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It is about a month early for Arbor Day, which is traditionally the last Friday of April, the 29th this year, but across the country Arbor Day varies depending upon local traditions and other circumstances. So let us declare April 2016 the Plant Lover's Almanac Arbor month, at least for my columns. I thought of this especially while visiting Laurel Hills State Park in the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania recently.

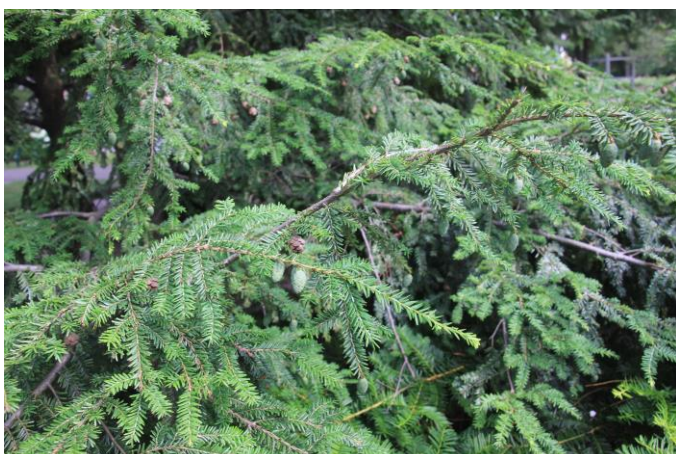
My wife Laura and I enjoyed moved upward on the Hemlock Trail from streamside views and trout fisherman, from small hemlocks to the Hemlock Natural Area, where trees were much larger. These hemlocks were in fact a virgin stand, unlogged from the early 20th century nearly clear-cutting of Laurel Mountain. We would have needed extra family members to encircle these hemlock trees with our arms.

First, it was wonderful that this hemlock stand did not appear to be infested with the invasive hemlock woolly adelgid insect, which has devastated large areas of hemlock forest east of Ohio and has now become an issue worthy of eradication in our

Hocking Hills State Park area and elsewhere. Second, we enjoyed this growing stand and the surrounding forest, which though certainly not as mature as in the Hemlock Natural Area, was on its way.



Laura Chatfield hugging a hemlock tree in Laurel Hills State Park in Pennsylvania (JC)



The loveliness of hemlock trees, with cones both old and new (JC)

This brings us to the display at the small Visitor Center in the park and the tale it tells. The trees of Laurel Mountain were almost totaled in the early 20th century. Why? As President Theodore Roosevelt put it: *"The railroads must have ties...the mines must have timber...the farmer must have timber...the stockman must have fenceposts."*

We were certainly a different country then, for one thing with a much higher agrarian population. We did need then (and still need now) the natural resource of trees.

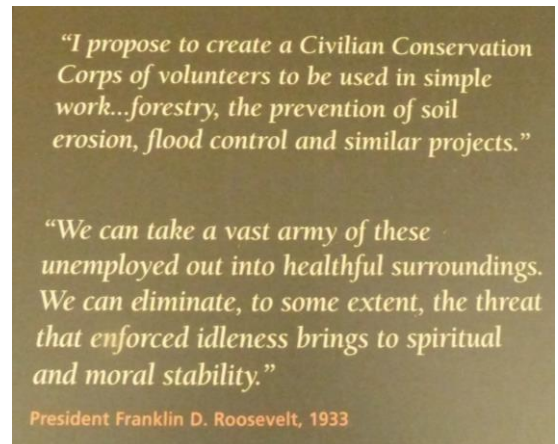
As noted at the Laurel Hill display, at the logging peak, there were over 600 sawmills on Laurel Mountain. A

lumberman was quoted about *"the screams of the saw, the roar of the machines, the booming of lumber on the rolls."* Special railcars and tracks were developed for the torturous, winding paths through the mountain.

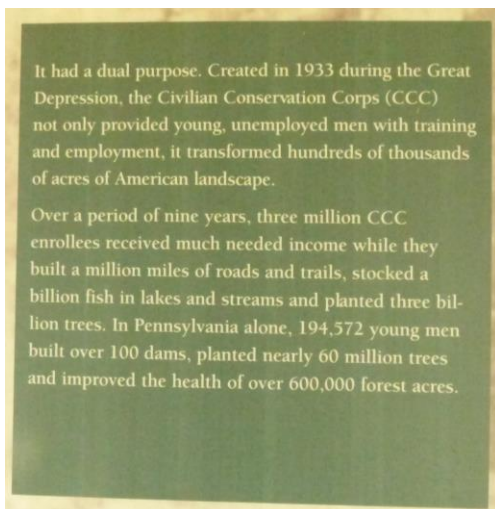
Then, Teddy Roosevelt's fifth cousin President Franklin Roosevelt is quoted in 1933, as the Great Depression roars through our country: *"I propose a Civilian Conservation Corps of volunteers to be used...forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control and similar projects."* Among the fruits of their labor? They *"transformed hundreds of thousands of acres, built millions of miles of roads and trails, stocked a billion fish in lakes and streams, and planted **billions** of trees."*

According to the display, in Pennsylvania alone, the CCC involved

194,572 young men, who planted over 60 million trees and improved the health of over 600,000 forest acres. It almost makes our current million tree planting projects seem paltry. They are not, they involve thousands of volunteers, multitudes of communities and have well-documented impacts.



CCC Quote from Franklin Roosevelt (JC)



CCC quote for Pennsylvania (JC)

The history of the forests in Ohio is quite interesting. Ohio was, of course, once almost all forested, with estimates of pre-European colonization of from 90%-95% forested land for what became Ohio, with some prairies and swamps mixed in. Then, with clearing of land for agriculture and living space, by the early 1900s, Edmund Secrest, the first state forester for Ohio, stationed at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, estimated Ohio's forest cover at around 10%. Quite a change. Yet, due to those CCC workers, due to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry, due to purchase and protection of large areas of state forest, by 2006 the survey of Ohio forest lands estimated it to be in excess of 30%. Quite a change, Again.

So, if you have some woodland acreage, get involved with the many offerings of OSU's Woodland Steward Program (www.woodlandstewards.osu.edu) to learn how to improve your forested land. If you are in an urban area, be aware that your urban trees are providing significant environmental services to your community

According to the well-researched i-Tree model, a 24-inch diameter white oak next to a building in Doylestown provides *annual* environmental services of \$239 in terms of stormwater remediation, energy savings, air quality benefits, carbon sequestration, and aesthetic benefits (treebenefits.com). Check it out for the trees in your yard. i-Tree was developed from a public-private partnership of the United States Forest Service, the International Society of Arboriculture, the Arbor Day Foundation and Davey Tree Expert Co. of Kent, Ohio. And that is only the beginning - then there are the social and human health benefits of trees.

Let us finish with Teddy Roosevelt speaking to the schoolchildren of the United States on Arbor Day 1907, with a little broader context than his 1905 comments of the usage of trees.

Arbor Day (which means simply "Tree Day") is now observed in every State in our Union — and mainly in the schools. At various times from January to December, but chiefly in this month of April, you give a day or part of a day to special exercises and perhaps to actual tree planting, in recognition of the importance of trees to us as

a Nation, and of what they yield in adornment, comfort, and useful products to the communities in which you live...

...So any nation which in its youth lives only for the day, reaps without sowing, and consumes without husbanding, must expect the penalty of the prodigal, whose labor could with difficulty find him the bare means of life...A people without children would face a hopeless future; a country without trees is almost as hopeless; forests which are so used that they cannot renew themselves will soon vanish, and with them all their benefits... If your Arbor Day exercises help you to realize what benefits each one of you receives from the forests, and how by your assistance these benefits may continue, they will serve a good end.

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next best time is – April 2016. Arbor Month awaits us.