

WILD ACRES

A Self-Guided Tour



Society of American Foresters

Representing the Forestry Profession in America
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WELCOME TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS . . . We hope you will spend some time here and tour the two SAF buildings at Wild Acres. The staff here will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the Society.

History of the Site

“Wild Acres” is a former land-grant site. It represents parts of “Leeke Forest” and “Dann”, recorded by the Lord Proprietor of Maryland in the late 1600’s. A colonial hewn-stone boundary marker remains intact in the woods; carved initials on the three-foot stone refer to an early owner of the property, Andrew S. Heugh, prominent Georgetown tobacco merchant. He developed a country place here in the 18th century. (Note: Heugh’s holdings were described on 1783 tax rolls as “200 acres of cleared land with good soil, a few acres in meadow, one good dwelling house, kitchen, barn, and quarters, etc.”) During the Civil War, the John Wilson family occupied the property, which was, by then, a typical Maryland farm – with fields, orchards, barns, and a clapboard farmhouse set in a forest clearing. Just to the east ran one of the country’s oldest toll roads, now known as Rockville Pike (Wisconsin Avenue). Confederate Jeb Stuart led a raid on a Yankee wagon train as it moved up the pike, passing the farm.

In 1890, a new form of transportation was added when trolley car tracks were laid along the property’s western boundary. A transformer station was built nearby and, for the next four decades, clocks were set by the sound of trolley’s approaching through the woods.

In 1913, Gilbert Grosvenor, editor of the *National Geographic*, purchased the property, christening it “Wild Acres”. Gilbert Grosvenor’s wife, Elsie May Bell, was the daughter of Alexander Graham Bell. Mrs. Grosvenor was an early advocate of women’s rights. Through the years, she was also active in the National Geographic Society, contributing articles and proofing miles of galley.

Initially, Wild Acres was the Grosvenor summer home. The original farmhouse had no plumbing, no running water, and no heat. As the Grosvenor family grew, the house became too small and, in 1928, was replaced by the present Tudor mansion, which served as the year-round home of the Grosvenor family until 1966, when Gilbert died. Elsie Grosvenor had died two years earlier.

When occupied by the Grosvenors, the mansion had 14 bedrooms, 8 baths, and 3 libraries. Elsie Grosvenor selected the native stone for its pinkish tones, and slate for the roof was shipped from England. The Grosvenor home was the scene of frequent social functions attended by many world-famous personalities. During the late 1960’s SAF began meeting with other professional societies to explore ideas for a consortium of renewable natural resources organizations. A center to house national headquarters for member societies was envisioned. In 1970, SAF learned that an anonymous donor would match funds raised for SAF national headquarters, to be named for Gifford Pinchot. SAF voted to accept the gift. Gordon D. Fox was appointed Chair of the Land and Building Committee and Charles A. Connaughton became chair of fundraising. Gordon Fox approached his friend, Tom Gill¹, to serve on the Search Committee. Gill refused, but voiced his strong support for the Renewable Natural Resources Foundation (RNRF) idea, and stated he would follow the project with interest. In January 1972, SAF joined with other professional societies to form RNRF. Fundraising and land search were progressing that year when Tom Gill died suddenly and his identity as the donor of a \$500,000 gift to SAF was revealed. With his bequest, Gill assured a fitting memorial for SAF’s founding forester, Gifford Pinchot.

Wild Acres was purchased from the Grosvenor estate in 1973 and, in 1974, SAF undertook major remodeling of the interior of the building. The exterior remained virtually unchanged; the Grosvenor Coat of Arms is still in place over the entrance. The architect for SAF remodeling, Rurik Ekstrom, was chosen for his work with wood. Paneling in the main hall was a gift of the California Redwood Association. The original oak floors were refinished. Extensive and innovative uses of natural wood were made possible by donations from universities, timber associations, and private industry. Plaques in each paneled area mark the names of the donors and types

¹ Gill was a SAF Fellow, a renowned tropical forester, and a writer of popular adventure novels. Many of his works were made into films.

of wood. The new headquarters, dedicated on September 30, 1975 as the Gifford Pinchot Forestry Building, are impressive evidence of the growth, prestige, and stability of professional forestry in America.

FIRST FLOOR: To the right of the front entrance is the Tom Gill Conference Room. In this room, cypress paneling conceals bookshelves which hold a small SAF library; a portrait of Tom Gill hangs over the fireplace; and French doors open onto a wrap-around veranda. A reception area has been formed from part of the original living room. Here a glass case contains Gill's first editions and memorabilia. The room adjoining the reception area also has French doors opening onto the veranda. A portrait of Gifford Pinchot hangs over an antique marble mantle, and the walls are lined with photographs of the other SAF Presidents and Executive Vice Presidents. This room was dedicated to Charles A. Connaughton on July 27, 1990, at the occasion of our 1990 SAF National Convention in Washington, DC. The desk, located just outside the Connaughton Room in the hallway near the front entrance, was crafted from an antique sea chest, and belonged to Tom Gill.

Doors to the left lead into the original dining room, now divided into offices and paneled in sycamore and white oak. This area is now occupied by our Finance and Administration offices. A sculptured marble mantle and another bay window are reminders of the days when the Grosvenors held dinner parties for such guests as Ann and Charles Lindbergh and William Howard Taft, a cousin of Gilbert Grosvenor (Taft was the U.S. president who dismissed Pinchot as Chief Forester). In the hallway next to this area is an ornate safe, moved to Wild Acres from the home of Alexander Graham Bell.

SECOND FLOOR: On the second floor landing, a six-foot cross section of a giant sequoia is mounted on the wall. Forestry students have made a ring count, placing its age at 1,500 years.

To the right (the west wing) of the landing is the former Grosvenor master suite, which now houses the Executive Offices, the Science and Education Department, and the Meetings and Conventions Department. The end room, with doors to a balcony on the south and a porch on the west, has exposed beams of Douglas-fir, skylights in a ceiling of Engelmann spruce, and cherry wall paneling. This is the office of the SAF Executive Vice President.

The east wing houses the Forest Policy Department and the Communications and Member Services Department, and is paneled in maple, birch, walnut, and pecan.

THIRD FLOOR: The third floor, originally the Grosvenor's nursery, is now divided into offices which are currently occupied by the International Society of Tropical Foresters (ISTF). This floor boasts the most colorful of the building's nine fireplaces – it is faced with ceramic tiles depicting whimsical nursery rhyme animals.

Every old house should have a ghost, and it is said – though not corroborated – that the third floor harbors a friendly spirit.

THE CARRIAGE HOUSE . . . AND BEYOND: The carriage house (really built as a four-car garage), next to the Pinchot building, houses our Publications Department and Adelman Travel Systems.

Beyond the carriage house are the two buildings of the Renewable Natural Resources Foundation. A 1920's clapboard barn sits back in the woods. A concrete silo, with metal dome, bear the date 1943 (Wild Acres was a working farm up through World War II). Also, near the driveway entrance is the wood-shingled caretaker's cottage.

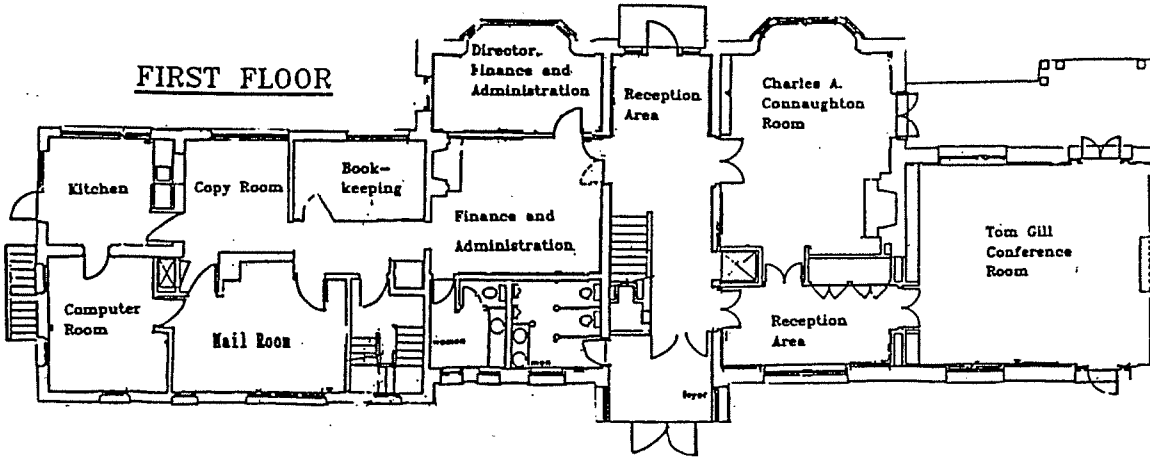
Carol J. McKernon

Front page illustration of the Gifford Pinchot Building was sketched by artist, M. Lederman, 1982.

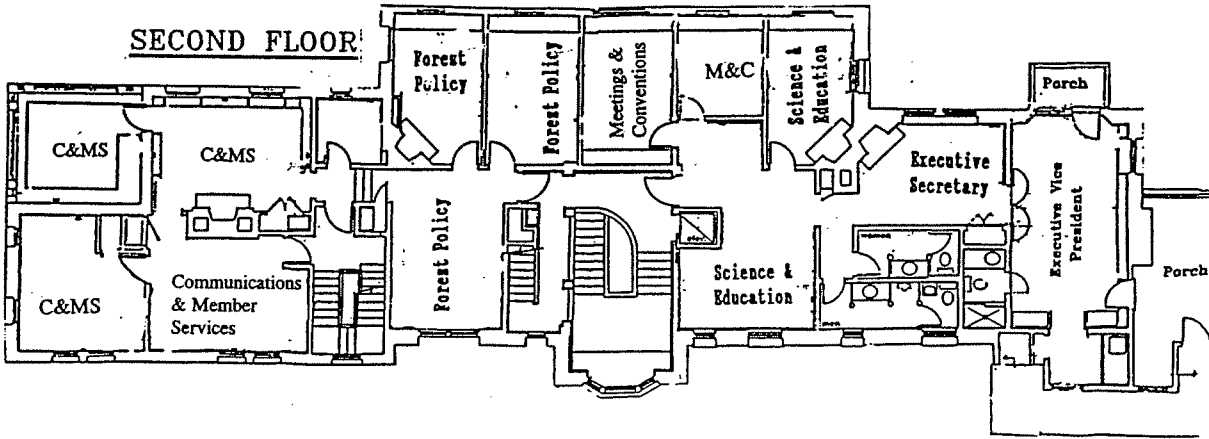
Map of tree species on SAF grounds was an Eagle Scout project of Scott West Troop 1145, Springfield, Virginia, 1987. Dr. Bryan Clark, Fellow-SAF, dendrologist; James Ohman, artist; financial assistance, National Capital SAF.

WILD ACRES -- FLOOR PLAN

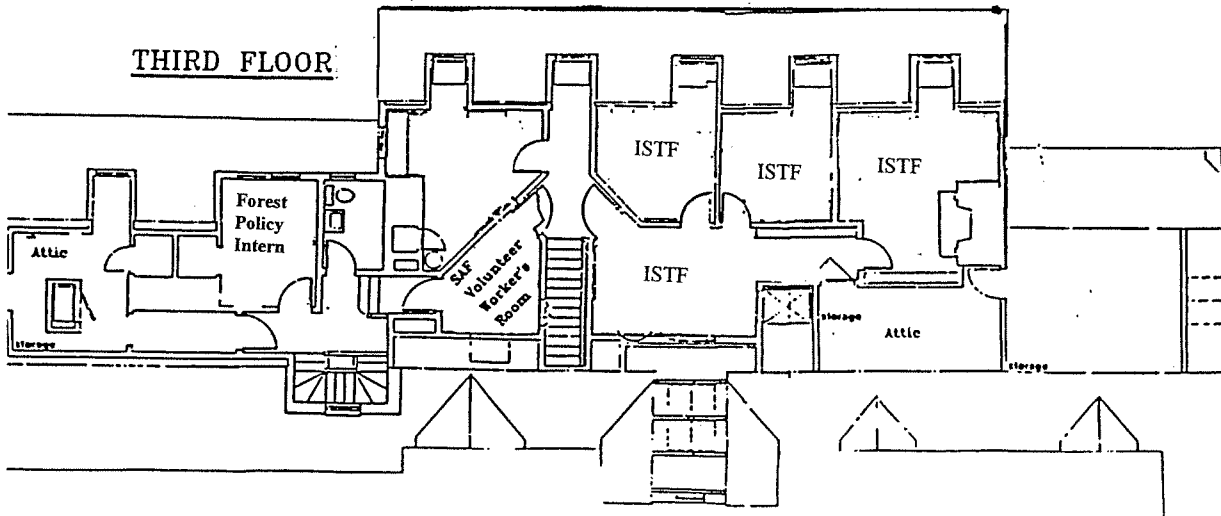
FIRST FLOOR



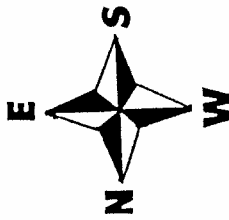
SECOND FLOOR



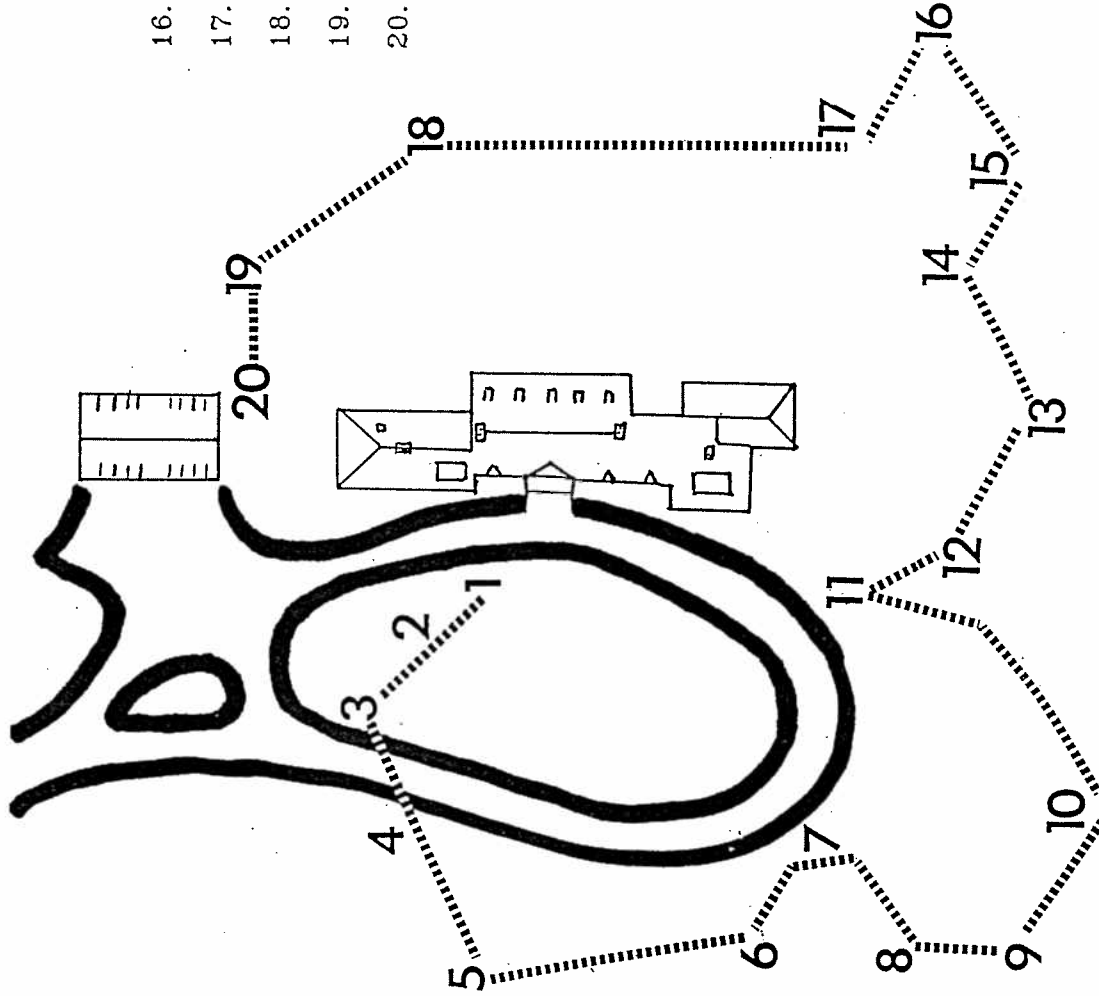
THIRD FLOOR



TREE SPECIES ON SAF GROUNDS



- 1. RED OAK
- 2. EASTERN HEMLOCK
- 3. NORTHERN CATALPA
- 4. CHINESE ELM
- 5. EASTERN WHITE PINE
- 6. SOUTHERN MAGNOLIA
- 7. FLOWERING DOGWOOD
- 8. RED MULBERRY
- 9. SHORTLEAF PINE



- 16. BLACK WALNUT
- 17. RED MAPLE
- 18. NORWAY MAPLE
- 19. NORWAY SPRUCE
- 20. WHITE OAK

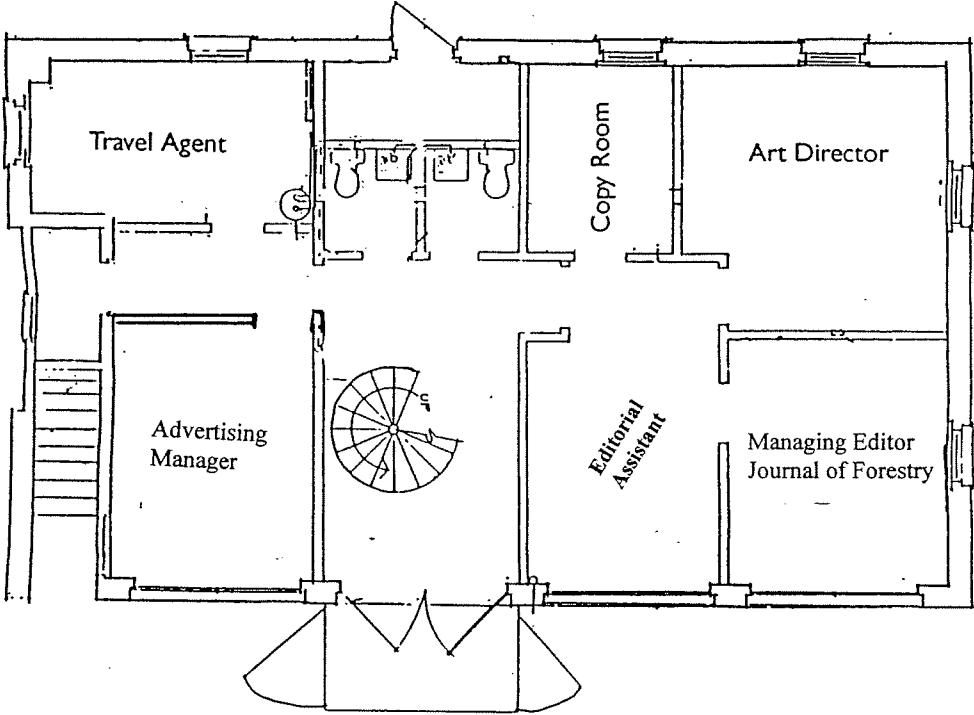
- 11. PAPER BIRCH
- 12. LOBLOLLY PINE*
- 13. AMERICAN BEECH
- 14. WHITE ASH
- 15. EASTERN REDCEDAR

*MOON TREE: Grown from one of a number of seeds taken aboard Apollo 14 by Command Module Pilot, Stuart Roosa, on NASA's historic February 1971 Moon Flight. Upon its return to Earth, the seed was nurtured by the USDA Forest Service's Southern Forest Experiment Station, in Gulfport, Mississippi. The tree was presented as a gift to the Society of American Foresters on its 75th Anniversary, at the dedication of the Gifford Pinchot Forestry Building, on September 30, 1975. Colonel Roosa was a Forest Service smokejumper before joining the Air Force. He carried the seed (and those of other tree species) on his lunar voyage to symbolize the major role that forests have played in the development of America, and the critical role forests will continue to play in the nation's future.

10. BOXELDER

Carriage House

First Floor



Second Floor

