

Louise F. Cosca Regional Park

Most of the people driving today on Surratts Road through Clinton, Maryland probably don't associate it with the Surratt family. John and Mary owned and ran a tavern catering to the middle class. The tavern became a town center. When John died suddenly of natural causes, Mary was left with rising debts and little way of collecting owed rents. The Civil War was on. Mary rented the property out and but worked in it by running a boarding house. The Surratt family had been sympathetic to the southern cause (they probably ran a Confederate safehouse) and eventually Mary came to know John Wilkes Booth. The rest was history. Mary was convicted by military court (later determined not to have jurisdiction) under evidence provided by a tenant who testified that she asked him to have field glasses and carbines ready on the night Booth assassinated President Abraham Lincoln. Her conviction later gave her the infamous distinction of being the first woman to be executed (by hanging) by the U.S. Government. Conspiracy theories are still debated as it may have been that southern forces wanted to capture the President rather than assassinate him. The Surratt House is now a museum offering tours. The Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House is also a museum. That museum holds the "red settee" that Booth was examined on for his injuries.

South and West of Clinton, Maryland in Prince Georges County is Louise F. Cosca Regional Park. Like several other regional parks operated by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). It has a lake, ballfields, tennis courts, picnic facilities, campgrounds, a Nature Center, and trails. The trails are mostly unpaved and generally open to hikers, equestrians and mountain cyclists. Most are hilly. Several horse riders were near the lake on my visit.

The information above was derived from "Surratt House and Tavern...A Page in American History," "The Surratt Family & John Wilkes Booth—Compiled from the research of James O. Hall," and the Surratt Society." For more information on the Surratt House, see visit the museum (see below) or go to WWW.SURRAT.ORG.

Getting There

From the Capital Beltway (I-495), take Branch Ave, Rte. 5, south toward Waldorf. Turn right after 4 miles onto Woodyard Road. After 0.75 miles turn left onto Brandywine Road. After 0.9 miles, bear right onto Thrift Road. After 1.8 miles, just past the creek at the bottom of the hill, turn right into the entrance for the Clearwater Nature Center. Follow the road up the hill as it goes left but turn right at the parking area. The trail head is straight ahead at first going down the steep hill.

Area Routes

Butter Branch (3.1 or 3.45 miles, III or IV)

This lollipop route starts easy by passing the lake on wide easy trails. As you get past the lake, the route crosses under some high tension power lines. You might, as did I, see a beaver dam or a Great Blue Heron in the Butter Branch there. After the power lines and a small tributary stream

crossing, the shorter option goes right up a double-track road with good footing along a stream. The longer route continues north on single-track following the Butter Branch longer. At times the longer route gets perilously close to washed-out stream banks. It is hillier and with poor footing but both route options come together on a trail atop an underground cable line. Some of this trail is hilly. Cross Thrift Road and continue along the buried cable line to a polygonal corner on the park's border. Round the campground and emerge along a dirt roadway under the high tension power lines that takes you back to Thrift Road. Use the shoulder to go downhill, back to the park and lake, then return on more dirt trails.

L.F. Cosca East and Lake Trails (2.55 or 1.7 miles, II)

Head down the unpaved trail only a short way to a stream crossing. As you come up after crossing it, you hit a six-way unmarked intersection. Bear left here on a green blazed trail, keeping the stream on your left. The single-track trail rises and falls along the stream before making a bigger climb away from it along the east end of the park. This nice trail circles clockwise down to the lake. Follow the shores to the dam and loop fully around once, or turn from there to go directly back to the six way intersection. The loop around the lake is the flattest trail in the park and is only 0.85 miles long.

Nearby and Connecting Zones

Fort Washington Park
Tucker Road Community Park/Henson Trail
Cedarville Forest

What to do Afterward

Food and Drink

Colony South Hotel - 301 856-4500
Olga's Swiss & German Restaurant - 301 599-7629

Entertainment and Edification

Surratt House Museum - 9118 Brandywine Rd.; Open January through mid-December, Thur. & Fri. (11AM-3PM) and weekends (noon-4PM), last tour begins 1 ½ hours before closing - 301 868-1121 voice & TTY
Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House - at Poplar Hill Rd, Rte. 382 & Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Rd., Rte. 232 in Charles County; April-Nov. on Wednesdays (11AM-3PM) and weekends (noon-4PM); 301 645-6870.

Butter Branch

Distance: 3.1 or 3.45 miles

Rating: III or IV; mostly single-track trails through the woods and hills

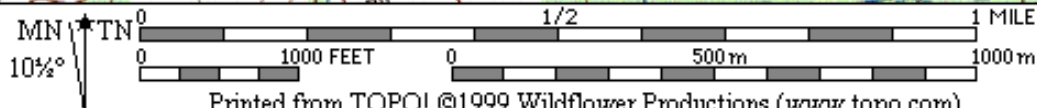
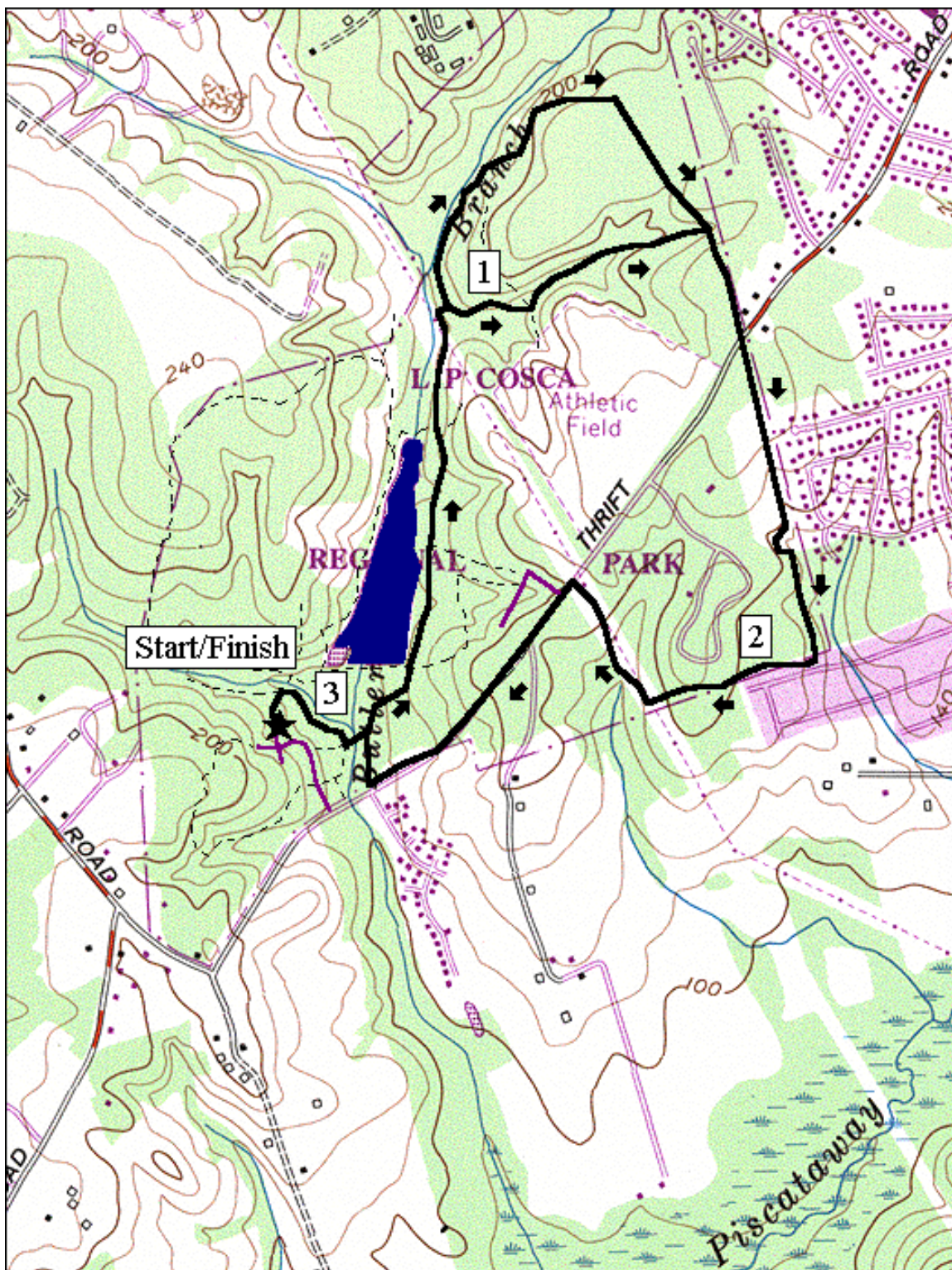
3.1 Mile Route

0.0	from parking go down the steep unpaved trail head (blazed red, yellow, blue & green)	0.95	trail X
		R	1.3 trail X (on top of buried cable)
		>*	
R	0.05 yellow trail (blazed yellow)	1.45	cross Thrift Rd (!)
		1.95	trail turns R to leave buried cable
L	0.15 blue trail (blazed blue); stairs down to wooden bridge over creek	R	2.25 dirt road under power lines; uphill
L	0.2 to stay on blue trail at park road	CL	2.45 Thrift Rd (! use paved shoulder)
	0.25 restroom on L		
S	0.35 trail X on lake dam	R	2.85 Group Pavilion entrance road into the park
	0.5 pavement ends; S on gravel road		
S	0.7 leave blue trail as it goes L to loop the lake; also trail X on R	L	2.9 blue blazed trail to wooden bridge over creek
	0.75 trail X on R	R	2.95 yellow trail at top of stairs after crossing creek
	0.85 trail X on R under power lines		
	<*		
BR	0.85 trail X after tributary stream crossing (no bridge)	L	3.1 trail X; up steep hill to parking

3.45 Mile Route*

BL	0.85 trail X after tributary stream crossing (no bridge); up hill
	1.15 trail X on R
	1.25 trail X on R
R	1.4 at T; trail over buried cable
	1.65 trail X (pickup cues at mile 1.45 on 3.1 mile route; end is 3.45 miles)

Butter Branch



L.F. Cosca East and Lake Trails

Distance: 2.55 or 1.7 miles

Rating: II or I; out and back on a paved, wooded stream valley hiker-biker trail

0.0 from parking go down the steep unpaved trail head (blazed red, yellow, blue & green)

0.05 yellow trail on R and red trail on L before the creek

BL 0.1 on green trail at 6-way intersection after crossing the creek; keep the creek on your left

BL 0.1 trail X on R

BR 0.6 at fields on L after trail on R merges (to stay on green blazed trail)

BR 1.0 trail splits; BR for green blazed trail

R 1.15 at T at lake; trail around lake is blazed blue

1.3 trail X on R

1.35 trail X on R

1.45 cross spillway to dam

<*

L 1.5 trail X on L on dam; L to continue around the lake

L 1.6 trail X after crossing dam; continue around lake

1.8 pavement ends; continue on gravel road

1.9 gravel road ends; trail continues unpaved

L 1.95 trail X on L to go around lake (blue blaze)

2.0 trail X on R

2.15 trail X on R

2.2 trail X on R

2.3 cross spillway to dam

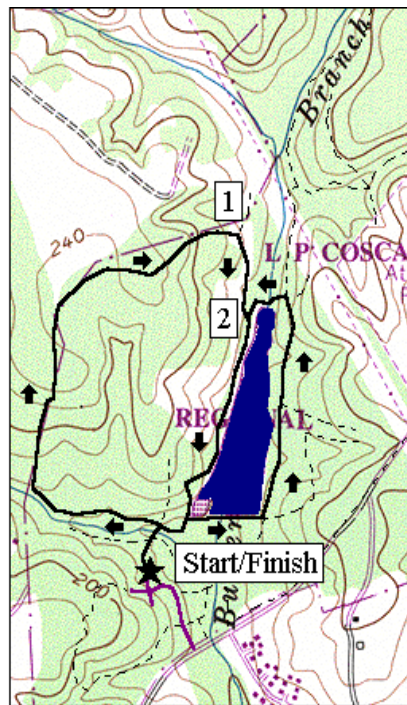
>*

S 2.35 trail X on L on dam; go S over grassy trail then BR into woods on unpaved trail

BL 2.45 6-way trail intersection; BL to pipe bridge over creek & up toward parking

2.5 yellow trail on L and red trail on R after the creek

2.55 parking lot



MN TN
10 1/2°
0 1000 FEET 0 500m 1000m 1 MILE
Printed from TOPO! ©1999 Wildflower Productions (www.topo.com)