

WOMEN'S FEDERATION MONUMENT

A monument that looks like a little castle sits on a hilltop in Palisades Interstate Park. It's a tribute to the vision and hard work of the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs.

The Palisades are a line of cliffs along the west side of the Hudson River. The word Palisades come from the Latin word *palus*, meaning a stake. To a soldier, a palisade is a defensive wall made up of stakes or tree trunks. The Lenape Indians called the Palisades "rocks that look like rows of trees," and their Indian word for that was Weehawken.

Two hundred million years ago, the Palisades were created by Mother Nature, a strong woman. Just 120 years ago, it took a few more strong women to save them from destruction.

The Palisades cliffs are made of diabase, a valuable volcanic rock similar to basalt, that erupted in a weak spot beside the river. Diabase has many industrial uses — it goes into concrete and roadbeds, and it's the rock packed under railroad ties. By the 1890s, there were half a dozen quarrying companies along a 12-mile stretch of the river, and there was real concern that the cliffs could be dynamited out of existence.

The Woman's Club of Englewood decided to take up the cause. They rallied the other women's clubs in the state, began a letter-writing campaign, and enlisted the help of their influential husbands. They even convinced the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs to hold its 1897 convention in New Jersey and brought the leaders out in a yacht to view the devastation. But the quarries just speeded up the destruction — in March 1888, three tons of dynamite brought down Washington Head and Indian Head in Fort Lee.

Although the quarries were big business, the women kept up the pressure on state legislatures. They succeeded in getting the governors of New York and New Jersey to form the Interstate Park Commission. J.P. Morgan helped buy out the quarries, and the women's clubs raised funds to buy land along the Palisades. At last the destructive dynamiting came to a halt, and Palisades Interstate Park was created.

Today, if you walk along an easy hiking path called Women's Heritage Trail, you'll come to 50 acres known as Federation Park, in honor of the New Jersey Federation of Women's Clubs. And in the center, you'll see a quaint stone watchtower overlooking the Hudson. It looks like a small castle, and it's built to resemble the ancient watchtowers that guarded the Rhine in Germany. The tower honors the women who guarded the river that poets called America's Rhine — the women who stopped the quarrying industry from blasting apart the Palisades cliffs.

The watchtower was dedicated on April 30, 1929. A plaque on the tower reads:

"This Federation Memorial Park and this structure are dedicated to the successful efforts of the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Club and of these men and women who aided in the opening years of the twentieth century in preserving these Palisades cliffs from destruction for the glory of God who created them and the ennobling of the generations which may henceforth enjoy them."

The watchtower's structure is assembled with massive stone bricks. That may not seem feminine, but it couldn't be more appropriate to honor the strength of the many women who assembled to build a scenic park that would last for generations to come.



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Federation Memorial Park
Palisades Interstate Park

Compliments of
WOMAN'S CLUB OF RAMSEY

Woman's Federation Monument is a trailside monument on the Palisades cliff top in Alpine, dedicated in 1929 to honor the role that the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs took in preserving the Palisades. The site is accessible during daylight hours from hiking trails along the overlap section of the Long Path and the Forest View Trail.

Limited parking and a bus stop are available on U.S. Route 9W at the trailhead for the Forest View Trail.

From there, it is an easy hike of approximately half a mile to the monument.

TIPS FOR HIKERS

Perhaps because of our proximity to New York City, many first-time Palisades hikers are surprised at how rugged our trails can be. Please be prepared! Some tips:

Always tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back. This is just good hiking sense, no matter where you go.

Wear sturdy, comfortable shoes that are not brand new. Ankle support is crucial, especially on the Giant Stairs. Shoes not broken in can cause blisters.

Bring plenty of water—and drink it as you go. Some basic first aid supplies are always a good idea, too, as are some snacks.

Dress or pack for all possible weather conditions forecasted for that day. Layers are the wisest way to dress for the outdoors—you can add or remove as you go. We also recommend long-sleeved clothing, even in warmer weather. Poison ivy thrives on the Palisades. Ticks are common. Long clothing with a spray of repellent at the cuffs is your best defense.

Look out for poisonous snakes. The copperhead is relatively common here, if seldom seen. Snakes tend to be shy, so watch your step—and don't reach where you cannot see. THESE ANIMALS ARE PROTECTED BY LAW.

Your dog is welcome to enjoy our trails with you, but must be leashed at all times. Please clean up after your pet.

The steepness and erodability of our trails make them unsuitable for bicycles. Violators are subject to fine.

Accident, fire, emergency: 201-768-6001

njpalisades.org



New Jersey

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The numbers in these descriptions are keyed to the map on the other side.

PEANUT LEAP CASCADE

About 2.5 mi., 2 hrs. round-trip. Moderate.

- Begin this hike on Old Route 9W a little north of Point Lookout, where the Long Path (aqua markers) heads into the woods. Stay on the Long Path headed north.
- In about half a mile, the Long Path turns right (east) near the state line border monument, then left (north) to go through a gate in a fence. The trail then descends on steep stone steps. Just beyond "High Gutter Point" (this is the point where you can see sweeping views to the north) are more steep steps. Use caution and take your time on these to the bottom.
- At the bottom of the steps the trail turns left (west).
- In about 1/8 mile, the trail crosses a stream. After you cross the stream turn right (east). This is the start of the Shore Trail (white markers). Follow the Shore Trail to the river and Peanut Leap Cascade. Sections are rocky and the final descent is steep—use caution!
- Enjoy this picturesque spot for a while. RETURN VIA THE SAME ROUTE.

Note: If you'd like to skip the steep stairs by High Gutter Point on the return, do not recross the stream at ④. Instead, take the Long Path north for about 1/8 mile, then look on the left for another stream crossing on stepping stones ④. Cross here, go up the short hill to Old Route 9W, and then turn left (southeast) and follow it back to the Lookout.

THE GIANT STAIRS

About 4 mi., 3 hrs. round-trip. CHALLENGING. Includes a difficult rock scramble followed by a steep ascent. RECOMMENDED FOR EXPERIENCED HIKERS ONLY! This hike is NOT recommended for dogs or very young children or when conditions are wet or icy. ALLOW FOR AMPLE DAYLIGHT TO COMPLETE THE ENTIRE HIKE. From Peanut Leap Cascade ⑤, continue south on the Shore Trail (white markers).

- Following the white markers, you'll scramble almost a mile across the boulder field called "the Giant Stairs."
- About 1/4 mile south of the boulder field, find the steep Forest View Trail (blue-and-white markers) and take it up to its intersection with the Long Path (aqua).
- Turn right (north) on the Long Path, cross the stream, and take the aqua trail back to the Lookout.

THIS LOOP CAN ALSO BE HIKE THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION: Use the directions for "Women's Federation Monument" (below), and after crossing the stream ⑧, follow the Forest View Trail to the Shore Trail ⑦, then go north and scramble across the Giant Stairs to Peanut Leap Cascade ⑤ and return using the directions from that hike (above).

THE WOMEN'S FEDERATION MONUMENT

About 2 mi., 1 hr. round-trip. Easy.

This short hike is ideal for children, who will find the ravine just challenging enough and the "castle" at the end a fun destination. Head south to where the Long Path crosses the entrance road to State Line Lookout, using caution when you're alongside or crossing the active roadway. Stay on the Long Path south (aqua markers) as it goes through a gap in the parapet stones and toward the cliff edge. The trail goes down a ravine on stone steps. At the base of the ravine (marker number ⑧ on the map), cross the stream, and the aqua Long Path will intersect with the blue-and-white-marked Forest View Trail. Continue south (as you go up the other side of the ravine, the two trails overlap). At the top you will find the Women's Federation Monument, which is in the shape of a medieval watchtower. Explore a bit (can you find the old swimming pool a little south of the Monument?), then return on the same route.

