

**Lower Howard's Creek Nature & Heritage Preserve** consists of 338 acres in Clark County, Kentucky. The site was purchased by the

Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund and is owned by the Clark County Fiscal Court. This property is home to populations of federally endangered plants, state rare plants and irreplaceable historical and archaeological features. As a result, a 228-acre tract was dedicated as a state nature preserve in 2001. The primary purposes of the Preserve are to protect rare species, protect and interpret historical/archaeological resources, conduct scientific research, protect and restore natural communities, and foster environmental education.

The Preserve is located in a limestone gorge formed by Lower Howard's Creek, which has been designated as a Kentucky Exceptional Waterway. The deep, twisting gorge is one of the most scenic places in the Bluegrass Region. Lower Howard's Creek is a unique area due to its geology, biodiversity and cultural resources.

The bedrock is mostly limestone from the Lower and Middle Ordovician period deposited between 450 and 480 million years ago. Two important building stones outcrop along the creek: one is a whitish-colored stone known as "birdseye limestone," the other is a tan to grayish dolomite called "Kentucky River marble."

The Preserve, now largely covered by second growth forest, is home to over 400 species of plants. From moist cliff faces to the riparian corridor of the meandering creek, ecological communities teem with diverse plant species that reflect their environmental conditions. Rare plants found in the Preserve are water stitchwort, running buffalo clover, Kentucky viburnum, white walnut and nodding rattlesnake-root. Mammalian species include river otter, beaver, deer, coyote, bobcat, black bear, gray bat and evening bat. Fish include rainbow darter, scarlet shiner and logperch.

The creek has been used by historic and prehistoric peoples over the last 10,000 years. This valley was a major overland route for buffalo herds, and their trails were widely used by Native Americans. Early settlers at nearby Fort

Boonesborough used the valley for a road, traveling to the Blue Licks to make salt via the "Salt Springs Trace," as it was called in 1775.

John Holder established a pioneer station at the mouth of Lower Howard's Creek in 1782. By the early 19th century, the area was crisscrossed with roads accessing industries located along the creek. Raw materials such as corn, wheat, wool and timber were taken down wagon roads to numerous water-powered mills. Finished products—such as whiskey, wheat flour, corn meal, woolen cloth and lumber from the sawmills—were hauled out of the valley for local use or shipment down the Kentucky River.

According to one historian, "This was one of the largest factory centers west of the Alleghenies in 1812 and had a wide reputation." After the Civil War, the area went into decline as industries moved to the more populated cities and residents followed. The valley, which had been completely logged over, has now been reclaimed by nature. Today the landscape looks very much like it did in the late 18th century.

#### **John Holder Trail**

This trail lies on land settled by Kentucky pioneer, Col. John Holder. Holder, who made his mark as one of the heroic defenders of Fort Boonesborough, was a commercial-industrial innovator involved in far sighted business enterprises. Under his leadership, the settlement he established at the mouth of the creek grew to include a store, tavern, boatyard, ferry, warehouse and mill. His landing on the Kentucky River became a major departure point of flatboats bound for New Orleans with Kentucky produce. Other developers followed Holder's lead, which resulted in Lower Howard's Creek becoming one of the first industrial areas of Kentucky. Much of the area is now enclosed in the Lower Howard's Creek Nature & Heritage Preserve.

The John Holder Trail follows segments of several old roads including the Athens-Boonesboro Turnpike, the Salt Springs Trace and Holder's Road. ■

For more information go to [www.lowerhowardscreek.org](http://www.lowerhowardscreek.org)

By observing these rules, you will be helping to protect Kentucky's natural heritage.

1. Trail is open sunrise to sunset.
2. Trail is for foot traffic only. The established trail provides the safest and best way to travel through the Preserve. Visitors must not re-route or shortcut the existing trail.
3. Horses, bicycles, climbing and rappelling are not permitted because of their destructive impacts to the trail and natural features.
4. Motorized vehicles are not permitted.
5. Possession of drugs or alcohol is prohibited.
6. Fishing, hunting, trapping and collecting plants, animals, rocks, or artifacts are prohibited in order to maintain nature's delicate balance.
7. Dogs, audio equipment, camping, picnicking, and building fires are prohibited to help ensure the natural beauty of the area and the safety and enjoyment of visitors.
8. Remember to carry out your trash.

**These rules are established by 400 KAR 2:090. Any person in violation of this regulation may be liable for a civil penalty of \$1000 per day and possible criminal prosecution as provided for in KRS 224.**



**Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission**



**Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund**

*This brochure was paid for by a grant from*

**KRA**  
**Kentucky River Authority**

# Lower Howard's Creek Nature & Heritage Preserve



## John Holder Trail

Parking is available behind Hall's Restaurant. The trail is 1.4 miles long (out and back 2.8 miles). This trail traverses the only portion of the Preserve open to the public. It is unlawful to trespass in other areas of the Preserve. The numbers below refer to markers along the trail.

- 1. Robert Martin House**—Foundation of a two-room log and batten house built about 1856.
- 2. Old Ford**—Crossing of the Salt Spring Trace (Boonesborough to Lower Blue Licks, 1775) and, later, the Athens-Boonesboro Turnpike. *Warning: Do not try to cross the creek in high water!*
- 3. Thompson Ridge residential area**—Multiple homestead sites dating from the 1800s.
- 4. Springhouse**—19th century dry laid stone wall enclosure.
- 5. Lower Howard's Creek overlook.**
- 6. Stone fence**—Quarried stone fence of outstanding quality.
- 7. Springhouse**—19th century dry laid stone wall enclosure. Spring may have been used by Holder's Station (1782).
- 8. Downey Graveyard**—Burials from early 20th century to present.
- 9. Benjamin Hieronymous House**—Early 19th century cabin site—only the chimney remains. Was the site of a triple murder in 1939. John Holder's station was located nearby.
- 10. Hieronymous Graveyard**—This family cemetery contains memorial stones to Col. John Holder and wife Fanny Callaway.

### Directions

*From I-64:* Take exit 94, then KY 1958 to Boonesboro Rd, KY 627; follow 627 south to Ford Rd, KY 1924; turn left onto Ford Rd, then the first right onto Athens-Boonesboro Rd, KY 418; follow 418 to Hall's Restaurant.

*From I-75:* Take exit 95, then KY 627 to the Kentucky River; cross the river and immediately take a right onto Ford Rd, KY 1924, and then the first right onto Athens-Boonesboro Rd, KY 418; follow 418 to Hall's Restaurant.

