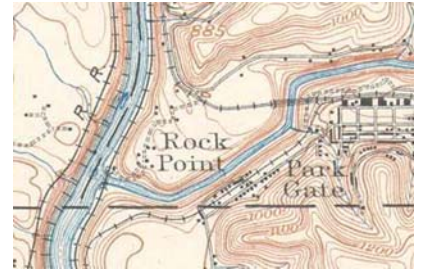


## HISTORY TIMELINE OF THE ROCK POINT AREA

- **1833** - Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Canal was completed and began operations on the Beaver River from Rochester to New Castle. The locks at Rock Point were operated by Philip Seltzer and son, John, who also operated a ferry from Rock Point from the opposite side of the river.
- **1836** - Matheny Inn (Tavern) built by Moses Matheny for use as hotel and tavern to serve travelers on the canal. Noteworthy visitors to the Inn include Charles Dickens, Thomas Moore, James Fenimore Cooper, and James A. Garfield (US President, as a lad).
- **1850** - President Zachary Taylor, on his way to New Castle, PA, stepped off his horsedrawn canal boat at the docks of Rock Point and had his dinner with Mrs. Moses Matheny at the old Matheny Tavern.
- **1872** - Canal operations ceased. Competition from railroads and the collapse of an aqueduct over Elk Creek in Erie County led to the canal's abandonment. The Matheny Inn closed due to lack of business.
- **1874** - Railroad operations begin along the east bank of the Beaver River with a narrow gauge line. As a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Corporation, the Pittsburgh, Youngstown & Ashtabula Railroad operated the portion of the line that served the Rock Point area. The cut stones used to build the bridge over the Connoquenessing Creek came from the old Beaver Division Canal Lock #8 (Rock Point).
- **1881** - Thompson Warnock loved the natural beauty of the area, so he bought the Tavern from Matheny for use as a hotel, store, and picnic grounds.
- **1882** - Dr. Ferdinand Venn of Pittsburgh bought the Tavern and grounds for use as a hotel and health resort.
- **1886** - The New Brighton and New Castle Railroad company, arm of the Pennsylvania Railroad, bought the tavern and the grounds, and made many improvements. The tavern was converted to a train station, depot, and telegraph office. The property was renamed "Felician Park", and it became one of the finest Victorian amusement parks in Western Pennsylvania.
- **1886 through 1889** - The railroad continued to buy more property, and by 1887 the Felician consisted of 145 acres with walking paths, 13 natural springs, many amusement rides, concession stands, and lovely buildings. The area was beautifully landscaped with many trails through the trees and wildflowers, all highlighted with huge natural stone formations.
- **1889** - The iron foot-bridge across the Connoquenessing was completed to provide access from the Park Gate train station.
- **1889** - Sylvester Park of New Castle is contracted to build a roller coaster of 300 feet in length at the park. The organization was known as the Rock Point Roller Coaster Company. The completion date is unknown, but the attraction probably opened the following year.



- **1890** - The P&LE Railroad completed their shortline service to Ellwood City. Known as the Beaver & Ellwood Railroad, the line provided passenger service to the Park Gate station, as well as freight service to Ellwood City industries.
- **1890** - The Pennsylvania Railroad records the park's highest attendance with 82,259 visitors. This date coincides with the 25th anniversary of the end of the Civil War.
- **1893** - Park closed for the season due to the Chicago World's Fair.
- **1897** - A new hotel, the Rock Point Inn, is constructed at the park, along with the Merry-go-round and Flying Horses ride. Additionally, a bowling alley, two dance halls, a dining hall, and a photo gallery were added.

- **1898 through 1902** - Attendance continues to decline due to increased competition by parks such as Idora (Youngstown), Cascade Park (New Castle) and several parks in the Pittsburgh area like West View and Kennywood parks. The Railroad allows the park to deteriorate and considers closing.



- **1903 & 1904** - Park Closed - it is thought that during this time, the railroad was upgrading the narrow gauge track to standard gauge. For this undertaking, the original train bridge had to be replaced with a wider structure to accommodate the wider track. The bridge piers also had to be widened using newly cut stones, which were added to the existing stones which had been recycled from the old canal lock.
- **1905** - The Rock Point Amusement Company acquired the lease to operate the park. They invested in many upgrades and renamed it "New Rock Point". The park featured the Peristyle, the Shoot-the-Chutes ride, and the miniature train ride.

- **1910** - A minor fire occurred - thought to be arson.
- **1911** - The end of the season for this year marked the last time the park was in operation.
- **1912** - On June 25th, President of the Rock Point Amusement Company, James G. Sansom, closed the park due to lack of patronage, spelling the end of Rock Point Park.



- **1913** - A major fire occurred, believed to have been caused by sparks from a passing steam locomotive.
- **1915** - On April 15, a very windy day, a fire caused by sparks from a passing steam locomotive, destroyed most of the buildings, including the Peristyle and the Roller Coaster. Other structures lost in the fire included the photo gallery, dance halls, theater, water tank, octagon pavilion on the look-out point, the dining hall, the Inn, and lemonade stand.
- **1916** - The Park property was sold (buyer unknown at this time)
- **1922** - The property was leased to the King's Quarry Company who removed practically all remaining Park buildings.

- **1936** - The old Matheny Inn collapses into ruin after standing for 100 years.
- **1940** - The Nastas family of Ellwood City purchased the property and strictly enforced their policy of prohibiting the public from the grounds.
- **2006** - A significant part of the property that included the former Rock Point Amusement Park was purchased by the Wild Waterways Conservancy, and opened for public use. The property is now referred to as the Rock Point Nature Area.
- **2007** - (December 7) RockPointPark.com is launched.

*Please note: this history timeline was composed with information obtained from a variety of sources, and we cannot guarantee its accuracy. If you are able to offer any updates/corrections/additions, please let us know. Contact [bruce@rockpointpark.com](mailto:bruce@rockpointpark.com)*

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