HISTORY OF THE BUCKNELL CHILLISQUAQUE NATURAL AREA

OUTLINE

Professors Alan Schweinsberg and Wayne McDiffet spent the summer of 1978 searching for land that would provide research and learning/recreation opportunities in a variety of habitats. With the aid of a $50,000.00 grant from the National Science Foundation, Bucknell decided to purchase 45 acres of land in Liberty Township to complement its newly formed environmental program. The land is bordered on the eastern side by the Chillisquaque Creek, the south, by woods, the west, by a hedge row and swampy area, and the north, by the road and parking lot. It encompasses a wooded area, a field, and several ponds, as well as some marshland. There exists a 100 foot access path from the parking area into the Natural Area.

In 1982, Bucknell was able to purchase an additional 17 acres of field area from the current owner, Bessie Beck. Thus, by 1983, Bucknell had accumulated 62 acres of land for its Natural Area.

The Committee overseeing the use and maintenance of the Natural Area includes Professors Warren Abrahamson, Ben Marsh, Wayne McDiffet, Richard Nickelsen, and Alan Schweinsberg. Each person has identified various vegetative, aquatic, geographic, and geologic characteristics of the Natural Area, in addition to animal life found there. Further research is conducted by students chosen by the Committee to work during the summer under the Katharine McKenna Scholarship and the Burpee Scholarship. Students had enhanced the Natural Area by building bird boxes, mapping the vegetation in the woods and the field, building a Nature trail and compiling a guide to the Area.

The land itself, before Bucknell bought it, was owned by several people. Ownership can be traced back to 1874, when Caleb and Peter Auten owned a tract of land now encompassed in the Natural Area. Urban Rhoads bought their section, and combined two other tracts from Bitler and the Billmeyer Estates in 1917; he owned approximately 80 acres from these three tracts. J. Urban bought the land next, then sold it to Lewis Wieand in 1956. During his ownership, Mr. Wieand built "roads" into the woods, allowing easier access for machinery and some drainage from the frequently saturated fields. He farmed oats and corn near the wooded area during and June, and wheat and hay on the higher land in the fall; he alternated plow lines yearly. Mr. Wieand also built a farm pond in 1956. In 1960, raw sewage was discovered to have been dumped in the water, thus affecting the quality of the pond water significantly. In addition to his pond, Mr. Wieand "built" and Artesian well behind his barn in 1956.*

In 1969, Wieands sold to Mr. Krist; it is not known if farming was continued in the same fashion as previously. Two years later, Mr. Krist died and his second wife, Bessie remarried a man named Mr. Beck. The Becks planted an apple orchard, but discontinued farming altogether.

Currently, the orchard is not maintained by Bucknell. The access path is mowed once a year. Plans do exist to establish a land management program for the field area of the Bucknell-owned land, to aid students and research successional pathways that would occur at the Natural Area. Plowing will be the method of disturbance. Further, hopes for a weather station to be established to monitor rainfall, humidity, and temperature at the Natural Area are being discussed.

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