



FWCCSP RECORD

November 2023

Invasive Battle Continues!



Every Thursday and Sunday volunteers gather at Judge Morris Estate to continue the work of removing invasive plants such as Autumn Olive, and replace them with native plants. In the above picture the green foliage behind the team will be removed and put into the piles you see on the left, leaving room for native plants to return. Join the fun and make a difference at www.whiteclayfriends.org/volunteer

How Friends are Helping the Park

YOUR membership and YOUR donations have allowed the Friends to support the Park in many ways. Here are some recent examples of where our funding makes a difference

- Field trips for schools and students that cannot afford them.
- Park Staff training programs
- “thank-you” picnic lunches for the Healing Waters veteran fishing program
- Batteries for Park security cameras
- Native plantings at Judge Morris, Nature Center

- Outfitting new patrol bikes and officer equipment to help oversee nearly 40 miles of trails (the largest in Delaware!) in our 3,800 acre Park



- Installation of benches that meet ADA guidelines. Four of these benches were recently placed on the Tri Valley Trail, connecting to other ADA accessible locations - including the primitive campsite by Nine Foot Rd and the Fishing Pond by Smith Mill Rd ...both locations assisted through Grants secured by Friends.

Here we see one of the Park’s happiest visitors ready to launch his glider- a special needs Mount Pleasant group was one of several that enjoyed field trips at the park supported by Friends contributions. The Silent Knights Soaring Society graciously hosted them after hearing how obsessed they were with the Tuskegee Airman. Their trail walk was something the teacher stated they talked about the rest of the school year, and they’re already booked for the nature center again this year.



History of the Nivin Property

As taken from National Park Services' National Register of Historic Places Nomination

White Clay Creek State Park's bucolic scenery includes a number of historic farm sites that read like a history timeline. Along the historic Nine Foot Road sits a piece of New Castle County agricultural history that reflects changes in farming from the 1830's to the 1890's as well as the later chapter of philanthropy that preserved this open space.

When William Penn opened up 30,000 acres in the area to settlers in 1680, the clearing of the woodlands for agriculture began. From 1730-1770, intensive settlement took place in the area, followed by a milling boom between 1770 and 1830 thanks to the creek. Agricultural prosperity peaked, supplemented by wealth of goods sold to these saw, grist, and merchant mills.

Between the 1830's and 90's significant intensive agricultural land cultivation occurred in New Castle County. As farms shrunk during this time period with inheritance splits and sales, these relatively smaller farmsteads of 100-200 acres or less had to be more efficient. They evolved to produce dairy and a variety of other agricultural goods. Farmers in New Castle County formed groups like the Agricultural Society of New Castle County, to share farming techniques such as crop rotation and fertilizers, increase productivity through technology, and new building designs such as the bank barn. Through more efficient farming, they were very profitable on smaller footprints of land. In Newark, it was all about butter- the area reportedly had the honor of the highest butter yield per cow in Delaware. Searching 'butter' in the 1880's Newark newspapers reveals scads of articles debating the latest butter drama- whether it was the shocking arrival of oleomargarine ("it's all carbon", declared one author) or which cows were best (Holsteins, they proclaimed).

The Niven Farm's roots – or at least the structures remaining- start in the 1850's with some buildings constructed in the 1930's duPont ownership period. Structures were either placed in a linear or courtyard fashion, Niven being an example of the latter. The stone and frame farmhouse's earliest portion is from the 1850's, with two additions built in the early 20th century. The manmade pond is a 1930's construction and is encircled by the courtyard style layout of outbuildings. Ironically, the pond was built to attract waterfowl for the duPont hunting preserve- not for the farm. It serves as storm water retention while being fed from an underground spring at some point in time.



House basement with old timbers

The bank barn is likely a 1930's era barn but built in a style typical of earlier barns. This 30 feet x 87 feet structure has openings in lower level for livestock, and a frame board and batten sided hayloft. The ice or spring house (circa 1840) is situated between the house and pond. Cold spring water flowing through the trenches was key to keeping milk pails and butter forms cool all year long. The rows of nails inside the roof framing are a testament to the many buckets that most likely hung there. A meat house once existed, its 9x10 rubble foundation still in place. The structure came down sometime between the writing of the national register nomination and today; it describes many exposed butt joined drafter and very heavy ceiling joists with large flat-head (mid 1800's) nails for hanging meats. A second set of ruins is reportedly a 16 x 40 foot two-room dwelling from an earlier period farm. An 1849 Rea and Price map shows this structure, and tax assessments verify its existence. Other buildings include a 24 feet x 28 feet corn crib (1930's), a 1930's two-bay garage, and another unknown stone foundation of 19 feet x 25 feet. A granary (24 feet x 19 feet) stands between the barn and the pond.



Who lived at Niven besides the Nivens? After William Penn cut the settlers loose on the area, some seventeenth-century owners like John Ogle and Peter Yocumb maintained their property from afar in New Castle and Philadelphia. John Chambers was probably the first resident farmer in the area to own land, purchasing the “Hop Yard”, a 430-acre tract of land. He subdivided into smaller parcels, one of which was a 200-acre parcel he sold to James Boggs in 1727 that would eventually become the Niven property. Further divisions of land occurred, and in 1837 Thomas Passmon sold 161 acres of this land to Henry Young for \$3,500. Josiah Hustis next purchased it from Young in 1842. The Hustis family had apparently made a lot of improvements during the first 13 years, as the value rose from \$3,300 to \$5,000. They built the stone springhouse for their butter business, and it appears another earlier barn and home also stood on the property.

By 1860, John Nivin purchased the property from Hustis for \$4,300, and it was assessed at \$12,000 due to many improvements. The Nivin family maintained the farm into the 1930’s, when they somewhat reluctantly sold to Hallock duPont’s Equitable Trust Company. Nivin was quoted as saying *“since so many of the farms have been sold and the owners or tenants moved off them, the foxes have multiplied so that it is very hard for us to raise poultry, but the worst of all is that we have so few neighbors now.”* Nivin was not the only one to sell: their situation was reflected all over the region in the Depression period. Farms were also now challenged by competition with larger production-oriented ventures. The Dawson Brothers opened a ‘Creamery’ manufactory in Newark in the 1880s, with technology boosting increased production that the little farmers could not match. One article entitled “New Creamery” (2/11/1888) stated, *“It is a question of but a short time when the farmer will cease to make butter and the art, if it may be called, may soon be a lost one. To the housewife, for that little engine called The Separator has not only made it possible but practical to reduce butter making to a science...”* The other butter drama was the advent of the evil oleomargarine, which some saw as competition. Newark farmers declared it was so inferior that it did not pose any competition when President Cleveland passed the “Oleomargarine Law” that did not overly tax it as some wanted.

Once Nivin sold his property to Hallock duPont in the 1930/s, it was incorporated it into the larger wildlife refuge, hunting and “gentleman farmer” estate grounds, probably having tenant farmers for some time. Ownership by the duPonts during this span accidentally but wonderfully prevented suburban sprawl for gobbling up the landscape and kept developers at bay.

The subsequent sale of the land to the State of Delaware in the 20th century ensured that this property would remain open space for the public to enjoy. Like many of the farm sites on the park, land was acquired with buildings suffering from deferred maintenance. We are pleased that our cultural resources group has secured funding to stabilize the barn; as of this writing the architectural drawings are complete, funding is secure, and the job has gone out to bid. This property, like several others, will be going out for a Request for Proposals initiative to find a partner to share in the preservation, adaptive re-use and maintenance of this site. Have an idea for a little bike shop, coffee shop, or B & B that supports the park mission? This might be the place for you! Parks looks forward to a rebirth of the site so that everyone can enjoy the tranquility and history for years to come.



Upcoming Park Activities

Register online at <https://destateparks.com/whiteclaycreek>

Naturalist Led Hike

Saturday, November 18, 2023 at 9:00 AM

New to the park? Ready to find a new favorite trail? Join the naturalist to explore the trails and learn about the park while you're out. Dress for the weather, bring bottled water and come ready for adventure on the Tri-State Marker trail. Pre-registration is required by calling 302-368-6900. Free with paid park entry.

Nature Nuggets

Tuesday, November 21, 2023 at 10:00 AM

For ages 2-5, we'll spend about 45 minutes with the preschoolers and their adults investigating a variety of nature topics(register child/adult is free). Join our naturalists for a weekday morning program series. Each Month we will explore something that is happening seasonally in our park with songs, a story and an outdoor adventure! Must pre-register by calling 302-368-6900 or going online. \$5 per child.

Full Moon Friday

Friday, November 24, 2023 at 6:30 PM

Join our park naturalist for an evening hike near the full moon. We'll start the hike as the sun sets and then enjoy the moonrise as we return. Online registration ends 24 hours prior to the program. After that, please call 302-368-6900. Meeting location provided upon registration. \$6 per person

Wreath Making Workshop

Sunday, December 3, 2023 at 10:00 AM

Join us for a cup of coffee in the cozy Judge Morris Estate during our wreath making workshop. Bring clippers and gloves. \$32 per person, includes greens, base and accents for one holiday wreath.

Wreath Making Workshop

Sunday, December 3, 2023 at 1:00 PM

Join us for a cup of coffee in the cozy Judge Morris Estate during our wreath making workshop. Bring clippers and gloves. \$32 per person, includes greens, base and accents for one holiday wreath.

Add to Calendar

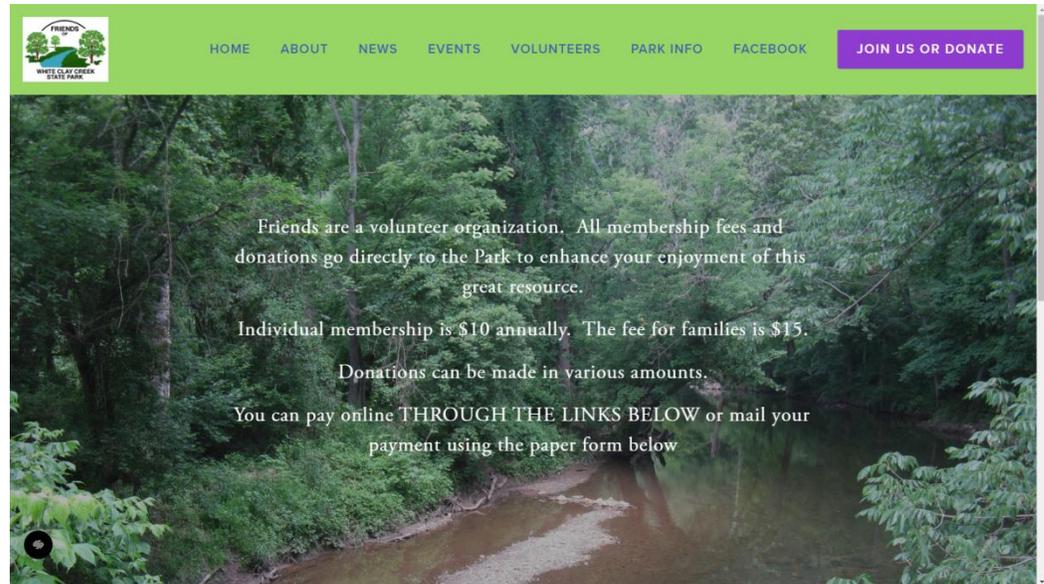
Hiking Series

Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 10:00 AM

New to the park? Ready to find a new favorite trail? Then join the park naturalist on this series to explore trails and discover nature in White Clay Creek State Park. Dress for the weather, bring bottled water and come ready for adventure! Pre-registration required, call 302-368-6900 by Tuesday at 3 p.m. Free.

Support the White Clay Creek State Park by Renewing your Membership!

The more members we have, the more our voice is heard when we seek to preserve and enhance our Park. Please go to our [website](#) and click on the purple button.



The screenshot shows the website for Friends of White Clay Creek State Park. The header is green with a logo on the left and navigation links: HOME, ABOUT, NEWS, EVENTS, VOLUNTEERS, PARK INFO, FACEBOOK. A purple button on the right says "JOIN US OR DONATE". The main content area features a background image of a river in a forest. The text on the page reads: "Friends are a volunteer organization. All membership fees and donations go directly to the Park to enhance your enjoyment of this great resource. Individual membership is \$10 annually. The fee for families is \$15. Donations can be made in various amounts. You can pay online THROUGH THE LINKS BELOW or mail your payment using the paper form below".