



Compiled by Abbie Rogers '09

THE GUILFORD COLLEGE WOODS

THE HISTORY OF THE GUILFORD COLLEGE WOODS

The area now called the Guilford College woods was once home to the Saura and Keyawee peoples, who systematically burned the underbrush, leaving an open grassy area with widely spaced trees. The native peoples left the region before European-American settlers came to the region in the mid-18th Century, and it is thought that the area became heavily wooded by the end of the 18th Century. Friends (Quakers) originally from southeastern Pennsylvania were among the first European-Americans to come to this area, and they named their new community New Garden in honor of a Pennsylvania Friends meeting of the same name, which was in turn the namesake of an Irish meeting.

The Friends of New Garden gradually turned the wooded region into a farming community, beginning with a meetinghouse made out of three fallen logs that doubled as a horse pen. Legends abound regarding the community's early years, including the mysterious Anne the Huntress, who appeared in 1790, wearing buckskin and carrying a decorated rifle, which she used to beat the local men in a shooting contest. She lived and taught in the community for nearly two decades before disappearing again.

The Battle of Guilford Courthouse at the close of the Revolutionary War thrust the nonviolent New Garden Friends into the midst of war. The battle ended with the British troops retreating down a wooded road from the courthouse toward the Friends' meetinghouse (cutting directly through the modern Guilford woods and coming out between the baseball and football fields). The Quakers cared for the wounded, and buried the dead of both armies – about 20-30, lined up side by side, British and American, to show their brotherhood – in a mass grave in the New Garden cemetery. There are also graves at the intersection of Ballinger, New Garden, and Fleming Roads, containing British soldiers killed by American snipers.

In 1837, New Garden Boarding School was founded in the midst of a thriving Quaker community. The woods harbored fugitive slaves in the antebellum era; according to prominent abolitionist Levi Coffin, who lived adjacent to this land, and has been connected to the Underground Railroad, "Runaway slaves used frequently to conceal themselves in the woods and thickets in the vicinity of New Garden, waiting

Moore • Brooke Davis • Bonnie Parsons • David Fagins • Jon Varnell • David Perce • Max Carter at Guilford College, as well as conversations with the following individuals: Gwen Erickson • Lynn Moseley • Angie is from the Guilford College Woods and the Guilford College Lake vertical files in the Friends Historical Collection Early America and with help from Michael Crouch in the Office of Communications and Marketing. Information Compiled by Abbie Rogers '09 as an honors project for Kyle Dell's course, Political Science 318 Environmentalism in

and other community members. college for decades, and serve as a defining part of the Guilford experience for students of the woods to the community. The woods have been an iconic feature of the of the woods for expanded student housing further emphasize the importance of the The expressions of student activism in 1990 and 2005 with the clearing of portions

for selling any of Guilford's wooded property. process in order to sell the wood. The current Campus Master Plan has no provisions cutter went well beyond his contract and cut down a large swath of live trees in the liability, the college hired a tree cutter to clear out dead trees and fallen limbs, but the to complain that underbrush in the woods posed a fire hazard. In an effort to avoid including 50 mature hardwoods in the quad, leading some neighbors of the woods in 2001, a May storm with 80 mph straightline winds downed trees all over campus, Professor Lynn Moseley and other science faculty, managed to prevent the sale. Also Park. Protest from the Guilford College community, including a letter from Biology acres of wooded land that serve as a corridor between the Guilford Woods and Price the college out of financial difficulties, the Chief Financial Officer tried to sell the 12 recognized as a National Historic District in the process. In 2001, in an effort to get Guilford woods. The college battled this development for years, getting the area to construct a major highway called Painter Boulevard through the middle of the Beginning in the 1970s the Greensboro Department of Transportation planned Recently, the woods has experienced the pressures of development in the area.

until 2007. shut down 20 years later for liability reasons, although not completely dismantled in the woods with special permission from the college in the late 1970s, which was Guilford from 1962-96. The Greensboro Drug Action Council built a ropes course a planned arboretum, were inspired by William E. Fulcher, a professor of biology at The steps by the current lake and the bridges, built by students in 1984 as part of

restricted to Guilford students and faculty. and for years it was used for swimming and boating, supervised by a lifeguard and

opportunities to make their escape to the North, and I generally learned their places of concealment and rendered them all the service in my power."¹ Later, during the Civil War, the wooded area also hid Quaker men trying to escape the Confederate draft. Some of these men hid in the Boarding School's barns; others took cover in a "cave" in the woods that consisted of a pit covered with a camouflaged trapdoor.

In 1888, New Garden Boarding School became Guilford College, and by the mid-20th Century, Greensboro's development surrounded the nearly 300 acre parcel of wooded land. The Guilford College woods has also served the college community throughout the years. Clay mined from the bluffs to the east of the North Apartments – behind the Pines and Milner Guest House – and carted to a kiln located near the



football practice field was made into bricks to be used in the construction of early buildings on campus. Parts of the woods were once part of the college farm, with large sections fenced off for cattle pasturage. The woods was a popular picnic site in the early to mid-20th Century, and an early

annual picnic involved the entire college community and plenty of festivity. The group cooked stew in a 25-gallon cast-iron wash-pot, carried to the picnic site on a horse-drawn wagon; college students hunted for meat for the stew in the woods and surrounding areas.

A lake was created in the college's early years, about an eighth of a mile northeast of the current lake, as a water source for livestock. Students also used it for recreation; swimming and skating were common seasonal entertainments. The earthen dam that held this lake collapsed around the turn of the Century and, while repairs were attempted, the lake was lost. The remains of the final concrete dam can still be found in the woods. There were also earthen dams located near what is now the Jefferson Gardens neighborhood. The current lake was created in 1952 for recreation purposes,

1 Levi Coffin, Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad (Cincinnati: R. Clarke & Co., 1880.) 20.



Vintage lake photo is courtesy of the Friends Historical Collection • Cover photo by Abbie Rogers '09

ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WOODS

The Guilford College woods are valuable from an ecological standpoint for a variety of reasons. It is an oasis of biodiversity in the midst of Greensboro's sprawl. The 240 acres of undeveloped land that it contains, along with the 80-acre tract of Price Park, comprise one of two main "hubs" or large areas of contiguous natural habitat. Ideally, corridors of similar habitat should link hubs, creating a network of green space and combating habitat fragmentation caused by human development. In Greensboro, however, there are few hubs, and they are not linked through corridors; this fragmentation has a negative effect on biodiversity, particularly genetic diversity.

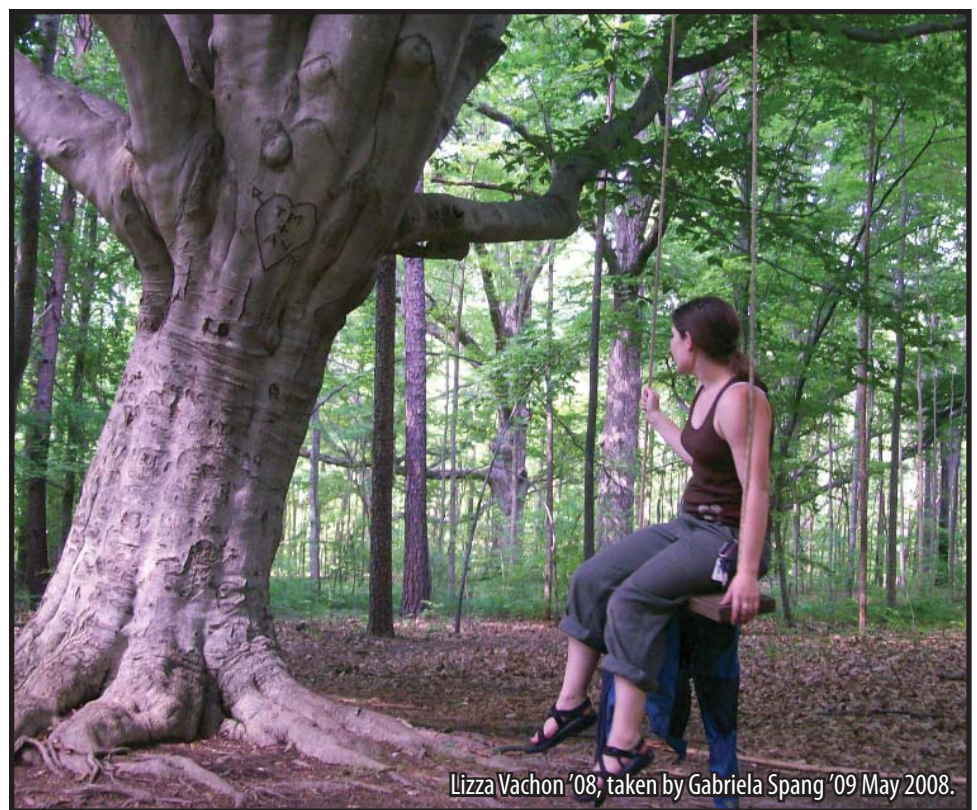
Various neotropical migratory bird species (species that migrate between northern and tropical climates) use ecosystems like the woods as breeding sites or as places to stop over while on their long migration journeys. These neotropical migrants are among the most threatened bird species because of habitat destruction all along their migratory paths, so the woods provides a valuable haven for them in Greensboro.

Reptiles and amphibians are very sensitive to the presence of pollution – their skin is porous and sensitive – and as a result, they serve as important biological indicators of an ecosystem's health. Herpetological censuses in the Woods throughout the years have shown that there has been a slight decrease in aquatic salamander populations in the past 20 years or so. The fact that they are still there is a positive sign, although there are other places in Greensboro with similar (and even larger) salamander populations.

The woods also provides an important buffer for the headwaters of the Haw River. The watershed that empties into the lake consists of significant (approximately 19%) impervious surfaces on campus and coming from West Friendly Avenue; the 320 total acres of wooded land help to counteract the runoff from these surfaces and keep it from heavily impacting all of the ecosystems downstream.

Another noteworthy feature of the Guilford woods is the presence of land that has been neither farmed nor developed. While much of the woods has been cleared at some point, the soil in an area of land in the middle has been undisturbed by machines, development, or other human impacts that compact the soil and disrupt its natural state. The trees in this area are old, too, although it is possible that logging did occur at this site at one point. But overall, it is remarkably undisturbed compared to its surroundings.

The Guilford woods serves as a valuable "living laboratory" for Guilford science students and professors, who benefit from this on-campus resource. Through species censuses and other studies, they are able to sample and monitor the health of the ecosystem from various scientific perspectives.



THE GUILFORD COLLEGE WOODS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR COMMUNITY.

PLEASE TREAT IT WITH THE RESPECT IT DESERVES BY FOLLOWING THESE RULES:

- No fires
- No alcohol, drugs, or firearms
- No camping
- Stay on the trails
- No motorized vehicles
- Keep dogs leashed
- Don't litter (and pick up any litter you find)
- Respect wildlife
- Enjoy yourself!

IT IS UP TO US AS A COMMUNITY TO TAKE CARE OF THE WOODS.