



R.B. Winter State Park Sign @ 1957

A FORESTER'S VISION

The beautiful Bald Eagle State Forest that you see today was once clear-cut lumber company land. By 1900 almost all of the virgin forest in the mountains of Union County was gone. Where there had been white pines 6 feet across and 200 feet tall, large hemlocks, and many other trees and forest plants, was mostly bare soil and rocks. What logging had not destroyed was consumed in wildfires during the 1909 drought.

The land, no longer of value to the lumber companies, was sold off in large tracts, much of it purchased by the state of Pennsylvania.

Raymond B. Winter's Halfway Park

Raymond Burrows Winter (1881, Huntersville, PA- 1968, Williamsport, PA), graduated from Mont Alto State Forestry School in 1910. He was assigned to the 20,000-acre White Deer Forest of Union and Centre Counties. Isolated pockets of old growth remained. Some deep-rooted deciduous trees and shrubs (such as low-bush blueberry) had survived the fires and drought. Air-born seeds of aspens and others had initiated new growth.

R. B. Winter, with assistants Steven Roadarmel and Leslie Stover, planted trees and dreamed of restoring the land for a park. In addition to reforestation (thousands of trees were planted), Winter and his rangers made fireplaces and picnic tables. Soon funds were secured for about 400 acres for Halfway State Forest Park. The park was situated where the Halfway House once stood, marking the halfway point on the early road through the mountains.

Except for serving during WWI in the Heavy Artillery Officers Training Corps and briefly working, in 1920, in the Corn Planter Forest District near Titusville, PA, R. B Winter spent his career as a forester in Union County.

In June of 1933 the Bald Eagle State Forest District got four CCC Camps of 200 young men each. One group was assigned to the Halfway Park area where they cleared seven acres of brush and debris, removed the old dam, and constructed the first cement and stone dam built by the CCC, making a seven-acre lake. The Fish Department stocked the lake with trout for fishing.

The federal CCC program provided the manpower and funds to make dramatic improvements in a short space of time. They built a bathing beach and diving tower. Brush Valley Road was improved, and new roadways built. Water and sewer lines were installed. Buildings and stone tables erected. Over the ensuing years, improvements continued at the park, which became a popular site used year-round by local residents and out-of-town visitors.

Raymond B. Winter State Forest Park

Raymond B. Winter worked for the Forestry Department for 45 years, retiring July 1, 1955. That year Senator Samuel B. Wolf introduced a resolution in the state Senate (the state House of Representatives concurring):

"Resolved that the recreational area in the Bald Eagle State Forest in Union County now known as Half-Way State Forest be renamed Raymond B. Winter State Forest Park in lasting tribute to his untiring work in conservation."

In September 1967 a memorial monument was erected at the Park.

Thanks to Raymond B. Winter's incredible vision to restore the natural beauty to a landscape that had been destroyed by lumbering and fire, we have a park with a lake for fishing, summer swimming and winter skating; campsites and picnic areas, and hiking trails for year-round enjoyment of this beautiful new forest.

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