

Susquehannock State Park, a family retreat

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This month of May marks the sixteenth anniversary of the opening of Lancaster County's only state park.

For these last sixteen years, this scenic, quiet, non-commercial state park has remained practically unknown to most of the surrounding population areas. Local neighbors often picnicked, hiked or played ball there but it was not until the possibility that the park might be bought by Philadelphia Electric that it made its mark in the public eye.

According to park foreman, Oliver Sheaffer, the 224 acre Susquehannock State Park opened to the public in May of 1965. Sheaffer has been foreman there for the last ten years. He has seen the facilities at the park expand gradually over this last decade. He also noted the great surge of interest generated in the totally non-commercial park since the public announcement of the possibility of the park's being acquired by Philadelphia Electric.

After holding public hearings and considering all sides of the issue, the State continues to maintain Susquehannock Park as its sole Lancaster County state park. Local residents and outsiders as well were heartened by the news that the park would

remain in the state's Department of Environmental Resources and therefore remain a natural setting for family and group recreation.

A recent visit to the park for photographic purposes proved to present plenty of evidence to support the notion that the park is a peaceful, restful bit of nature saved for drinking in the beauty of rolling, grassy hills which are trimmed by forests filled with trails for hiking and horseback riding.

The dogwood bloomed this May, according to Sheaffer prettier than in any of the other springs in the ten years he has worked there. The fields and dogwood were strikingly reminiscent of Valley Forge, better known for its natural beauty among the general public.

With the recent attention of the possible purchase, the park has, almost suddenly it seems, just been discovered by the people in the surrounding areas. Until recently, it was used for family gatherings and local scout and other youth organizations.

Sheaffer noted that many Amish gatherings especially during their holidays come to the Park for recreation as well. Hitching rails are provided for the horses of Amish and riding club groups and ample parking lots are provided for automobiles. Much of the park,



Oliver Sheaffer, park foreman at the Susquehannock State Park, takes care of the grounds and the nature trails. He says he feels the park is a great place for families to come for rest and relaxation.

however, is accessible only by foot or horseback trails.

The Susquehannock State Park is located on a wooded plateau high above the Susquehanna River in



These dogwood trees highlight the edge of your forte, you can always play a game of ball the open meadow at the park. If hiking isn't in the meadows.



Beautiful trees, the Susquehanna River flowing in the background, self-guided tours and clean grounds all grace the State Park in Lancaster County.

Southern Lancaster County. It rises up out of the River Hills area and commands a scenic spot from which to view the river and several sites within the visible boundaries from the overlook area of the park.

From the overlook one can easily see across the river one of the largest nuclear power plants in the world. The Peach Bottom, York County, plant contains three units and has been in operation since the early sixties. It is owned and operated by Philadelphia Electric.

Also a part of the Philadelphia Electric's enterprises in the area is the Conowingo Dam Reservoir. The backed-up water from the high dam-breast built in Maryland just below the state line is fourteen miles long and one mile wide. The "lake" has a maximum depth of 109 feet. Small boats operated by pleasure fishermen can be seen plying their way up and down and across the lake.

As the boats reach the upper end of the "lake" and draw almost

directly opposite from the west-shore Peach Bottom Atomic power plant, the boats will pass by an island which appears to be nearly round in circumference and rising in the center to a perfect cone-shape.

The irony is that this island, so close to the early nuclear power plant, is the world's first Bald Eagle sanctuary. The island is called Mt. Johnson Island.

At the base of the steep hill atop which the outlook rests are the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks laid in 1877 and now operated by Conrail.

Prior to the railroad's coming through the county, the river was used as a primary means for transporting goods into the Commonwealth through a series of canals on the Western shore in York County. The Susquehanna Canal was put into operation in 1840 and taken out of service in 1894.

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This little hiker stops to look at a bit of nature's wonders along the self-guided nature trail at the Susquehanna State Park.

Homestead Notes