

Ethan Allen Park - Wilderness in the City



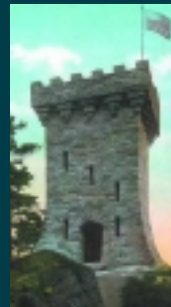
A century ago, most of this area was rural, but people were beginning to build houses here. William Van Patten owned many acres of land locally, and he wanted a park in this new neighborhood. He got on his old horse, Mattie, and let her find easy trails to the rocky hilltop above. Van Patten built a gazebo on the pinnacle and opened the park to the public in 1905. Centuries before, native Abenaki villagers used the same hilltop to watch for approaching friends and enemies. Climb Ethan Allen Tower and see if you can find similar look-out hills to the north and south.

Photograph labeled "Streetcar Suburb" courtesy University of Vermont Special Collections. All other images courtesy Burlington Parks and Recreation.



Hot Spot

You may be here today for a woody stroll in the park's 67 acres, but decades ago, you might have come here for a different sort of fun. Ethan Allen Park was once a swinging hot spot of entertainment. City dwellers in the 1920s came for a day of picnics, concerts, dancing and bootleg liquor. A roller skating rink opened in the 1950s and teenagers used the park for romantic—and unchaperoned—strolls.



Tale of a Tower

Ethan Allen Tower honors Vermont's Revolutionary War hero, but Allen never built anything like this Scottish-inspired lookout. Local citizens in 1905, proud of their growing city, created this whimsical monument to Burlington's most famous citizen on this land, which was once owned by him.



Streetcar Suburb

Horse-drawn streetcars brought something new to Burlington in the 1890s—the suburb. Workers who lived here on North Avenue rode the wondrous new trolleys to their jobs. Families took Sunday streetcar excursions out to the park. Soon buses and cars replaced trolleys, but people kept moving "out the avenue."



Lake Champlain Basin Program
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