



Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame Foundation, Inc.

Celebrating, Advancing and Sharing Wisconsin's Conservation Legacy

Gordon A. Bubolz

(1905–1990)

Inducted 2022

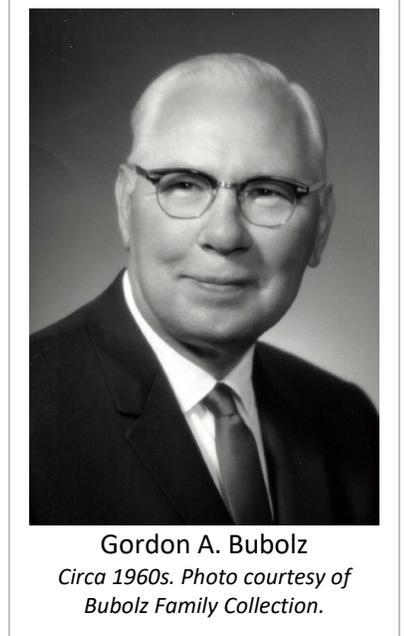
Gordon A. Bubolz was a man of contrasts. He was a mix of a conservative business leader and politician who was also a dedicated conservationist and volunteer who raised funds for the preservation of lands for public education and enjoyment. He is probably best known for the results of his volunteer efforts. Learning to love nature as a child, he devoted his life to protecting and preserving Wisconsin's waters and lands for future generations while building a successful company.

After a devastating windstorm swept through western Wisconsin in 1899, Julius Bubolz, Gordon's father, founded The Farmer's Home Mutual Hail, Tornado, and Cyclone Insurance Company of Seymour, Wisconsin in 1900. After serving many years as operations head, Gordon succeeded his father as Home Mutual's chief executive. The company is now known as SECURA.

As a Republican state senator for eight and a half years (1945–1953), Bubolz battled for welfare reform and limited spending in the Wisconsin Legislature while championing the creation of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), water and air pollution control regulations, and regional planning on a watershed scale. He also advocated for a one percent state sales tax to be approved for the purchase of wilderness lands and river headwaters.

Bubolz served on the state Conservation Commission and chaired the advisory council of the Department of Resource Development, bodies that provided oversight for the predecessors of the DNR. He served on the Legislature's Joint Water Resource Committee and co-authored legislation to implement in Wisconsin's provisions of the federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948. Although his home and business were in Wisconsin's "Paper Valley," he was an outspoken advocate for regulating industrial pollution of the Fox River. He was the first to chair what is now known as the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

After his work in the state senate was finished, he worked as the volunteer leader of a nonprofit conservation group that created his most enduring environmental legacy. In 1974, Gordon established and led Natural Areas Preservation, Inc. (NAPI), a nonprofit dedicated to identifying and preserving natural areas of ecological significance and educating the public on the value of conservation. A 1990 Legislative Joint Resolution credits Bubolz as a key fundraiser and organizer in the acquisition of four nature centers, three wildlife areas, two county parks and High Cliff State Park—collectively, about 4,600 acres. His most prominent tribute was one of those four nature centers being named the Gordon A. Bubolz Nature Preserve.



Gordon A. Bubolz
Circa 1960s. Photo courtesy of
Bubolz Family Collection.

"To succeed, a natural resources conservation and development program cannot be just another arm of the government. It must be an instrument for participation and expression of the people's needs, their wills and their human aspirations." - Gordon A. Bubolz

Bubolz's efforts won him Conservationist of the Year honors from the National Wildlife Federation and its Wisconsin affiliate, selection as a "Conservation Pioneer" by the UW Department of Agriculture and a special citation from the Wisconsin Legislature for his achievement in conservation and ecology.



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Bubolz graduated from Lawrence University, studied business and insurance at institutions in Ohio and Pennsylvania, and earned a law degree from the University of Wisconsin. He developed his love of nature while sitting at the edge of a swampy woodlot on the family farm to be alone with his thoughts. According to the family of Gordon Bubolz, it was this reflective childhood experience that nurtured his lifelong dedication to conservation.

"When people work together to protect wilderness beauty and environmental quality, they accomplish much more than they would be able to if working alone." - Gordon A. Bubolz

"That which we do for ourselves dies with us. That which we do for others lives on."

- Gordon A. Bubolz