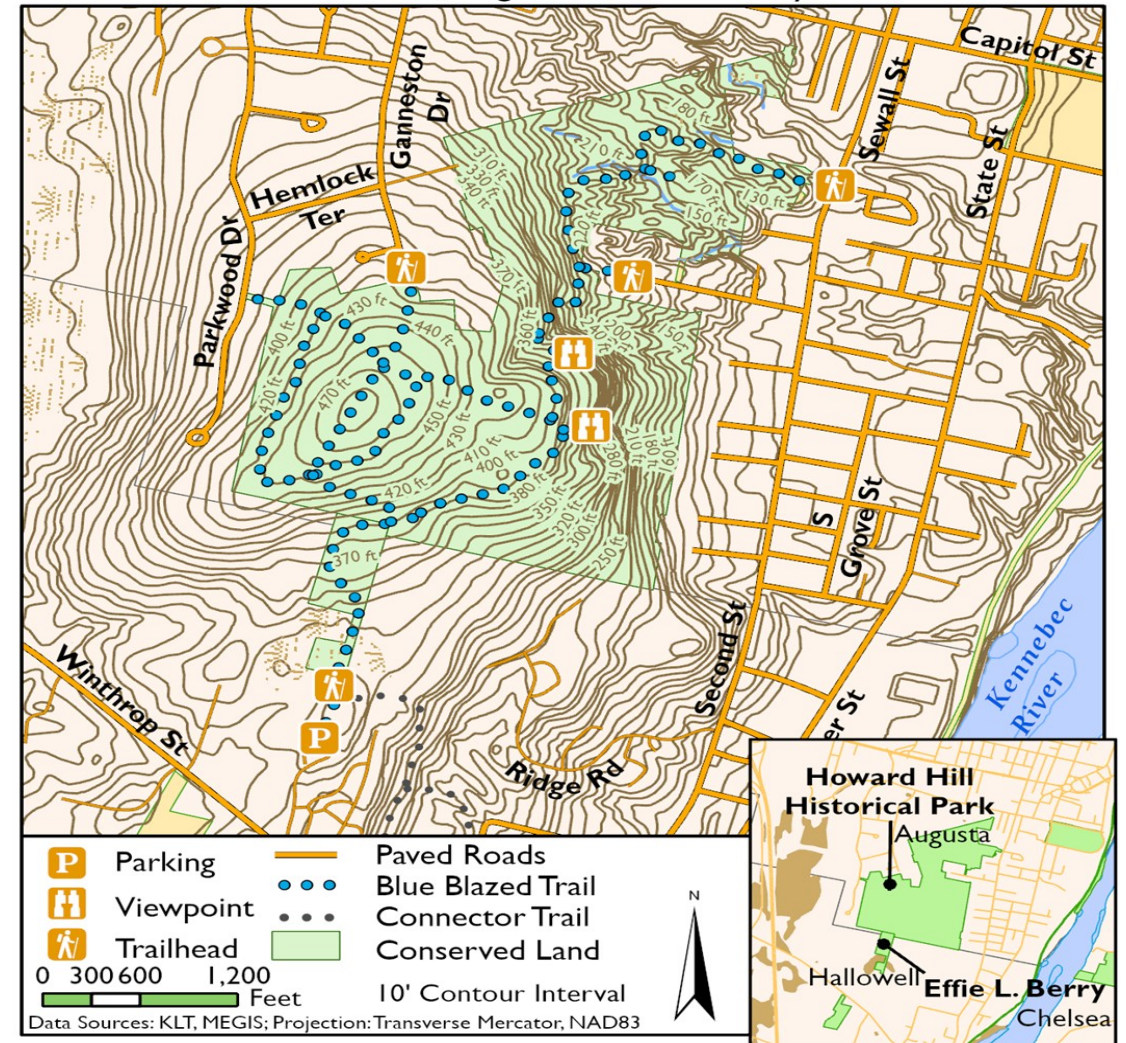
1930-1969 – Howard Hill, also known as Gannett's Woods and Ganneston Park, is designated as a state game preserve.

1970s – Maine State Parks & Recreation Commission attempts purchase of 200 acres on Howard Hill; project fails. Ganneston Park subdivision begins.

2009 – KLT, in partnership with the City of Augusta, begins actively pursuing conservation options for 164 acres on Howard Hill.

2017 – KLT donates the Howard Hill property, with stewardship funds, to the City of Augusta. This transaction successfully completes an eight-year process to protect this land in perpetuity for the benefit of Maine's people and wildlife.

Howard Hill Historical Park, Augusta & Effie L. Berry Field, Hallowell



Note: Watch your footing - some portions of the trail are uneven. Check for ticks after hiking!

Public uses: The Park is open to the public from 6 a.m.-11 p.m. for nature observation, hiking, snowshoeing. Bow hunting (by permission of the City of Augusta) allowed in season. No motorized vehicles are allowed. **Dogs:** shall be on a leash per Augusta City ordinance. Please pick up after your pets. **Facilities:** Currently there are no bathrooms available.

Trails, Directions, Parking: **Stevens Commons/Effie L. Berry Conservation Area trailhead in Hallowell:** 0.6 mile walk through the Park on uneven terrain to the overlook. Parking at the Stevens School Commons at the end of Coos Lane. **Sewall Street** directly opposite Brooklawn Avenue: 0.8 mile walk (steep, uphill section). Parking is available at the State House lots and garage and side streets. **Ganneston Drive:** travel to the end of Ganneston Drive, park alongside road, please be respectful of neighboring driveways. 0.4 mile walk to overlook. In the future, the City is planning to provide facilities and parking via a driveway at the end of Ganneston Drive.

Thank you to our dedicated Howard Hill trail crew: Anasley & Janet Sawyer; Maine Conservation Corps; Jean-Luc Theriault & Tyler Keniston - KLT stewardship staff; the City of Augusta Community Service Department & Leif Dahlin; and KLT interns & volunteers.