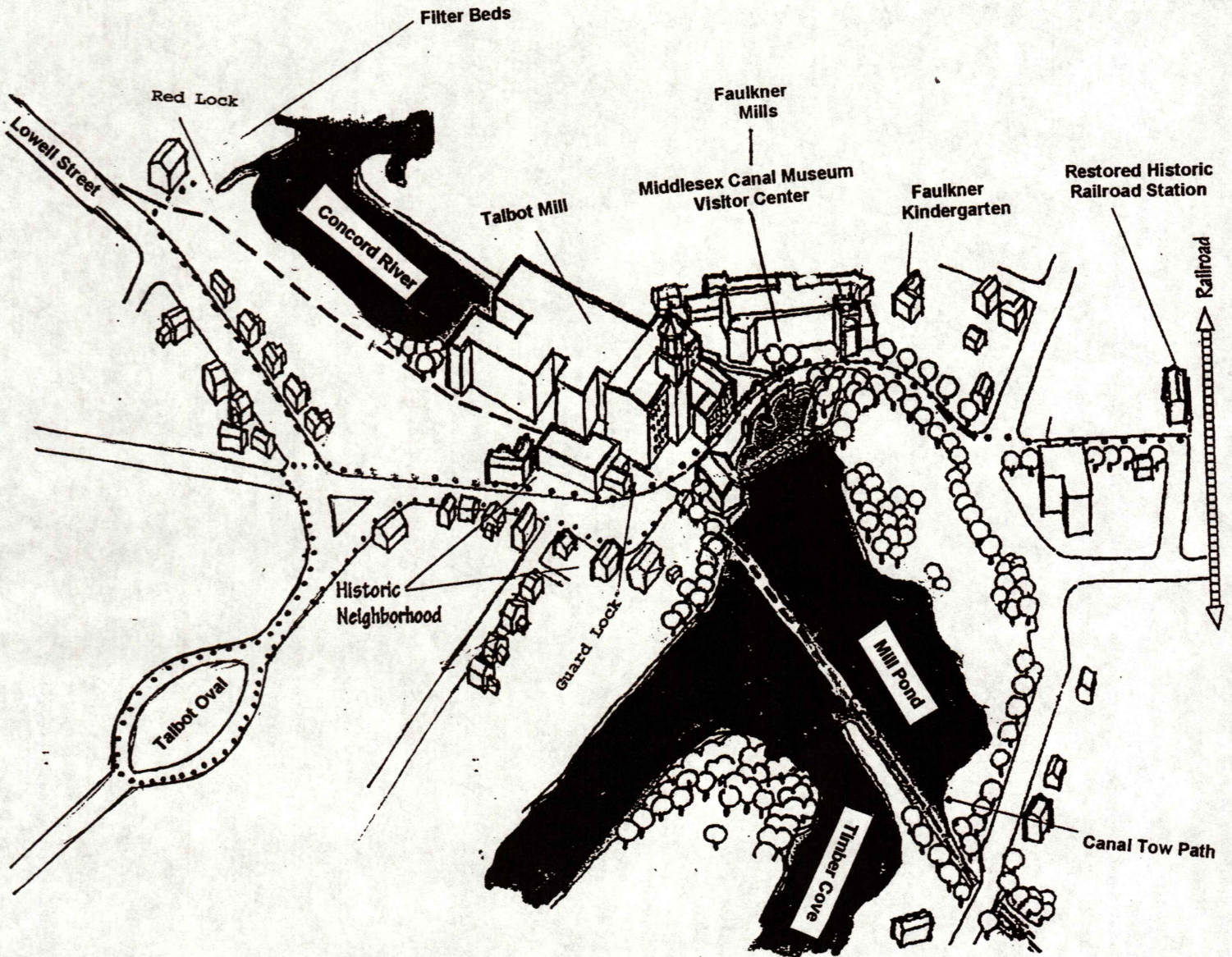


Mill Village Walking Tour



Follow the dotted line for a short tour of the Historic Mill Village of North Billerica. About 1 ½ miles in total length. Envision the floating towpath across the Millpond – from the Talbot parking lot on the Concord River's edge to the spit of land diagonally across the River. Not suggested for wheelchair access.

Mill Village Walking Tour Guide

North Billerica Railroad Depot. It is believed that the first depot was erected at this site about 1840. On December 28, 1866 the Boston and Lowell Railroad Corporation purchased from the C. P. Talbot Company the lot upon which today's depot is set. During the next 8 to 12 years the main portion of the present depot is believed to have been built.

Faulkner Kindergarten. Built in 1826 as James Faulkner's residence it was converted to a school for employees' children in 1897. The kindergarten established by the three daughters of James Faulkner is said to have been the first day care center in the United States.

Faulkner Mills. Francis Faulkner came to North Billerica in 1811. He leased a fulling mill on the east bank of the Concord River at the dam and secured water power by agreement with the Proprietors of the Middlesex Canal. The company, which Faulkner founded, continued as a textile manufactory at the site until 1987. At the present time the surviving mill buildings have been subdivided for light manufacturing and offices.

Talbot Mills. Charles P. Talbot and Thomas Talbot (later Governor of Massachusetts) arrived in North Billerica in 1839. They began a logwood business in a building leased from the canal company. In 1851 the Talbot brothers purchased the mill privilege from the Proprietors of the Middlesex Canal and erected a textile mill on the west bank of the Concord River. Throughout the nineteenth century, "Talbot & Co." produced a growing line of woolen goods - flannels and cashmeres, and later cheviots, military olive drabs and coach linings - augmenting these textiles with an extensive dyewood and chemical works. It continued in operation until 1963. The buildings were then divided for industrial tenant use.

Old Guard Lock. On the western side of the millpond, the descent to the Merrimack River started by passing through a stone guard lock which still exists under a platform at the Talbot Mills on Faulkner Street. The corner stones were hollowed out to accommodate the posts for the gate. You can also see the recessed sections of the walls, into which the gates swung back when they were opened to allow the maximum space for canal boats to pass. The northern end of this lock is completely covered by the Talbot Mill yard.

Red Lock. On Lowell Street about 0.1 mile from the Talbot Mill, is the North Billerica Fire House which was built in the 1960's over an old canal basin. To the right a few steps is part of the basin and the location of the Red Lock, which led into the Concord River below the Concord River dam. This allowed boats to go down the Concord River and enter the Merrimack River below Pawtucket Falls in Lowell.

Talbot Oval. The Talbot Oval was named after a prominent Billerica family - the Talbots. Thomas Talbot was the governor of Massachusetts in the 1870's. Originally designed by the famous landscape architect Warren Manning, the Oval is being restored to its original condition to recreate its landscape from 1700s and early 1800s. Plans also include building a flag house, installing park benches and a new flag pole with a 100' flag was erected November 2001.

Mill Village. The industrial development of the mill village in North Billerica began in 1708 when Christopher Osgood was granted the mill privilege along with forty acres of land on the west bank of the Concord River in exchange for his guarantee that he would build and operate a grist mill to grind grain for the growing population of Billerica. Along with the gristmill, a sawmill, a fulling mill and forge were in operation at various times. The mill village, developed by the Talbot Mills owners to house their employees, was placed on the National register of Historic Places in 1983. This action recognized the historic significance of the entire milldam area.

Floating Towpath. To effect the crossing of the Concord River by horses and oxen towing canal boats, a wooden floating bridge was devised. A floating towpath was built so that canal boats could be drawn across the millpond from one section of the canal to the other. The towpath could be parted to allow the passage of timber rafts bound for sawmills on the Concord River.

Mill Pond. About 1793, the Middlesex Canal Corporation purchased the mill privilege and extensive holdings from Thomas Richardson. A sawmill and forge at the site were immediately put to use, supplying materials necessary for the canal's construction. In addition the Canal Proprietors remained obliged to operate the gristmill for the benefit of the townspeople.