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The Gordon Natural Area (GNA): (Our ecological treasure island in a sea of development) 2013: The 40th Anniversary

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The Gordon Natural Area (GNA)

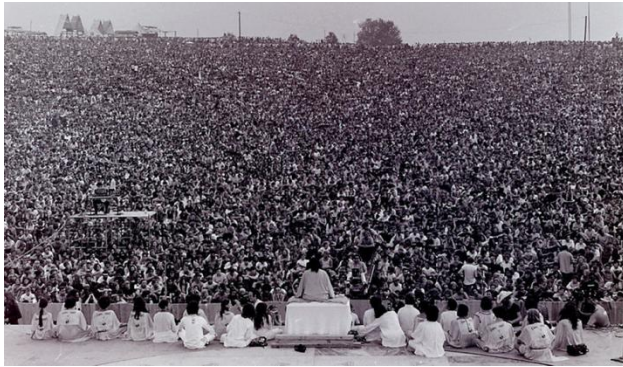
(Our ecological treasure island in a sea of development)

2013: The 40th Anniversary

(June 11, 2014)

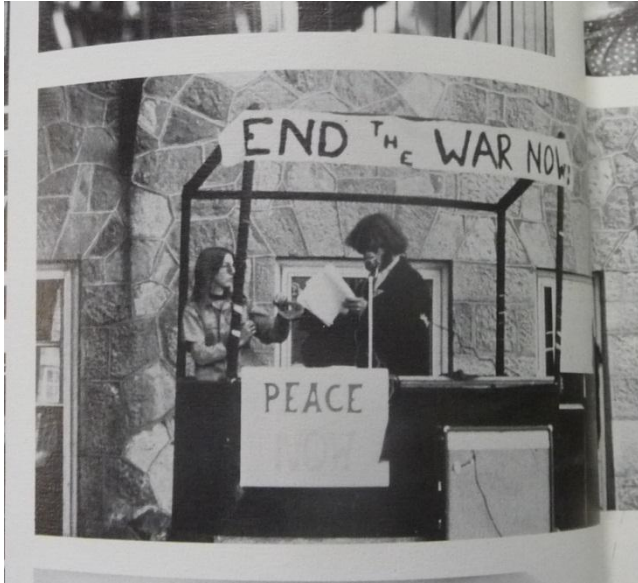
Many events and movements began in 1969.....

It was the year of Woodstock, 1969-Joan Baez, Grateful Dead, Credence Clearwater Revival, Blood Sweat and Tears, Jimi Hendrix and many others. – can you hear the music?



Dr Hertel was at the University of Wisconsin working on his PhD. Students were doing what was necessary to get us out of the unjust war in Vietnam.





WCU demonstration

Here at WCU there was a plan to develop the woods on South Campus. The late Dr. William Overlease (Biology/Ecology) led the one person movement against development but that was not successful in 1969. Dr Overlease had established research plots in what would be the GNA in 1968. He and his wife and daughter noted each year the coming and going of every plant up until 2006 when Dr. Overlease passed away. A 2011 publication in *Bartonia* reported on the results up until 2000. A WCU biology student has made the 2009 and 2012 measurements on these plots. It is the longest running research study at WCU

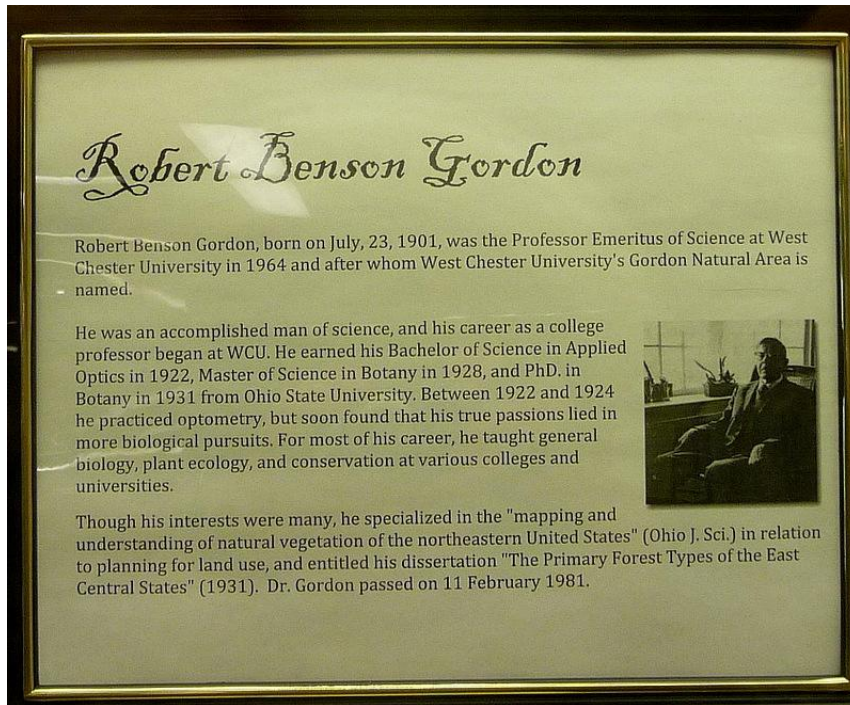


In 1971 two Trustees, Mrs. Thomas Harvey & Edward Hilbush gave their support after a presentation by Brian Gottfried



On November 10, 1973 the 68 acre Robert B. Gordon Natural Area for Environmental Studies was officially dedicated. Its mission was to

1. Promote education (800-1000 students/year)
2. Promote research (macro invertebrates; plant succession; salamanders; tree mycorrhizae; deer and non-native plant species; geology & soils; carbon plots; [funding: PA DCNR; USDA Forest Service; PA Sea Grant; WCU Technology Fee Grant; Center of Invasive Plant Management])
3. Protect biodiversity (manual and biological control of non-native plants) [funding: Tree Vitalize; Aqua PA]
4. Outreach (Borough of West Chester; East Bradford & East Goshen Townships)



Robert Benson Gordon

Robert Benson Gordon, born on July, 23, 1901, was the Professor Emeritus of Science at West Chester University in 1964 and after whom West Chester University's Gordon Natural Area is named.

He was an accomplished man of science, and his career as a college professor began at WCU. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Applied Optics in 1922, Master of Science in Botany in 1928, and PhD. in Botany in 1931 from Ohio State University. Between 1922 and 1924 he practiced optometry, but soon found that his true passions lied in more biological pursuits. For most of his career, he taught general biology, plant ecology, and conservation at various colleges and universities.



Though his interests were many, he specialized in the "mapping and understanding of natural vegetation of the northeastern United States" (Ohio J. Sci.) in relation to planning for land use, and entitled his dissertation "The Primary Forest Types of the East Central States" (1931). Dr. Gordon passed on 11 February 1981.

Between 1973 and 2006 the Area was primarily used for classes and a few research projects. Dr Harry Tiebout (Biology/Ecology) had to fight off two movements to open a public road through the Gordon Natural Area. Dr Tiebout has been the GNA Faculty Administrator.

Up until 2006 there were no funds allocated to care of the Gordon Natural Area. Small amounts of money were allocated from time to time from the Environmental Council (now the Sustainability Advisory Council). That changed when Dr. Don Barr (Dean of Health Sciences, now retired) found us enough funds so we could have a part-time Stewardship Manager along with some operating funds.



Our on-going champions include President Weisenstein and Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences Lori Vermeulen.



In 2013, our 40th Anniversary:

1. The Stewardship position was made a permanent part-time position
2. Received a \$10,000 seed grant from the USDA Forest Service
3. Designated as Wild Plant Sanctuary by the PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
4. Dr. Weisenstein added 16 acres to the Gordon Natural Area
5. A new trail, the Golden Ram Trail, was established by the Foundation through the wetland/flood plain section. Educational signs were erected.

Kendra McMillin (Biology 2014) is the Student Stewardship Manager for 2012-2014



Student Stewardship Manager for Gordon Area: 2009, 2010, 2012 & 2013

Prepared GNA Tour Guide: <http://www.gordonarea.org/pdf/tourguide-gna.pdf>

Natural Lands Trust Assistant Land Manager: 2011

Prepared Emerald Ash Borer management Plan for the Borough of West Chester: 2012

Team Leader: Green Legacy Data Collection-South Campus-2012; Overlease Research Plots data collection-2009 & 2012

Trained as Tree Tender by Pennsylvania Horticulture Society

Hurricane Sandy impact report 2012

Intern with PA DCNR working on the emerald ash borer 2013

Dr. Hertel has been the Stewardship Manager for the GNA since 2006



AS Forestry, North Dakota School of Forestry (now Dakota College at Bottineau) Bottineau, ND

BS Forestry, University of Montana, Missoula, MT

MS Forestry, Duke University, Durham, NC

PhD Entomology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

Retired after 34 years with the USDA Forest Service

Has consulted in Armenia (2009), Kenya and Tanzania (1994; 1997; 1999; 2000; 2001; 2006)

GNA Outreach:

West Chester Borough: emerald ash borer; West Nile virus

East Bradford Township: riparian forest restoration project

East Goshen Township: forest restoration project

Chester Co Historical Society: planning land protection display

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society: Tree Tenders training and support; Tool Library for Tree Tenders

Campus: Tree Legacy; Sustainability Advisory Council; Outdoor Classroom, Laboratory and Garden

Barclay's Friends: given talks on Wangari Maathai (2010) and wild African Violets (2012); Garden Tour (2013)

Gerard "Gerry" Hertel; ghertel@wcupa.edu; 484-883-3371 (also known as big bug [dudu kubwa [swahili]])

Gordon Area Web site (www.gordonarea.org)

Facebook: Gordon Natural Area