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Lest the Legends Die—Forestry at ISU from 1954 to 1979

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The pride and integrity of a tribe depends on a continual renewal of awareness of its historic foundation. Thus it becomes the duty of some ancient shaman to chant the old tales for the wide-eyed wonder of the young lest the legends die. G. B. MacDonald fulfilled this function for all Iowa State foresters in 1954 when the Golden Anniversary of the Forestry Department was celebrated. No one could possibly be better aware of its historic foundation.

With only an initial excursion into the first fifty years I will bend to the task of continuing the odyssey of Iowa State forestry from 1954 to this Jubilee Year of 1979.

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE BEGINNING

Excluding Dr. Schenck’s revolutionary but short-lived forestry school on the Biltmore Estate, the pioneering but soon extinguished College of Forestry at Cornell University and the Yale Forest School with its primary concentration on graduate study, we must wonder at the exact time when each of the present-day universities started teaching foresters (does one use conception or delivery as the time at which aging begins?), the following bench marks for Iowa State may help to establish our place among the pioneering forestry schools.

The Idea of Forestry

For those who have forgotten, or never knew, it seems appropriate to restate that our college was founded on March 22, 1858. The original 648 acres was bought for $5,379 in 1859 and admission was granted in 1868 to seventy men and women (making ours the first land grant college to be co-educational from the beginning).

The relative scarcity of timber in Iowa and the Great Plains is conceded to have been a factor in delaying settlement west of the Mississippi. Therefore, it should not surprise us that Section 1621 of the Code of Iowa for the Ninth General Assembly (1880), quoted in that year’s catalog for the State Agricultural College and Model Farm, stated, “State law requires that—the following branches shall be taught: Natural philosophy, chemistry, botany, horticulture, fruit growing, forestry, animal and vegetable anatomy, ---.”

In the same 1880 catalog under the heading of “College Grounds” is the statement, “These (properies) occupy the high land of the southwest part of the farm and include a large lawn, shrubbery plantations and young forestry plantations.” That tree establishment was considered important and the problem of forestation, vexing, can be supported further on page 47 of the 1880-1885 catalog. “During the second term the general principles of Forestry will be taken up. Fuller’s treatise will be used as a textbook so far as it is applicable to prairie conditions.”

To give history its due it must be pointed out that in a later catalog for 1897-1898 this statement appears, “In 1882 the General Assembly noted in Section I, ---that Section 1621 of the Code is hereby repealed and the following is entered in lieu thereof: There shall be adopted and taught in the State Agricultural College a broad, liberal and practical course of study in which the leading branches of learning shall relate to agriculture and the mechanic arts and which shall embrace, ---.” While forestry was excluded in this listing so were the other special courses originally identified.

Study of the early catalogs and Reports to the Governor emphasizes the close tie between horticulture and forestry as twin essentials to farm husbandry. “In the sophomore year (1880-81 Ninth Biennial Report to the Governor) forestry is first considered separately, the forest and ornamental trees are taken up, identified and their relative growth, uses, and propagation discussed. This is followed by lessons on climatic modification, identification, management and propagation of shrubs, perennials, bulbs, flowers, etc.”

By the same evidence we can visualize that forests were already high-graded in 1880 and although the
college farm manager might believe in
the importance of woodlands, he had
a hard time showing how to make
them pay. Observe. "So much of the
valuable timber has been removed
from woodlands that if they were
charged with their just proportion of
expenses there would be no balance to
to their credit, I therefore recommend
that the woodland account be in­
corporated with the general farm
account."

This same farm manager in the
next sentence made the typical
recommendation (and we can be sure
that he put it into effect) that has
steadily hastened the retreat of Iowa's
state area to its present 2%

"To add
to the available pasture, about 90
acres of woodland (the original farm
had 390 acres of woodland) has been
thinned and underbrushed, and the
work should be continued as rapidly
as practicable."

Hold Daddy's hand, it'll be over soon—
summer camp 1952.

The Founders

The support of the turn-of-the-cen­
tury botanist-horticulturists gave
impetus to separation of forestry
from horticulture in that early period
when Gifford Pinchot, Theodore
Roosevelt and "Tama Jim" Wilson
were striding across the horizon of
agriculture and conservation.
Foresters from Iowa State owe much
to Professors A. T. Erwin, S. A.
Beach, and B. S. Pickett who were
department heads of the two
curricula of Horticulture and
Forestry from 1904 to 1946. While
each of these administrators was a
horticulturist, each helped the new
profession of Forestry stand
essentially alone from that day on
July 14, 1904 when a salary of
$758.34 was recommended for one­
half the time of an Assistant
Professor of Forestry. On September
7, 1904 the "new course in Forestry
proposed by President Storms was
approved" and Hugh P. Baker of
Yale, with one-half of his salary paid
by the Bureau of Forestry so that he
might investigate "forestral condi­
tions" in Iowa, took over the
direction of the new curriculum of
Forestry.

After a long gestation, Forestry at
Iowa State College was born.

As the development of the curricu­
um, the Department of Forestry
faculty and departmental activities
has been well told in the 1954 Ames
Forester by Gilmour Byers Mac­
Donald, who saw it all from 1910 to
his death on October 13, 1960. It
seems necessary to reemphasize only
a few points that may be unclear.

Physical Plant

The physical location of forestry
instruction has been typically mobile.
From 1880–1892 Forestry was taught
in North Hall directly south of the
present Home Economics building.
In 1892 "Old" Botany Hall, then
denamed Agriculture Hall, was built for
$37,000 from Anamosa limestone
and local brick, and housed forestry
classes until the Horticultural
Laboratory (just torn down in this
year of 1978) was built in 1903. By
1909 Curtiss Hall was completed and
was the home of Forestry as a
department from 1910 to 1967. On
June 1, 1967 Forestry has established
itself on the second floor and the
south side of the basement of Bessey
Hall. Greenhouse facilities one block
east and south in the extraordinarily
fine units were first shared with the
Ames Branch of the USFS North
Central Experiment Station. The
greenhouses were then turned over
completely to Forestry when the
research unit was closed down in
1972.

Course Work

Relatively little has been recorded
of the rapid development of a
forestry curriculum and the courses
available once Professor Baker came
to the campus.

The earliest forestry work was a
general agriculture course called
"Farm Forestry" which was a
mixture of conventional horticulture,
and tree planting and pruning and
erosion control. In 1902 A. E. Erwin,
as Acting Head of Horticulture,
increased the course to three semester
credits. Hugh Baker increased the
forestry courses to four in 1905, and
by 1910 there were eight forestry
courses offered plus a Horticulture­
Forestry seminar with Farm Forestry
required of all agriculture students.
Because of Baker's half-time
assignment to investigate the forest
resources, it is interesting to see listed
four formal areas of forest research:
Tree Planting, Natural Timber
Growth, Erosion and Reclamation,
and Artificial Preservation of
Timber. By 1910–1911 the prerequi­
site for Forest Utilization was "one
season's work in a lumber camp."

The emphasis on Science with
Practice "for foresters was in the
tradition established at the time of
chartering the 'Model Farm'.""

With the arrival of G. B. Mac­
Donald from Nebraska by way of the
Forest Service, the number of courses
increased rapidly and were, for the
first time, identified as "Forestry"
rather than Horticulture-Forestry. In
the 1911–1912 catalog there were 19
forestry courses, including one called
Forest Research, as contrasted to 16
in horticulture. It was in the 1911
catalog that this statement appeared:
"During the last dozen years forestry
has advanced in this country from an
almost unknown science to a profes­
sion of wide usefulness. ---"the
Department has a collection of 600
lantern slides---also foreign woods
from the Louisiana Purchase Ex­
position.'"
In this same catalog it was directed that applied lumbering would be studied in a lumbering region during winter vacation. At this time, also, a thesis was required of each student.

The 1913–1914 catalog showed two faculty members, MacDonald and G. C. Morbeck, listed nineteen courses and mentioned Summer Forestry Camp for the first time. Camp was described as three months long and that it would come regularly after the Freshman year, although special permission could be obtained to attend after the Sophomore year. It was assumed that a Forester, with Camp, would complete his degree work in three and one-half years. Camp would include Silviculture, six semester credits; Lumbering, five; Mensuration, five; Utilization, two. The first Camp was planned for 1914 on Star Island at Cass Lake, Minnesota on the then-named Minnesota National Forest.

In the 1914–1915 catalog were listed 38 courses. A ten-week Camp was identified. Instructor Traux was added to make a three-member faculty, and the first mention was made of a Forestry Club and the Ames Forester. Utilization, but not Lumbering, was eliminated from Camp course work and total Camp credits was reduced to ten.

G. B. MacDonald’s article in the 1954 Ames Forester describes the Camp requirement and lists the curricular and faculty changes from 1904 to 1954. It is well worth rereading. Of passing interest it can be noted that Municipal Forestry was listed in the 1916–1917 catalog and escalated to an Area of Specialization in the following catalog. Current employment opportunities in 1979 are listed in the 1916–1917 catalog and mentioned.

Camp course work and total Camp credits was reduced to ten.


Forestry Camp

This summer of 1979 will see Iowa State’s sixty-third forestry camp come and go. Once started in 1914 only the war years of WW II have interrupted the steady steam of camps. In the last fifteen years, many forestry schools have abandoned their camp programs. The reasons for doing so have varied from “cost of maintaining the facility” to “reluctance of faculty members to be away from their research activities.” While we at Iowa State periodically evaluate the camp program we have never seriously considered abandoning this part of our curriculum. Costs have certainly increased out of proportion to the income potential of our graduates yet the chance to obtain an early focus on one’s profession and to have a sense of participating in professional forestry while still in college seems to make the camp requirement the least criticized part of the degree program.

Having personally spent so much of my own career with the camp program, I find that I date all events in relation to such-and-such a camp. The fact that we continue to “rove” to different locations each year is helpful in getting a mental fix on a period or a time. The respective camp directors are indicated by an asterisk (*).

1954—Tent camp on Mullison Park, Brushy Creek Ranger District of Medicine Bow N.F. G. W. Thomson, L. F. Kellogg, Dean Einspahr (½), Gordon Gatherum (½), G. B. Hareman (2 weeks).

Cook: Mable and Tennis Larson.


1975—University of Minnesota Camp at Cloquet, Minnesota. Wendell Beardsley,* Steven Jungst, Ole Helgerson, Dean Prestemon (½). Cook: Local.


An intensive search for camp sites has been recently initiated to uncover possible locations for the future. Eastern Oklahoma will probably prove to be the camp location in 1980 and 1981.

Faculty

Since 1960 the mobility of forestry faculty members has increased. A tendency toward shorter residency at a given university has been due to increased opportunities in university teaching, extension, research and administration brought about by expansion of university programs. This expansion has been in response to population growth, increase in financial support for forestry programs and a need for the younger faculty members to obtain recognition and promotion by moving.

It seems appropriate to document our faculty changes in the last twenty-five years to continue the roster recorded by G. B. MacDonald in 1954.


In the intervening years the following faculty members have come and gone.

1957 James Yoho (Resigned)
1957–1959 I. Irving Holland
1959 R. B. Campbell (Resigned)
Dr. Kellogg conducts a class in Silviculture at 1951 forestry summer camp.

1959–1962  C. J. Goebel
1959–1963  R. L. Ethington (Instructor)
1959–1963  R. R. Davidson (Extension)
1960–1966  C. H. Stoltenberg (Head)
1960  G. B. Hartman (Deceased)
1960  G. B. MacDonald (Deceased)
1961–1971  K. D. Ware
1963–1966  W. R. Bentley
1963–1964  John Duff (Instructor)
1963–1966  J. H. Gottsacker (Extension)
1965  L. F. Kellogg (Retired)
1965–present  D. R. Prestemon (Products Extension)
1965–1970  J. D. Wellons, III
1966–1967  DeWitt Nelson (Visiting Professor)
1966–1970  V. G. Smith (Instructor)
1966–1969  D. W. Smith (Extension)
1967–1975  H. H. Webster (Head)
1968–1971  DeWitt Nelson
1968–1975  John Meadows
1968–1972  A. E. Grafton (Extension)
1969  Gordon Gatherum (Resigned)
1969–1970  Joe McBride
1969–1976  D. R. Yoesting (Joint with Sociology)
1970–1971  G. F. Dykstra (Instructor)
1971–1977  W. G. Beardsley
1971–1973  D. L. Dickman
1971–1977  L. C. Promnitz
1972–1974  D. W. Rose
1973–1975  R. B. Heiligmann (Extension)
1974–present  R. B. Hall
1975–1976  K. T. Adair (Visiting Professor)
1975–present  D. W. Countryman
1975–present  S. E. Jungst
1975–present  Paul H. Wray
1975–1977  Ole Helgerson (Instructor)
1977  J. A. Larsen (Deceased)
1976–present  T. J. Born
1977–present  C. W. Mize
1978  D. W. Bensend (Retired)
1978–present  J. P. Colletti
1978–present  F. G. Manwiller
1979–  R. C. Schultz

High Points of the Third Quarter

In 1954 the Forest Products option was formally established so that forestry students might select a sub-curriculum in their Junior year to allow for more focused study on the utilization side of forestry. While never the choice of a large number of students, the guidance and encouragement of Dwight Bensend gave dozens of Iowa State foresters a direct entrance to private industry in plant management, research and development, and technical sales. Initially encouraged by George Hartman, whose professional interest lay with wood preservation, it was the efforts of Bensend aided by Robert Ethington, J. D. Wellons, and Extension Forester Prestemon that created so many excellent people in the wood products area. This effort, plus almost unending service to the Forest Products Research Society, earned Dwight Bensend the prestigious Gottschalk Award in 1977.

There is little doubt that the energetic leadership of Carol Stoltenberg and the passage in 1962 of the Cooperative Forestry Research Act, making McIntire-Stennis funds available, brought a new era of research emphasis to the Forestry Department. This emphasis in turn stimulated the development of an enlarged graduate program particularly at the doctoral level. In 1965, in addition to the existing graduate offering of a Master of Science degree, the Forestry Department was authorized to offer 1) the Master of Forestry degree for the emphasis of professional, as opposed to research, goals and 2) the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a single major in Forestry that could be offered solely within the department. Increased flexibility of offerings and increased support for research assistantships caused an immediate increase in graduate student enrollment. The Master of Forestry was subsequently dropped in 1973 when the non-thesis option for Master of Science students became available.

It was in 1967 that change in the undergraduate curriculum was brought about by the identification of several rather flexible minors within either Forest Management or the Forest Products options. While these minors were really little more than groups of selected electives, it allowed, and forced, each student to identify his or her own objectives and this did much to improve the attitude of the student and the ultimate level of competence.

In 1967 Bessey Hall, named for the Iowa State and Nebraska botanist of the late 19th century, was completed in time for Acting Department Head
Thomson to turn the department over to H. H. Webster on June 1.

Toward the end of the environmental concern decade of the 60's, it was common for colleges, many of which were woefully unqualified, to introduce courses on an entire curricula in Recreation. The College of Agriculture wished to attract students in this area so the Department of Forestry, assisted and encouraged by a large and diverse committee, was placed in charge of the curriculum of Outdoor Recreation. We were extremely fortunate to obtain an influential, supportive, and infinitely charming person with Tuskegee after Dwight retired in 1978. Seven young people so far have entered I.S.U. from Tuskegee.

A steadily increasing enrollment of young women in Outdoor Recreation then in Forestry (the proportion of females is now 28%) has been both startling and gratifying. Admitting to uncertainty as to curriculum development and career planning for the female forester, a symposium for women and men forestry students was held in October 1977. Young women foresters, already employed in the profession, were brought in to lead the discussions. The seminar carried the title “Women and Men Working Together—An Attempt at Understanding.” Women have been remarkably successful in gaining entrance to the profession although it is too early to determine their longevity within their organizations.

The greatest of changes in the last 25 years faces us now as the university abandons some 60 years of the quarter system to take up the increasingly common semester system. The transition, while difficult and not universally popular, will be made in the fall of 1981.

EPILOGUE AND PROLOGUE

No shaman worthy of the name could resist forecasting the future once the old stories had been told and it does seem appropriate to consider the probable directions that our department will follow in the last quarter of its century.

A few of the present forestry schools, possibly a half dozen, will become increasingly sophisticated and will be thought of as major centers of pioneering technology. Iowa State Forestry Department, because of its geographic location and the competition from predominantly agricultural interests, may not be one of these.

Nonetheless, this department can expect no lessening of its contribution to forestry in the nation and the world for the simple reason that its students have an unaffected work ethic that leads to a desire to produce. The excellence of the university in its biological, physical, quantitative, and managerial sciences of plant physiology, agronomy, biochemistry, statistics, computer science economics, industrial engineering, and administration will continue to make for top notch and sought-after forest scientists and managers. Couple the technical forestry education with these scientific support courses and a continually improving base of communication and humanities and it is difficult to imagine better preparation for a professional forester. Surely the diminishing forest base in Iowa and a national emphasis on commodity products forestry is a drawback but in a world where resources are becoming increasingly scarce the Iowa forester will be both sensitive and at home.

It is increasingly likely that more and more emphasis will be placed on continuing education and reeducation for foresters faced with expanding and complex technologies. The youth, vigor, and rigorous education of our faculty seems ideally suited to meet this growing demand.

With a reputation for excellence personified in almost 2,000 alumni at work in the profession it is impossible to imagine either failure or lessening of repute. The next 25 years will carry us into the 21st century in a continual pursuit of excellence.

William Clifford, an English mathematician of a century ago, may have said it best, "You cannot fail to see that scientific thought is not an accompaniment or condition of human progress, but human progress itself.” We have every intention of continuing the progress so grandly envisioned seventy-five years ago.