

UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE SILVICULTURIST:
THE RESEARCH CAREER OF EARL H. FROTHINGHAM

An Oral History Interview
By Elwood R. Maunder

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Earl H. (Andy) Frothingham was born in Manchester, Iowa on August 31, 1880. He attended Hyde Park High School in Chicago, Illinois and the University of Michigan. At Michigan, Frothingham received a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science in forestry. He was appointed to the Forest Service in 1906, with his first assignment in Nebraska, studying conditions of forest planting. Transferred to the Division of Silvics (of the Silviculture Department) in Washington late in the same year, he began by writing silvical leaflets and then bulletins on individual species of trees. During World War I, Frothingham was loaned to the War Department on a special assignment. After the war he continued in the Research Department (the new name for the section in which he had worked previously) until 1921 when he began as a silviculturist at the Appalachian Forest Experimentation Station in Asheville, North Carolina. From 1923 to 1935 Frothingham was the director of the station, and afterwards he was engaged there as a senior silviculturist in special studies. Frothingham had also been treasurer of the Society of American Foresters in 1921 and was on the society's executive council from 1924 to 1928. Frothingham retired in the early 1940s and moved to California where, during World War II he received a citation from the government for his work in an aircraft factory.

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BACKGROUND

ERM: I'm Elwood Maunder, director of the Forest History Society, which is at the Yale School of Forestry; I am with Mr. Andy Frothingham at his home in Long Beach, California on January the 23rd, 1968. I'm here to interview you briefly about this project that we are starting with the Forest Service and I want to get some basic information from your remembrance of the past which might help to guide us in planning our program of writing a history of the Forest Service. You're Earl H. Frothingham, but you go by the name of Andy, right? And you're a good friend of Jesse Buell.

EHF: That is correct.

ERM: Jesse told me that if anybody can tell about certain areas of Forest Service history, it's Andy Frothingham. So, here I am and I'd like to get from you as much information as you can give me about the history of the Forest Service when you were in it and your suggestions of other men who I might go to and ask the same type of questions as I'm going to ask you.

EHF: I'll be delighted to do what I can, but I'm afraid it'll be very little.

ERM: Whatever you can do will be much appreciated. We realize, of course, that you were very much concerned with the early work in research in the Forest Service. Where were you born?

EHF: In Manchester, Iowa on August 31, 1880.

ERM: And where did you go to school, Andy?

EHF: I went to school at Hyde Park High School in Chicago, then to the University of Michigan where I stayed six years and took an A.B. degree and an M.S. degree in forestry. I was appointed to the Forest Service in 1906.

ERM: When were you at Yale? Weren't you at Yale for a time?

EHF: Not for educational purposes. I had a job in New Haven, Connecticut making a study under Sam Spring that led to the publication of a bulletin on the second-growth hardwoods of Connecticut. And I had some Yale fellows under me.

ERM: Was this one of your first jobs with the Forest Service?

EHF: One of them. The first job was out in Nebraska in 1906.

FOREST SERVICE WORK

ERM: What was your first job with the Forest Service?

EHF: We were studying the conditions in Nebraska relative to forest planting; there had been no successful forest planting in the dune region there. And we were trying to find out how to make trees grow there. As the result of the work of one of the men of that party, Carl Bates, it was found possible to grow trees there. He found out where to put them and why they hadn't succeeded before. He did a very good job of research, and I don't think he was ever very well rewarded for it. When we came West, I came through Halsey where we were stationed to see if I could see what had happened. I was astonished. There was a regular forest of quite a number of different species and there were jackrabbits in there as big as-- I hate to say it--they looked like deer to me!

ERM: Who were the men you were associated with in that research back there in your early days besides Bates?

EHF: It was not research that I was in then. The men were: Bates, who was in charge of the research; MacDonald, who used to be a professor of forestry at Ames; and the rest I don't believe were known in forestry. Oh, Bill Mast was one and Scott was in charge of the whole work.

ERM: And what was Scott's first name, do you remember?

EHF: I should know, but I seem to have forgotten it.

ERM: Are any of the men who were associated with you in that work in Nebraska still living?

EHF: No, I don't think so. MacDonald and Bates are both dead and Mast is dead. I don't know about Scott. I think maybe he's still living.

ERM: Where did you go after the Nebraska assignment, back to the East?

EHF: I was transferred to the Forest Service in Washington in the fall of 1906.

ERM: What new work were you assigned to there?

EHF: I've forgotten what the name of the office was at the time, but it was under Raphael Zon, and he was under the direction of Clapp. It was the Office of Silvics, perhaps. I think that was it. I wrote leaflets which were called

silvical leaflets. They didn't bear the name of the author; they were descriptive of various species of trees. At that time, we didn't know very much about the species and it was my duty to write out these leaflets descriptive of various species of trees. I wrote a good many.

ERM: Did you keep a file of those leaflets that you wrote?

EHF: Yes, I did, but I don't know what ever happened to it.

ERM: Which species did you deal with in your leaflets?

EHF: Oh, a lot of them. But I can't tell you just which they were. I think it was rather unimportant. I then began writing bulletins on individual species and I remember what those were. I've got copies of those bulletins.

ERM: You have. Which were they?

EHF: Oh, there was one on white pine, one on eastern hemlock, one on the northern hardwoods--that was the best I wrote, I think--and several others, ending up with one on timber growing and logging practice in the Southern Appalachian region.¹ I traveled in quite a number of regions at that time. I wrote one on the status and value of farm woodlots.

ERM: Did these all bear your name? (They gave you credit for writing these?)

EHF: Yes.

ERM: This necessitated your traveling around quite a bit, didn't it?

EHF: Yes.

ERM: But you were still headquartered in Washington and then you'd go out on field trips?

EHF: Right.

ERM: And then you'd come back in and you'd write a bulletin.

EHF: Come back in the winter and work out the data that we'd obtained and write a story about it.

¹For an article by Frothingham on the Southern Appalachian region see: Earl H. Frothingham, "Ecology and Silviculture in the Southern Appalachians: Old Cuttings as a Guide to Future Practice," Journal of Forestry, 15, no. 3 (March 1917): 343-349.

ERM: Who were some of the other men who were doing the same kind of work?

EHF: Benton MacKaye was one, you know him?

ERM: Yes. He's still living up in New England, I believe, isn't he?

EHF: I suppose so; Clinton. No, not Clinton either. Who else? I just can't think of the names; they don't come to my mind very easily. But there were a number of us who wrote bulletins. One was William Dent Sterrick, who is now living in Clearwater, Florida.

ERM: Right. He'd be a good man to interview, probably.

EHF: He would be a fine man to interview. He's a splendid fellow.

ERM: Benton MacKaye would be another.

EHF: He'd take a dim view of me, I think.

ERM: He would, why?

EHF: Well, because I was rather undisciplined and rather of a jovial disposition and I wasn't quite as serious-minded as I should have been. He was very serious-minded, although I think he'd hate to have me say that. He was a very fine man. I was very fortunate to be able to work with him. There was another man in the Forest Service, who was Bristol Adams. He was in the editors' part of the Forest Service. He would review the bulletins that we prepared.

ERM: What was the procedure that you followed in doing your research and then writing and editing and finally publishing these bulletins? Could you tell me how you went about it?

EHF: Well, the subject was assigned to me by the chief of the office, Zon, with Clapp's authority. I was authorized to make the trip. I prepared a plan of some kind and submitted it, and when that was approved I was authorized to get assistants.

ERM: How many assistants did you usually have?

EHF: Oh, two or three.

ERM: And they would go with you?

EHF: Yes.

ERM: And you would then go out in the field and stay for how long doing your research?

EHF: All summer. One of the things that I remember doing specifically was stem analysis work. I don't think it's done any more. We measured the rings, decades on stumps of trees that had been cut--as many as we could find of the number of different species in New England; birch, yellow birch, sugar maple, beach hemlock. We worked in the Lake States too.

ERM: You used to keep, then, field journals or field notebooks in which you would record your data.

EHF: Yes.

ERM: And you would bring it back in with you at the end of the summer and settle down and do your writing.

EHF: And turn it in to the mensuration department of the Forest Service. They would work out volume tables and such. In Connecticut in 1910 I was the head of two parties and they worked much in the same way. One party was in the east of the state, and the other party was in the west. I was directing both parties.

ERM: What were they doing exactly? Can you tell me what their assignments were?

EHF: They were establishing temporary sample plots in second growth hardwoods in Connecticut which at that time was mostly chestnut. And it was wonderful the amount of chestnut there was there; the disease had not got in at that time. It was just starting in the western part of Connecticut. It gave us a wonderful opportunity to study a species which disappeared entirely immediately after the work was done.

ERM: Is that right?

EHF: Yes, it was terrible.

ERM: Did you see the demise of the chestnut coming on? Did you fear that it would be wiped out?

EHF: No.

ERM: You had no inkling that this was going to happen.

EHF: No, I had no idea that it would. We didn't hear about the disease very much until the close of our work.

ERM: Had you seen lots of evidence of the disease?

EHF: Yes, later, and down in the southern Appalachians it was terrible. It spread

down there and the trees were all dead. It was awful.²

ERM: Tell me a little bit more about the way in which you organized your parties and did your work--some of the details that you recall of how you organized your program. How did you get your men together and assigned to their work? Where did you go to get men?

EHF: In the case of this study that I've just mentioned, it was easy because I was working with Sam Spring and he helped me get four men from the graduating class, I think it was, at Yale. And they were fine.

ERM: Do you remember who those men were?

EHF: I think I could name them, though I don't remember as well as I used to. One was Jeffers--I've forgotten his first name; another was Hank Mousch, who later was a supervisor in the Forest Service; and--oh, I'm sorry. If I'd only thought, I could have got these out of my diary.

ERM: You do have diaries? And do you have them still?

EHF: Yes.

ERM: For how long did you keep them?

EHF: Oh I suppose twelve or fifteen years, something like that.

ERM: Do you know that we are making a collection of such diaries at Yale?

EHF: Are you really.

ERM: Yes, and we would be very, very pleased if you would someday assign them to us so that they could be preserved there in our Forest History collection.

EHF: Yes, I can do that. I know where you're located; Marsh Hall. I once gave a talk there at the dedication ceremonies. I was selected to talk on forest research.³

ERM: That was quite a few years ago.

EHF: Yeah.

² See: Earl H. Frothingham, "Some Silvicultural Aspects of the Chestnut Blight Situation," Journal of Forestry, 22, no. 8 (December 1924): 861-872.

³ For the speech given at the dedication see: Earl H. Frothingham, "Forest Research," Journal of Forestry, 22, no. 4 (April 1924): 343-352.

ERM: Tell me a little bit more about these surveys that you made in Connecticut back about 1910.

EHF: That was just one survey under Sam Spring, and it resulted in the publication, "Second Growth Hardwoods in Connecticut."

ERM: This was a work that you spent one whole summer at and which you wrote in Washington in the fall and winter?

EHF: That's correct.

ERM: After you had written up your bulletin, who reviewed what you had written?

EHF: Well, Sam Spring, for one; he was the man who employed me, of course. It was a cooperative job between the Forest Service and the Connecticut Forest Service.

ERM: And who else did the reviewing? Who reviewed it in the Forest Service? Who was the editor?

EHF: I think it was Findley Burns.

ERM: Was it checked out at all by your superiors, such as Zon and Clapp?

EHF: Yes.

ERM: They would have read it, too, before it was put into print.

EHF: Yes. They were jointly responsible for it. It was edited by Burns and Treadwell Cleveland, another person in Burns' office who helped.

ERM: How widely were these bulletins distributed then?

EHF: They were, I suppose, distributed the same as all other Forest Service bulletins. Of course, all the forest schools got them--there weren't so many then. And they were distributed to people who worked in the government.

ERM: Those interested in the species or in the problem or in the area that you dealt with might write into the Forest Service and get them, then.

EHF: That's correct.

ERM: Where did you go from there in your work in the Forest Service? What was the next step in your career?

EHF: That was in 1910 and from then on I made studies of species--getting analyses during the summer and having them worked up in tables. One was white pine and another was eastern hemlock.

ERM: Did you do your white pine study in the eastern states?

EHF: Yes.

ERM: You didn't go out to the Lake States.

EHF: Yes, we made some studies in the Lake States. I think on the Menominee Indian reservation in Wisconsin and elsewhere.

ERM: Did you go out to the white pine area of Idaho?

EHF: No, that's western pine.

ERM: After you had completed this series on the species, where were you then? Did you move on to another job then?

EHF: Yes. Those were finished in 1915 and 1916. I made a study of height growth as an index of site. It was suggested by work that Professor Filibert Roth had done. He suggested that height was a very good method of determining the quality of forest sites. We changed that just a little bit by making it height growth rather than height.⁴

ERM: Had you known Filibert Roth when you were a student?

EHF: I studied under Filibert Roth.

ERM: Can you tell me anything about him? What sort of man was he?

EHF: Oh he was an awfully fine man. I have his picture in here, he's the man who's bearded, a German. He talked with a slight accent. In the beginning of the First World War he said, "Certainly I'm a German. I'm a hyphenated American," and he was quite proud of that. It made him very unpopular among certain people. He was patriotic but he was also a German and he wanted it to be understood that that was the case. In college I worked on several surveys for the state of Michigan.

ERM: Did he help you get those jobs?

EHF: Yeah, he wished them on me.

ERM: Tell me a little bit more about the work you went on to do in the Forest Service

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For articles by Frothingham on height growth see: Earl H. Frothingham, "Height Growth as a Key to Site," Journal of Forestry, 16, no. 7 (November 1918): 754-760, and Earl H. Frothingham, "Classifying Forest Sites by Height Growth," Journal of Forestry, 19, no. 4 (April 1921): 374-381.

during World War I.

EHF: In World War I I tried to go to Plattsburg, but I was stymied. Mr. Graves wrote me not to try to do it because if I did, I would probably get into the same work that I was doing at a lower salary and just not be able to do anything but that work--he wasn't able to control that. I was loaned to the War Department. We made a census of the production of mills--chiefly of elm, rock elm, and one or two other species. We used them for airplanes because at that time wood was the chief construction material for planes--spruce and rock elm.

ERM: Where did you make your studies?

EHF: Wisconsin, largely. Also in Minnesota and upper Michigan.

ERM: Were you in any way connected with the Forest Products Laboratory?

EHF: No, except that I visited there and became acquainted with some of the men there.

ERM: But you were doing your own independent research.

EHF: Yes.

ERM: And did that produce any published bulletins or articles?

EHF: Bulletins, yes, and journal articles in some technical magazines.

ERM: You've been the author of a good many of those.

EHF: A little over forty.

ERM: In other words, they kept you busy writing.

EHF: Yes. I would go out in the summer and get information and come back in the winter and write it up.

ACQUAINTANCES WITH FOREST SERVICE MEN

ERM: How closely acquainted were you with Colonel Henry Solon Graves?

EHF: I knew him personally quite well, He was the head of the Forest Service and I knew and liked him very much.

- ERM: Can you tell me a little bit about him as a man? What sort of a person was he, apart from the fact that he was a good friend and a good man in your estimation?
- EHF: He was a man of a good deal of personal power, administrative power. He led the Forest Service very well. Of course, Pinchot had preceded him and Pinchot was a wonderful man.
- ERM: Did you know Pinchot?
- EHF: Very well.
- ERM: How did you come to know Pinchot?
- EHF: Being in the headquarters office and being at the Baked Apple Club meetings at his home.
- ERM: Can you tell me any stories about Gifford Pinchot as you remember him?
- EHF: I was working in the woods with him and my acquaintance was very limited. I remember visiting him one time at his home. You know, he was an exponent of government control of forest management. And I didn't agree with him.
- ERM: You didn't agree?
- EHF: And I remember expressing my views rather forcibly at his home, and afterwards I was quite sorry about it because it seemed rather impertinent on my part. I was a mere whippersnapper of a young forester and I was making my views known a little bit too liberally.
- ERM: What was his reaction?
- EHF: Extremely good. He was a gentleman throughout. Mr. Pinchot was wonderful.
- ERM: And did you have other occasions on which you expressed yourself on the same subject?
- EHF: No. I don't remember that I did.
- ERM: Can you tell me anything else in the way of stories that you recall about Pinchot that ought to be interesting to people who are coming on now in the Forest Service?
- EHF: I don't remember anything in particular.
- ERM: How did Mr. Pinchot deal with the members of the Forest Service staff on a day to day basis?
- EHF: I think very well. I think he was very well liked. His administration was

clean, and it was rather unique in the government. The Forest Service was known to be a very clean and non-political organization at that time. I hope it still is, but I don't know.

ERM: How did he actually deal with his men from day to day? Was he close to them or was he reserved?

EHF: He was pretty close to them. He was very friendly. I remember one story that was told of him; I am thinking of that one of the old messenger, or someone of that kind, who was well known in the Forest Service and well liked. His wife was sick and I believe that she died, but Pinchot once spent all night with him. I think the messenger was an Italian. I've forgotten his name now. Pinchot was very much that way. He would do a lot for his individual helpers.

ERM: He was concerned about the people who worked for him, then?

EHF: Yes, that's right.

ERM: Can you cite any other evidences of that?

EHF: No, I don't recall any others. One of the men he had was interested in his contention with Ballinger and that was very interesting to me. My wife and I used to go to the Pinchot-Ballinger trials.

ERM: Yes. Do you remember those vividly?

EHF: Not very vividly. I simply know that we were very much interested in the trials and took sides with Pinchot, of course, and liked his attorneys very much.

ERM: Did you ever go with Gifford Pinchot at all on field trips?

EHF: No. You see, I was not a Yale man and I think that he did go out, maybe, with some of the Yale people and the people at summer school at Milford, Pennsylvania. But I was not in that group.

ERM: Did you feel there was any special favoritism shown to Yale graduates in the Forest Service?

EHF: Not in the least. No indeed. The administration of the Forest Service was very clean.

ERM: Everyone was judged on his own merit.

EHF: Yes, I think that was true.

ERM: You were associated, of course, with a lot of other men who have since

become very famous in the field.

EHF: Yes.

ERM: Raphael Zon was one. Tell us a little bit about Zon. What kind of a person was Zon? Tell us a story or two about your experiences with him that will help us to understand him better.

EHF: Oh, I had so many stories about Zon. I remember writing a verse about Zon and being so excited for fear he'd find out about it. And when he did find out about it, he said, "Andy, that is the best thing you ever wrote!"

ERM: He got back at you, then, huh?

EHF: He and--why can't I think of names quickly?--the one who lives up in Connecticut now at the head of the Appalachian Trail. You know him. But they'd been great friends and both of them were radically minded. Zon said to him one day, "Benton (Benton MacKaye), I will tell you something for your own good. You are no good!"

ERM: And what did MacKaye say? What response did he offer?

EHF: He came back with a very good reply, but I've forgotten what it was, I'm sorry to say.

ERM: But they were good friends nonetheless?

EHF: Oh yes, they were very good friends. It was hard not to be a friend of Benton.

ERM: When you say that Zon was a radical and that MacKaye was a radical, would you describe how you classified them as radicals?

EHF: Well, they were not communists, as I recall it, by they were fellow travelers, I think you would call them. A lot of us were. A lot of us, I remember, were pretty radical in our minds at that time, and we were opposed to going into the war at one time. Later we changed our minds; I changed my mind completely.

ERM: You did.

EHF: Oh yes.

ERM: But were most of the radicals in the Forest Service against the war?

EHF: I wouldn't say so, not most of them. Some of them were opposed to entering the war.

ERM: Who were those who were opposed to going into the war? Do you remember?

EHF: No, I wouldn't want to say. It's a long time ago and I wouldn't say that I knew too well about it.

ERM: Did you have strong discussions amongst yourselves on the subject?

EHF: I remember at the meetings of the Society of American Foresters there was quite a good deal of discussion as for the propriety of the United States going into the war, and I remember Zon one night got up and talked very bitterly against it and Arthur Ringland made a remark about Zon and Zon said, "Ringland, what do you think I am, a mollycoddle?"

ERM: Did the members of the society speak more forcefully and vigorously at each other in those days than they do now, do you think?

EHF: They were pretty vigorous.

ERM: What did you see as being wrong with our involvement in the war?

EHF: Lord I don't know. I don't know what it was.

ERM: Why was Zon opposed to it?

EHF: I think we were influenced by each other. But we changed very quickly; I think my opinion was changed chiefly by William B. Greeley; a wonderful forester; a wonderful chief of the forest service.

ERM: And he was strongly in favor of our involvement in the war.

EHF: Well, not too strongly, but he was not an opponent of going in.

ERM: How well did you know Bill Greeley?

EHF: Very well. I knew him personally. I played chess with him and was beaten every time. And I knew Mrs. Greeley very well; my wife and I had meals with them, they had meals with us. We were very friendly.

ERM: This was after he became chief.

EHF: Yes.

ERM: How well did you know Henry Solon Graves in comparison?

EHF: Not as well as I knew Greeley, but quite well.

ERM: Were they very different?

EHF: Graves was a little stiff, more stiff in his approach than Greeley, but a very likeable man. I liked him very much.

ERM: Likeable in what ways?

EHF: I don't know how to describe it; he was personable, friendly.

ERM: But he was still more formal.

EHF: A little more formal than Greeley, yes. It seemed to me that he was. I may be wrong.

ERM: How close was it you worked with Bill Greeley?

EHF: He was so far above me; he was head forester and I was a very junior forester at the time, so that I couldn't say that I was very close to him.

ERM: Tell me a little bit about Earle Clapp. You were close to him, of course.

EHF: Very.

ERM: What sort of person was Earle Clapp?

EHF: He was not a very warm person, as I remember, but he took strong stands. I liked him very much, but I didn't agree with him. He was very strongly in favor of Pinchot's attitude toward control of private logging, government control. I had to write a bulletin on that general subject--timber growing and logging practice in the southern Appalachians. It was one of a series-- Sam Dana wrote one of those and there were a number of others in that series of bulletins on that subject.

ERM: What provoked you to take a position opposite to that of Pinchot and Zon and Clapp? What had caused you to view the situation differently than they?

EHF: I felt that it was in opposition to the American way of doing things. It looked to me as though it was taking a stand that I couldn't personally favor; controlling the development of industries--it hadn't been done before and I didn't think it was American.

ERM: I wondered whether your position in this controversy over regulation or non-regulation; was this a result of your own background and family training, or education?

EHF: Yes it was.

ERM: What was your own family background?

EHF: Well, father was a minister, a staunch Republican and took a conventional view of things. I was more or less brought up that way.

ERM: In what denomination?

EHF: Presbyterian.

ERM: I see; and in the Middle West?

EHF: Yes.

ERM: Had the family been living in the Middle West for many generations?

EHF: No, not many generations. It's an eastern family. Father's great-uncle was Washington Irving, and so he was quite interested in Irving and gave lectures on this subject.

ERM: I see. So you came out of a very conservative political background.

EHF: That's right. But I did get dragged over there, too, a little bit when it was a case of going into the war. I didn't believe in it at first.

ERM: You took a pacifist position--were you a part on the pacifist side?

EHF: I don't think I was. I wouldn't have let myself at that time.

ERM: But you were against our getting involved in the war.

EHF: At first, yes.

ERM: How did you get along with some of these fellows you were working with in the office who were strongly socialist in their inclinations?

EHF: Well, Benton MacKaye was one; he was one of my associates on the field work.

ERM: How did you get along with him on these matters of policy?

EHF: I got along fine with him.

ERM: Yeah. But you didn't agree with him on lots of things.

EHF: No, not in a great deal, no. And I didn't disagree either very much because I stood off and was an observer rather than anything else.

ERM: You didn't enter into any strong debate.

EHF: No.

ERM: Apart from this one occasion when you sounded off to Mr. Pinchot.

EHF: Yes, for which I was very sorry afterwards.

EHF: At the time I was working on woodlots, farm woodlots, which are small, and I felt that that was more important than the thing he was going to get across which was control of the management of the private lands.

ERM: Do you think there was any justification for the program of Pinchot and some of his lieutenants?

EHF: Yes, I think there was some justification. I think the attitude of a great many of the private operators was antagonistic to the best interests of the country.

ERM: Can you remember any specific instances of this that you saw in your own field examinations?

EHF: Yes.

ERM: Where?

EHF: In the Lake States. There was so much carelessness, lack of interest in the future, in the well-being of forest lands after logging was finished. They almost invariably had forest fires that were very destructive.

ERM: Was this true of all of the operators there, or just some of them?

EHF: All of them. All that I knew about.

ERM: Would that have included the Weyerhaeusers, too?

EHF: I don't remember anything about the Weyerhaeusers. I knew Fred, but I didn't know very much about their work.

ERM: When you say you knew Fred, which Fred was that? Frederick the old-- the original?

EHF: Yes, one of the old Weyerhaeusers, and I didn't know him very well, but I travelled from Chicago with him up to his headquarters in Minnesota and had quite a talk with him on the way.

ERM: This would have been about what year? Nineteen what?

EHF: Perhaps I should say '13 to '14.

ERM: That would have probably been Mr. F.E. Weyerhaeuser.

EHF: He was a young man.

- ERM: He was the second generation; he was the son of the original Frederick Weyerhaeuser.
- EHF: I think so.
- ERM: And, do you remember what you talked about and what you did on the trip?
- EHF: No, no. No, I can't recall. I was a very minor forester at the time.
- ERM: Were there any lumber people at that time who were showing an interest in forestry at all?
- EHF: Not very many; there were very few. I know there were some, but not a great many.
- ERM: What about Mr. Goodman over in Wisconsin?
- EHF: He was quite favorable. He was a conservationist.
- ERM: Did you know him?
- EHF: No.
- ERM: You knew of his work, though.
- EHF: Yes. I knew of him, but I didn't know him personally.

STORIES OF FROTHINGHAM'S EARLY FOREST SERVICE DAYS

- ERM: What do you recall about the early days of the Forest Service experience you had that you could tell me about in the way of stories other than what you've already said? Do you have any favorite stories you like to tell about your early days in the Forest Service?
- EHF: No, I don't believe I have anything that would be of interest. I was not a very powerful member of it, you know.
- ERM: You were not a powerful member, but you were a keen observer.
- EHF: I observed as we went along.

ERM: And as a good observer, you must have had some recollections and stories that you told of your experience.

EHF: Yes, I remember we had a good many experiences, but I've forgotten just what they were. I know that at the time of the war, a number of interesting things came about. For instance, it was felt that there might be an attack made on the Forest Service, among other things, and efforts were actually made to head off the effects of such an attack. For instance, they set up a gong in the Forest Service which was not to be rung except in case of an attack. There were other gongs--they had another gong but this one was a special one. I never heard it rung. But it was put up on the wall and a number of us were told to report for defense purposes at the sound of that gong. (See Appendix A for the complete story.) We were to report to Bobby Reynolds. Did you ever hear of him?

ERM: No.

EHF: He was on the Forest Service rifle team. He was the head of it and was a very enthusiastic rifleman. And he was put in charge of the distribution of firearms and when we heard that gong, we were supposed to report for him on the seventh floor of the old Atlantic Building, and we were to be served out arms and we were to have certain positions. I was on the landing between the sixth and seventh floors in the Atlantic Building. I can remember that, and I was not to allow anybody to go up or down.

ERM: Where was the attack going to come from?

EHF: We didn't know; nobody knew anything about it. It was just a possibility, and it was being prepared for, and believe me it was earnest, too.

ERM: You mean an invasion?

EHF: It was in earnest. I don't know how much danger there was.

ERM: Who did they think was going to attack them? The Germans?

EHF: I don't know if it was communists or not, but I suspect it was communists.

ERM: They thought the communists were going to try to take over the Forest Service.

EHF: That's what I felt.

ERM: Is that right? Who initiated this plan?

EHF: I've forgotten who was at the head of the Forest Service at the time; it was at the beginning of the First World War.

ERM: That would have been Graves.

EHF: It may have been Graves, then, who initiated it.

ERM: So you were ready at the sound of the gong to turn out and protect the Forest Service.

EHF: That's right. I've got it written up somewhere. Do you want me to look for it?

ERM: Yes, that would be interesting.

EHF: I think I wrote it up at the request of Richard McArdle, as head of the Forest Service.

ERM: Did you write anything very substantial about your recollections back when McArdle asked you to?

EHF: Just a couple of pages--just a couple of short articles. He wanted them for his files as a matter of record.

ERM: Do you remember what subjects you wrote on apart from this defense team?

EHF: I've forgotten. I could tell you in a minute; I can look them up.

ERM: Do you keep files of all this stuff?

EHF: I've got files of that. I was of the right-minded disposition. I can't think of words well enough, but I've not been of a serious temperament and I used to keep things that were not serious.

ERM: Did you keep any of your old letters?

EHF: Yes. I have some old letters, but I'm going to throw them away. They're not worth keeping.

ERM: Oh, don't do that. We have lots and lots of old letter collections down at Yale. We find them very interesting and very helpful, because sometimes they tell us little details about the story that we like to know.

EHF: I don't think you'd find mine to be the least use at all.

ERM: Well, what kinds of letters would they be?

EHF: Personal letters.

ERM: To whom

EHF: To Zon and others.

ERM: Oh, they would be terribly interesting.

EHF: I remember I gave a paper one time that Zon didn't agree with at all and I have his letter of criticism.

ERM: Oh, now that would be very, very valuable. Don't throw things like that away. That is just exactly the kind of thing that we would like to have you send us at Yale. We'd consider this really a great gift on your part if you would make that to us, because letters of that kind just are very rare. They give the lighter side, sometime, of the Forest Service that we miss in our literature that we have, so don't throw that away.

EHF: I'll look them up. See what I can find; I didn't keep very many personal letters.

ERM: Did you have any family letters that you kept over the years? I have all of Harris Collingwood's letters, for example. All his personal letters to his wife.

EHF: Well that's something else, that's fine--he was a real writer.

ERM: He was; a very good writer, and I would imagine you were a good writer. After all, you made your way mainly as a writer in the Forest Service.

EHF: Probably that's the only reason I got into the Forest Service.

ERM: This is the story of your rifle team, is that right? (See Appendix B for the full text of the story.)

EHF: That's right. We were handicapped by a couple of men being absent, so this young chap--he once, when he was a child, used a .22 rifle--but was not much of a shot with it--said he'd be glad to become a member of the team if it'd do any good. Well we didn't have anybody else to get so he was taken on. I was not there; I was away. So, this chap practiced up with his mother. She would hold the target and he would snap practice it--snap the unloaded rifle. And he was so interested that he got himself a Krag-Jorgensen rifle and went into the contest. He was the high man of all the people that contested, and he was so good that the Forest Service won the contest.

ERM: Well, that's a real story.

EHF: Those are real things, they're not fairy stories.

ERM: Has it ever been published?

EHF: No. It was just put on file in the Forest Service.

ERM: I see. This is where the rifle team was on alert to stand guard during the time of World War I.

EHF: Yes, that's right. That's the time of the silver gong.

ERM: It's a rather interesting thing to do to try to retrace some of the early history of the Forest Service.

EHF: Without any rehearsal it is, because with a little effort, you can recall things that you may find difficult to ad lib.

ERM: The Forest Service, is now getting to be nearly seventy-five years old, and it's beginning to be more aware of the fact that it has a history and that history ought to be collected and preserved. And this could only be done if somebody takes the initiative and goes out in an active kind of way to collect it. You may not think your personal papers are very valuable, but they may contain some things that would help to put the picture back together again.

EHF: I have had a couple of letters from German foresters that I would like to have been able to keep, but I can't find them.

ERM: How did you happen to know these German foresters?

EHF: I didn't know them, but I wrote a bulletin on Douglas-fir and separated two varieties--wrote about the Rocky Mountain and the Coastal forms of Douglas-fir, and it seemed that they had been interested in that, too. The head of a German botanical organization, when he saw my bulletin on Douglas-fir requested to translate it and we gave him permission to do it. After that, another German forester wrote and said that I was full of hot crickets, that I didn't know what I was talking about. He said that the Douglas-fir that I thought was frostbitten, in the bottom of a canyon, was tinder. He said that what was wrong with it was an attack of an insect. But I knew that he was wrong. I had those two letters and I was awfully anxious to keep them; one from the head of a botanical organization and the other from this other chap. I can't find either one of them. If I could find them, you'd be welcome to them. The letters had been quite interesting because they were high-class German foresters who were at the head of the profession.

ERM: Did they write to you in German?

EHF: Yes. And they translated my article into German, too.

ERM: Do you have a forestry library?

EHF: No. But I have a few of the things that I've been specially interested in, and my own bulletins and a copy of that translation.

INCIDENT OF THE SILVER GONG

by
Andy Frothingham

January 12, 1955

The incident here described is an episode in the history of the old Atlantic Building, 930 F Street NW, Washington, D.C., which was, thirteen years earlier, the birthplace of the Forest Service. It was, or is, if it still stands, a rather narrow-fronted red brick building of eight stories, and it was the working center of as dedicated a group of public servants as has ever, I am convinced, been brought together in the history of this or any other country. If one were searching for internal subversion or for danger of external overt action from anything more ill-omened than the Salvation Army, his search would certainly have been sterile, or so it seemed to me.

It was in the early spring of 1918, and trouble was in the air. One evidence of it was an awkward squad of Forest Service personnel, training after office hours in the alley back of the Atlantic Building. The drill sergeant, incidentally, was William B. Greeley.

About this strange affair of the Silver Gong, all I know are the bare facts, and probably not all of them. All the background of occult knowledge was denied me. There must, however, be a few surviving better-informed old-timers who knew at the time and who must still remember what it was all about: the dark hinterland, the stark, underlying incentive, the implicit urgency, the ominous forces inexorably moving toward a fearful conclusion; information strictly classified, known only to a tried and dependable few. I can only report what happened - or better, what didn't happen.

Here is the picture: On the east wall of a seventh floor corridor of the Atlantic Building, back of the stair well and passably concealed from the view of the uninitiate, there appeared one morning a bright silvery gong. One evening it wasn't there; next morning, there it was, like the face of the Sphinx, silent, answering no questions. If there were those who observed it and who felt an unexplained quiver of fear, certainly there were none who recognized it as the dormant voice of doom; none, that is, other than the apprehensive elect who put it there.

At that time there was a Forest Service rifle team of maybe a dozen more or less trigger-happy personnel. Under the able direction of the late "Bobby" Reynolds, an accomplished marksman and a delightful companion, this group, or such of them as were in town at the moment, engaged in small-arms practice in a near-by basement and occasionally went down the Potomac for target practice with Springfield rifles and Krag carbines on the Army range at Indian Head; but that's another story. What mattered was that the rifle team was available; and what more logical than that it should be drawn into the purlieus of the Silver Gong?

At any rate, a directive went out, under injunctions of utmost secrecy, from Reynolds' office to members of the rifle team, to stand in readiness and to act without a second's delay upon the first summons of the Silver Gong. The action required was to report instantly at Reynolds' office, where arms and ammunition would be served out. The individuals would thereupon take up positions previously assigned. All points of ingress and egress to and from the building were to be covered, and quickly. No one was to be allowed to pass.

What's more, passage from place to place within the building was to be denied to anyone, regardless of rank, sex, or physique. Guards were to take position at each fire-escape exit; nobody was to be allowed to ascend or descend. My own assigned position was on the stair landing between the sixth and seventh floors. Perhaps there were further instructions relative to strangers with foreign accents, but if so I have forgotten them.

Here, according to my recollection, is where the episode of the Silver Gong comes to its abrupt conclusion. So far as I know, no explanation was ever vouchsafed as to the character of the disaster that was apprehended, but I was away on field duty some of the time. I do not even remember that the Silver Gong was ever removed. Perhaps it's still there.

ARMA VIRUMQUE CANO

by
Andy Frothingham

January 18, 1955

During the spring of 1918, while things were shaping up for our entry into the First World War, there was great martial fervor in and around the District of Columbia. Its chief expression was the organizing of dozens of rifle clubs throughout the Federal departments and bureaus. The Forest Service was the first, or one of the first, in line. Its rifle club was headed by Robert ("Bobbie") V. R. Reynolds; an enthusiastic and experienced marksman himself, he inspired his associates in the team he organized with his own assurance and determination.

The rifle team was restricted to about six members, but since some might have to leave, at a crucial time, for field duty, alternates had to be available, and there were always a number of these around, hoping to fill any such chance vacancies. One of these was a bright-haired, starry-eyed youth named Francis Kiefer, from Port Huron, Mich.

Kiefer had no knowledge at all of large-calibre fire-arms and only casual experience, many years earlier, in the use of miniature rifles. But there was no more enthusiastic aspirant among all the candidates for the team. In the after-hours' "snapping-practice" and training in the use of the rifle sling, usually in the chief's office, he was never absent. His enthusiasm carried him to the extent of purchasing a star-gauged Springfield rifle of his own, with which he spent long evenings at home, timed by his lovely, white-haired mother. He became, as the sequel (sic) proved, practically "letter-perfect" in each of the conventional rifleman's positions.

The big event toward which the team's practice had been directed was a mammoth contest between all the bureau teams. On the eve of the contest the Forest Service team was thrown into panic amounting to despair when it was known that several of its members had been designated for field duty and would not be available. Alternates had to be selected, among them Kiefer, in spite of the fact he had not done so well in a small-arms try-out in a near-by basement, a short time earlier. Never-the-less, on the date specified for the contest, the disabled team borrowed confidence from stout-hearted Bobby Reynolds and joined the crowd of riflemen that packed the steamship bound for the Army rifle range at Indian Head, Maryland.

What happened that day was in the nature of a miracle. The Forest Service team won a hard-fought first place. When the smoke had blown away and the tumult had died and the scores were evaluated it was found that not only had the F.S. team won but that the highest individual score was made by a Forest Service man, and not by a mere point but by several points over the man in second place, who was himself one of the best. Who was the Forest Service prodigy? You guessed it - Francis Kiefer.

Kiefer, the inexperienced beginner, the careful, plodding venturer, had made of himself an expert, and had saved the day for the Forest Service.

His personal triumph came later, when "Arms and the Man", the organ of the National Riflemens' Association, published photographs of all his targets.

