

## Introduction

The Redbird Purchase Unit of the Daniel Boone National Forest sits quietly tucked away in the remote foothills of Appalachia where the three forks of the Kentucky River's headwaters flow at the base of steep and rugged terrain. While providing a great abundance of natural resources, this unique area is equally recognized for its ecological significance to the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The Redbird Purchase Unit is richly steeped in American history. In 1989, the Redbird Ranger Station was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Chief Red Bird was a legendary Cherokee for whom this fork of the Kentucky River is named.

## The Early Stages

In the late 1800s, after unregulated logging practices left noticeable impacts on the land in the eastern United States, Congress decided to set aside "forest reserves" where timber would be federally managed for sustainable use. These reserves were designated to help meet the future needs of a growing nation.



Peabody, 1910



*Thomas R. Frazier, First Redbird District Ranger*

## New Agency Established

The U.S. Forest Service, officially established as a federal agency in 1905, was set to lead in the conservation management of timber and other natural resources on forest reserve lands. While these reserves were originally designated in the vast unclaimed lands of the West, the Weeks Act of 1911 later allowed for the federal purchase of private lands in the headwaters of navigable streams across the country.

## Naming the National Forest

In 1937, the Cumberland National Forest was established in Kentucky as part of the Forest Service. The forest was later renamed the Daniel Boone National Forest in 1966, as it is known today.

Ranking high among long-range objectives for watershed protection needs within the state, the Redbird Purchase Unit became part of the national forest system in 1965. The unit encompasses seven Kentucky counties within its boundary.

## For more information

Redbird Ranger District  
91 Peabody Road  
Big Creek, KY 40914  
606-598-2192

The Redbird Ranger District includes the following Kentucky counties: Clay, Leslie, Owsley, Perry, Harlan, Knox, and Bell.

Daniel Boone National Forest  
Supervisor's Office  
1700 Bypass Road  
Winchester, KY 403891  
859-745-3100

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# History of the Redbird Purchase Unit Daniel Boone National Forest



*Redbird Ranger Station, 1968*



*Redbird Ranger Station, 2008*





*Red Bird Timber Company*

## The Land's History

The initial land purchase for the Redbird Purchase Unit was 60,000 acres that once belonged to the Ford Motor Company, when hardwood was used for automobile body parts and wheel spokes. After being logged and sold several times, this land was acquired by the Forest Service from the Red Bird Timber Corporation.

Today, nearly 146,000 acres of national forest lands occur within the Redbird Purchase Unit of the Daniel Boone National Forest.

## Another moment in time

Built by the Fordson Coal Company in 1924, the building that now serves as the Redbird Ranger Station was once living quarters for Fordson survey crews, engineers and draftsmen. For these employees, the building was known as the "Club House," a place where they would gather for meals and social activities during their evening hours. Oscar Bowling, a local professional carpenter, led in the construction of this now historic structure.

## Inside the Office

The original hand-cut wood paneling remains on the interior walls of this structure, providing evidence of an intrinsic past. In the front entry hall, the golden hues of aged maple provide a warm welcome for visitors. To the right, once a dining room, oak-paneled walls extend the invitation. To the left, rich dark walnut panels surround the walls of a gathering area, which continues to function as a Forest Service meeting room. In the District Ranger's office, the walls are paneled in a wood once considered queen of the eastern forests... American chestnut.



*Peabody Flood*

## Other Structures

In the lower parking lot of the Redbird Ranger Station, a Fordson building previously stood that was both a supply house and a furnace room, providing amenities that would rival even today's standard of living. Steam pipes from this building were routed underneath the sidewalks that led to the Club House, melting snow and ice along these walkways during cold winter months.

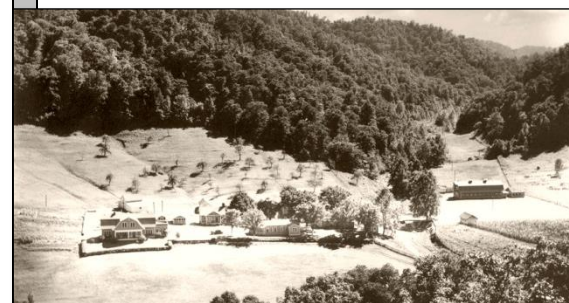


*Helitack crew*

## Serving the Community

A post office, established in 1909, originally called Annalee, once stood on the property near the highway. Its name was eventually changed to Peabody. After years of service to the community, this post office closed around 1978. The structure was later moved across the river to a private residence, where it became a playhouse for resident children.

An airplane hanger once sat in the upper end of the field in front of what is now the Redbird Ranger Station. Jewell Galloway, who managed the Peabody Post Office during the 1930s used this field as an airstrip for crucial incoming and outgoing mail. The Forest Service continues to use this same field today as a landing site for helicopters during wildland firefighting operations.

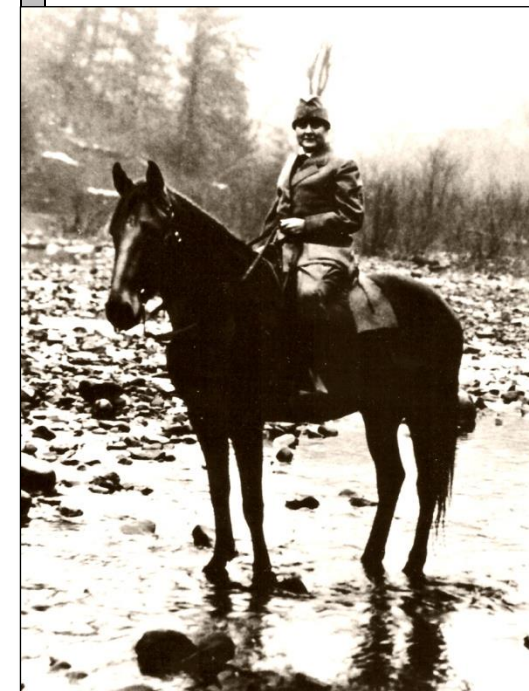


*Peabody in the 1940s.*

## An Advocate for Appalachia

Mary Breckinridge is most famous in the Appalachian region of eastern Kentucky as founder of the Frontier Nursing Service in 1925. While dedicating much of her life to the prenatal care of women in this region, Breckinridge also played a major role in the conservation of natural resources in this area.

In 1933, Breckinridge personally visited Forest Service officials in Washington, D.C. In a pleading effort to have a federal purchase unit established in the headwaters of the Kentucky River, in the interest of protecting and managing this most biologically diverse region, her efforts were finally realized when the Redbird Purchase Unit was officially established.



*Mary Breckinridge*