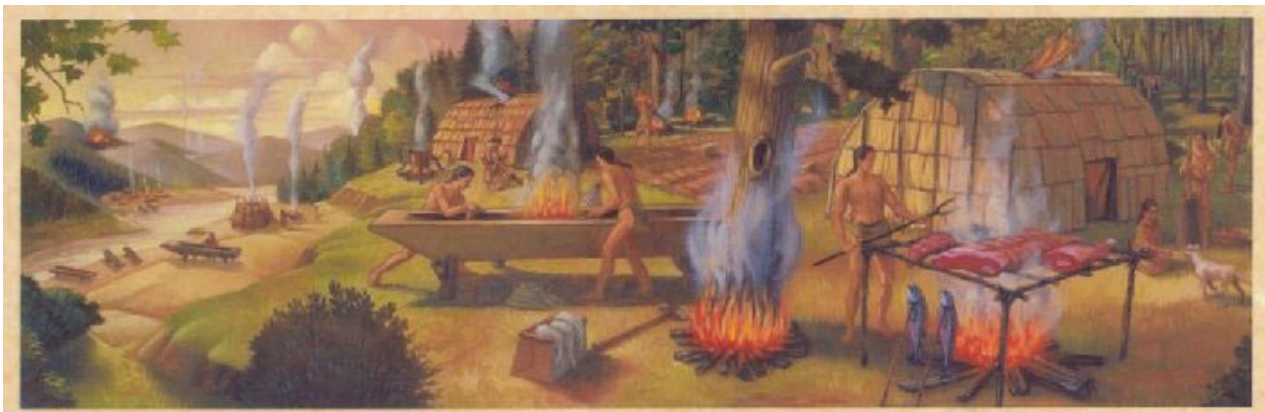


## People of Penn's Woods

Forests have always been important to the inhabitants of the area we now call "Pennsylvania" (Latin for "Penn's Woods"). Pennsylvania's location spanning 40°-42° north latitude and its varied terrain support 2076 species of native plants and over one thousand others introduced from Europe and Asia. Forest trees provide a renewable source of lumber, paper, nuts and chemicals. Forests are also essential as living filters, removing pollution from the air we breath and the water we drink. The forest plant communities provide the foundation of food and shelter necessary for hundreds of species of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and thousands of species of insects. With wise management, forests can produce these benefits for future generations as they have in the past.

The first human beings to hunt and gather in these forests left stone tools and spear points at scattered campsites about 12,000 years ago. These people were hunters and gatherers of wild resources that supplied their food, shelter and clothing. They had no planted crops or domesticated animals. Glaciers were still retreating from around Lake Erie and the upper Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers. The climate further south was still cool and wet. Pollen remains indicate these people explored forests dominated by spruce, fir, birch, pine and alder. About 10,000 years ago, oak and hemlock appear in the lower Susquehanna valley and the flora begins to take on its modern character.



Clearing of areas for farming and villages began almost 3000 years ago. These native Pennsylvanians used fire and stone tools to raise gardens of maize, beans and squash to supplement their wild foods. Burning areas of forest also may have improved hunting as animals moved into burned-over sites to feed on fresh re-growth and the lack of brush gave a clearer shot for hunter's arrows. The impact of these village peoples on the forest was limited by the small size of the population and the available technology.

After European settlements were established along the Delaware River (400 years ago), the pace of clearing land for agriculture and the use of forest products for housing, food, fuel and the manufacture of tools, furniture and other goods, increased dramatically and expanded westward across the state.

Steel plows and axes made clearing the forest easier and the growing population pushed the forests out of the valleys and up the hillsides. In the early 1800s Pennsylvania was a state of largely self-sufficient farms. There were an estimated 128,000 farms in the Commonwealth by mid-century.

In the late 1800s and early 1900's, Pennsylvania was the country's leading producer of lumber. The city of Williamsport was the Commonwealth's timber capital. Vast numbers logs were rafted down the Susquehanna River to Williamsport's log booms, where numerous mills sawed them into millions of board

feet of lumber.

The number of Pennsylvania farms peaked around 1910 at 224,000 and all but a few small isolated areas of virgin forest had been cut. In addition to farming, and the use of wood for construction of houses, mills and towns, the iron industry cleared large areas of forest for charcoal to smelt the ore and forge the steel. Wood chemicals such as tannic acid for the tanning of leather were extracted from the bark of hemlock. At one point Pennsylvania was the leading leather producing state. Wood alcohol and acetic acid were also extracted from various species. Locomotives, steamboats and steam engines used wood for fuel.

After World War I (1918) much of Pennsylvania's population began moving from rural areas to the cities. A landscape of stumps and scrub growth covered much of the hillsides. Wildfires were a common occurrence in this brushland and would rage uncontrolled for days, over thousands of acres. Much of the abandoned farmland began to revert once again to forest through the process of plant succession.

Today's forests have grown out of the seemingly barren conditions left after mass cutting and severe fires. Six of every 10 acres (60%) of Pennsylvania is now forested, (17 million out of 28 total acres). And we still derive much of our economy and many comforts from the flora and fauna of Penn's Woods. Medicines, foods, and wood fiber, a cleaner environment, tourism, and recreation are all provided by our forests.

Pennsylvania's forest products industry is vital to the state's economy and to the livelihood of many of its residents. Pennsylvania is the nation's largest producer of hardwood lumber, producing over 1 billion board feet per year. Annual economic contribution of forest products exceeds \$5 billion. The industry provides more than 90,000 jobs (10 percent of Pennsylvania's manufacturing workforce) in 2,600 companies, with a total industry payroll that exceeds \$2 billion per year. Payments to private landowners for timber sales exceed \$350 million yearly. The Commonwealth's 500,000 private landowners own 75 percent (12.5 million acres) of the state's forestland and supply 80 percent of its timber products.

The state forest system of Pennsylvania, approximately 2.1 million acres of forestland in 48 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, comprises 12 percent of the forested area in the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania's state forest represents one of the largest expanses of public forestland in the eastern United States, making it a truly priceless public asset.

When viewed from another perspective, the state forest represents a two million acre water treatment plant and air purification system. Additionally, these forests provide recreational opportunities and mineral resources, as well as an aesthetic setting that is vital for Pennsylvania's tourism industry. And, when taken as a whole, the state forest is the largest publicly owned habitat for plants and animals in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Our state forest system is a combination of these resources, uses, and values, as well as a functioning biological system with intrinsic values to be held in public trust for future generations.