

# WESTPORT SUMMER PASSPORT

*Just Add Water!*

WELCOME TO OUR POPULAR WESTPORT SUMMER PASSPORT! IT IS A FANTASTIC WAY TO TAKE IN WESTPORT'S BEAUTIFUL SIGHTS. THIS YEAR, IT'S ALL ABOUT WATER. WESTPORT LOOKS OUT ON BUZZARDS BAY, AND THE EAST AND WEST BRANCHES OF THE SCENIC WESTPORT RIVER RUN THROUGH ITS LANDSCAPE. THE TOWN BOASTS COUNTLESS PONDS, LAKES, AND BROOKS. WESTPORT'S LONG HISTORY, ECONOMY, CULTURE, NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN SHAPED BY WATER. FOLLOW THE EASY SELF-GUIDED PASSPORT TO EXPERIENCE WESTPORT AND ALL OF ITS GLORIOUS WATER. TAKE FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND HAVE A GOOD TIME!

# Hello!

*If you are new to the Westport Summer Passport, get ready to discover some of our town's most delightful places.*



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- 1 Check out all the locations and decide where you'd like to start.
- 2 At the first location, have a good look around. This place, and all of the places you'll visit, are scenic and important to Westport's history. Take your time. Before you leave each location, write in the answer to the Passport Challenge question for each location. This is a fun thing for children to do.
- 3 Now move on to the next place, and the next, until you've visited all six. When you've filled in all the challenge questions, you're finished!

#### ANSWER THE PASSPORT CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

The simple question at the end of each of the locations in the Summer Passport is designed to encourage you to look closely. The answers are all numbers. When you have visited all six locations and filled in all of the answers to all the challenge questions, add up the numbers. The total number is hidden in one of the photographs in this booklet. When you find it, circle it.

#### PLEASE NOTE

This is a family-friendly activity that runs from July through September. Hikes at Herb Hadfield Conservation Area and Gooseberry Island are under 1.5 miles and cover flat ground. You may visit locations in any order, seven days a week, over multiple days if necessary. Depending on weather conditions, trails may be muddy. Watch for poison ivy and take precautions against ticks.

Westport Summer Passport is produced by the Westport Historical Society. For more information about the included sites, contact [www.wpthistory.org](http://www.wpthistory.org).



## Town Wharf at Westport Point

2056 MAIN ROAD

You are at the southern end of Main Road at Westport Point, one of the most historic neighborhoods in town. Once called “Paquachuck,” the Wampanoag word for “cleared hill,” the Point encompasses land that is nestled between the east and west branches of the Westport River and the harbor.

The wharf area was first developed around 1740 to support the shipbuilding that eventually led to a thriving commercial whaling business. The Paquachuck Inn is the large building on the east side. The building was constructed by the Cory family in 1827. It served the busy people of Westport Point as a ship chandlery—a business that catered to the Point’s thriving whaling, fishing, and shipbuilding trades. Like any general store, the Cory Store was an important resource for the neighborhood. It was a post office and custom house, tailor’s shop, and sail loft as well before it was converted to an inn in the 20th century. (Be sure to check out the Cory Store display at the Handy House this summer!)

Today, the wharf area still bustles with commercial fishing and lobstering. Main Road once saw steady traffic heading to a ferry and then later to a bridge that connected the Point to the land across the harbor. During the Revolutionary War, ships took refuge here, protected from the British by the rough waters and the dunes of the surrounding beaches, which screened them from view.

**PASSPORT CHALLENGE:** How many whales are on the sign of the Paquachuck Inn? \_\_\_\_\_

## Gray’s Grist Mill

638 ADAMSVILLE ROAD

OPEN SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, 12:00-4:00

CALL 508-801-6743 FOR MILLING HOURS.

Walk into Gray’s Grist Mill and time travel back more than 300 years, to the time before Westport was incorporated as a town. There were no supermarkets or fast food places. Processed and frozen foods were still far in the future. How did people eat? They cooked with ingredients that they grew or foraged. But before they could bake bread or make porridge, for example, they had to take their wheat, rye, or corn to a grist mill. There, the grain was ground on millstones to produce flour or cornmeal.

Gray’s Grist Mill is famous for its brand of corn meal, made from flavorful Rhode Island Flint corn and milled between huge 56-inch granite stones which have been grinding corn for generations. Gray’s was built in 1717 by Philip Taber as Taber’s Mill. Like all mills, it relied on the power of water. Here, the water moved from the mill pond across the street into the West Branch of the Westport River, turning the millstones along the way. Due to inconsistent water levels in the pond, a 1946 Dodge truck engine provided backup. The mill now runs exclusively on electricity.

Over its remarkable history, Gray’s Grist Mill has had relatively few owners, each of whom operated the mill for decades. It got its name from Philip Gray, who purchased the mill in 1880. Today, the mill is owned by Ralph Guild, who had promised to keep it running as a working mill—one of the oldest continuously running grist mills in New England.

**PASSPORT CHALLENGE:** From the parking lot across from the mill, count how many water gates are on the dam. (Hint: how many handles do you see?) \_\_\_\_\_



## Horseneck Point Life Saving Station

241 EAST BEACH ROAD

The waters around Westport are beautiful, but they are also treacherous. In the 19th century, many ships ran aground or even sank. To provide assistance, the Massachusetts Humane Society established dozens of coastal life saving stations, each supplied with a lifeboat and special rescue equipment. The Horseneck Point Life Saving Station was one of the last stations to be built, in 1888. It reflected the town's focus on shipbuilding and whaling, and a growth in both population and prosperity that brought new interest to the East Beach area.

Although this life saving station was unmanned, it was managed by two Keepers in its lifetime, both colorful locals: George Manchester and Burt Head. By the time of its decommissioning, in 1913, it had never actually recorded a single rescue mission over its 25 years of vigilance. It was one of the few structures in the area to survive the devastating hurricane of 1938, though Keeper Burt Head perished in his rooming house on East Beach.

The triangular building on the left side of the complex is not original to the Life Saving Station, having been added in 1940. Today, it is a visitor center for the station. Over the years, the buildings were reused as a restaurant, clam shack, ice cream parlor, residence, and environmental center, before the Westport Fishermen's Association acquired it and completed the restoration in 2009.

**PASSPORT CHALLENGE:** What was the number of the Horseneck Point Life Saving Station? \_\_\_\_\_

## Gooseberry Island

WEST END OF EAST BEACH ROAD

OPEN DAWN TO DUSK SEVEN DAYS A WEEK.

Just steps from the Horseneck Point Life Saving Station, a narrow causeway connects East Beach Road with a small windswept island called Gooseberry. Just 73 acres in size, the island is part of the Horseneck Beach State Reservation. Visitors enjoy hiking, swimming, photography, birdwatching, sunset viewing, and just generally taking it easy.

The island was first settled in 1670 and was used for grazing sheep. But because it was accessible only at low tide, residential and recreational uses were limited. That changed in 1924, when the construction of the causeway was completed, making the island easily accessible. Walking through its sandy trails today, it is hard to imagine that more than 80 summer residences once dotted the remote landscape of Gooseberry Island. Like most of the buildings just down the road on East Beach, Gooseberry's homes were destroyed either in the Hurricane of 1938 or in Hurricane Carol in 1954. Look carefully and you'll see a couple of cement foundations, nearly buried in beachplums and other brush. Structures on the island were so vulnerable to hurricane damage that in 1956, the state of Massachusetts took it over.

From the parking lot, take the trail down the center of the island. Turn right at the fork and head over to the towers, built by the U.S. Navy in the 1940s. Though derelict and covered with graffiti today, these towers were important to America's defense during World War II. They were used for observation, keeping watch for German U-boats that lurked in the coastal waters.

**PASSPORT CHALLENGE:** How many towers are on Gooseberry Island? \_\_\_\_\_



## Herb Hadfield Conservation Area

638 ADAMSVILLE ROAD

OPEN DAWN TO DUSK SEVEN DAYS A WEEK.

You are never far from water in Westport, and this stop on the Passport route is no exception! The Herb Hadfield Conservation Area features easy hiking trails through the forests and wetlands. You'll also find an expansive meadow that was recently restored to a native grassland.

But you're here for the water. Follow the red trail out of the parking lot, and walk until you come to the blue trail. Turn left and you will see a long boardwalk and a bridge over water. The boardwalk carries you over some terrain that may be wet and spongy. Stop on the bridge and look at the clean, clear waters below you. This is Angeline Brook, one of Westport's finest coldwater streams. Native brook trout live in Angeline Brook and find their way to the nearby west branch of the Westport River and Buzzard's Bay beyond. These rare fish are called "salters," and they are protected by the forests around the brook.

To visit the meadow, continue on the blue trail until you come to the red trail. The meadow is before you. The restoration of this almost-six acre site began in 2015 and is nearing completion. The meadow has been seeded with native grasses and now features nesting boxes to attract a variety of bird species. Turn right and follow the red trail to the far corner and enter the woods. The trail will take you back to the parking area.

**PASSPORT CHALLENGE:** On the bridge over Angeline Brook, find the small bench on the ground near the water. How many logs support the bench? \_\_\_\_\_

## Handy House

202 HIX BRIDGE ROAD

OPEN SATURDAYS 10:00-4:00.

Built around 1714 by William Cadman for his daughter Elizabeth, the Handy House was a family home for three centuries until the death of its last owner, Eleanor Tripp, in 2003. It is significant for its architecture and history, but since we are talking about water, take a minute and think about what you would do if your house, like the Handy House in its early years, had no running water. No way to wash dishes inside, no working toilets, no water to drink. Take a look at the well in the back of the house. Family members would bring water up in a bucket. See the old shed near the well? That was an outhouse—an outdoor bathroom. Imagine running out there in the rain or snow, or dark of night. Water makes a big difference in how we live.

The Handy House is located a short distance from the east branch of the Westport River. In the early 20th century, Westporters seeking to profitably evade Prohibition restrictions stealthily moved liquor around town on the river. This practice was known as rum running. The contraband liquor was picked up from large boats at the harbor in the dead of night, brought up the river, and hidden away in barns along its shores. Although illegal, rum running was so lucrative that when Prohibition was repealed in 1933, many in town had to scramble to find legitimate employment.

If the Handy House is open when you visit, stop in to see the house and the special exhibition on Native American culture in our region. Docents lead tours at 11:00 on Saturdays.

**PASSPORT CHALLENGE:** How many exterior doors does the Handy House have (not counting the cellar doors)? \_\_\_\_\_