

Neville's Woods – Fossil Cliff Walk

3.5 Miles

Much of this hike is on private land. Treat the land as if you were a guest in someone's house. The hike is best after several dry days.

Description: A pleasant, easy to moderate, 3.5-mile forest walk with very little elevation change. Occasional mud along Old Coal Road, so wear sturdy shoes or boots. The only real routefinding, and the only short climb, occur in the first quarter-mile of the walk.

Features: View across Robinson Run to the village of Rennerdale, winter views down into the valley of Robinson Run; wildflowers and fall colors in season; rock collecting: coal at the ruins of a 19th-century trench coal mine (no dangerous holes or shafts), slate fossils at Fossil Cliffs. Many side trails to extend the hike by 2-3 mi.

Directions to Start: From the Interstate 79 (NOT Interstate 376) Carnegie exit west of Pittsburgh, head W along winding Noblestown Road 1.6 miles. At first stop sign, turn L on Walker's Mill Road and go 0.1 mile. Park on either side of Walker's Mill Road in one of the Panhandle Trail parking areas.

0.0 mi. From the Walker's Mill parking lot, head uphill (SSE) on Walker's Mill Road about 10 feet, and turn R on the other side of the Panhandle Trail sign onto (unsigned) Scott Alley. In fifty feet, where the paved road turns left, continue straight ahead on a wooded grassy lane. In another fifty feet, where the lane forks, bear left and uphill on a double-rut dirt wooded lane. As you come near a house ahead and to the left, cut R across the hedgerow, then bear 45 degrees L (SSW) fifty feet across a grassy area to an obvious two-rut dirt road; turn R (SW) and head into the forest. You will stay on this old woods road for a mile and a half - this is the Old Coal Road, likely dating from 1884, that leads past ruins of the old Boyd mine and finally to the Jackson mine. In another 40 feet, the Old Coal road turns sharply L, steeply uphill, then quickly curves to the R.

0.2 mi. Old Coal Road levels out. From this point to the Jackson mine at 1.5 mi., the road is basically level, slabbing across the steep hillside through delightful woods. Pick your way around several poorly-drained areas turned to mudholes by ATVs and motorcycles, only detracting mildly from the walk. There are occasional views (best in winter) to the R deep into and across the valley of Robinson Run.

0.6 mi. Pass trail downhill to the R; this is the E end of the Lower Boy Scout Loop, A side trail off the lower portion of this loop leads to the new Collier Pedestrian Bridge over Robinson Run. Pass several numbered posts, as this part of the Old Coal Road is also part of the Lower Boy Scout Loop. Continue W on level, wide Old Coal Road.

0.8 mi. Pass trail downhill to R; this is the W end of the Lower Boy Scout Loop. In a few feet, a trail L, uphill, leads to the Upper Boy Scout Loop (a pleasant 0.7 mile diversion if you're in the mood) and on up to Hilltop Road. Continue W on level, wide Old Coal Road.

1.1 mi. Pass trail to R leading steeply down to Fossil Cliffs and the Panhandle Trail. Continue on level, wide Old Coal Road.

1.2 mi. Pass trail leading back to R, leading down to steep trail down to Fossil Cliffs. Old Coal Road in this area passes past the ruins of the old Boyd Coal Mine; note the berms of mine tailings just to your L with the mining trench just beyond. Trail curves R. Continue NW on level, wide Old Coal Road.

1.5 mi. Curve to the R across the head of a ravine; just after crossing the ravine, a well-worn path to the R leads downhill to the Panhandle Trail, but keep ahead and level. You are now entering the old Jackson Coal Mine ruins; the area is much-eroded by motorcycles, with trails all over, many of which are too steep to climb easily by foot. Where the main Old Coal Road curves gently to the R into the old trench of the mine, a trail leads more sharply to the R up onto the berm of main

tailings; take this trail E, running on top of the long, narrow tailings berm, to its end. Although many of the rocks along the entire Old Coal Road are coal, this mine area is the best place for kids to collect pieces of coal.

1.7 mi. Stop at the beautiful view across the valley. (Thanks to Charlie Brown for clearing the area to keep the viewpoint open.)

From the viewpoint, head back W along the berm 0.2 mi, noting the mining trench just a few feet to your R, with a trail down in the bottom of the trench. (If you were to follow this trail to the E and then NW, this Nike Site Trail leads via a pleasant woods walk 1 mile to Nike Site Road. You may extend the hike by a couple of miles if you walk out this trail and back. Caution: at the E end of the trench, the trail is confused by all the motorcycle trails, not noted on map. Note: Nike Site Road does **not** intersect the Panhandle Trail, it crosses on a bridge far above.)

1.9 mi. You are back where the high trail along the tailings berm rejoins the trail in the mining trench, coming in from your R. But, instead of continuing back on the Old Coal Road around the head of the ravine, take the well-worn trail sharply to the L, heading down the N side of the ravine.

2.3 mi. Having descended the ravine and then switchbacking along an open, wooded slope, you come to a T junction. To the L leads just a few feet to the Panhandle Trail, but turn R.

2.4 mi. After less than 0.1 mi up the N side of the ravine. and after crossing the ravine to the S side, turn L on a well-worn path. Follow this path 0.1 mi to the

2.5 mi. Fossil Cliffs.

Either sort through the broken shale at the bottom cliffs, or for the more adventurous, climb (and slip and slide) up the piles of broken shale, where you can peel pieces of shale off the cliffs themselves. It seems to take the average child about 30-60 minutes to find a fossil of some sort. From the Fossil Cliffs, return back the way you came 0.1 mi,

2.6 mi. at the T intersection, turn R, but instead of turning back L up the hill, continue straight a few feet to the Panhandle Trail.

2.7 mi. Turn R on Panhandle Trail. Follow Panhandle Trail E back to Walker's Mill.

2.9 mi. Rennerdale: old train station location for village on L, now a Panhandle Trail parking area.

Up the road from the Rennerdale parking area 0.2 mi. is a large duck pond in front of the fire department, a favorite of young kids. A block beyond is the Rennerdale Corner Store (412-276-8964), which sells pizza and has indoor seating.

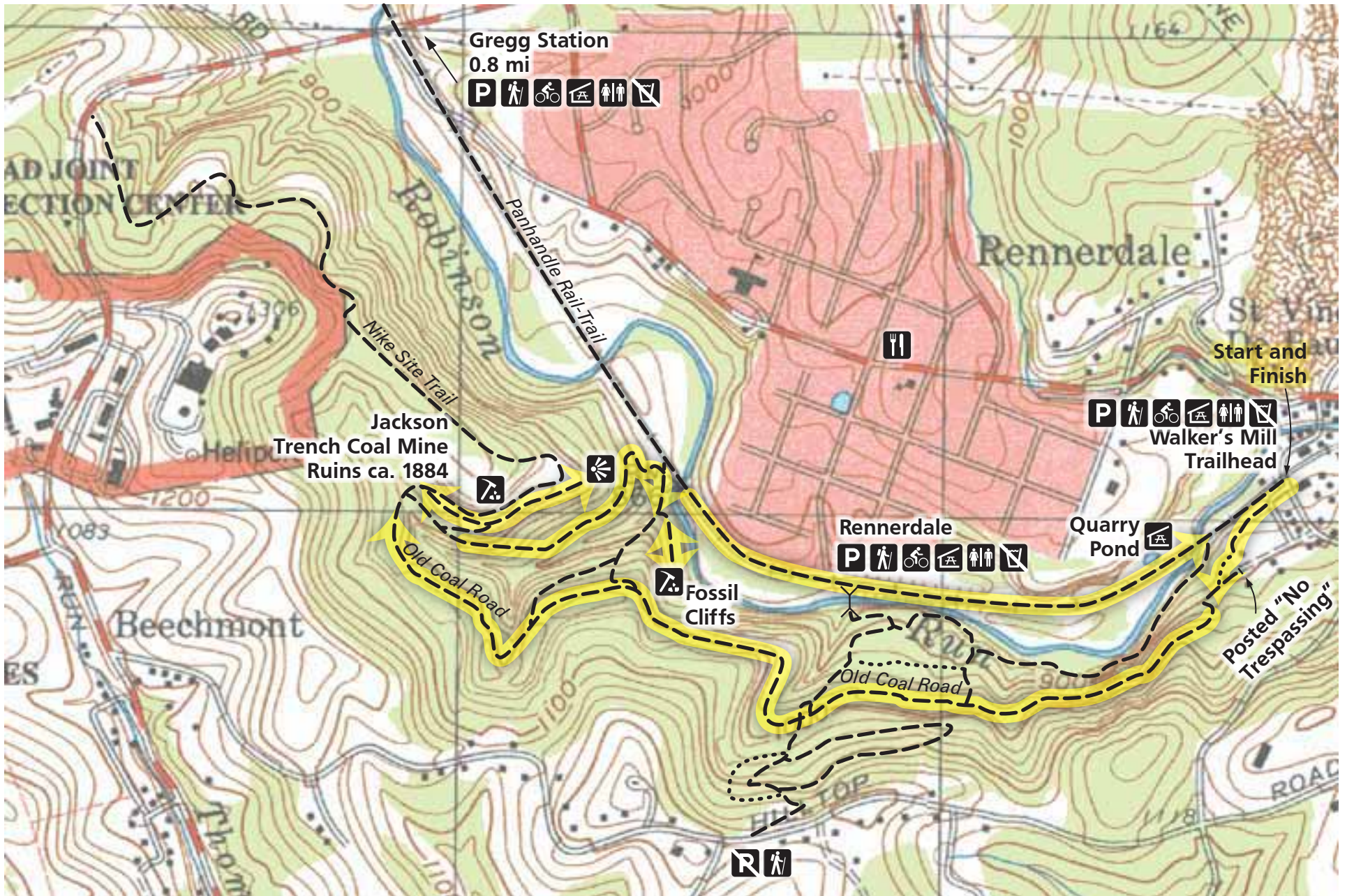
The trail across the bridge to the R leads to a beach along Robinson Run; kids and dogs are often wading in the shallow water here. The trail continues to the lower portion of the Lower Boy Scout Loop, and a trail (rough in sections with some downed trees) leads along the S side of Robinson Run back to the Panhandle Trail within view of Walker's Mill. Continue E on Panhandle Trail.

3.3 mi. Quarry Pond on L, picnic shelter on R; site of the Rock The Quarry concert/festival. Continue E on Panhandle Trail.

3.4 mi. Trail along Robinson Run comes in from R. Continue E on Panhandle Trail.

3.5 mi. Arrive back at Walker's Mill.

[Updated 11/2/10]



Neville's Woods Trails

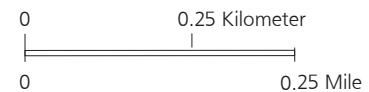
Off Panhandle Rail-Trail,
Collier Township, PA

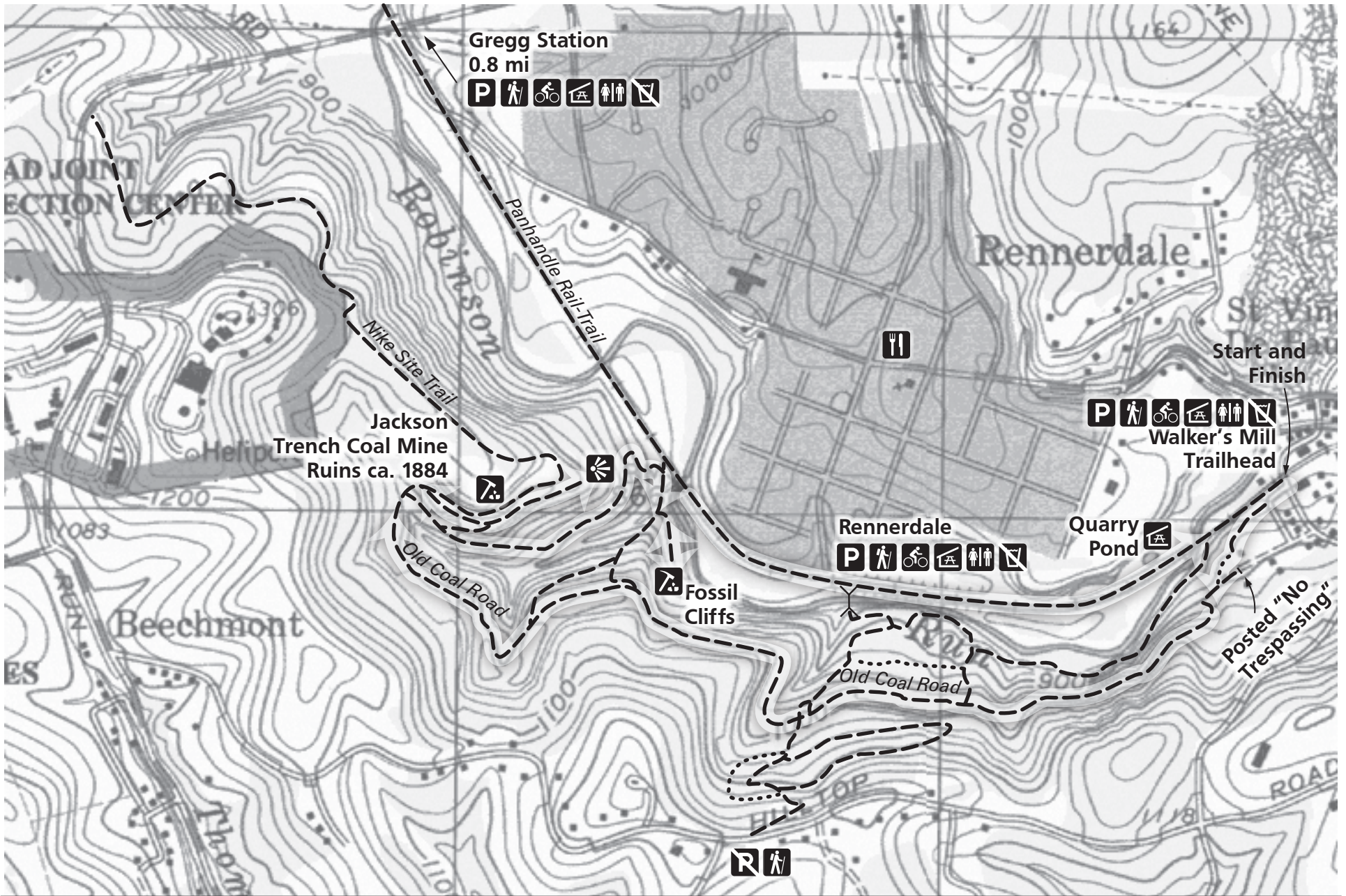
With Neville's Woods -
Fossil Cliff Walk Marked

Version 1.1 10/23/2010
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- well-worn or maintained trail
- indistinct or unmaintained trail





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