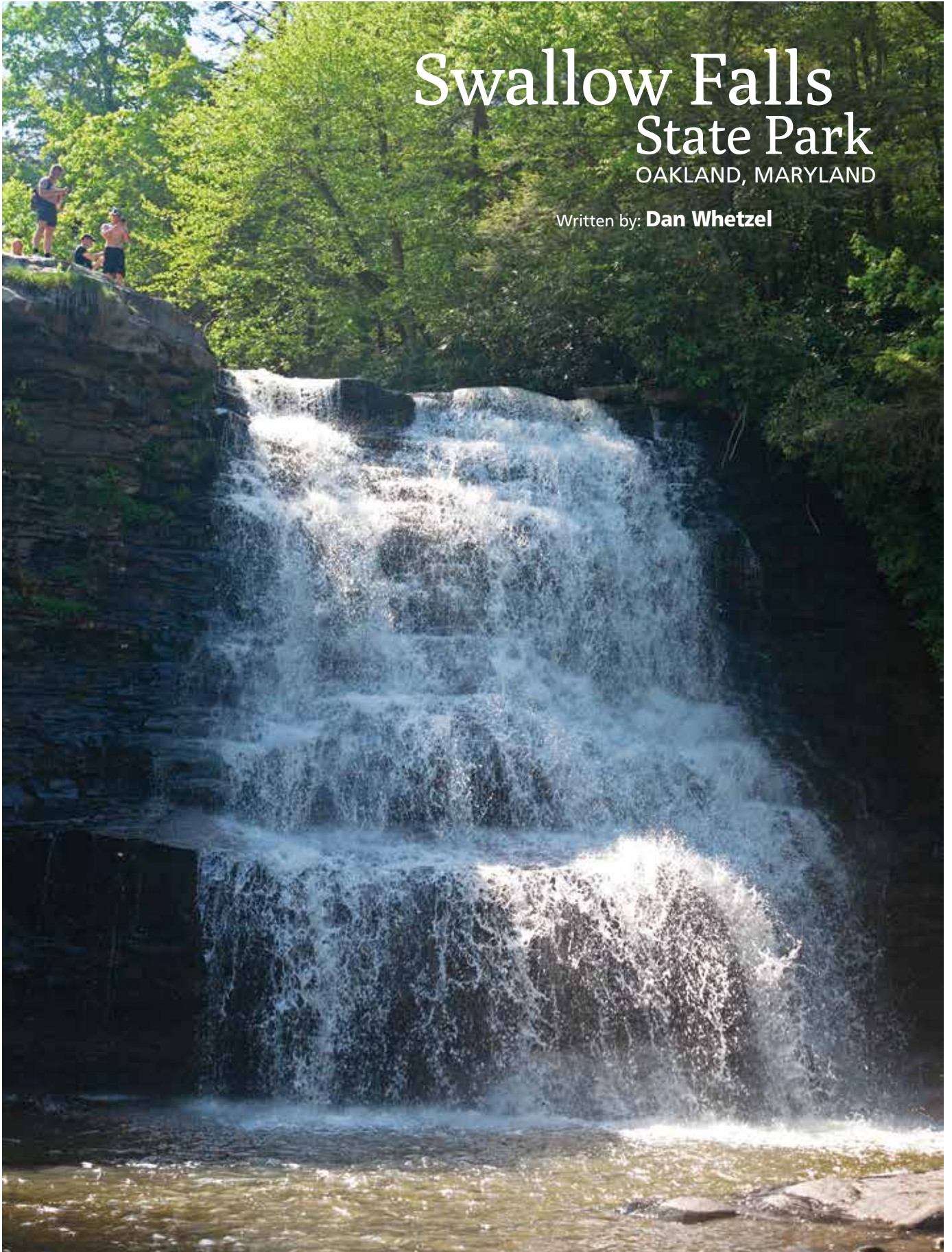


Swallow Falls State Park

OAKLAND, MARYLAND

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**



Where do visitors enjoy the splendor of four waterfalls by walking a short scenic trail? And where may one experience a forest that provides a glimpse into the primeval past? The answer is Swallow Falls State Park, an area known for its natural beauty and unique environmental setting.

Swallow Falls State Park located in Garrett County, Maryland, offers a variety of natural wonders within quiet surroundings. Its 37 acres of Hemlock trees are remarkable not only for their appearance, but also for their affect on the senses—the dense shade and canopy cause a silence bordering on reverence. The tall silent sentinels have survived for more than 300 years in a region that was heavily logged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, thereby elevating them to a place of special significance. Swallow Falls is one of the few areas in Maryland where the public may enjoy a large grove of the old-growth trees accompanied by one of the nine state-designated “Scenic Rivers.”

Swallow Falls visitors become immersed in the sights and sounds of the Youghiogheny, a whitewater river that surges north through the shaded forest and rocky gorge. To experience the river and nearby Muddy Creek, it is recommended that guests follow the Swallow Falls Canyon Trail that begins in the visitor’s parking area. The trail sign is easily spotted and provides a convenient way to experience the flora, fauna, and waterfalls.



The most popular of the water features is Muddy Creek Falls, the highest free-falling waterfall in Maryland. Three additional waterfalls on the trail—Upper Swallow Falls, Lower Swallow Falls, and Tolliver Falls have their own aesthetically pleasing qualities that are favorites of photographers and guests who enjoy the peaceful qualities of the park.



Facing page: Muddy Creek Falls, Maryland’s highest free falling waterfall. PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

Above: Swallow Falls State Park, named for a rock pillar that once housed hundreds of nesting cliff swallows, is also home to 37 acres of old-growth Hemlock trees.

PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

Left: Many winters in Garrett County are cold enough to freeze Muddy Creek Falls, although water continues to flow under the spectacular frozen structure.

PHOTO BY LANCE C. BELL

Right: Upper Swallow Falls on the Youghiogheny River is a popular spot for photographers, swimmers and waders.

PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

Below: The two couples are believed to be Harvey Firestone and wife, Idabelle, (left) and Henry Ford and wife, Clara, (right) enjoying Upper Swallow Falls while on vacation in the early 1920s.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY SWALLOW FALLS STATE PARK



Henry Krug, a private land owner of the Muddy Creek Falls section, also protected the old-growth forest from exploitation and later willed the property to the Grand Masons Lodge whose members enjoyed it as a retreat center.

The Garretts and Free Masons were not the only ones enjoying Garrett County hospitality. In 1921, American industrialists Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and Harvey Firestone vacation-

Swallow Falls State Park has been a popular destination site since its inception when the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built roads, stone and log accommodations, and additional infrastructure during the 1930s. A park pavilion constructed by the CCC is still in use and provides a venue for special events.

Public access to the park's core area was made possible after a generous donation by John and Robert Garrett, whose family played a significant role in the industrial development of Western Maryland. Their gift of nearly 2,000 acres of land to the state in 1906 added to the family's legacy. Fortunately, the donors stipulated that the forest must be managed and protected.

ed for four days at Muddy Creek Falls. The self proclaimed "Vagabonds" set up camp adjacent to the falls where their activities were widely reported in national publications. The group not only brought attention to the benefits of outdoor recreation and forest conservation, but they also sparked an interest in vacation travel. Increased ownership of automobiles and the building of hard surface roads generated an interest in the hospitality industry that benefitted the captains of industry.

The state of Maryland later made formal arrangements with the Grand Masons to assume ownership of Swallow Falls State Park. Today, the camping amenities of Swallow Falls State Park include 65 designated sites, a playground,

picnic ground, and trails through the forest. Fishing and swimming are also available summertime activities.

Richard Hill, Park Naturalist, is familiar with Swallow Falls and nearby Herrington Manor State Parks. Over the years he observed that, “Most visitors are initially interested in seeing the waterfalls and old-growth forest. The near total shade, all the time, captures their interest. The only light in the forest happens when a Hemlock falls.” Richard also notes, “Once visitors are here, they also enjoy the special events that happen throughout the year. It is interesting that many of the guests I meet at Swallow Falls return every year.”

Special events continue to draw new visitors and long time friends to the park. “In the fall, during the Autumn Glory Festival, we have folks who come for the “Apple Butter Boil.” And throughout the year special events are popular, like weddings in the CCC Pavilion.”

Swallow Falls State Park could be described as a peaceful experience. According to Richard, it is an experience that more than 350,000 guests enjoy each year. Visitors may also conveniently travel to nearby Deep Creek Lake and other area outdoor attractions in Garrett County.

Swallow Falls State Park is located nine miles north of Oakland, Maryland, at 2470 Maple Glade Road.



Top: One needs to be cautious with the deeper, swifter current of Lower Swallow Falls.

PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

Above: Gentle Tolliver Falls on Tolliver Creek is a beautiful spot for photos.

PHOTO BY SHELBY CALHOUN

Left: Park Naturalist, Richard Hill, is familiar with Swallow Falls and nearby Herrington Manor State Parks.

PHOTO BY DAN WHETZEL