

CHAPTER THREE

FORESTRY AND LAND USE

Under an agreement made with the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests on September 11, 1951 more than 3,500 acres of Authority-owned forest and swampland came under the management of that department. Total cost of the land was approximately \$36,000.

Acquisition of land formed an important part of the Authority's reforestation and water conservation program. The establishment and maintenance of forest cover had several purposes or benefits, which may be broadly described as: Demonstration to the public of wise land use, actual wood production, water conservation, erosion control, recreation, and aesthetic values. For many persons the best lesson in conservation is field observation and the Upper Thames forest areas now are a living example of how marginal land can be wisely used.

Many of the natural woodland areas in the Upper Thames forest were in poor and rundown condition when acquired. Many had been overcut and heavily pastured. Many had the best trees removed over the years, leaving only poor specimens of inferior species. The aim was to improve these woodlands through the scientific management plan carried out by Lands and Forests, in order to secure maximum growth of valuable wood. In acquiring land for forestry purposes the Authority endeavored to purchase areas not suited to agriculture.

The largest Authority-owned tract under agreement in 1968 was the Ellice Swamp, in Perth County, covering 2,133 acres. The first 150 acres were purchased in 1948 from the Canada Company for \$785. Eighty acres, bought in 1967, cost \$2,500, an indication of rising prices. Other tracts in Perth County were purchased at Gadshill, in North Easthope Township, covering 666 acres and including the former Perth County forest; the Dr. Murray Forest, 175 acres, in the Gore of Downie; and at Fish Creek, Blanshard Township, 66 acres.

In Blandford Township, Oxford County, there is the Downey tract of 50 acres and in North Dorchester, Middlesex County, 387

acres. Since taking over management of the tracts, Lands and Forests have planted more than 1,115,000 trees of various species.

The Authority's original reforestation committee, named in 1948, included Dr. R. S. Murray, chairman; John G. Bell, Hon. Nelson Monteith, a former Ontario minister of agriculture and W. A. G. Thurston, representing Lands and Forests. Members in 1968 were Charles Kirk, chairman; J. A. Wallace, J. E. Bryan, Carl Sackrider, J. W. Brown and L. E. Vail.



Authority Forest in North Easthope, under Lands and Forests Management.

Under the agreement signed in 1951 Lands and Forests had sole and exclusive possession, control, management and care of all lands coming within the scope of the agreement, until the year 2000. The agreement was revised in 1963 setting the expiry date at 40 years from April 1, 1961. The Department assumed all expenses incurred in development and management and paid 50 per cent of the cost of all land acquired by the Authority for reforestation, providing that the purchase was approved by the Minister.

In 1960 the Forestry Act of 1952 was revised to provide more comprehensive management of lands suitable for forestry purposes, and the scope of management was broadened to include such matters as wildlife, recreation, and protection against floods and erosion. The legislation now provides for grants to Authorities to assist in acquisition of lands for multi-purpose management.

There was always close liaison between the department and the Authority and representatives of the former have given freely of their time and advice in forestry matters. Names of Lands and Forests personnel familiar to Authority members over the years include S. R. Hamilton, R. J. K. Murphy, Douglas Omand, Al. Berst, H. H. deVries, James Gage, W. A. G. Thurston, L. C. Scales, Dr. J. K. Reynolds, C. J. Heeney, J. A. Fingland, L. N. Kelly, E. K. E. Dryer, Charles Horton, W. E. Steele, W. E. Moore, C. Blanken, James Lockwood, Douglas Rosborough, Lloyd Stock, Fred Janser, Tom Beck, Herb Clark, W. B. M. Clarke, C. Harold Zavitz, Peter Addison, Murray Johnson.

MILLIONS OF TREES

While the Department of Lands and Forests is doing an excellent job in managing the tracts committed to its care, the Authority has not been idle in planting trees on its own account, or in encouraging others to do likewise. During the Authority's first 20 years, more than four million trees were planted, a goodly percentage on private property, at the request of the land owners.



Lesson in Tree Planting for School Children.

The first major step in the tree-planting program took place in April, 1949 on the former Soldiers' Settlement farm, bordering Fish Creek, near Prospect Hill. Members of the staff of the St. Williams Forestry Station, under the direction of Lloyd Stackhouse, planted 50,000 trees on 52 acres of land.

In September, 1950 the first mechanical tree planter used in Ontario was demonstrated at the annual meeting of the Ontario Conservation and Reforestation Association, held at the Dr. J. Cameron Wilson farm at Hyde Park. The Authority purchased three, one for each county in the watershed.

In carrying out this phase of its conservation program the Authority, through meetings and demonstrations, kindled the interest of many individuals and organizations and received co-operation in kind, with school children, scouts and guides, forestry groups, service clubs and sportsmen's organizations all involved in the work.



Mechanical Tree Planter Demonstrated.

When the Authority first offered reforestation service to private landowners in 1952, most of the applicants were already keen tree planters. But as time went on more and more persons became interested, and each year there were new applicants planting for the first time. Under this plan the Authority provided its tree planting equipment and manpower free of charge when the trees were purchased through Lands and Forests-approved outlets.

Appreciating that the preservation of existing woodlots in the watershed was of paramount importance, the Authority in 1955 decided to sponsor a tree-farm movement, in co-operation with the Canadian Forestry Association. From time to time dinners were held to honor those who qualified for tree farm certificates. The first such gathering was at Woodstock on March 28, 1955 when 12 farmers received their awards. Plaques have been presented to the Ingersoll Kiwanis Club for proficiency in 4-H club forestry work and in 1967 it was decided to sponsor the Oxford County 4-H Conservation Club.

Scouts and Guides planted trees on Authority-owned property to qualify for their forestry badges; assistance was given in tree planting on school grounds, with mechanical planters used to demonstrate large-scale planting and talks given on tree care. Stratford Teachers' College students were Authority guests at Arbor Day ceremonies at the Murray Forest, where the students planted trees and observed demonstrations in machine planting, spraying and thinning older stands.

In June, 1965 the London Kiwanis Club planted 100 sugar maples on the south side of Fanshawe and plans to build a sugar shack, used for boiling down sap. A. R. Ford, the club's charter president, planted the first tree.

THE MURRAY FOREST

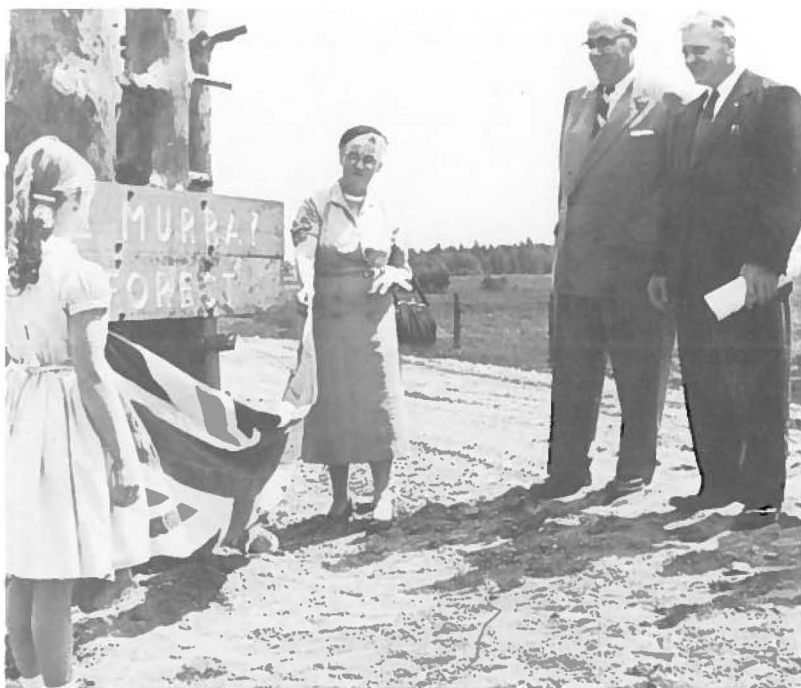
The 175-acre Murray Forest, on the north side of Wildwood Lake, perhaps the most valuable tract in the watershed, was bought in 1956 for \$16,000. One hundred acres were turned over to Lands and Forests for management and the remaining 75 acres were retained by the Authority for the purpose of demonstrating management and utilization of plantations.



Winter in the Murray Forest.

The plantation had its origin in 1939 when Dr. R. S. Murray, a Stratford physician, set out 75,000 seedlings. Much of the planting was done by hand by Dr. Murray, his family and friends. Over the years the number of plantings doubled and a good harvest was returned.

Dr. Murray was a charter member of the Authority and it was fitting that, at the formal opening on June 19, 1957, that the tract should be named officially the "Dr. Murray Forest". It was a tribute to a man who spent much of his spare time planting trees on land that had not justified use for agricultural purposes. Honor of unveiling the new entrance sign and opening the forest for public enjoyment went to 10-year old Patricia Murray, granddaughter of the late doctor, who died on August 28, 1954. She was assisted by Mrs. Murray.



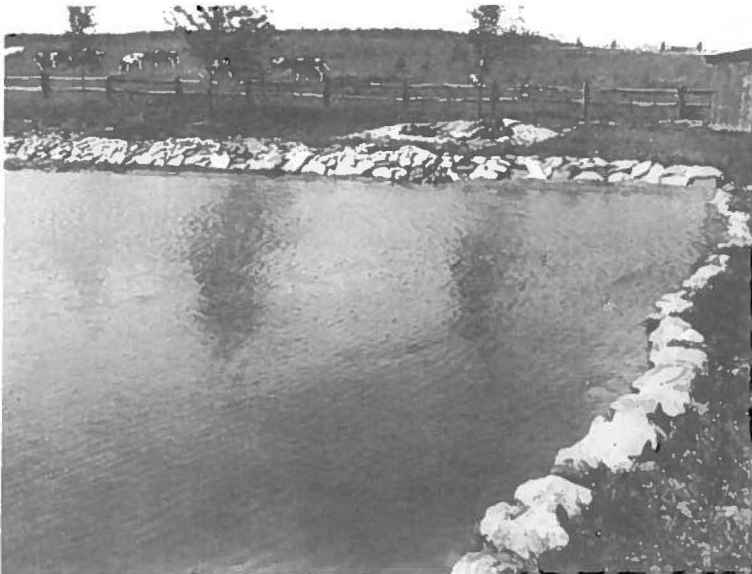
Left to right, Patricia Murray, Mrs. R. S. Murray, Mr. Pitlock, John Stephen.

The Authority now faces the problem of obtaining non-agricultural land suitable for tree planting. Under the ancillary measures agreement, a companion to the flood control agreement with the Federal government, the Authority is required to plant a minimum of 200,000 trees a year. The quota has been met, but more land is needed. Municipal clerks and the Department of Agriculture have been asked to be on the lookout for suitable land.

Working with the Department of Agriculture and its representatives in the watershed, with crop improvement associations and with the Ontario Agricultural College, part of the University of Guelph, the Authority played its part in encouraging soil conservation and the intelligent use of land. Numerous soil judging contests were held for adult and junior farmers, and soil testing and soil building demonstrations were arranged. Several hundred acres of agricultural lands, adjacent to Wildwood and Pittock dams, are being kept under cultivation by area farmers, pending agreement on future use.

FARM PONDS

The Authority's farm pond program was initiated in 1949 and terminated in 1964 when the operation was placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture. This program brought the Authority close to the farmer and the dual co-operation resulted in the construction of approximately 500 ponds in the three counties in the watershed.



Well Managed Farm Pond.

Average cost of the ponds was \$200. The Authority provided plans and engineering supervision, and made a financial contribution to the farmer of up to \$100 a pond. Approximately 50 per cent of the ponds served a variety of purposes, including swimming and fishing. Forty-five per cent were for stock watering, three per cent for irrigation, and two per cent solely for wildlife.

In 1949 demonstration ponds were built on the farms of Cecil Riddle, near Beachville; Albert Bowman, Fullarton, and David McEwen, Byron. These farms were visited frequently by interested farm groups and students on organized tours. Field officer Johnson was assisted in the program by John Simpson, Frank Zavitz and William Weir.

The number of ponds built in the various municipalities in the watershed, while the program was under Authority jurisdiction, appear below:

Biddulph 46	Ellice 12	Oxford W. . . 8
Blandford 5	Fullarton . . . 29	Oxford N. . . . 5
Blanshard 51	Ingersoll 1	Usborne 23
Delaware 10	Lobo 1	Westminster . 11
Dereham 14	London Twp. . . 91	Zorra E. . . . 1
Dorchester N. . 31	Logan 12	Zorra W. . . . 15
Downie 26	Nissouri E. . . 17	St. Marys . . . 1
Easthope N. . . 18	Nissouri W. . . 48	Woodstock . . . 2
Easthope S. . . . 7	Oxford E. . . . 1	Mitchell 1

SIFTON BOTANICAL BOG

Within the bounds of Greater London stands a living monument to the greatest of all Canadian builders — the glacier. Probably no other single element has so shaped the face of our country, and even our very destiny, as those monsters, millions of years ago.

The above paragraph appeared in The London Free Press of October 28, 1961. It was written by Ken Smith. He was referring to the Byron Bog, now the Sifton Botanical Bog.

After earlier rejection of the scheme, the Authority finally agreed to co-operate with the city in preserving and developing this phenomenon of nature. The bog is situated just south of Oxford Street, between Hyde Park Sideroad and the Sanitarium Road. It is said to be the oldest floating bog in Ontario, and a remnant of the last glaciation 10,000 years ago. Surrounded by beech and maple stands, it is like an island of the northern evergreen forests. A real naturalist's paradise, it has been used for many years by teachers and students of the University of Western Ontario and the University of Toronto as an aid to studies.

In 1889 a study of the area was made by the Entomological Society of Canada. At that time the depth of the peat was found to be 60 feet at the centre to a minimum of eight feet around the outside. The now small pond, according to the experts, must have been at least 60 acres in size when first left by the glaciers. Aquatic plants and wetland species have gradually absorbed the

pond, creating bog conditions over the whole area. It illustrates the formation of land from water, the development of soils and plant life from the early ages. Sphagnum moss fills the centre and a ring of spruce and tamarack grows around it. Pitcher plants, showy orchids, bog rosemary, blueberry, leatherleaf, and many other interesting plants are common.

In May, 1960 W. Mowbray Sifton, of the Sifton Construction Company Limited, which firm had acquired part of the bog, offered it to the Authority on the understanding that the Authority obtain the remainder of the bog and take steps to ensure its preservation. Following investigation the executive committee decided that the Authority was not the proper body to take over the area.

London city council entered the picture, and in September, 1962 approved acquisition of the property on a cost-sharing basis with Mr. Sifton and the Province of Ontario, providing the latter would agree. Mr. Sifton offered to give his part of the bog, about 27 acres, to the city and to pay half the cost of obtaining the remaining 17 acres, up to \$2,500.

In December, 1963, following receipt of a resolution from the city supporting the purchase of the bog, the Authority applied to the Ontario government for financial aid. In September, 1964 Ontario approved a grant of \$9,900 for land purchase.

The London Public Utilities Commission undertook a plan of development, and in September, 1966 a five-year program, involving a capital expenditure of \$24,300, was approved by the joint parks committee which includes representatives of the London board of control, city council, the Authority and others. At the request of the Authority the Ontario government in March, 1967, approved a grant of \$12,150 toward the development plan. The name, Sifton Botanical Bog was given the area by resolution of city council on September 20, 1966.

The development program included construction of a fence, gateway, entrance road and parking area. The fence and road have been completed. It is hoped to crisscross the area with high-level walks and to erect a tower or two from which visitors will be able to obtain a good panoramic view of the bog area.

ARDA PROGRAM

While the Authority evinced interest in some phases of the program offered under the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act of 1961, little was accomplished. A Federal government measure, the Act was designed to provide financial assistance for rural development, with Provincial government participation. Ontario became a partner in the program in 1962.

At a full Authority meeting in Ingersoll on November 26, 1963 it was resolved to acquire 18,609 acres of wetlands in the watershed under the ARDA plan. A brief was sent to the Ontario Department of Agriculture, administrator of the program. In February, 1964, H. F. Crown, director of the program for Ontario, met the Authority executive to explain the benefits under the Act.

He said that the Federal and Provincial governments would share the entire cost of buying wetlands. Chairman Pittock suggested that perhaps the Authority should contribute 10 per cent of the cost so as to retain local autonomy and local interest. With this Mr. Crown concurred and also suggested that the Authority pick up half a dozen sites and proceed with their purchase in 1964. The executive reiterated the Authority's interest in obtaining 18,609 acres of wetlands. Later there was some question as to whether any rural area in the watershed would qualify for rehabilitation and development under the Act, and the question was not resolved.

It would now appear that the only access the Authority might have to ARDA funds would be through the Provincial government's water supply reservoir program, under which grants of 75 per cent are available, with 37-1/2 per cent coming from ARDA. The Zorra Swamp reservoir is a typical example.

AVON VALLEY PLAN

A management plan for the Avon River Valley was prepared for the Authority in 1952, by the Ontario Department of Planning and Development. It was intended to demonstrate what could be accomplished on a little watershed, drained by one stream, by sound conservation practices.

An advisory board was formed and brought M. H. Cohee, chief economist of the eight-state Upper Mississippi Soil Conservation Service, from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to address a meeting of farmers and explain how conservation practices aid food output. Copies of the report were distributed to farmers in the area and some 135 farmers were contacted personally by Robert Crawford, a summer employee of the department. The report offered suggestions on how to make best use of the land through contour plowing and strip-cropping; on how to check soil erosion and gullying, and rebuild top soil; on reforestation and woodlot management; on proper drainage methods and water conservation, through the construction of farm ponds.

There is no doubt that a number of farmers profited by the report, through improved farm planning and building farm ponds, but the intent to develop a model watershed in a small valley, fell short of accomplishment. Two reasons were advanced. One was the feeling on the part of some members of the Authority that the scheme

should not proceed unless it was duplicated in other parts of the watershed; the other was the plan was ahead of its time and the people were not ready for it. Many aspects of the Avon plan were offered later to rural dwellers all over Canada, under the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act.

Members of the advisory board were Michael Messerschmidt, chairman; A. D. Simpson, R. Thomas Orr, Wilson Cook, Howard Lowe, Donald McTavish, R. E. White, S. R. Hamilton, A. B. Manson, Fred Schlotzhauer, John Dempsey and Bradley Rutherford.