

Rock Point Park Memories of a bygone amusement park in Ellwood City, PA ~ 1885-1911



Some stories beg... no, *demand* to be told... and this one is compelling.

Rock Point Park, a wonderful Victorian-era amusement park once located near Ellwood City, PA (about 45 miles north of Pittsburgh), has a very unusual history. With beginnings in the "Trolley Park" era of the late 1800s (the exact date is difficult to pinpoint because of its evolution, but it is widely accepted as 1885), the park quickly became one of the favorite destinations for recreation in Western Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, it did not survive the competition with parks like Kennywood & Westview (Pittsburgh area), Cascade (New Castle), Junction Stretch (Rochester, PA), Idora (Youngstown, OH), and Idlewild (Ligonier, PA). After the 1911 season, the railroad decided to discontinue providing excursion service to the park due to a decrease in ridership. This decision brought an end to the park's profitability, and it was announced in the Spring of 1912 that the park would cease operations.

The unusual twist to this story is that after the park closed, the subsequent owners (to the best of my understanding, although the owners dispute this) prohibited the public from the property. It has been said that they cared deeply for the park, and kept it "off limits" in an attempt to preserve any remaining structures. They hoped that it could be revived and rebuilt at some point. But unfortunately, after the park was severely damaged by several fires, hope for revival was abandoned. From that point, the property had been closed to the public (again, disputed) until 2006, when it was purchased by the Wild Waterways Conservancy, and named "Rock Point Nature Area". Thanks to that effort, we now have the opportunity to explore the remains of the park for the first time in nearly a century.

In addition to the historical aspect, Rock Point Nature Area is a superb natural wilderness region with many acres of deep woods. The forest has reclaimed all but some small remains of the park, making the region one of the most picturesque natural hiking areas around. Many of the original trails are still accessible, and allow for easy walking. But many areas of the park are rugged and only suitable for more experienced hikers.

Not familiar with the region? To view a map of Rock Point Nature Area and the surrounding area, please [click here](#). If you plan on visiting, please review the [property use guidelines](#) beforehand. Thank you!

My Story

As a young man from Baden, working a temporary job in Ellwood City during the summer of 1970, I heard some amazing stories about the old amusement park that once stood on the land where the Connoquenessing Creek



joined the Beaver River. The descriptions given to me by older residents of the region seemed more like imaginations... nearly unbelievable accounts of long-gone roller coasters and merry-go-rounds in a rustic woodland park "just over on that hill". They swore it was the truth, but unfortunately the land which held the old Rock Point Park was now under private ownership, and the owner did not permit the public onto the property. What I had hoped to see with my own eyes would not be possible, so I could



only dream about what was there.

It's been nearly 40 years since I first learned of that mysterious wonderland across the Connoquenessing Creek gorge from my workplace. The land has been inaccessible all that time, until recently, when it was opened to the public. When I first heard that the Pennsylvania Wild Waterways Conservancy had purchased the land that once held the Rock Point Amusement Park, my heart raced with anticipation.

As I began exploring the historic site in the Fall of 2007, my excitement for the area grew. I needed to know more. Where were all the rides and buildings situated? What happened here? Why was there nothing left except a few

scattered ruins? I needed to know. I needed answers.



Driven - I began my research. And I quickly realized that, if you looked hard enough, there was a great deal of detailed information available about the park. But the problem was, it was widely scattered... residing mainly in the local museums, libraries, *and especially* in the homes, hearts, and minds of a large number of local experts who share the passion for this remarkable place. My quest became one of

consolidating all of this wonderful information into one place. I chose the Internet as the depository of this amazing collection of photos and documents that tell the story of the Park that once was...



On behalf of my friends who have helped me immensely with this project, the contributors who have donated information for this website, and myself... I thank you for visiting, and hope to learn that you too, have become a friend of Rock Point Park.

Planning a visit to the Rock Point Park property?

If you are planning to visit the Rock Point Nature Area property, please keep in mind that this is now a natural wilderness area, and certain guidelines exist for its preservation. The nice folks at the [Wild Waterways Conservancy](#) (owners of the property), and the members of the Rock Point Boat Club (tenants and volunteer caretakers of the property), respectfully ask that you adhere to the following:



1. You are welcome to visit the property, but please realize that there is very limited parking, and you should not park in a manner that could cause damage to the vegetation, or natural (or historic) features.
2. The removal of anything (natural or man made) from the property is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, historic remains or artifacts, and natural rock material (including fossils & minerals).
3. The harming or removing of any plant or animal life is strictly prohibited. This includes hunting, or trapping, or the cutting of plants or trees. Fishing is permitted (with valid Penna. Fish & Boat Commission License).
4. Camping and/or building of fires is not permitted. The property is available for day use only.
5. The use metal detectors, or any kind of digging tools or equipment, is not permitted.
6. Leave nothing behind. Do not litter or leave any trace of your visit. Please keep the property clean and pristine so that others may enjoy it as much as you have.

7. Off road vehicle use is not permitted. All vehicles are required to stay on the permanent roadway. The use of bicycles, motorized dirt-bikes, and ATV's is strictly prohibited in areas other than the permanent roadway.
8. The use of the property is "at you own risk". Please remember that this is a very rugged natural area with many hazards and pitfalls. Hiking in the areas off the main road can be very dangerous, and should be attempted by capable hikers only.

Remember, the main access gate is only open at certain times of the year. It is open daily during daylight hours during late Spring, Summer, and early Fall, but is only open weekend daylight hours in late Fall and early Spring. It is closed during the Winter months. On days the gate is closed, it is permissible to park outside the gate and walk in. Please remember to park in a manner that will allow other vehicles to pass (in case of an emergency).



The property has no drinking water, toilets, communications, or emergency assistance facilities. It is recommended that you come well prepared to handle your needs during your visit.

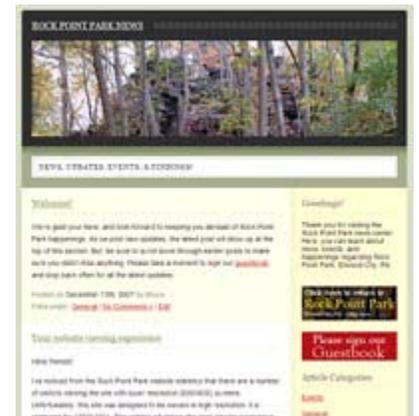
Enjoy your time on the property, but please leave it as fresh and alive as it was before your visit.

Rock Point Park interactive virtual newsletter

Be sure to stop by the Rock Point Park news page for the latest updates, news, events, and discussion.

While you're there, we hope you will take a moment to sign our [guestbook](#). It would be wonderful to know who you are, and what brought you here. Thanks!

Click here to visit [Rock Point Park News](#).



About this website

The purpose of this website is to offer a comprehensive look into Rock Point Park in Ellwood City, Pa... it's origins, it's history, and it's current state. It is an open repository of information we have collected about the park. Visitors can read about the history of the park, and view present-day photographs, old postcards, park memorabilia, documents, maps, etc.



Who are we? We are responsible and respectful citizens, just like you. We are not affiliated with any government agencies, public or private organizations, or commercial businesses. We are not professional historians, archaeologists, or published authors. We are private individuals who are passionate about local history, willing to put forth the effort to explore and research this remarkable

story, and make our findings available to the public. We work closely with the [Wild Waterways Conservancy](#) and the [Ellwood City Historical Society](#), as well as many prominent local historians to present, as clearly as possible, the amazing story of Rock Point Park. We have no interest in profiting from this effort. This

website is the result of our love of history, and the information presented is intended for the education and enjoyment of our readers.

There is still a great deal of research to be completed, and we will continue adding items of interest to the website as they become available. It is likely that this project will never really be finished. We earnestly reach out to you, seeking your help. If you have any information or items about Rock Point Park, we would love to talk to you about including them in the website. Please send us an [email](#), and we will respond as quickly as possible.



A note on the images used on this website: It is our belief that the old photos and postcards used on this website are, based on their origin, age, and historical importance, in the public domain. It is not our desire to infringe upon anyone's copyright, if still in existence. If anyone can legally claim a copyright on any of the images posted here, please inform us and the image will be promptly removed. All recent photos are either the product of the editor, or have been donated specifically to this website with expressed permission to display them. All recent photos are copyright rockpointpark.com 2008, except for those donated. If you have an interest in a particular photograph, please contact us to learn about its availability. Some photos will require permission from 3rd party sources. Thank you!

Visit RockPointPark.com