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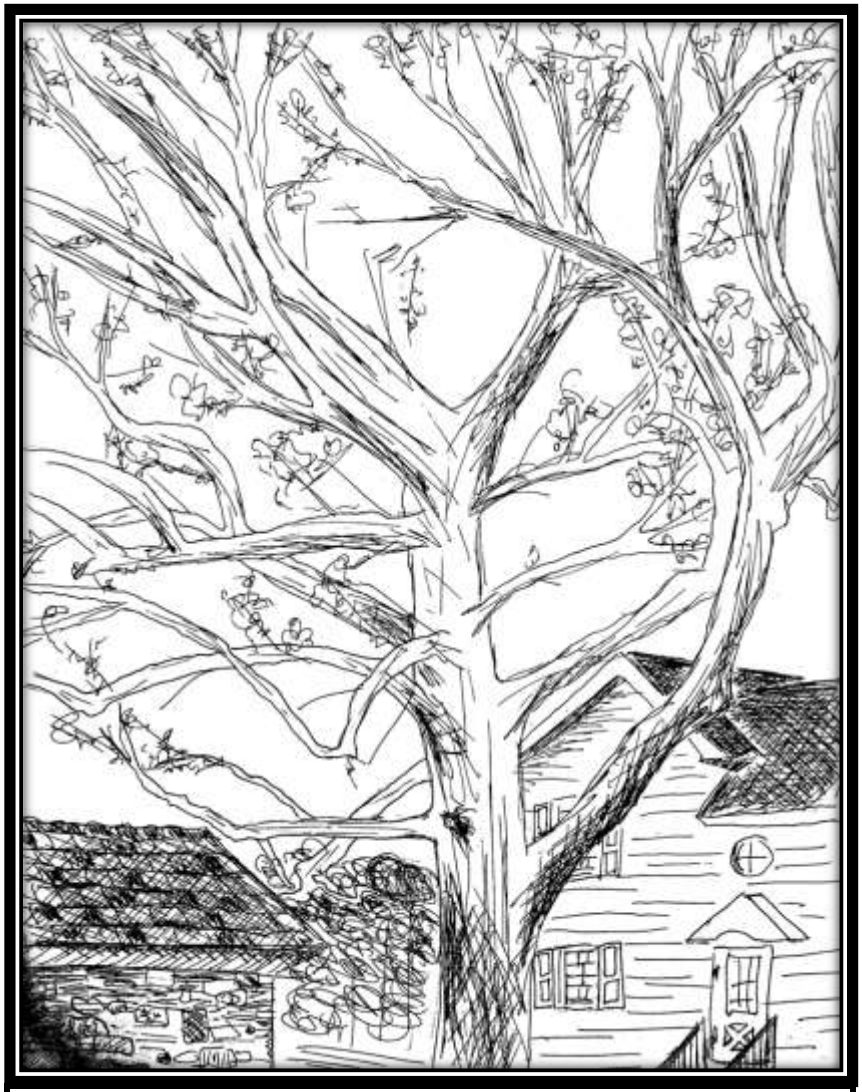
This self-guided, interpretive trail booklet, the trail head kiosk, and the trail post markers were all produced in cooperation with the Cromwell Valley Park as fulfillment of the Eagle Scout project for Sebastian Schreiber-Pan, Troop 444, Jacksonville, MD between December 2015 and September 2016.

Fact checked and edited by Jim Kelly

Sherwood-Eck Trail

A Self-Guided, Interpretive
Nature Trail



Cromwell Valley Park
www.cromwellvalleypark.org

About the Trail:

The Sherwood-Eck Trail will take you throughout Cromwell Valley Park while interpreting many of the park's most interesting and historical structures and sites.

This trail is about 2 miles long and will take about 1-2 hours to complete, depending on your walking speed. If you are unable to walk for 2 miles or for 2 hours, then the Southern portion of the trail can be easily skipped by simply stopping at the Sherwood House (station #15). We also encourage you to return the booklets where you initially got them in order to save paper and printing costs.

Thank you and enjoy the trail!

Sponsors & Volunteers

This project would not have been possible without the countless hours and dollars put in by so many people. I am very grateful for the faithful assistance that I have received by various workers, mentors, partners and more.

Thanks You:

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- Mike and Tivy Binnix
- Nikalay and Eileen Ratajczak
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- Renee Vanderstelt
- Robin Langgartner
- Wendy Kahalas
- Winny Tang

20

Eck Cottage

This small cottage was the farm manager's house.

Please Return Booklets to Original Box.

Thank You!

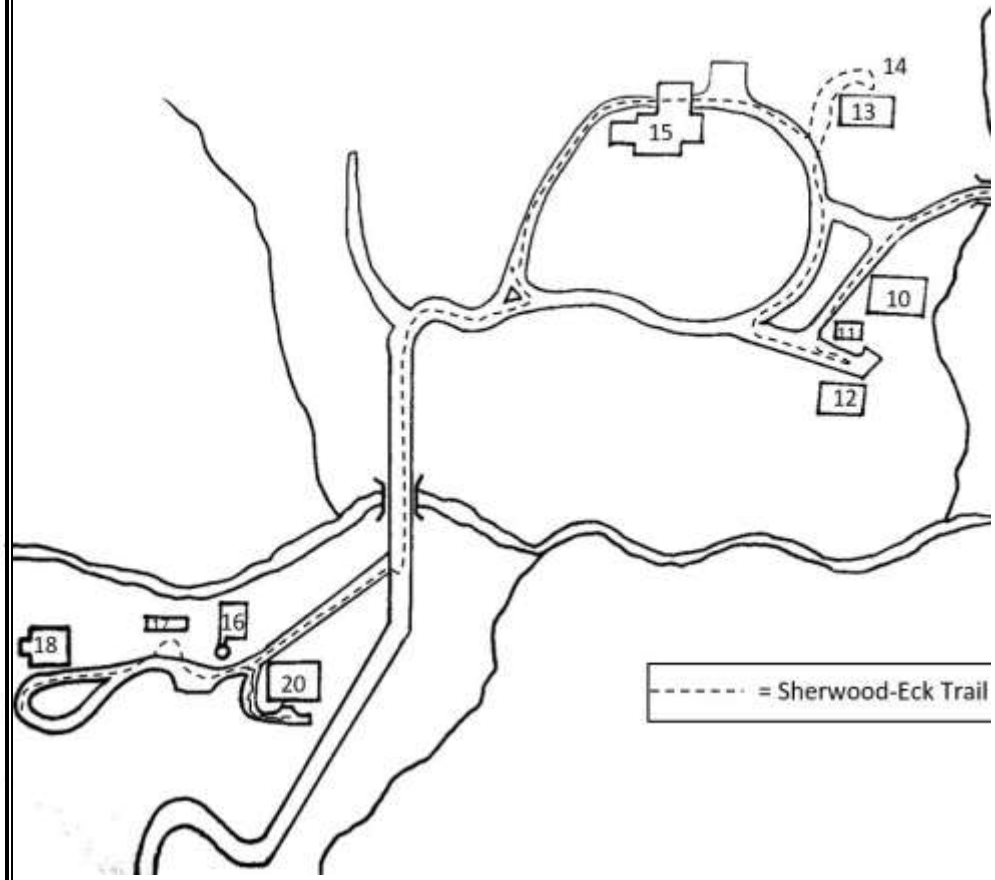
The Story

Cromwell Valley Park is comprised of four regions: The Eck Property, the Sherwood Farm, the Merrick, or Willow Grove area, and the Barrans/Baldwin area. This trail will explore three of these highly historic places while teaching you their significance.

The Sherwood-Eck Trail is about 2 miles and a journey back in time. Cromwell Valley Park contains many historical buildings. As you proceed on the trail, you will visit historic sites that tell the story of the people who settled in this valley in the 18th and 19th century.

This trail begins at the Willow Grove Nature Center and continues through 19 points of interest which are indicated by the numbered trail post markers with the Nature Center being post #1. These trail markers correspond to the numbered symbol located at the top of each page.

Trail Map



Eck Barn

19

The Eck and Sherwood buildings, including [illegible] were designed by a prominent architect from Baltimore, and a good friend of the Ecks. The Eck and the Sherwood family were also close friends. Their children played and went to school together.

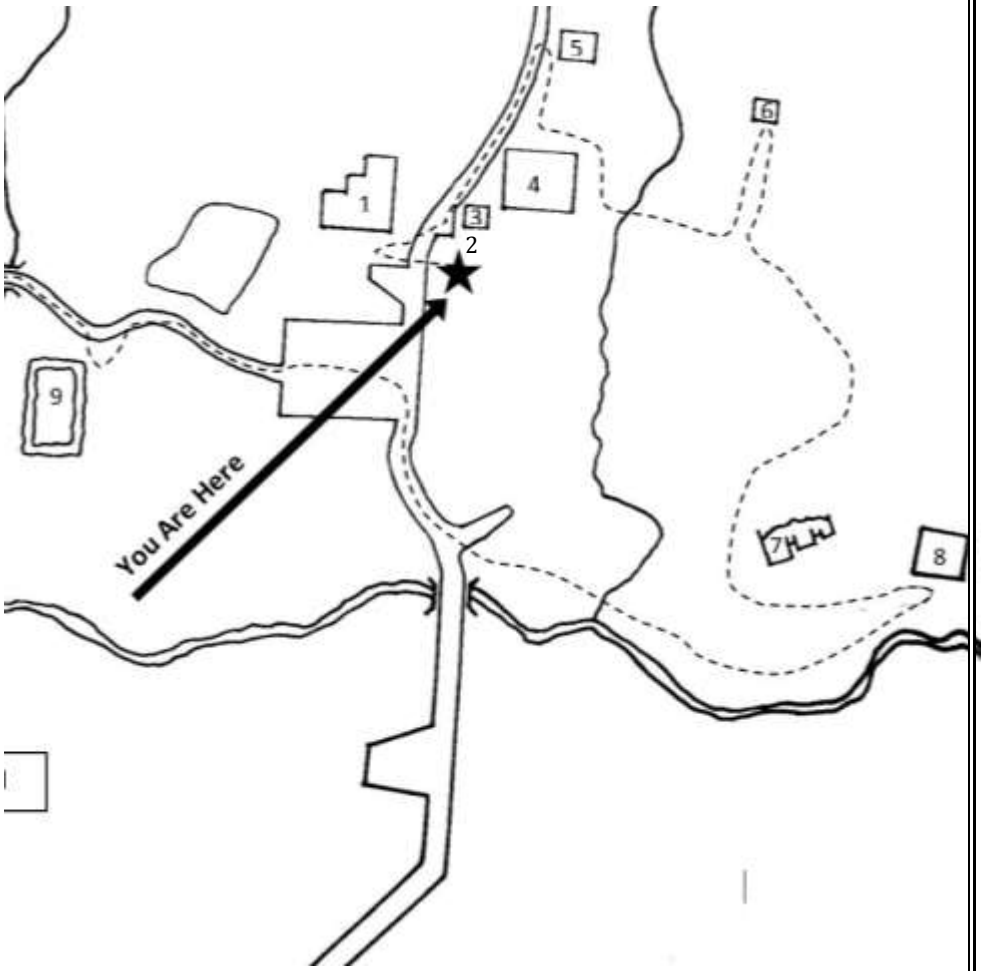
Conservation Fact: In the 1980's and early 1990's the Eck property came under development pressure and plans were drawn up to develop 38 single family homes. If it wasn't for the county government, these beautiful 45 acres would not be part of Cromwell Valley Park, but filled with homes, roads, and concrete.

18

Eck House

Charles and Viola Eck bought the land in 1942. The house was built in 1972, on land that was Gay's Good Fellowship Farm, which was originally patented for Nicholas Ruxton Gay in 1751. In 1753, Gay passed the land to his daughter, Elizabeth Cromwell, where the valley got its name.

The Eck's raised cattle and operated the land as a Christmas tree farm. Christmas trees are sold here to this very day. Come back and get your very own Cromwell Valley historical Christmas tree.



1

Willow Grove Nature Center

(The Merrick House)

The park's Willow Grove Nature Education Center was built in the middle of the 19th century as a home for Arthur Washington Shanklin and his bride, Ann Bosley, who married in 1867. The Shanklins were a prominent family in the area and owned large tracts of land in Cromwell Valley and along Satyr Hill Road. Shanklin had 10 children and added two additions to the home over the next 20 years before Ann passed away at age 39.

The two huge sycamore trees now gracing either side of the home may be bride and groom trees, planted to commemorate the marriage of Arthur and Ann and the establishment of a new household. Planting trees to honor one's love for another – very romantic!

In 1993, the county purchased the old Shanklin property, which at the time was owned by Robert Merrick's heirs, along with farms owned by the Sherwoods and the Ecks, using county and state Program Open Space funds.

Bull Barn

17

This structure is another prime example of a Gentleman Farm building of the late 30's and early 40's. The Eck farm was an active cattle breeding farm and this structure housed a maximum of 2 bulls at any one time. The bull barn contained 2 stalls, but usually one was enough

Fun Fact: Male cattle that cannot father calves are called steer, and they are often killed for their meat. Sometimes, they may help to haul things around the farm. Then, they are called oxen.

16

Silo Barn

The final section of this trail is situated on the Eck Farm of Cromwell Valley Park.

The silo barn could be even older than its neighboring buildings based on its stone pillar foundation. A silo, such as this one, is a structure for storing bulk materials like grain, coal, cement, carbon black, woodchips, food products or sawdust.

Why do you think the bands that wrap around the silo are spaced farther apart towards the top and closer at the bottom? This had to do with the weight of its contents building up near the bottom, where stress on the silo would be greatest.

Spring House

2

The Spring House (circa 1860) was built to provide water for the Shanklin family and the keep dairy products cool. When the city of Baltimore constructed a tunnel from Loch Raven Reservoir to Montebello Water Works, the city undermined the Shanklin Property and this Spring House went dry. Arthur Shanklin sued the city. He won and received compensation. Justice!

While the original purpose of a springhouse was to keep the spring water clean by excluding fallen leaves, animals, etc., the enclosing structure was also used for refrigeration before the advent of ice delivery and later, electric refrigeration.

Imagine having to walk to another building to get your ice cold glass of milk.

3

Cider House

The Cider House or log storage house is a converted corn crib and an excellent example of a log structure that would have been found on a farm in 1800's Baltimore County. Log cabin construction came to North America in the 1600s when Swedish settlers brought building customs from their home country.

Cider houses were common in the 1800's, selling a product that was usually fermented on the premises from apples grown in a local apple orchard. But this cider house got is name from recent cider production demonstrations, and likely not historical cider use.

Attention!

The extended part of trail continues now. If you are unable or unwilling to walk for another mile (approximately 45 minutes), then simply turn around and follow the trail back to the start Kiosk. If not, enjoy the walk to the Eck property!

15

Sherwood House

The Sherwood House, completed in 1935, is an example of the English Manor style house. The house has 27 rooms, including 5 bedrooms, 8 bathrooms, 5 fireplaces and room for 3 servants. The mansion's main entrance faces N/W, complete with a walled garden, pump house, and driveway.

The name Sherwood is an English name, signifying "belonging to the Sherwood" (in Nottingham, England) and was made famous by Robin Hood.

Merrick Barn

4

This two story bank barn was built with adze-hewn, square logs, assembled in the 1860's at the corners with V-notches. This is the only style of joinery ever noted in this County for log buildings. This historic building was once an integral part of family life, and remains a crucial element on any working farm.

Fun Fact: It was the Scandinavians who developed the technique of hewing and squaring of the sides of logs to provide flat walls. And it was they—Swedes and Finns, to be exact—who introduced this rugged, practical form of building log cabin barns to the Americas in 1638.

5

Willow Grove Cottage

The Willow Grove farmer's cottage is a Tidewater style cottage and is not from the same time period as the other buildings in the Merrick compound. However, it is a prime example of a typical farm tenant house of the later 1930's and early 1940's. Furthermore, this building is an example of the evolution of farm buildings when the makeup of the workers on the farms shifted from large families, owner/operator farms to the hired laborer who managed and worked the Gentleman Farmer's land.

Tenant farming was historically a step up on the "agricultural ladder" from hired hand taken by young farmers as they accumulated enough experience and capital to buy land (or buy out their siblings when a farm was inherited).

Did the person who lived here dream of buying his/her land one day?

Sherwood Orchard

14

Farm hands first planted apples and then peaches on the farm. A small portion of the old orchard remains in place for you to see.

The harvesting of apples and peaches on the farm was very tedious work. At least a dozen pickers and laborers were trucked to the farm and back to Baltimore city after working the orchard.

13

Sherwood Cottage

Just on the east side of the main house, a farm manager's home was built in the style of an original Cape Cod cabin. In addition, the Sherwood's employed as many as four full time farmers who helped with the work.

Pool House

6

In the mid 1900's Robert G. Merrick, bank president and philanthropist, and his brother Wilton S. Merrick, builder and developer, acquired the property and used the place as their rural retreat. His was called "Satyr Hill Farm". The pool house was used as a private changing facility for only Mr. Robert Merrick. His family and friends were forced to change in either the spring or cider house, but nonetheless enjoyed splashing in the cool water of his pool.

This structure was since moved from its original location. Where do you think the pool was located? *Hint*: It was near the Nature Center, the changing houses, and a water source.

7

Lime Kilns

This part of Cromwell Valley was once named "Limekiln Bottom" for the accessible deposits of limestone located here. There are three visible 19th century lime kilns on the property. The oldest of the three grouped kilns was probably in operation by 1785.

A lime kiln is used to produce quicklime through the calcination of "limestone" (calcium carbonate). The process of burning lime is the 2nd oldest chemical reaction (fire being the oldest). Quarried "limestone" was placed in the kiln and heated at 1,000 °F. This process released CO_2 from the "limestone", leaving a lump of rocky quicklime.

The annual production of bushels of lime constituted a large portion of the farm's income. Farmers used lime as fertilizer, in mortar for buildings and as a component for whitewash.

Apple House

12

The apple business boomed during the early part of the 20th century. The resident farm manager at Sherwood, Fred Ingram, helped Mr. Sherwood plan an apple & peach orchard. If an apple tree died, it was replaced with a peach tree. The small structure was made into an apple finishing house. Packing boxes were designed with the Sherwood logo and the fruit was sold on the waterfront or at many stalls located in various areas of Baltimore City.

The fruit bearing the Sherwood logo came to be known as the best quality fruit in the area.

The farm was very profitable for years to come. The apple and peach business netted the farm about $12,000 per year, including the sale of celery, hay, straw, pigs, chickens, chicken eggs and produce.

"To this day, my back begins to ache every time I see a stick of celery." - D. H. Sherwood Jr.

11

Corn Crib

The farm was divided up into fields to grow hay, corn, wheat, and vegetables.

This ventilated building was used for the storage of husked corn. These corn bins were built to store corn and other garden vegetables grown on the farm. Look at the mesh between side boards, what might have happened if this ventilation was not here?

Merrick Log House

8

This small house was built sometime in the late 18th to early 19th century. The Merrick log house probably most of its life as property of the inter-related Amos, Risteou, and Jenifer families until 1960, when Robert Merrick bought it to expand his Satyr Hill Farm.

In 2014 all exposed log walls were framed out and covered with cypress barn board siding just as it originally was. Therefore, it lacks the log cabin look on the outside.

The log dwelling most likely served as the kiln overseer's residence as the short distance to the kiln may suggest; keeping in mind that the fires often burnt all night.

The last resident of the house moved out in 1994. Mold, fungi, termites as well as spiders and snakes called the log house home until it was stabilized in 2014.

9

Sherwood Graveyard

This graveyard is one of the more interesting and mysterious structures here. There is little to nothing known about its history, but for a few oral stories. A mention is in the 1840's deed to Plaskett Farm (Good Fellowship). It is suspected that white family members were buried inside while slaves were buried outside. Recently, underground cavities have been accidentally discovered just outside the graveyard walls.

Sherwood Barn

10

In 1933 Mr. Donald Henry Sherwood (1898 – 1989) acquired the first 80 acres of the 120-acre farm. Most of the outbuildings were built between 1935-1936. This large Pennsylvania style bank barn was equipped with stables, milk cow stalls, and pig pens. D. H. Sherwood Jr writes:

> *"Mr. Kurtz (farm manager) milked four cows, fed six pigs, and raised many chickens which the family devoured with relish. Milk was separated into cream and butter. We also made our own ice cream …our families were self-contained and everyone had a good life before World War II."*

During the second world war all able bodied men went to war leaving Mrs. Frances Wellington Sherwood (1899-1992) in charge of the farm.