

Spanning the Gap

History along McDade Trail I Hialeah Picnic Area to Turn Farm/Owens Trailheads (Revised September 2012)



U.S. Dept. of the Interior
National Park Service

Spanning the Gap
The newsletter of
Delaware Water Gap National
Recreation Area
Vol. 24 No. 3 Fall 2002

McDade Trail from Hialeah Picnic Area to Turn Farm Trailhead

The first segment of the park's **McDade Recreational Trail** opened on June 1, 2002 -- two miles of gravel path for hiking and biking extending from the north end of Smithfield Beach to Riverview trailhead on River Road. By the fall, the installation of pedestrian/cyclist bridges extended this section southward to Hialeah Picnic Area and northward to the Turn Farm parking area on River Road-for a total of 5.2 miles each way.

For **everyone's safety**, please observe the **Rules of the Road** for McDade Trail, posted at trailheads, before you hike or bike.

- *Hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing only are permitted. **NO** motor vehicles are permitted.*
- *Pets are restricted, especially in summertime.*

For emergencies call
(800) 543-4295.

This is a fitting location for this major recreational facility to start. Farms and settlements existed here long before the recreation area was established, and their fate is part of the park's story. The federal project that created the park, the proposed Tocks Island Dam, would have been located on this section of the river. Below are thumbnail sketches of settlements along this section of McDade Trail "before the dam."



BURNED: Kautz farmhouse
around 1900.



(Left) **BURNED:** Kautz Farmhouse in 1967. After the family moved out, the home suffered arson and was eventually demolished.

(Right) **DEMOLISHED:** A view of the many outbuildings in 1967.

River Road and Hialeah Picnic Area (mile 0)

River Road, running along the Pennsylvania side from Shawnee-on-Delaware to Bushkill, was once a rural thoroughfare lined with farms and farmhouses. The road linked inhabitants to a ferry which crossed from the river bank near Bushkill to the Jersey side near Walpack Bend. Subsequent removal of buildings for the proposed Tocks Island Dam project (See map) has eliminated much of this settled character of River Road.

In the 1950s a farm at Hialeah was developed into a community of residences. Newcomb House just south of Hialeah's exit, dates from 1740, with a later brick addition.



SURVIVED: Newcomb House would have been removed to make way for the dam's abutments.



(Left) **DEMOLISHED:** Robacher House in 1968, which stood on River Road just to the north of Kautz Farm.

(Right) **DEMOLISHED:** The summer kitchen to the Robacher House



(Left) **DEMOLISHED:** The Stone School House around 1900. Built around 1888 at what is now the exit from Hialeah Picnic Area, the school was one of four similar schoolhouses built in Smithfield Township.

(Right) The school district sold the building in 1927 for \$800 and it lived out its life as a private residence.



DE-AUTHORIZED: An artist's view of the proposed Tocks Island Dam, looking south (downstream.) The area that is now Smithfield Beach PA is on the right; the New Jersey bank is on the left.

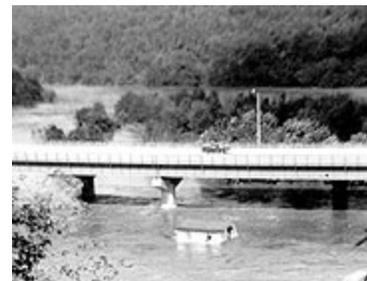


DE-AUTHORIZED: The Tocks island Dam project, looking upstream from about the location of today's Hialeah Picnic Area.

Smithfield Beach and the Tocks Island Dam *(mile 2)*

Just downstream from Smithfield Beach is Tocks Island. Though flood control had been studied and discussed in this area for years, after a lethal and devastating flood in 1955, the Army Corps of Engineers planned an earthen dam at Tocks Island. Its purpose was not only to control flooding, but to provide recreation on a 12,400-acre reservoir, and supply electricity and drinking water to metropolitan areas such as Philadelphia and New York City.

The project immediately had opponents-local residents, environmentalists, even geologists. In 1992, the Tocks Island Dam Project was officially de-authorized.



(Above) Two ways to cruise the Gap: In the flood on 1955, a house drifts downstream past the (then fairly new) Interstate-80 bridge at the Water Gap. *(Park photo collection)*

(Below, left) **RELOCATED:** An apparently contented resident of Theune dairy farm in 1967, with the Delaware River

A long and often bitter battle was over. What was saved was the free flow of one of the largest rivers in the eastern United States. What was lost were most of the area's historic structures on both sides of the river, demolished to make way for the dam, or the subsequent victims of the vandalism and neglect of a turbulent time.

behind the trees in the distance. The operation moved to Cherry Valley near Delaware Water Gap PA.

Farmlands (miles 1-4)



Agricultural leasing programs, which keep nearly 3,000 acres of the park in cultivation, help preserve rural landscapes along the trail.

Theune farmhouse once stood on the east side of River Road near Zion Church. Ironically, the dairy's prosperity and the resultant modernization of this comfortable home and its farm buildings caused them to be judged of "little historic value".



(Above) **BURNED:** Theune farmhouse, River Road, in 1967.



RETAINED: (Left) Looking north from McDade Trail toward the north end of Mosier's Knob PA.



RETAINED: (Left) Looking south from McDade Trail. The south end of Mosier's Knob PA is on the right.

Zion Church (mile 3)



(Left) ADAPTIVELY RE-USED: The interior of Zion Church in 1967. *Delaware Valley Conservation Association*, a group of citizens who banded together to fight the Tocks Island Dam, formed here in 1965.

Not all buildings along River Road were lost to the removal actions of the Army Corps of Engineers, however. From a ridge above the river, Zions Evangelical Lutheran Church still surveys the valley from which its congregation has been scattered. The 1851 brick building, visible from the trail when the leaves are down, is a survivor of squatter occupation, eviction, and desperate interior damage. It was preserved through the pressures of families who once worshipped there and is now the offices for the recreation area. The cemetery is still used by local families, some of whom lived along River Road.

Riverview Trailhead (mile 4)

The river is tempting but it is also treacherous!

Please don't swim here.

Please swim at Smithfield Beach --it has lifeguards!



ADAPTIVELY RE-USED: Zion Church, looking east in 1967. At the far left is the stucco Michaels House (now gone) on the east side of River Road.



Zion Church, looking east today.



Zion Church, seen from River Road today.

Turn Farm Spur (mile 4.8)

Bear left 4/10 mile up to Turn Farm Trailhead.

Turn Farm (mile 5.2)

John Turn's land-which changed from a subsistence farm to a resort-dependent dairy farm, then to church

(Below, left) BURNED: The unusual Turn Farm Weave House was lost to arson.

(Below, right) DEMOLISHED: The chimney of the Weave House was still standing in this photo from 1995. It has since been demolished.

summer camp, and finally a federally-owned recreation area-encapsulates the history of this part of the valley. An outdoor (*wayside*) exhibit tells the story of Turn Farm at the trailhead.



(*Below*) **NEWLY-BUILT:** McDade Trail at Turn Farm Trailhead today.



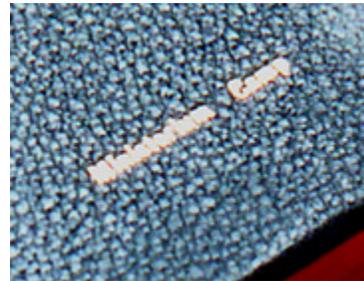
Ministerium Camp, the John Turn tract's final incarnation before federal ownership, was just one of the many church and scout camps for adults and for children that once lined both banks of the river, many within sound of each other's bugled *Taps* each night.



(*Below, left*) Ministerium Camp in 1967.

(*Below, right*) A former camper's snapshot of Ministerium Camp in 1972.

(*Below*) A bible imprinted with Ministerium Camp's name.



McDade Trail north at Turn Farm Spur (mile 4.8)

Bear right to continue on McDade Trail northbound.

About .8 mile north of the turnoff to the spur to Turn Farm Trailhead, McDade Trail reaches an unpaved road which is now called **Freeman Tract Road**. This is the original roadbed of River Road when River Road led to the ferry landing on the Pennsylvania side of Walpack Bend.

This road is still owned by the township; it provides an extended stretch of lightly-trafficked road for walking and mountain biking. Be aware that though vehicles may move slowly, drivers are obliged to swerve to avoid potholes. Hikers can alternately use a rough footpath running along the north side of the road to get to the next trailhead .2 mile farther at Owens (mile 5.8). Owens Springhouse is (*right* is just .1 mile farther than Owens Trailhead along Freeman Tract Road.

This guide continues with

History along McDade Trail II: Hogback to Hornbeck.



SURVIVED: Owens Springhouse is a reminder that Freeman Tract Road was once lined with farms, cottages, and summer camps.