A Walk Around Vernon Park in Germantown

A Photo Album and History

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"About Vernon Park," by Ruth Seeley

Friends of Vernon Park, https://friendsofvernonpark.org/
A Quiet Place in Germantown

Many Vernon Park activities and events have been postponed because of Covid-19, but residents still visit the park to refresh their spirits.
The First Protest Against Slavery

The Pastorius Monument in Vernon Park commemorates the first protest against slavery in North America. The protest was published by German Quakers who had fled religious persecution and settled in what is now Germantown. During World War II, the monument was boarded up to protect it from damage by anti-German groups.
Annual Vernon Park Bazaar

Usually held in the fall, the annual Bazaar in the park has been postponed because of the pandemic. We hope to hold it in the spring of 2021.
Under the Shady Old Tree Program for Children

Under the Shady Old Tree, presented in partnership with Friends of Joseph E Coleman Library, has become an important part of the Park’s summer events. It will resume in summer 2021.
Little Library, Donated by Baldwin School Students

Students from the Baldwin School presented the Park with a little free library in 2019. It has become a popular feature, providing children and adults with books for their enjoyment.
Center in the Park

Housed in a converted Carnegie Library, the Center in the Park provides activities, information, and friendship to Germantown's senior residents. Unfortunately, it is temporarily closed because of Covid-19.
Yoga in the Park

The Park has become a popular location for outdoor yoga classes.
Vernon Park Playground

As part of a makeover in 2015, the Park received all new equipment for its playground—a feature that is in use even now, when other activities have been postponed.
Mosaic Dedicated to Germantown Musician Sun Ra

On a wall behind the playground, this mosaic commemorates the late Germantown musician Sun Ra. Members of his band occasionally practice on their instruments in the Park.
Philly Pops in the Park at Vernon House

The front of historic Vernon House is an excellent location for outdoor concerts, including this one in the summer of 2019.
Making Trimmings for the Park's Holiday Tree

Each year Friends of Vernon Park invites neighborhood children to make decorations and trim our holiday tree. Our live holiday tree is named Cary's Tree in memory of longtime FoVP member Cary Lewis.
Winter in the Park

Even in cold winter weather, the Park is an inviting place for a walk.
The Monument Lab Program, 2017

In the fall of 2017, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation chose Vernon Park as one site for its Monument Lab program—an effort to explore the meaning of monuments in a modern city. Sculptor Karyn Olivier's "The Battle is Joined," an installation that covered the Battle of Germantown monument in the Park with reflective material, became a thought-provoking part of the neighborhood's life from September to November.
About Vernon Park

* Park Land acquired by the City of Philadelphia from Charles Wister in 1890.

**Buildings:**

Vernon House (earlier called the Wister House) built in 1803 by James Matthews and purchased by John Wister. His son, John Wister was a member of Congress. The Black Writers’ Museum is now housed in the first floor.

Center in the Park built as a Carnegie Library in 1907. Now a Senior Center.

**Monuments:**

Pastorius Monument, to commemorate the founding of Germantown by Franz Daniel Pastorius, the protest of the German Quakers of Germantown Against Slavery on February 18, 1688 and the German volunteers in the American Wars. The sculpture is by Albert Jaegers in 1917 and was not placed until 1920 following WW I and “removed from view” during WW II.

Battle of Germantown monument, erected by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 1903. Battle date: October 4, 1777. Map of the battlefield and a quote from Washington to the President of Congress from the Camp near Pennypacker’s Mills, 5th October 1777.

John Wister, Congressman John Wister, by Raffaelo Romanelli, 1903, installed by his son also named John Wister.

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**Friends of Vernon Park (FOVP)** organized in 1993 as one of the first three “Friends” groups in the city through a partnership between the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. First renovation carried out and playground installed in the mid-1990s.

FOVP was re-vitalized and re-organized in 2012. Reviewed park needs in 2013 and was chosen for a full green renovation with new lighting and playground in 2015. FOVP holds clean-ups, special events, Bazaars and co-hosts Germantown activities with other neighborhood groups, including Oldies in the Park, on Wednesday evenings in the summer.

Rain Garden planned and designed by the Tookany/Tacony Frankford Watershed Partnership (TTF) in 2011. (To see photos of before and after - check out the flickr section in the right-hand column of the FOVP website.)

Peace Pole dedicated to Sonia Sanchez, Philadelphia’s first Poet Laureate was installed at the community-wide Countdown to Germantown Day, held April 6, 2013.

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**Useful links for further information:**

Friends of Vernon Park: https://friendsofvernonpark.org
Friends of Vernon Park Facebook Page
Tookany/Tacony Frankford Watershed Partnership: http://ttfwatershed.org
Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation:http://www.phila.gov/parksandrecreation/Pages/default.aspx
Fairmount Park Conservancy: http://myphillyphpark.org
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society: http://phsonline.org
Germantown Historical Society: http://www.germantownhistory.org (They have an online collection.)
The Cultural Landscape Foundation: https://tclf.org/landscapes/vernon-park
Center in the Park: http://www.centerintheapark.org
Black Writers’ Museum: http://blackwritersmuseum.com
The Park from the Air
The Park Makeover, 2015

In 2015, the park underwent a makeover, including new lighting, improved pathways, a greatly improved playground, and installation of fitness equipment for adults. This map shows changes and improvements.