

## Brief History of Gypsy Hill Park

In 1876 Staunton purchased 30 acres of land at the edge of town to help control the springs that were part of the community's water supply. The City constructed a series of spring boxes that fed the water to the pump house (now the home of the Stonewall Brigade Band) where the water was sent up to the top of nearby Reservoir Hill. There, the water supplied Staunton homes and businesses by a system of gravity-fed pipes. Years later when the city upgraded its water system, it capped off the low hexagon brick spring boxes that are remnants of this system. The name Gypsy Hill Park acknowledges the fact that traveling gypsies would use this area for camping when in the vicinity.

By 1890, the city had acquired additional 90 acres and the idea to establish a recreational park was proposed. Councilman Capt. W.P. Tams is credited with planning and developing the site as a park. The minutes of the May 7, 1889 Staunton City Council meeting include the passing of the motion to this end. Over the years, land was added so that today Gypsy Hill Park encompasses 214 acres. There have been changes to the park throughout its history, however the original Victorian character and charm of the park remains, particularly at the main gateway. There, the original pump house and Garden Center buildings remain along with the historic gate piers and the wrought iron fences. Also several of the brick bases of the old spring boxes can be seen around the pump house.

An interesting historic fact is that cars were not allowed to travel through the park until October 1916. Now on any given day, hundreds of cars, motorcycles, bicycles, people and pets travel the 1.3-mile Constitution Drive that circles the park.

The list of all the recreational opportunities is too long to include but there is something for all ages and interests. A few of these opportunities include a public 18-hole golf course, baseball fields for Kiwanis youth programs, a duck pond, a Victorian bandstand that hosts concerts and the Gypsy Hill Express Train which is manned by volunteers. In 2016, the train was ridden by 13,712 young and old individuals.

Gypsy Hill Park is a treasure that brings enjoyment to all ages and is a source of pride to the local citizens and visitors who enjoy its recreational offerings. The park is open daily from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. so that the public can enjoy the sights, facilities and activities. Trip Advisor gives the Park a *Certificate of Excellence*.

It has been said "Gypsy Hill Park is the place everyone would dream of having in their home town."