

LEDGES TRAIL SELF—GUIDED TOUR

Trail distance is approximately 3/4 mile.

Follow posts with green numbers on L—Ledges Trail (see map on inside).

L-1 As you walk toward the stairs that will take you to the Ledges, look to your left. The Grand Ledge Spiritualist Association built the big red barn in the late 1800's as a meeting place for séances. It has also been used as a factory, roller rink, basketball court, and theater. It is currently the home of the Ledges Playhouse.

L-2 The Grand River which stretches in front of you helped to expose unique ledges that appear for approximately one mile in the Grand Ledge area. Today, the river is making a path for itself by eroding the opposite bank and depositing sediment in sandy plains on this side.

L-3 The island to your left is the seventh island of the Seven Islands Resort. At the turn of the century, the resort attracted thousands of vacationers to Grand Ledge for steamboat rides, rowboat rentals, mineral springs, and other activities. The seventh island was a favorite site for picnickers, but is now used as a breeding island for the ducks, geese, and swan which inhabit the river. A Native American legend claims that an Indian mother threw her seven sons into the river to save them from a rival tribe. Where each son landed, an island formed.

L-4 You are standing on what may have been an ocean beach. About 270 MILLION years ago, during the Pennsylvanian period, water covered much of Michigan. Sediments (sand, silt, and clay) were carried by the water and deposited in layers along the riverbanks and beaches. Time and pressure compacted and cemented such sediments into the rocks you see today. Touch the rock. Notice the sand-size, shiny quartz crystals on your fingertips. The Swiss cheese effect in the rock here is due to the action of water dissolving the calcite cement which holds the sand grains together.

L-5 Notice the powdery light green growth on these rocks. These plants are called lichens. They are a combination of an algae and a fungus; the algae produces the food from the sun and the fungus supplies moisture and support. The bright green plants you see are mosses. Touch them GENTLY - they feel like velvet. Look closely above the leaves to see the fine brown stalks which end in tiny capsules. These capsules contain spores, which will be dispersed by water and wind to develop into more moss plants.

L-7 The ledges are now a peaceful place, but their past was more colorful. Native American tribes, led by Chief Okemos, migrated through this area each year looking for game and tapping trees for maple syrup. To the Indians, the Grand Ledge area was known as Big Rocks. The ledges attracted more than just Indians. At one time the area was riddled with caves which were known as Robbers Caves or Counterfeiters Cave. Legend has it that the caves were used to stable stolen horses while they awaited sale. Another story claims that the caves were used to harbor fugitive slaves en-route to Canada.

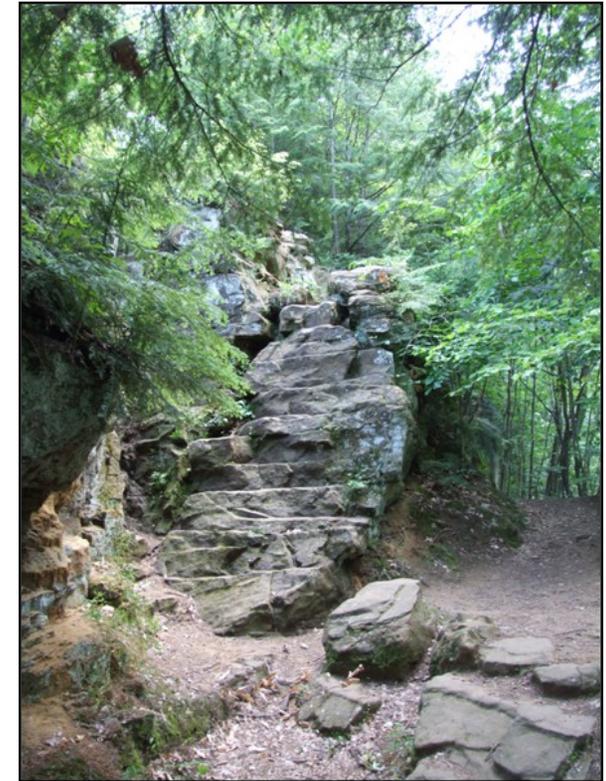
L-6 Liverworts, the smooth, green scales covering the rock here, were thought by the early settlers to resemble the shape of an animal liver...thus, they were used superstitiously as a treatment for liver ailments. Liverworts cling to the rock with rhizoids which work to absorb water and minerals from the rock. Look closely and you can see the tiny pores where gas exchange occurs. What do your pores do for you? Many of the liverwort species found in Fitzgerald Park are not found anywhere else in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Liverworts, lichens, and mosses all work as engineers, breaking down rock into soil.

L-8 The railroad trestle was built around 1888, probably by the Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Western Railroad. Several railroad companies offered excursion trains to the Seven Islands Resort. The trestle marks Fitzgerald Park's boundary. The trail continues into Grand Ledge and ends at Island Park, the second island of the Seven Islands Resort. The remainder of the trail crosses private property. PLEASE respect the rights of those who own the land.

If you have any questions about what you have read or seen, please contact the Eaton Parks Naturalist.

FITZGERALD PARK TRAILS

www.EatonCountyParks.org



EATON COUNTY PARKS
133 Fitzgerald Park Drive
Grand Ledge, MI 48837-9766
(517) 627-7351
ParksDept@eatoncounty.org



A MEMORABLE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

Fitzgerald Park

Trails

- 1 - West Woods Trail
- 2 - Wildflower Trail
- 3 - East Bloodwell
- 4 - River Ridge Trail
- 5 - Bloodwell Trail
- 6 - Acorn Loop
- 7 - Hemlock Trail
- - - 8 - South Trail
- - - 9 - River Bottom Trail
- - - 10 - Baneberry Trail
- - - 11 - Sandstone Cr Trail
- - - L - Ledges Trail
- Pkg Lot Trail
- - - Bike Path

Park Facilities

- | | | | |
|--|------------------|--|------------------|
| | Gate | | Playground |
| | Parking | | Canoe Dock |
| | Handicap Parking | | Sledding Hill |
| | Restroom | | Ball Field |
| | Park Office | | Basketball Court |
| | Theater | | Volleyball Court |
| | Pavillion | | Trail Head |
| | Picnic Site | | Disc Golf |

