



OAKLAND
COUNTY PARKS

The Wilder Side of Oakland County

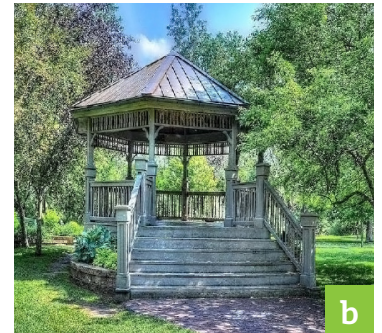
by Jonathan Schechter

A Musical Day at Depot Park



I almost forgot about the existence of Depot Park until I saw a Clarkston Family Farm Facebook post promoting its free “Music in the Park” event at this extremely picturesque and well-maintained public park near downtown Clarkston. That event occurred on August 1. I placed other tasks aside and headed off to Clarkston to relax, enjoy music by the *Stardusters Big Band* and of course explore the wilder side of the park.

Depot Park is a great place to meander or have a picnic and it even has modern play structures for children. A bit of on-line research revealed this 35-acre park is the largest single property in the City of The Village of Clarkston. I arrived an hour before “Music in the Park” was set to begin at 6 pm. Available adjacent parking was already scarce; traffic was backed up and the metered lots were busy. (a)



I skipped the metered lots and instead went to my parking plan B and headed towards the long-standing Kinetic Systems bicycle shop a short walk away on Main Street (M-15) and asked management if I could park in their lot since they close at 6 p.m. With a gracious yes as their answer, it was time to wander back to the park and I also assured management I will be returning to that shop soon to explore E-Bikes. It was then time to wander back to the park and cross a small foot bridge again.



Although the centerpiece of Depot Park is their beautiful gazebo I wandered about exploring the very tame, wilder side of this gem. Much of the park is a wetland, fed by a tributary of the Clinton River. I was amazed at how many people had gathered and were already settled in on lawn chairs and blankets. I meandered over to the shoreline of the shallow river and watched a few fish heading up stream and took note of Canada Geese resting and grazing on the lawn. Their behavior told me they were obviously very accustomed to people. (b)

Depot Park is divided by a stream and a paved walking path surrounds the peaceful confines. Picnic areas and park benches dot either side of the stream and the grounds are well-maintained (c)



Clarkston Family Farm staff and volunteer had areas set up where children could see and interact with rabbits and goats. Their live animal areas were a hit I was not surprised to see signage with the words “Have Fun, Be Safe, Dig It.” That mantra is used at farm programs; something I discovered when I volunteered at the farm for some of their events.

Although I was not quick enough with my camera to capture the moment, it was fun watching someone's leashed dog walk up and sniff at a bronze statue of a dog. I was told the dog's name is Clark and it is a tribute to community volunteers.

A live Monarch Butterfly display drew a small crowd and the monarchs gained their freedom to live out their life cycle. Young children were thrilled by the display and drew as much attention as a nearby face painting opportunity.

I was pleased to note a bat house as I explored the park. The habitat is ideal for bats. A good reminder of the role bats have in our environment as voracious consumers of mosquitos. (d)

The music was enjoyable and a fairly large crowd that brought blankets and folding chairs crowded around the gazebo to enjoy the early evening entertainment. As for me, I wandered over a small bridge and watched the gentle flow of the east branch of the Clinton River to the accompaniment of the music.

I wrapped up my slow-paced adventure by finding an empty bench. It was the perfect place to sit back and relax and reflect on this small gem of park just a short walk from the restaurants of downtown Clarkston. If you're looking for peaceful place to relax, consider Depot Park

Oakland County Parks staffer Jonathan Schechter is an avid "nature-embracing" hiker who follows phenology - the study of natural cycles of nature's way - to inspire his blogs.

Additional Photo Credits: City of the Village of Clarkston, Clarkston Historical Society