

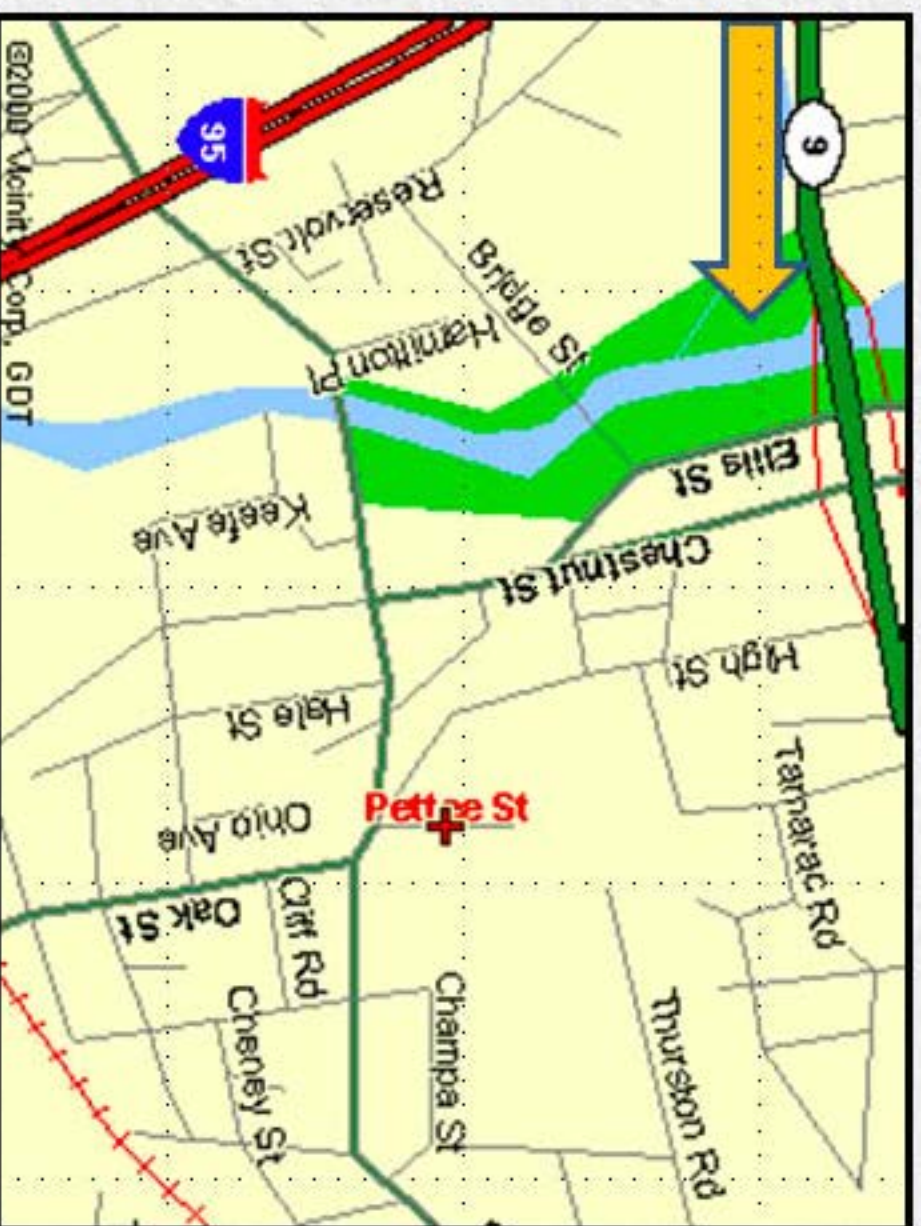


Please join us
for the Dedication of the granite bench for

Brian Yates

Hemlock Gorge Park
at the Stone Building - Route 9 end of the Park
Tuesday, August 6 at 5:30 p.m
Wednesday, August 7 at 5:30 p.m.(rain date)

The dedication will take place at the Stone Building at the Route 9 end of the Park and will be followed by the Friends' annual summer picnic. The yellow arrow marks the location



Remembering Former City Councilor Brian Yates at Hemlock Gorge

On Tuesday, August 6 at 5:30 p.m., The Friends of Hemlock Gorge will dedicate a granite memorial to the late Brian Yates. Brian was a Newton City Councilor for three decades and a strong advocate for the environment. Brian was the founder of The Friends of Hemlock Gorge Reservation, a local state park in which historic Echo Bridge crosses the Charles River from Needham to Newton. The dedication will take place at the Stone Building at the Route 9 end of the Park and will be followed by the Friends' annual summer picnic. Event details, maps, and parking information can be found on the Friends' website: www.hemlockgorge.org. In the event of rain, the dedication will be held the following evening at the same time and place.

Brian, the Friends, and the Stone Building have a long and intriguing history. More than 30 years ago Brian founded The Friends of Hemlock Gorge to preserve and improve a small but precious park important to his constituents and the all the surrounding communities. The park comprises 23 acres that were acquired by the Metropolitan Parks Commission (MPC) in 1895. Its acquisition had been recommended by the renowned landscape architect Charles Eliot called it a "jewel" of the MPC. Prior to becoming a park, the property was home to several factories (that had once thrived on the waterpower at the gorge), a home, and a dance hall. The MPC transformed Hemlock Gorge into a park, but then invested little in it over the following decades. Brian recalled that Mr. Gary Van Wort, first manager of the Massachusetts Division of Reservations and Historic Sites under then Governor Michael Dukakis, described the park as a "beautiful example of total non-management."

In large measure due to Brian's leadership and a combination of manpower and commitment by the Commonwealth, a brief golden era for Hemlock Gorge began in the 1980s. It was part of a general renaissance of Newton Upper Falls. Park staff oversaw maintenance and improvements. They organized and ran an extensive series of interpretive walks. On some walks, staff in full period costume recounted the lives of workers who labored in the mills that lined the gorge.

The Golden Years lasted through 1988 when state funding for the Metropolitan District Commission (now the Department of Conservation and Recreation) was cut. Brian was advised by Mr. Van Wort that preservation of the Hemlock Gorge property could not be guaranteed by the Commonwealth and suggested that a Friends group was needed. Brian took up the challenge.

Brian organized a group of volunteers from among his constituents in Upper Falls and people who had attended the many walks that had taken place in Hemlock Gorge. The newly formed Friends' first goal was to keep up the property. The first park clean-up was held in 1990. The Friends, however, were also a creative group who wanted to enhance the improvements that had been started. They decided that restoration of the roofless 'Stone Building', the last remaining industrial-era building on the Property, would be a worthy undertaking. The success achieved by Brian and the Friends will be evident at the dedication.

With the Stone Building project as a catalyst, the Friends' expanded these betterment efforts over the years to include cutting trails, restoring a bridge needed to connect two trails, and installing new windows and railings at the Stone Building. All of these achievements were spearheaded by an indefatigable Brian Yates, who served as the President of the Friends for nearly three decades, until his death on March 15 this year. The story of the Friends since 1992 is recounted in detail at the Friends' website, www.hemlockgorge.org. The Friends' leadership can be reached at friends@hemlockgorge.org.