

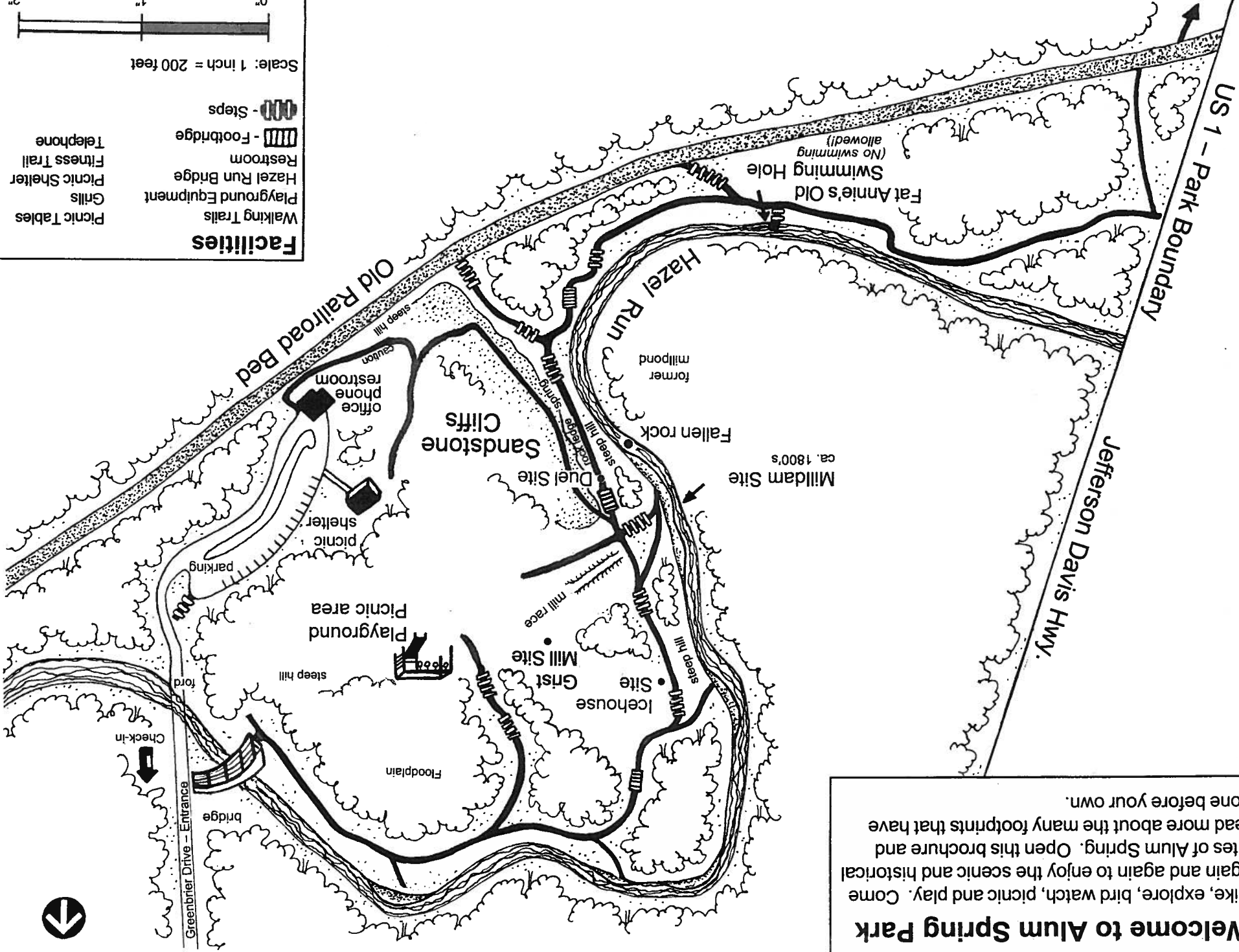
Scale: 1 inch = 200 feet

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Facilities

- Walking Trails
- Playground Equipment
- Grills
- Picnic Shelter
- Fitness Trail
- Telephone
- Restroom
- Hazel Run Bridge
- Playground Equipment
- Grills
- Picnic Shelter
- Fitness Trail
- Telephone

- Steps
 - Footbridge

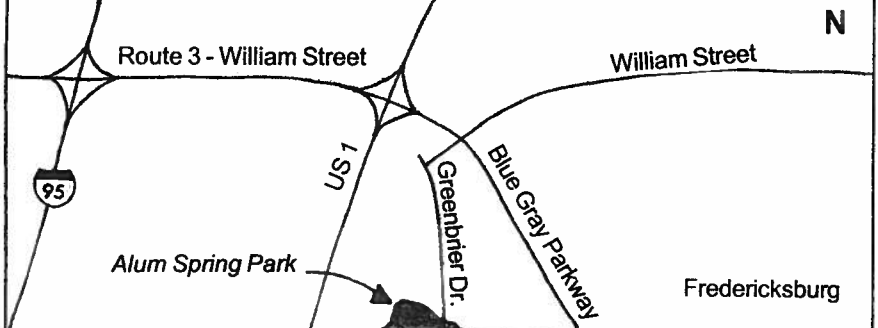


Welcome to Alum Spring Park

Hike, explore, bird watch, picnic and play. Come again and again to enjoy the scenic and historical sites of Alum Spring. Open this brochure and read more about the many footprints that have gone before your own.

Whether here to enjoy the playground, picnic, or hike the trails, we hope you enjoy your visit to Alum Spring Park.

Map to Alum Spring Park



Rules and Regulations

- Park only in designated areas
- No camping
- Fires allowed in grills only
- No alcohol
- All dogs must be on a leash
- No motorized vehicles or bikes allowed off road
- No firearms, fireworks or weapons of any kind
- No disturbance or removal of plant or animal life
- Wade in creek at own risk

Days and Hours of Operation

SUMMER (April 1 through October time change)
 Weekdays: 9am to Dusk Weekends: 10am-Dusk
WINTER (October time change through March)
 Daily: 10am-5pm
 Park can be closed in case of inclement weather at attendant's discretion

Parking Fee

The following parking fee is charged on all vehicles entering the park on Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays during Summer Hours ONLY:
 City resident's vehicles - FREE
 Non-city resident's vehicles - \$2.00

Shelter Reservations

A \$25.00 fee plus deposit is charged to reserve the shelter for group picnics; otherwise shelter is available on a "first come, first served" basis.

For more information or to make shelter reservations, contact:
 City of Fredericksburg Parks, Recreation and Public Facilities
 408 Canal St., Fredericksburg, VA 22401 (540) 372-1086.
 Designed by Linda Bailey, 1/98. Updated, 3/04



Alum Spring Park

Historical & Recreational Information

City of Fredericksburg
 Department of Parks, Recreation and Public Facilities

Please return, reuse or recycle this brochure!

A Trail Through Time

When Fredericksburg was established in 1728, the "Alum Spring" was a remote though well-known destination in the wilderness of Spotsylvania County. For several millenia Powhatan Indians had come to the banks of Hazel Run to gather clay. These were the tribespeople Captain John Smith met when he explored the area in 1608. After the town was established, George Washington surveyed the tract which was then purchased by his brother-in-law, Fielding Lewis. Other notable owners included John Marye, one-time mayor and owner of Marye's Heights and Brompton, and Absalom P. Rowe, mayor of Fredericksburg from 1888 to 1900.

The City of Fredericksburg became the final owner in 1965 after purchasing the Alum Spring property from W.C. Spratt and others. The 35-acre park was developed with the addition of a concrete ford and suspension bridge over Hazel Run, trails, grills and picnic tables. It was opened to the public on August 13, 1968.

We hope you enjoy becoming the latest in a long line of explorers, and that Alum Spring Park will become your frequent destination.

Site of Old Ice House

Watch your step! This deep pit and bit of stone wall are all that remain of an historic ice-house. In the cold winter months, ice was harvested from the Alum Spring mill pond and stored here between layers of sawdust and straw. It was eagerly sought as the purest and clearest ice available to the townspeople of the 1800's. In the days before modern refrigeration, iceboxes were used to keep perishables and provide the coolant for an occasional summer treat. Records show the ice was typically sold for \$5 a share, entitling the holder to eight pounds a day for the season.

Site of Old Grist Mill

Two centuries ago, a water-powered grist mill most likely stood on this spot. Though an archaeological dig has not yet been performed, records and land forms indicate this was the mill built in 1753 by George Washington's brother-in-law, Fielding Lewis. The four-story stone and wood mill ground corn and wheat for over a century until it was burned during the Civil War. In lieu of cash, the miller commonly kept a tenth of the grain as payment. When the surrounding foliage is gone, look for the old mill race. This high, trench-like cut in the earth most likely carried water from a dam on Hazel Run to the overshot wheel of the mill.

Revolutionary War records indicate that the miller's house and other buildings at Alum Spring were used as a prison for Hessian troops taken in New Jersey by General Washington, and as a hospital after the surrender of Cornwallis.

Duel Site

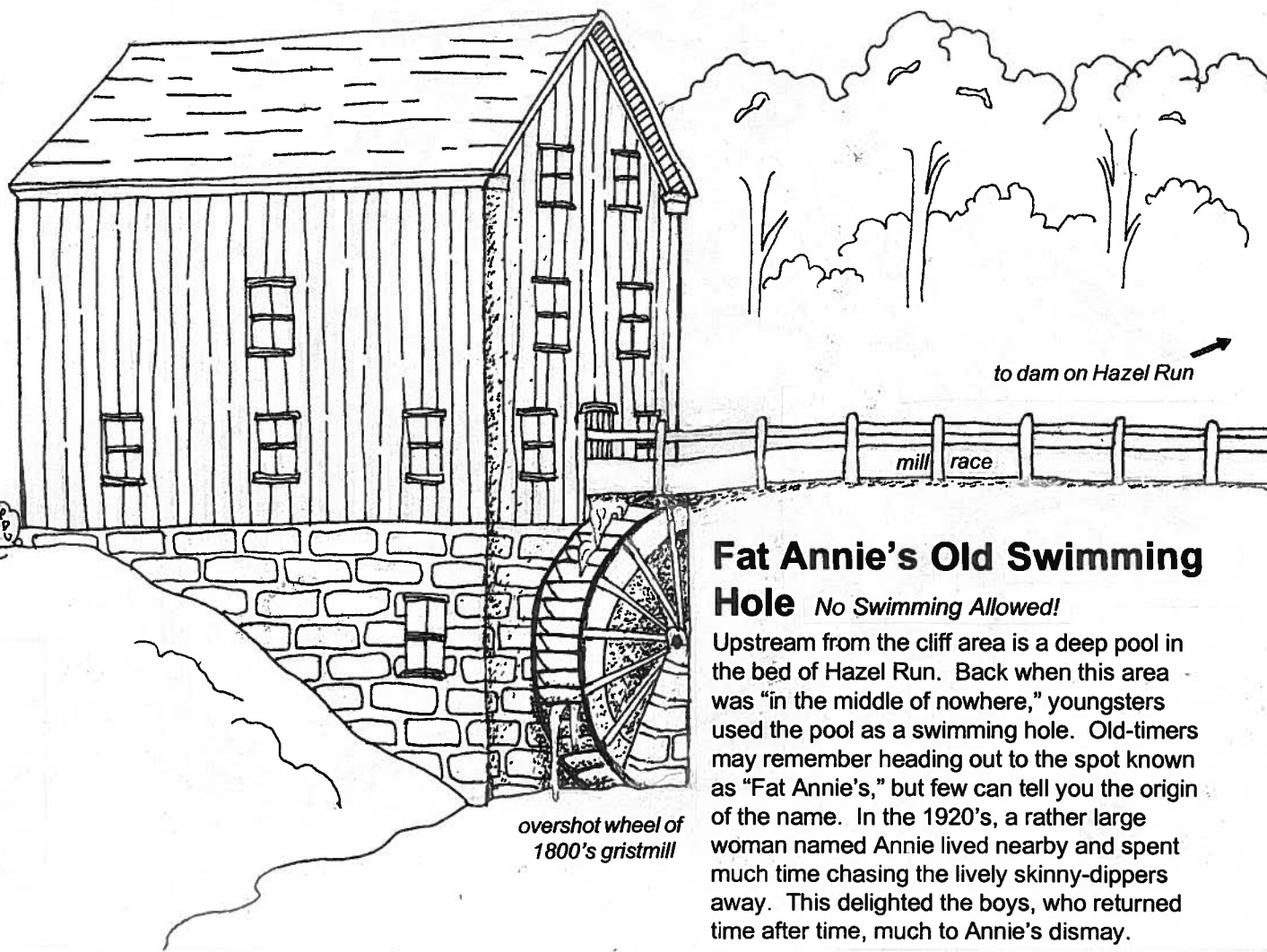
In December of 1803, a tragic pistol duel was fought on this spot. The participants were two cousins, Francis Fitzhugh Conway and William Thornton, each from prominent Fredericksburg area families. Both men were in their early twenties, and both were attracted to Nellie Madison, a 20-year old niece of future President James Madison. At a Christmas ball held at Chatham Manor, Francis tried to impress Miss Nellie with a new bridle for his horse; however, when it came time to depart, the bridle was on William's horse. Francis accused William of switching the bridles and challenged him to a duel on the following Monday morning. They met on the narrow pathway between the Alum Spring cliff and the mill pond. At the word "fire" both shots sounded simultaneously and the bullets passed through the lower abdomen of each man. Francis and William died at the same hour the following day.

mountain laurel



Fallen Rock

On Friday, October 9, 1885, sometime around midnight, an earthquake shook the town of Fredericksburg. Residents reported hearing a rumbling noise "like the rolling of many heavy-laden wagons over the streets." The quake dislodged a chunk of sandstone from the cliff. This huge rock can be seen lying in Hazel Run, just below the cliffs. In fact, if you look closely you might even imagine where it once hung, making the cliffs an even more attractive shelter.



overshot wheel of 1800's gristmill

to dam on Hazel Run

mill race

Fat Annie's Old Swimming Hole

No Swimming Allowed!

Upstream from the cliff area is a deep pool in the bed of Hazel Run. Back when this area was "in the middle of nowhere," youngsters used the pool as a swimming hole. Old-timers may remember heading out to the spot known as "Fat Annie's," but few can tell you the origin of the name. In the 1920's, a rather large woman named Annie lived nearby and spent much time chasing the lively skinny-dippers away. This delighted the boys, who returned time after time, much to Annie's dismay.

Sandstone Cliffs and Spring

This sandstone cliff is a geological formation about 100 million years old. Back when dinosaurs roamed the earth, waters flowing from the western mountains toward the newly formed Atlantic carried tons and tons of weathered sediment. As the terrain flattened out, sediments were dropped from the moving waters in layer upon layer of sand and clay. Chemicals in the water cemented the sediments together into the sandstone we see today.

During this period of sedimentation, swollen flood waters carried trees and limbs to this site. Over time the wood was covered with sand and clay. Some of the wood was subject to intense heating and changed into carbonized wood fossils. As the sandstone cliffs weather away, some of the soft, black, charred wood becomes exposed. This too wears away, leaving only impressions of the original wood. The impressions are best seen while standing under the cliff looking upward. Specimens should NOT be collected from the cliff but MAY be picked up on the old railroad bed at the far end of the cliff.

While you're examining the sandstone overhead, imagine what it was like for the hundreds of women and children who took refuge under this rock ledge during the Civil War bombardment of the town in December, 1862.

Water seeping from under the cliff, midway along the path, deposits a crystalline pink, white or yellow layer of alum on the ground. Alum was used in Revolutionary times to preserve meat. At the far end of the cliff the dripping of water forms a spring which gives the area its name.

Old Railroad Bed

Listen...can you hear the whistle and feel the rumbling of the old steam engine? For over sixty years, this railroad bed was part of a 38-mile track from Fredericksburg to Orange. It began in 1853 when the state of Virginia chartered the Fredericksburg and Gordonsville Railroad and the cut was begun through this hill. The uncompleted track was important to Stonewall Jackson's troops in 1863, but it wasn't until the Civil War dust had settled in 1870 that the cut was completed and seventy men laid track through Alum Spring.

In 1877 the first round trip from Fredericksburg to the Orange County Courthouse was made and the entire population of Orange turned out to welcome it. The train continued to offer freight and passenger service for many years. In 1926 the railroad went into private ownership and its name was changed to the Virginia Central Railroad and converted from narrow gauge to standard track. The final trip to Orange County was made on January 1, 1938. Subsequently, all but one mile of track through Fredericksburg was removed. In 1967 the remaining mile of line was sold to the City and Fredericksburg became the only municipality in the country to own a railroad. Then in 1984 the final whistle blew, bringing an era of over one-hundred years of service to an end.

Many thanks...

to Noel Harrison, local historian with the National Park Service, for his assistance, and to Robert A. Hodge, whose booklet *Alum Spring Park - A History* (available at Central Rappahannock Regional Library) proved invaluable.