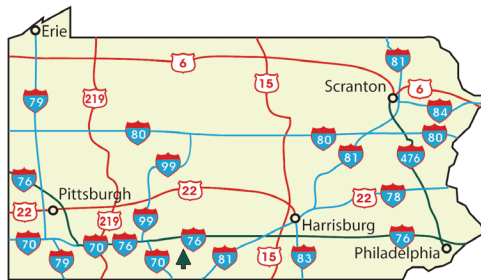


# Buchanan's Birthplace State Park

## A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide

5/2023



Buchanan's Birthplace State Park is an 18.5-acre park nestled in a gap of Cove Mountain in Franklin County. The park and the surrounding forested mountains offer an abundance of beauty throughout the year.

### Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 39.86813 Long. -77.95282

The park is between McConnellsburg and Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, near the village of Cove Gap along PA 16. From US 30 at Fort Loudon, take PA 75 south, and follow signs to Cove Gap and the park.

### Recreational Opportunities

**PICNICKING:** Picnic tables, charcoal grills, restrooms, and drinking water are available. Picnic pavilions are free on a first-come, first-served basis.

**FISHING:** Buck Run flows through the park and hosts a population of native trout. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations for wild trout waters apply to Buck Run.

### The Birthplace of a President

Today, Cove Gap is a quiet and remote place. But on April 23, 1791, the day of James Buchanan's birth, it was on the western edge of the American frontier. Although the surrounding Allegheny Mountains provided a formidable barrier to those seeking a way to the west, Cove Gap cut through two of the three parallel mountains, making the westward journey a little easier. Travelers following this route west passed through the gap and by the last store for many miles.

### James Buchanan (1791-1868)

When James Buchanan was six, his family moved to Mercersburg where his father became a wealthy merchant, farmer, and entrepreneur. Buchanan attended Dickinson College and graduated with honors. In 1809, Buchanan moved to Lancaster, apprenticed with a prominent lawyer, and became an attorney at age 21.

James Buchanan's education and career of public service shine brightly when compared to other presidents. He became active in the Federalist Party, the predecessor of the Democratic Party. Once nominated, Buchanan never lost an election during his political career. He served as a Pennsylvania Assemblyman, U.S. Congressman, Foreign Minister to Russia, U.S. Senator, U.S. Secretary of State, and Foreign Minister to Great Britain.

### 15TH PRESIDENT

Buchanan's solid reputation both at home and abroad led to his election as the 15th President of the United States in 1857. During Buchanan's term as president, his policy kept peace. He pledged the federal government would enforce the law where practical, but not commit armed aggression against the South. Lincoln followed the same policy until the firing on Fort Sumter

James Buchanan's father bought Tom's Trading Place in 1789. He renamed it Stony Batter after the Buchanan home in northern Ireland. Although young when he left Stony Batter, Buchanan's first home left a lasting impression. In his later years, Buchanan wrote, "It is a rugged but romantic spot, and the mountain and mountain stream under the scenery captivating. I have warm attachments for it..."

which required a military response and brought on the American Civil War.

### POST PRESIDENCY

After Abraham Lincoln's inauguration, James Buchanan retired to his home, Wheatland, in Lancaster. Buchanan passed away at his home on June 1, 1868.

Wheatland is operated by the James Buchanan Foundation and is open to the public.  
<https://www.lancasterhistory.org/>

### HARRIET LANE JOHNSTON (1830-1903)

The youngest child of James Buchanan's sister Jane, Harriet Lane lived a life of great triumphs and heartbreaking tragedies. By age 10, she lost both her mother and father. Harriet chose to live with her favorite uncle, James Buchanan, who became her guardian in 1842.

Buchanan provided Harriet with an excellent education and a refined upbringing. This training served her well. When James Buchanan became President, Harriet acted as First Lady, since Buchanan never married. In 1866, Harriet married Henry Elliott Johnston, a Baltimore banker.

### A Quest for Honor

Harriet's quest to honor her uncle through the creation of a monument began in the early 1880s. She made several attempts to purchase James Buchanan's birthplace, Stony Batter, but was unsuccessful throughout her lifetime.

In 1895, at the age of 65, Harriet Lane Johnston prepared her will with a provision to establish the James Buchanan Monument Fund. A four-member board of trustees would have 15 years to build a monument at Stony Batter.

### STONY BATTER

In 1906, the owners of Stony Batter agreed to sell the property to the James Buchanan Monument Fund.

The architectural firm, Wyatt and Nolting of Baltimore, Maryland, designed the monument in pyramid form, 38 feet square and 31 feet high. The pyramid structure contains 600 tons of mortar



and native stone from the nearby mountainside. All faces of the stone show the original weathered surface. Work began on the monument in October 1907 and was completed on November 15, 1907.

The Pennsylvania Legislative Session of 1911 gave authorization for Commonwealth to accept the 18.5-acre James Buchanan Monument from the only surviving trustee.

# BUCHANAN'S BIRTHPLACE STATE PARK

 **Blue Symbols  
Mean ADA Accessible**

 **Wayside Exhibit**

 **Non-flush Restrooms**

 **Picnicking**

 **Picnic Pavilion**

 **Water**

 **Hiking Trail**

 **Paved Path**

 **Unpaved Road**

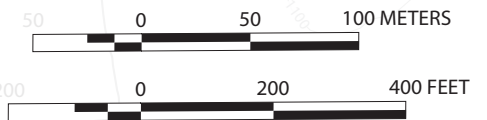
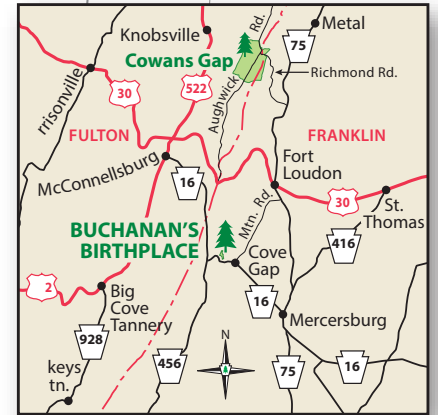
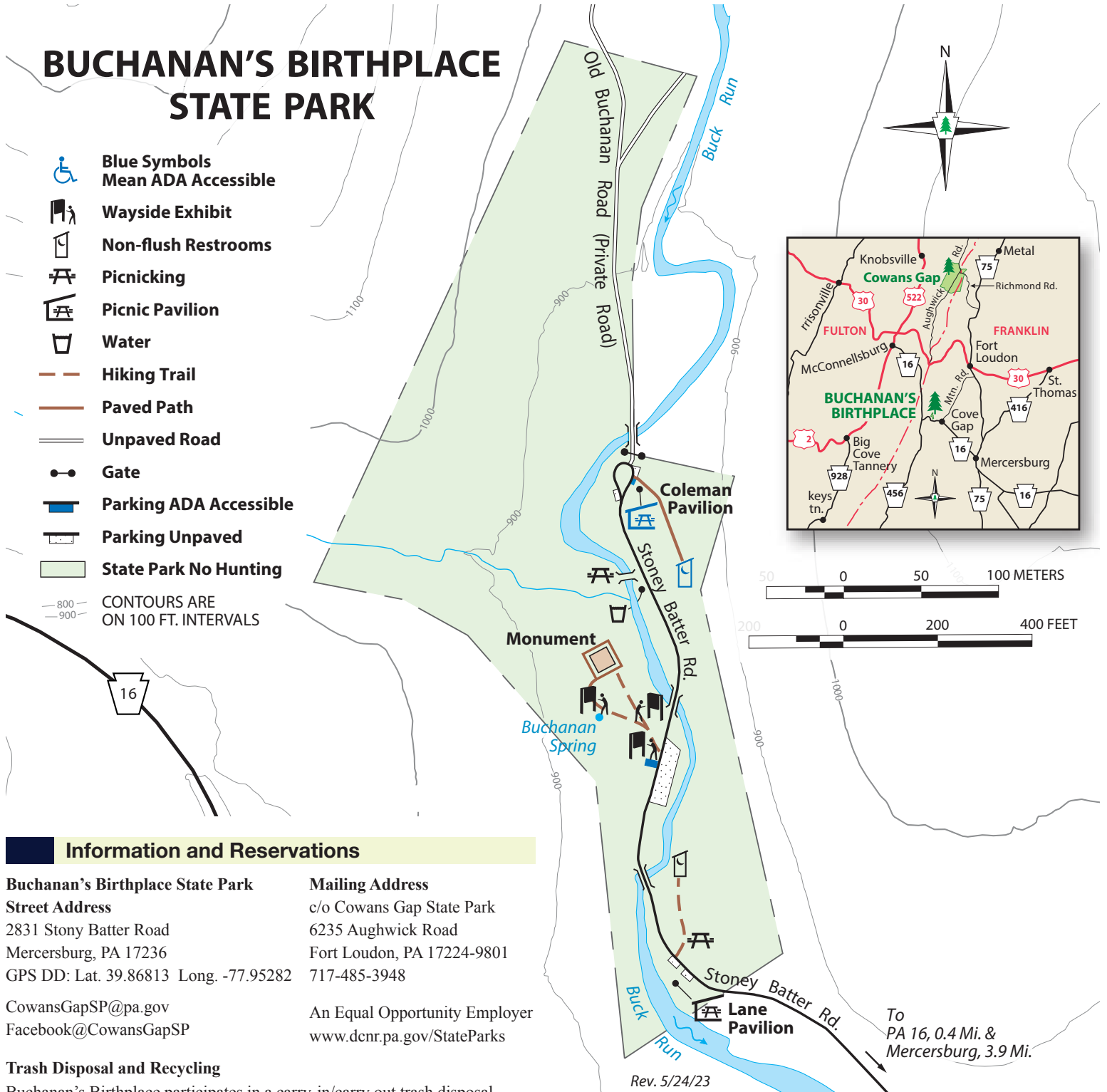
 **Gate**

 **Parking ADA Accessible**

 **Parking Unpaved**

 **State Park No Hunting**

 **CONTOURS ARE  
ON 100 FT. INTERVALS**



## Information and Reservations

### Buchanan's Birthplace State Park

#### Street Address

2831 Stony Batter Road

Mercersburg, PA 17236

GPS DD: Lat. 39.86813 Long. -77.95282

CowansGapSP@pa.gov

Facebook@CowansGapSP

### Mailing Address

c/o Cowans Gap State Park

6235 Aughwick Road

Fort Loudon, PA 17224-9801

717-485-3948

An Equal Opportunity Employer

[www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks)

### Trash Disposal and Recycling

Buchanan's Birthplace participates in a carry-in/carry out trash disposal program for small parks. There are no trash collection or recycling facilities. Visitors are asked to limit the number of disposable items brought to the park and take all trash and recyclables home.


## Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from the Franklin County Visitors Bureau. [www.explorefranklincountypa.com](http://www.explorefranklincountypa.com)

Nearby Cowans Gap State Park offers swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking, hiking, hunting, camping, rustic cabins, organized group camping, a visitor center, and environmental education programs.



## Access for People with Disabilities

 This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.



## In an Emergency

Call 911 and contact a park employee.

Directions to the nearest hospital are posted on bulletin boards and at the park office.

### NEAREST HOSPITAL

Fulton County Medical Center  
214 Peach Orchard Road  
McConnellsburg, PA 17233  
717-485-3155