

# RADNOR TOWNSHIP TRAIL SYSTEM GUIDE



## Southern Section

## RADNOR TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION

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# WELCOME TO THE RADNOR TOWNSHIP HIKING TRAILS!

## General Information

The Radnor Township Hiking Trails are part of a network of hiking paths that lead through some of the most scenic woodlands, peaceful meadows and historically significant areas in the Township. The Southern Section of the trail network extends from the intersection of West Wayne Avenue and Maplewood Road, near the Wayne Elementary School, to Saw Mill Park at the intersection of Saw Mill Road and Earles Lane. Most of the trail surfaces are earthen and, in some places, a bit rocky. One area trail is fully paved and another is partially paved. Many of the trails follow paths that were already well established by area wildlife, Native Americans and some of the Township's earliest industrialists. For much of its length, the Trail runs along the banks of the Darby and Little Darby Creeks. The total distance covered by all trails in the network is approximately five miles.

## Development of the Trails

Work on the Radnor Township Hiking Trails began in 1996 and continues today. The Trails were created by Radnor Township in partnership with a number of local volunteer organizations, including the Friends of Radnor Trails, Boy Scouts from Radnor Troop 284 (with 7 Eagle Scout projects), Paoli Troop 1, other scout troops and various church groups. These organizations designed many of the trails, cleared vegetation, removed fallen tree limbs and other debris, and blazed trees. In 1999, a wooden bridge was constructed across Darby Creek near the Saw Mill Road Bridge in order to connect trails on the north and south banks of the creek. Unfortunately, a few months after the bridge was completed it was destroyed by Hurricane Floyd. A new bridge made of recycled materials was re-constructed in 2001. Another bridge, located further downstream, was constructed as part of another Eagle Scout project in 2002.

## The Six Trail Systems

There are six interconnected trail systems that comprise the southern portion of the Radnor Township Hiking Trail network. Each of these trail systems has its own special characteristics and distinctive features.

**The Dittmar Park Walking Track** form includes two loops around the Township's playing fields located on Valley Forge Road. This paved track provides an excellent surface for walking, jogging, and in-line skating. It is also wheelchair accessible. This trail system track can be accessed via Maplewood Road or Valley Forge Road. Parking is available at the Valley Forge Road entrance. Picnic areas are located in the park near the trails, as are public restrooms. This walking track is 0.5 miles in length.

**The Brooke Farm Trails** are located between Wayne Elementary School (West Wayne Avenue and Maplewood Road) and Brooke Road (near the entrance to Ravenscliff). These trails pass through a wooded area on the south side of Little Darby Creek. Although the entrance to this trail system at Maplewood Road is somewhat steep and rocky, most of the trail route is flat. The principal trail in this system crosses Little Darby Creek three times by way of stepping stones. Near its eastern end this trail crosses a small meadow with a short steep incline up to Brooke Road. The trail continues along the west side of Brooke Road until it reaches the crosswalk to the Inverary Trail. The total length of the Brooke Farm Trail system is about one mile.

**The Inverary Trail** begins across the street from where the Brooke Farm Trail ends. This trail runs along the eastern shoulder of Brooke Road for a short distance, then dips into a wooded area along the western bank of Little Darby Creek. The trail crosses Little Darby Creek on stepping stones and continues along the eastern bank until it reaches the bridge over Darby-Paoli Road, near the entrance to The Willows. The Inverary Trail is approximately one-quarter mile in length.

**The Willows Trail** system begins at the entrance to the Willows Park on Darby-Paoli Road. This trail follows the paved drive through the Willows Park, bearing right and up the hill in the direction of the Willows Mansion and the large upper parking lot. Behind the parking lot is the entrance to two trails. One is a short trail that loops through a wooded area and back to the parking lot. The other trail in this system traverses the top of the hill behind the Willows Mansion and can be accessed from the upper corner of this parking lot. This latter trail includes a spur which leads to an abandoned wooden tower enclosing a water tank. There is also an old brick path that leads to the Willows Mansion. The Willows Trails connect with the Skunk Hollow Trails at three points, all located along the eastern border of the Willows Park. The southernmost of these connections is located in a heavily wooded area. The middle connection is located at the southeastern corner of the Township's leaf composting area. The northernmost connection is located at the northwest corner of the composting area. Traveling west from this point, across the rolling front lawn of the Willows Mansion, leads to the Willows Pond and picnic and recreation areas. The total distance covered by the Willows Trails is one mile.



The Skunk Hollow Trail system is the most complex and challenging of the six trail systems within the Southern Section of the Radnor Township Hiking Trails network. It also offers some of the best scenery, natural features and historic ruins along the trail network. The Skunk Hollow Trails can be accessed at a number of points, including three linkages with the Willows Trail system, two entrances on Saw Mill Road, an entrance near the Darby-Paoli Road parking lot, and an entrance near the end of Paper Mill Road. Most of the Skunk Hollow Trail system is located between the south bank of the Little Darby Creek and the north bank of Darby Creek, in the angle formed by the confluence of these two creeks. This portion of the trail system is characterized by several hairpin turns and changes in grade. The latter include a steeply sloping path and sharp switchback as the trail approaches the unpaved remains portion of old Paper Mill Road; four steep paths leading from the north bank of Darby Creek to a common point near the juncture of twin paved roads in the center of Skunk Hollow; and a steep descent towards the Boy Scout Bridge from the northwest. The central east-west trail in the Skunk Hollow Trail system, which runs from the courtyard of the Willows Mansion to the Boy Scout Bridge, marks one of the highest elevations in this trail system. From late fall through early spring, the eastern portion of this trail offers a wonderful breath-taking view of Darby Creek below. The western portion of the central trail runs along the upper (southern) boundary of the Township's leaf composting area. A parallel trail runs along the lower (northern) boundary of this area.

The remainder of the Skunk Hollow Trail system is located on the south side of Darby Creek. Starting at the access point on Saw Mill Road, near the Saw Mill Trail, this trail runs along the base of a steep meadow while hugging the southern bank of Darby Creek until it reaches the Boy Scout Bridge. Bypassing the bridge, the trail loops through a densely wooded area, crossing a small stream twice along the way. One of the highlights of this trail is the large split boulder on the western most curve of the loop, at the creek's edge. No child (or inner child) can resist climbing this rock.

The Skunk Hollow Trail system covers a distance of approximately two miles.

**The Saw Mill Trail** system begins on the east side of Saw Mill Road, just south of the Saw Mill Road Bridge and across the street from the entrance to the Skunk Hollow Trail system. This short, flat, partially paved trail is located in the Township's Saw Mill Park. For most of its length, the Saw Mill Trail system runs along the south bank of Darby Creek, crossing a small bridge along the way. Two short branches connect the main trail to Earles Lane. The Saw Mill Trail system is approximately 0.4 miles in length.

## Natural Features

Nature lovers will find much to enjoy along the Radnor Township Hiking Trails. Most of the Trail network is located along the scenic banks of the Darby and Little Darby Creeks. Darby Creek is one of the principal watersheds in our area. The Darby and Little Darby Creeks are teeming with aquatic life. An assortment of frogs, salamanders and other amphibious creatures can be found along the banks of the creeks. Each spring, the Township stocks the creeks with trout, much to the delight of area fishermen who use the Trail to gain access to their favorite fishing spots.

The woods surrounding many of the trails are populated by beeches, tulip trees, sycamores, oaks and maples. The filtered shade created by these trees and the moist conditions along the banks of the creeks provide ideal settings for the many wildflowers that grow along these trails, including bloodroot, trout lilies, claytonia, dutchman's breeches, Virginia bluebells, hepatica, may apples, jack-in-a-pulpit and, regrettably, poison ivy.

The woods, meadows and ponds along the trails provide habitats for a variety of wildlife, including deer, red foxes, skunks and groundhogs. The trail network is a popular venue for bird-watching.

Stream bank erosion is a problem at many of the trails that abut the creeks. Measures are being taken to mitigate this problem. Trail users can assist in these efforts by staying on the trails and avoiding walking along the edge of eroded stream banks.

## Historical Features

During the 18th and 19th centuries, numerous mills, a tannery and other commercial operations were located along the banks of the Darby and Little Darby Creeks, in the corridor now occupied by the Radnor Township Hiking Trails. The remains of many of these enterprises can still be found along the trails. Perhaps the most notable of these are the crumbling stone ruins of a gristmill and its associated dam, millrace and tailrace located along one of the Skunk Hollow Trails, a short distance upstream from the confluence of the Darby and Little Darby Creeks.

A number of houses, barns and outbuildings of historic interest, or what remains of such structures, are also located along the trails. Perhaps the most familiar of these is The Willows, a lovely stone mansion built in 1910 and purchased by Radnor Township in 1973. The Willows Mansion is used throughout the year for a variety of Township-sponsored activities and can be rented for weddings, private parties, and other events.

Trail users and others who are interested in learning more about the early commercial enterprises and notable houses and outbuildings located along the Radnor Township Hiking Trail network are referred to the following sources on the Historical Features of the trails:



- Ashmead, H.G. A History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: L.H. Everts (1884).
- Case, R., Cronin, E., Squyres, M., Webster, N. & Woodfin, H. A Survey of Mills in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, 1826-1880. Media: Delaware County Community College and Delaware County Historical Society (1994).
- Cummin, Katharine. A Rare and Pleasing Thing: Radnor Demography (1798) and Development. Philadelphia: Owlswick Press (1977).

- Curley, A. The Old Mills of Radnor. The Bulletin of the Radnor Historical Society, Vol. 1, No. 5 (Spring 1955).
- Grant, J. Mills on the Upper Reaches of the Darby Creek. The Bulletin of the Radnor Historical Society, Vol. II, No. 8 (Spring 1998).
- Jordan, J. A History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania and Its People, Vol. 1. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company (1914).
- Maier, P. The Willows 1910-1973
- Morrison, William. The Main Line Country Houses 1870 – 1930. New York: Acanthus Press (2002).

## Proposed Future Trails

Radnor Township proposes to add several new trails to the Trail network, thereby increasing linkages among the various existing trails, nearby parks and residential areas neighborhoods. These include a trail along Maplewood Road, adjacent to Wayne Elementary School, which would connect the Dittmar Park Walking Track to the Brooke Farm Trails; a trail along Brooke Road which would improve access between the Brooke Farm Trail system and nearby homes to the north and enhance the connection between that system and the Inverary Trails to the south; and a trail circling the field and hillside north of Little Darby Creek at the Willows Park.

Other trails are planned for a North Section, Harford Park to Radnor High School, and a West Section, the Radnor multi-purpose trail (old P&W railway).

## Trail Rules and Etiquette

- The Radnor Township Hiking Trails are open every day from sunrise to sunset.
- Alcoholic beverages, camping, fires and weapons are prohibited.
- No motorized vehicles are permitted on the trails.
- Bicycles are permitted, but riders should give the right of way to hikers and take care not to damage the trails or the vegetation.
- Stay on the trails. Short cuts will damage the trails, contribute to erosion and may harm native plants.
- Treat other trail users, nearby property owners and wildlife with respect.
- Hikers should avoid crossing streams on stepping stones during high water or icy conditions.
- No trespassing on private property.
- Do not litter.
- All pets must be leashed.
- No hunting.

## Parking

Parking for the Radnor Township Hiking Trails is available at Dittmar Park, The Willows, Skunk Hollow (Mon. to Fri., 8am to 3pm) and Saw Mill Park.

## Trail Volunteers

Volunteers are always needed to help maintain and improve the Radnor Trail System. National Trails Day is the beginning of June each year, and the Friends of Radnor Trails usually organize events at that time. If you would like to help out with one of the projects that come up from time to time, please call the Radnor Township Parks and Recreation office and ask to be put on their trail volunteer list. You can always help out while walking the wooded trails by picking up small fallen branches or trash. Please call the Township if you notice other problems or have suggestions to offer. We ask that you don't perform any major trail work without proper authorization.

# RADNOR TOWNSHIP

## PARKS TRAIL SYSTEM *Southern Section*



Main through trails blazed in white

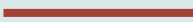


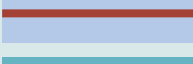


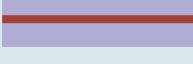
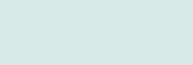










Side trails blazed in yellow



Double Blaze indicates turn in trail

## LEGEND

-  Existing Trails
-  Proposed/Future Trails
-  Brooke Farm Trails
-  Dittmar Park Walking Track
-  Inverary Trails
-  Willows Trails
-  Skunk Hollow Trails
-  Saw Mill Trails
-  Waterway
-  Parking
-  Rest Room (call 610-688-5600 for lock combination)
-  Landmark
-  Picnic Table(s)/Area
-  Kiosk/Information Board
-  Bridge
-  Handicapped Accessible

