

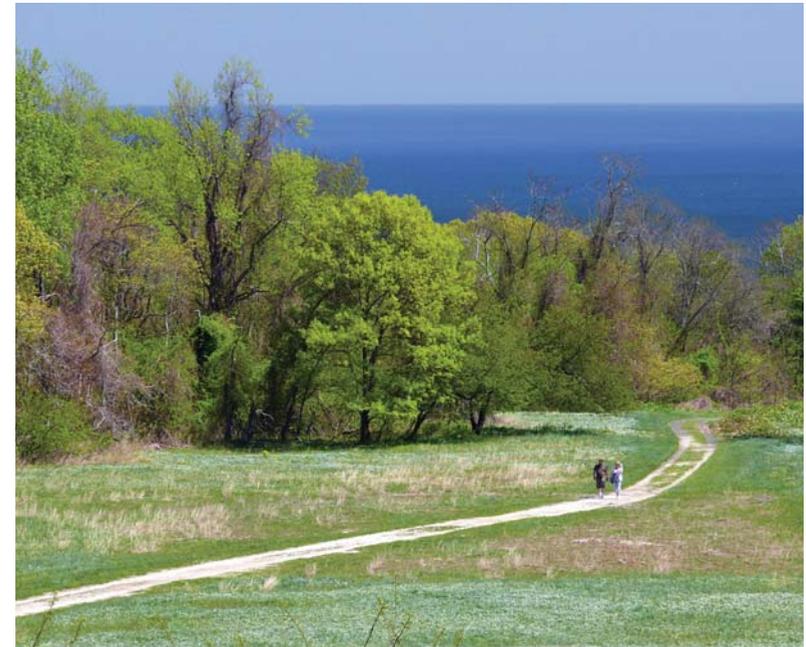
# 11. Hartshorne Woods Park

1973–46 ACRES; 2009–794 ACRES

HARTSHORNE Woods Park preserves nearly half of the unique Navesink Highlands, one of the highest areas along the Atlantic Coast and the County's most prominent natural feature. The name of the woods derives from Richard Hartshorne, a Middletown settler who accumulated more than 2,300 acres and settled on Portland Point on the Navesink River around 1680. Hartshorne descendants built homes along the river and on top of Rocky Point, the southeastern hill overlooking the river and the Atlantic. Artists like James Butterworth, whose painting is shown here, have long celebrated the Highlands' picturesque scenery, depicting what novelist James Fenimore Cooper called one of the most beautiful combinations of land and water in America.

The U.S. Army acquired 224 acres of the Highlands at the onset of World War II to build Battery Lewis to help defend New York harbor. As the Cold War developed, the Air Force built the Highlands Air Force Station west of the battery in 1948 for radar defense. The Army expanded the Station into the Highlands Army Air Defense Site, known as H.A.A.D.S., in 1958 to control Nike missile batteries around New York, including one in the Hilltop area of Holmdel Park.

The Federal Government cleared part of the property for the military installation, but left portions of the land in its natural state. When Park System officials learned in the mid-1960s that H.A.A.D.S. was becoming obsolete, they quickly communicated their interest in preserving the land as a County park. With grants from Green Acres and the Federal Open Space Program, the Park System bought nine private parcels within the Hartshorne Woods totaling 492 acres in 1973 and 1974. The U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation transferred 161 acres of the Federal land to the County in 1974 through President Richard Nixon's Legacy of Parks program for surplus land. The U.S. General Services Administration transferred the 63-acre balance of the H.A.A.D.S. base to the County without cost in 1984.





The Park System has recently added two significant parcels to the Park. Through a collaboration with the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection's Harbor and Estuary Program, Middletown Township, and the Monmouth Conservation Foundation, the Park System in 2005 acquired the 45-acre Stern-Fisher property, one of the early summer-home estates established by wealthy New Yorkers along the river after the Civil War. The property fronts on Claypit Creek, a tributary of the Navesink, and provides a link to Huber Woods Park, just a few hundred feet to the west across the Locust Avenue Bridge.

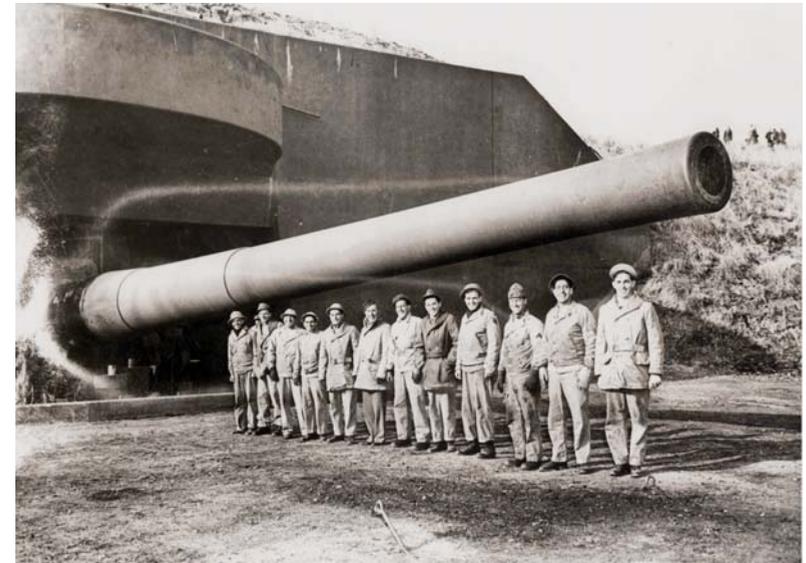
Daniel Ward Seitz, a descendant of Richard Hartshorne and a former president of the Friends of the Parks, bequeathed Portland Place, an ancestral home of the Hartshorne family, to the Park System when he died in 2008. Dan was a longtime supporter of the preservation of Hartshorne Woods and a co-founder of the Friends of the Parks. The five-acre property (pictured right) is one of the most important historic sites on the Navesink River. Thomas Hartshorne, Richard's grandson, may have built the oldest section of the house in the early 18th century, and his descendants and later owners expanded it several times. Park System staff are currently planning the use of this historic gem.



The elevation and steep slopes of the Navesink Highlands provided the best site in the region for guarding New York harbor at the outbreak of World War II. The U.S. Army built Battery Lewis in 1942 on the Highlands plateau in conjunction with Battery Harris at Fort Tilden on Rockaway Peninsula in New York to reinforce the primary battery at Fort Hancock on Sandy Hook. Battery Lewis was named for Colonel Isaac Newton Lewis, a West Point graduate who worked on New York Harbor defenses around 1900.

Battery Lewis contained two batteries. Battery 116 on top of the Highlands consists of a 600 ft.-long, 180 ft.-wide, and 40 ft.-high bunker built of densely reinforced concrete and covered with earth to withstand shells and aerial bombs. The bunker has two casemates, or fortified gun emplacements, protected by concrete canopies, and a long corridor between them with side rooms for generators, ammunition, and other uses. Each casemate sheltered a 16-in., 68 ft.-long gun capable of firing a 2,240 lb. armor-piercing projectile up to 25 miles. The 120-ton guns were originally cast for ships and were similar to the guns on the Battleship New Jersey.

Battery 219 on the east end of Rocky Point has a smaller bunker with casemates for two 6-in., 25-ft. long guns that were capable of firing projectiles 15 miles, plus ammunition and storage rooms. None of the Battery Lewis guns were ever fired in combat but nearby residents remembered test firings of the 16-in. guns that shook the ground and shattered windows. The Army deactivated Battery Lewis in 1949 and sold the guns for scrap.





Hartshorne Woods Park contains almost 750 acres of forest at the eastern end of the cuesta ridge that extends from the Atlantic Highlands to western Monmouth County. The ridge's sedimentary rock separates New Jersey's inner and outer coastal plains, with the western slopes draining to the Raritan or New York Bays, and the eastern slopes draining to the Atlantic Ocean or the Delaware River.

The parkland's unique topography hosts old growth forest that has not been timbered since the 19th century and successional forest that has grown up on formerly cleared areas. The ridges have old growth forest of chestnut oak with an understory of huckleberry and blueberry. The slopes have a black, scarlet and chestnut oak forest with abundant mountain laurel that blooms strikingly in June. The protected hollows have an American beech-white oak-tulip poplar-hickory forest with a diverse understory, including mapleleaf and arrowwood viburnum. Formerly-occupied portions of Rocky Point have some significant American holly. American chestnut, which was decimated by disease a century ago, notably grows throughout the park and some 16-in. diameter specimens are among the largest in the region. Some rusted implements and open-grown trees within the Park indicate former farming and residential sites.

On the former H.A.A.D.S site, Park System ecologists and rangers have established grasslands for vistas and habitat. The Park provides some good habitat for species dependent on large forest blocks, including barred owl and pileated woodpeckers. The forested riverbanks provide unique habitat for osprey, kingfisher, and heron. Starting in the 1990s, volunteers have helped build and maintain more than 14 miles of trails in the Park for hikers, equestrians, all-terrain bicycles, cross-country skiers, and nature enthusiasts.

## 12. Mount Mitchill Scenic Overlook

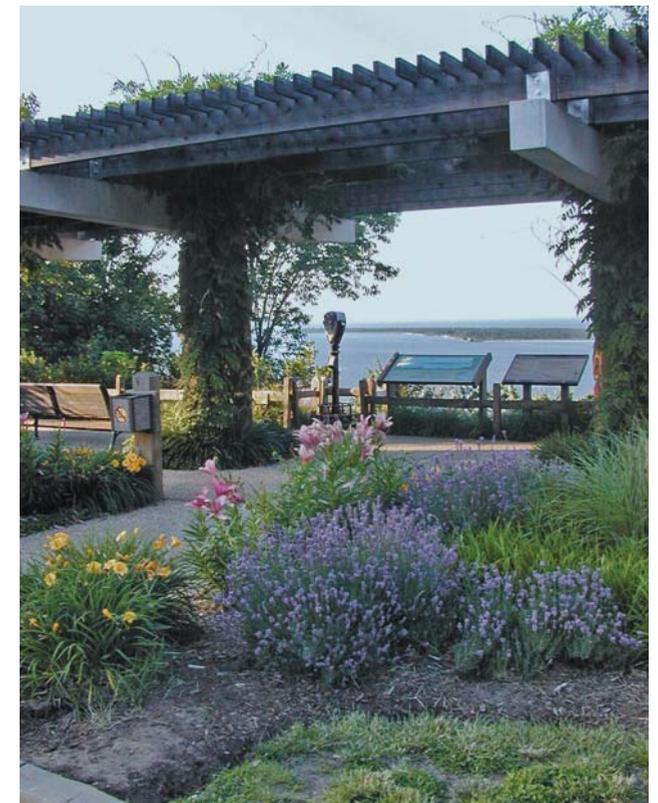
1973–8 ACRES; 2009–12 ACRES

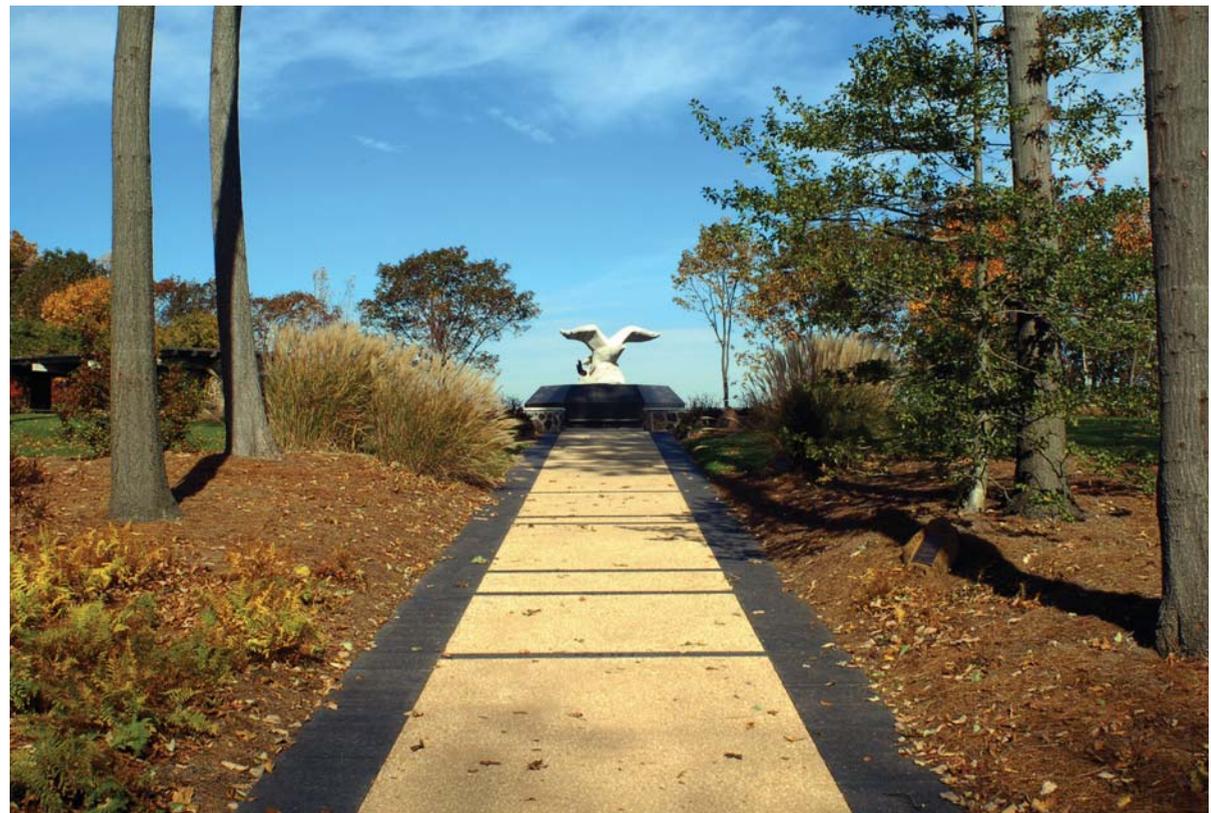
WITH an elevation of 266 feet, Mount Mitchill is the highest natural point along the North Atlantic Coast south of Maine. The site is named for Dr. Samuel Latham Mitchill, a physician, scientist, educator, and politician who measured its elevation with a barometer in 1816. Dr. Mitchill lived in New York and served in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

With its majestic view of Raritan Bay, Staten Island, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Sandy Hook, Mount Mitchill has long been a popular viewing site, and in the 1940s there was an effort to make it a State park. A private refreshment stand and picnic area occupied one of several lots on the site for many years, but the area was mostly barren and unkempt. The sedimentary rock forming the Highlands is prone to slumping on steep slopes, where large blocks of capstone and sand periodically slide down the cliff face, and the lack of controls allowed considerable erosion.

A developer's proposal in the early 1970s to build two 15-story high-rise towers on the site prompted many calls for its preservation. The County tried to buy the entire site but the progress of the developer's plans raised the cost significantly. A compromise enabled the developer to build one tower and the County to preserve eight acres.

The Park System created the Mount Mitchill Scenic Overlook in 1973 with parking and viewing areas, drainage, and oak and cedar plantings to help control erosion along the steep slopes. In 1995, the Park System upgraded the Overlook with redesigned parking, viewing areas, interpretive panels, and landscaping (pictured above right in 1980, and center right in 1995).





Mount Mitchell first became a commemorative site in 1980 when the Park System installed flagpoles and a plaque paying homage to the eight soldiers who died during the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis in Iran.

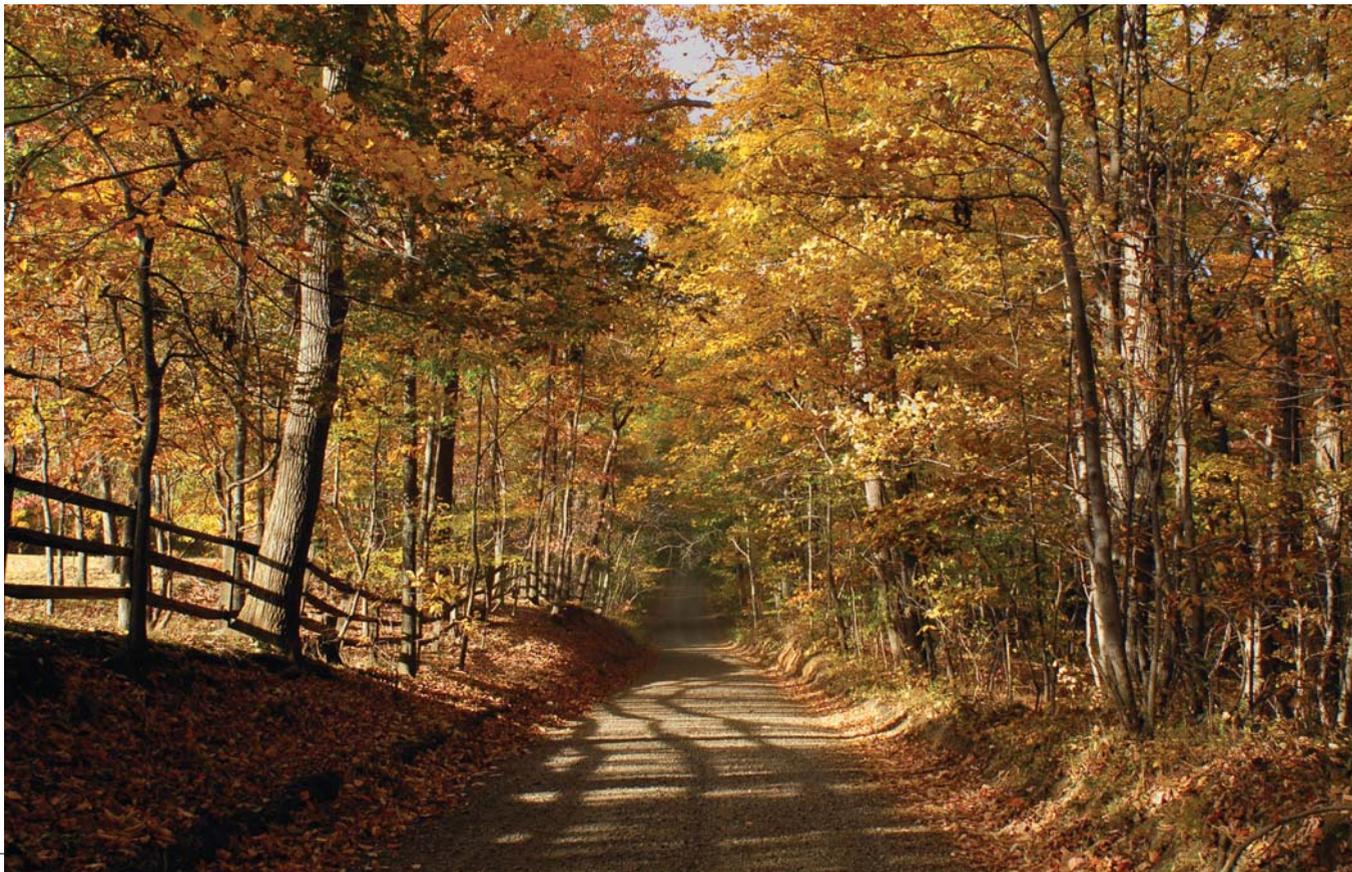
In 2002, the Monmouth County 9/11 Memorial Committee chose Mount Mitchell for a memorial tribute to the victims and heroes of the attacks on the World Trade Center. The Committee and the Friends of the Parks raised several hundred thousand dollars for the memorial, and Freehold sculptor Franco Minervini carved an eagle for it with a 9-ft. wingspan ascending into flight while clutching a fragment of a steel beam from the World Trade Center. The granite base of the sculpture lists the names, ages, and towns of the 147 County natives and residents who lost their lives in the attacks, and the walkway to the memorial chronicles the timeline of the tragic event.

## 13. Huber Woods Park | 1974–119 ACRES; 2009–375 ACRES

HUBER WOODS PARK in the Locust section of Middletown was the fifth County park established by a family's generous donation of land. Four generations of the Huber family had enjoyed the Huber farm overlooking the Navesink River since Joseph Huber bought his first acreage on Brown's Dock Road in 1915. Huber's son and daughter-in-law, Hans and Catherine Huber, wanted to see 119 acres of woodland on the north end of their farm preserved in perpetuity as a nature sanctuary, and when they donated it in 1974, they specified that roads, playgrounds, recreational facilities, and powered recreational vehicles should be excluded from the property. They also requested that Brown's Dock Road along the west boundary of the land be maintained as a dirt road and not widened.

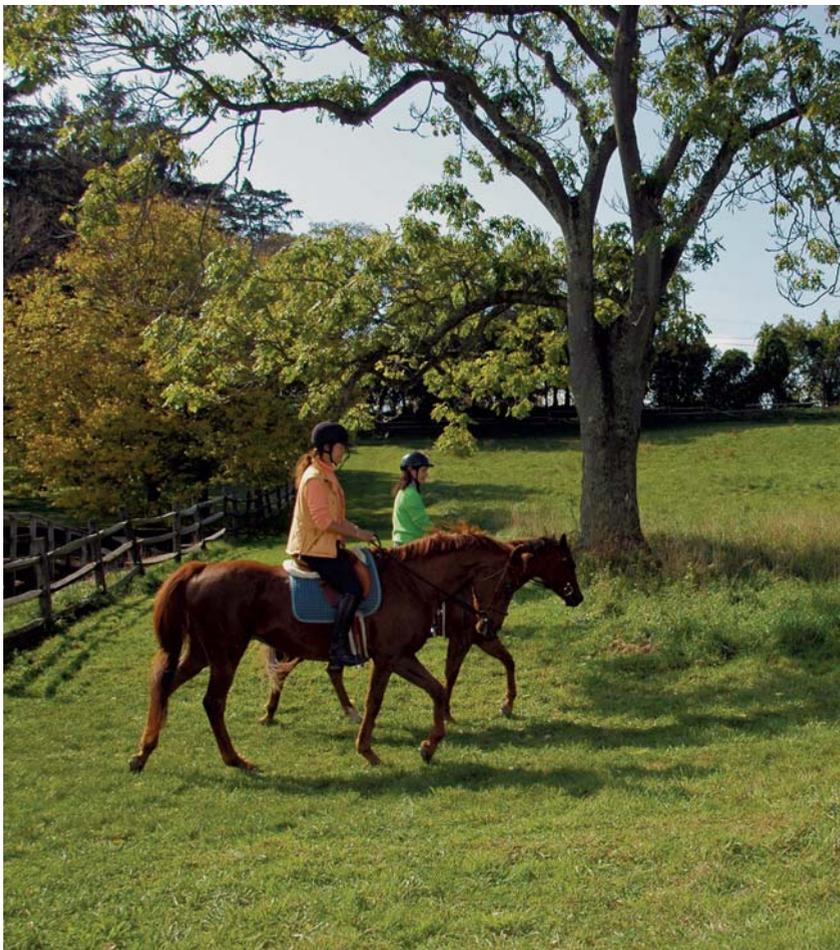
The Park System expanded the new Park that same year with the acquisition of 29 adjacent acres, and a year later Steven and Bonnie Wood donated three acres across Brown's Dock Road. With the assistance of the N.J. Conservation Foundation and a Green Acres matching grant, the Park System added 52 acres across from the Park in 1979.

In 1985, the Huber family generously donated the core of their farm estate on Brown's Dock Road, consisting of 48 acres with the Hans and Catherine Huber House, a barn and stable complex, and agricultural fields and woods sloping down to Navesink River Road. Huber family members had considered the development potential of the land but decided that they would rather see the farm preserved for light agricultural use and nature study.



The Park System made good use of the Huber Farm stables by moving the SPUR—Special People United to Ride—therapeutic riding program there in 1987 from Thompson Park, where there had been inadequate space. The Park System also turned the Huber House into an Environmental Center with hands-on and live animal exhibits and constructed an accessible Discovery path through the adjacent woods. In 1994, Park System carpenters erected an Activity Building made of logs next to the Environmental Center for educational programs and meetings. Park System naturalists conduct several popular programs at Huber Woods, including Creatures of the Night for Halloween visitors and building a Native American Longhouse for school and private groups.

In 2006, the County added a key parcel to the Park through the acquisition of the 99-acre Timolat Farm on Brown's Dock Road with the help of the Monmouth Conservation Foundation. James G. Timolat, who was originally from Staten Island and was President of the Oakland Chemical Company, purchased the property in 1909 and developed it into a country estate he named "Riverside." The acquisition consisted of the farm portion of the estate with a farmhouse, barns, and man-made ponds surrounded by old meadow and forest.





Settlers established farms on the north bank of the Navesink River by the middle of the 18th century, and typically built houses on the river and farmed the upland. Some also built docks for bringing in supplies and for shipping produce to New York. A farm owner named Brown built a dock on the front of his farm, and the road next to his farm became known as Brown's Dock Road. Members of the Brown family had farmed the land for more than 150 years when descendants sold 30 acres with river frontage in 1915 to Joseph M. Huber.

Joseph Huber came to New York in 1883 to sell dry color ink pigments that his family manufactured in Munich, Germany. He established J. M. Huber Corporation in New York in 1887 to manufacture and sell pigments, and soon after married Anna Gundlach, the daughter of German immigrants. Arriving by steam boat from Manhattan, Joseph and Anna rented Brown's peach farm on the Navesink in 1904 as a summer resi-

dence for their young family. Joseph brought his delivery wagon horses from the city to Brown's farm so that they could graze on the pasture.

The Hubers bought the Brown farm through the J. M. Huber Corporation in 1915 and built an Alpine-style house on the river. They acquired additional land up Brown's Dock Road, and their oldest son Hans and his wife Catherine Goss Huber built a larger Alpine-style house on the hill in 1927. They spent summers there with their six children, farming the land with hay and corn for their horses, cows, chickens, and pigs and producing milk, butter, and eggs for themselves and neighbors.

After Hans and Catherine died, everyone in the family remembered how much they enjoyed the property and wanted to see it preserved. As Michael Huber recalled, a cousin summed up the family sentiment in a letter, writing that "she would love to see the farm used as a place where city kids could come and learn about nature."

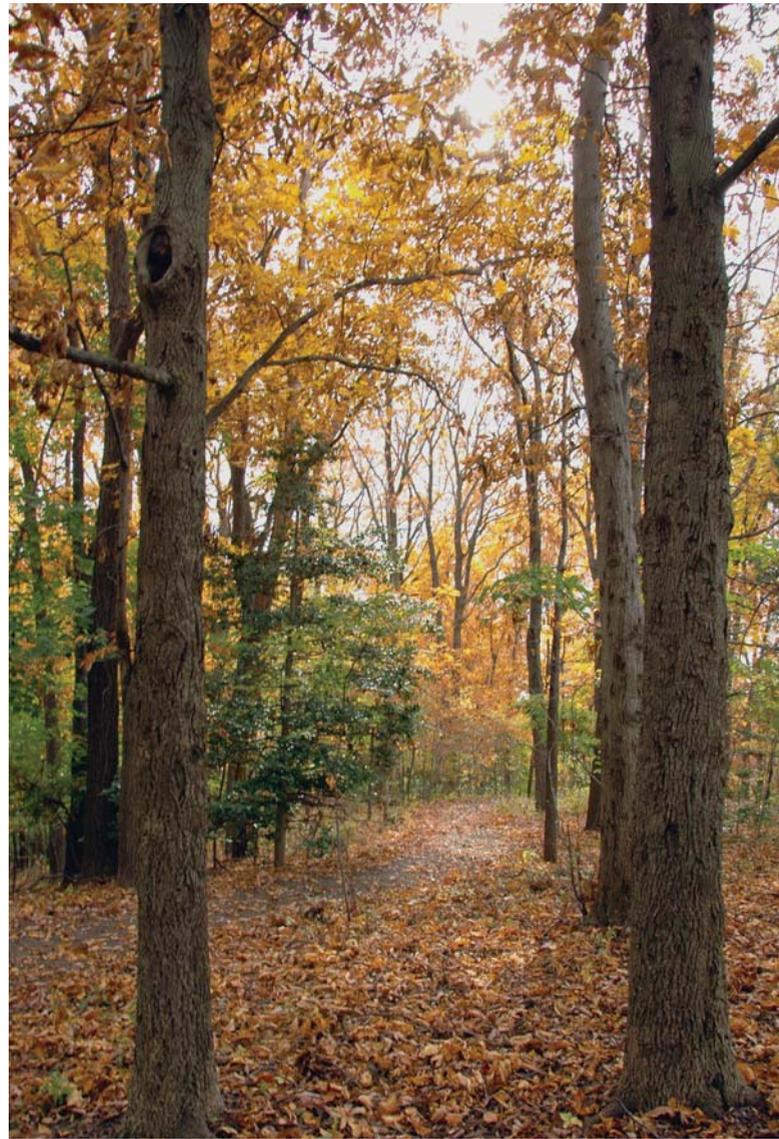


Huber Woods Park occupies a lower elevation of the County's cuesta ridge to the west of the Navesink Highlands and Hartshorne Woods Park. The historical use of the parkland was equally divided between woods and pasture and orchards, but today about four-fifths, or 300 acres, is forested. The older woods on the ridges resemble those of Hartshorne Woods Park, with mixed oak and chestnut, including some remnant American chestnut, with an understory of mountain laurel. Tulip poplar forests have grown up on long-abandoned pastures, while eastern red cedar woodlands are found on more recently-abandoned fields. Norway spruce groves planted by the Huber and Timolat families thrive near the Environmental Center and further west on the former Timolat Farm.

The wooded areas of the Park host pileated woodpeckers, great horned owls, and scarlet tanager. Birds hunting over the fields include raptors like bald eagle, American kestrel, red-shouldered hawk, red-tailed hawk, and non-raptors such as black and turkey vultures and swallow-tailed kite. Songbirds that flock to the feeders, gardens, and fields include pine siskin, eastern bluebird, Carolina chickadee, American goldfinch, indigo bunting, and Baltimore oriole.

The five ponds on the former Timolat Farm provide habitat for several water birds, including wood duck, Wilson's snipe, gadwall, ringed-neck ducks, hooded merganser, black ducks, and green and great blue herons. Wood frogs and spring peepers fill the area around the ponds with calls each spring.

The Park System manages the 75 acres of fields as pasture for horses and as old fields enhanced with wildflowers to preserve a pastoral landscape of rolling hills and tree-lined fencerows with intermittent views of the Navesink River. The success of the 8.5 miles of trails that Park ecologists and rangers developed in 1991 for casual walkers, hikers, and equestrians has provided a model for developing trails in Hartshorne Woods and other parks.



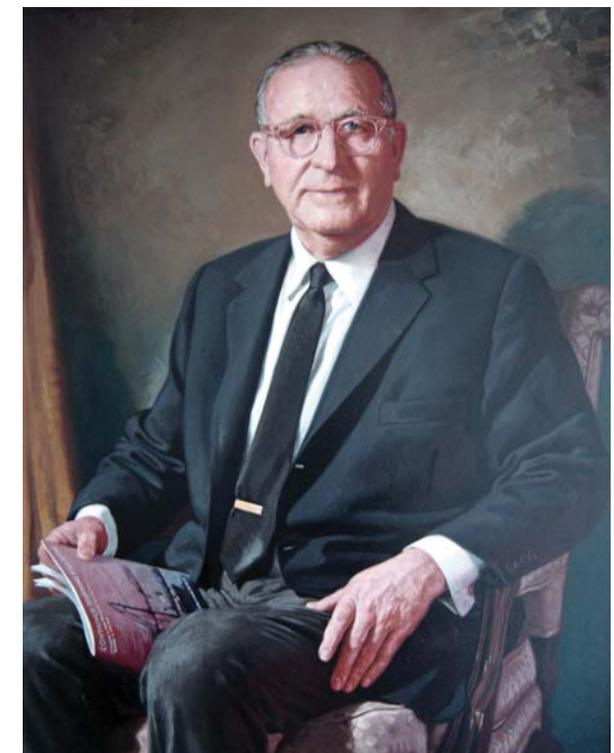
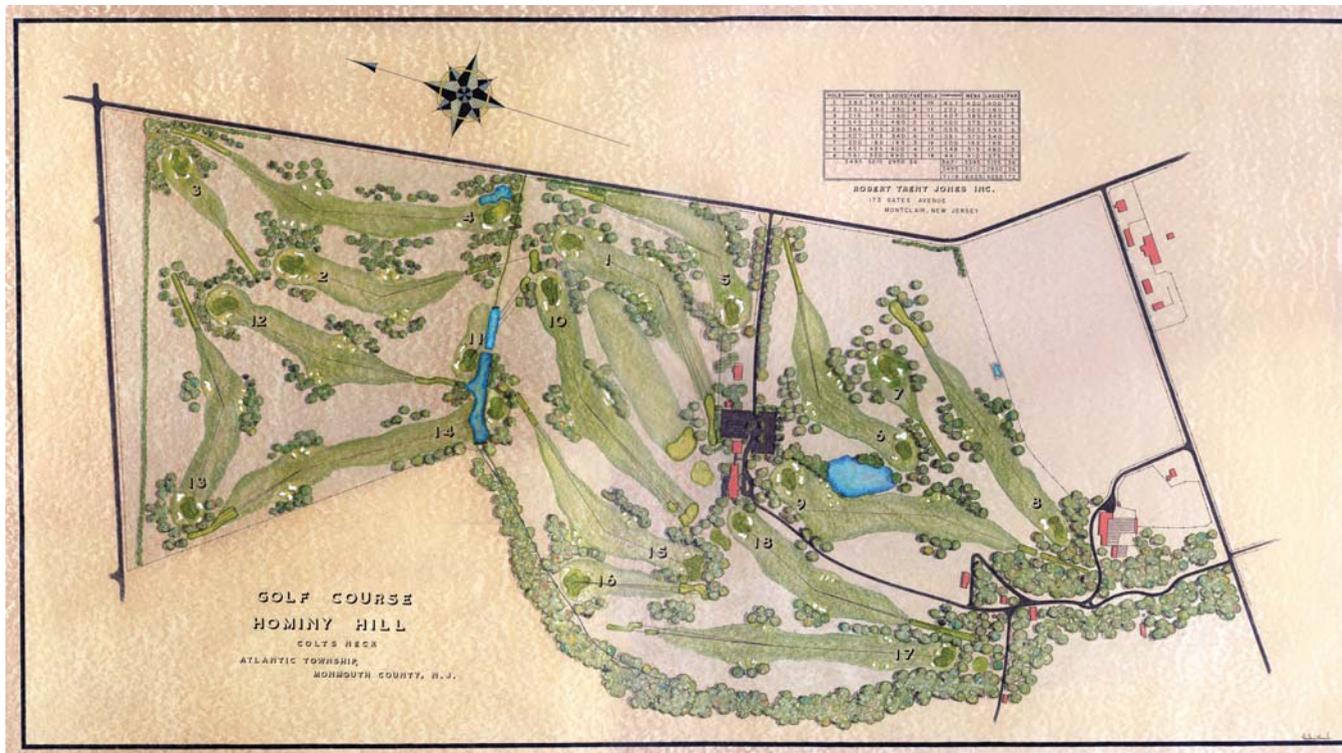
# 14. Hominy Hill Golf Course

1977-183 ACRES; 2009-262 ACRES

WHEN Henry Dickson Mercer, Sr., built Hominy Hill in 1965, it was one of New Jersey's most exclusive private golf courses, and since the Park System acquired it in 1977, it has often been rated as New Jersey's #1 public golf course in national and regional publications.

Henry Mercer was president of the States Marine Corporation, a shipping company, and lived in Rumson. He purchased several farms in Colts Neck in 1941 to raise prize-winning herds of Guernsey cattle. He eventually accumulated 411 acres and named his land Hominy Hill Farm after the Manhomoney Hills, the historic name for a group of small hills in the Colts Neck area.

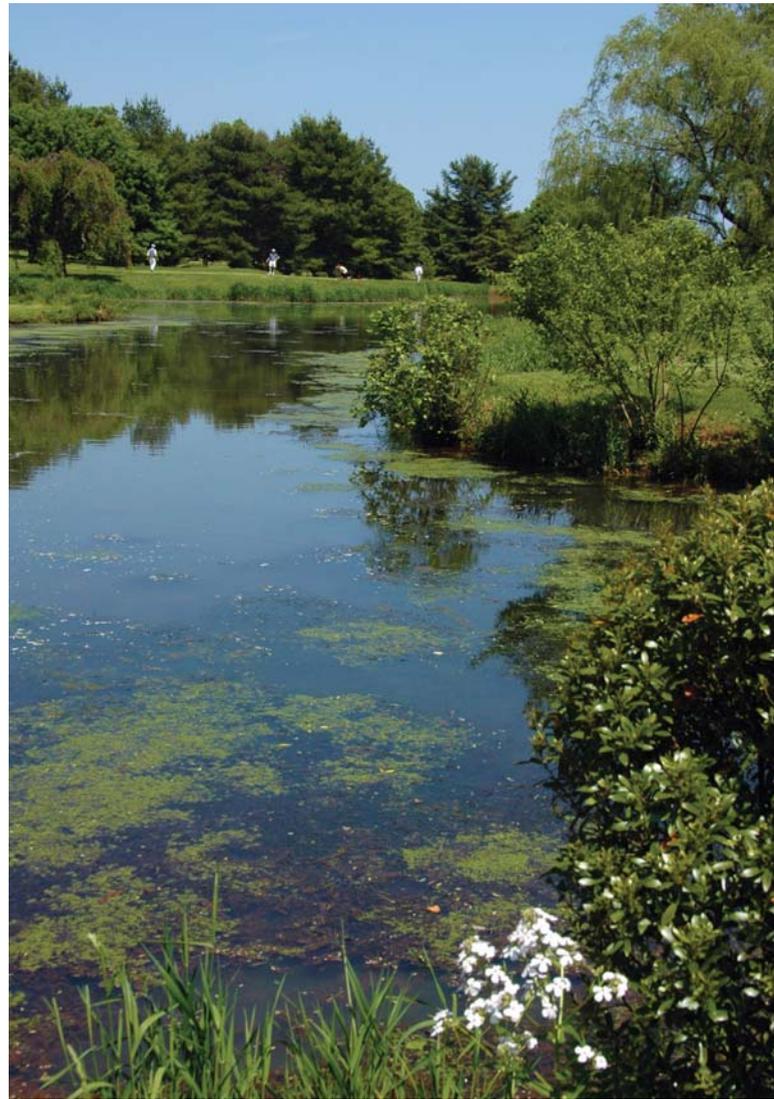
In 1963, Mr. Mercer commissioned the famed golf course architect, Robert Trent Jones, Sr., of Montclair, N.J., to convert 180 acres of the farm into an 18-hole golf course for entertaining his many foreign business contacts when they visited New York. Jones designed or re-designed hundreds of challenging courses during his seven-decade career with the philosophy that golfers had to earn their rewards through high achievement. Mr. Mercer directed Jones to spare no expense in making Hominy Hill a championship-quality golf course. Jones



laid out a long par 72 course measuring 7,120 yards and installed 138 bunkers to challenge golfers, and he incorporated tributaries of the Mine Brook that runs through the rolling landscape as water hazards on several holes.

Mr. Mercer hired architect Derrick Kipp to convert the farm's large dairy barn into a well-appointed clubhouse with locker rooms and an informal restaurant with seating for 60 people on the ground floor. He turned the enormous hayloft into a formal restaurant with seating for 125 people and a large kitchen. In spite of its lavish features and meticulous care, few people actually got the opportunity to play golf at Hominy Hill. Mr. Mercer occasionally opened the course to charity events, but otherwise golfers played there only by invitation. He missed seeing cattle on the remaining portion of the farm, and he started a purebred Charolais beef cattle herd there.

The Mercer family decided to put the course up for sale in 1975 and made a verbal agreement to sell it to the County. The Mercers resisted offers from developers to purchase the course at a higher price during the 18 months it took for the Park System to secure a Green Acres matching grant for the acquisition. While some people were concerned that the Park System would not be able to maintain Hominy Hill at the level of quality that the Mercers had achieved, the popularity of the course since its acquisition has long silenced any skeptics. In 2010, readers of *New Jersey Monthly* magazine named Hominy Hill as their favorite public golf course in the State.



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**HOMINY HILL GOLF  
COURSE**

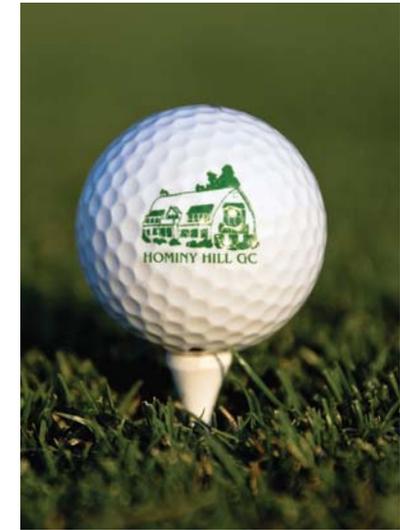
Dave Pease, the Park System's Manager of Golf Courses, started working at Hominy Hill soon after the County acquired it in the spring of 1977, and he recalled in a 2004 interview, "The golfers were extremely excited about playing at Hominy Hill because now they had access to something that was previously closed to them, and they continued being excited." By the end of its first year of operation, Hominy Hill had become the Park System's largest source of revenue, exceeding both Shark River and Howell Park Golf Courses.



HOMINY HILL  
GOLF COURSE

Over the years Park System golf staff have made a number of improvements to the greens and fairways for more active use of the course, and in a national recognition of the quality of Hominy Hill and the Park System's operation of it, the U.S. Golf Association held its 58th U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship on the course in 1983. The USGA held its 19th U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links Championship at Hominy Hill in 1995, and the chairwoman of the event said it was the finest of all the 19 that the organization had sponsored.

Since 1993, the Friends of the Parks have held an annual Friends Golf Tournament at Hominy Hill to support the Park System's Junior Golf Program and other programs. Forty players participated in the 1993 tournament and corporate sponsors and private donors contributed over \$7,000 to the effort. The Friends raised nearly \$18,000 at their 2009 Tournament.

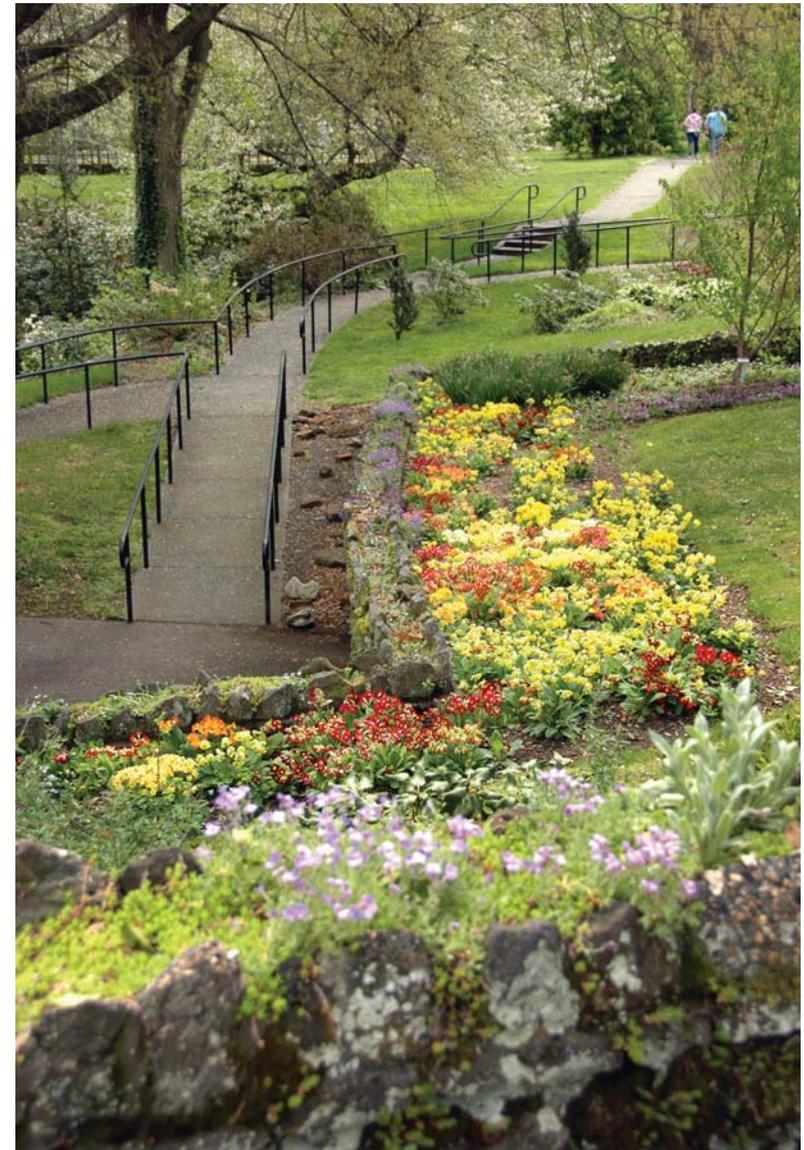


## 15. Deep Cut Gardens | 1977–39 ACRES; 2009–54 ACRES

DEEP CUT GARDENS is Monmouth County's horticultural park dedicated to home gardeners, and it was the sixth County Park to be established by a major land donation and the fifth by a woman. The land has a long history of cultivation dating back to the late 17th century, when settlers established the nearby village of Middletown and cleared surrounding land for crops and pasture. Edward and Teresa R. Dangler bought a 35-acre farm parcel in 1925 and erected a 10-room Colonial Revival mansion on the promontory off Red Hill Road that affords picturesque views of the Highlands. The Danglers landscaped the hillside and planted many fruit trees.

In 1935, Vito Genovese, a New York mobster, purchased the property and moved there with his wife and three children. Genovese expanded the house and refashioned the estate to remind him of Naples, Italy, where he was born. He had previously lived in Atlantic Highlands and he hired the Caruso Construction Company, which was known for building the huge retaining walls there, to do the landscape and building work. Caruso subcontracted with the famous J.T. Lovett Monmouth Nursery of Little Silver to design and plant the gardens. Lovett's landscape architect, Theodore Stoudt (pictured below), who graduated from Penn State, designed the gardens with Italian and English features, including a rockery with terraced pools, a walled parterre with boxwood and roses, and a stone gazebo at the east end.

At Genovese's request, Caruso built a "Mt. Vesuvius" pseudo-volcano that erupted with smoke during parties. Genovese installed a swimming pool, a tennis court, a playground, and a three-hole golf course, and constructed a greenhouse and a garage with gardener's quarters. After he fled to Italy in 1937 to escape a murder charge, a mysterious fire destroyed the house. Dominic Caruso acquired the property in 1948 to satisfy liens from the construction.





In 1953, Karl and Marjorie Sperry Wihtol purchased “Deep Cut Farm,” as the property had become known, and erected a one-story ranch house on the site of the previous house. Mrs. Wihtol was the daughter of Alexander Sperry, co-founder of Sperry and Hutchinson, the trading stamps company. She studied at Columbia University and the Sorbonne in Paris. A well-known book lover, Mrs. Wihtol served for many years as the president of the Middletown Library and she established a scholarship fund there for local students interested in studying library science. She was also an avid horticulturist and she restored the greenhouse at Deep Cut and grew succulents there that she collected from fellow enthusiasts in the United States, Britain, South America, and South Africa.

The Wihtols restored the rockery and gardens, planted ornamental trees, and installed a pool on the west side of the house. When Mrs. Wihtol died in 1977, she bequeathed half the property to the County for park and horticultural purposes, and the Park System used a Green Acres matching grant to purchase the rest. With the help of the Monmouth Conservation Foundation, the Park System in 1990 acquired 13 adjacent acres that had been slated for an eight-lot subdivision.





When the Park System took over Deep Cut Farm, staff members uncovered the formal gardens that had become overgrown and restored the greenhouse and gazebo. They adapted the Wihtol house into a Horticultural Center with two classrooms, a horticultural library, a gift shop for hard-to-find plants and gardening items, a kitchen, and offices. They converted the Wihtol swimming pool into a 'water garden' pond, and planted a number of specimen trees.

The Park System named the new park Deep Cut Gardens and opened it in 1978 with horticulturist Margaret 'Peggy' Crooks, who for many years was the Garden Editor for the *Asbury Park Press*, as Garden Center Director. Staff gardeners planted demonstration plots, propagated special plants in the greenhouse, and presented horticultural programs for home gardeners. Mrs. Crooks started a Friends of the Garden volunteer program which was a forerunner of the Friends of the Parks. Elvin McDonald of New York donated about 1,000 books to the Deep Cut library, which the Park System named the Elvin McDonald Horticultural Library in his honor.



Between 2005 and 2008, the Park System restored the large parterre at Deep Cut, repairing the stone walls and recreating the patterned flower beds of the original garden. In 2009, Park System ecologists and Deep Cut staff launched a plan using the gardens and fields to educate the public about environmentally sound horticultural practices and about New Jersey's native plant communities. They have established several planting areas as demonstration sites for re-establishing native species.

On the east side of the formal gardens, the ecologists planted three groves: an oak grove to illustrate the type of woodland that grows on dry and sandy soils, a maple grove to illustrate woodland on well-drained soils, and an ash grove to illustrate woodland on moderately-drained soils. Between the groves are glades of low grasses and wildflowers. In the successional woodlands around the boundaries that comprise a little more than half the park, the ecologists are controlling or removing invasive species to allow native species to regenerate naturally.



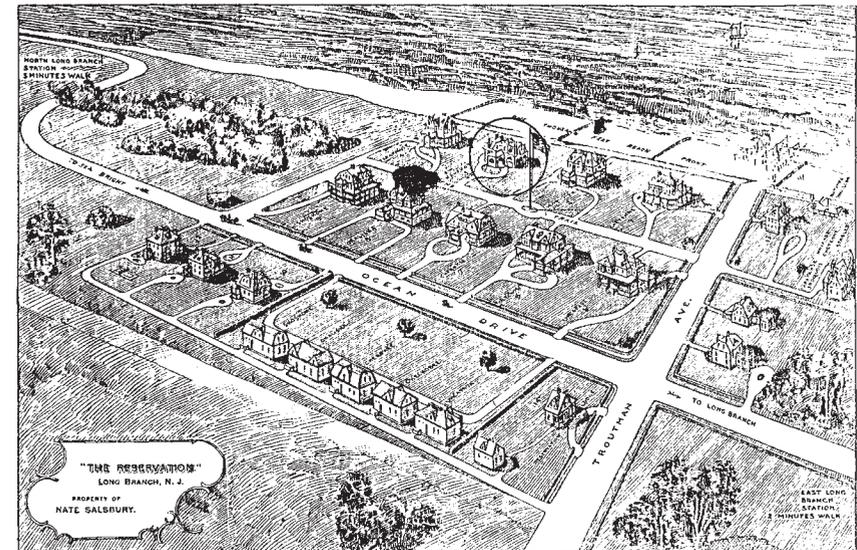
# 16. Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park

1977-33 ACRES; 2009-38 ACRES

THE SITE and name of Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park is linked with Long Branch's history as a fashionable East Coast seashore resort. President Ulysses S. Grant began the presidential tradition in 1869 when he rented a cottage in Long Branch and made it the nation's "summer capital." Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Chester A. Arthur, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley, and Woodrow Wilson all spent part of their vacations in Long Branch during their terms.

Many wealthy businessmen and celebrities visited Long Branch during its heyday, including entertainers like William "Buffalo Bill" Cody and Annie Oakley. A showman named Nate Salsbury became a partner in Cody's enormously popular Wild West Show in 1884, and in the 1890s he built a seaside compound with a thousand feet of oceanfront in Long Branch and called it the "Reservation." Along the "Trail" through the Reservation, he built nine large cottages in the Shingle and Queen Anne Styles and named them for Indian tribes (drawing at right). Cody and his troupe of Indians, sharpshooters, and bareback riders spent time in Long Branch while they performed in New Jersey cities and in New York and Philadelphia, and the cottages became known as the Buffalo Bill Cody houses, even though Buffalo Bill himself never owned one.

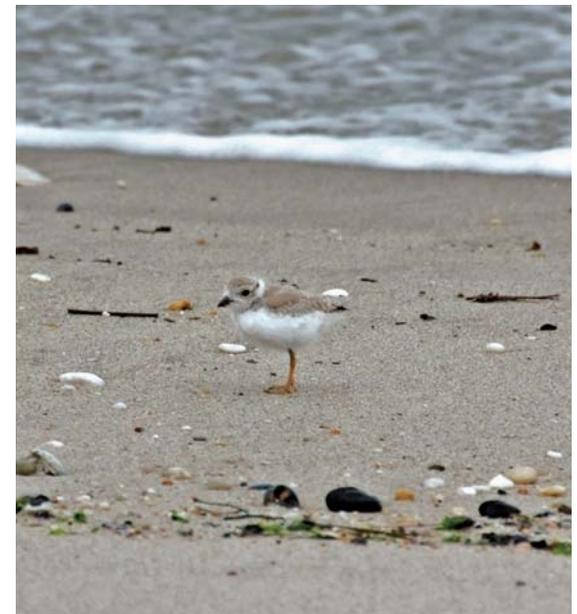
After the area fell into decline, the City of Long Branch started acquiring parts of the former Reservation in 1973 and commissioned plans to create Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park there. By mutual agreement, the Park System assumed responsibility in 1977 for operating the 33-acre park since it attracted regional visitation. Long Branch transferred the Park to the Park System in 1984. Only one of the Reservation's cottages, "Navaho," remained, and the Park System moved it to the north end of the Park and renovated it for park use (pictured above right in 1978, prior to park improvements).



The Park System improved the beach and facilities at Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park in the early 1980s with grants from Green Acres and the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. When annual visitation passed 500,000 in the mid-1990s, the Park System acquired more land for parking and additional recreation facilities. In 2005, the Park System opened a 4½-acre Skateplex on the north end of the Park with a skate-bowl and a street course with quarter pipes, ramps, and funboxes for beginning, intermediate, and advanced skateboarders. The Skateplex also includes an in-line skating rink, a paved trail, and a shelter.

In 2009, a multi-year collaboration between the Park System, Challenged Youth Sports of Middletown, and the Friends of the Parks came to fruition with the opening of Tony's Place, an accessible playground for children of all ages and abilities to play and interact. Tony's Place is named in honor of the late Anthony Musella, a Middletown dentist and former Vice Chairman of the Board of Recreation Commissioners, who had volunteered much time helping children with special needs to enjoy sports activities.

The Park System manages the Park to balance its intensive beach recreation with conservation of its littoral environment. Staff ecologists and rangers restored the eroded dunes in 1983, and have maintained and expanded them over the years. American beachgrass, bayberry, and beach plum shrubs now help secure the ocean side of the dune. The land side hosts a stunted woodland community of red cedar, black cherry, and vines, especially poison ivy. The staff also established 'natural areas' on the seaward side of the dunes, where seashells and other natural debris now provide rare habitat for some threatened and endangered species like the small annual seabeach amaranth and shorebirds such as the least tern and piping plover, which nest in the sand and have successfully fledged chicks each year.

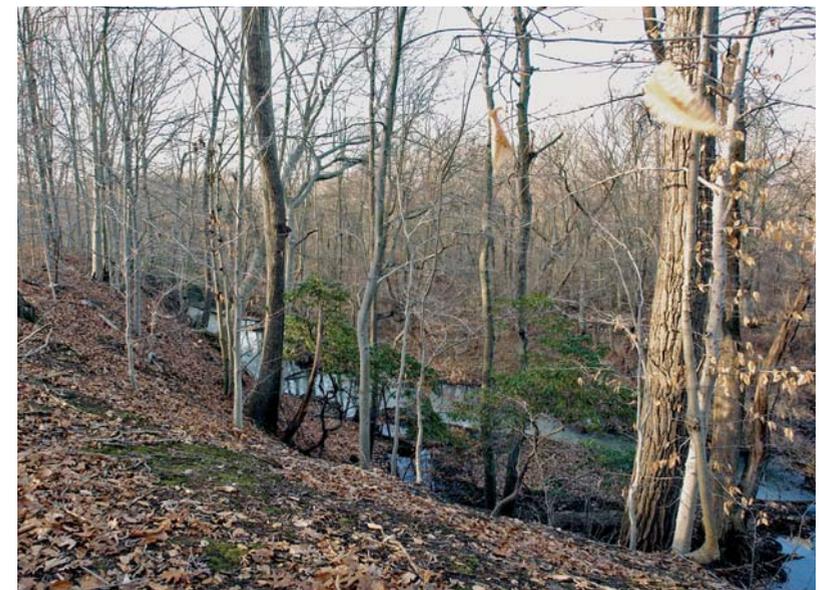


## 17. Clayton Park | 1979–170 ACRES; 2009–434 ACRES

THE CLAYTON FARM in Upper Freehold Township remarkably survived into the late 20th century as one of the County's best-preserved historic rural landscapes. Paul Clayton had farmed the land from the time of his purchase in 1906 until he retired in 1972 at the age of 87. Paul and his daughter Thelma lived in their 1840s farmhouse without plumbing, electricity, or telephone, and they pumped water from a well outside the back door. Paul farmed with horses until his son helped him with a tractor for the last few years (farmhouse above right in 1982; below are Paul Clayton and daughter Thelma, right in photo).

Doctor's Creek runs in a deep ravine through the farm's majestic woods, and lumbermen pestered the Claytons for years to log them. The high ground affords panoramic views of the Upper Freehold farmlands, and developers tried to buy the farm to subdivide it. Instead, the Claytons chose to sell their land to the County to preserve it, and they held on for five years while Park System staff secured financing with help from the N.J. Conservation Foundation and Green Acres. The Park System purchased the farm in 1979 and the Claytons donated a six-acre woodlot in 1982.

In 1990, two years before Paul died at 107, Thelma told a *Newark Star Ledger* reporter (August 18, 1990), "Monmouth County was all agricultural years ago. Then to see so much development—it looks quite sad. There were so many beautiful farms then and now they're all gone... We sold to the county by choice. We didn't want the farm torn up. We had many happy days there as a family. We wanted the happiness to stay so the children of tomorrow could be happy too."



Clayton Park lies on the western end of the cuesta ridge that extends to Hartshorne Woods Park, and it was the Park System's first large land acquisition in the rural western part of the County. From a high elevation of 240 feet, the parkland slopes down to 110 feet at the lowest level of Doctor's Creek, which drains to Crosswicks Creek, a tributary of the Delaware River.

Due to better soil and moisture conditions, the Piedmont environment typically hosts more species than those found on the outer coastal plain. Because the Clayton woods have not been logged for many decades, they contain some of the highest quality hardwood forest in the County. The old growth woods are dominated by American beech, white and red oak, and birch trees and have a diverse and lush understory. Black oak, white and green ash, tulip poplar, and shagbark hickory trees are also plentiful. An 18-acre field released from agriculture in the 1950s shows the successional transition from the pioneer red cedar trees to the tulip poplars and oaks that now dominate them.

A small man-made pond at the intersection of forest and fields provides some interesting edge habitat for many species, including beaver, turtles, and wading birds like egrets, heron, and snow geese. The forest and field juncture also provides habitat for quail, pheasant, and wild turkey. Spice bush and greenbriar shrubs and skunk cabbage thrive in wet areas. Interesting perennials include strawberry bush, beechdrops, rattlesnake plant, roundlobe hepatica, hobblebush, American golden saxifrage, trumpet vine, ladyfern, and cinnamon fern. Six miles of trails through Clayton Park provide access to some of the best forest landscapes and spring wildflower sites in the County.

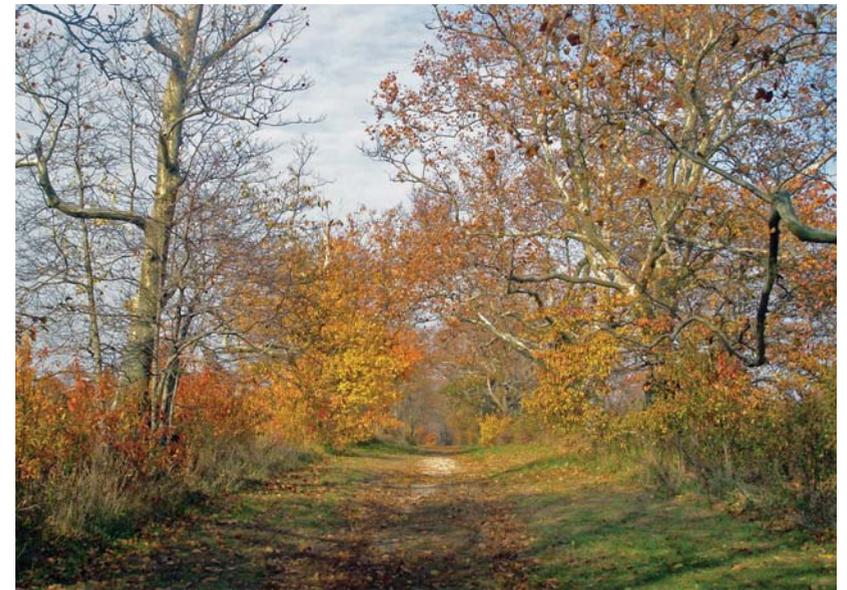


## 18. Weltz Park | 1979–114 ACRES; 2009–165 ACRES

BY THE 1970s, the Weltz Farm in Ocean Township was one of the last remaining large tracts of open space east of Route 35 in southern Monmouth County. Samuel and Louise Weltz purchased their 114-acre farm in 1944, and had held on to it while most of the surrounding area was developed. Four acres along Route 35 were zoned commercial and the remaining land had the potential for 186 house lots. Members of the Ocean Township Environmental Commission urged County officials to preserve the land, noting the abundant wildlife by the farm pond and along Whalepond Brook, which runs to the Atlantic.

The Weltzes also wanted the land preserved and they sold the property below its appraised value to N.J. Conservation Foundation, which held it until the Park System could secure a Green Acres matching grant. The Foundation also helped add 29 acres to the Park in 1979, and the Park System acquired another 22 acres in 1984, which extended the Park into Eatontown. In the 1990s, a coalition of local citizens requested that the Park remain undeveloped for passive recreation.

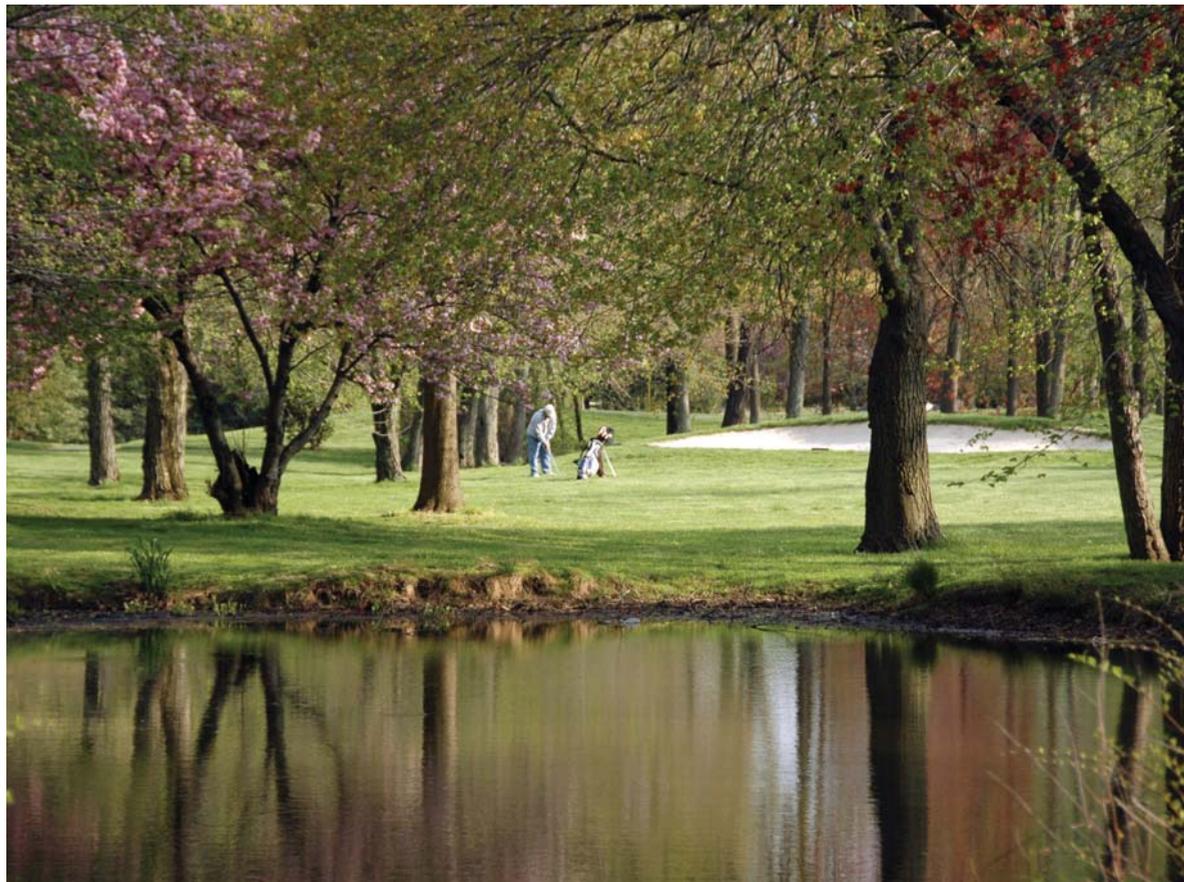
The Park has 44 acres of intermediate upland forest that is typical of the Pine Barrens, with white, black, red, and chestnut oaks and pitch pines, and 52 acres of wetter lowland forests, with red maple, gray birch, sweetgum, and Atlantic white cedar. Although five miles inland, the Park's 57 acres of sandy and dry fields provide habitat for coastal dune species like beach heather and prickly pear shrubs. Juniper and bayberry shrubs also thrive in the sandy fields, along with butterfly milkweed and many native grasses. Twelve acres of scrub and shrub land host bayberry, sumac, alder, and other small trees and shrubs that provide good bird habitats. Rows of highbush blueberries under a young woodland canopy illustrate the adaptation of a blueberry field to the successional forest. Two miles of trails through the woods and fields provide good vantages for watching birds and butterflies.



## 19. Pine Brook Golf Course | 1981-61 ACRES

PINE BROOK Golf Course is the seventh County recreation facility established by a major donation of land. Hovnanian Enterprises of Red Bank built the Covered Bridge adult community of 1,780 homes in Manalapan Township with the Pine Brook Golf Course as one of its primary amenities. Pine Brook is an 18-hole, executive-length golf course with shorter fairways than a standard golf course. Its donation has enabled the Park System to provide playing opportunities for golfers who prefer shorter and faster rounds. Pine Brook was also the Park System's first golf course in the west-central portion of the County.

The noted golf course architect Hal Purdy designed Pine Brook for Hovnanian, which first opened it in 1975. Purdy, who designed nearly 50 golf courses in his career, laid out the par 61, 4,168-yard course in a broad arc along Pine Brook, which drains to the Matchaponix Brook in the Raritan River watershed. Hovnanian's donation included a two-story clubhouse with a manager's office, a maintenance building, and parking.

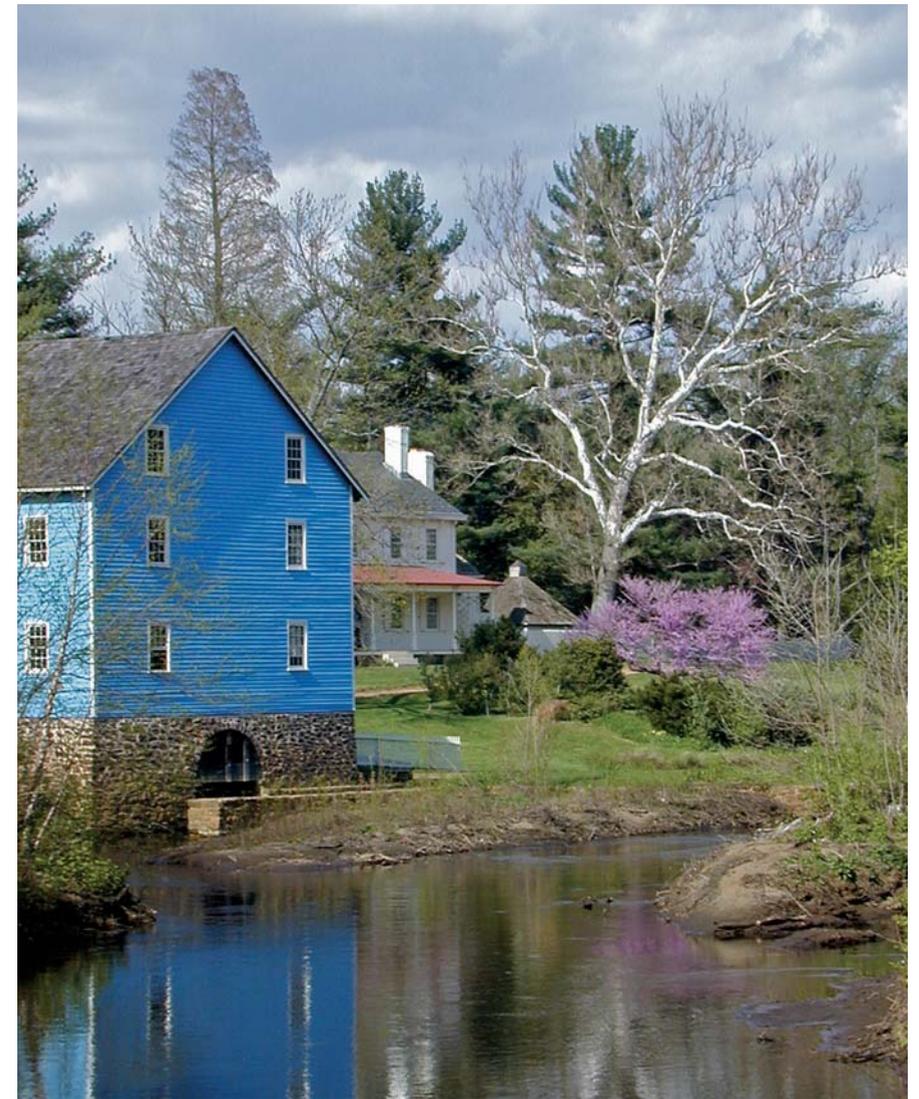


## 20. Historic Walnford | 1985–36 ACRES

WALNFORD is one of New Jersey's premier historic sites and the eighth County park established by a generous gift of land. Edward and Joanne Mullen donated Walnford with 36 acres in 1979, and it is now the centerpiece of the 1,479-acre Crosswicks Creek Greenway.

Walnford remains remarkably intact as a farm and mill complex spanning three centuries, thanks to its isolation and continuous tenure by one family for over 200 years, and many extant documents illuminate its fascinating history. Like many colonial settlements, Walnford originated as a mill site, and it functioned as a small milling village for more than 100 years. In 1734, Samuel Rodgers, a merchant in nearby Allentown, bought 323 acres of land that included the Walnford site and erected a dam, grist mill, two-story brick house, shops, and barns, all of which are now gone. Rodgers sold his "pleasantly situated plantation" with 173 acres in 1750, and it passed through several owners over the next two decades.

Richard Waln, a prominent Philadelphia Quaker merchant, bought the plantation in 1772, beginning more than 200 years of ownership by the Waln/Meirs family. Waln built the Georgian Style house in 1773 and named the plantation Walnford. His journals document colonial trade, as he shipped flour, grains, hams, lumber, and other Walnford products down the Crosswicks Creek and Delaware River to Philadelphia and to distant ports. Waln's son Nicholas inherited the property in 1809 and rebuilt the grist mill after it burned in 1821. When his daughter, Sarah Waln Hendrickson, succeeded him, she updated the house, built an imposing carriage house, and reconstructed the grist mill again after another fire in 1872.



In 1907, the property passed to Richard Waln Meirs, the grandson of Sarah's brother. Meirs and his wife Anne Weightman Meirs used the property as a summer home, and Anne closed the grist mill after her husband died in 1917. Their son William Meirs inherited 41 acres with the house, barns, and mill in 1958 and maintained the property while he lived in Philadelphia (carriage house and mill at right in the 1970s). After a suspicious fire destroyed the two early tenant houses pictured below in 1969, Meirs decided to put the property up for sale. Aware of the site's important history and historic buildings, Park System officials wanted to preserve it as a County park but didn't have the funding to do so.

Ed and Joanne Mullen (bottom right) bought Walnford in 1973 for their large family. When they moved in a year later, it was the first time the house had been lived in full time in nearly 70 years. The Mullens researched Walnford's history, interviewed William Meirs on his family's ownership, collected historic photographs, and nominated the property to the National Register of Historic Places. After enjoying Walnford for seven years, they decided to donate it to the County for long-term preservation. Along with the property, the Mullens donated some Waln and Meirs furnishings and household items that they had acquired when they purchased Walnford.

In a 2004 oral history interview with the Mullens, Ed said, "We enjoyed living here. Walnford opened our eyes to New Jersey history." Joanne added, "It's a good feeling to know that it's being so well taken care of and that so many people are able to come and visit and enjoy it."

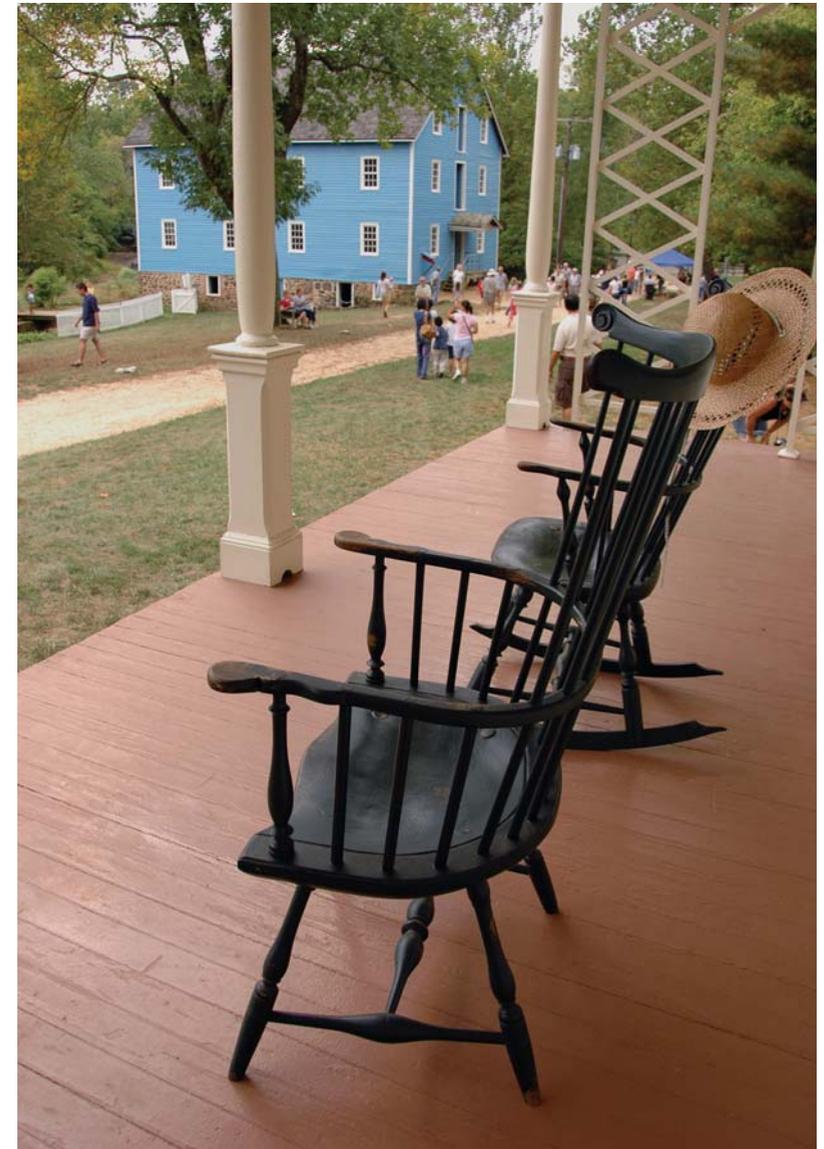




The Waln house is the largest surviving pre-Revolutionary house in Monmouth County. In keeping with their Quaker traditions, Richard and Elizabeth Waln built a substantial but unpretentious house in the Georgian Style using lumber from the sawmill on the property. With a wide center hall, generously proportioned rooms, and tall ceilings, the Waln house epitomized a gracious country house in the Delaware Valley on the eve of the Revolutionary War.

In the 19th century, Waln descendants updated the porch and cornice, added a store wing on the west side, and installed marble fireplaces on the interior. When Waln's great, great grandson, Richard Waln Meirs, and his wife Anne transformed Walnford into a country estate in the early 20th century, they renovated the house in the Colonial Revival Style, installed plumbing, electricity, and central heating for the first time, and added a caretaker's wing. When Ed and Joanne Mullen purchased Walnford in 1973, they stabilized the mill, replaced roofs, modernized mechanical systems, and installed a modern kitchen in the house, but otherwise preserved the property intact.

With funding from the County of Monmouth and grants from the New Jersey Historic Trust, the Park System completed restoration of Walnford's major buildings in 2000, including the house, mill, carriage house, and cow barn. The Park System restored the Waln house to its appearance in 1915, after Richard and Anne Meirs made the last major alterations. The Friends of the Parks generously supported the reproductions of wallpaper and furniture for the house and the fabrication of interpretive exhibits.



Waln's Mill, built in 1873, is the only operating gristmill remaining in Monmouth County, and one of only a handful in the State. In a 1981 report to the Park System, Charles Howell, an English millwright and master miller at Phillipsburg Manor in Tarrytown, N.Y., wrote, "The mill machinery layout is a perfect example of a water-powered country flour and grist-mill of the 1870s. The mill is probably one of the best surviving examples of a complete millstone mill in the eastern United States and possibly in the whole of the country. Restoring this mill to working order will be a wonderful asset to Monmouth County, and indeed, to New Jersey. The educational value to young and old alike will be immense."

The Park System opened the restored grist mill in 1997 and a year later began operating the machinery for the first time since 1917. To

enhance Walnford's historic setting, the Park System obtained permission from Upper Freehold Township to vacate the portion of Walnford Road that runs through the Park along Crosswicks Creek.

The farm and mill complex is perched on a narrow ridge bound by Shoppen Run to the north and Crosswicks Creek and its floodplain to the south and west. While most of Monmouth County drains to the Raritan Bay or the Atlantic, Crosswicks Creek drains into the Delaware River. The plant communities at Walnford reflect the area's rich Piedmont soils and include notable species like Virginia bluebells, which carpet parts of the floodplain in the spring, and the majestic American sycamores, with their distinctive white bark, that grow along the stream banks.

