

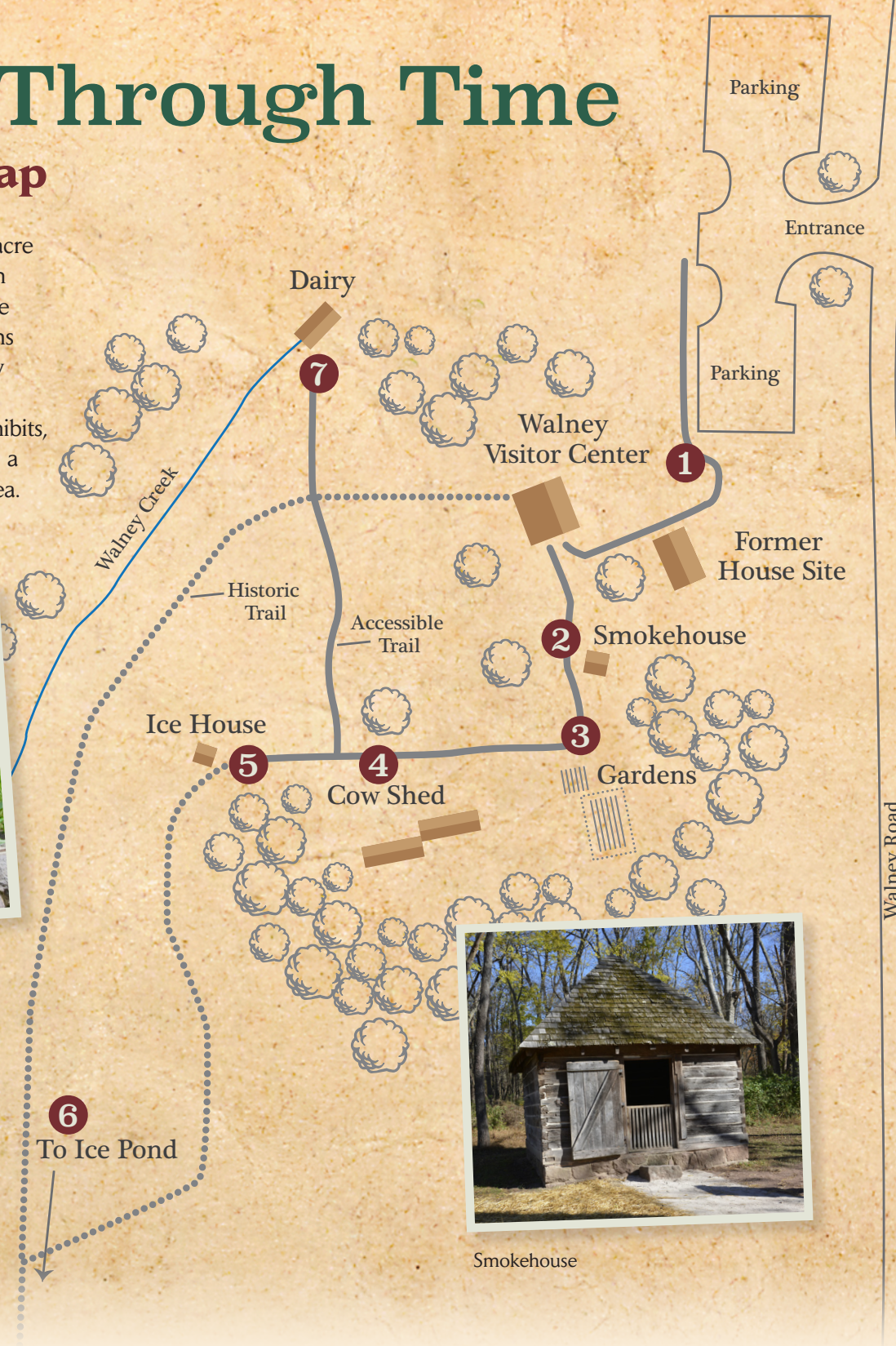
A Walk Through Time

Historic Tour Map

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park is a 650-acre park in western Fairfax County with a history that spans 8,000 years. The park's habitats include forest, streams and a pond, and it is home to many species. Inside the Walney Visitor Center you will find live animal exhibits, historic exhibits, children's activities, a greenhouse, classroom and sales area.



At the dairy ruins



Stone barn at Walney, early 20th century. Courtesy of Ellanor C. Lawrence Park.



Smokehouse



1 The Walney Houses

The house you see now was built by Thomas Brown's son, Coleman, in the 1780s, and additions were completed in 1875. The Machens lived in a woodframe house located near today's visitor center. That house burned on New Year's Eve in 1874, and James Machen expanded the stone house you see today. He, his wife and their seven children, lived here.

2 Smokehouse

Smokehouses were found on Virginia farms starting in the colonial era. Workers first dried the meat in salt, then hung the meat in the building while a low-heat fire burned below. The two month smoking process preserved the meat, rather than cooking it. Once smoked, meat could last as long as two years. Ellanor and David Lawrence moved this smokehouse to its current location during the 1930s to make room for a garage, which is now used as a classroom.

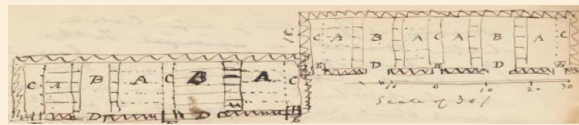
3 Kitchen and Herb Gardens

The Machens grew field crops such as potatoes, wheat, corn, buckwheat, tobacco, rye and hay for cash, food or to feed livestock. The fruits and vegetables planted in a kitchen garden were intended for their own table. They planted asparagus, cucumbers, spinach, peas, beets, rhubarb, carrots, parsnips, onions, raspberries, strawberries and pumpkins. The Machens also kept an herb garden for their personal use.



4 Cow Shed

A 2017 archaeological excavation confirmed this foundation was a cow shed. In addition to the archeological fieldwork, historians were able to match the building dimensions with a sketch made by Lewis Machen in 1853.



The image above was found in original notes explaining that this feeding house is 60 feet long and 18 feet wide. "A" illustrates the stalls for up to five cows, "B" the feeding trough, and "C" the "dung removal area".

5 Ice House

In the 1850s, Emmeline Machen wrote letters about her efforts to persuade her family to build an icehouse, believing the allure of chilled drinks and ice cream would attract her city friends to visit during the summer. The ice was also used to keep dairy products from spoiling and preserve stored food. Today, you can see a metal frame building where the ice house was located. The frame shows us what the ice house would have looked like, and it protects the stone foundation. Historically, the ice house extended down sixteen feet and was made of stone, brick and wood.



Walney Ice House conceptual drawing by Rob Martin.

6 Ice Pond

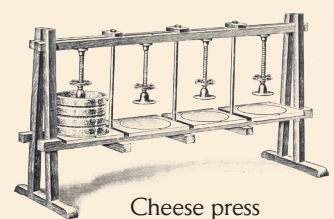
The trail currently runs through the Machen ice pond location. The pond ice was used to chill drinks and create ice cream in the summer. Both enslaved workers and hired workers used horses and wagons to haul 40-pound ice blocks from the pond to the ice house.



Transporting ice from the pond to the ice house on the Roosevelt estate—about 1890. Courtesy Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

7 The Dairy

According to an 1843 property ad, a dairy existed on this farm before the Machens moved here. In 1845, Machen family letters reference replacing or updating the dairy. Throughout the 1850s, the family sold butter as a side income. After the Civil War, the Machens increased their dairy operations. They produced 3,000 pounds of butter in 1880 and added a cheese press to the second room. Ellanor C. Lawrence added the roofed springhouse to the dairy in the 1940s for decorative purposes.



Cheese press

8 Stone Barn

Across the street, you can see the remains of a three-story barn. The exact construction date is not known, but it dates to sometime before 1843. The barn was the centerpiece of a sprawling complex that included a shed, a stable and several cattle yards. The barn decayed over the 20th century. By the 1970s, it was demolished.



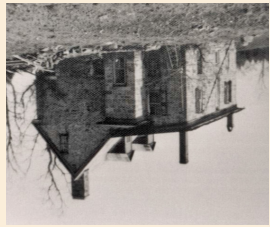
The Park remains a cultural and natural legacy for public enjoyment. Come in to the Visitor Center and learn more!

The land was deeded to the Park Authority in 1971. By the 1980s, the house was renovated into the Walney Visitor Center, and the grounds were left in a natural state.

By 1900, James moved from Walney leaving it in the care of tenants. These tenants cared for the property and house even after the Lawrence's purchased the farm in 1935 and renovated the house in 1944.

In the 1870s, James took advantage of the increased access to dairy markets via the railroad. By 1880, he expanded the dairy and purchased a cheese press. As his children grew, they showed little interest in farming.

After the Second Battle of Manassas in 1862, Union soldiers raided the farm. Fearing worse to come, the family relocated to Baltimore to be near relatives. Lewis Machen died there in 1863. After the Civil War, only his son, James, returned to the farm.



Changing times in Fairfax County

Slaves shaped this land and farm, although there are few physical remains of their presence here.

Slave quarters from Henrico County, Virginia. Photograph by Thomas T. Waterman, 1940.



The Machens employed many people to work the fields, outbuildings and house. They participated in the slave hiring system. This enabled non-slave owners to lease the services of enslaved people on an annual basis, paying their owners for their work. The Machens leased people from families throughout Northern Virginia. By 1859 they purchased Jimmy from Sarah B. Brett for the sum of four hundred dollars.



Lewis Machen

Of those who lived here, we know the most about the Machen family because they kept detailed records about life at Walney from 1843 to the early 1900s. Lewis Machen worked in the U.S. Senate as a clerk for nearly 50 years, and his family managed the farm.

In one farm, many lives...

Please follow Park Rules.

Protect our natural and cultural resources.



Protect the Animals.

Persons or pets should not harass, capture, remove, injure or kill any animal, its young and its eggs, nor disturb any animal-related structure found in a park.



Protect Plants and Fungi.

Plants and fungi (e.g. mushrooms) including flowers, seeds, berries and nuts should be left as found and not removed.



Protect Cultural Resources.

Historic resources such as artifacts or features including walls, fence lines, cellars, fire pits, foundations or any other man-made features should be left as found. Collecting is prohibited.



Protect Natural Resources.

All naturally occurring materials should not be tampered with or removed. Please stay on designated trails.

Explore more stories at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park

Become part of the story:

- Connect the past to the present with historic cooking, trades, arts and tours.
- Experience adventurous, hands-on history camps.
- Enjoy rotating museum exhibits.
- Join us for our free, springtime celebration—Walney through the Years.

Learn more online.

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/ecl



As you walk, learn how each building or garden had a purpose.

Ellanor C. Lawrence



For more than 13,000 years, people have inhabited Western Fairfax County. Before European contact, the Doeg tribe hunted on this ground. The oldest archaeological object found here is a small, 8000-year-old spear point. From the 1740s through the 1890s, the Brown and Machen families made a living from the land with the work of enslaved African Americans and paid workers. In 1935, David and Ellanor Lawrence purchased Walney farm as a country retreat and later bought the Cabell's Mill property. After Ellanor's death in 1969, David gave the property to the Fairfax County Park Authority, fulfilling her wish to preserve its cultural and natural features.

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. For thousands of years, humans have inhabited the property now known as Ellanor C. Lawrence Park.

A Walk Through Time

Making Connections at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park



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