



# The Respite

The official newspaper  
of Rock Creek Park

Winter 2008

## Georgetown's African-American Heritage

Nestled along the back streets and historic homes of Georgetown, lies an unassuming patch of green space that is the birthplace of the neighborhood known as Herring Hill. This African-American community, established soon after the colony of Maryland created Georgetown in 1751, was named for the annual herring run in Rock Creek, which meanders through this historic Washington neighborhood.

Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, Herring Hill grew to encompass roughly one quarter of what is now present day Georgetown. Bordered by M Street on the south and R Street on the north, and between 26<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> Streets, more than 1,000 black families lived in this 15-block area by the late 1800's and worked as gardeners, cooks, and stable help for the gentry of Georgetown and the surrounding area.

Although M Street is now considered the main artery through Georgetown, P Street was the main avenue of Herring Hill. P Street, like any community's main thoroughfare, was brimming with stores, schools, and businesses, all catering specifically to the African-American population.

By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, urban renewal programs gentrified the neighborhood and forced the majority of African-American families out of their historic birthplace. Although the majority of the original black families have moved to other areas of Washington, several of the original 18th century churches are still in existence and are attended by descendants of those original Herring Hill citizens.

We invite you to step back in time and discover the incredible stories of struggle, adversity, and achievement in one of the earliest and largest African-American communities established in Washington DC. Tours of Herring Hill and the African-Americans who called this neighborhood home for two centuries are on Rock Creek Park's Black Georgetown Hike. Join us to learn about prominent Herring Hill residents like Emma V. Brown, who opened a school for Georgetown's black children in her home, Dr. James Fleet, one of Herring Hill's three black physicians, and Alfred Lee, a prominent black business owner who had a business on P Street.

The schedule for this tour can be found online at [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr). The Black Georgetown Hike begins at the Old Stone House, 3051 M Street. Comfortable shoes and water are recommended for this 90 minute tour.



Present day view of P street in the area once known as Herring Hill.

*Herring Hill holds reminders of Georgetown's 19th century African-American community.*

### Welcome from the Superintendent

Rock Creek Park is a unique urban oasis in our nation's capital. It offers visitors the opportunity to relax and reflect. It is a respite from the everyday. Whether you spent your childhood wandering through these woods or this is your first visit to the park, you will find something that brings a smile to your face and peace to your heart.

Exploring the park trails is a popular recreational activity. Some of these trails were originally designed for horseback riding and some also offer scenic views of the forest and the creek. Rock Creek Park also has much to offer if you are interested in history. Wander through the Civil War sites at Fort DeRussey and Fort Stevens (the only Washington fort that saw battle during the civil war), or visit one of the oldest standing structures in the District of Columbia, the Old Stone House in Georgetown.

Rock Creek Park is part of the National Park Service and, like all national parks, our mission is to preserve our natural and cultural resources not just for today but for generations to follow. You can help us protect these areas by enjoying your experiences in the park and by taking only pictures and leaving only footprints. Enjoy the respite of Rock Creek Park.

Sincerely,

Adrienne A. Coleman  
Superintendent

### 2. Exploring Washington's Winter Night Sky

Just because it's winter doesn't mean there isn't a lot to see in the night sky. Discover the amazing adventure the night sky offers and learn what you can see right from your front door.

### 3. How to Become Bird Brained in Rock Creek

Cardinals, Chickadees and Blue Birds, Oh My! Read about the many bird species who spend their Winters in Rock Creek Park. We also have some recommendations on where the best spots are to find our winter feathered friends.

### 3. Rock Creek, A Park Fit for a President

Rock Creek Park has been a respite for many of our Presidents. Read how past Presidents spent their leisure time in one of the nation's oldest National Parks.

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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

### Rock Creek Park

Rock Creek Park was founded in 1890 as one of the first federal parks. When the park was established, it bordered the edge of the growing city and was a favorite area for rural retreats. In the establishing legislation, Rock Creek Park would “provide for the preservation from injury or spoilation of all timber, animals, or curiosities within said park, and their retention in their natural condition, as nearly as possible.”

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

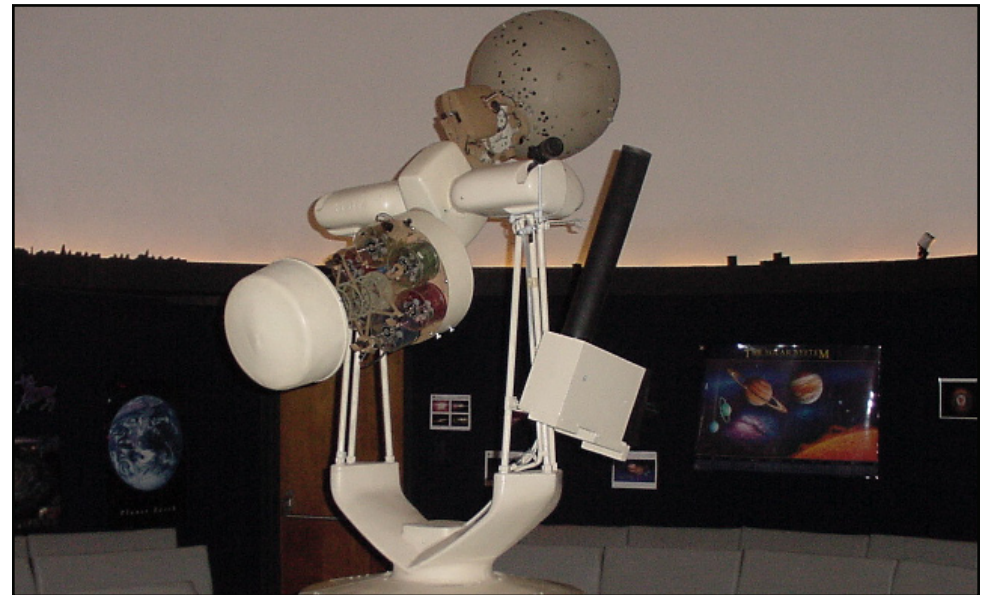
# Exploring Washington’s Winter Night Sky

The winter night sky is full of wonderful things: two bears, a king with his queen and beautiful daughter, a flying horse, a hunter, a bull, the seven sisters, and more. These pictures are in the stars, but it will take patience and an imagination to see how they fit. Let that be your adventure!

Begin your adventure as you step outside just after the Sun has disappeared below the horizon. You can see a glow on the horizon where the Sun has set. Point your left shoulder toward that glow so that you are now facing north. Now wait until the sky is dark enough to see stars. As the stars appear, you will see, in the north, a familiar pattern of stars, the Big Dipper in which four stars form the bowl and three others form the handle. The two bowl stars farthest from the handle are the pointer stars because they point to the North Star, Polaris. Try this! Point a finger at the bottom (of the bowl) pointer and move it past the upper pointer until it points to the first bright star. That will be Polaris, the North Star.

Polaris is at the end of an arc of stars which forms the handle of the Little Dipper. At the other end of the handle you will see four stars which form its bowl. Some people may think that the two dippers are constellations, but they are actually asterisms. An asterism is an easily-recognized pattern of stars which usually is a part of a constellation. Here, the Big Dipper is a part of the constellation Ursa Major, the Big Bear and the Little Dipper is a part of the constellation Ursa Minor, the Little Bear.

The interpretation of star patterns is not universal. In England, for instance, the Big Dipper is often called the Plough. In this country, the fugitive slaves called it the Drinking Gourd. The Drinking Gourd and the North Star were beacons that guided the



Rock Creek Park is home to the only Planetarium in the National Park Service.

fugitives north on the Underground Railroad.

In the western sky, just above the horizon where the Sun has set, lies the constellation Pegasus, the flying horse. You can see four stars forming a large square, the Great Square of Pegasus.

If the sky is dark and clear, you may be able to see a wide band of stars (light) crossing the sky, the Milky Way. In the Milky Way toward the north-east, you will see a pattern of stars that looks like the letter W (or M). This is the constellation Cassiopeia, the Queen of Ethiopia (probably the ancient kingdom of Cush). Her husband, Cepheus, lies just east of her but closer to the horizon. Between Cassiopeia and Pegasus lies their beautiful daughter, Andromeda.

Perhaps the most prominent winter constellation is Orion, the hunter, with his club, sword, and lion skin shield. Orion has everything: something red, something blue, something old, something new! Betelgeuse is a very old, red star. Rigel is a hot blue star.

And the Great Nebula near the tip of Orion’s sword is a maternity ward for new stars.

Orion is facing a V-shaped group of stars, the Hyades, which, with the bright star Aldebaran for an eye, forms the head of the constellation Taurus, the bull. Beyond Taurus you will see a small cluster of stars, the Pleiades also known as the Seven Sisters.

For more information on your sky adventures, join us in Rock Creek Park’s planetarium and meet George who will show you the wonders of the night sky. We have the only planetarium in the National Park Service. Public planetarium programs are scheduled at 4:00 PM each Wednesday (for the youngest astronomers) and at 1:00 PM and 4:00 PM on Saturdays and Sundays. Visit our web site – [www.nps.gov/rocr/](http://www.nps.gov/rocr/) - for a complete schedule of planetarium and other programs. Our planetarium is a part of the Nature Center located at 5200 Glover Road, NW Washington, DC. In addition to your backyard, our planetarium is a good place to start your exploration of Washington’s winter night sky.

## Visitor Information

### Nature Center & Planetarium

The Nature Center is open Wednesday - Sunday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Planetarium is open only during show times. Show times for the planetarium are Wednesday at 4:00 p.m., Saturday at 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. and Sunday at 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

### Peirce Mill

Peirce Mill is currently closed due to renovations and repairs. Peirce Barn, next to the Mill, is serving as a Visitor Contact Station and Bookstore. The Peirce Barn is open Saturday and Sunday from Noon to 4:00 p.m.

### Old Stone House

The Old Stone House is located at 3051 M Street in Georgetown and is open to the public for tours Wednesday to Sunday from Noon to 5:00 p.m. Eastern National Bookstore, located in the front room of the Old Stone House, is open every day Noon - 5:00 p.m.

### Entrance Fees

Rock Creek Park is FREE!

### Park Regulations

Camping is prohibited in all park areas.  
All park areas are closed to the viewing of wildlife with an artificial light.  
All park areas are closed to swimming, wading, and bathing.  
Removing or damaging natural or cultural resources is prohibited.  
Alcoholic beverages are prohibited from all park areas.  
Fires permitted only in grills or fireplaces; visitors may bring their own grill and use them in designated picnic areas only.  
Parking allowed only in designated parking areas.  
Washing vehicles within Rock Creek Park is prohibited.  
Dogs must be on leash in all park areas.

## Volunteer Opportunities in Rock Creek Park

Do you enjoy working outdoors, helping people and animals, educating others about our country’s natural and cultural resources, or working to care for and manage these beautiful places? Well why not become a volunteer at Rock Creek Park?

Rock Creek Park is recruiting motivated individuals to volunteer their time and talents in one of the nation’s oldest National Parks. You can lend a hand at the Rock Creek Park Nature Center, Rock Creek Park Horse Center, and the Old Stone House.

Volunteer opportunities are available in the following areas:

- Equestrian Care
- Visitor Services
- Resource Management

For more information about these volunteer opportunities, please visit the Rock Creek Park website at [www.nps.gov/rocr/](http://www.nps.gov/rocr/) and click on Volunteer.



Volunteers cleaning up at Fort Stevens.

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is looking for interns! Get the chance to live and work at Rock Creek Park or another National Parks, Forest, or Historic Site. Some of the Internship opportunities are in the fields of environmental education, interpretation and visitor services, and natural resource management. For more information visit the Student Conservation Association website [www.theSCA.org](http://www.theSCA.org).

# How to Become Bird Brained in Rock Creek

Rock Creek Park has always been an important stop for migratory birds to rest and feed during their long journeys in the spring and fall. While many birds live in the park year round, others migrate to the park from far northern regions to spend the winter in a climate that is milder than the areas from where they originated. This constant turnover of birds among the local population makes bird watching a popular pastime even in the chilliest of months. Here are a few tips for those of you who would like to take up this educational and environmentally friendly diversion.

## What You Will Need

You should start with a comprehensive field guide. This will allow you to identify and record the many birds you will observe in the park. Stop by the nature center for a free bird check list to aide you in your quest. A good pair of binoculars is necessary for successful sightings preferably with a 7 or 8 magnification. Inexpensive binoculars will not provide you with proper alignment or a clear view. Birds have a tendency to move from place to place quickly. Sharing binoculars often results in a missed birding opportunity for someone in the group. Dress for the weather and wear comfortable foot wear.

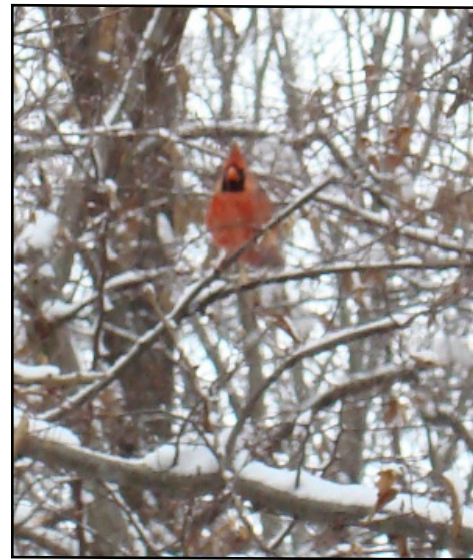
## Where & When To Go

The best times for bird watching are around sunrise and sunset. One of the most popular birding spots in the park is picnic area #18,

because it has the type of terrain visited by multiple bird species. Located on elevated land it sits in an area where the upland forest meets the meadow a perfect place to practice your ornithological past time. But don't nest here. Try to visit as many different habitats as possible. For example, walking along Rock Creek will help you view water birds such as ducks and King Fishers.

## What You Will See

Common year round resident birds include: Cardinals, Eastern Blue Birds, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Red Bellied Woodpeckers, Pileated Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, and Wrens. Birds that you will see in Rock Creek Park only in winter include the White-throated Sparrow, Junco, and the Winter Wren.



Cardinals are one of the many species of birds who spend the winter in Rock Creek Park.

# Rock Creek, A Park Fit for a President

Rock Creek Park has a long standing connection with the presidents of our country. From its earliest days the park has been a place of relaxation and recreation enjoyed by Presidents and citizens alike.

Many of the Presidents have come to enjoy the peace and beauty of Washington's largest expanse of green space, Rock Creek Park. Andrew Johnson would bring his family to the park for picnics in the area of Peirce Mill. Woodrow Wilson, the only President to marry while in office, courted his wife while on walks along Ross Drive. He would have his driver drop them off at one end of Ross Drive and wait for them at the other. Meanwhile Secret Service would ensure that the couple remained undisturbed. Harry Truman and his family were present for the opening night performance of the Carter Baron Amphitheater. Dwight Eisenhower would take a break from the cares of the Oval Office in a round of golf at the park's golf course. Ronald Reagan would do the same by riding horses at the Rock Creek stables and equitation field.

Perhaps the President that utilized and appreciated Rock Creek Park's resources the most was Teddy Roosevelt. He approached the park with its forest covered hills and the stream filled valleys with the same enthusiasm and spirit he showed for the parks out west. Only the most intrepid and enduring of hikers was able to match Roosevelt's rapid pace and point-to-point manner of hiking. One such hiker was the French Ambassador Jules Jusserand. On one of his first

meetings with the president, Jusserand and a number of others joined Roosevelt on one of his point-to-point hikes. As one by one the others were left behind amidst the brush and streams, Jusserand doggedly kept pace with Roosevelt. He became a good friend of the President's and one of the few people who would regularly hike with Roosevelt in the park.

Roosevelt's love of the outdoors was not limited only to those who could keep pace with him. In the summers he would bring his family to the park, pulling the children in wagons once they tired. Winters saw them sledding down the park's many hills.

Every day is President's day in Rock Creek Park. Come enjoy the park's beauty and it's many recreational opportunities as did past Presidents.



Visit the Jusserand Memorial along Beach Drive. Jusserand was the Ambassador to the U.S. from France and a close friend of President Teddy Roosevelt.

## Contact Information & Phone Numbers

Facility	Address	Phone
Nature Center	5200 Glover Road, NW	202-895-6070
Peirce Barn	Beach Drive and Tilden Street	202-282-0927
Old Stone House	3051 M Street, NW	202-426-6851
Carter Barron Amphitheatre	16th Street and Colorado Ave.	202-426-0486
Thompson Boat Center	2900 Virginia Ave, NW	202-333-9543 202-333-4861
Rock Creek Horse Center	5100 Glover Road, NW	202-362-0117
Tennis Center	3149 16th Street, NW	202-722-5949
U.S. Park Police	1800 Beach Drive	202-619-7300

# Ranger Programs

## Young Planetarium

4:00 p.m. Wednesdays  
Planetarium

This introduction to the night sky for the youngest of astronomers is a shortened version of our Night Sky Planetarium Program. Ages 4 and older.

## Winter Night Sky

1:00 p.m. Saturdays & Sundays  
Planetarium

Visit the only planetarium in the National Park system and explore the wonders of the night sky. View the brightest stars, planets, and constellations and learn their stories. Ages 5 and older.

## Exploring the Universe

4:00 p.m. Saturdays & Sundays  
(December and January)  
Planetarium

Join us for a series of planetarium programs exploring the universe. Topics for these programs include the sun, moon, stars, planets, and other space phenomena. Ages 7 and older.

## Night Sky to Freedom

4:00 p.m. Saturdays & Sundays  
(February only)  
Planetarium

In honor of African-American History Month, learn how enslaved people on the Underground Railroad used the night sky as a compass to reach freedom. Ages 7 and older.

## Creature Feature

4:00 p.m. Fridays  
Nature Center

Get acquainted with the Nature Center's live animals and assist a park ranger in their feeding. All ages.

## Black Georgetown Walks

Please contact Nature Center for times. Old Stone House  
Explore the stories of sacrifice, adversity, and success on this ranger-led tour of historic Herring Hill, a Georgetown neighborhood that holds reminders of the vibrant African-American community that thrived in the 19th century. Ages 8 and older.

## A Presidential Park Hike

Please contact Nature Center for times and location.

Join a park ranger on this scenic hike and discover how previous American Presidents have utilized Rock Creek

Park for a source of wealth, recreation, and solitude. Ages 8 and up.

## Meridian Hill Hike

Please contact Nature Center for times.

## Meridian Hill Park

Learn the story of Meridian Hill Park while strolling along the scenic walkways of statues and fountains of this man-made oasis. Meet at the Joan of Arc statue above the cascading waterfall. All ages.

## Children's Programs

4:00 p.m. Thursdays

Children of all ages can join a park ranger to learn about the natural and cultural resources of Rock Creek Park. Programs are designed to be interactive, so children can play as they learn. Program topics vary. Ages 3 and up.

## Nature Walks

Please Contact Nature Center for location and times.

Experience the diverse natural and geological features of Rock Creek Park on this ranger-led hike. Distances and ability level vary for each hike. Ages 7 and older.

## Historical Hikes

Please Contact Nature Center for location and times.

Learn the cultural and historical story of Rock Creek Park while strolling along walkways and footpaths. Distances and ability level varies for each hike. All ages.

Please contact the Nature Center at **202-895-6070** or visit the Rock Creek Park website at [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr) and click on the Ranger led Programs link for a complete list of activities and programs available.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Washington, D.C. 20008

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

# Join Us in Sharing Your “Memorable Trees of Rock Creek Park”

Rock Creek Park invites you to partake in the quest of celebrating the beauty of the park’s natural elements—specifically, trees through the expression of art. So grab your camera, or paint brushes, pencils, and canvas and head out into the park! Use your artistic talent to capture the beauty and essence of Rock Creek Park trees that are meaningful to you. We’re not just looking for the largest tree(s), but also those trees that are noteworthy for their beauty, age, history, community significance, or for any other reason that is relevant to the artist.

Send us your framed photographs, paintings, or drawings of the tree(s) along with an essay of 300 words or less telling why the selected tree(s) have significant meaning for you. Your framed submission should be no larger than 18” x 24”.

Your choice of trees can be from Rock Creek Park proper or any of the other areas in Washington, D.C., administered by Rock Creek Park, including Palisades Park, Glover Archbold Park, Whitehaven Park, Battery Kemble Park, Fort Reno Park, Soapstone Valley Park, Little Forest Park, Fort Stevens Park, Battleground National Cemetery, Meridian Hill Park, Old Stone House, Francis Scott Key Memorial, Dumbarton Oaks Park, Montrose Park, Normanstone Parkway, Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Klinge Valley Park, Melvin Hazen Park, Bryce Park, Fort Bayard Park, Fort Slocum Park, or Fort Totten Park.

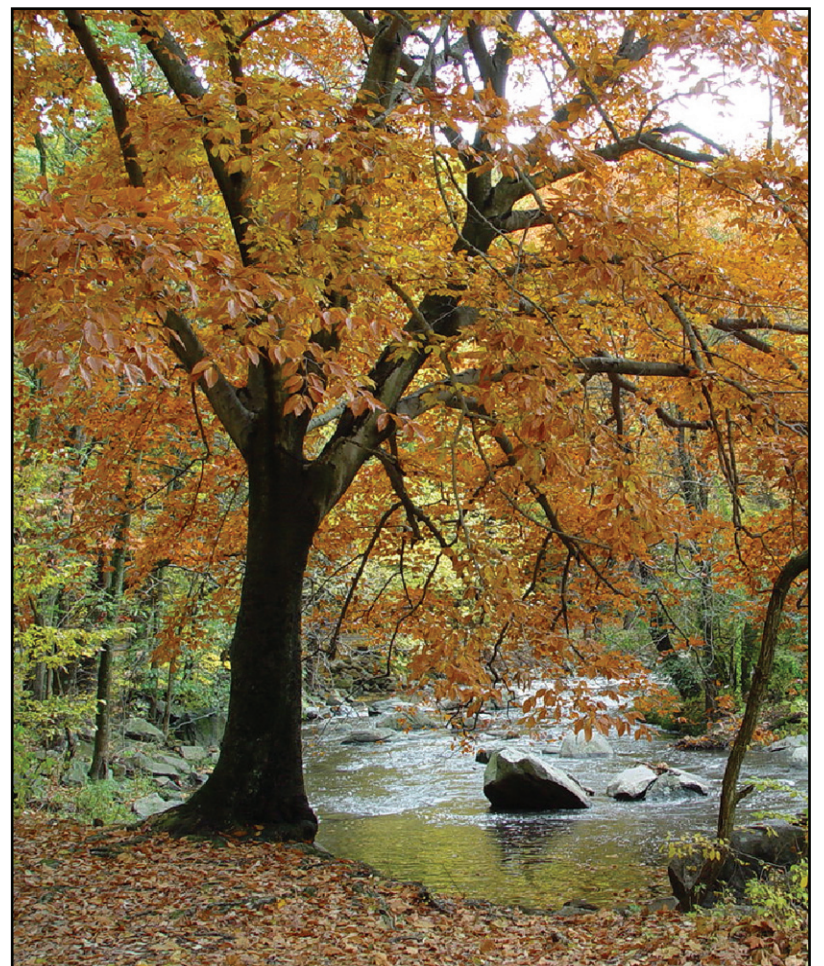
This exhibit is open to visitors of all ages. Entries must be hand delivered to the Rock Creek Park Nature Center and Planetarium by close of business March 16, 2008.

Visitors whose images are chosen from the entries will be invited to attend the opening exhibit and reception the evening of April 6, 2008.

All visitors whose images are chosen will receive a copy of *Remarkable Trees of the World* by Thomas Pakenham.

All submitted images and essays can be picked up by participants at the Rock Creek Park Nature Center and Planetarium after July 5, 2008.

For more information, visit our website: [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr) or call (202) 895-6070.



One of the many beautiful and inspiring trees found along Rock Creek.