

FARMING THE HILLTOWN LANDSCAPE

Though this area has decent farming soil, the challenging rocky, steep, and wet terrain was met with resourcefulness in farming the entire landscape. Farms were built close to prime locations on Meadow Brook: farm products like lumber, apples, and wool were processed in water-powered mills. Zeba White built a sawmill before 1800; the Gloyds (Guyette Farm) ran saw and cider mills. Manda Farns' builder produced sateen (cheap wool cloth) and broom handles. Today's maple syrup production (members of the Thatcher family) fits this pattern of adding value to agricultural products. This proto-industrial farming wasn't sustainable in the face of the heightened industrial productivity of steam. Transportation routes went elsewhere, people followed. Some stayed, adding stones to walls, rebuilding burnt houses, rerouting roads, adding depth to the landscape over the next 150 years.

- Many of the farm boundaries follow original lot lines _____, often marked by walls.
- Plainfield's soils yields yearly crops of frost-heaved stones. On a sloping field, a stone easily is rolled down to where the land banks down steeply to a stream, creating a vaguely stacked field wall. On level fields, you pile them on top of surface bedrock: saves the plow, too.

FARMING IN STONE

Old walls are sometimes visible in the slope of roads that were built up (like dikes) to avoid flooding.

- Field walls often look like rows of trees, left by grazing livestock, plow or mower.
- Apple trees with a trunk of more than 18 inches in diameter are at least 100 years old.

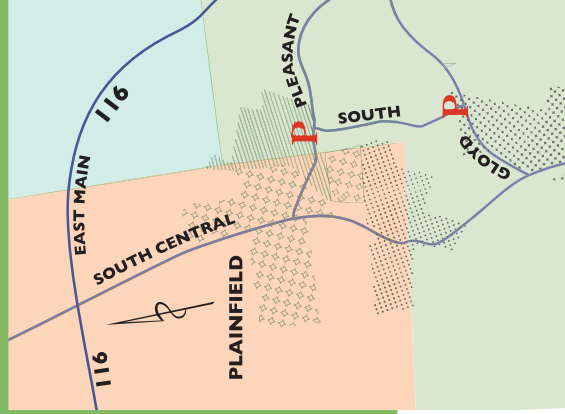
READING THE MAP/ READING THE LANDSCAPE

- Long walls etch historic lay-out in the landscape: cross the road at odd angles, form a square corner on the map, marking ancient grant divisions.
- Discontinued roads: look for a two rod (33 feet) wide swath flanked by stone walls.

PLAINFIELDMAHISTORY.ORG



EASY WITH MODERATE OPTIONS
2.6 MI
DRIVE, BIKE, OR WALK
AGE 12 (WITH ADULT) TO ADULT



PLAINFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HIDDEN WALLS, HIDDEN MILLS

EXPLORING THE PLAINFIELD LANDSCAPE

FARMING IN STONE

LOOKING AT TODAY'S LANDSCAPE WITH A CURIOUS AND EXPLORATORY EYE, IMAGINING IT EVOLVING DURING THE PAST 200 YEARS. ITS FEATURES ARE VISIBLE TRACES OF A WORKING LANDSCAPE, AN ECONOMY TRACED IN STONE. THE MAP SHOWS ONLY SOME OF THE STONE WALLS ON THE BLOCK SO THERE IS MUCH TO DISCOVER.

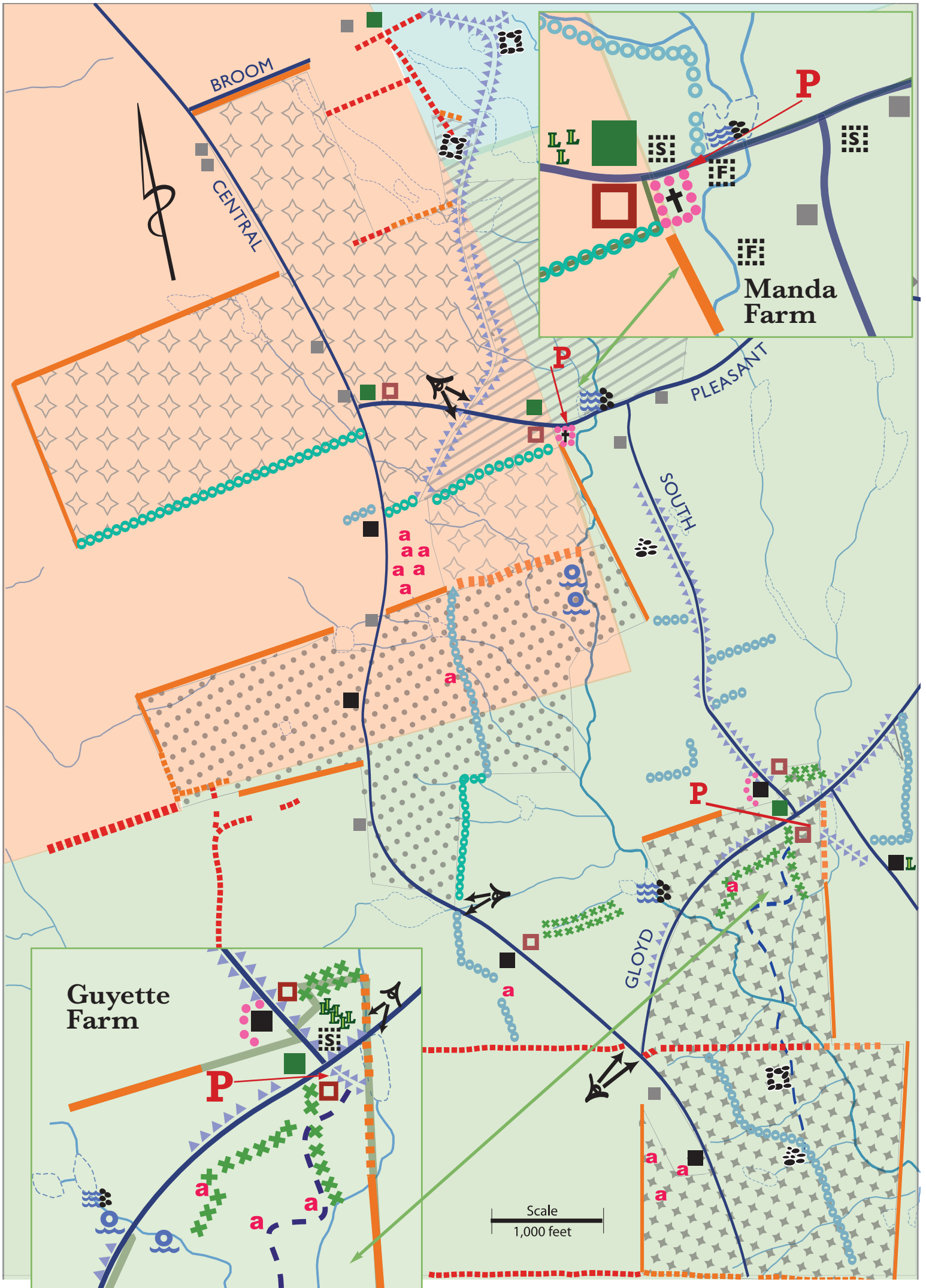
Circle the block by car, bike, or on foot; park and walk, snowshoe or ski. Walk softly, leave only foot-prints, take only memories. Stone walls and grave-stones are protected. Roadside, Dyer Cemetery and Guyette Farm are publicly accessible. Park at Guyette farm (best) or at Dyer Cemetery at Manda Farm. If possible, obtain permission from the land owner before you wander in fields and woods near houses. Laws governing poking around and protecting landscape features: Mass. General Laws (MGL) Chapter 266: Crimes Against Property—Sections 94, 113, 120, 126A































<http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartV>

BUILDING A TOWN

Plainfield was settled in the 1780's (Native groups may have hunted the area earlier). The Great and General Court of the Province of Massachusetts Bay (1691-1774) parcelled out large tracts, as payment (Mayhew's Grant, 1739), compensation (Hatfield Equivalent, 1744), to raise money and settle the area (Plantation # 5, 1762). This map depicts the intersection between 3 overlapping grants, each subdivided and the lots sold to individuals. A group of people with competing land claims and little in the way of a plan were building a town and an economy. They created an enduring landscape.

- The four farms were settled in the eighteenth century, each remained largely within original "proprietor lot" lines: Zeba White and Thatcher in the Hatfield Equivalent; Guyette and Manda in Plantation # 5. Two are farms today; one is in a Land Trust, and one has been divided up, much of it to one owner.
- "All fences of four feet high, in good repair, of rails ... or stone walls; ... shall be accounted legal and sufficient. . . divisional fences between man and man." An Act for Regulating Fences: Acts of the Great and General Court (GGC) of the Province of Massachusetts Bay February 21, 1786. No longer 4 feet high, these are often located on original grant boundaries, written in stone, as it were.
- During the nineteenth century, this was a pastoral but lively development, a managed landscape largely devoid of trees, crossed by roads and walls lined with sugar maples, dotted with farms, mills, factory-type buildings with at least one dormitory, and schools that moved around to serve a changing and literate population.
- Plainfield farmers were a literate lot of certainties and arguments, some of them also set in stone. When Ziba White died in 1842, he left a grim warning. *Be ye also ready.* In 1848 Huldah White was ready with an answer, *Blessed are the righteous when they die.*



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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Plantation #5 |  Farm boundary on grant-lot boundary |  House-settlement period (1770-1800) |
|  Hatfield Equivalency |  Grant-lot boundary wall |  House-farming period (1800-1900) |
|  Mayhew Grant |  Farm boundary wall |  Barn Settlement period to 1840 |
|  Clockwise from top left:
Guyette Farm |  Farming/industrial wall |  Modern Structure |
|  White Farm |  Field wall |  Cellar hole/foundation |
|  Thatcher Farm |  Enclosure wall |  Parking |
|  Manda Farm |  Wall on road |  Cemetery |
| |  Discontinued road |  Apple tree |
| |  Franklin-Land Trust self-guided tour |  Locust tree |
| | |  Factory location |
| | |  School location |
| | |  Dam location |
| | |  Mill site |
| | |  Stone Pile |