

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Johnson Woods State Nature Preserve. When the first European settlers came to Ohio, around 90% of the land area was forested. There are few remnants of this primeval forest left in our state. Johnson Woods is probably the largest, least disturbed, old-growth forest currently known to remain in Ohio.

The 155-acre tract on the south side of Fox Lake Road was a gift to the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves from Mrs. Clela Johnson and her family in memory of her late husband, Andrew C. Johnson. In addition to the gift, Mrs. Johnson sold 51 acres of adjacent old-growth woods on the north side of the road to the Division. This tract was purchased with State Income Tax Checkoff donations.

The combined 206-acre woodlot is administered by the Division of Natural Areas & Preserves as a dedicated state nature preserve, representing one of the finest remaining examples of Ohio's natural heritage. Visitation and use of this preserve is primarily for research, education, and low impact activities such as nature study and appreciation, bird watching, hiking, and photography. Thus, Johnson Woods will be protected for generations to come.

THE "BIG WOODS"

After Jacob Conrad, Andrew Johnson's great grandfather, left France in 1823, he bought land in section 7 of Baughman Township and settled in Ohio. This property included what is

now known as Johnson Woods. At that time, many of the trees were already 200 years old. Having sprouted before the Pilgrims came to America on the Mayflower, these trees flourished through a time when clearing the landscape was one of the most important objectives of the settler. Establishing tillable acreage and making lumber for shelter and transportation were reason enough for the axman to make his way across Ohio.

The woods probably survived the onslaught of the pioneer because of the existing wet conditions. Later, it survived the sawmills of the Depression era of America due to Anna (Graber) Johnson, the mother of Andrew Johnson.

During the last few decades the woods became a stable feature of the local landscape. Stories abound concerning hunters, wildflower bouquets, the Johnson boys' treehouse, poison ivy and even people getting lost. Neighbors referred to the property as the "Big Woods".

Today, a 1.5 mile long boardwalk trail system allows the visitor to enjoy the preserve without destroying the integrity of the old-growth forest. The boardwalk is constructed of Trex®, a recycled plastic/wood composite.

Buttonbush

