



Lyon Oaks County Park

52221 Pontiac Trail
Wixom, MI 48393
248-437-1488



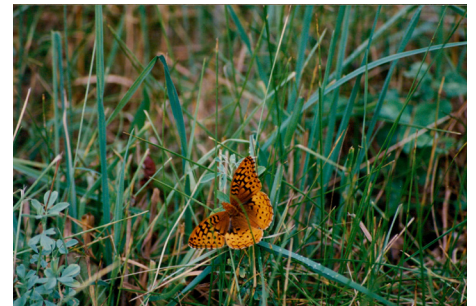
Park Information

Opened in 2002, Lyon Oaks County Park preserves 800 acres of environmentally-sensitive wetlands within a 1,041-acre park. Lyon Oaks marks the first park in the system that was created for both day-use and a golf course.

The park's day-use area offers a picnic shelter, playground and restrooms; volleyball, horseshoes pits, and soccer and cricket fields; and six miles of natural trails for biking, cross-country skiing and on-leash dog walking.

Lyon Oaks Dog Park features a 13-acre fenced enclosure with small dog area, benches, shelter with picnic tables, doggie drinking water and field training area.

The challenging Arthur Hills-designed 18-hole golf course on 230 acres features an "up north" feel with wide fairways, wetlands and ponds. A practice facility includes driving range, target greens and sand traps. Bunkers Bar & Grill provides food service for golfers and outings, and the banquet center is perfect for weddings, banquets and educational seminars.



Natural Resources

- Lyon Oaks is part of the Huron River Watershed and the Kent Lake subwatershed.
- While Lyon Oaks is primarily known for its recreational facilities, 800 of the 1000 acres of Lyon Oaks is classified as a wetland. Also, Norton Creek Drain, a tributary of the Huron River, runs through the park.
- Wetlands on the property extend into the forests which are comprised of forested swamps, dry-mesic southern forests, and mesic southern forests.
- A 470-acre wetland mitigation project was installed in the fields between the dog park and the forest to the south. This project removed drainage tiles, created a 13-acre wetland and planted numerous native prairie species.
- The park was likely a combination of Oak-Hickory Forest, Shrub Swamp/Emergent Marsh, Beech-Sugar Maple Forest, Mixed Hardwood Swamp and Wet Prairie prior to the 1800s.

History

The Grand River Trail, an important Native American pathway, ran just south of Lyon Oaks Country Park. It was used by different groups of Native Americans for more than 500 years. Eventually early settlers moving out of the Detroit area followed the same pathway and purchased farmland along the way. In 1848 the part of the trail between Detroit and Lansing became a plank road and a stage coach route, with toll gates along the road. The little town of Hicksville began just southwest of what would become Lyon Oaks Park. The Hicksville Hotel, which still stands today, became a toll gate and a stage coach stop.

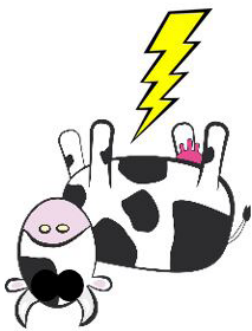


Hicksville Hotel



By the 1870s three families had built houses and begun farms on what would become Lyon Oaks. The first was Jay Marlatt, a bachelor farmer who had come from New York. His housekeeper, Sarah Baker, was a young widow with two children. Sarah's husband, Sergeant Albert Baker, had been killed during the Civil War. In 1875 Jay Marlatt married Sarah and they ran a very successful farm together.

Just to the north of the Marlatt farm was the farm of Spencer Renwick, who was married to Jay Marlatt's sister, Mary. At one time Spencer Renwick owned the nearby Hicksville Hotel and hired a manager to run it for him. Spencer was also the Vice-President of the local branch of the American Horse Thief Association, an organization made up of officers and riders dedicated to hunting down horse thieves. It described itself as "an association for mutual protection of property and the maintenance of law and order."



In the northeast part of what would become Lyon Oaks was the Lake farm, owned by brothers George and John Lake. They appear to have led fairly uneventful lives...until 1900 when lightning struck and killed one of their cows – fortunately they had insurance on the cow and were compensated \$50.00 by the Southwestern Insurance Company. Interestingly enough, when OCPRC purchased the Lake farm they found several lightning rods, on the barn, on the house and in the chicken coop.

The Lake farm was eventually purchased by Vernon Spencer who played major league baseball for the New York Giants for a short time. Following his brief career as a ball player he developed his farm into a major dairy farm, specializing in Brown Swiss Dairy Cattle. At one time was president of the Michigan Brown Swiss Cattle Breeder's Association. Vernon Spencer was also the founder and president of the Michigan chapter of the National Flying Farmer's Association. The motto of this group was "An airplane in every barn!" Vernon even built a landing strip on his farm just east of the park's eastern border and developed it into Spencer Airport. Following his death in 1971 there were plans to expand the airport into a general aviation airport, but those plans were dropped in the 1980s.

