Native Americans have probably lived in this immediate area for around 10,000 years. They almost certainly practiced slash and burn agriculture on the Pomperaug River flood plains starting approximately 1000 AD.

The name comes from early deeds citing “Ye Bent of ye River” as a landmark. In the 1700’s, the village of South Britain was also known as Bent of the River.

Eleazer Mitchell bought the “South Purchase” from Manquash, the last sachem (or chief) of the Pootatucks, in the 1750’s. The land included what is now Audubon land as well as the still active Mitchell Farm on Purchase Brook Road. Eleazer built his farmhouse about a mile from the current house and barn, closer to the Housatonic. His son Benjamin was probably the first European to farm on the land around the Clark house.

During the middle of the last century, most of the farm’s land was cleared. As is typical with many rural places in Southern New England, you will find stonewalls snaking through now thick forest. Many of these walls were built in the 1830’s when, the farmers had run out of wood for rail fences. The Mitchells continued to live on and farm the property until late 1920’s, when William E. Mitchell died. His children did not wish to farm and sold the property to Howard G.B. and Althea Ward Clark in 1934.

The purchase price was $15,000 and included the house, barn and 550 acres of land. Over time, the Clark’s purchased another hundred acres from various neighbors. When Mrs. Clark, who had long been a leading force in local conservation, died in 1993, she left the Bent of the River to the National Audubon Society.

The Cascade is a beautiful, seasonal little waterfall in the forest. It usually is running during the autumn to late spring.

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Please note that signage is limited on the property. All trails are marked with small signs on wooden posts at trail intersections. There is no blazing. Most trail posts have a red arrow which always points back to the red barn.

TRAIL LENGTHS AND DIFFICULTY

Althea's Meadow Loop - ½ mile, flat
Beaver Loop - ¼ mile, Flat
Cascade Trail - ½ mile, moderate climb, then rolling
Cedar Fields Trail - 1 mile, flat to gently rolling
Collier Trail - ¾ mile, moderate climb
Eagle Overlook - 1 mile round trip, mostly moderate with two short steep sections
Howard's Run - 1 mile, moderate climb in parts
Manquash's Gap - Trail to Sachem's Ridge - ¼ mile, steep in parts
Mitchell Farm Trail - 2 miles, rolling to moderate to steep
Miska's Loop - ½ mile, flat
Overlook Trail - ½ mile, rolling
Pootatuck Road - 1 ½ miles from barn to top, moderate climb
River Road - 1 + miles, rolling
South Pool Trail - ½ mile, moderate
Tulip Tree Trail - ¾ mile, steep in parts
Scale's Trail - 1 ½ miles, steep and rough in parts
Zig-Zag Trail - 1 mile, rolling