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**METHUEN TO PARTICIPATE IN SIXTH ANNUAL  
ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA TRAILS & SAILS WEEKEND**

**Masonic Lodge Open House and Searles Legacy Walking Tour  
Scheduled for Saturday, September 29, 2007**

**September 21, 2007 (Methuen, MA)** The John Hancock Masonic Lodge and the Methuen Historical Society are among nearly 90 sites and organizations in Essex County that are participating in the sixth annual ENHC Trails & Sails: *A Weekend of Walks and Water* on September 28-30, 2007. The weekend will offer more than 150 free events that in some way represent, celebrate or interpret the rich heritage of the region.

Thousands of people are expected to turn out for Trails & Sails. In addition to the activities taking place in Methuen, events will include foraging for wild edibles, jelly making, dory-rowing, behind the scenes tours, conservation walks, and redevelopment tours. Most events will accommodate between twelve and fifty participants; all have free admission and are first-come, first-served.

The events taking place in Methuen include an open house at the John Hancock Masonic Lodge and a walking tour of landmarks related to Edward F. Searles. "Mysteries of the Masonic Hall Revealed" will give visitors a rare look at the fascinating building that Searles presented as a gift to the Masons in 1915. Visitors will see Masonic ritual spaces and symbols not often viewed by the public, as well as an exhibition of local artifacts organized by the Methuen Historical Commission. The open house will take place from 2:00 – 5:00 pm on Saturday, September 29 at 275 Broadway. The event is appropriate for children twelve and older.

“The Legacy of (Reclusive Millionaire) Edward F. Searles” is a walking tour of landmarks associated with the eccentric millionaire and philanthropist who left an indelible mark on Methuen. Sites to be visited include the Searles Building (Methuen City Hall); Pine Lodge (at Presentation of Mary Academy); the Lawrence Street Cemetery; the Central School; and the Memorial Music Hall, where the great organ will be demonstrated. The two-hour tour starts at 1:00 pm on Saturday, September 29 at the Methuen City Hall, 41 Pleasant Street. It is an easy walk over gravel/dirt and paved terrain.

The Essex National Heritage Commission organizes the annual Trails & Sails event to encourage exploration of the historic, natural, and cultural resources in the Essex National Heritage Area. In recognition of its contributions to American history and culture, Essex County was designated a national heritage area by the U.S. Congress in 1996.

The guide to Trails & Sails is available online at [TrailsAndSails.org](http://TrailsAndSails.org) or by contacting the Essex National Heritage Commission at (978) 740-0444.

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