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LORIMER PARK: Council Rock and Dairy Farm Trail



KEY AT-A-GLANCE INFORMATION

LENGTH: 2.5 miles

CONFIGURATION: Double loop

DIFFICULTY: Easy

SCENERY: Council Rock, Pennypack Creek, woodlands, dairy farm

EXPOSURE: Mostly shaded

TRAIL TRAFFIC: Light

TRAIL SURFACE: Gravel

HIKING TIME: 1–2 hours

DRIVING DISTANCE FROM CENTER CITY: 17 miles

ACCESS: Daily, dawn–dusk; free admission

MAPS: USGS Frankford; maps available at ranger station

WHEELCHAIR TRAVERSABLE: Mostly; park near the ranger station.

FACILITIES: Restrooms in welcome area near ranger station

SPECIAL COMMENTS: Trails are unsigned; obtain map at the ranger station. No dogs or alcoholic beverages permitted in park. Old McVeagh Mansion is a private residence, despite being listed on park map. More information: (215) 947-3477; parks.montcopa.org (click the link for this park in the list on the left).

GPS Trailhead Coordinates

UTM Zone (WGS84) 18T

Easting 0493672

Northing 4438501

Latitude N 40° 5' 48.42"

Longitude W 75° 4' 27.24"

IN BRIEF

This park's unsigned trails wind through shady woodlands, hug a babbling creek and trickling stream, and then ascend to a pastoral scene worthy of a Norman Rockwell painting.

DESCRIPTION

You've got to get up every morning with determination if you're going to go to bed with satisfaction.

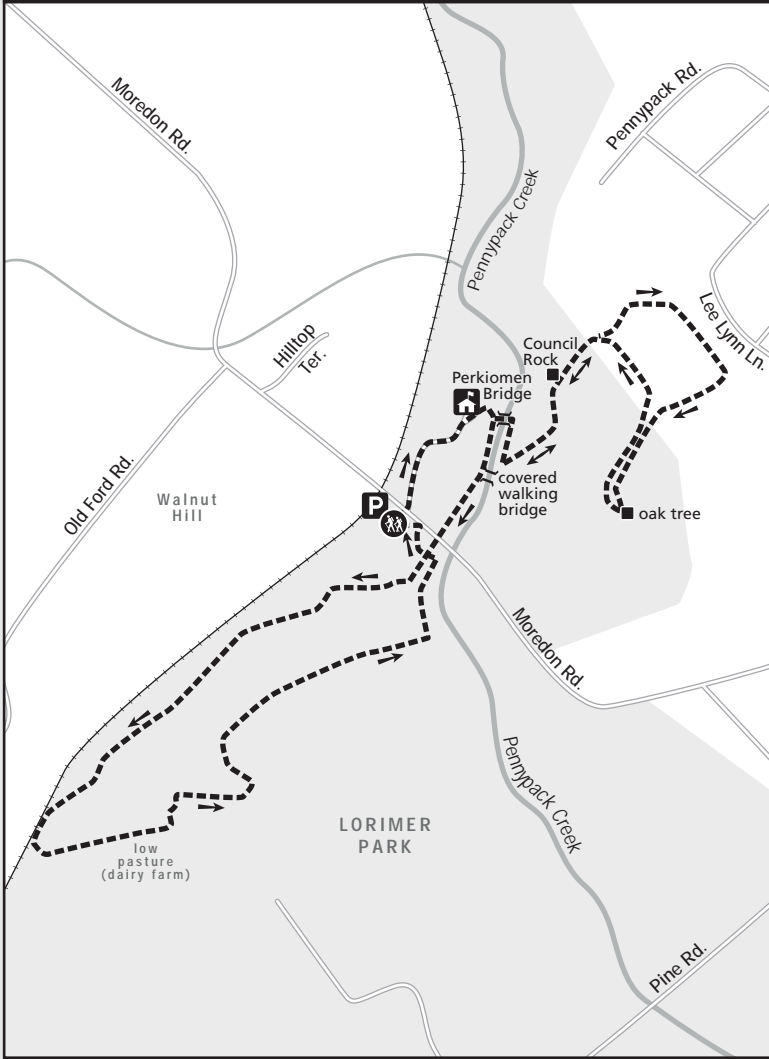
—George Horace Lorimer

An editor who worked with the likes of Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Rudyard Kipling, Sinclair Lewis, H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, and Stephen Crane, George Horace Lorimer helmed the *Saturday Evening Post* from 1899 to 1937. He was the first of the magazine's editors to commission covers from Norman Rockwell, starting a business relationship with this all-American art icon that would last 45 years. While Lorimer was in charge of the *Post*, subscriptions grew to 3 million copies per week.

Directions

Take Interstate 95 north from Philadelphia. After 8 miles, take Exit 30 for Cottman Avenue/Rhawn Street/PA 73, and merge onto Cottman Avenue. After 4 miles, turn right at Oxford Avenue. After 1.2 miles, continue on Huntingdon Pike. Stay on Huntingdon Pike for almost 1 mile, then turn right at Rockledge Avenue. In less than 0.25 miles, turn left at Old Ford Road. After 1 mile, turn right at Moredon Road. Park across the street from the Lorimer Park sign, on the left. Walk down the steps, cross the street, and follow the park entrance to the ranger station. The trailhead is at the bridge. 183 Moredon Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006.

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Council Rock, an outcrop of Wissahickon schist, may have once been used as a meeting spot for Native Americans.

Like many successful people, Lorimer invested in land. He chose the rich countryside of Montgomery County for his home and other investment property. His estate in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, eventually became a private Catholic grammar school, but he donated 230 acres in eastern Abington Township—land that would become Lorimer Park—to the county in memory of his mother and daughter, “for the enjoyment of its natural beauty.”

That natural beauty bursts through the moment you enter. Babbling Penny-pack Creek passes underneath a wooden footbridge

to the right of the ranger station. As you walk across the bridge, the sun may reflect the water’s ripples on the majestic Council Rock, an outgrowth of Wissahickon schist. Residents of the area claim that this massive rock was once used as a meeting spot by Native Americans. Couples now meet atop the rock to share a romantic moment, sometimes returning months or years later for wedding photographs.

Once across the bridge, look for another small bridge, on the right. This covered footbridge, which spans a small stream, was constructed in 1997 by Eagle Scout Timothy Egger and Troop 72. Cross this bridge and take the gravel trail to your left, which passes beside Council Rock and heads east, then northeast. The first of today’s double loop is well shaded and well populated by deer, which have lost much of their forage land to development in this part of Pennsylvania.

Some of the abundant trees growing within the park include red, white, and black oaks and blackgum, maple, pine, and tulip. The understory consists of spicebush, mountain laurel, and witch hazel. All told, at least 70 species of trees have been identified in the park, and the meadows glow with wildflowers in the spring and summer.



Moredon Road bridge over Lorimer Park trail

Climb the gravel trail, heading north, to a fork, where you stay right, heading east and then southeast. Pass a residential area on the left. The trail curves right, hugging a meadow and then returning to shady woodlands. Continue on an outer loop until you come to a T-junction near a giant oak tree. Here turn right, heading back toward the creek. Soon you rejoin the original trail, heading west toward Council Rock and the wooden footbridges.

When you return to the first bridge, the trail hugs Pennypack Creek for about 0.25 miles. An underpass takes you beneath Moredon Road. The mature trees, the creek, and the stone underpass lend a remote and quiet feel to this part of the park. Continue to hug Pennypack Creek until you come to another bridge; here the creek turns left. You may see an occasional angler here, bidding for the trout that are stocked here seasonally by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. After crossing the bridge, take a right and walk along a trail that hugs a stream called Harper's Run. Trail traffic is light most of the time, and birds are abundant even in the wintertime. Bring your binoculars to see migrating raptors, warblers, and a slew of resident birds.

Continue to follow the trail as it climbs upward. Your strenuous efforts on this leg are amply rewarded at the top of the hill by a pastoral scene of dairy cows grazing amid rolling hills. On a sunny day, they look like black silhouette cutouts moving slowly through the fields. Stop here to meditate before continuing to a junction. Here you can opt for a shorter route by turning left and following the trail as it returns to forest, or you can continue straight, beside a fenced



The cows look like black silhouettes as they graze the fields.

pasture. Either way, you will be heading back toward the creek and the bridge you crossed just before coming to Harper's Run. After the bridge, look for a concrete pathway with white arrows, pointing you back toward the parking lot.

The hike you've just completed scratches the surface of this natural haven, which lies 35 minutes from Philadelphia's Center City. The park's trails turn off in many different directions but are not marked. You never know what awaits around each corner, and you can only imagine George Horace Lorimer losing himself after a long day of editing—probably not realizing that someday the authors he published in the *Post* would become literary legends, nor how much future generations would enjoy losing themselves in the nature that he preserved.

NEARBY ACTIVITIES

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