



State Parks of Michaux State Forest

Pine Grove Furnace State Park: Birthplace of Michaux State Forest

Origin

Pine Grove Furnace was started back in 1764 by George Stevenson, Robert Thornburgh and John Arthur under the name of Pine Grove Iron Works. Built along Mountain Creek, it produced fireplace backs, iron kettles, ten plate stoves and potentially munitions during the American Revolution. Over the next 131 years the iron works changed hands six times. Some of these owners include Fredrick Watts, founder of Penn State University, and Jay Cooke who became the richest man in America after the Civil War.

The financial panics of 1837 and 1873 both caused the temporary shut down of the iron works, but the final closure took place in 1895 when new technology finally rendered small iron producers obsolete. In 1913, the 17,000-acre Pine Grove Ironworks was bought by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and added to the Forest Reserve System. Most of the land became the Michaux State Forest, with a portion becoming the Pine Grove Furnace State Park we know today.



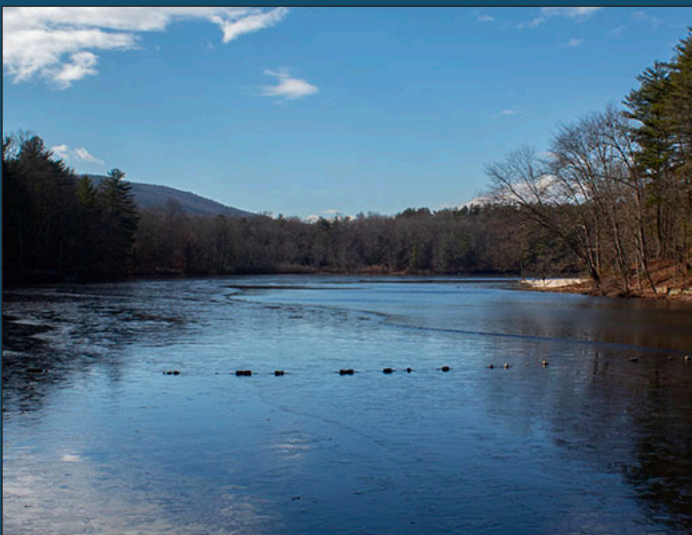
Laurel Lake

Laurel Lake is a 25-acre lake and lakeside beach at the northeast corner of Pine Grove Furnace State Park. It was created in 1830 to supply a water race for the Laurel Forge. As the iron forges became inactive, the lake shifted toward recreational purposes, such as the Camp Rotherock Boy Scout facility in 1922, the Gettysburg Academy in 1929 for weekend camps and Camp Lion in 1933.

There is plenty to do around the lake, from biking and birding to swimming and boating. The mountain backdrop, cool water and hot sandy beaches make for an ideal swimming experience on a hot summer day. Swimming is open from May 1st to September 30th, and there is a snack bar available to sell delicious treats and savory burgers. There are no lifeguards at Laurel Lake, so swim at your own risk.

Boating is also a popular activity on the lake. A variety of boats are available seven days a week during the summer, including canoes, rowboats, electric motorboats and more. Rentals are cash only and a photo ID is required.

Many fishermen take to Laurel Lake to scratch their fishing itch. Common fish at the lake are pickerel, perch and stocked trout. Mountain Creek has brown, brook and rainbow trout. In the winter Laurel Lake supports ice-fishing and ice-skating. Fish aren't the only animals that bring people to the lake. Birdwatchers are drawn in to spot different birds on their migrations. Some of the birds that can be seen migrating through the area include merganser, Canadi-



an geese, mallard, loon, teal and other ducks. Wild turkeys and woodcocks can also be found in open areas of the park.

Cardio doesn't stop at swimming here. There is an entrance for the two-mile Cumberland County Biker-Hiker Trail at the lake, which also has entrances at the Furnace Stack Day Use Area and Fuller Lake. Another trail in the area is the Pole Steeple Trail.

Pole Steeple

The steep .75 mile climb up Piney Mountain starts across the lake from the swimming area. On your way up there are multiple rest points with

log benches to take a break and catch your breath. There is also a fork in the trail on your way up. The choices that await you are "steep" and "moderate." For those open to the challenge, the "steep" path takes you more directly up the up the side of the mountain, but it requires more precise footing. The "moderate" path takes slightly longer, but winds gently up the side of the mountain for a more relaxed experience.

While the climb may be steep, the reward is a stunning view of the entire park from a beautiful white and maroon quartzite rock outcropping. Five hundred feet below lies Laurel Lake and its sandy beaches, while to the west you can see the central ridge of South Mountain.





Hammond Rocks

A three-mile journey from Laurel Lake to the northeast is Hammond Rocks, a boulder outcrop that is perfect for bouldering. The trail to Hammond Rocks starts next to Laurel Lake with the first .75-miles being paved and the remaining 2.25-miles being gravel and dirt. If you aren't feeling the hike but still want to see the rocks, you can drive directly to the rocks and park along Ridge Road.

Upon arrival you will find a large "Tor" or rock castle that is somewhere between 530 million and 600 million years old. For those who are comfortable with bouldering, the two main rock pinnacles can offer beautiful views of Laurel Lake and Pole Steeple from the top. Even if you aren't comfortable bouldering, there are still great views if you wrap around the rocks to the right. The rocks themselves are also a wonder to behold, but unfortunately have some graffiti marks littered among them. Volunteers in 2016 did a massive clean up project, but vandalism has slowly reemerged over the years.



Caledonia State Park: A Path of Freedom Site

Origin

Like Pine Grove, Caledonia started as an Iron Works. Thaddeus Stevens of Caledonia County, Vermont moved to York, PA to teach in 1815. Shortly after he moved to Gettysburg to practice law and dabble in real estate. His first entrance to the iron business was in 1822 with the opening of Maria Furnace in Fairfield, Adams County.

Stevens found better iron ore in Franklin County, so he built the Caledonia Iron Works which went to blast in 1837. During the Civil War furnace foreman William Hammett was a conductor for the Underground Railroad, guiding run-away slaves north to Greenwood. Caledonia State Park is marked as a Path of Freedom site for this effort.

In 1903, the Caledonia Mining and Manufacturing Company sold most of the Caledonia Iron Works lands to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the new Forest Reserve System. Many of the roads and recreational facilities found today within Michaux State Forest and Caledonia State Park were built between 1933 and 1939 by young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps.



Thaddeus Stevens Blacksmith Shop

The blacksmith shop was built along the Chambersburg Pike as part of the Caledonia Iron Works in 1837. During the Battle of Gettysburg, the entirety of the Caledonia Iron Works was burned to the ground, leaving just the stone walls standing. It was rebuilt and operated for twenty years after the iron furnace stopped blasting, finally closing in 1895.

After closing down as a blacksmith shop, the building served many roles. These include a trolley station for the Chambersburg Trolley Company in 1905, a park office, a pool concession stand and a museum. Now the shop opens occasionally over the summer season for live demonstrations of what the blacksmith process looked like back in the 1800s.



Forest Heritage and Discovery Center

The Forest Heritage and Discovery Center is home to tons of information about PA state parks and state forests, such as how they began and how they are maintained. The items on display include artifacts, poster boards, maps and plenty of Smokey the Bear memorabilia! Located across from the Caledonia Park Office, you can visit it on Saturdays and Sundays from 12PM to 5PM between Memorial Day and Labor Day.





Totem Pole Playhouse

Totem Pole Playhouse, “America’s Summer Theater,” began its life in 1950 out of a small, converted auto shop. Karl Genus founded the playhouse with his wife Muriel Benson. Genus would become a founding member of the Directors Guild of America, which he served on for 27 years until his death in 2003.

Under the next Artistic Director, William H. Putch, the playhouse achieved national prominence. He directed 300 productions, with many starring his wife Jean Stapleton from the TV series, *All in the Family*. The Totem Pole came into play in 1969, after the original playhouse burned down earlier that year. It includes many segments, such as flames to represent the burning of the old playhouse, the bear to represent strength and William Putch, the thunderbird protector of all and more.

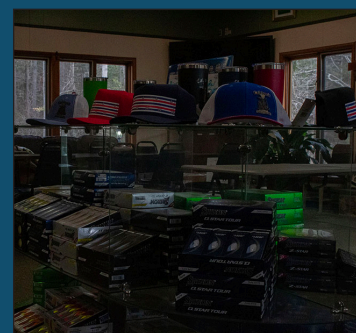
Caledonia Golf Club

The Michaux State Forest offers a scenic location for Caledonia Golf Club’s 18-hole public golf course. Founded in 1923, every direction you look is the beauty of nature. Featuring 5,154 yards of golf, the course boasts a course rating of 67.1 and a slope rating of 118. The prices are affordable with cheaper weekdays than weekends and holidays. Golf carts are available for getting around the course easier than walking, for \$10 to \$27 depending on the day and number of holes you play. Specials for seniors, veterans, first responders and students also help keep this experience affordable. Caledonia Golf Club is open March 1st to October 31st with some wiggle room outside of this range depending on the weather.

After his death in November of 1983, his daughter Pamela Putch and two resident actors, Carl Schurr and Wil Love, took the reins of the 1984 season. Ms. Putch left Totem Pole Playhouse after the 1984 season and currently serves as Senior Vice-President of Production for NBC Universal. Schurr and Love stayed at the helm of the playhouse until 2008, during which they directed over 100 productions and transitioned the playhouse into a non-for-profit corporation.

Another resident actor, Ray Ficca, became artistic director from 2008 to 2013. He now serves as the president of the National Conservatory of the Dramatic Arts in Washington D.C. He continues to perform at the playhouse when his schedule permits. Rowan Joseph became the first artistic director since 1953 to be recruited from outside the resident company of the playhouse. He directed until July of 2020, paving the way for the current director, David Hemsley Caldwell.

The playhouse hosts several plays a summer, starting in late May and running until late August. Scattered throughout are also Tucked Away Tuesdays, which are smaller scale performances that only run one day of the year. Over the Christmas time the playhouse itself is closed, but the actors join the Historic Majestic Theatre in Gettysburg, PA for a Christmas play. This year is *A Christmas Carol*, adapted by Wil Love and Carl Schurr.



Mont Alto State Park: Pennsylvania's Oldest State Park

Origins

The Mont Alto Furnace was opened in 1807 by the Hughes family. Rich in resources, the area was ideal for an ironworks. It started by producing pig iron, but later expanded to make bar iron and nails.

With the addition of the Mont Alto railroad in 1872, the transportation of products improved and provided passengers access to the area from far away points such as Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and Winchester, Virginia. The site became a popular destination overtime, bringing people out to



visit long after the ironworks ceased operation.

In 1902, Dr. Joseph T. Rothrock, on behalf of the State Forestry Commission, purchased Mont Alto Furnace lands as part of the new state Forest Reserve System. Pennsylvania's State Forestry Commission later became today's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. This makes Mont Alto Pennsylvania's oldest state park!

Mont Alto Now

Now Mont Alto State Park is a cozy spot for a day trip with your family. There is a small playground for the kids, picnic tables and grills for eating and even a pavilion for larger family gatherings. Across the tiny creek behind the pavilion there is the Bricker's Clearing Trail. The trail serves as a short hike to do with family or to walk your dog. It wraps around and lets you out behind the STEM Camp on Penn State Mont Alto campus. From there you can walk down and behind the campus soccer field to head back to the trailhead. It is open from sunrise to sunset like all Pennsylvania state parks.

