

Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park Highlights

Rutledge-Wilson Farm Community Park was opened in 2007 as part of the Parks, Open Space and Greenways element of the vision 20/20 plan. The 207-acre park is funded by the 2001 1/4-cent sales tax for Parks.

Animal Barn and Classroom

- The 4,112 square-foot animal barn is home to miniature horses, miniature donkeys, Nigerian dwarf goats, Boer goats, and Dorper sheep.
- The barn is heated and allows visitors to interact with the animals throughout the winter months. It also includes a veterinarian office, tack room, hay storage, nine exterior corrals, and a wash bay.
- The large open area at the east side of the barn houses “Irene the dairy queen.” Irene is a life size fiberglass Holstein cow. Irene holds water and allows visitors an opportunity to see what it is like to milk a cow.
- The barn’s classroom is used in a variety of ways including:
 - ✓ Educational programs (children’s classes, summer camps)
 - ✓ Recreation room available for rentals (birthday party, reunion’s, meetings)
 - ✓ Special events (crafts area, information area)

Cow Barn

- The cow barn is home to our small herd of beef and dairy cows including Holstein, Jersey, and Hereford cows. The barn also has direct access to the 3 acre pasture for the cows and an office for our Livestock coordinator.

Visitor Center

- The 2,060 square-foot building is a welcoming stage for visitors and field trips. The visitor center is home to a retail shop, site information, public restrooms, staff offices, and a conference room.
- The interior walls of the retail shop are lined with authentic barn wood reclaimed from the Valley Water Mill Equestrian Center project.
- The retail shop offers a variety of agriculture/wildlife products for both children and adults. It also serves as an information center for first time visitors.

Main Campus

- Areas accessible from the main campus include a farm-themed playground, turkey and chicken coops, pedal tractors area, three bonfire pits, and picnic area.

Fishing Pond

- The 1 acre fishing pond is stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish. Visitors may rent fishing poles and/or purchase bait from the retail shop and fish. Everything is catch and release only, so no permits are required. Fishing is open from March-October.

Farmhouse

- The original farmhouse on the property was located where the fishing pond currently sits. Unfortunately, the home burned and the family re-built the structure on the highest point of the property. Although the home is not quite as old, the stone foundation is inscribed with the date 1908 giving the impression that something was located there along with the original farmhouse.
- The bathroom by the kitchen was added in the 1970's. The space was originally used as a kitchen pantry. An outhouse was located just north of the garage/milk house. The home doesn't have a shower or a bathtub. The family heated water and took baths in a portable tub in the kitchen once a week. A shower was eventually built in the garage/milk house.
- The three upstairs bedrooms belonged to the children, mother, father, and the farmhand. Each room had a bed with a down comforter and mattress made from feathers pulled from the ducks kept at the farm.
- Family legend has it that runaway slaves were hid in the basement of the original house during the Civil War, and that during the battle of Wilson's Creek the home was used as a field hospital.

Milking Barn

- The authenticity of the milking barn makes it an important aspect of the farm park both from a historical and educational perspective. Though not yet complete, the Park Board would like to partner with a family or a local business to renovate the barn into another classroom and demonstration area. It will provide an authentic setting for visitors to learn about dairy cows and the many dairy products made from milk.

Garage and Milk House

- The actual dairy bottling operation took place in the garage next to the farmhouse, which the family called the Milk House. There was a boiler at the south end for sterilizing bottles, and you can still see the brick flue. The bottles were placed in crates and run through the steam vat before filling. All milk was sold in quart glass bottles while cream was sold in smaller ones. The family also operated a milk route to deliver the milk.
- The dairy operation was called “Walnut Grove Dairy,” because the area south of the original house was jam-packed with walnut trees which proved to be a good source of income.

Grounds and Pasture

- There are 70 acres of field crops. Every year 6-10 acres of that area is created into a corn maze/pumpkin patch. Location of the maze changed from year to year in order to prevent draining all the nutrients from any one particular area. Other crops include wheat, oats, clover, orchard grass, fescue, and sunflowers.
- One mile of the Wilson’s Creek Greenway Trail is located inside the park, and is to eventually connect with Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield to the south and Ewing Park to the north.
- There are 10 acres of native prairie established along the east side of Wilson’s Creek.
- There is a 1 acre orchard located to the south of the fishing pond with apple, pear, plum and peach trees. These trees grow very well in southwest Missouri and would have likely been the choice for early settlers. Adjacent to the orchard are 3 acres of wildflowers/pollinator prairie.
- There are 70 small and large raised garden beds on the northeast corner of the property that are available for patrons to rent for the gardening season. Participants are responsible for all the care and maintenance of their bed, but receive 100% of the harvest.

Historical Record of Park Property

- The earliest recorded name of the owner of the property is Daniel N. Beal who filed a federal land patent for the property along Wilson's Creek, 4 miles west of Springfield.
- The property changed hands multiple times before being passed down to John G. Wilson in 1944.
- In 1982 the Farm's ownership was passed onto Troy Rutledge.
- The entire property was purchased by the City of Springfield in 2001 as part of the 20/20 vision plan.
- Rutledge-Wilson farm Park opened to the public in December 2007.