

Vereen Park

A quaint little nature park resides in Little River, South Carolina. A visit to the park makes all troubles disappear. It is not that popular, so it does not have a swarm of visitors at any given moment. People can come and enjoy what nature offers. The man-made things there are meant to accentuate the natural beauty of the park or to respect the family it is named after. It is not tarnished by the apathy of mankind. Vereen Park is cared for, and for that, every visit is as enjoyable as the last.

In the park, there are wooden bridges, spanning the marsh, guiding people to the water way or to the forest. The bridges are sturdy though they have aged. Looking down, there are crabs the size of my thumb, making their way to their homes. The crabs were chestnut colored with off white pinchers. Because of the crabs, sometimes people will stand on the bridges and set cages to catch crabs. The people are quiet and stay out of the way, for those who simply only want to take a gander at the marsh. Most do not leave with many crabs.

After crossing the first bridge, there are two paths. One leads to another bridge, the other leads to a dock. Going to the left, there are trees whose limbs are like that of an octopus. Branching out in different directions, they stand out in waves. On the ground below, there are shells in the damp soil. The shells tell a story of higher tides. The park has changed, but has left things behind. At the dock, people may stay and bring a pole to fish. Other times, people watch the water. People watch how the water moves. The water way is smaller than the ocean but just as mesmerizing. Smaller waves lap the shore of

oyster shells below the dock. Occasionally, small boats may pass by. Most times, it is barren of humans.

At the fork in the pathways, if someone were to take the right, they would walk another bridge. This bridge has a view of the water way and the forest all together. Standing still, one can hear herons and storks calling out to their mates. One time, I had stumbled upon one of the birds, perching on the railing of the bridge. Slowly approaching, it did not fly off yet. The bird was pure white and their thin legs sitting gracefully on the edge of the bridge. Getting too close, the bird flew away, exposing their majestic wings. At the end of the bridge there are two more paths.

To the left, leads back to the water way. This time, however, it leads to the shore. A hill of oyster shells sit as a shore for the water way. Walking along, the shells crunch under the shoes of the visitors. One time my mother decided to throw shells back in the water as if skipping stones. Another time, I filled my pockets with shells my niece wanted to bring back home. The shorts that were filled with oyster shells became damp, sandy and smelled slightly fishy. The shells would clank in my pocket the whole way back. The memories made that day made up for walking around with wet pockets all day.

The other path leads to the forest. A lone bench sits on the side of the forest trail. The ground is covered with grass, dirt, and tree stumps. The trunks that stick out on hills and almost serve as stairs. Above is the soft blue sky intermingling with the rich green leaves of the trees. The path seems to meander here and there, with different paths all leading back to one solid track again. There are fallen trees and logs on the ground, out of the pathway. There are a few signs along the way that describe and identify the wildlife

people may spot on the trail. Wandering through the long trail, at the end there is the family gravesite.

The gravesite opens back up to the road to the park, but goes unnoticed. There is a tall wall that is not very wide with names of the family. In front of the name of walls, there is a stone angel. The stone angel is my favorite thing to visit at Vereen Park. She looks mournful, but accepting. Her arms are out and her head slightly tilted down. The craftsmanship on the statue is not on-par with Michelangelo. It is not as detailed, but her appearance is still stunning. Seeing her after seeing all the beauty of the natural world invokes a message. She harbors emotions, though she is made of only stone. She is a gentle reminder. Humans all return to the earth again. Death is upsetting, but inevitable. The lives humans have are important and so is the life of all the other living things. Humans are not better than nature, as we all become one in the end.