

## History of Loda Lake

The modern-day story of the Loda Lake area begins with the existence of a vast virgin pine forest "where trees 54 inches in diameter at the base towered to a height of sixty feet." This timber was removed just before the turn of the century by the Pere Marquette Railroad. Shortly thereafter, the land came into the hands of the Hanson family, who owned stock in the railroad. The land, stripped of timber and largely strewn with decaying pine logs and stumps as large as 4 feet in diameter, was felt to be worthless by the Hanson's. However, a friend and Illinois resident, Thomas E. Hunt accepted a challenge to farm the land, and thus Bass Lake Farm came to be.

Mr. Hunt was an early scientific farmer and from 1909 to 1916 he farmed the land using methods to replace nutrients lost from the soil due to farming. The farm thrived under his care. Unfortunately, health concerns forced the family to relocate west and the farm fell into "disrepair and neglect". The land was declared "sub-marginal" by the Department of Agriculture who bought it from the Hanson's daughter for \$3 per acre and made part of the Manistee National Forest.

By the late 1930's, the Forest Service was beginning to evaluate what to do with the property. In 1937, the Federated Garden Clubs of Michigan and the local Newaygo County Chapter became involved with Loda Lake planning efforts. It was designated by the Secretary of Agriculture as a Wildflower Sanctuary on Dec. 15, 1949. By 1950 a cooperative agreement had been signed between the Forest and the Federated Garden Clubs to establish the Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary. Efforts sponsored by the Garden Clubs over the years include the initial development of five trails; hiring of a botanist, Mr. Clayton Bazuin who identified and marked 238 plant species; development of trail guides; placement of picnic tables, grills, and resting benches; and maintenance of a visitors log. Plantings were made over a period of years by the Garden Clubs to help return extirpated and/or native species to the area (Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), Showy Lady Slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*). Modern use of the area includes expansion of native plant restoration.

Thus goes the story of the establishment of the only wildflower sanctuary in a National Forest, a project supported both financially and botanically by the Federated Garden Clubs for now over sixty years.



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### HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FORESTS

[www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnf/hmindex.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnf/hmindex.htm)

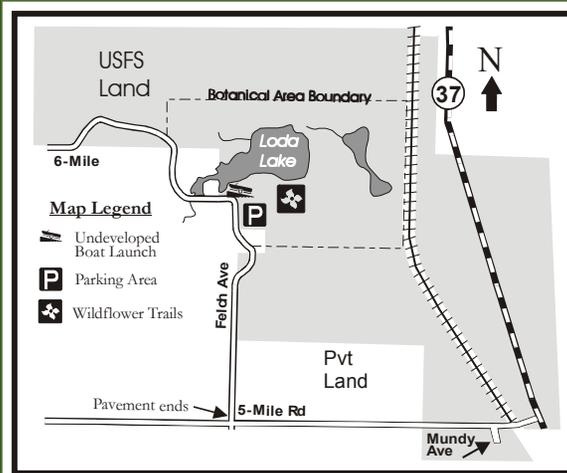
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For additional historical and cultural information about Loda Lake, visit our website!



Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary is located on the west side of Michigan, north of Grand Rapids. Follow Hwy M-37 approx 6.8 miles north of White Cloud. Turn west onto 5-Mile road and travel west to the intersection with Felch Ave. Turn north on Felch (gravel) to the parking lot entrance road.



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## Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary

*"Witness the Wonder of Wildflowers"*

*"Caring for the Land,  
Serving People"*



*"A sample of wildflower plants, their composition and natural habitats that once covered much of the area of Michigan should be restored and perpetuated for future generations. It is therefore proposed to set aside a 72 acre tract of land surrounding Loda Lake in the northern part of Newaygo County for this purpose. This area should be preserved and be allowed to exist without human interference or artificial development, except for very minimum essentials..."* US Forest Service, 1949.

Huron-Manistee National Forests