



# The Respite

The official newspaper  
of Rock Creek Park  
Winter/Spring 2009

## Georgetown's New Waterfront Park

What was once a bleak asphalt parking lot is being transformed into an urban oasis. After years of planning, design and fundraising, the first phase of the new Georgetown Waterfront Park between Wisconsin Avenue and 34<sup>th</sup> Street, is complete. Today, visitors to the new park can stroll a promenade with overlooks of the Potomac River, Washington monuments and lush Virginia shoreline. They can learn about the history of human settlement along the Potomac River from granite slabs etched with historic images. Bikers have a continuous trail linking the Capital Crescent and Rock Creek Trails. Other sites of interest are an ornate labyrinth and a "bioengineered" slope designed to prevent bank erosion.



Visitors enjoy the labyrinth and bike trails at the new Georgetown Waterfront Park

Construction of Phase Two of the park began in the fall of 2008 and is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2010. The "Wisconsin Avenue Plaza" will be the park's centerpiece with a beautiful interactive fountain, stairs to the river, flowering plants, and a continuation of the bike path and promenade.

An October 4th, 2008 ribbon cutting ceremony opened Phase One of the park to the public. At that time, management of the new public space was entrusted to Rock Creek Park. In attendance were many of Washington, DC's civic leaders, including Mayor Adrian Fenty, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, National Park Service Director Mary Bomar and Rock Creek Park Superintendent Adrienne A. Coleman. Others who were instrumental in the park's creation looked on with pride. Through their efforts, 225 miles of parkland, from Mt. Vernon, Virginia to Cumberland, Maryland, had been connected in the new park.

The waterfront park's completion will be the culmination of 40 years of planning and cooperation between the Georgetown Waterfront Park Campaign, the National Park Service and National Park Foundation, the Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission, and many others. Through their vision and dedication, visitors can enjoy a relaxing, new public space along the spectacular Potomac River shoreline.



Dignitaries gather for the October 4, 2008 ribbon cutting ceremony opening Phase One of the Georgetown Waterfront Park.

### Welcome from the Superintendent

In the midst of the thriving metropolis of Washington, DC lies the green oasis of Rock Creek Park. For over one hundred and eighteen years, visitors to this grand city, along with native Washingtonians have used the park as a place of contemplation, relaxation and recreation. Rock Creek Park encompasses over three square miles and contains a treasure trove of natural, cultural, and recreational resources and opportunities. Whether one comes to explore a trail, commune with nature, walk in the footprints of our forefathers, or to simply picnic, Rock Creek Park is waiting for you.

The mission of Rock Creek Park, like all national parks, is to ensure the protection and preservation of these incredible natural and cultural resources for public enjoyment. Through the efforts of many, Rock Creek Park is a shining example of how nature can co-exist in an urban environment. As Superintendent, I am honored to be one of the many that work on your behalf to ensure that these resources are preserved for the enjoyment of the public of today and for future generations. You too can help protect these pristine areas by taking only pictures and leaving only footprints.

On behalf of Rock Creek Park, I welcome you to explore the resources that Washington, DC's largest forest has to offer. Enjoy the respite of Rock Creek Park.

Sincerely,

Adrienne A. Coleman  
Superintendent

### Where am I?

Can you find me in Rock Creek Park? Answer on page 3



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Fascinating facts about a winter stargazer's favorite constellation.

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Learn some of the stories found in the many monuments of Rock Creek Park.

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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

### Rock Creek Park

Rock Creek Park was founded in 1890 as one of the first federal parks. When established, it bordered the edge of the growing city and was a favorite area for rural retreats. In the establishing legislation, Rock Creek Park would “provide for the preservation from injury or spoilation of all timber, animals, or curiosities within said park, and their retention in their natural condition, as nearly as possible.”

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[www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr)

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

# Monuments of Rock Creek Park

What do Joan of Arc and General George McClellan have in common? One might think nothing. After all, Joan of Arc led the French Army to numerous victories during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Hundred Years’ War. She was eventually captured by the English and burned at the stake for heresy at age 19. George McClellan, on the other hand, was a Union general who led the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War. Under his leadership and direction, the Capital City’s Civil War Defenses were constructed, making it the most heavily fortified city in the world. So, what is the common link between these two individuals? Both are memorialized with equestrian statues in areas managed by Rock Creek Park. Joan of Arc sits prominently within Meridian Hill Park and General McClellan is located at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and California Streets, NW. This fall, watch for renovations to begin on the McClellan Memorial.

These are just a few of the statues that fall under the protection of Rock Creek Park. Sixteenth Street, NW, provides a nice walking tour of a few monuments, including the Art Deco memorial for Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of the radio and winner of the 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics. Marconi established the world’s first radio factory in 1898 in England instead of in his native Italy because officials there were not interested in his experiments with



The McClellan Memorial

radio waves. His statue recently underwent restoration in which it was regilded in brilliant gold color.

In addition to the monument to Joan of Arc, historic Meridian Hill Park offers an opportunity to see a statue of Dante Alighieri, the Italian author of the book The Divine Comedy. There you will also find the memorial to our 15<sup>th</sup> President, James Buchanan (1857-1861).

The statues of Rock Creek Park honor a broad range of people, from private citizens to presidents. Yet each individual has made a valuable contribution to the world we live in today. What contributions are you making? Who knows? Maybe one day your statue will be among them.

For more information about Rock Creek Park’s memorials, visit [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr).

# Squirreling Away Winter

While you’re warm in your home on a cold winter day, a glance outside might prompt the question, “How are the animals doing in this weather?” The eastern gray squirrel, for one, is doing just fine.

Comfort in winter comes from the squirrel’s remarkable adaptations. The squirrel cannot simply turn up the thermostat like we do, or go someplace warm the way birds can. As the days grow cooler, squirrels ramp up their activity level, collecting and burying tree nuts that will keep them fed throughout the winter. Later, their excellent sense of smell helps locate those precious food stores, even under snow.

The squirrel’s fabulous tail is also essential to the animal’s winter survival. It serves as a blanket, keeping the squirrel warm inside the nest, high in the trees above.

Rock Creek Park provides critical food and shelter for squirrels and other animals in the bitter months of winter. You can observe them along the park’s trails or learn more about them in the Nature Center.



An eastern gray squirrel feeds on a high-energy acorn.

## Your Corner of the Sky

One doesn’t have to be an astronomer to enjoy the most prominent constellation of the winter night sky. Even for the untrained eye Orion, the hunter, is easily recognized in the skies above DC. Look in the southern sky for three stars in a straight line. These make up his belt. He stands with one arm uplifted, holding a club. The bright star at his shoulder is Betelgeuse; a huge, old, red star. Just like humans, stars are born, live and die. The other arm is covered by a lion’s skin and faces Taurus, the bull, whose head is a group of stars in the shape of a “V.”

Looking below the belt, one sees three stars that form Orion’s sword. Near its tip is a fuzzy tuft of light. This is the Great Nebula of Orion, a nursery for new stars. So, grab a coat and head outside on the next clear night. Orion is up, and glimmering with fascinating mysteries of our universe.

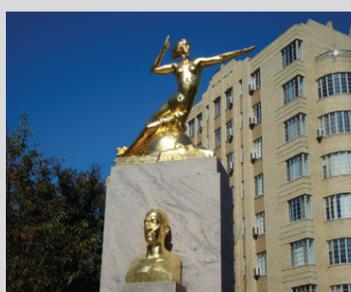
## Rock Creek Park Rocks For Kids!

### Monumental Match-Up!

Rock Creek Park has many monuments and memorials at different sites. Use the article “Monuments of Rock Creek Park,” to learn their locations, then draw a line to match the picture to their corresponding street name.



a. Joan of Arc Statue



b. Guglielmo Marconi Statue

Meridian Hill Park

16th Street NW

Georgetown

Massachusetts Ave

Connecticut Avenue



c. General George McClellan Memorial Statue



d. Dante Statue

Answer: a. Meridian Hill Park, b. 16th Street, NW, c. Connecticut Ave, d. Meridian Hill Park

# The Valley Trail - A Great Winter Hike

It may be cold outside, but this great hike will get the blood flowing and might just give you a new appreciation for winter. Starting at the northernmost tip of Rock Creek Park, the Valley Trail offers the visitor a wonderful panorama of the creek and also highlights the steep valley terrain of the park. Boots are recommended, especially on the portion of the trail just south of Military Road. On this trail (blazed blue) one is introduced to the scenic bridges along Rock Creek, Pulpit Rock, the Jules Jusserand Memorial, and more. For trail details pick up your free map at the Nature

Center, Peirce Mill, or the Old Stone House, or download it from the park website at [www.nps.gov/rocr/planyourvisit/maps.htm](http://www.nps.gov/rocr/planyourvisit/maps.htm).



Pulpit Rock - a favorite park destination along the Valley Trail.

## Hats off to Partners and Volunteers

Each issue of The Respite will spotlight one of Rock Creek Park's valued partners. In this issue we feature a key partner in encouraging stewardship of public lands. Since 1992, Rock Creek Park has participated in the Alice Ferguson Foundation's (AFF) annual Potomac Watershed cleanup. The park also works with AFF in the high school science education program, "Bridging the Watershed." This program allows students to conduct scientific studies of Rock Creek and discover its connection to the Potomac watershed.

In addition to partners Rock Creek Park has enjoyed the support of invaluable volunteers. In 2008 more than 3000 volunteers contributed

nearly 16,000 hours in a wide range of projects. Activities included removal of exotic species, trail maintenance, skate and bike patrol, and more. To join the volunteer team, contact **Dan Winings, Volunteer Coordinator**, at 202-895-6224 or visit the park's website at [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr).



Volunteer Aziza Tichavakunda pulls exotic Japanese stiltgrass behind the Nature Center.

## Visitor Information

**There are NO entrance fees to Rock Creek Park.**

### Nature Center & Planetarium

The Nature Center is open Wednesday to Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Planetarium is open only during show times: Wednesday at 4:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

### Peirce Mill

Peirce Mill is currently closed due to renovations and repairs. Peirce Barn, next to the Mill, serves as a visitor contact station and bookstore. The Peirce Barn is closed for the winter, except for scheduled programs. Please check upcoming program schedules for these dates and times. The barn will reopen in spring.

### Old Stone House

The Old Stone House is located at 3051 M Street in Georgetown and is open to the public Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5:00 p.m. The Eastern National bookstore located in the front of the house is open daily, noon to 5:00 p.m.

### Park Regulations

Fires permitted only in grills or fireplaces; visitors may bring grills and use them in designated picnic areas only. Parking is allowed only in designated parking areas. Dogs must be on leash in all park areas.

### The following are prohibited in all areas of Rock Creek Park:

- Camping
- Viewing of wildlife with artificial light
- Swimming, wading, and bathing
- Removing or damaging natural or cultural resources
- Alcoholic beverages
- Washing vehicles

## Contact Information & Phone Numbers

Facility	Address	Phone
Nature Center	5200 Glover Road, NW	202-895-6070
Peirce Barn	Beach Drive and Tilden Street	202-282-0927
Old Stone House	3051 M Street, NW	202-426-6851
Carter Barron Amphitheatre	16th Street and Colorado Ave.	202-426-0486
Thompson Boat Center	2900 Virginia Ave, NW	202-333-9543 202-333-4861
Rock Creek Horse Center	5100 Glover Road, NW	202-362-0117
Tennis Center	3149 16th Street, NW	202-722-5949
U.S. Park Police	1800 Beach Drive	202-619-7300

## Ranger Led Programs

### Young Planetarium

4:00 p.m. Wednesdays  
Nature Center Planetarium  
An introduction to the night sky.  
Ages 4 and up.

### Winter Night Sky

1:00 p.m. Saturdays & Sundays  
Nature Center Planetarium  
View the brightest stars, planets, and constellations and learn their stories.  
Ages 5 and older.

### Exploring the Universe

4:00 p.m. Saturdays & Sundays  
Nature Center Planetarium  
Topics include the sun, moon, stars, planets, and other space phenomena.  
Ages 7 and older.

### Night Sky to Freedom

4:00 p.m. Saturdays & Sundays  
February  
Nature Center Planetarium  
Learn how enslaved people used the night sky to reach freedom. Ages 7 and older.

### Women in the Stars

4:00 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays  
March  
Nature Center Planetarium  
Ages 7 and older.

### Creature Feature

4:00 p.m. Fridays  
Nature Center  
Assist a park ranger in feeding the Nature Center's live animals. All ages.

### Peirce Mill Updates

Contact Nature Center for times.  
Peirce Barn  
Discover what's happening at Rock Creek's last remaining mill. All ages.

### Black Georgetown Walks

Contact Nature Center for times.  
Old Stone House  
Explore stories of sacrifice and success on this ranger led tour of historic Herring Hill. Ages 8 and older.

### Nature Walks

Locations and times vary.  
Experience the diversity of Rock Creek Park on these ranger led hikes. Distances and ability levels vary.  
Ages 7 and older.

### Children's Programs

4:00 p.m. Thursdays  
Nature Center  
Join a park ranger for interactive lessons on Rock Creek Park. Program topics vary. Ages 3 and up.

### Historical Hikes

Locations and times vary.  
Learn the cultural story of Rock Creek Park. Distances, ability levels and age limits vary.

Contact the Nature Center at 202-895-6070 or visit the Rock Creek Park website at [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr) for a complete list of activities.



Answer to "Where Am I?" from page 1. The statue is of Joan of Arc, found in Meridian Hill. Read about this amazing woman in "Monuments of Rock Creek", pg 2.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Rock Creek Park  
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# Rock Creek Park Updates

- **Visitors to the Nature Center and Planetarium will soon be treated to a new star show.** The current projector is being replaced with a state-of-the-art digital projector. The new “Spitz SciDome” will offer superior digital graphics and other special effects that enhance learning and appreciation of the night sky. During replacement, in early 2009, the planetarium will be closed. Please contact the Nature Center for details on the grand reopening.
- **Rock Creek Park bid a reluctant, but fond farewell to retiring Supervisory Park Ranger Dwight Madison in July of 2008.** Mr. Madison’s career in the National Park Service spanned 33 years. For the past 11 of those years he oversaw Rock Creek Park’s interpretive operations. Highlighting his final year with the National Park Service, Mr. Madison was awarded the National Capital Region’s prestigious Freeman Tilden Award for his children’s book Why Are There No Bears in Rock Creek Park? This beautifully illustrated book offers important insights about respecting wildlife and can be purchased at any park visitor contact center.
- **A hand-carved Tlingit canoe, titled “Raven Spirit,”** was presented to the Smithsonian Institution in a ceremony at Rock Creek Park’s Thompson Boat House on June 19, 2008. Today “Raven Spirit” can be viewed at the Smithsonian’s Natural History Museum, in their newly opened Sant Ocean Hall. The canoe is a gift from the Tlingit Nation of Southeast Alaska.
- **Over 80 children, ages 7-12, explored Rock Creek Park during the summer 2008 Junior Ranger Camps.** The children participated in turtle tracking, creek explorations, Native American skills and more. This year’s Junior Ranger Program included Rock Creek Park’s first Spanish Language Junior Ranger Camp. Announcements for the 2009 camps begin in May and can be found in the program announcements, or on the park website: [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr) under “For Kids.”



William and Victoria Quiroga practice Native American skills while volunteer Julia Murray looks on during Rock Creek Park’s first Spanish Language Junior Ranger Camp.