

## Norristown Farm Park

One of the most unique in the Pennsylvania state park system, Norristown Farm Park is a working farm in continuous use since colonial times. The 690-acre park is home to 71 species of wildlife, fish, reptiles and amphibians; 173 species of birds; 89 species of trees; and 216 species of wildflowers. Here you will find hiking trails, a trout nursery, picnic areas, separate forest areas of mixed oak and other deciduous trees, flood plain, old farm fields, working fields, wetlands and two streams. There are 15 historic buildings on the property, the earliest dating from 1764.

One of the last undeveloped areas in Montgomery County, Norristown Farm Park is actively farmed. Sitting quietly in the midst of a population of over 65,000 people, eighty percent of the park is dedicated to growing farm crops.

Under a 1992 lease agreement with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Montgomery County is responsible for the development, operation, maintenance, and administration of the park.

### Directions

Norristown Farm Park is located in Montgomery County just north of Norristown. There is currently one vehicle entrance into the park, located at the intersection of Germantown Pike and North Wales Road.

Take the Pennsylvania Turnpike to Exit 333 (Norristown). Follow signs for Germantown Pike, West. Go west on Germantown Pike, approximately 4 miles to North Wales Road (first light after railroad tracks).

Turn left at light heading into The Barley Sheaf apartment complex. Stay to the right, go through the main gate and follow signs to the park office/visitor center.

### Reservations

For reservations, contact the park at (610) 270-0215.

### Recreational Opportunities

#### ACTIVITIES

A volleyball court and a horseshoe pit are located in the Picnic Pavilion Area adjacent to Parking Lot #3. Chess, checkers, and volleyball sets may be checked out at the park office. Restrooms are available here and at the park office.

The Kevin W. Walsh Memorial baseball field is leased to the West Norriton Little League, which has first priority in its use. If the field is vacant, park visitors may use it on a first-come, first-served basis.

#### TRAILS

There are eight miles of trails throughout the park. Most trails are paved and used for walking, rollerblading and bicycling. *NOTICE: There are no park roads or trails open to equestrian use.*

 All paved trails can be accessed by wheelchairs. Some trails have hills that could impact wheelchair use. Check the contours on the map to determine changes in elevation and your ability to maneuver these grades. Several rustic nature trails are available for the adventuresome.

**CAUTION:** Any of the roads and trails could potentially be used by either park vehicles or farm equipment. Users will need to pay attention to other users of the roads and trails. Public motor vehicles are restricted to the Upper Farm Road for access to the picnic pavilions and parking lots.

#### PICNIC AREAS

There are several picnic areas throughout the park and two accessible picnic pavilions. Each pavilion contains 14 picnic tables and accommodates up to 84 people for a total of 168 people. There are five charcoal grills at each pavilion. Groups, organizations and individuals wishing to reserve these pavilions for their function need to contact the park office for dates and availability. The picnic area is slated for expansion soon. One large picnic pavilion, four smaller picnic pavilions and two restrooms will be added and available for use. Check with the park office concerning availability.

The free “Concert in the Park” series is held on selected Saturdays from June through August, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at the picnic pavilion area. Check the Norristown Farm Park Web site for information on musical acts and dates. [www.parks.montcopa.org/parks](http://www.parks.montcopa.org/parks)

#### BICYCLE AND ROLLERBLADE TRAILS

The paved trails are open to bicyclists and rollerbladers. Please use caution as you share the trail with pedestrians, and obey all posted speed limits



#### INTERPRETIVE NATURE TRAIL

Just outside the park office is The Millennium Grove, one of two sites in Pennsylvania selected by the American Forest Foundation and the White House Millennium Council to promote the planting of historic tree groves in each state. These trees have been propagated to continue the lineage of trees touched by important figures in our nation’s history. The Millennium Grove is a national program sponsored by U.S. Department of Agriculture, American Society of Landscape Architects, White House Millennium Council, and the American Forest Foundation. The groves are part of Millennium Green, the White House Millennium Council’s project which encourages people and businesses to plant and adopt trees, establish gardens, or care for a special natural resource treasure in honor of the new millennium.

The American Forest Foundation provided the initial 100 seedlings to SmithKline Beecham for donation to the Millennium Grove project at the park. These seedlings are from 21 parent trees of historic significance, including: the Johnny Appleseed tree; Hermitage Tulip Poplar; Trail of Tears Redbud; Minuteman Red Maple; John F. Kennedy Post Oak; Charter White Oak; Mark Twain Cave Bur Oak; Abraham Lincoln White Oak; Franklin D. Roosevelt Redbud; Ft. Atkinson Black Locust; Harriet Beecher Stowe White Ash; the Frederick Douglass White Oak and others.

#### FISHING AREAS

Visitors may fish at the Farm Pond or at either of the two trout-stocked streams, Stony Creek and Kepner Creek. A Pennsylvania fishing license and a trout stamp are required for persons age 16 and over and may be obtained by contacting the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us)

#### BIRDWATCHING

Because of the park’s diverse habitats, over 170 species of birds have been recorded. Area bird watchers are continually drawn to the park in hopes of catching a glimpse of a new or rare species to add to their own personal list. Each year volunteers monitor and maintain 118 bluebird boxes located throughout the park on 13 separate trails. These same volunteers also participate in Cornell University’s Christmas Bird Count, a bird feeder survey/census that records fluctuations in bird diversity and population densities.

A one-acre farm pond sits quietly atop a gentle rise just off Upper Farm Road, overlooking much of the park. The area is surrounded by wooded fence rows and farm fields. Its remote location makes the site a bird watchers’ paradise. This tranquil setting features a viewing blind built in 2004 by a local Boy Scout and his troop as an Eagle Scout project. The enclosed structure allows for the close-up observation of a wide variety of birds, both resident and migratory. This picturesque area abounds year-round with waders and common waterfowl, and is also home to a wide variety of warblers and other songbirds. A bird checklist specific to the park is available upon request at the park office/visitor center. *Please note that, while much of the park is open for exploration, the farm fields (particularly during the growing season) are not.*

#### WINTER ACTIVITIES

During the winter, any part of the park may be used for sledding, skiing (downhill or cross-country) or snowshoeing. The users assume all risk and liability when participating in these sports on park land.

### Environmental Interpretation

Naturalists from the Montgomery County Nature Center conduct various educational classes and activities at the site throughout the year. Information on upcoming programs and events can be found on the Parks and Heritage Services website, in brochures at park kiosks or by visiting the park office. Most of the programs are free; however, some carry a nominal fee to help cover the cost of materials or supplies used for a particular project or craft. [www.parks.montcopa.org/parks](http://www.parks.montcopa.org/parks)

### History

The Native American Lenni Lenape (Delaware) tribe occupied the land for generations. Women farmed, while the men hunted game for food. The Lenape believed it was their duty to share what they had with everyone, and the Native people welcomed early European visitors graciously.

They expected that the Europeans would respond in kind, but prior to the arrival of William Penn and the Quakers in 1682, the Lenape were ill-treated—first by the Dutch, and then by the Swedes. The Lenape response was usually swift and violent, often involving destruction of livestock and property, and the death of the settlers.

Relations with European settlers changed for a time after Penn arrived. When King Charles II deeded the land called “Penn’s Sylvania” to Penn in payment of a debt, Penn laid the groundwork for a friendly relationship with the Lenape. He wrote to them to explain the Quaker faith and guiding principles, and asked their permission to settle on the land.

Penn quickly became a beloved friend of the Lenape through his willingness to learn their language, and his participation in their festivals and games. He spent only five years on the land, from 1682 to 1684, and from 1699 to 1701. While Penn was gone, relations with the Native Americans were not as friendly.

In 1704 when Penn was away in England, his son William Penn, Jr., sold the land to Isaac Norris, after whom present day Norristown was named. In 1744, the land was sold to James Shannon, who built the Shannon Mansion in 1764. That building still stands near the entrance to the park. A nearby springhouse was also built around 1764. The Getty Cottage, situated directly behind the Shannon Mansion, was built in 1802.

In 1777, the British marched through the town and burned several areas in the park, including a gunpowder mill and other homes.



Other historic buildings in the park include the Castner House, built in 1802. On the south side of the house built by shoemaker (cordwainer) John Castner, is a date stone and a boot symbol.

Happy Hollow Cottage was inhabited by the Norris family, and was built in 1800. The Sheetz House was built in 1870, and Doctor’s House dates from 1900.

In 1876, the Pennsylvania legislature passed a law giving the state permission to buy land on which to build hospitals. Norristown State Hospital was built as one of the mandated facilities. Until 1975, patients at the hospital worked the farm growing crops and raising animals as part of their treatment program. Further, the hospital farm served as a program to train farm managers, and also as an “Alternative Service Program” for conscientious objectors who could not, because of their beliefs, participate in military actions

It was believed that patients who worked the farm recovered more quickly. After 1975, the state changed its policy, stating that the farm work did not, in fact, help the patients to recover more quickly, and that it was less expensive to buy food than to grow it themselves.

The Department of Agriculture took responsibility for the land when farming operations ceased. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of State Parks, then took over the property in 1987 through the legislative efforts of Senator Edwin G. Holl. In 1992, Montgomery County leased 690 acres of the land from DCNR and created the Norristown Farm Park. Montgomery County operates the park for DCNR.

Four hundred and fifty acres of the land are still farmed by a tenant farmer, allowing visitors to see an unusual site in this urban area—a working farm.

### Nearby Attractions

For more information about nearby attractions, visit the Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau online at [www.valleyforge.org](http://www.valleyforge.org). You may also contact them by e-mail at [info@valleyforge.org](mailto:info@valleyforge.org), or by telephone at (610) 834-1550.

#### CENTRAL PERKIOMEN VALLEY PARK

1 Plank Road, Schwenksville, PA 19473

(610) 287-6970

E-mail: [CentralPerkiomenPark@montcopa.org](mailto:CentralPerkiomenPark@montcopa.org)

This 800-acre park offers a wide variety of family activities. Visitors can walk, jog, bike or horseback ride on over 19 miles of the Perkiomen Trail winding along the Perkiomen Creek. Park hours are from 8:00 a.m. until dusk.

#### ELMWOOD PARK ZOO

1661 Harding Boulevard, Norristown PA, 19401

(610)-277-3825

[www.elmwoodparkzoo.org](http://www.elmwoodparkzoo.org)

Admission charge. Open seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The sixteen-acre Elmwood Park Zoo features exhibits organized by habitat, such as The Bayou, with American reptiles and amphibians like alligators, turtles, frogs, lizards, and snakes; The Grasslands, featuring American Bison, Roosevelt Elk, prairie dogs and the black-footed ferret (one of the rarest and most endangered species) and more. The Thomas Kimmel Conservation Kingdom, a state-of-the-art interactive playground, is one of the Zoo’s most popular attractions. It features the Cougar Cafe, and the Lenore Weiss Nature Shop. Educational programs are available.

#### EVANSBURG STATE PARK

851 May Hall Rd., Collegeville, PA 19426

(610)-409-1150

E-mail: [evansburgsp@state.pa.us](mailto:evansburgsp@state.pa.us)

Evansburg State Park is located between Norristown and Collegeville. The park offers a significant area of green space and relative solitude in an urbanized area. Its main natural feature, the Skippack Creek, has dissected the land into ridges and valleys that create feelings of enclosures and provides scenic views.

The narrow valley was first settled and farmed by Mennonites who powered their industries with the water of the Skippack. Mill remnants, mill buildings and houses from the eighteenth and nineteenth century serve as reminders of early American life.

Today, the park is a quilt-work of crop land, meadows, old fields and mature woodlands that attract day use visitors from the Montgomery County and Philadelphia areas. People come to enjoy hunting, fishing, the open playfields, picnic areas, trails, golf course and the relatively tranquil, natural environs.

#### GREEN LANE PARK

2144 Snyder Road, (Routes 29 & 63),

Green Lane, PA 18054

(215) 234-4528

E-mail: [GreenLanePark@montcopa.org](mailto:GreenLanePark@montcopa.org)

Green Lane Park offers fishing, boating, rental boats, picnicking, horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, family camping, equestrian camping, tennis, sand volleyball courts, playgrounds, cross-country skiing, ice skating, ice fishing, a nature center with environmental classes, and the annual Scottish Irish Festival & Highland Games. Hours are 6 a.m. - 10 p.m. in season: 6 a.m. - 9 p.m. after November 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### JOHN JAMES AUDUBON CENTER AT MILL GROVE

1201 Pawlings Road, Audubon, PA 19403

(610) 666-5593

Built in 1762 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Mill Grove was the first American home of renowned artist, author and naturalist, John James Audubon. Museum hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Sunday 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Admission charge. Sanctuary grounds are open Tuesday thru Sunday, 7 a.m. to dusk.

#### LOWER PERKIOMEN VALLEY PARK

101 New Mill Road, Oaks, PA 19456

(610) 666-5371

E-mail: [LowerPerkiomenValleyPark@montcopa.org](mailto:LowerPerkiomenValleyPark@montcopa.org)

This setting of 107 acres in the southernmost section of Upper Providence Township offers picnicking, an attractive playground for younger visitors, fishing, hiking, jogging, cross-country skiing, rollerblading/skating, basketball and softball. Hours are 8 a.m. to sunset.

#### NORRISTOWN DAM AND FISH LADDER

98 DeKalb St. Bridgeport, PA 19405

(610) 270 - 0215

The Norristown Dam along the Schuylkill River was constructed in 1828 and rehabilitated by Exelon Corporation between 1985 and 1993. In the Spring of 2008 Exelon turned the fish ladder at the Norristown Dam over to Montgomery County. The fish ladder will assist the upstream migration of American Shad during their springtime spawning migration. Open dawn to dusk.

#### PENNYPACKER MILLS

5 Haldeman Road, Schwenksville, PA 19473

(610)-287-9349

E-mail: [PennypackerMills@montcopa.org](mailto:PennypackerMills@montcopa.org)

At the turn of the 20th century, Pennsylvania Governor Samuel W. Pennypacker purchased and renovated an estate where Washington’s army had encamped in the fall of 1777. Today, this country home reflects the governor’s time here. Hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. The last tour is at 3:30 p.m. Free. Closed Mondays and county holidays.

#### PERKIOMEN TRAIL: Multi-use trail

The 19-mile Perkiomen Trail runs through the Perkiomen Creek Valley from its junction with the Schuylkill River Trail at Oaks, Upper Providence Township, to the largest county park, Green Lane Park. Most of the trail is a 10-foot wide cinder or stone aggregate (non-paved) surface with grass shoulders. Selected sections are paved.

This multi-use trail follows the Perkiomen Creek and connects three county parks (Lower Perkiomen Valley Park, Central Perkiomen Valley Park, and Green Lane Park) and two County historic sites (Mill Grove and Pennypacker Mills). It passes directly through ten municipalities making connections to numerous municipal parks and open spaces along the scenic waterway. The trail provides access to Valley Forge National Historical Park via its connection to the Schuylkill River Trail extension.



#### PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD

2100 Schultz Road

Worcester, PA 19490

(610) 584-5104

E-mail: [PeterWentzFarmstead@montcopa.org](mailto:PeterWentzFarmstead@montcopa.org)

This was the site where George Washington lived while planning the Battle of Germantown, in October 1777. A German Georgian farmhouse, it is decorated in a unique style with dramatic sponge painting and geometric designs. Hearth cooking, spinning, fraktur painting, and other Colonial crafts are demonstrated at special events. Hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. The last tour is at 3:30 p.m. Free. Special events are held year-round. Closed Mondays and county holidays.

#### POTTSGROVE MANOR

100 West King Street, Pottstown, PA 19464

(610) 326-4014

E-mail: [pottsgrovesmanor@montcopa.org](mailto:pottsgrovesmanor@montcopa.org)

The manor house exemplifies the restrained elegance of early Georgian architecture popular with wealthy English gentry during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Built in 1752 for John Potts, ironmaster and founder of Pottstown, the mansion was situated on a 1,000-acre plantation, which by 1762 included the town of “Pottsgrove.” Hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. The last tour is at 3:30 p.m. Free. Closed Mondays and county holidays.

#### SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL: Multi-use trail

This paved, 11.5-mile multi-use trail runs from Philadelphia to Valley Forge National Historical Park and is a popular destination for bicycling, rollerblading, jogging and walking. Built on the Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way, the trail parallels the Schuylkill River as it passes through various townships. The U.S. Department of Interior’s National Trails System has recognized it as a National Recreation Trail.

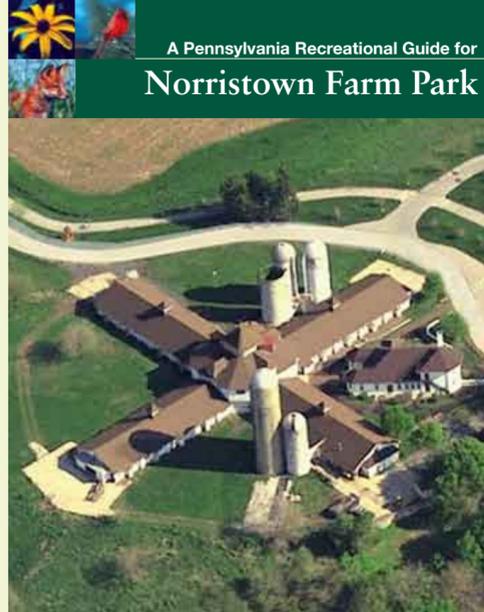
#### UPPER SCHUYLKILL VALLEY PARK AND WILDLIFE CENTER

Route 113, 1600 Black Rock Road, Royersford, PA 19468

(610) 948-5170

E-mail: [USVP@montcopa.org](mailto:USVP@montcopa.org)

The Schuylkill River in Upper Providence Township forms a natural backdrop to this 15-acre display of wild animals and raptors indigenous to Pennsylvania. Picnicking and fishing are popular along the river. A scenic hike will lead you past the Black Rock Dam, a popular fishing and boating destination, to Lock 60 in Mont Clare. Here you can learn the history of the Schuylkill Canal system and witness first hand a restored, working lock.



A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for

## Norristown Farm Park

pennsylvania  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



For More Information Contact:  
Montgomery County Department of  
Parks & Heritage Services

Norristown Farm Park

2500 Upper Farm Road

Norristown, PA 19403

610-270-0215

e-mail: [norristownfarmpark@montcopa.org](mailto:norristownfarmpark@montcopa.org)

An Equal Opportunity Employer

[www.montcopa.org](http://www.montcopa.org)

Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

Information and Reservations

610-270-0215



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#### VALLEY FORGE NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK

Rt. 23 and N. Gulph Road, Valley Forge, PA 19462

[www.nps.gov/vafo](http://www.nps.gov/vafo)

It was here during the winter encampment of 1777-78 that General George Washington forged his Continental Army into a fighting force. The welcome center features exhibits, artifacts, a gift shop, light refreshments and an 18-minute film. Take a self-guided or scheduled tour on a scenic drive through the park, or explore the ten miles of horse trails, and six miles of multi-use trails that weave through the park’s rolling hillsides.

## Protect and Preserve Our Parks

Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- Be prepared and bring the proper equipment. Natural areas may possess hazards. Your personal safety, and that of your family, is your responsibility.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Fireworks, all firearms including BB guns, bows and arrows, cross bows, pellet guns, air guns, paintball guns or slingshots are prohibited on park property.
- Your pets are welcome in many areas, but are not permitted in the water. Pet owners are required to cleanup

after their animals using the Mutt Mitts provided. Pets must be on a leash not exceeding six feet in length, and must be controlled and attended to at all times by the owner. Uncontrolled pets could chase wildlife or frighten visitors.

- Please recycle. Place trash accumulated during your stay in proper receptacles, or take it home with you.
- Fires are prohibited except in charcoal grills or other designated facilities. Do not leave a fire unattended.
- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.
- Please park only in designated areas and obey posted speed limits and all traffic regulations.



## Other PA State Parks

Nearly all other Pennsylvania State Parks are operated by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. For reservations or general information on these state parks, call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Saturday. Online reservations at these parks may be made at [www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com)

## Access for People with Disabilities

The park office is a completely ADA accessible building.  This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are accessible. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

## In an Emergency

Dial 911 or contact the park office. Directions to the nearest hospital are given below, and are also posted on kiosks and at the park office.

**NEAREST HOSPITAL:**  
Mercy Suburban Hospital  
2701 DeKalb Pike  
Norristown, PA 19401  
610-278-2000

From the park's main exit (intersection of Germantown Pike / North Wales Avenue) turn right, heading east on Germantown Pike. Travel 1.2 miles toward Dekalb Pike ( US 202 ). At the intersection of Germantown Pike and Dekalb Pike turn right and travel 0.2 mile. Mercy Suburban Hospital is on the right; follow signs to the emergency room.