



# Forest History Society, Inc.

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Oral History Interview

Herman H. Chapman

with

Elwood R. Maunder  
(10/10/??)

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Oct.

This is ~~SEP.~~ 10 and we're in the offices of the Forest History Society. This is a discussion between Elwood Maunder and Herman Chapman and his wife concerning the manuscript of "Making of a Forester" which Dr. Chapman has been writing.

MAUNDER: Now, you say you have something here with you that's your bibliography.

CHAPMAN: That's the bibliography and there's also some stuff in that envelope.

MAUNDER: Are these manuscripts or pictures or -

CHAPMAN: Pictures.

MAUNDER: Do you have any large number of pictures that you have to illustrate your book?

CHAPMAN: I wouldn't say there were a great number.

MAUNDER: Any photo albums. Any family photo albums. Anything of that kind. Yale pictures taken on field work and all that sort of thing. Pictures of your students.

MRS CHAPMAN: Isn't that a good one?

MAUNDER: That is a good one. Where was that taken. Down at Urania?

CHAPMAN: Yes.

MAUNDER: That's good. I hope you have more pictures of that kind that we can use for illustrating. Now, you have I think you told me the other day started exploring the possibilities of publishing the manuscript.

CHAPMAN: Yes.

MAUNDER: With a publisher in New Haven, is it? Boston.

CHAPMAN: Well there is a publisher in Boston that is a possibility, yes.

MAUNDER: He hasn't seen the manuscript.

CHAPMAN: Oh, yes.

MAUNDER: What publisher is that by the way?

CHAPMAN: It's the one that published Steve book on aerial photography. I'm trying to think of the name of it.

MAUNDER: Do they specialize in forestry books.?

CHAPMAN: Yes.

MAUNDER: Has there been any thought that this book would be privately published by you or how do you plan to go about publishing?

CHAPMAN: I couldn't finance it very well. The publisher would have to take the -

MAUNDER: Would have to take the risk. You've published books before of course yourself. And what publisher did you use in publishing them?

CHAPMAN: Well, J. B. Ryan and Co. handled my text books and McGraw Hill.

MAUNDER: Do you suppose that they would be at all interested in this?

CHAPMAN: They turned it down.

MAUNDER: When did they see the manuscript?

CHAPMAN: Oh, maybe 2 months ago.

MAUNDER: Was this McGraw Hill?

CHAPMAN: McGraw Hill, yes.

MAUNDER: What was there comment about the manuscript?

CHAPMAN: It wouldn't have enough of a sale to justify the risk.

That shows how much they know about it.

MAUNDER: Well, how much of a sale would you anticipate?

CHAPMAN: Well, it seems to me that ~~there~~ there would be a good deal of interest in the book because I'm about as well known as any forester in the country because of my text books and all the things I've done and been mixed up in about which ~~there~~ there would be a good deal of fairly curiosity. And I would have reason to anticipate a ~~very~~ good sale.

MAUNDER: By a ~~very~~ <sup>fairly</sup> good sale, how many copies do you think should be published in an edition?

CHAPMAN: I should think 500 and then hold at that and see how it goes.

MAUNDER: Well, probably why McGraw Hill was not interested was because

these publishers can't really make out on a ~~publishing~~ publication now, with the high cost of book publishing, unless they can get an edition of at least 4 or 5 thousand books. And there isn't that big a market for books of personal memoirs these days. That's just the trouble. Now you take for example the study we've just published on Greeley which was done by one of the staff members who was with us last year; we published only 2 thousand copies of that book. But, we figure it will be a good long time before we sell out all 2 thousand copies and a lot of those 2 thousand copies are actually being practically given away. They're not being sold. So, you must try to understand the publisher's point of view on this. It's not easy to make a go of a book venture these days unless you've got something that will sell in quantity. And foresters, by and large, are not big book buyers. They may be interested in a book but they will go to the library to get it rather than purchase it themselves. And when you have that kind of a market to deal with, it's not easy to make out on a book venture. Now several people who have written similar works, have gone into this thing on a private ~~press~~ publishing venture and sold the books themselves. But this is a risky business and one again in which I don't think there is any immediate prospect of retrieving any money that is invested in the project for quite some length of time. So it's ~~not anything~~ nothing I recommend to anybody to do if they hope to retrieve their cash in a hurry. In the first place a book of the length that you have here - now you have a manuscript of how many pages? It's over 500 pages or nearly 500 typewritten pages. That's going to be quite a substantial volume there as far as printing is concerned and I would guess that in order to make a go of it, it would have to be sold at a price of around \$7.50 to \$10. You see here, I've got a copy here of the book on Greeley that we've just put out and it's a relatively small book.

MRS CHAPMAN: Yes, we have one.

MAUNDER: That's \$3 just for that. See, this is just a little 67 pages of type. Three dollars. And that's actually priced at a lower figure than would be the case if it were done by a commercial publisher. Is there any possibility that the Yale University School of Forestry or the Yale University would be interested in sponsoring a volume of this kind because of your long association there.

CHAPMAN: I don't see much chance of that.

MAUNDER: Have you talked to anyone there about

CHAPMAN: No. I've had dealings with them before and wasn't very successful. About other things.

MAUNDER: Are they not interested in publishing books written by their own faculty people? It seems strange that they wouldn't be. The Univ. of Minnesota press is.

CHAPMAN: Well, it's hard for me to explain. I called their outfit and they've got a man in there I don't like.

MAUNDER: You mean head of the press.

CHAPMAN: Yes.

MAUNDER: What about the Forestry School itself, Dean Garrett.

CHAPMAN: I hardly think that they would venture into anything like that.

MAUNDER: What about some of your friends in the forestry industry. What about the people down in Urania and places like that. Would they have any interest do you suppose in subsidizing publication?

CHAPMAN: Well, so far they haven't manifested any tendency along that line. I tried to get them to publish it. A series of letters was written about Urania Camp. No they wouldn't do it.

MAUNDER: Are there any other friends that have the where with all who could do this if they wanted to, that might be approached.

CHAPMAN: I can't think of any such individual.

MAUNDER: Well, ~~there~~ they're so involved now in publishing their own company history and it's costing them quite a bit of money to do this

and I rather ~~x~~ doubt that they would right now. I was thinking more in terms of the people whose woodlands the U.S. had some ~~real~~ real hand in managing or working out management plans during the course of your career. That's what made me think of Urania.

MRS CHAPMAN: The Crossett people.

MAUNDER: That's right. What about the Crossett~~s~~ people?

CHAPMAN: Well, it would be quite a venture on their part to publish anything like that. I don't think they'd want to do it.

MAUNDER: Well, is their story part of what you've written here? It is isn't it.

CHAPMAN: YES.

MAUNDER: There's Crossetts, there's Urania. What other companies might possibly be interested besides Crossett and Urania?

CHAPMAN: Well, I wouldn't know of any.

MAUNDER: Are there any others that are mentioned in the text of the book? Any paper companies?

CHAPMAN: No.

MAUNDER: No. Have you submitted this manuscript or any part of the manuscript to Arthur Myer for his reading? In his journal. To get his impressions and ideas?

CHAPMAN: No.

MAUNDER: Have you thought of giving him excerpts ~~of~~ from it for publication in the Journal?

CHAPMAN: No. I haven't thought of doing anything like that.

MAUNDER: Have you thought of possibly publishing parts of it in the Yale School of Forestry?

CHAPMAN: There's too many other things that goes in there to clutter it up with this.

MAUNDER: Did McGraw Hill give you any idea as to how much it would cost to publish the book.

CHAPMAN: No, they didn't take the trouble to do that.

MAUNDER: Did they come to see you with the manuscript or did you send it to them in the mail?

CHAPMAN: I sent it in the mail.

MAUNDER: One of the things I think the manuscript needs and that is a certain amount of rewriting. This isn't because the writing is poor in any way but it does I think require a little organization of material that would help to make it more attractive to a publisher. And I have some suggestions to make in that regard that you might just like to note. I think for example, as you started off with a section or a chapter called "Ancestors" here, in which there is some good anecdote but it seems to me it needs filling out especially in certain stories. Like the story you tell of your grandfather and the wasps nest in the field. The reader is left wondering what actually happened to your grandfather. What did his employer do? Did he give your grandfather the sack, did he whale the tar ~~out~~ out of him for making fun of him and if so, was your grandfather propelled by this incident into seeking another way of making his living that brought him to Boston and into his brother's carriage factory. You don't make this clear. There's no end to the story. It's just a little episode that is cut off before you tie it in with the rest of what you're telling. Then there are little bits of anecdote that I think would be just as well left out. For example, the story of the Irish Terrier, Gyp. It may be some fond recollection to you as an individual because you remember the dog with affection, but as far as your ~~the~~ reader is concerned, it's a matter of rather small value and interest because we've all had experiences with dogs in our lives. And unless there's something specifically unusual about this dog and his relationship to the family and your grandfather, I doubt very much that it should be left in. Then there is the story you tell of your grandfather being on assignment to patrol

the streets of Boston to quell the boisterous students. And there is a man who shouts: Hi, to him in the street and your grandfather according to your telling the story promptly wacks him over the head with a billy club or something or other. In the telling of this, it seems to me, that this doesn't reflect well on your ~~grand~~ grandfather's good sense or his ability to keep the peace. Indeed, it would seem to the reader that he is a quarrelsome trouble maker rather than a peace maker. Neither do you get any <sup>intimation</sup> ~~intimation~~ from your telling of the story who his victim is. Obviously it must have been somebody who knew him or I thought he knew him and this story follows along very shortly after the one you tell of your grandfather's penchant to come home and tell his wife that he ~~was~~ saw Jim Lowell in the street and she quips him by saying: Did you see Longfellow too. And the reader is inclined to wonder was this poor chap who yelled hi at grandpa, possibly Jim Lovell or Jim Longfellow? If so, how do these anecdotes ~~tie~~ tie together in a framework, a pattern that reveals character which is what I believe you're trying to do in this chapter. You're trying to reveal something about the character of your ancestors as a prelude -

MRS CHAPMAN: I think those things did do exactly that. Whether it's complimentary or not, it's true.

MAUNDER: Well, it's only because I think they don't quite complete the story. They don't seem to quite get through to a conclusion. They seem to be leaving something that has <sup>get</sup> to be told in the reader's mind. These are familiar to you, you see. And because they are familiar stories that you've heard many times retold in family circles, they have a fullness about them that they don't necessarily when they appear in print here because they're not quite as well rounded in this book. Your ~~think~~ putting in information that's stored away in your memory that may not all be down here on the page you see. That's why I say that I think the relating of anecdote needs some real effort



at rewriting to make it a little more full, a little more cohesive.

MRS CHAPMAN: That adds to your manuscript.

MAUNDER: Yes it does, but maybe the manuscript needs to be cut too in other parts and these can be - there is, I don't think I have ever seen a ~~wanted~~ manuscript and, Dr. Chapman you have been an editor, you must know this too; there is very seldom a manuscript that goes across any editor's desk that isn't improved by editing and cutting. And you know that these things are probably good for any manuscript. This is particularly true of reminiscense. They can become long and rambling and sometimes cluttered up with a lot of detail and anecdote that may appear to be important to the writer but from the standpoint of the reader may be very extraneous and limited in its value. Now Grandfather Chapman emerges as a sort of character"who loved to fight, sometimes swung first and asked questions afterwards and sometimes kept his counsel until all who had spoken at the meeting had had their say and then delivered a wise evaluation of the problem." Yes the same man died with a reputation of being as you ~~showing~~ characterize him, an old war-horse. Now some of these things seem a bit in conflict with one another. Maybe he was complex in that way and maybe - but somehow or other these things don't quite fit together as a whole picture of a man and therefore the chapter is not quite convincing because he's one thing one time and another thing another. In one incident he's banging a man over the head in the street and in the next episode he sits back at a meeting and listens to everything that is said and then at the crucial moment comes forward with a wise patient understanding analysis of the problem that goes right to the heart of the matter. These don't seem like the same man. You see what I mean. Here, once he's banging somebody over the head in a very quick ~~a~~ action sort of thing, he's taking action right away. He's not waiting to enquire who the man is, what he wants or anything. In the next instance, he's ~~sitting~~ sitting

back, he's being the patient and thoughtful person. You see, there's a conflict here in the character analysis between the anecdotes and that makes for confusion to the reader. There is no mention, in this first chapter at least, of his relations with his wife and his children. Or if there is, there seems to be a little less than there might be. Grandfather as an island unto itself, his family is somehow or other there in the background but they're not real people, they don't seem to come forth as ~~real people~~ anything more than very faint shadows and this has a tendency I think to make him a little more unreal. I think you have to get a little bit more of the family into this thing. Now you, Herman, enter the picture of the story here on page 3 of the manuscript in an anecdote having to do with a Christmas party in the old Boston home. And the anecdote just trails off. It doesn't come to anything. It is just an incident in which there is some reference and indication of indigestion in the family which is not fully revealed and it leaves the reader wondering why you mentioned it at all. This doesn't tie up into a package at all.

MRS CHAPMAN: I agree with tying it in and I don't know what I'd do about Grandfather because I think he was a complex character.

MAUNDER: This is not meant to discourage some of these. It's just means to give them a little bit more roundness, a little bit more clarity than before. Sometimes it has to be reworked before you really get that complexity coming through in all of its many colors you see, in ~~work~~ writing. Now then let's see: I think your introduction ~~is~~ altogether, your personal history here, needs a deal of revision and I would suggest that you take up your introductory chapter and recast it and ~~have~~ have a go at rewriting it maybe three times. Good writing, good books, are labor of the worst kind. You can't just sit down and write it off the first time and that's the book, because very often the

first effort is not really all that you need to have. And I have a feeling it's unfortunate for this, that you have dictated this out. These are your recollections and this is it and you haven't really had a chance to go back over it and put a little bit more flesh on the bones of history, a little bit more flesh on the bones of the characters that you describe ~~in~~ here to really give a little dimension so that people who read this book will really understand who they are, what kind of people they were. I'd be interested in knowing a little bit more about the first chaplains who came over from England for example. Why did they come?