

Ellis Estate

Location: the Ellis Estate is located between Country Way, Mann Lot Road, Chief Justice Cushing Highway (Rt. 3A) and Booth Hill Road. The Town of Scituate Public Safety Building occupies the southerly portion of the site.

Parking: Parking is available at various locations on site. The main parking lot with a bike rack is available at the 709 Country Way entrance. Parking spaces are also found on the west side of the gravel roadway that ascends the hillside to the Scituate Arts Association “SAA” (the former Bailey-Ellis House) from Country Way. The gravel lot is next to the Public Safety Building along Mann Lot Road at Rt 3A. There are several parking spaces available at the SAA.

Purchased: 1969, from the Ellis Family.

Acreage: 89 acres/ SAA controls 3.6 acres

History: Elm Heights was the name of the house originally built around 1830 by John Wade Bailey, taken from an old American elm tree near the house that was “...so large and so tall that Mariners at sea took their positions from it.” Later, Ellsberg was the name given to the house by Joseph Bailey’s grandson, Walter, and his wife Harriet Kimball Ellis. Ells stands for “Ellis” and Berg is “hill or mountain” in Latin.

Historically, the Bailey-Ellis House is an outstanding example of late 19th century residential architecture in Scituate. It also exemplifies the summer resort development of the town and is associated with members of one of Scituate’s most prominent families, who distinguished themselves as important Boston merchants. Members of the Bailey and Ellis families occupied the property as year-round and summer homes until 1969, when the estate was sold to the Town of Scituate. When the house was constructed, there were few trees obscuring the view to the ocean from the top of the hill (hence, the name “Seaview Trail”).

The Scituate Arts Association is responsible for operating and maintaining the Bailey-Ellis House, which is used for classrooms, art studios, and gallery space. A resident caretaker lives in the End Building Addition.

A National Register nomination for Ellis House was prepared in 2011.

The Town voted to place most of the Ellis Estate into Conservation in December of 2015.

Description / Unique Features

Parallel Stone Walls: Ten-foot-wide parallel walls that extend from private property onto the Ellis Estate appear to have been intended to direct cattle to springs near Trail Junction 2.

Deke's Pond: This is the largest open body of water on the property abutting a number of smaller groundwater discharge areas.

Glacial Erratics: Large boulders dropped during the Wisconsin Glacial Episode, ending about 11,000 years before the present, can be observed near Trail Junction 6.

Trails: Mostly level woodland walking trails on the Upper Loop, while the Lower Loop and Ellsberg Trails are slightly steeper.

Social Trails: There are a number of "Social Trails" shown on the Ellis Estate Map as white dashed trails. These trails are not maintained. Some of these trails end at private properties. One of the white dashed trails formerly entered the Public Safety parcel.

Sea View: From the Blue Trail and the former Bailey-Ellis House, the ocean could be seen when there were open meadows dating back about 100 years.

Geology: Booth Hill is a glacial landform called a drumlin, an elongated hill in the shape of an oval formed by glacial ice moving unconsolidated till or ground moraine under it.

Flora/Fauna: The existing woodland on the site is on the order of 100+ years old. There are some large white pines and oaks that have grown on the site. Note the absence of herbaceous shrubs and plants, due to the heavy deer predation.

The large trees provide great roosting for the predatory birds (hawks and owls), as well as nuthatches, chickadees, and warblers. The eastern white pines are a favorite of red squirrels and provide winter cover for a number of small species of small mammals and birds. The mature trees (living and dead) also provide excellent habitat for the woodpeckers. The stone walls create habitat for small mammals and amphibians, as do the decaying logs and thick leaf litter. Deer presence can be observed along the trails.