

Larose Forest was initiated in 1928 when agronomist, Ferdinand Larose, undertook a conifer plantation on lands that were abandoned due to soil erosion.

Today, the Larose Forest is owned and managed by the corporation of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell. This pristine natural site is located approximately 50 kilometres east of Ottawa, just south of the village of Bourget and covers over 11,000 hectares.

More than 18 million trees have been planted making it the second largest community forest in Ontario. It includes conifers, wetlands, mixed forest and is crisscrossed by the South Nation River, many smaller creeks and over 200 kilometres of roads and trails.

The Forest shelters a wide variety of wildlife from the small chickadee to the majestic moose. It also contains a beautiful variety of wildflowers and mushrooms, scattered throughout the area. There are numerous excellent places to relax and have a good time.

By visiting the Forest, you will have the opportunity to enjoy numerous popular outdoor activities year-round, ranging from hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, snow shoeing, cross-country skiing and much more.

History:

Before the logging era of the 1800's, travelers in the lowlands of eastern Ontario encountered great stretches of maple, white cedar, white pine and tamarack. Wherever the soil was sandy, red pine trees grew in profusion. The poorly drained areas supported dense thickets of white cedar.

Over fifty tree species grew in this forest area, sheltering many kinds of insects, birds and animals. In turn, this wildlife provided food for a small population of native Indians, whose scattered settlements formed the only man-made breaks in the forest. In the 17th and 18th centuries various groups of Europeans came to explore along the trails and waterways that connected these villages. These groups included the French *coureur des bois* and missionaries, and English fur-traders, who set out to convert the natives, or exploit the apparently limitless supply of fur bearing animals.

Up to the end of the 18th century, the primeval forests remained intact. The Europeans had not yet tried to systematically cut the timber, clear the land and build homes.

However, the fur trader's trap was soon joined by the lumberman's axe. In 1804, the Royal Navy's desperate need for naval timbers and masting, coupled with the demand for general building timber in England, touched off an era of logging which was to last for over 100 years.

Canadian timber shipments to Britain and the United States reached a peak in the late 1860's, but declined in 1873 when American expansion westward led to a decrease in demand for Canadian timber. In 1874, the Franco-Prussian war created a new demand for Canadian timber and the overseas trade flourished until 1904. The United States demand also increased in 1893 when American reserves of pine and spruce became exhausted.

In 1857, mills began operating at Lemieux, Riceville, Fournier, St-Isidore de Prescott, Proulx and Lalonde. Timber operations to feed the mills supplying lumber to the insatiable United States market, were in full swing across the region. By 1860, the choice stands of pine were gone. The seemingly indestructible forests had been all but destroyed. To keep the mills going, the cutover areas that hadn't burned were stripped of the small trees left after the first assault on the forests. At the turn of the century the timber resources necessary to maintain the huge Ottawa mills were exhausted.

Following the timber exploitation, agricultural land clearing (beginning about 1830) and large fires reduced much of the Prescott and Russell landscape to a "Blow sand" desert. The land clearing seriously disturbed the equilibrium of the environment causing major problems which soon posed a threat to the entire area. year-round stream flows became intermittent and the spread of man-made fires devastated both cut-over and uncut forest areas. The plant and wildlife population, dependent on the forest, underwent alterations causing some species to multiply and become a nuisance while others declined and became extinct. Thus, the area went from a primeval forest to what was known as the "Bourget Desert".

The reclamation of the Bourget Desert was started in the 1920's. This reclamation through reforestation can be credited to the initiative and enthusiasm of Ferdinand Larose, the local Agricultural Representative for the Counties of Prescott and Russell. Other conservationists and Department personnel gave him strong support in his efforts. Their concern, of course, was controlling the blow sands and reclaiming the waste areas of the Prescott and Russell sand plain. Larose believed that the forests

must be returned so that the areas of blowing sand and water erosion would be consolidated and hence produce a useful new crop.

The rehabilitation and planting work were started after an agreement negotiated between the United Counties and the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests in 1928. Under this agreement, the Counties purchased the waste sand areas from the private landowners and the Department took over the responsibility of managing the land.

In 1928 Mr. Cliff Duckworth, of the Department of Lands and Forests transferred from Barrie to carry out the initial plantings of red pine on the first 40.5 hectares of blow sand. The position of planting foreman was advertised locally, and Leo Lapalm of Bourget was hired in this capacity. He was in charge of the reforestation in what is now Larose Forest.

The initial purposes for establishing this forest were to help control wind and water erosion, to grow valuable crops of quality timber economically, to provide employment for local residents, and to provide a good reforestation demonstration area.

From these initial objectives for Larose, the growing of timber has increased in importance along with the public needs and demands for outdoor recreation, education and conservation.

Today, the forest encompasses more than 11,000 hectares of land laced with over 200 kilometres of roads and trails. The early 1928 plantings today reach some 27 metres in height. Much of the land is ideally suited for forest. On the light dry sands, red pine shows excellent growth. In moister areas, white pine, white spruce and tamarack have been successfully established with the natural hardwoods.

*Source: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry



FURROWED LAND, WAITING TO BE PLANTED WITH TREES.

Furrowed Land



Horses carrying out freshly cut trees

