

Montgomery Parks 250th Booklet

Instructions

1. Print this booklet.
2. Plan your route.
3. Bring the booklet and a pencil or crayon with you.
4. Once at the park, look for wooden posts with the black “**MDTwoFifty**” logo near parking lots, trailheads, or parks signage.
5. Use a pencil or crayon to transfer the raised image on the top of the post into your booklet.

Collect all eight and share your experience on social media!

#MoCoParks250

Follow us on Facebook at *Needwood Mansion, Montgomery Parks* and visit our website:

montgomeryparks.org/caring-for-our-parks/culture-heritage/



In 2026 and beyond, Montgomery Parks observes the 250th commemoration of Montgomery County, the State of Maryland, and the United States of America with the **Montgomery Parks 250th Booklet**. Created by Montgomery Parks’ Cultural Resources Stewardship staff, this downloadable booklet encourages the public to explore the diverse history of eight parks within our vast park system. Educational signage and outdoor recreation, such as trails, playgrounds, and water activities, make visiting these parks interesting for the whole family.

History by the River

Blockhouse Point Conservation Park

14750 River Road, Darnestown

Visitors to this park can hike more than seven miles of natural surface trails through a landscape rich in the natural and cultural history of the Potomac Valley.



The Potomac River holds deep significance to the Piscataway and Indigenous groups who traveled through this region. Its name comes from “Patawomeck,” a word from the Algonquin language group. To the Piscataway, waterways are sacred, connecting them with all living things—past, present, and future.

Proximity to the river brought Union troops here and throughout the nearby Muddy Branch stream valley during the Civil War (1861-1865). They camped here, building three blockhouses facing the river and kept watch for raiding Confederate troops from within their fortified walls. In 1864, while Union forces were in Washington helping defend the city, Confederate troops burned the blockhouses and camps. Archaeological excavations uncovered the camp remains, including troop’s personal belongings.



The Darne Family Cemetery

Darnestown Heritage Park

14015 Darnestown Road, Darnestown



In the mid-1700s, Scottish and Irish frontierspeople began settling the area that eventually became Darnestown. Many

became farmers, and others, like tavern owner Ninean Beall, operated businesses. Large landowners, like Beall’s son-in-law William Darne, relied on enslaved laborers to work the fields. Some members of the Darne family were buried at the cemetery at this site. No markers remain, and research has yielded few answers as to who exactly is buried here. Recorded accounts suggest that 20 to 50 individuals found their final resting spot here.

Archaeological investigations confirmed the location of the cemetery, which is now marked by a set of large rocks in the grassy area of this small park. Several benches offer a shady place to rest and reflect. A fully-accessible paved path winds past interpretive signs offering a wealth of information about Darnestown history, including its role in the Civil War.



A Tavern on The Great Road

Dowden's Ordinary Special Park

23169 Stringtown Road, Clarksburg

In his petition for a tavern license in 1750, Michael Dowden wrote that because his house was situated between Rockville and Frederick, he regularly received visitors requesting food and lodging. The term “ordinary” originally applied to a tavern meal regularly offered at a fixed price, but later referred to the tavern itself—hence Dowden's Ordinary.

A prominent feature of this park, the tavern ghost structure illustrates the building style of the original Dowden's Ordinary. A separate kitchen was located nearby. Archaeologists found many artifacts here that relate to taven operations—glass bottles, tobacco pipes, cooking pans, mugs, and jugs, and lots of oyster shells that were typical of tavern meals.

This park also features a walking path, benches, and a playground with elements inspired by the site's history. A favorite is a climbable elephant in homage to the first elephant ever seen in North America when she was toured along the East Coast from 1796 to 1818.



Civic Spirit and Federal Aid

Kensington Cabin Park

10000 Kensington Parkway, Kensington

Kensington Cabin exists thanks to early 20th-century suburban civic engagement and New Deal-era federal construction. In 1924 the Woman's Club of Kensington began an effort to create a park on town-owned lots. Local officials reached an agreement with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) on May 17, 1930.

During the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched several public relief programs, including the Civil Works Administration (CWA) which supported park development. The Kensington project began on March 23, 1934, but halted a week later as Roosevelt prepared to discontinue the CWA due to political pressure. Relief workers walked away, but left supplies. M-NCPPC finished the cabin at a cost of \$506.50. It opened to the public on October 13, 1934. Today the cabin is called the Mayor Jayne H. Plank Kensington Cabin in honor of the first female Mayor of Kensington.



When Schools Were Segregated

Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Park

4101 Muncaster Mill Road, Norbeck



From the late 1920s until 1951, African American children attended elementary school in this building. Known as the Norbeck Rosenwald School, it replaced the Mt. Pleasant Colored School. A fixture of the surrounding Black community, the original school was built in 1872 and used until 1925. It was one of the first county-funded schools for African American children.

Norbeck was one of at least fifteen segregated Rosenwald schools built in Montgomery County between 1920 and 1929. African American residents contributed funds to match those donated by Sears co-owner and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932). While often an improvement from previous school buildings for Black students, Rosenwald schools were substandard compared to county schools for white students. Norbeck had no indoor plumbing or heat and students had to rely on second-hand books. Norbeck closed in 1951, three years before the 1954 Supreme Court ruling *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned school segregation.



Newlin's Mill

Oakley Cabin Trail

3610 Brookville Road, Brookeville



In 1810, David Newlin ran an oil mill along Reddy Branch. The mill ground flax seed into linseed oil, which was used in paint, wood varnish, lighting, and as a machinery lubricant. A covenant prevented Newlin from grinding grain and competing with Richard Thomas' mill on the east side of Brookeville.

Succeeding his father, Artemus Newlin offered apprenticeships to orphans. In 1845 Joseph Clements, a free African American teenager became legally bound to work at the mill for seven years. He and his younger sister Caroline lived with the Newlin family when the census was taken in 1850. The mill remained in the Newlin family until 1874. Operations ended in 1912, and by 1923 the building was removed.

Walk the trail from Oakley Cabin to the archaeological site of the mill. The trail follows and is partially within the head race, the ditch that directed flowing water to power the mill. Nearby, the stone foundation of the mill worker's dwelling can be seen.



An Agricultural Legacy

Royce Hanson Conservation Park at Broad Run
21820 Club Hollow Rd, Poolesville



This park's scenic vistas are a reminder that agriculture has deep roots in Montgomery County. Until the early 20th century, more than 90% of the county's population made their living "from the soil." Farming provided families, like the Joseph White household who owned this property for almost 100 years, with subsistence and purpose. Prior to 1864, many farms, including this one, profited from the forced labor of enslaved individuals.

Eventually, suburban development reduced farmed acres and raised environmental concerns. In 1980, Planning Board Chair Royce Hanson helped establish the Agricultural Reserve to ensure a third of the county is protected and zoned to encourage farming.

The property is also significant because Union troops camped here during the Civil War. Parks staff are conducting archaeological fieldwork and historical research to learn more about the encampment. Visitors can explore five miles of scenic trails that wind through meadows, farm buildings, forests, and agricultural fields.



Creeks and Commerce

Seneca Landing Special Park
16501 River Road, Poolesville



The landscape around Seneca Creek has long featured in the county's history. In fact, in 1780 the state of Maryland

confiscated more than 1,000 acres of land near Seneca owned by British supporter Daniel Dulaney. The sale of those lands helped fund the American Revolution. The creek was also the site for several mills. A grist mill began grinding grain in 1725 and close to one hundred years later stored and shipped goods down the nearby C&O Canal. In 2019, archaeologists working for Montgomery Parks discovered another 18th-century mill next to Seneca Store.

Check out the interpretive signage at this park to learn about the area through time, including its commercial history, its time as a resort location, and its role in the Civil War. You can also experience this historic landscape by water. There's a boat ramp for motorized boats and a fully accessible kayak/canoe launch.

