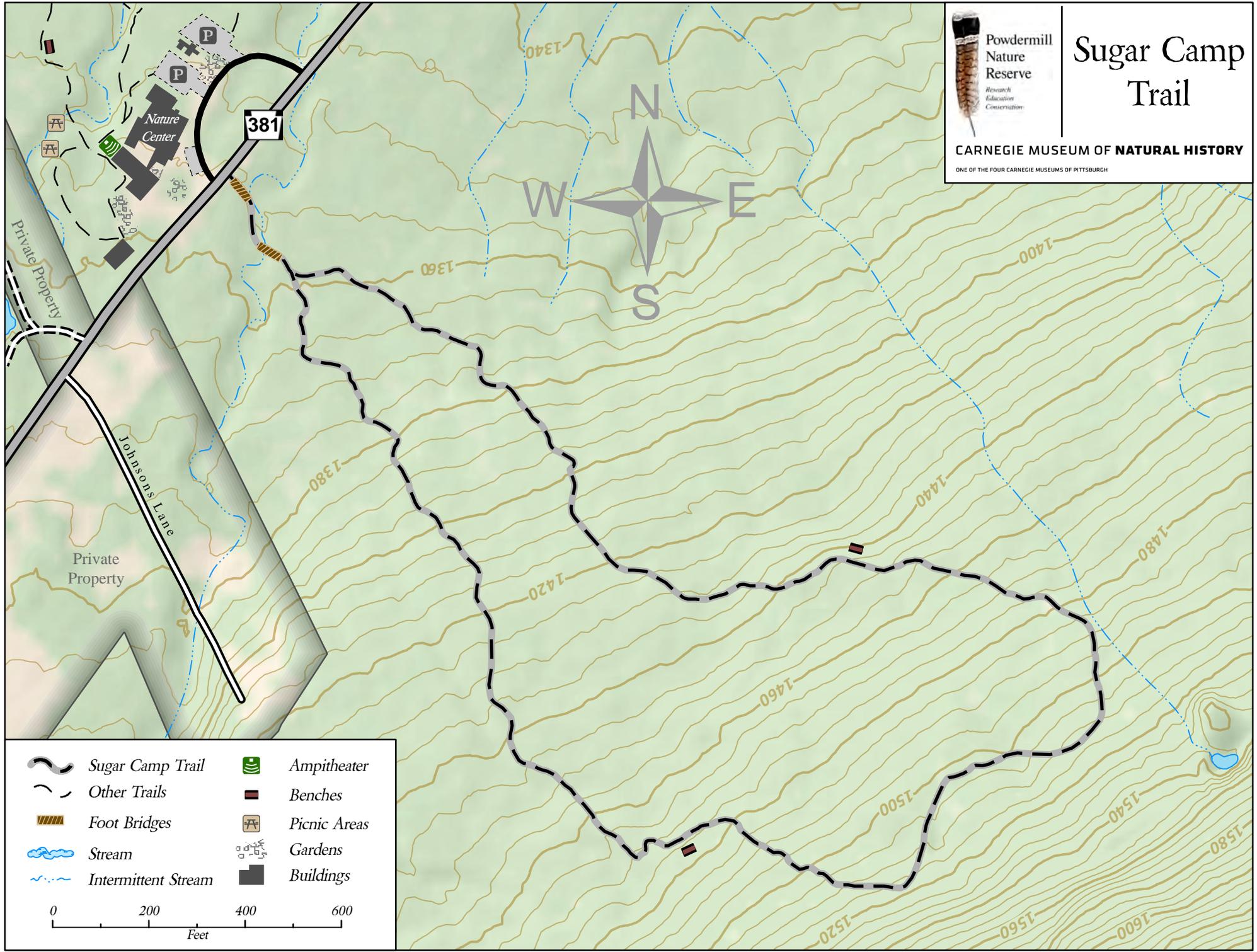




Powdermill
Nature
Reserve
*Research
Education
Conservation*

Sugar Camp Trail

CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
ONE OF THE FOUR CARNEGIE MUSEUMS OF PITTSBURGH



	Sugar Camp Trail		Amphitheater
	Other Trails		Benches
	Foot Bridges		Picnic Areas
	Stream		Gardens
	Intermittent Stream		Buildings

0 200 400 600
Feet

Welcome to Powdermill Nature Reserve's Sugar Camp Trail



Before you begin your walk:

This self-guided walk will allow you to experience some of the richest woodlands on the 2,200 acre Reserve. This is a protected area so please do not disturb or remove anything. Stay on the trails and help keep this a beautiful natural area for future generations to enjoy.

Completed in 2005 by the Student Conservation Association, this trail completes a mile and a quarter loop which takes about 35 minutes to walk. The trail is located across the road from the front of the building.

Trail History:

The trail is named for the maple syrup camps located throughout the area during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

This hillside was a special sugar maple orchard and sugar camps were common in the Powdermill Run area. In the early spring when the sap began to run, the farmers had plenty of time to collect and boil the sap to extract the syrup. This camp was unique in that it had a special machine for processing the maple sap and producing syrup; the machine was an evaporator. The syrup made by the use of an evaporator was much cleaner and finer than that made by the simple boiling pans used by other farmers.

As you first enter the forest take a few moments to look around. You may notice that something is missing; the thick undergrowth. This can be caused by the deer population. They feed on practically every plant from their head to the ground, often called a browse-line. Spicebush remains the prominent plant species here because the deer do not like to feed on this species.

Traveling uphill you will see many small trees starting to develop the understory. Cherry and hawthorn trees make up a large portion of what you are seeing, as well as spicebush, for they are the first to move in and take hold of a disturbed or open area.

You will see large vines hanging from the trees. These are the wild grapevines. It is never a good idea to pull or swing on these vines because they are usually attached to dead branches which can snap off. The grapes are edible when they turn purple; however, it is never a good idea to sample wild edibles on your own. Many plant species can look similar. The long vine contains large amounts of water, and in a survival situation can be cut open to provide a source of drinkable water. The vine can harm the tree as it climbs high and spreads its leaves over the host tree, which can shade and kill portions of the tree.

As you walk up the hill notice the trees are larger and older than down near the road. You are entering a mature forest. It consists of a canopy- a roof of leaves that shades the forest floor in summer. Severe storms can throw down mature canopy trees and start a race among the young saplings to fill the empty space.

Take a minute to stand still and look up. The canopy of leaves overhead makes even the tallest person feel tiny in the cathedral-like section of forest.

Sections of the trail have large amounts of rocks scattered in the landscape which, is caused by many years of erosion, both natural and human caused.

If you look closely, fragments of coal can be found on parts of the trail and on the surrounding hillsides. In the early 1900's this hillside was dug for coal by hand. Each bushel of coal was worth around 3 cents.

Later the methods were revolutionized with the development of large digging machines. In the summer of 1946 a coal stripping operation hired 2 teachers from Blairsville to map out the depth and thickness of a coal vein. The coal proved to be a very fine grade, was 40-49" thick, and relatively close to the surface. Within six months, three large areas had been excavated and large ridges of soil piled up. In the spring of 1947, a court injunction was obtained to stop or prevent pollution of Powdermill Run stream. The operations were brought to a halt, leaving piles of spoil and exposed veins of unmined coal. A spoil pile of dirt can be seen near the top of the trail a few hundred yards back.

Keep alert to the many animal tracks that are scattered in the wet sections of trail. These clues can help tell you which animals are using the same trails that humans use. As a general rule, animals will choose the path of least resistance, making the trails a great place for them to travel when no people are around. Some common tracks that can be spotted in the mud or freshly fallen snow include raccoon, squirrel, opossum and our state mammal, the white-tailed deer.