

INTRODUCTION

This brief history of the Kanawha State Forest is written, partly from the memory of Charles (Charley) N. Carlson, partly from records of sales and purchases of land maintained in the office at the Forest, and with the help of Mr. James Comer, who lived all of his life in Loudendale, which is adjacent to the Forest. Mr. Comer was past ninety years of age when Mr. Carlson interviewed him in 1979. The source for the information on wild flowers came from "Flowering Plants of Kanawha State Forest", authored by Mrs. Margaret Denison, who, with the help of Mr. Osbra Eye, Mr. Les McDowell, and Charley did an extensive study of the area. The section on "Birds" was derived from conversations between Mr. Carlson and such noted bird watchers as Ann Shreve, Noris Gluck, Osbra Eye, and others. The comments regarding "Trees" and "Animals" originate from the personal observations of Charley Carlson.

The Kanawha State Forest is located on the headwaters of Davis Creek and Middle Fork of Davis Creek, seven miles south of downtown Charleston, on secondary W.Va. Routes 23 and 42. Davis Creek derived its name from Thomas Davis, an early settler, who lived on Davis Creek about three miles below what is now the Kanawha State Forest. The main hollows, which have perennial streams and empty directly into Davis Creek are Dunlop, Polly, Shrewsbury, Rattlesnake, Hoffman, and Middle Lick Fork. Dunlop Hollow was named for Albert Dunlap, who lived in the hollow (but somehow had his name misspelled on the maps of the area. Polly (sometimes called Pauley) Hollow is supposedly named after a girl who was instrumental in getting a church built at the mouth of the hollow. Shrewsbury Hollow was named for John Shrewsbury, who built a log house at the mouth of the hollow and was one of the earliest settlers in this area. The Rattlesnake Hollow name is derived from a story about a pioneer woman, who lived in the area, entered her kitchen one morning and found two large rattlesnakes awaiting her. The Hoffman Hollow name probably originates from a pioneer family name. Middle Lick Fork probably derives its name from an animal lick located along the stream. Licks are spots where salts are found in the soil, which attract animals and who generally disturb the area when gaining access to the salt.

The general topography of the Kanawha State Forest, you see now, is part of the recent cycle of the geologic evolution which left a table land surface of considerable height, elevated about seven hundred feet above the Kanawha River, that was cut by Davis Creek and its numerous branches to form deep ravines with steep sides. These ravines are now about three hundred feet below the flat topped ridges that lie on either side of the streams. Rock outcrops are found below most of the prominent ridges. Elevations range within the Forest from 700 to 1500 feet above sea level. Although the climate is considered moderate, extreme temperatures have been recorded as low as -17 degrees F. to as high as 108 degrees F. The average summer temperature is 77 degrees F, whereas the average winter temperature is 46 degrees F. The mean annual rainfall is 47 inches; with the heaviest rains usually occurring in the spring.

The Forest is covered by loam type soils, 85% Muskingum, and Wellston or Shelocta at 15% each. Various materials have been extracted within the area for commercial purposes, i.e., coal, natural gas, fire clay, and iron ore. Only natural gas is being produced from 31 wells in the Forest at the present time. Fossils may be found on slate dumps at old mine sites, also around and under some of the rock ledges, and in some of the creeks. These fossils are usually leaf and stem prints of ancient ferns which once covered the area and were part of the massive plant and tree decay process which scientists believe formed the vast deposits of coal millions of years ago. Although most exploration scientists generally accept that the origin of oil is a product of the decomposition of organic matter, both plant and animal, and its reservoir is usually within sedimentary rocks, there remain some who do not accept this theory. The term "natural gas" usually implies hydrocarbons in gaseous form and may have a similar origin as petroleum, but this is not necessarily so since there are natural gas occurrences in some areas that exhibit a separate genesis from that of petroleum. Coal is a black sedimentary rock consisting chiefly of decomposed plant matter. However, there is no evidence to support that any relationship exists between the coal and natural gas in the Kanawha State Forest.

HISTORY

The earliest recorded history found thus far, relative to the Kanawha State Forest, is an economical evaluation report made September 1, 1881 to the Black Band Iron and Coal Company by N. S. Shaler, Doctor of Science. Dr. Shaler's report covers a 3,500 acre tract of land that lies upon the headwaters of Davis Creek, which is assumed to be now part of the Kanawha State Forest. Dr. Shaler in his report used the expression "your land and adjacent lands on Davis Creek" which would imply that the 3,500 acre tract was already owned by Black Band Iron and Coal Company by the September 1, 1881 date of his report. If the date of Dr. Shaler's report is considered valid, then some of the dates presented in Mr. Carlson's 1979 history are in question, and will remain in question until accurate records can be found to resolve these discrepancies. Dr. Shaler reported the timber was of excellent quality and occupied at least nine-tenths of the surface, the coal deposits were large and were of the highest quality, and the iron ores present in the area were of such size and quality to justify major development for the exploitation of the iron ore.

On January 13, 1888, J. Wilson and Fanny Humbird, and John A. and Caroline G. Humbird conveyed three tracts, 690 acres, 58 acres, and 1630 acres (total 2,378 acres) to Humbird Davis Coal Company. This company was later acquired by the Black Band Iron and Coal Company, which was owned by the Anheuser-Busch Brewing Company, and managed by Davy Nease and his wife.

In 1892, a narrow gauge railroad, known as the Kanawha and Coal River Railroad, was constructed from the headwaters of Davis Creek to connect with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad at the mouth of Davis Creek. This railroad was the only commercial access into this remote area at that time and was used solely to haul out the coal and timber. Part of the railroad's roadbed and some of its rails are still visible in various areas of the Forest.

In the summer of 1894, this narrow gauge railroad was extended up Dunlop Hollow for about one mile to haul out the large trees that were being cut into saw logs and staves. The staves were needed for making barrels. The trees were reported to be white and chestnut oaks of tremendous size.

On October 20, 1894, Columbus Shrewsbury, John W. Shrewsbury, Samuel and Isabelle Shrewsbury, and Betty Lloyd conveyed to George Shrewsbury a title to three tracts of land: 277.6 acres, 138.4 acres, and 14.5 acres (430.5 acres total). These tracts were later conveyed to the Anheuser-Busch Brewing Company.

Around 1894, an attempt was made to utilize the iron ore, as recommended by Dr. Shaler in his 1881 report to the Black Band Iron and Coal Company. A smelting furnace was built at the mouth of Pigeon Roost Hollow and smelting of the ore was tried but did not prove to be profitable and the furnace was abandoned. No physical evidence of the furnace exists.

On May 27, 1902, Betty Lloyd, a widow, Columbus Shrewsbury, a widower, and Samuel Shrewsbury and his wife, Isabelle, deeded 422.7 acres to the Kanawha and Coal River Coal Company. This tract was later conveyed to the Black Band Iron and Coal Company for a sum of \$6,340.00. This particular tract encompasses the area where the swimming pool now exists. With this acquisition of 422.7 acres, the Black Band Iron and Coal Company had acquired a total of 3230.5 acres in what is now the Kanawha State Forest.

Within the period 1888-1907, six coal mines were operated simultaneously, all mining the Black Band seam of coal. This is an excellent grade of bituminous coal and it won first place at the 1898 World Fair in San Francisco. The six mines were located; one at the mouth of Log Town Hollow, one in Polly Hollow, one on the east side of Davis Creek at the mouth of Dunlop Hollow, one at the mouth of Shrewsbury Hollow on the west side of the main road, one up Shrewsbury Hollow above the present site of the swimming pool, and one at the head of Shrewsbury Hollow. Whereas most mines in those days used donkeys and ponies to haul the coal out of the mines, these six mines used the most modern mining techniques available at that time and coal was hauled out of the mines by electric powered engines. An amusing method of paying the employees was by gold coin instead of by script, as was done by most of the large coal companies at that time.

During the peak of the mining activity, a sawmill and a stave mill for manufacturing barrel staves were located near the mouth of

Rattlesnake Hollow. There is no evidence of its existence now. There was also a brick manufacturing factory located on Middle Lick Fork, where traces of the factory remain visible. The clay for the brick was mined near Wall Fork, which empties into Middle Lick Fork.

A 1907 topographic map of the area, which is now the Kanawha State Forest, indicates there were 131 houses, three schools, three churches, two stores, one Post Office, and one town, called Chilton. One school was located at the mouth of Kanawha Fork, one at the mouth of Polly Hollow, and one at the mouth of Johnson Hollow. The churches were all located in the same areas as the schools. The Post Office, one store, and the main office of the Black Band Iron and Coal Company were located in Store Hollow No. 1, the present site of the campground. The town of Chilton was located on the upper part of Davis Creek, slightly above the mouth of Polly Hollow. Log Town Hollow, so named for the log houses built there, is adjacent to Johnson Hollow, where there is an abandoned cemetery. There are also two abandoned cemeteries in Shrewsbury Hollow.

The Black Band Iron and Coal Company closed the coal mines May 1907 and they were never operated again on the same scale as they had been for almost 20 years previously. The narrow gauge railroad built by the company was abandoned and let go to ruin. Most of the people living in the area moved away after the mines closed to find work in other areas. After the first World War, the railroad was rebuilt and operated for about a year to remove all of the mining machines, motors, generators, and other metal that could be used for scrap iron. Upon completion of this task, most of the rails were removed and the railroad beds turned over to Kanawha County to be used as roads.

In September 1923, Quince Jones purchased the land owned by Black Band Iron and Coal Company. Jones did some timbering and opened a coal mine in Shrewsbury Hollow. He hauled the coal out by truck. Jones established a sawmill at the mouth of White Hollow, but some of his timber was sold to F. Lory & Sons and part sold to Clear Fork Lumber Company (both these companies did most of the timbering in the area during that period).

Quince Jones died in 1933. On July 2, 1936, the title to the land that

Jones had purchased in 1923 from the Black Band Iron and Coal Company was conveyed to the Kanawha Valley Bank by Robert Kelly, Trustee. This action was made possible by the loss of the property through default on the deed of trust signed May 2, 1931 by Quince Jones and his wife Ella Jones.

The ex-Jones property, approximately 6,705 acres, was deeded September 21, 1937 from the Kanawha Valley Bank to the State of West Virginia for the use of the Conservation Commission of West Virginia for the sum \$33,525.00. This acreage is situated on the headwaters of Davis Creek in the Loudon and Washington tax districts, Kanawha County. The sale consisted of seven tracts or parcels of land. The coal and gas mineral rights were reserved by the owners for 4,336 acres of the total property. Right of ways were also reserved for the electric and telephone lines through the area.

The U.S. Federal Government entered into an agreement with the State of West Virginia and on April 6, 1938, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) occupied their new camp, Camp Kanawha. The camp was located at the mouth of Shrewsbury Hollow below where the swimming pool facilities now exist. The CCC camp supported approximately 200 young men. No traces of the camp itself survive, although there are several buildings, shelters, and stone buildings/walls that remain as examples of the fine work the CCC did in creating the Forest facilities. When the CCC camp first began, there were four families living at the mouth of Polly Hollow, several families living in Shrewsbury Hollow, and various other families scattered throughout the area.

The Civilian Conservation Corps began the development of the area that is now known as the Kanawha State Forest. The CCC removed all of the old abandoned houses, coal tipples, and all other items in the area that were no longer in use. The CCC then constructed main roads, the Forest Superintendent's residence, the office, the maintenance buildings, and the picnic shelters. The Superintendent's residence and the picnic shelters were built using native chestnut logs, which were plentiful in the area before the blight attack, which killed most of the mature chestnuts in the Middle Atlantic States. The CCC also built a dam across Davis Creek to create a one and a half acre lake, which was used as a swimming

pool. The bath house, restaurant, and other buildings used in conjunction with the lake swimming pool, were also constructed by the CCC during that era. The CCC continued with the development of the area until June 30, 1942 when Camp Kanawha was closed and most of the CCC men entered the armed forces to help fight in World War II.

In 1973, an additional 2,500 acres were acquired for the Forest from the Wehrle Family landholdings to make a total of 9,205 acres. Dorothy Wehrle Guest was instrumental in this acquisition. The "new" area did not have any developments, except for some gas wells and a road along the outer perimeter which was intended for fire control and general protection of the Forest. Within this "new" area, there is also a road along Middle Fork, which has been in existence for many years.

On November 17, 1989, the Kanawha State Forest Foundation was officially established through the efforts of the Kanawha State Forest Superintendent, Alvan D. Gale, and Calvin C. White, an ex-Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) member who had helped develop the Forest in the late 1930's. The primary purpose of the Foundation was and is to solicit funds from the private sector for the benefit of the Kanawha State Forest.

Calvin White, a retiree, had created in early 1989 a volunteer work force comprised primarily of ex-CCCers who had served at Camp Kanawha in their youth. They were all retired but willing to donate their time and skills, and in many cases their own money, to help rejuvenate the Forest. These ex-CCCers working with the other volunteers fulfill a secondary purpose of the Foundation to physically improve developed recreational areas of the Forest. By September 1, 1994, this volunteer work group, who work regularly throughout most of the year, had accomplished the following significant projects:

- 1) Rehabilitated the CCC-built shelters #1 and #2. Built an access road to shelters, blacktopped the hill portion and graveled the flat part of the road. Cleared brush from around the shelters down to the main Forest entry road and dug drainage ditches alongside the access road.
- 2) Built thirteen (13) mini-shelters, spaced throughout the Forest.
- 3) Built a stone fire ring at the Shrewsbury Hollow Camping Area and one at the shelter end of Salamander Trail.

- 4) Built ten (10) footbridges throughout the Forest, four in Dunlop Hollow, two on the Snipe Trail (Shrewsbury Hollow), one in Rattlesnake Hollow, one near Shelter #9, one in No. 2 Store Hollow, and one on Davis Creek below the dam. Two other footbridges at Shrewsbury Hollow near the Group Camping Area were redecked, and two abutments were also built for the Davis Creek footbridge placed near the mouth of White Hollow.
- 5) Installed a stainless steel door to an abandoned coal mine in Shrewsbury Hollow.
- 6) Financed and helped construct a new Kanawha State Forest wood/stone sign at the Loudendale entry.
- 7) Built and erected a new wood Kanawha State Forest Sign at the Hernshaw entry.
- 8) Financed and helped build a new wood/stone sign near shelter #8 to indicate the site of the original CCC Camp Kanawha.
- 9) Financed the repainting of shelters #1 and #2.
- 10) Built two small footbridges near the toilets below shelters #1 and #2.
- 11) Cleared brush from the Shrewsbury Hollow area above the swimming pool, including the Group Camp Area.
- 12) Built the Snipe Trail and established procedures to keep it maintained to hiking trail standards.
- 13) Cleared brush along the Davis Creek area between the dam footbridge and the Loudendale entrance to the Forest.
- 14) Built wooden fence along top of Davis Creek Dam wall.
- 15) Donated nearly 8,000 man-hours of volunteer labor.

Just as this book was going to press, the Foundation received the official certificate confirming a district of the Kanawha State Forest which contains the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)-built structures, i.e. four large picnic shelters, superintendent's residence, stone powder building, Davis Creek footbridge, and the dam had been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Foundation's Secretary, Flossie Kourey, deserves extra credit for her three year diligence in seeing this procedure through to success.