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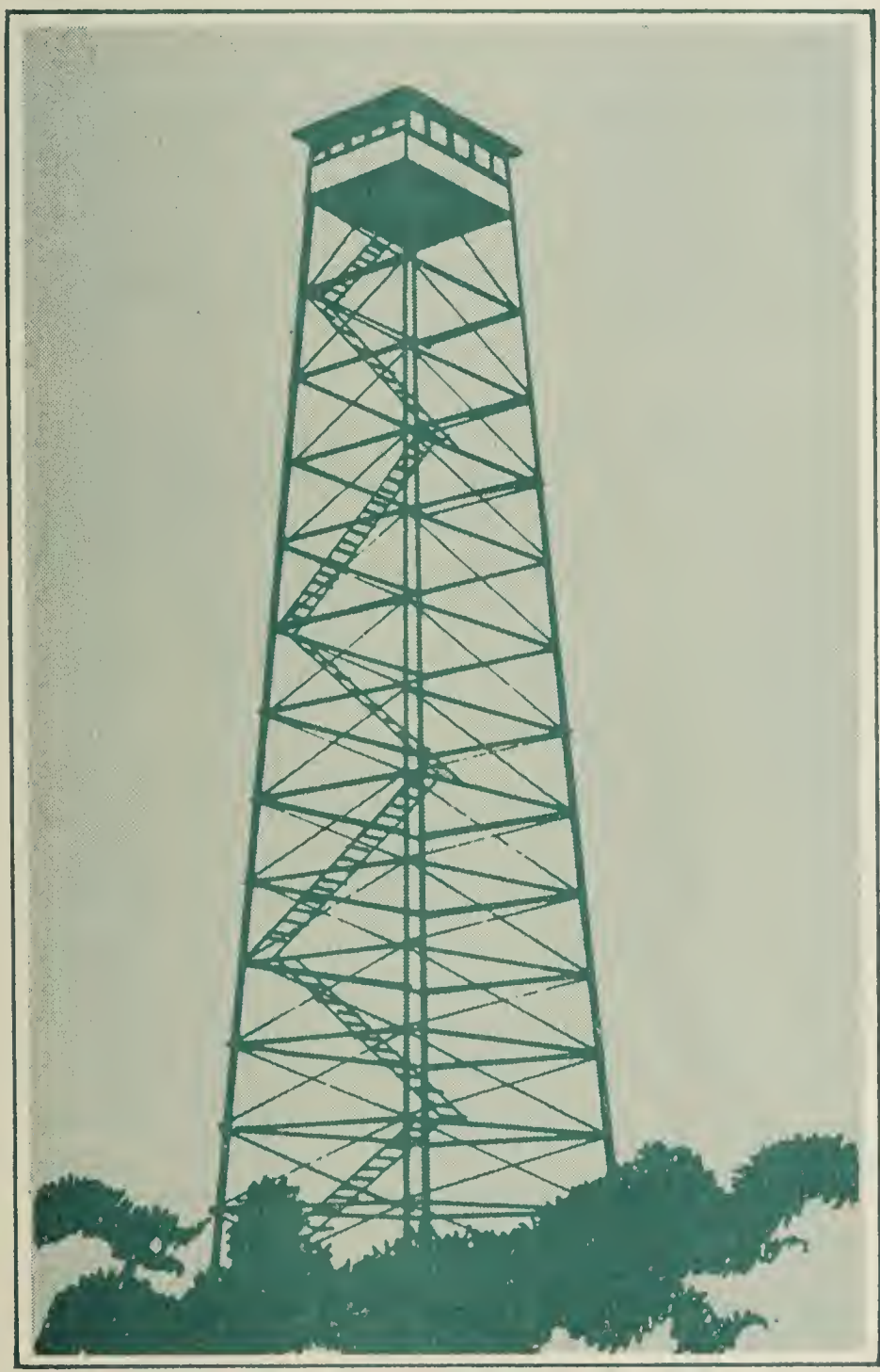
ILLINOIS DOCUMENTS

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Big River

STATE FOREST



CONSERVATION

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THE FOREST

Big River State Forest, in western Illinois, is six miles north of Oquawka on the Oquawka-Keithsburg blacktop road in Henderson County. The forest is primarily managed as an area for the demonstration of sound forestry practices. Arrangements may be made by an interested group for demonstrations and talks on forestry practices with the district forester or resident site manager.

HISTORY

The 2,671-acre forest was acquired by the state through five separate purchases, beginning in 1941 and 1942. The largest acquisition was in 1969. Additional land of 126 acres leased from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the 200-acre state-owned Oquawka Refuge brings the total land acreage to 2,997.

NATURAL SCENE

Vegetation — The natural area located at Big River is a unique community in several ways. It is a remnant of a vast prairie woodland border community that once covered much of Illinois. The large-flowered penstemon and Patterson's bindweed may be found here. Both of these plants are on the Illinois Rare and Endangered Species List. In the case of the Patterson's bindweed, this site is a type location. This species was first found here in 1873 by N. H. Patterson and at that time, this was the only known location in the world for it.

Some of the common plants found in the prairie are big and little bluestem, Indian grass, June grass, grama grass, flower-of-an-hour, cottonweed, pale prairie coneflower, prairie coneflower, prairie bushclover, western sunflower, blazing star, kittentails, lead plant, prickly pear cactus, purple prairie clover, flowering spurge, aromatic sumac, false dragonhead, Sullivan's milkweed, horsemint, goat's-rue, and hoary puccoon.

TIMBER STAND CONVERSION

Much of the forest is undergoing timber stand conversion to demonstrate the feasibility of growing profitable pine forests on this type of sand land. This consists of removing the scrub hardwood, salvaging the salable material for pulpwood, controlling hardwood reproduction and planting to white and red pine, which develops rapidly and shows excellent promise for the future. Through the years these practices have been emulated by other landowners, resulting in the establishment of hundreds of acres of successful pine plantations throughout the area.

FOREST FIRES

Fires, which were fairly common in the past, now occur rarely since adjacent landowners are aware of the detrimental effects of fire on their own timberlands. A fire tower is located at the headquarters area, as well as ready fire fighting crews and equipment to protect the forest during periods of threatened fire and damage.

Sixty miles of firebreaks interlace the forest, separating it into various compartments for management purposes as well as providing access and fire protection. Hiking and horseback riding are allowed on the firebreaks.

OQUAWKA REFUGE

The Oquawka Refuge, acquired in 1925, contains the well-known Milroy plantation. This 17-acre planting of red, white, and jack pine was established in 1928 and is the oldest pine plantation in the area. Trees are now 12-14 inches in diameter and 50 feet in height.

FACILITIES

Picnicking — There are several scattered picnic areas along Campbell Slough and Putney's Landing. Shelter houses, tables, camp stoves, and drinking water are available.

Camping — Tent and trailer sites are available at River-view camping area and in the northwest corner of the forest. Group camping is permitted; groups of over 25 persons must have advance permission to enter the forest. All campers must obtain a permit from the site manager.

Boating and Fishing — There are three boat launching ramps along the Mississippi River. Boat rentals are not provided.

Fishing can be done from a boat or the banks of the Mississippi River. Crappie, bass, carp, buffalo, channel catfish, bluegill, and bullhead are the fish most commonly found in these waters.

Ice fishing is a popular winter sport along Spring Slough, north of Putney's Landing.

Hiking — The Big Pines Trail is an enjoyable 3½-mile hike. The network of firebreaks may be used for hiking and backpacking as well as by bird watcher and nature study groups.

Horseback Riding — The riding of horses is also allowed on the firebreaks. Equestrian campgrounds and stables are available. Horse rentals are not available.

Hunting: With all types of existing cover and plenty of nearby water, the forest contains numerous small game animals such as quail, squirrel and rabbit, as well as deer. Waterfowl hunting is popular. Wood duck, blue and green-winged teal, mallard, shoveller, and Canada geese are familiar in the area.

Food patches have been planted throughout the forest to supplement existing food and to improve habitat for upland game.

Snowmobiling — This area has 30 miles of marked trails and a warming station.

Scenic Drives — Fifteen miles of scenic drives wind through the forest.

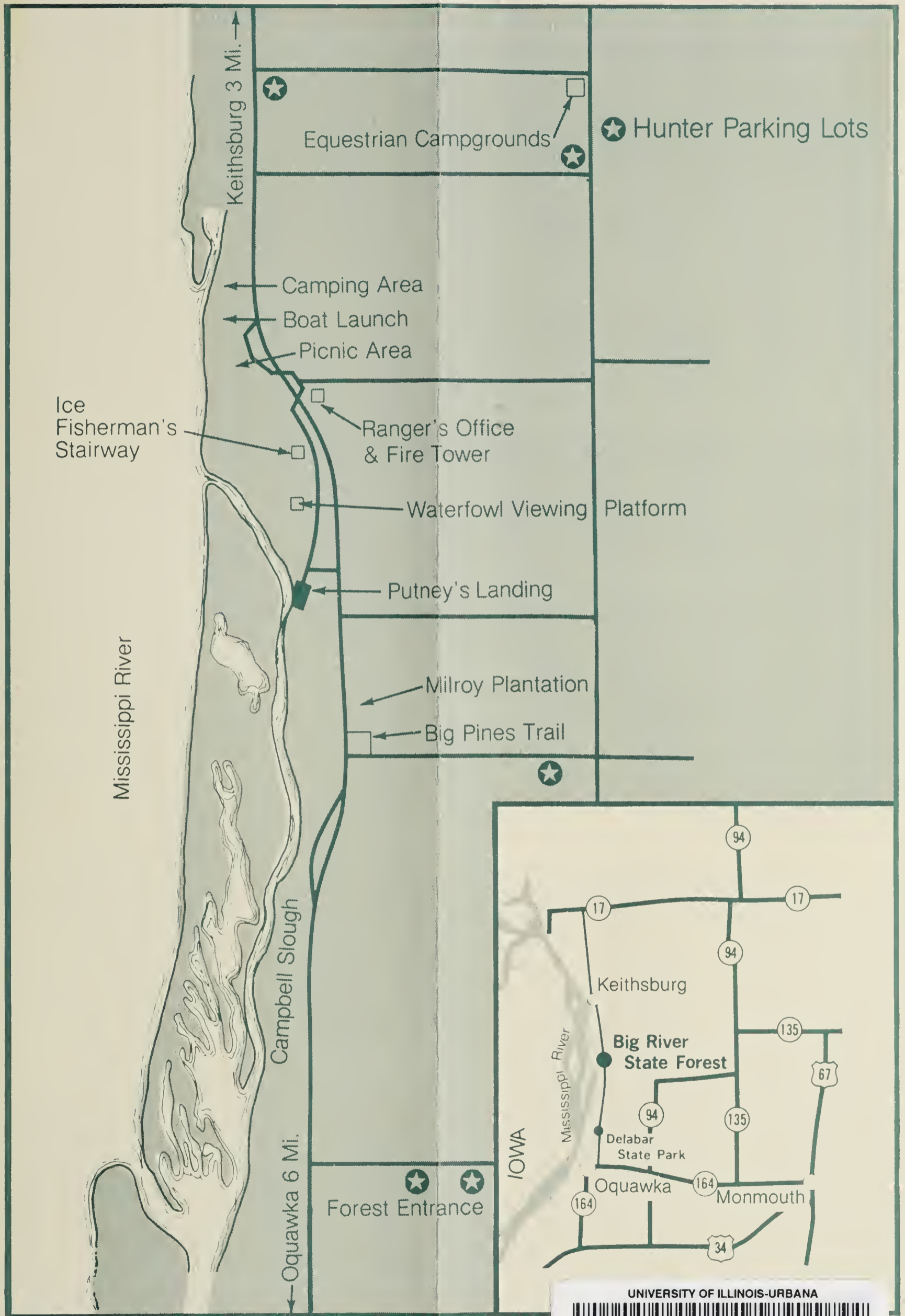
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Other state forests include Trail of Tears in southern Illinois, and Hidden Springs and Sand Ridge, both in central Illinois.

For more details, contact Site Superintendent, R.R. #1, Keithsburg, IL 61442, phone (309) 374-2496. For information on other Illinois sites, write the Department of Conservation, Division of Land Management, 524 South Second Street, Springfield, IL 62706.



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