

Forest Land Failed First Owners

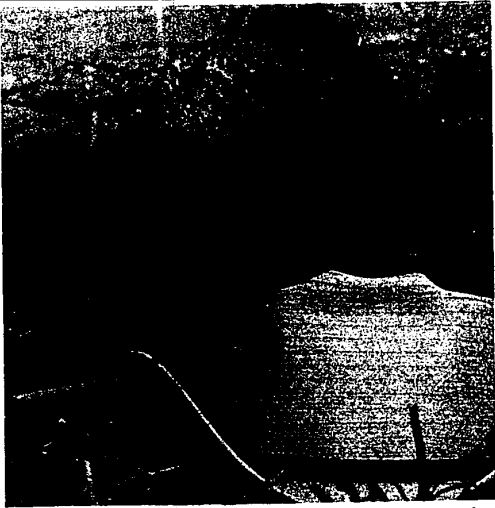
State Became Owner

Public success and private failure are mixed in the story of how the State of Michigan came to own and maintain more than 4 1/2 million acres of land.

Michigan was practically forced into becoming a land manager, recalls R. J. Greffenus, retired U. S. Forest Service conservationist from Colorado who is currently a research scholar in The University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources.

In the 1880s and '90s, as forest lands were cut and burned and as farmers failed on the unfertile soils of northern Michigan, these lands were abandoned to the state for nonpayment of taxes, he points out.

By the early '90s this flow of tax-delinquent lands became a flood, so the state in 1893 decided to take full ownership of them.



GREFFENUS, who discussed the subject with Dr. Karl Lager on the radio program "Conservation Report," notes that the state still hoped to control land abuses by getting the land back into private ownership, first through homesteading and later by direct sales.

"However, the abuses continued and a few discerning individuals prevailed upon the state to retain some of these lands as state property," he recalls. "So the first state forest of 35,000 acres was created in 1903 under a Forest Commission directed to reforest burned-over lands and to provide fire protection."

Between 1910 and 1930 the state recognized the recreation potential of these lands and with legislative authority created state game and recreation areas, Greffenus points out.

As recreation use increased, more lands and funds were dedicated to parks and recreation areas. At the same time provision was made for wildlife.

"AN INTERESTING policy change was made in the '30s and early '40s," Greffenus explains. "To increase deer populations, refuges on which hunting was prohibited were established. Only small areas were open to hunting."

"As the deer population increased and vegetation became overgrown, the state altered its policy and by the early '40s large areas were opened to hunting and only a small area remained in the refuge system."

Since World War II recreational use has grown by leaps and bounds, he adds. In the last 10 to 15 years, it has increased at a faster rate than the population.

"To meet this demand, the state has expanded its park and recreation system but, with the present level of financing, the state is unable to keep up with the demand. For this reason the voters will have an opportunity to vote on a \$100 million bond issue this fall for more recreational development on state bonds, especially in southern Michigan," he notes.

Resident Finishes

2-Week Navy Tour

Naval Reserve Commander Robert E. Vanden Heuvel of 21252 Robinwood, Farmington, recently completed two weeks active duty aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Guadalcanal.

Vanden Heuvel is second in command of Battalion Staff, USNR Training Center, Dearborn. He enlisted in the Naval Reserve 20 years ago and rose from recruit to commander through the Reserve Officer Training program. He commanded Division 9-82, Dearborn Naval Reserve Training Center until his promotion last year.

Vanden Heuvel and wife Ruth have two children: Linda, an eighth grader at Farmington Jr. High, and Richard, a fifth grader at Flinders Elementary.

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