

A Rich History ...

The year was 1639. Ansantawae, Chief Sachem of the Paugusset Tribe, made an arrangement to sell the area known as "Wepawaug" to a group of settlers. Two hundred men, women, and children came from New Haven and began to build the town that would be known as Milford, the sixth oldest town in Connecticut. In the late 1700's, Fort Trumbull was erected for protection during the Revolutionary War, and George Washington slept here on his journeys through Connecticut. During the Civil War, Milford was a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Although primarily agrarian, the local economy also included shipbuilding, oystering, small industry, and sea trade from the harbor. The early 1900's brought the leather industry and production of boots, hats, and shoes. Through the years, citizens of Milford have contributed to the growth and prosperity of the state. Three state governors have called the town home.

In the center of Milford is a quaint, historic green filled with monuments commemorating the past, and the heroes and heroines who have contributed to the town's rich culture. Shops, boutiques, antique stores, and restaurants are all within walking distance. The scenic harbor adjoins the downtown area, and the Wepawaug River winds its way through the heart of town. Seventeen miles of Long Island Sound coastline have played a large part in defining the history of the town. Native Americans and early settlers enjoyed a rich source of sustenance from the sea, and pristine stretches of sand provided a natural paradise for recreation. Today, Milford is a destination for all seasons with visitors and residents alike enjoying boating, fishing, and swimming. The five city beaches and Silver Sands State Park are great for soaking up the sun and admiring the scenery. The harbor has transient docks for visiting boaters and is a short walk from the green. Access to Long Island Sound is provided through several boat launches and the Milford Landing Marina. Milford Yacht Club, Spencer's Marina, Milford Boat Works, and Port Milford provide year-round boat slips.

The Connecticut Audubon Coastal Center at Milford Point offers views of the estuary and educational programs describing the ecosystem and its inhabitants. Milford also boasts 157 acres of forever-green areas filled with wildlife and native plants. In addition, Eisenhower Park provides land for community gardeners, bridal paths for horseback riding, walking trails, and a fitness course as well as a fenced area for dogs to run. Municipal parks are available for tennis and basketball, and playgrounds provide swings and slides for children to enjoy. There is also a nine hole municipal golf course and Milford Ice Pavilion, which offers skating instruction and practice hours.

Proximity to New York City makes Milford an ideal base from which to foray into Manhattan for theatre and museums. Closer by, culture abounds in New Haven and Yale, Hartford, and the state's many other diverse attractions.

Today, Milford, with its population of more than 50,000, has become a hub for industry as well as a center for retail, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, and tourism. There's always something exciting to do in Milford!

Tales of Charles Island

One mile off Fort Trumbull Beach lies Charles Island. Over the years, a succession of enterprises were begun and abandoned. Dreams of a tobacco plantation by Charles Deal in 1657 did not come to fruition. The plant that produced fertilizer from dead fish failed to flourish. A hotel was started in the 1880's, but eventually closed. Finally a retreat for Dominican priests from New Haven was tried and subsequently given up.

The nickname "Hard Luck Island" evolved as a result of these ill-fated enterprises. However, a legend of seafaring fame and fortune persists that may yet turn the fate of Charles Island around. For it is said that Captain Kidd, who was known to weigh anchor in Milford more than once, buried iron chests filled with gems and gold somewhere on Charles Island. Of course, it is also said that Kidd left a curse that would befall anyone who might disturb his treasure before he returned. The plunder has not been unearthed to this day.

Those whose curiosity beckons may walk out to Charles Island from Silver Sands Beach at low tide along a sandbar, but staying too long will mean being marooned as the sand bar is covered until the next low tide.

