

THE RIVER PARK OF GENEVA

A Facility of Geneva Park District

(630) 232-4542 | genevaparks.org

a river's edge experience



Geneva
PARK DISTRICT
Live Your BestLife



The elements of earth, air, fire and water come to mind when describing the River Park, a facility of Geneva Park District with origins from 1998. Citizens succeeded in petitioning the city to purchase two acres along the Fox River and then organized themselves to raise the funds and build the park. In 2014, ownership of River Park was transferred to Geneva Park District.

In addition to the expansive views, the river and its unbroken shoreline, whole cloud formations, unimpeded sun and moon rises and multiple bird flights, the site offers several unique features in the south section along the path from the amphitheater: the **History Wall**, **Story Rock** and carved **Turtle Boulder** with stones marking each seasonal sunrise.



THE HISTORY WALL

Surrounded by native prairie plants, the stone terrace that begins at the south end of the amphitheater displays artifacts from different eras of history. The eras represented range from the sites prehistoric days of Ancient Sea, Glacial Drift, The First People, Geneva Settlers, Industry and Stewardship. It is a treasure waiting to be seen in the heart of downtown Geneva.

THE STORY ROCK

The large granite boulder, left from the old days, is popular for storytelling or for young families and individuals to sit quietly and enjoy the flow of the river. "What makes the river so restful to people is that it doesn't have any doubt—it is sure to get where it is going, and it doesn't want to go anywhere else," suggests columnist Hal Bole.



THE TURTLE BOULDER

Jim Jenkins of Geneva carved this boulder with the polished head and arms of a turtle extending out in pink along with a spiral, suggestive of Fibonacci's sequence as reflected in the pattern of sunflower seeds. The turtle often factors into Native American creation stories. The world was covered with water. The lowly muskrat, snapping turtle and otter dove down to bring up the first gobs of Earth. From this island of mud, often gathered on the turtles back, the earth grew.

THE ANCIENT SEA— Three straight cephalopod fossils located in the top layer of stones above the engraved sign are representative of the Ordovician Period, 440-500 million years ago.

GLACIAL DRIFT— Granite boulders were deposited here from the Canadian Shield when the glaciers melted and retreated north in the Pleistocene Period, one million years ago.

THE FIRST PEOPLE— In the lower terrace, within the cement block, are chert, stone hammerheads and projectile pointes copied from originals of the Native Americans, 600 B.C.—1837 A.D.1



GENEVA SETTLERS— An iron fireplace arm and Dutch oven pot in the upper terrace and haying scythe and grain seeding wheels in the lower terrace were used by early farmers. Seventeen year old Harriet Warren Dodson records her first visit to Geneva aboard her brother-in-law's wagon in 1836. "They rode in a lumber wagon through the dark and deep woods to the river. [The east bank of the Fox River in Aurora] "Bird plunged the wagon abruptly into the water, a fright that Harriet recalled fifty-four years later: 'Our hearts were in our throats until we were safely across. The first object to meet our view was the large wigwam of the Indian Chief 'Wabaunse' [which was] remarkable for its neatness... we came up as far as where Geneva now stands on the west bank of the river and were charmed with the lovely landscape all the way.'" 2

INDUSTRY— In the upper terrace, a cement block holds an ice saw and pick. Nearby is another block displaying a Howell factory sad iron and assembly line pulley. Below rests a large millstone discovered along the old rail line in Wheeler Park. These and all the other artifacts: the twisted steel beam, railroad track, single concrete pier, and metal water pipe and cover, are remnants from the industrial days along the river.



STEWARDSHIP— In 1835, the shoreline would have sloped gradually, revealing sections of stone out-cropping and small springs, resplendent with tall prairie, wetland plants and gravel-loving perennials. Plants to explore for every season:

River Park Prairie Plants - May & June

Upper Beds: Prairie Alum Root, White Wild Indigo, Lead Plant, Butterfly Milkweed, Purple Prairie Clover, Foxglove Beard Tongue, Compass Plants (leaves only), Prairie Dock (leaves only), Pale Purple Coneflower, Meadow Anemone, Sand Coreopsis, Golden Alexander, Shooting Star.

Lower Beds: same as upper beds, but in addition: New Jersey Tea, Prairie Smoke, Hairy Wild Petunia.

River Front: Blue Flag Iris, Water Willow (in water), Indigo Bush, Prairie Dogbane.

River Park Plants - July & Early August (lower and upper beds)

Wild Bergamot, Hoary Vervain, Rattlesnake Master, Purple Prairie Clover, Mountain Mint, Side Oats Grama, Nodding Wild Onion, Culver's Root, Compass Plant.

River Park Plants - August & Fall (lower and upper beds)

Little Bluestem, Prairie Dropseed, New England Aster, Smooth Blue Aster, Rough Blazing Star, Tall Coreopsis, Prairie Dock, Obedient Plant, Stiff Goldenrod, Common Ironweed, Heath Aster.

SOLSTICE AND EQUINOX ROCKS— From the polished seat on the boulder, one can sit and celebrate each season's sunrises marked by stones labeled summer and winter solstice and fall and winter equinox. Jim Jenkins also designed the plaza's railing with its dragonflies and suggestion of ripples in the river's current.



Notes & references

The History Wall artifacts were collected by Mary Jaeger and Sharon Jones. The artifacts were installed by Dennis Kintop and Jim Jenkins in the winter of 2004. The accompanying text was written by Sharon Jones.

1. Some of the copies are those taken from a collection by Merritt King of Geneva and Norm Salamone of Batavia.
2. Geneva Illinois, A History of Its Times and Places.