



1906 - 2006

Project 2006

The Centennial Celebration of the  
Maryland Forest Service and  
State Forest and Park Service

# One of the Committee's Goals

- ◆ More than a history lesson, but an assessment of the present, and provide **a vision for the future"**
- ◆ **"The recollection of the past is only useful by way of provision for the future."** Samuel Johnson



Helen Besley and sister camping  
at Patapsco State Reserve  
(c. 1921)





# Cascade Branch



# Patapsco Valley Campsite (c. 1920)

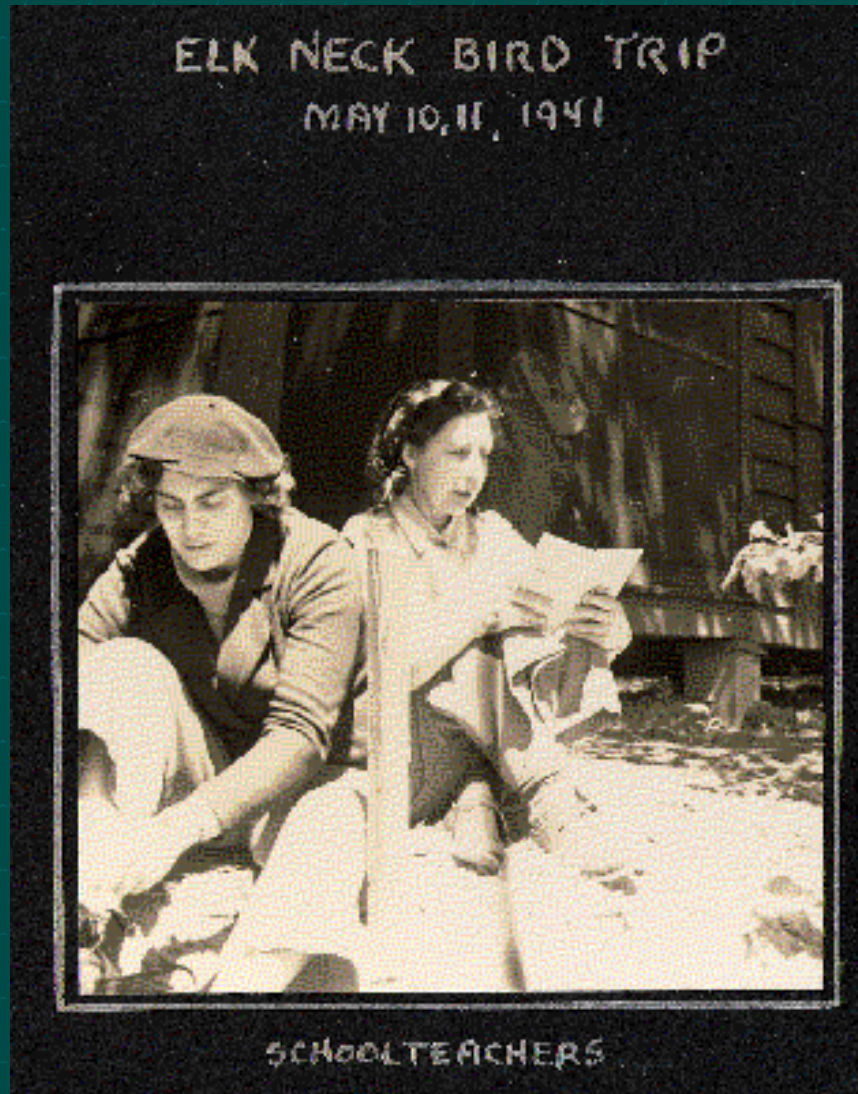


# Patapsco Valley Campsite (c.1920)





# Helen Besley Overington at Elk Neck (1941)



# Helen Besley at New Germany (c. 1941)



NO- NOT ROLAND PARK - THE PICTURE  
WAS TAKEN AT NEW GERMANY

# Helen Besley at New Germany

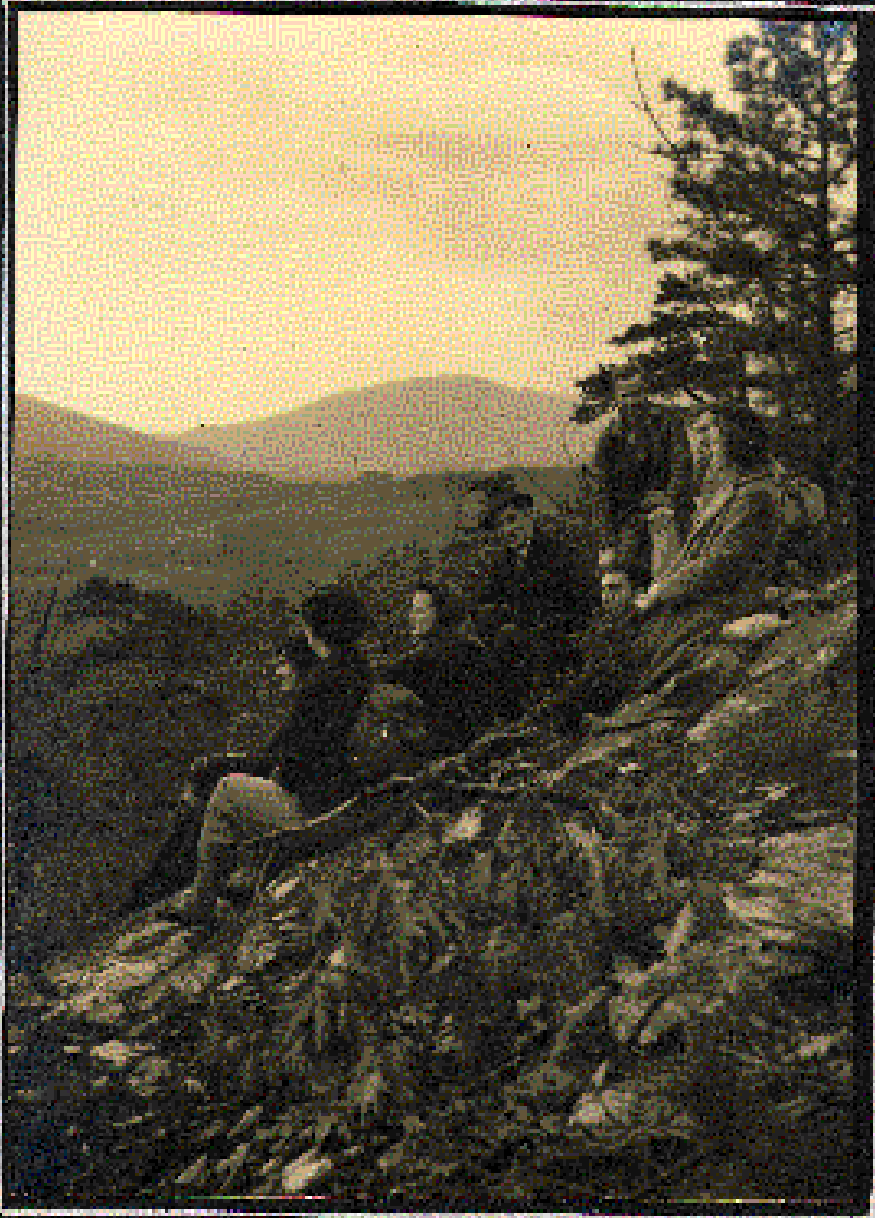


175 MILES AWAY FROM HOME, TO RUN A TOBOGGAN  
INTO A PICKET FENCE - HARRIET, MORGAN, HELEN,  
AND GRACE. GWYNETH'S SEEMS AMAZEDLY AMUSED.

“Easy with the cream Helen – Alec’s coffee is still black.” (c.1941)



THAT MOMENT OF INDECISION - FLORENCE SEEMS TO BE HAVING  
DIFFICULTY - THE BIG PIECE - OR THE ONE THAT LOOKS TENDER -  
SO EASY WITH THE CREAM, HELEN - ALEC'S COFFEE IS  
STILL BLACK - ORVILLE SEEMS TO BE REMOVING MORGAN'S  
PLATE WHILE HE NAPS - GRACE IS SMILING SWEETLY - - -



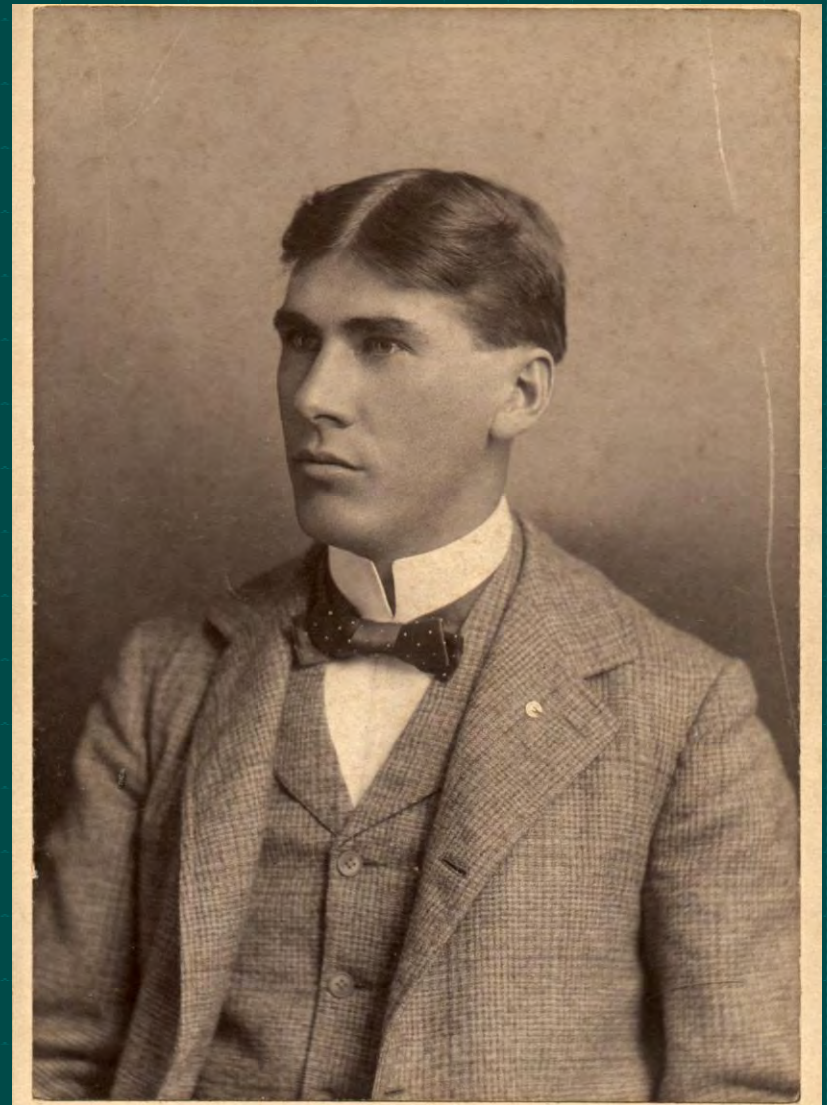
WPA

MERLE'S CLAYLICK MOUNTAIN TRIP. NOV. 23D

HELEN BESLEY, ANITA LEADBECKING, DOROTHY COCHEL,  
GEORGE RUSSELL, FRANK CALAFIORE, MERLE HEART,  
MORGAN BARR, JEAN RUSSELL



“They could have all the gingerbread and baked apples they wanted. One night, Pinchot told them they were going to have a special guest....That special guest was President Theodore Roosevelt!”

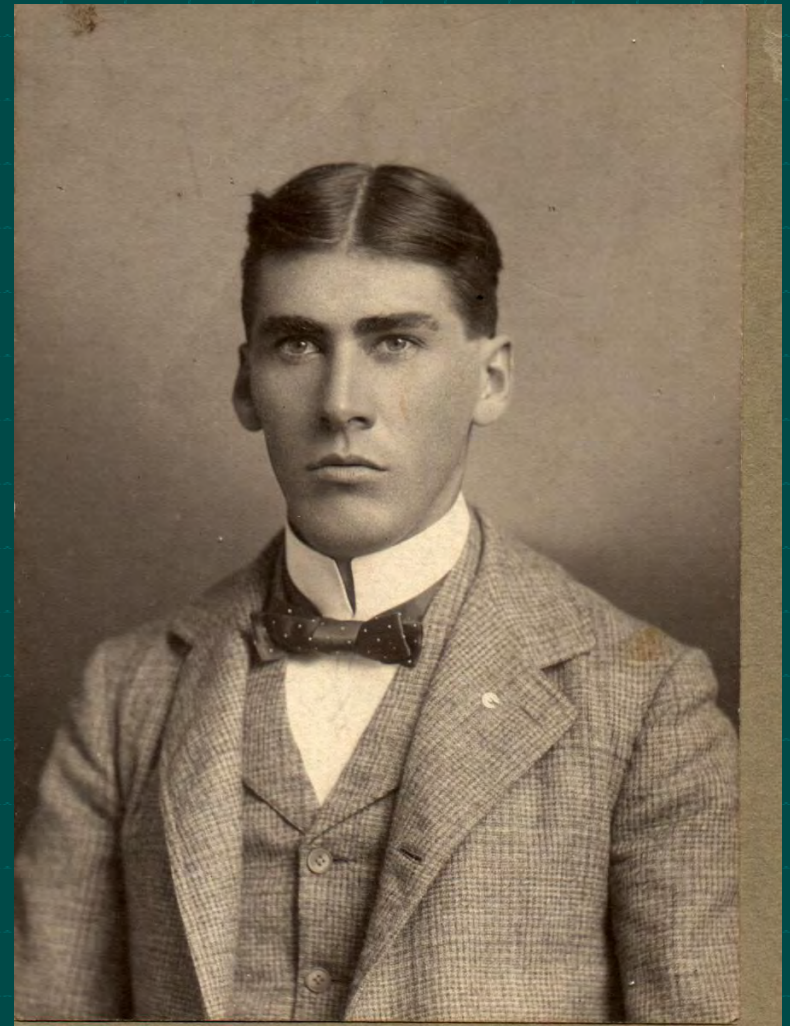


Fred W. Besley  
(1870-1960)



“Father was born in Vienna, Virginia”

“Pinchot told my  
father he ought to  
go into forestry”

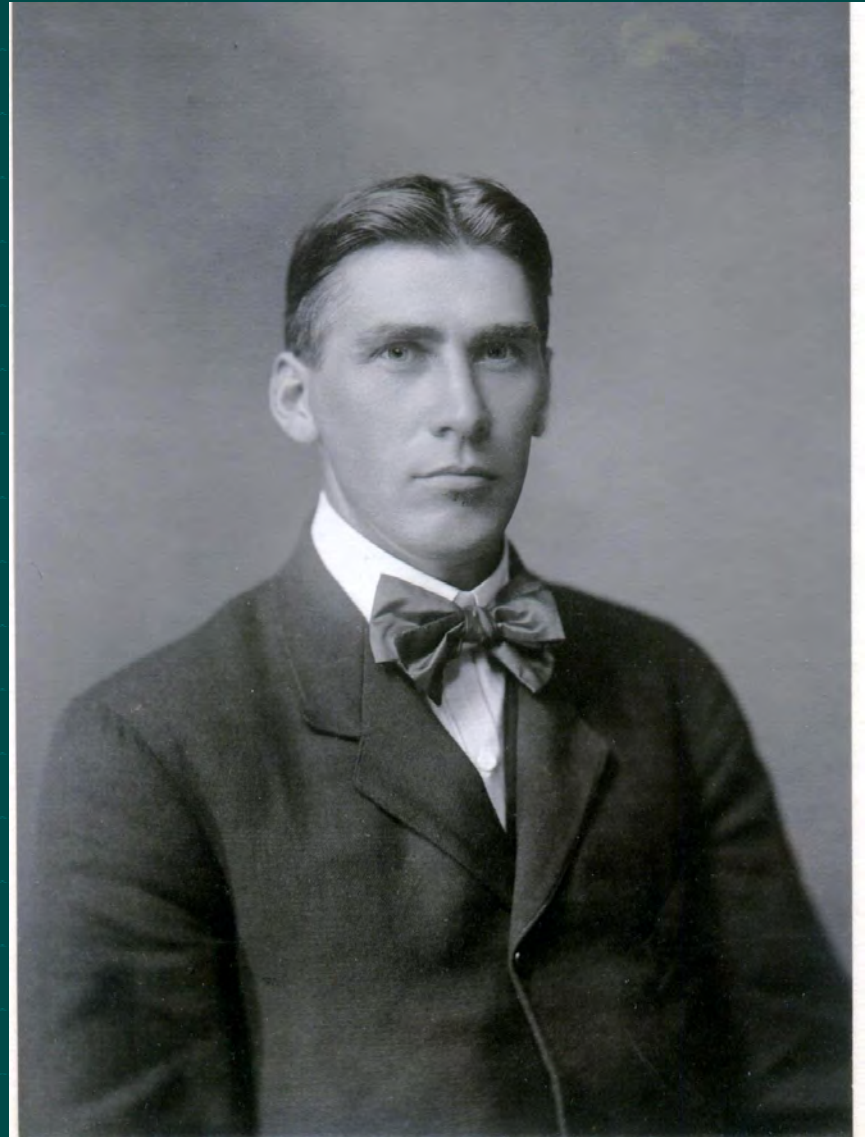




“He was a terrific  
worker”

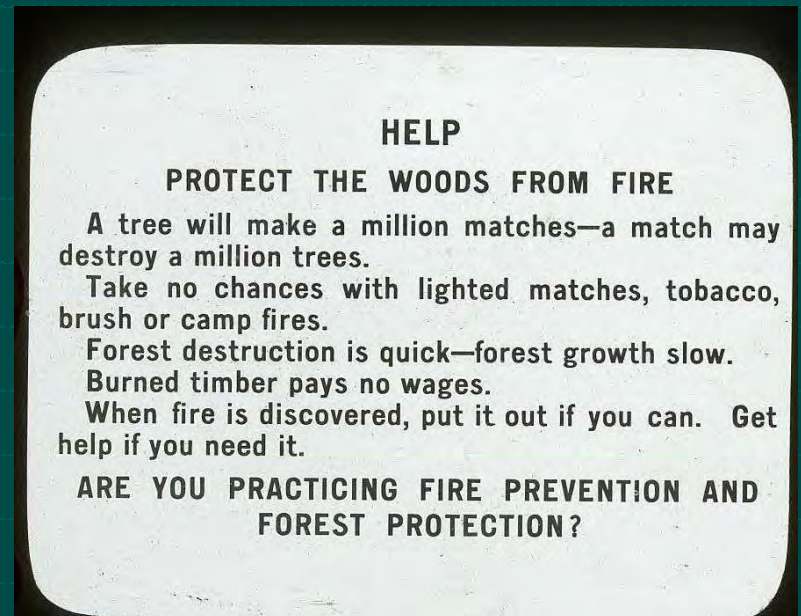
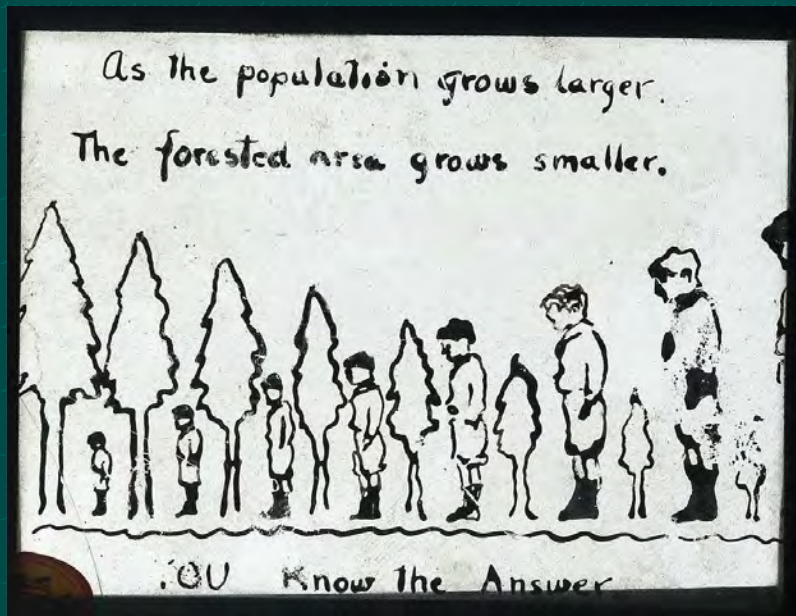


“Being one of the  
first State Foresters,  
Father had to  
pioneer  
everything.”



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Pioneered Environmental Education
  - Started Career as a teacher



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Environmental education
  - An accomplished photographer
  - Lantern slides



Patapsco Valley State Park

Rare photograph of Fred Besley  
standing behind a camera

SHELTER DEDICATION TRIP

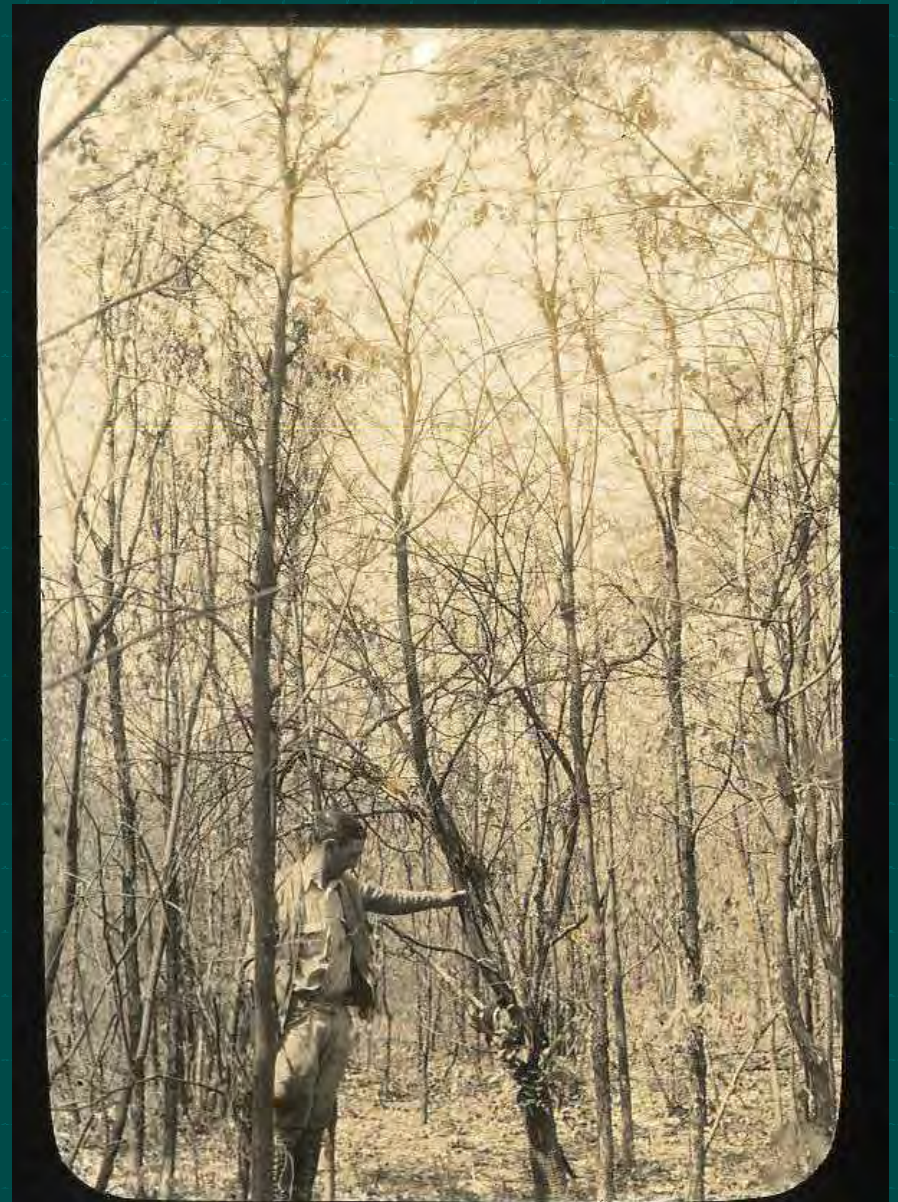


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THE CHIEF IS ALSO A PHOTOGRAPHER  
BUT RIGHT NOW HE'S ENJOYING  
THE NEXT PICTURE -- WHERE --

At the former  
Paw Paw CCC Camp  
Green Ridge State  
Forest  
1941

“I remember being  
with my father at  
his lantern slide  
programs.”



“Father would jack up the back end of the car, and to power up the lantern slide projector, attach a belt from the axle to the projector.”





“He would hang a sheet and show slides about forestry instead of movies...people were crazy (enthusiastic) to see them.”





“Governor Ritchie was great on helping father. He was very proud of Maryland’s roads and he thought they ought to be beautified.”

# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Pioneered Conservation Laws
  - The Roadside Tree Law (1914)
  - concerned with forest and roadside aesthetics (model adopted across the country)



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Pioneered Forest Inventory Techniques
  - *Forests of Maryland* published in 1916 - the first complete State forest inventory in the nation



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Pioneered Big Tree Champion Program
  - Program and method of measurements for “noted trees” – later adopted across nation
  - “Father of the Big Tree Contest”



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Concerned with preserving remnants of old-growth that Besley called “original growth”



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Pioneered the forest nursery to regenerate “devastated” forests



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Pioneered outdoor recreation on public lands to gain public support for conservation.
  - Camping
  - Brought Skiing into Maryland (c.1938)



# Rare Photograph of FWB Giving a Campfire Program at GRSF

"SHELTER DEDICATION" TRIP - JUNE 21-22, 1941



THE STATE FORESTER, F.W. BESLEY, AT THE CAMPFIRE

NO. 100





“The Mountain Club of Maryland was very interested in bringing skiing to Maryland...It was built at Savage River State Forest in New Germany State Park.”

# New Germany State Park



Circa 1938



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Oversaw development of co-operative forest management programs on private property



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Oversaw development of facilities and infrastructure on public lands, especially during the CCC period



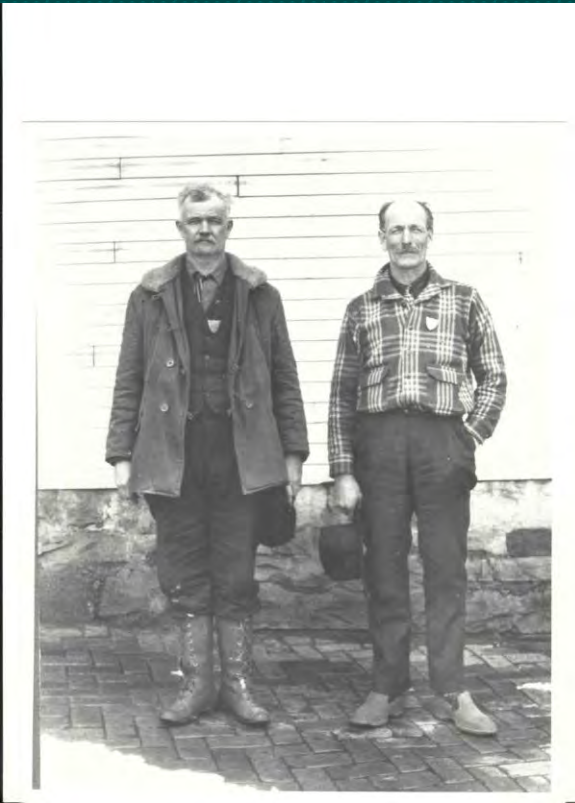
# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Pioneered  
“parkitecture”



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Established forest warden system

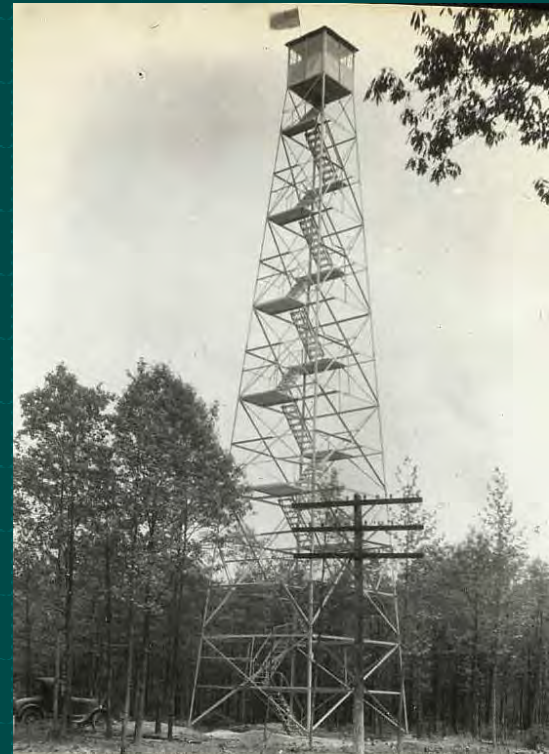


# Volunteers – priceless legacy

- ◆ Preserved and conserved the significant places of majestic beauty for posterity.
- ◆ Preserved and conserved places of historic interest and natural beauty cultivating a historic sense of place not found in books.
- ◆ variety of activities, from fighting wildfires to providing political clout to support conservation efforts of Forest and Park Service.

# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Pioneered methods to detect forest fires





# Besley the Pioneer

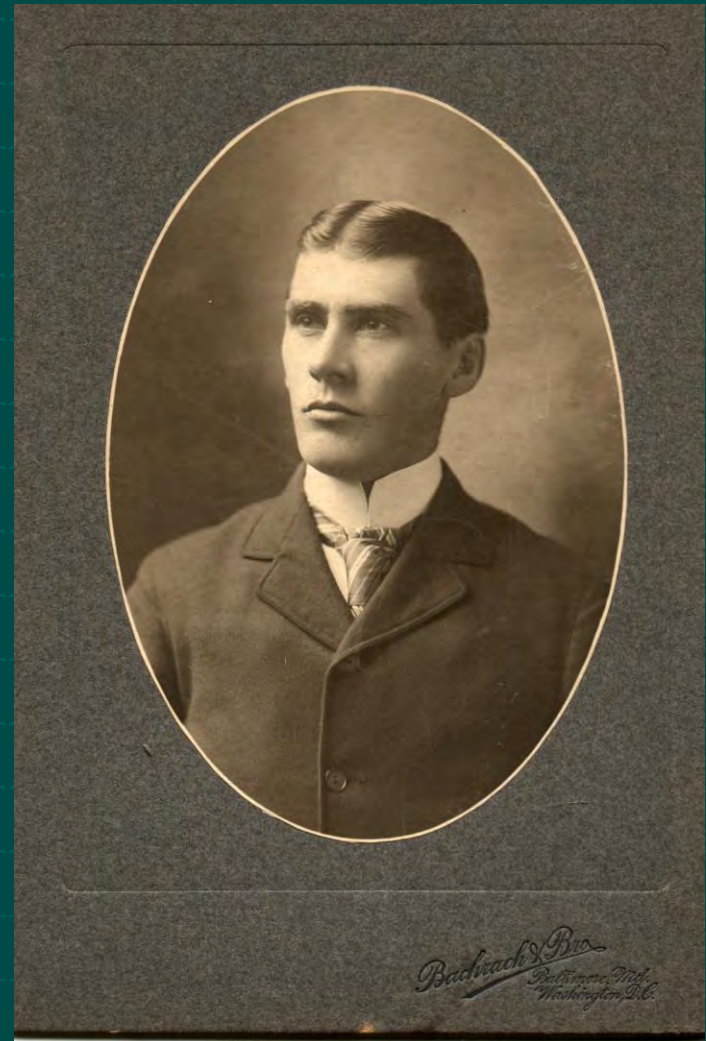
- ◆ Pioneered methods to fight forest fires



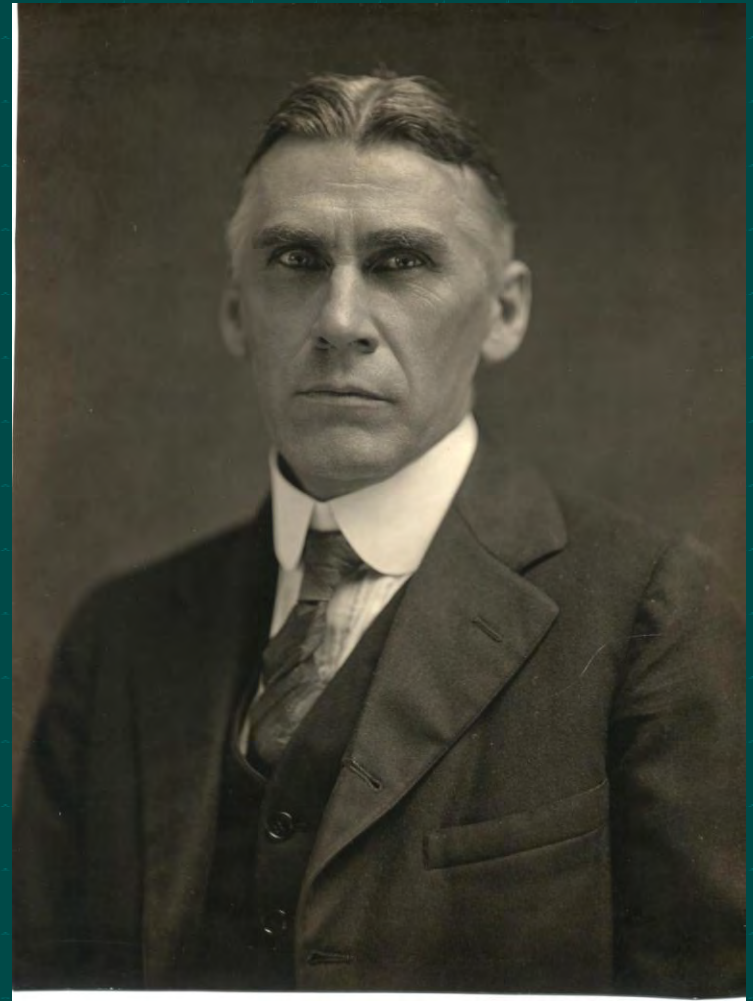
“Father was a great Story Teller...especially Paul Bunyan stories.”

“His Stories  
are as Tall as  
the Trees he  
Protects.”

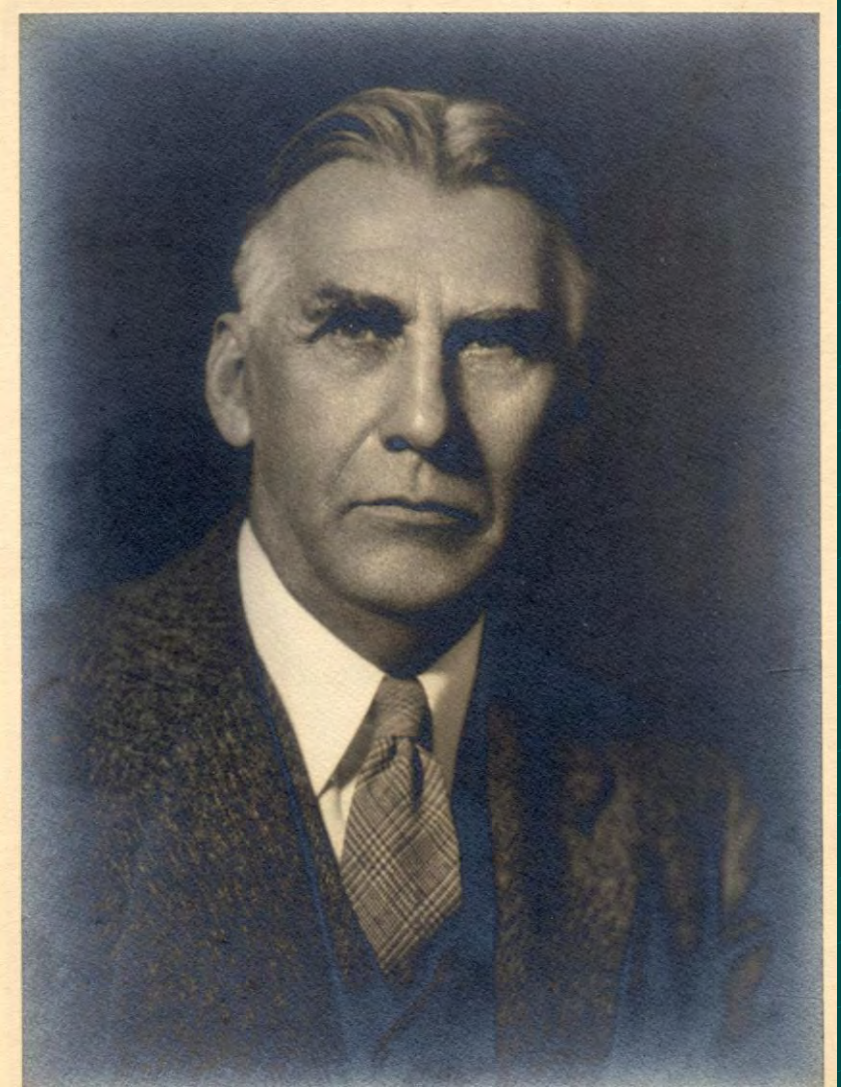
from a heading  
in a newspaper  
article



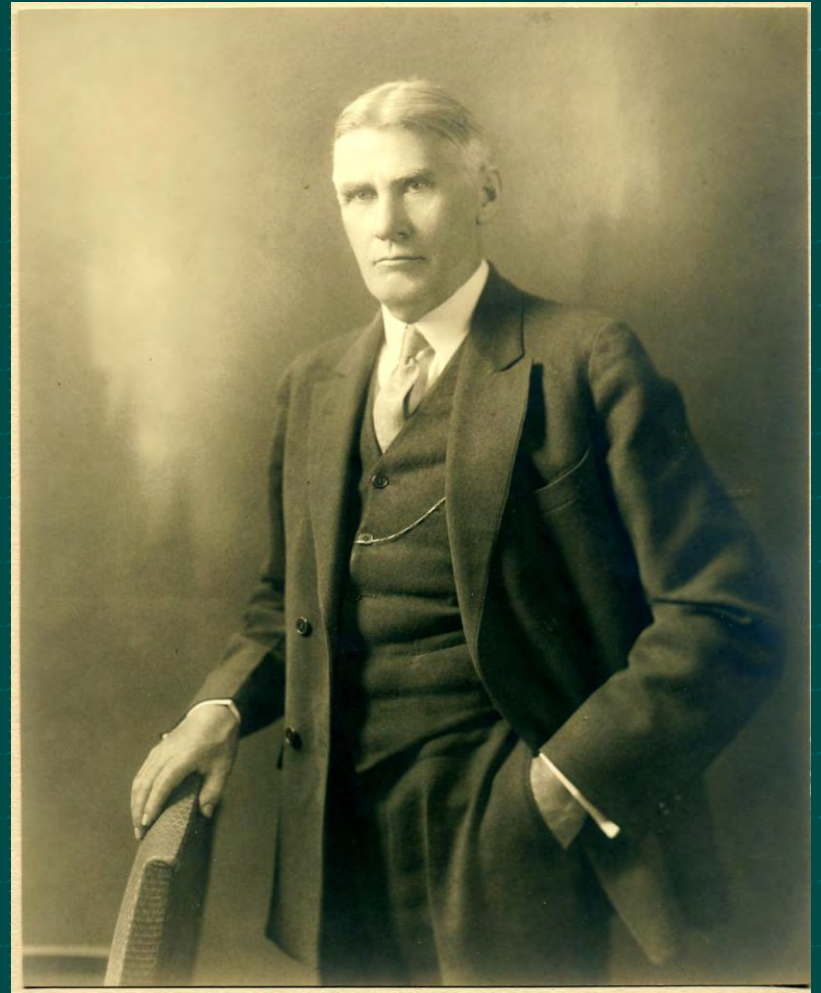
“Governor Ritchie was very much for State rights, as was my father...He thought the closer to the people you got, the better it was, and so did my father.”



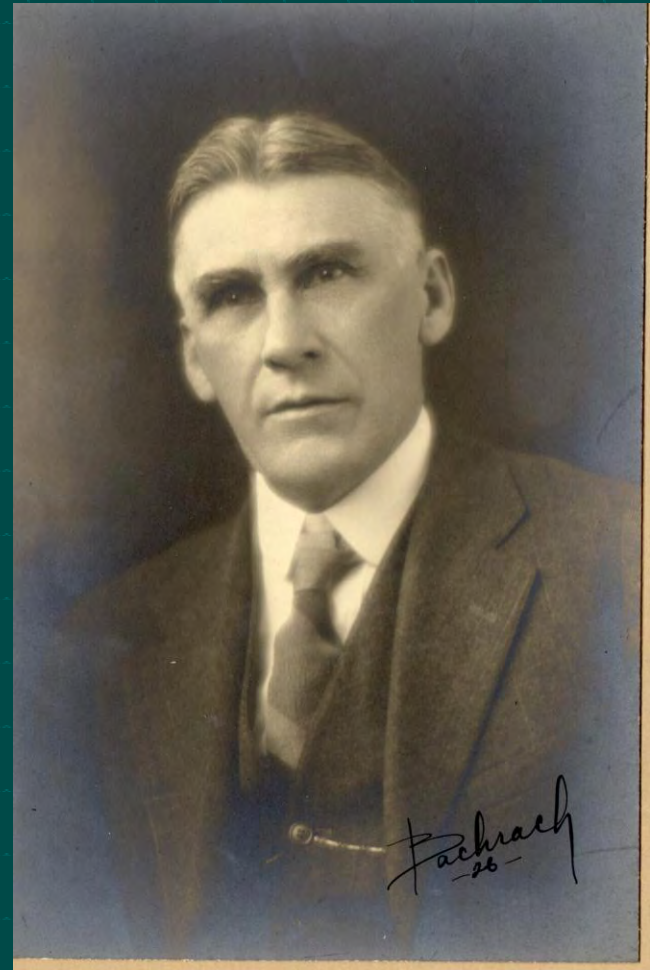
“One of the things my father felt, that he brought to the State , and to the Country, was that forest lands should not only benefit the land owners and the State (with taxes and so on), but that they should be used for recreation for the public.”



“Father believed the forest should not only be conserved, but that they should be used. Father was very interested in getting the public to use the land. Father thought that this would bring more public support for conservation.”

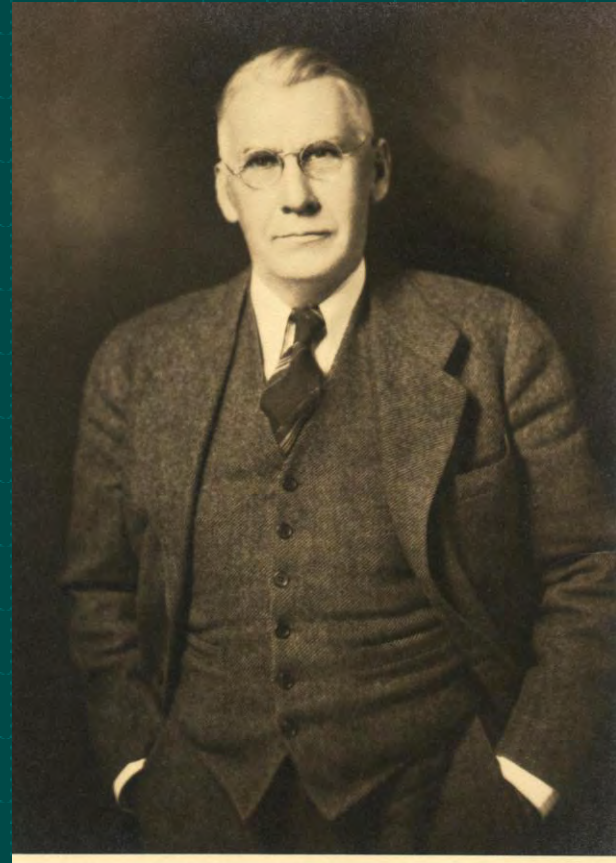


“ The reason Father bought these lands was to utilize areas not good for anything else and practice forestry. He thought it was important to practice what he preached.”



# Besley the Pioneer

- ◆ Pioneered acquisition of public lands
  - 2,000 acres in 1906
  - 500,000 acres in 2004
  - No outdoor recreation in 1906
  - 11 million forest and park visitors (2002)



Father of Public Lands

# Rare Photograph of FWB with Buckingham at GRSF

SHELTER DEDICATION TRIP - JUNE 21-22, 1941



MR. BESLEY SIGNS THE LEASE AS HARRIET KEEPS HER LIGHT ON THE DOCUMENT. BILL KEMPER AND GEORGE CONNER HOLD UP THE DESK. ORVILLE, ALEC, OS, AND MR. BUCKINGHAM, DISTRICT FORESTER, LEND NUMBERS TO THE DEED.



Herb Robertson, the first forester hired by the the State of MD to work at GRSF, receiving advice from FWB (1941)



G.W.

ONE PHOTOGRAPHER PICTURES ANOTHER  
TRYING TO GET CHIEF DESLEY AND  
HERB ROBERTSON IN THE MOVIES

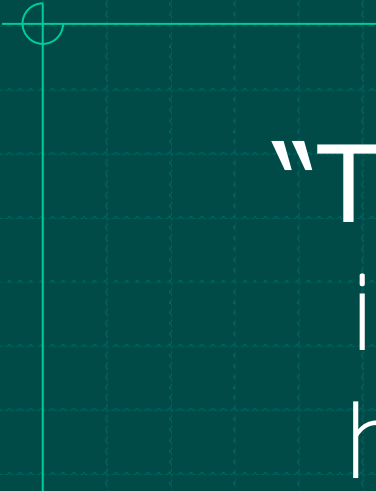
# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - 1956



Fred W. Besley and Governor McKelden

# Conclusion

- ◆ Fred W. Besley is one of Maryland's, and the Nation's, great conservation leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- ◆ Maryland Forest Service and State Forest and Park Service pioneered conservation standards adopted across the country and world
- ◆ **The legacy and influence of Maryland's great conservation leaders of the past are felt today**



**“The greatest advances  
in human civilization  
have come when we  
recovered what we have  
lost: When we learn the  
lessons of history.”**

Winston Churchill

# Contributors to this program

- ◆ Helen Besley Overington
- ◆ Peggy and Don Weller
- ◆ Mary Rotz
- ◆ Kirk Rodgers
- ◆ Maryland State Archives
- ◆ Department of Natural Resources
- ◆ Dr. Geoff Buckley
- ◆ Maryland Mountain Club
- ◆ Offutt Johnson