



Postcard. Image courtesy of Joseph Sapia

5. History of the George Helme Snuff Mill

George Washington Helme- a Louisiana lawyer, married Margaret Appleby of Spotswood in 1858.

The Applebys had operated a tobacco and snuff mill at Railroad Mills- the site of present day Helmetta Borough.

By 1866, Helme partnered with his brother-in-law to purchase the operation, assuming sole ownership in 1872.

The company became the George W. Helme Company- and grew to be the largest snuff mill complex in the world.

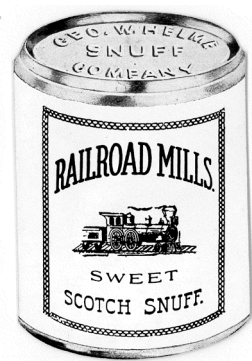
Helme built up the surrounding town to provide homes for his employees and facilities for drying, storing and milling tobacco into snuff and chew.

The Borough of Helmetta (named for Helme's daughter, Etta) was incorporated in 1888.

The large brick building that still stands- Building A, was a water-powered mill with water coming from the now dammed pond. Water still travels under that building today!

The mill closed in 1993. Saved from demolition, Building A has been converted to apartments.

The George W. Helme Snuff Mill Historic District, which includes the pond, was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.



Trade card. Image courtesy of Joseph Sapia

6. Bog plants

Between the dry uplands and the deeper waters of the pond lie a section of wetlands. The sandy soils and acidic waters help define the plants that can tolerate these conditions.

Sphagnum moss underlies the open marshes, with Atlantic white cedar trees fringing the upland sides. Carnivorous bog plants- pitcher plants and sundews occur, along with bladderwort in open waters.

Pickerel weed, white water lily and arrowhead are common.



Pitcher Plant (Sarracenia purpurea)

7. Role of Wetlands

Wetlands-including marshes, swamps and bogs provide valuable ecological services to people and to nature:

Flood control: Wetlands act like a sponge to capture and store water. During rain storms they slow the velocity of floodwaters. During dry times, wetlands slowly release that water back into the environment.

Filter: Wetland plants and soils help to filter out pollutants, sediments and excessive nutrients from the water.

Habitat: Wetlands provide food, water, shelter and space to a diversity of plants and animals.

Fun: Wetlands provide a place for people to hike, fish, canoe and explore.

Income: Commercial fishing, crabbing, shell fishing and cranberry farms all depend on wetlands and provide economic benefits to New Jersey.



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SELF-GUIDED PADDLING TRAIL

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Follow Us:



HELMETTA POND
JAMESBURG PARK CONSERVATION AREA



The Helmetta Pond Paddling Trail is a self-guided, interpretive tour of Helmetta Pond, part of the Jamesburg Park Conservation Area, located in Helmetta, NJ.

This County-owned parkland is administered by the Middlesex County Office of Parks and Recreation.

The boat launch is located off Maple Street in Helmetta Borough. Follow the green, numbered signs posted clockwise from the boat launch.

Portable restrooms, picnic tables and a children's playground are also available at the boat launch area.

Emergencies

In the case of an emergency, call: 911

For non-emergencies, call the Middlesex County Park Rangers: 732-745-3800

Safety

Dress for the weather. Bring safety gear and know how to use it. Carry waterproof emergency ID, contact information and a fully charged cell phone in a dry bag.

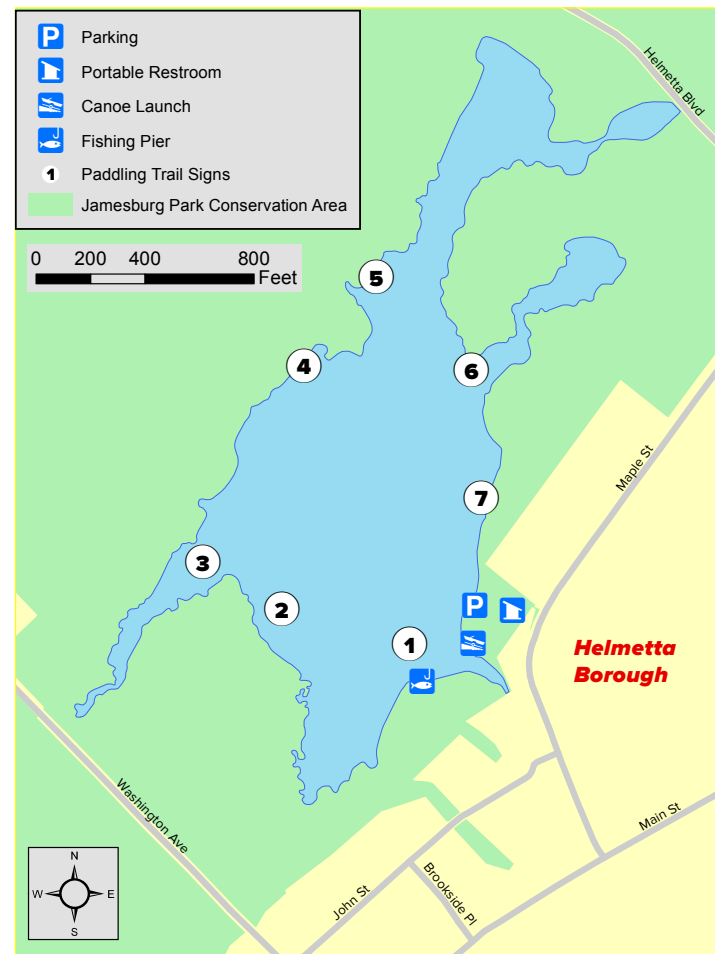
Be sure to inform someone of your travel plans.

A life jacket (Personal Flotation Device) only works if you are wearing it.

Respect private property, fellow boaters and wildlife. Middlesex County Office of Parks and Recreation & NJ Fish and Game rules and regulations in effect.

Please enjoy this paddling trail at your own risk.

Trail Map



1. Fishing opportunities in the pond

Anglers enjoy fishing at Helmetta Pond throughout much of the year. A variety of fish can be found here, including largemouth bass, bluegill sunfish, crappie and pickerel.

A license is required for freshwater fishing in New Jersey. Please consult the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife for the complete rules and regulations governing fishing.



Sunfish

2. What is a watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that is drained by a common body of water, such as a lake or river.

Helmetta Pond lies within the Lower Raritan Watershed—part of the larger Raritan Basin.

Helmetta Pond is fed by surface water flows and wetlands from the surrounding Jamesburg Park Conservation Area, including old cranberry bogs. Water leaving the pond flows into the Manalapan Brook towards DeVoe Lake.

From there the Manalapan joins the Matchaponix Brook and Cedar Run to form Duhernal Lake, which in turn joins the Deep Run to become the South River.

The South River flows into the Raritan River and ultimately Raritan Bay.

The water surrounding you has a long journey ahead.

3. Wetland birds

A diverse assortment of birdlife can be found on Helmetta Pond in every season.

In winter, scan any open water to find ring-necked ducks, black ducks and bald eagles.

In warmer weather, long-legged wading birds such as great blue heron and great egrets may make an appearance.

Swooping swallows and chimney swifts are common summer visitors.

Mallard ducks and Canada geese are year-round residents.



Great Blue Heron

4. Spotswood Outlier

Helmetta Pond and the surrounding Jamesburg Park Conservation Area are part of the 'Spotswood Outlier', the northernmost section of the New Jersey Pine Barrens.

They are separated from the main body of the Pine Barrens which lie about 20 miles to the south.

Much of the Spotswood Outlier has been lost to development.

The sandy soils and acidic waters allow for typical Pine Barrens vegetation and wildlife to exist here.

Much of the wooded area before you is part of the 1400-acre Jamesburg Park Conservation Area.

More than 4 miles of natural surface hiking trails can be found there.

While hiking, look for pitch pine trees, blackjack oaks and highbush blueberry.

In spring, listen for the trill of the pine warbler, or the song of the carpenter frog.



Pitch Pine needles and cones

For even more information and a printable hiking map please visit: middlesexcountynj.gov

This trail is funded in part by the Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program through the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.