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V. C. Fisk

*Iowa State College*

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What Illinois is Doing In Forestry

By V. C. Fisk, '21

Few people of the Central or Prairie States, unless perhaps they have travelled through the southern part of the state know that Illinois has any forests or that any state department is at all concerning itself with forestry matters.

Before a man purchases a store he first calls for an invoice or inventory of stock, as he wishes to know the capability of the store as a producer of revenue. The stock or "growing stock" in a forest is made up of the trees and reproduction on the ground, the growth on this every year representing the interest on the investment in that forest property.

The work of invoicing Illinois woodlands, which according to the census reports for the year 1919 amount to over three million acres on farms alone, started on July 27, 1921. Three men all graduates of forestry schools were employed by the State Natural History Survey to do this work, under the supervision of R. B. Miller, the State Forester. The work first started in southern Illinois and at the present time about three-fifths of the entire state has been surveyed. At first the men traveled on foot or used livery rigs until October (1921) when a Ford was obtained. Three men work in a party, one driving the car, one mapping and the third takes the bumps of the back seat and makes whatever observations he can as to the classes of soil and species of trees in the region. The base maps used are the state topographic quadrangles whenever they are available and when they are not available the county rural delivery maps are used. In every county a detailed examination or estimate of timberland by the strip survey method or the sample area method, is made.

During the field season of 1921, from July 27 until December 15, this three man party, had gone over about 2,389,120 acres of land in eleven southern counties, finding 473,362 acres of this, or an average of 19.8% wooded. The estimated board foot contents for these eleven counties was about one-half billion board feet so that the average was something over 1200 board feet per acre. During the field season of 1922 every county north and west of the Illinois river was surveyed. The finishing up of maps from the field maps and the working up of the data on growth and volume and the plotting of curves of the various sorts is done in the office during the winter season.

Future work in Illinois will depend largely on appropriations from the State. The educational propaganda of the Illinois Forestry Association will also be of great aid in establishing a permanent forest policy for the State of Illinois.