

## Brayton Memorial Research Forest: History

### RFR-A2007

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### History

In June 1949, under the terms of the will of Emma L. Brayton, a 305-acre tract of forestland located three miles north of Hopkinton in Delaware County, Iowa, was made available to the Iowa State Agriculture Experiment Station. This forest, the ISU Brayton Memorial Forest, in memory of the donor's parents, was to be used as an experimental and demonstration area. The father of Emma Brayton was one of the early judges of Delaware County when Delhi was the seat of government. Judge Brayton at one time owned about 3,600 acres of land, most of which was cleared and put into cultivation. The two quarter sections, which make up the Brayton Memorial Forest, were acquired about 1883, and since 1912 were owned by the Judge's daughter, Emma, until her death.

The original geological survey of the area made in 1839 stated there was a fair stand of red, white, black, and bur oaks and basswood on some sites of the tract while some stunted white and bur oak timber occurred primarily along the streams. A re-survey of the area in 1975 indicated the composition consisted of oaks, hickory, black walnut, butternut, soft and hard maple, and ash. The native timber of the area was logged completely in the early days, most likely to provide ties for railroad construction. Due to the difficulty of maintaining a good fence around the tract,

grazing has occurred on the area from time to time in the distant past, but no domestic livestock have been in the forest for many years. In 1950, an official boundary survey was completed and all corners located. As a result of this survey, it was deemed advisable for Iowa State University to purchase 10 acres adjacent to the southeast corner of the original bequest. A topographic and soil survey followed in the spring of 1951.

Since 1951, several tree plantings have occurred within the forest, which have consisted of red pine, scotch pine, white pine, Norway spruce, larch, black cherry, black walnut, yellow poplar, hybrid poplar, and hybrid willow. In November 1972, a forest survey was carried out to determine timber volume estimates, density, frequency of occurrence, reproduction, and understory data of approximately 33 percent of the native species. The species contributing over 90 percent of the total volume were white oak (36.9%), red oak (16.1%), black and pin oak (11.0%), elm (10.0%), and hickory (6.9%).

Over the duration of university ownership, the forest has been the site of a diverse assemblage of field research studies, timber harvest and active forest management activities, undergraduate experiential learning events, and ISU Extension and Outreach (ISUEO) educational programming. In addition to utilization by ISU, the Brayton Forest continues to serve as a public land resource for Iowa citizens through a cooperative agreement between ISU and the Iowa DNR (IDNR), which was initiated in 2002.