

George Horace Lorimer

Benefactor of Lorimer Park

George Horace Lorimer was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1867. He went to high school in Chicago where he worked at a meat packing plant. After that he attended Yale for a short time. In 1899 he became Editor in Chief of The Saturday Evening Post. He turned a struggling magazine into one of the most successful weekly publications in the country. He did this by selling twice the material of the average weekly magazine for half the price.

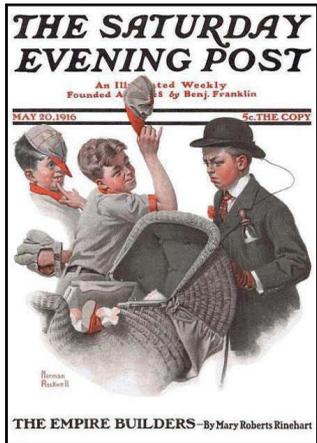
Some of the best authors of the time contributed to The Saturday Evening Post, including Agatha Christie, William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald. George H. Lorimer developed a policy where he guaranteed a response within 48 hours of every manuscript that was submitted. If he decided to use it, the author would get paid immediately. This innovative policy is how The Saturday Evening Post attracted its brilliant writers.

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1867-1936



Later in life, Lorimer served as Vice President and Chairman of Curtis Publishing Company. Lorimer was also a best selling author. His short stories first appeared in The Saturday Evening Post. Although he published them anonymously, the readers discovered it was Lorimer, and in 1902 his Letters of a Self-Made Merchant to His Son was turned into a book, which became a best seller in the United States, England, and Germany.

Lorimer loved to travel all over the country, especially to state and national parks. Some of his favorite parks were Estes Park, Roosevelt-Sequoia Park, and Glacier Park, however his favorite was the Grand Canyon.

He did much of his travelling by car before highways across the country were built. Lorimer and his driver, George Smyth, developed their own road maps. They often found themselves stuck and used ropes to pull the car along tight hiking trails. George H. Lorimer is considered one of the Nation's first serious motorists.



Some of his passions were smoking pipes and cigars, collecting antiques, especially Navaho rugs, and eating sweet food and candy. One of his favorites was blueberry pie. Lorimer also enjoyed hiking in the woods where he did some of his best thinking for future literary works. He would spend most nights in front of a fire in his library smoking a pipe and reading manuscripts. It is said that he read about 100,000 words a night, although he probably skipped 75% of them.

Lorimer had many famous friends, including 31st President of the United States, Herbert Hoover. Hoover was a pallbearer at Lorimer's funeral. Some other important people of the time who visited Lorimer were authors James Whitcomb Riley, Mary Roberts Rinehart and actor DeWolf Hopper.

Lorimer had two sons and a daughter. His son Greame was a successful writer and his son Burford owned and ran a 16,000 acre plantation in Georgia. His daughter Belle died in 1908 of spinal meningitis at the age of six.

Lorimer's wife Alma was interested in politics. In 1932 the Chamber of Commerce appointed her chairman of the Women's Washington Bicentennial Committee. Under her leadership, the committee created a "living memorial" of Japanese Cherry trees and pink and white dogwood trees stretching along River Drive in Fairmount Park.



Lorimer and The Park

Prior to 1683 the land where Lorimer Park sits was inhabited by The Lenni Lenape. In 1683, William Penn purchased this land from the Native Americans. In 1729, Edmund McVeagh II purchased the land and between 1735 and 1740 he built a house on the property, where it still stands. In 1915, George Horace Lorimer purchased the land.

In all, he accumulated about 2,000 acres of farm land in the area, including "Kings Oak." However, he soon realized that "the less land you farm, the less money you lose" and he started selling off most of the properties. One of these parcels is now the park and another is currently owned by The Sisters of The Holy Redeemer.

When Lorimer died in 1936, he left his 132 acre Kings Oak estate to the county to be used as a public



Park in memory of his mother and his daughter, both named Belle, "For the enjoyment of its natural beauty."

Lorimer intended the park to be used as a home for wildlife and open for the public to study and observe birds, trees, flowers and other animals. While he was alive, Lorimer used the Kings Oak estate as a weekend retreat from his house in Wyncote. His favorite place in the park was Council Rock which overlooks the meadow across the Pennypack Creek.

This geographic formation was named for being a meeting place of the Lenni Lenape in the 16th and 17th century. It was an ideal location because of its height of nearly 100 feet.



Today, Council Rock remains a centerpiece for the modern Lorimer Park. Still an oasis of woodlands in the middle of suburbia, the park provides a natural escape for visitors from the noise and congestion of urban life. A picnic with the family, fishing in the stream, bird watching, nature photography, bicycling, and, as Lorimer himself enjoyed, hiking in the woods, all allow an individual to slow down, relax, and enjoy nature in all its beauty. George Horace Lorimer would be proud that his vision of a park "for little girls" is still being enjoyed by all. And, we thank him for it.

Information used in this brochure came from the following sources:

Tebbel, John. George Horace Lorimer, and The Saturday Evening Post. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948.

Morrow, Edward. "Lorimer Park in Montgomery County, an Incomplete History." Old York Road Historical Society Bulletin March 10, 1948: pp. 22-30.