

LORIMER PARK

Lorimer Park is the easternmost facility operated by Montgomery County Parks, Trails & Historic Sites. Located near the Philadelphia border in Abington Township, it is 230 acres of woodlands, meadows, creeks, and trails. The park provides visitors with many passive recreational opportunities and environmental education programs throughout the year and is open daily from 7:00 a.m. to sunset.

History

Lorimer Park was dedicated to Montgomery County to be used as a public park by benefactor George H. Lorimer upon his death in 1936. It opened in 1938 and has grown from the initial 132 acres to become a 230-acre sanctuary for wildlife and flora, as well as a centerpiece for passive outdoor recreation.

George H. Lorimer

George Horace Lorimer was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1867. He was an author, journalist, editor, and lover of nature. From modest beginnings working at a meat packing plant, and after a short time attending Yale, Lorimer rose to become Editor-in-Chief of *The Saturday Evening Post*. He turned the struggling publication into one of the most successful weekly magazines in the entire country. He associated with, and promoted, famous artists and authors of the time including: Norman Rockwell, Agatha Christie, William Faulkner, Jack London, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. An author in his own right, Lorimer's book of short stories, *Letters of a Self-Made Merchant to his Son* became a best seller.



Credit: Library of Congress, @Ellis

Lorimer lived in the Wyncote section of Cheltenham Township. In the early 1900s he purchased farmland in the Huntingdon Valley area, eventually accumulating about 2,000 acres. This land included what is now the properties of the Sisters of the Holy Redeemer and Lorimer Park, which he called King's Oak. Lorimer used the King's Oak estate as a weekend retreat and to entertain famous friends such as President Herbert Hoover, authors James Whitcomb Riley and Mary Roberts Rinehart, and actor DeWolf Hopper.

After a few years he soon realized that *"the less land you farm, the less money you lose"* and he started selling off most of the properties. He so loved King's Oak that he arranged that upon his death the property be deeded over to Montgomery County. He directed that the park be dedicated to his mother and daughter (both named Belle) *"for the enjoyment of its natural beauty."*

He intended the park to be used as a home for native plants and animals and to be open to the public for their observation and study. As such, the park can never be commercialized and is to be kept *"in as nearly its natural state as shall be possible."* After all these years, Lorimer Park remains an oasis of woodlands in the middle of suburbia. The park provides a natural escape for visitors from the noise and congestion of urban life, and allows an individual to slow down, relax, and enjoy nature in all its beauty. George Horace Lorimer would be proud that his vision of a park *"for little girls"* is still being enjoyed by all.

Picnicking

The park has a small, shaded picnic area with tables and grills; perfect for a family outing. Modern restrooms and a large activity field are adjacent to the picnic area. There is no fee for picnicking, although group size is limited to 50 and tables are first-come, first-served. However, other activities may require a Special Use Permit and fee. Also, certain restrictions apply such as no Moon Bounces, large play items, live bands, DJ's, PA systems, or loud electronic produced music. And, as with all County facilities, alcoholic beverages and smoking are prohibited. Call the park office for more information, 215-947-3477.

Trails

Park visitors can enjoy over six miles of internal multiuse trails for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Most trails are easily walkable, but a few sections are hilly and rated as moderate to difficult. They wind through the deep woods, parallel cool streams, and lead to scenic overlooks. A number of local high schools and colleges use the Lorimer Park trail system for cross-country training and races. Additionally, adjacent to the park is the Pennypack Trail. With the first two-mile section opening in 2009, this rail trail now extends 5½ miles from Rockledge, through Bryn Athyn, to Byberry Road in Lower Moreland Township. Although not paved, the crushed stone surface is smooth and level enough for most bicycles, wheelchairs and baby carriages. Parking is available at the Lorimer Park lot, as well as the Welsh Road and Byberry Road trailheads.

Fishing

For the angler, the Pennypack Creek is stocked with trout by the PA Fish & Boat Commission (PAFBC) four times a year. Fishing may take place during normal park hours and all PAFBC licensing, rules and regulations apply. Once the water warms beyond trout season anglers can still catch panfish, catfish, carp, and the occasional bass. The Creek extends from Old Huntingdon Pike at the park's north end and winds its way to Pine Road in the south, where it continues on into Philadelphia's Pennypack Park. Along the way there are numerous spots, or 'holes' where you can cast your bait, lure or fly. Each spring the local Rotary Club, along with Trout Unlimited, host a Kid's Fishing Derby and Clinic. Children have the opportunity to learn how to fish from local 'experts' and then apply their skills in this friendly fishing event.

Wildlife Viewing

As an island of woods, meadows, and streams surrounded by urban sprawl, Lorimer Park attracts a large variety of birds and wildlife. Those taking morning or evening walks may observe deer, foxes, raccoons, rabbits, and groundhogs. Birders from amateur to hardcore can view species of songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl. The Wyncote Audubon Society holds regular guided bird walks, usually the third Tuesday of the month and some weekends. See the calendar of events for the schedule. All you need is a pair of binoculars! The National Audubon Society has designated Lorimer Park as an official IBA (Important Bird Area).

Environmental Education

Interpretive programs are offered throughout the year by our staff Environmental Educator on a variety of nature-related topics. Come discover the wonders of Lorimer Park, or make a craft for the holidays. Past programs have included: 'Birding Adventures', 'Wild Edible & Medicinal Plants', 'Creek Critters', and 'Leaf Print Art'. The Park also hosts Junior Naturalist Camp, a week-long nature day camp for children from 2nd to 6th grade. For a full list of public programs, check out the Calendar of Events at www.montcopa.org/pths. You may also call 610-270-0215 and ask for the Environmental Educator.

Winter Activities

Winter is one of the best seasons to visit Lorimer Park. When it snows the scenery is beautiful, and visitors can enjoy many recreational opportunities such as hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and sledding. Lorimer Park has one of the best family sledding hills in the area! A note to parents: the modern restrooms are heated and open year-round!

Contact Information for
Lorimer Park
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Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania 19006
Phone/Reservations: 215.947.3477
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LORIMER PARK
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



Whitetail Deer Buck



Hummingbird



Coneflower (Echinacea)



Harper's Run



Bullfrog

BE HEALTHY HAVE FUN

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TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

Pennypack Trail – 5.5 miles (total current length) | crushed stone surface | EASY | The Pennypack Trail is a level rail-trail located along the western edge of Lorimer Park. Converted from the SEPTA Fox Chase-Newtown Branch line, this trail runs from Rockledge Borough north to Byberry Road in Lower Moreland Township. It provides scenic views of the Pennypack Creek, cliffs, and woodlands of the park. The southern portion of the trail connects to miles of Lorimer Park's internal hiking trails and in the north the trails of the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust. Local connections include access to and from Lower Moreland Township, Upper Moreland Township, and Bryn Athyn Borough. Parking is available at Welsh Road and Byberry Road.

North Park Trail/Service Road – .75 miles one way from the Moreland Road entrance to the Pennypack Creek | natural surface | MODERATE to DIFFICULT (with steep hills) | This trail is a well-kept secret in the North Park section of the park and suggested to visitors who are experienced and adventurous. Surrounded by woodlands, this trail is an uphill/downhill trek that provides striking vistas and a serene atmosphere. Wildlife, including deer, fox, and turkeys populate this less used section of the park. Parking for this trail is along Moreland Road and Packard Avenue, with foot access at the stone pillared gate.

Council Rock Trail – .3 miles one way starting at Michael's Bridge to the pinnacle of Council Rock | natural surface | MODERATE (with short, steep hills) | This Central Park section trail leads visitors to the popular and majestic Council Rock, the centerpiece of Lorimer Park. It is a rising trail that rewards ambitious hikers with an unparalleled view of the picnic area and activity field. Legend has it that Council Rock was a meeting place of the Lenni Lenape in the 16th and 17th centuries.

South Park Loop Trail – 1.9 miles (full loop) from the parking lot kiosk and back | natural surface | EASY to MODERATE (with some long hills) | This popular trail weaves through the wooded, internal South Park section of the park and comes out into an open meadow. It offers beautiful scenery alongside creeks and huge trees. The terrain rises and falls onto hills and small valleys. This trail offers a panoramic view of the adjacent Fox Chase Farm, which is especially colorful in the fall.

TRAIL LEVELS

(general descriptions)

EASY – *Level terrain for easy walking or biking | little or no grade difference | usually a wider, more comfortable trail*

MODERATE – *Some uneven terrain with loose rocks | may include boulders and fallen trees | may include some sections with steep grade and more narrow trails*

DIFFICULT – *Recommended only for the adventurous, more experienced trail users | trails tend to be more narrow | uneven terrain and steep grades | boulder fields and possible fallen trees*