



Photos by
of Drinnan

into the creek to break the near silence and sends ripples along the glossy olive-hued surface.

The quiet mysterious lure of the Wissahickon catalyzed Edgar Allen Poe's imagination. Poe frequented the park when he lived in Philadelphia and wrote *Morning on the Wissahickon*, a tale about a mysterious boatman on the water here.

Across the road the trail picks up again. About half a mile down is a popular unofficial swimming area. Large slabs of rocks on a cliff about 15 feet above the creek form platforms. Here the Wissahickon ranges in depth from ten feet to more than 30 feet, which makes this place ideal for cliff diving. Although the water may not be as clean as when Poe visited the Wissahickon, it is clean enough for swimming—much cleaner than the radiation and toxic-chemical-steeped water in the Susquehanna. I wouldn't recommend swallowing the water though.

A few hundred yards down the creek a tributary empties into the Wissahickon. About a hundred yards up the tributary, stone walls and



boulders form a pool and provide another unofficial swimming and diving area. As the water is shallow here, diving or jumping in from only a few feet above the water or taking a shallow dive is in order.

Further down the trail, a Roman-arched bridge towers more than 100 feet over the trail. This stone bridge crosses over the park here and spans the Schuylkill River into which the Wissahickon empties after winding about half a mile downstream. A painting of people rowing a boat along the Schuylkill by this bridge hangs in

the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

It takes about 45 minutes to walk the trail from the Bells Mill entrance to Valley Green Restaurant, and from the restaurant to the Henry Avenue parking lot the walk takes about an hour and a quarter, if one keeps a steady pace. Most visitors should be enticed to slow down and enjoy the walk along the wooded banks of the meandering Wissahickon—this refuge from the bedlam of center city Philadelphia a mere fifteen-minute drive away.

Directions to the park from the

Harrisburg area are: Take the turnpike east to King of Prussia (Valley Forge exit) or take route 283 east to route 30 to route 202 north, Norristown, which is picked up just outside of Exton, to the Expressway (76) east. From the expressway get off on the Blue Route (476). From 476 get off at the Conshohocken exit which follows Ridge Pike. From Ridge Pike look for a sign that reads "Valley Green," which directs you to a left-hand turn onto Bells Mill Road. About a half mile down Bells Mill Road is a parking lot for Fairmount Park.