

Harry J. Gordon

Harry J. Gordon was born in Circleville, W.Va. He was dedicated to serving others and to life. Senator Robert J. Byrd called him a friend like none other, a honest and dedicated worker to his state and government – “Harry Jay Gordon, a true pioneer! A mountain man like none other.”

During hard times in the early 1900s, Mr. Gordon sacrificed completing school to help run the family farm. In 1946, Mr. Gordon was one, if not the first wildlife manager hired by what was then called the W.Va. Conservation Commission, Game Section. He was assigned to the Gatewood Area, later known as the Potomac Wildlife Management Area – a large portion of the Monongahela National Forest consisting of several counties, including Spruce Knob, the highest point in the state. The timing of Mr. Gordon’s employment was at the very beginning of a cooperative agreement between the State of West Virginia and the USDA Forest Service – an agreement which is still in effect. Mr. Gordon later attended the police academy, adding a new title of U.S. Deputy Game Warden.



During World War II, Mr. Gordon was called into the military. But, instead of combat, he was requested to stay home and care for the families along the Spruce Knob and North Fork areas. Mr. Gordon, along with family, farmed all over this area to ensure families did not starve during these times that husbands and fathers were away. He also made sure these families had firewood for warmth.

Mr. Gordon was what some considered to be the old school type of wildlife manager, meaning he had the ability and knowledge to do anything asked of him. He was also very familiar with his area, having lived there all of his life. He has been credited for being responsible for the return of wild turkeys to the Allegheny Mountain portion of his area, due to the extensive habitat improvement measures which he undertook. He expertly maintained the numerous wildlife habitat improvements in this very large area. He trained most of the later wildlife managers in various aspects of their work, such as blasting water holes, seeding and planting, grafting and pruning. His area was a “stopping off” place for tours and visits by authorities from many agencies, but especially the Forest Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Mr. Gordon was a man of vision. He was instrumental in the building of the Shot Cherry Cabin – Forestry’s Spruce Knob headquarters. Thanks to Mr. Gordon, the one-room cabin grew to a full-sized lodge and is still used as their headquarters. If one would visit the Cabin, they would find Mr. Gordon’s name engraved above the front door along with the name Cherry Shot Cabin. The cabin was often used for employee family get-togethers – creating a history and memories for a lifetime. Mr. Gordon was also instrumental in the building of Spruce Knob Lake, where over 10,000 people were on hand for the dedication. Mr. Gordon’s life and dedication to Spruce Knob inspired Mr. Donald L. Groh to write *A Man and His Mountain* in the *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine in 1973.