



Incoming guests were greeted at Biltmore Plaza by Dr. Schenck.

## Biltmore Forest Fair, 1908

We shall raise cotton when it pays to  
raise it--

We shall not raise trees **WHEN** it pays  
to raise them--

We simply can't!

For, **WHEN** it pays to raise them,  
it takes eighty years to raise them.

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*Undesignated photographs supplied by the author.*



## Come to the fair!

is a familiar invitation that annually rings throughout the land as autumn approaches. "Come to the fair!" was also an invitation sent out in 1908 from the famed Biltmore Estate near Asheville, North Carolina, by Carl Alwin Schenck, resident forester. But his invitation was unique. Dancing bears, bearded ladies, and blue-ribbon farm products were not his featured attractions. He offered instead a three-day excursion through the vast Biltmore Estate to demonstrate the accomplishments and possibilities of practical forestry at a time when even the word *forestry* had a most uncertain meaning. Probably no fair ever had a more energetic, enthusiastic, and competent majordomo, despite the fact that Schenck was truly a stranger in a strange land — a citizen of Germany steeped in German scientific forestry and filled with the Prussian concept of authority.

Schenck's fairgrounds were the forests of the seignior created by George W. Vanderbilt II, in the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina. They represented the aesthetic skill of the nation's most renowned landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, as implemented by the scientific forestry skill of Schenck and his predecessor, Gifford Pinchot. But the practical-minded Schenck described his offerings as "3,000 acres of forest obtained by planting on abandoned fields; 40,000 acres of woodlands which were rescued from wretchedness by Mr. Vanderbilt since 1888; 90,000 acres of primeval forest wherein conservative logging is introduced tentatively and gradually."<sup>1</sup>

The forest lands were, in reality, an adjunct to the Biltmore Estate proper and were begun only when Olmsted advised Vanderbilt that a forest was a prerequisite for a baronial estate. Thereafter Vanderbilt pursued acquisition of the run-down lands adjoining his and made a deliberate effort to convert those holdings into attractive and remunerative forests. Thus in 1890 Robert Douglas and Sons, an Illinois nursery firm, made the initial efforts at reforestation on a 300-acre tract. When he was advised that his forests would require the direction and supervision of a professional, Vanderbilt secured the services of European-trained Gifford Pinchot, who began his pioneering activities as Biltmore forester in January, 1892. Pinchot's drawing of a working plan for the entire forest,

<sup>1</sup>Letter, Schenck to C. H. Miller, editor, *Country Life in America*, November 16, 1908. Drawer 1, Folder 8, Biltmore Room, D. H. Hill Library, University of North Carolina at Raleigh. The Biltmore Room is the recognized depository for primary sources dealing with Schenck and his forestry activities in America. Unless otherwise indicated all cited material originated from that source.

timber stand improvement cuttings, and tree planting gave Vanderbilt the distinction of having the first scientifically managed forest in America.

Other interests caused Pinchot in 1895 to relinquish the role of Biltmore forester. His successor was a brilliant young German *Forstmeister*, Carl Alwin Schenck, freshly armed with a *summa cum laude* Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Giessen. Determined to make a success in America, Schenck focused all of his forestry skill on transforming Vanderbilt's forest into a national showpiece, the example *par excellence* of successful practical forestry. It was to this forest representing the labors of Olmsted, Pinchot, and Schenck that leaders of education, business, and politics were invited. To make the bid more alluring, Schenck infused his invitation with the idea that the fair was celebrating two outstanding forestry landmarks: the twentieth anniversary of practical forestry in America and the tenth anniversary of Biltmore Forest School, the first forestry school in the nation.<sup>2</sup>

Economics and politics also played a role in prompting the fair. The school needed money and the 10 dollar gratuity asked of each visitor would appreciably bolster the Biltmore "hospital fund." Moreover, the depression that had severely affected the nation's lumber industry in 1907 also deprived the school of income it normally received from the Biltmore sawmill.

Politically, Schenck was concerned lest the Democratic candidate, William Jennings Bryan, win the 1908 presidential election instead of the Republican, William Howard Taft: "If Taft was elected I could hope for a recovery of my lumber business on which the financial maintenance of my department and of my tree farms was depending. . . . Fortunately for me Taft was elected. Most fortunately, because now I could hope for a success for that grand Biltmore Forest Festival. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

The festival's sponsor, widely known as "Doctor Schenck," would have been characterized by his countrymen as a *Realpolitiker*, a man keen-witted and ambitious enough to capitalize on and make the most of all opportunities. Hungry for success, he became one of the most flamboyant and controversial figures in pioneer American forestry. His

<sup>2</sup>Schenck's school began operation on September 1, 1898. On September 22 or 23, 1898, Bernhard E. Fernow taught the first forest class at Cornell's New York State College of Forestry. Compare S. L. Frost, "The Plymouth Rock of Forestry," *American Forests*, 56 (July 1950) p. 15 with Andrew Denny Rodgers III, *Bernhard Eduard Fernow: A Story of North American Forestry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 262.

<sup>3</sup>Carl A. Schenck, "The Dawn of Private Forestry in America," (unpublished manuscript in Forest History Society Collection, Santa Cruz, Cal., n.d.), pp. 241-42.

forest fair was a bold and unique bid for publicity and recognition.

Preceding events greatly facilitated his endeavor. Almost from the beginning the Vanderbilt estate had been given widespread national and international publicity. For example, as early as February, 1894, the conservation-minded editor of *Garden and Forest* was describing the forest operations on the Vanderbilt estate as a "most important step in the progress of American civilization."<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, in the brief years that Schenck had been in America, 1895-1908, tremendous publicity had been generating an awareness of the national need for conservation of natural resources, including timber. Well cognizant of this and of the uniqueness of the Biltmore forest, Schenck's staging of a forest fair reflected his astuteness. That astuteness was duplicated throughout the fair from conception to completion.



Months before the event Schenck laid out the whole thing and methodically pursued the great diversity of details required to make it a success. His diary for 1908 is replete with entry after entry relating undeviating attention to matters calculated to achieve the greatest impact from the fair. Those matters included the task of getting the local display items in readiness. Areas to be visited were designated and consecutively numbered. Numerous photographs were taken to illustrate visual aid materials. Local arrangements were made for housing, feeding, and entertaining the guests. But the bulk of preparation was channeled into two areas; selecting the names of persons to be invited and wording their invitation in a manner to attract an affirmative response, plus the making of an attractive booklet to serve as an illustrated guide for those who came. Neither was a simple matter. With the invitations Schenck was determined to attract prominent persons, men of influence, whose favorable comments would be a great asset. And for the booklet he labored to compose a guide that would not only attract the reader's attention but would fill him with information and even enthusiasm about the great accomplishments being demonstrated.

Schenck's dossier does not indicate schooling in the art of promotion but a modern day public relations man might envy the finesse with which he handled the invitations and other aspects of the fair. He divided the invitees hierarchically, with United States Senators ranked at the top. He devised form letters to send members of each

rank. The teasing letter to be sent out to the representatives of the United States Forest Service in Washington, D.C., was the briefest and the gist of it was "I'll promise to you three of the most interesting days in the woods which you have had for a long time. There can be no doubt that the object lessons in forest conservation offered at Biltmore are not duplicated anywhere on this side of the water."

The invitation to the governors took another approach. For example the Governor of Nevada was told, "You are going—so I understand—to attend the 'Conservation' Congress at Washington in the early days of December. I am not. I was not asked to attend either; powerful men only are invited, and the meek are only to be blessed." Then the Governor was invited to come to the Biltmore Forest Fair but was warned that "At our forest fair there will not be any reception committees, nor any burning of incense; you need not bring along that elocutional barrel organ of yours. . . . Our forest fair is a small affair and you will not attain any halo for attending it, nor will George Vanderbilt entertain you royally at Biltmore House." And then the punchline was delivered: "Stop over at Biltmore enroute to Washington: accept this invitation for what it is meant to be—an expression of our desire to have two or three of the aristocrats (which translates into *best rulers*) of the United States with us when we celebrate at Biltmore the twentieth anniversary of American Forestry practiced in Dixie Land."

The addressees were told to wear a pair of good shoes because not only would there be hikes through the forest but a 'possum hunt was to be part of the scheduled festivities. To this attraction North Carolina's Governor R. B. Glenn, renowned for his humorous remarks, replied that prior commitments prevented him from appearing but that "If I could have come I would have worn my old breeches and patched coat and if mounted in any style would have adopted the democratic mule for locomotion. I would also have been a first class aide in the 'possum hunt, for I swing an axe with a great deal of power, and I certainly would have made a 'full hand' in eating the 'possum after he was caught."

The opposite approach to this flippant reply came from the Executive Chamber in Albany, New York, where Charles Evans Hughes sent his regrets because "My work is so exigent at this time that I can not be away."

Surely more pleasing to Schenck was the response made by Curtis Guild, Jr., of Massachusetts, who, unable to come, delegated the state forester as his deputy and avowed that "I am

<sup>4</sup>*Garden and Forest*, VII (February 21, 1894) p. 71.

particularly interested, as you know, in the restoration of the New England forests, and you certainly at Biltmore have prepared for us all a magnificent object lesson."

Meanwhile to the United States Senators there went a letter deliberately phrased to act as a banderilla stinging the recipient into action. The opening sentence declared, "I admit that you have never shown any outward evidence of a decided and deep interest in forestry. . . . 'Conservation' is a noun with you; with us it is 20 years old." But the sting was somewhat softened by the follow-up: "Nevertheless, being told that you have something of an inclination toward forestry and forestry conservation, this note means to say that you are twice welcome at Biltmore if you can join us."

Among the senatorial targets were Robert M. La Follette and Moses H. Clapp. Both replied in the negative. Clapp, however, explained that he had engagements which could not be cancelled but commanded Schenck, "Now do not throw the letter down at this point, as there are one or two matters I want to talk about." Then the Senator, probably bristling, began ticking off a rebuttal to the charge that he had never evidenced any interest in forestry and conservation: "You say that I have never shown any interest in conservation. Long before conservation became a ladder by which men could get into the public eye, in my humble way I was advocating conservation, especially along the lines of preserving forests and the raising of trees. . . . In my humble way I have assisted in placing lands in this state subject to forestry control, both federal and state." In the end, however, after citing in detail his own conservation endeavors, the Minnesota Senator complimented and extended him a handshake.

While wooing the politicians, Schenck was also especially anxious to gather all of the state foresters at his fair and hence devised a special appeal to them. All were told "Deny it if you can: Biltmore is the Mecca for the man interested in the possibilities and the shortcomings of American forestry, and object lessons now exhibited at Biltmore cannot be duplicated anywhere else in the world. That much I believed to be true, and I am anxious — really anxious — for you . . . to join a party of 40 to 50 'pilgrims' at Biltmore on November twenty-sixth." Furthermore, a guarantee was issued that the "sun will shine," that there "will not be a display of oratory," and that "your queries will be answered and your criticism will be invited." Schenck's final enticement was that the "itinerary selected for our pilgrimage through the woods — through the yellow pines and white pines and hardwoods — must be interesting to the lumbermen, the financier, the engineer, the statesman, and par-

ticularly to *you*. Regardless of prior engagements, COME!"

In addition to the support of his forestry colleagues, Schenck hungered for favorable nationwide publicity. He phrased and rephrased a letter to the editors of periodicals. His finished product took up three legal-size sheets of paper. It began with this lengthy sentence: "The reading public, which is the thinking public, is interested nowadays in the upbuilding of the American commonwealth, economically and socially and particularly in the conservation of the resources which have given this country such paramount importance in the Concert of Nations during the last 20 years." Then, after shrewdly pointing out that the forests and soils were the two resources disappearing most rapidly, he stressed the fact that practical forestry had had its American origins on the Biltmore Estate and that, furthermore, "Nowhere else on this continent, and nowhere in Germany — I am German — can there be found object lessons in forest conservation so interesting as those exhibited at Biltmore." With this buildup came the carefully planned appeal: "Knowing the enormous influence which your publication has upon the upbuilding of the country, I invite you, personally and especially . . . to get a close acquaintance with forestry of the American character." And, perhaps to dispel any misgivings about his German background, he let it be known that "Naturally, in this country we cannot use the methods of German forestry any better than we could use Chinese forestry, if there be any. We will have to work out our own salvation." Then, in a parting supplication, Schenck impressed upon his readers the conviction that "I doubt whether you will ever have another chance to see forestry of the American character and type under as diversified conditions as you will have here at Biltmore."

While seeking national coverage Schenck was careful not to neglect local support. Thus his invitation to North Carolina editors urged them to be present "for your benefit and for that of your readers — above all for the good of the old 'Tar Heel State.'" Further play was made upon state pride when the editors were informed that the "American world at large does not realize that it is North Carolina which, through the Biltmore Estate is in the lead of the forestal procession. It is well worth while, it seems to me, to emphasize, from time to time, the good which we have at home, lest we overlook it. We need not learn forestry in Germany or in France; we may learn it at home, at Biltmore, N.C., more readily, more cheaply, and more interestingly."

All in all, almost 400 persons received letters from Schenck inviting them to "Come to the Fair!"

The addressees by vocation, ranged from President of the United States to a local land agent (Schenck, upon learning the results of the national Presidential election, had telegraphed William Howard Taft an invitation and had received a cordial expression of Chief Executive appreciation and regret).



Along with the letters went a 55-page illustrated booklet entitled "A Forest Fair in the Biltmore Forest, November 26, 1908." It was a novel interpretive tool designed to convey a meaningful comprehension of what 20 years of professional forestry could accomplish. Of course much of the glory of achievement was to reflect upon Doctor Carl Alwin Schenck, resident forester.

Gifford Pinchot initiated this work in 1892 and had thereby pioneered scientific forestry in America. After 1895 Schenck had greatly expanded upon Pinchot's early efforts and the fair was calculated to demonstrate their effectiveness. A great diversity of forestry and conservation practices, successful and unsuccessful, were to be shared with the visitors. Among those practices were reforestation, natural regeneration, erosion control, timber stand improvement, forest finance, access roads and transportation, sawmilling, watershed management, and fire control. To show and interpret these Schenck put showmanship, forestry skill, a sense of humor, and advertising expertise into his little guide book.

In the Forest Fair guide book the entire forest was divided into 63 stations. These Schenck called "Tips" and accompanied each with a narrative interpretation. Neatly sandwiched in between "Tips," in bold red ink, were numerous Schenckian precepts, beginning with

**Edel sei der Mensch, hilfreich und gut!  
Noble be mankind, benevolent and good!**

Tip Number 1 illustrated reforestation and soil conservation showing how 26,500 white pines and 24,000 hardwoods from German and Biltmore nurseries had been closely planted in March, 1899, to rehabilitate 12 acres of badly eroded land. Prior to planting, gullies had been filled and wickerworks erected to prevent further erosion. "I like this plantation; but one fool, with one match, may destroy it in one hour," closed Schenck's remark on the station.<sup>5</sup>

A failure and a change of tactics were given prominence in Tip Number 2. Schenck, in compliance with Vanderbilt's desires, had attempted to convert 45 acres of eroded and abandoned farm

land into a hardwood forest. Bushels of nuts were planted in 1895-1896, as were thousands of yearling, two, and three-year-old hardwoods. The forester had originally hoped to show Vanderbilt that this planting could be done for \$5.00 per acre. But Schenck confessed that by 1899 the success of the effort seemed so doubtful that "I got scared for my reputation; I then abandoned the idea of planting as cheaply as possible." So he bolstered his prior efforts by replanting with more than 75,000 white and yellow pines intermixed with some 3,000 white oaks. This approach proved so successful that the forester was moved to exclaim, "Nowadays it is a joy for me to crawl through this plantation! I feel like the Lord on the Seventh day of the Creation when I am crawling."

**The man who looks for a reward does not deserve any.**

Natural regeneration was featured in Tip Number 4. In 1905 Schenck had clean cut for cordwood an area with trees of little value and was now depending upon nature to regenerate it: "There is no need, mind you, of any planting in this cove . . . nature will restore the forest wherever we cut it away." He then proclaimed that the "effect of nature's forces is a forest; you cannot prevent the effect unless you keep the soil ploughed or fired. . . . Only the fire, only the plough prevent nature from reestablishing the forest where we remove it," was his prevailing philosophy on natural regeneration. As if that were not bold enough, he ventured a further declaration: "In the year 2222, all North America would be as primeval in character (in the prairies, the deserts, and the woods) as it was in anno 1111, if all mankind should die today from the plague."

Schenck's ego and sense of humor emerged in Tip Number 5: "Here is a group of yellow pines planted by nature and saved by me. I saved it by an 'improvement cutting', removing some six cords of firewood per acre obtained from scrubby, brushy, and low-crowned hardwoods which had no prospective value and which were an impediment to the development of the pines. . . . Now we traverse some irregular hardwoods where I have been acting as undertaker, 'burying the dead,' or rather seeing that the dead were cremated as firewood in Asheville."

As for all foresters, fire was of major concern for Schenck. Repeatedly he referred to and illustrated its adverse effects. It was well he should because his neighbors, the local mountaineers, traditionally used fire indiscriminately to green-up their pastures and to clean their new grounds. Moreover, it was common for those fires to get out of hand, run wild, and damage hundreds of

<sup>5</sup>All comments in this section are based upon Schenck's guide booklet.

**I tell you, William, what is so:  
“Money kept in timber is safer  
than money kept in the safe.”  
.... Stop the fire, William!**

acres of forest land. To make matters worse, there were no local regulations to control, deter, or prevent it. This lack greatly irked Schenck, who had been reared in the attitude that the forest was a national treasure to be husbanded and protected: “The citizens of the county do not realize — do not want to realize — that my work is for their benefit as well as for that of my employer. We have never found any encouragement whatsoever in our work on the side of the state, the county, or the town. We are aliens; we do things out of the ordinary; that is cause enough for suspicion — for antagonism and enmity.”

Fire damage was so widespread and so devastating that Schenck was convinced that only one tree

in a hundred had escaped it in the Appalachian region. Logically several of his Tips included comments on forest fires. Accompanying the picture of a fire-damaged tree in Tip Number 38 was the remark: “I hope that my plantation will not meet the fate of the white ash shown herewith—the fate of the majority of the trees in the Appalachians! The fires have bursted it from root to crown and it is as hollow as a gun.”

Prevention of erosion, like prevention of forest fire, was viewed by Schenck as an important role of the forester. Tip Number 14, a yellow pine grove developed by natural regeneration, provided a conservation lesson: “A slope of this character should not be cleared and used as this one was, agriculturally. Look at these frightful gullies! Erosion was rank in this lot prior to the time at which the slope was left alone, left unburned, unpastured, unused! We want conservatism, and we want conservation!”

But the practical forester, the one who constantly preached that “That forestry is best which pays

Horses and horse-drawn carriages with top-hatted drivers conveyed the guests from Tip to Tip.





best!", came out in the Schenckiana which accompanied the Tip:

Washington, November 26, 1908.

Dear Conservation:

Conservation, Dear conservation! How I would love to serve you! You are right, good, noble, -- nobody denies it. But alas! Your service is perfect self restraint, -- yea, it is self denial!

I am so sorry!

Yours sisterly,  
American Liberty

Preservationists must have suffered a tremor when they encountered Schenck's comment in Tip Number 40 regarding destructive forestry: "The forest, near No. 40, will be cleared away this coming winter and will be converted into farmland. Mind you: Forestry is business; forest destruction is quite frequently the best business, and destructive forestry is quite frequently the best forestry."

In a similar manner, Schenck repeatedly argued that silviculture as a business was impractical for American forestry. He did so on the grounds that whereas in Germany timber was high-priced and the woods homogeneous, in the United States timber was low-priced and the woods heterogeneous. Hence each separate group of trees required separate and distinctive treatment making the practice of silviculture prohibitively expensive. Therefore he advised: "Leave nature alone, or help nature! Give it increased chances! Do not hitch it up, using narrow-mindedness for the harness! William, I tell you! Skip the lectures on silviculture and learn from nature."



As the letters and guidebooks were received various reactions and replies flowed back to Biltmore. From Walter Hines Page, editor of the influential *World's Work*, came an expression of interest in "the excellent result that you are working out at Biltmore" and the plea that the reply be delivered to "the gentleman whose signature is on the enclosed sheet, for to speak with frankness, I can't read it."

Elbert Hubbard, renowned as an American man of letters and humor, congratulated Schenck on his booklet, told him that it was the finest thing of the kind ever issued in America and that it would

be mentioned editorially at an early date. Then came words which must have highly elated Schenck: "I do not know much about the divinity of our Lord, but I do know and believe in the divinity of a tree. Therefore I believe in your work and you."

The dean of the forestry faculty at the University of Toronto, Bernhard E. Fernow, one time chief of the Forestry Division of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, wrote his old acquaintance that a visit to Biltmore and the instructive exhibits of a 20-year systematic forestry program would be "an inspiration even to an old stager whose enthusiasm of younger years has not been quite destroyed by the bickerings, fault-findings and disappointments prepared by friends and enemies."

A valuable political contact was inherent in the reply by Claude Kitchen, North Carolina governor-elect, who assured Schenck that "Your booklet delighted me very much. I read it 'clean through' last night without stopping. It has aroused within me much interest in forestry and forestry conservation."

W. G. M. Stone, president of the Colorado State Forestry Association, was keenly appreciative of Schenck's forestry contributions and was most enthusiastic about the unique fair and the guide book: "It gives one a raging fever. . . . It promises to be the most ideal and the most remarkable Thanksgiving in the annals of inventive genius. The scheme is wonderful in its conception and will give forestry one of the best boosts it ever had. I wish every Senator and every Congressman could be present, and the members of every legislature in the Union. Such an object lesson would be worth a whole forest of speeches."

Farley Price, a New Orleans lumberman, told Schenck that "I have been watching the results of your labors with a great deal of interest, and I want to take this opportunity of expressing my hearty appreciation of the same. It is to you and your efforts largely that this country will eventually be indebted for its continued lumber supply."

In a similar vein, a Mississippi lumberman declared that "We are becoming more interested every day in practical forestry and are very glad indeed to know that lumbermen are going to have an opportunity to become acquainted with your work."


"I always knew you were a genius, but my conviction is now more deeply rooted than ever," expressed the convictions of Charles H. Herty, a university chemistry professor. W. A. Murrill, the assistant director of the New York Botanical Gardens, went even further: "I have just received your exceedingly interesting booklet on Biltmore

Forest Fair, which contains, according to my notion, about all there is to learn about forestry."

Meanwhile, from a lawyer in Houston, Texas, came praise for the object lesson being offered: "The work you are doing will bear fruit a hundred fold and I have no doubt that the object lesson you can furnish at Biltmore, if it could be seen under your guidance, would do more to bring out practical results for the conservation of the forests of the country than all the theoretic teaching which is being done in the schools."

Even as these comments were being digested, preparations were continued and plans completed for the arrival of the expected guests. The Battery Park Hotel in Asheville, North Carolina, was established as headquarters. Despite the fact that the fair coincided with Thanksgiving, a holiday traditionally meaning dinner with the family at home, some 200 guests put in their appearance. Although no senators or governors appeared, there were botanists, forest engineers, lumbermen, furniture manufacturers, state foresters, railroad and mining company representatives, statesmen, university professors, paper company spokesmen, editors, state forestry commissioners, American Forestry Association officials, lawyers, tanning and lumber company men, and a judge.

However no United States Forest Service personnel accepted Schenck's invitation: "I was much chagrined over this failure. Not that I missed the men; no, I saw it clearly that Gifford Pinchot's and my ways had parted forever. From that time on, I had no connection with the Forest Service except through some of its staff members who came to the Biltmore School during their vacations as teachers of this or that topic."<sup>6</sup> In fact, although Forest Service stalwarts such as Royal S. Kellogg, William L. Hall, Herbert A. Smith, and Overton W. Price sent Schenck their regrets and warm wishes, Gifford Pinchot apparently did not even acknowledge the fair.

ut in the meanwhile, true to Schenck's "guarantee," the sun was shining and the fair opened with a gay procession from the hotel to the forest. The guests were mounted on horses or provided seats in open carriages. Green and white, the colors of the Biltmore Forest School, bedecked the horses and equipage. Guests were delighted with the forestry students who served both as mounted escorts and as tour guides. One editor-guest reported to

his readers that "They all go bareheaded and coatless, wear leather leggings, and their physique glows with brawn and brain and the color of health. They are as handsome as Buffalo Bill." Another editor wrote that "These young men impressed the visitors as without exception a fine lot of enthusiastic, wideawake, intelligent, clean-cut, embryotic foresters, superb horsemen, well-grounded and practical woodsmen, well equipped as surveyors, engineers, inspectors, mentally and physically fit, technically and practically, to enter tirelessly and intelligently into the handling of wooded estates — the finished product of a thoroughly practical course of comprehensive instruction and experience." This praise, coming from the editor of the most influential lumber periodical in the nation, was priceless advertising as Schenck had calculated.

One of the things which attracted such favorable attention to the Biltmore students was their melodious singing, en route, of their favorite school songs, such as "The Good Old Mountain Dew" and

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<sup>6</sup>J. E. Defebaugh, "Three Days Forest Festival on the Biltmore Estate," *American Lumberman*, December 5, 1908, p. 36.

### The Man Who Looks Like The Kaiser

Who is the man that is riding along,  
Singing the words of an old German song,  
Telling the boys that the road is run wrong?  
'Tis the man who looks like the Kaiser.

Who is the man on the coal black steed,  
Riding along at the utmost speed,  
Little fur muff and a cap o' green tweed?  
'Tis the man who looks like the Kaiser.

Who is the man on the horse named Punch,  
Riding along at the head of a bunch,  
Don't even give us the time to eat lunch?  
'Tis the man who looks like the Kaiser.

....

Who is the man that corrects our "exams",  
Tells us that our papers are not worth two damns;  
Saying that our answers are nothing but sham?  
'Tis the man who looks like the Kaiser.

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<sup>6</sup>Schenck, "Dawn of Private Forestry," p. 248.





Schenck Collection, D. H. Hill Library, North Carolina State University at Raleigh.

“The Man Who Looks Like the Kaiser.” The latter, the equivalent of an *alma mater*, caricatured their moustached German schoolmaster.

Upon arrival at the hotel each guest had been provided a three day schedule of events and Schenck, with great gusto, saw to it that those three days were fully utilized. The first day's outing covered Tips 1 through 25 and gave the host an opportunity to expand upon ideas which he had introduced in the guide booklet. At one station for example, while pointing out local successes and failures, he indicated a need for the services of a soil scientist: “We need a genius like Burbank or Edison to tell us of the biology of the soil, because on this soil depends the life of the trees. Someone has counted the bacteria in a gram of soil, estimating them at 200,000 to the gram. Of this life we know nothing except that it is interwoven with the life of the trees.”<sup>8</sup>

Schenck vigorously kept the group moving and provided a running commentary. His pace was so rapid that one of the guests gasped, “He goes like a machine geared up to the highest speed and the man who follows him and does not ‘blow’ has stout muscles and good lungs.”<sup>9</sup> Station after station was thus visited with the host vividly interpreting each.

<sup>8</sup>Asheville *Gazette News*, November 25, 1908, p. 2; Defebaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup>Charlotte *Evening Chronicle*, editorial, November 30, 1908.

**If men should hold their peace, the trees would cry aloud: “Honor and thanks to you, George W. Vanderbilt!”**

When the final Tip of the day had been examined a sumptuous Thanksgiving dinner was awaiting all at the hotel. Schenck, acting as master of ceremonies, paid his respects to the visitors and thanked all who had come and all who had labored to make the fair a success. Then he announced, “And there is another man, last but not least, whom I want to mention, George Vanderbilt.” At that point he was interrupted by loud applause and then allowed to continue: “George is not here today and does not know anything of this little fuss, but I want to say that George Vanderbilt is a nobly spirited American, as high principled a man as I ever met; a man of high ideals, reticent if you meet him but of splendid purposes, and who has given me all I want of a chance to develop, a chance to work, chances to put in our ideas, and I thank Mr. Vanderbilt.” Again loud applause interrupted him. When it had quieted he concluded, “And now, if you will do me a favor, join me in three cheers for George Vanderbilt.” Thereupon everyone rose and loudly cheered the master of Biltmore.

The Biltmore Forest School students, in turn, serenaded their teacher and his guests with a round of school songs, which were also rewarded by hearty



cheers. The master of ceremonies then directed that thereafter any member of the group should feel free to speak "as the spirit moved him." J. E. Defebaugh, editor of the *American Lumberman* was the first to be "moved." He praised Schenck most highly for his leadership and outstanding contributions in the field of practical forestry.

Then, somewhat more formally, D. T. Keith of Wilmington, North Carolina, read a paper entitled "The Future Destiny of the South Depends Upon the Protection of Its Forests," which condemned the piney woods "rooter," scrub cattle, and reckless lumbermen as the greatest enemies of the forest and asked for a concerted effort to secure legislation which would protect the forests.

**T**hereafter the dinner meeting turned into a resounding encomium for Doctor Schenck. Starting with the Commissioner of Forestry from Pennsylvania, one by one guests arose and praised their host for his remarkable accomplishments in practical forestry and forestry education. The Reverend R. P. Swope, rector of All Soul's Church at Biltmore, eulogized the high moral character of Schenck and added, "He is an appreciative lover of nature; he also appreciates keeping in touch with the younger generation that is coming into his hands and he is molding them to make of them successful foresters." A Canadian asked indulgence to declare that "Dr. Schenck's work has spread not

only in the United States but in Canada and has brought a few Canadians down here to learn something." Finally, as an expression of the admiration and high respect which all present had for their host, a lumberman from Wisconsin proposed three cheers for Doctor Schenck. These were joyously given and were accentuated by the rising of all present to join in singing "For He is a Jolly Good Fellow."

Schenck responded most appropriately: "I asked my neighbor here a question he did not answer — what would he do if he were a peacock? I told him that if I were a peacock I would have my tail feathers spread out like this just now."

Next morning, "the edict of Forester Schenck, who is of that class whom people obey instinctively, forced an early beginning of the second day of the forest festival," so one of the participants reported. And as the entourage traveled onto the Biltmore Estate many were impressed with the over 200 miles of good macadam roads. Their host credited Vanderbilt with introducing macadam roads to that section of North Carolina and repeatedly pointed out the importance of good roads to remunerative forestry, both as an essential aid to lumber transportation and to fire control.

Using those roads the party visited, among other things, the Biltmore herbarium (one of the best in the nation at that time), the nurseries, the dairy, the pig and poultry farms (all of which were nationally famous), and were taken, with appropriate explanatory remarks, through numerous plantations

## Deeds are the megaphone for words, without the noise.

of locust, pine, cherry, walnut, oak, and other species planted between 1899 and 1908. Each stop demonstrated some facet of practical forestry and provided live amplification of the material in the guide booklet.

The rapid pace of the tour created appetites which were satisfied at noon by a bounteous luncheon served out of doors around an old log cabin. Mrs. Schenck, aided by some of her female friends, presided over the serving. Both the food and the friends made a hit with the guests.<sup>10</sup>

After lunch the tour included more plantations and more interpretation, highlighted by a study of regeneration of yellow poplar. The day was topped off with a delightful barbecue accompanied by music and dancing. For the more adventurous, and the less fatigued, the final *piece-de-resistance* for the day was a 'possum hunt. A dozen hounds, led by half as many Negroes famed for their skill as 'possum hunters, made their way into the woods followed by about 100 curious visitors. Soon they trooped back into a camp with a sack filled with a mother 'possum and her brood. When the jollifications were at an end the tired participants returned to their quarters to generate enough energy to face what promised to be an even more strenuous third day.

<sup>10</sup>J. E. Defebaugh, *American Lumberman*, January 16, 1909, pp. 53-54. His series of articles on the Fair is the source for the material between this and the preceding footnote.



The next morning there was an excursion by train to Pisgah forest where the visitors were led into the forest primeval and shown some of the largest trees in eastern America. Included were giant poplars measuring eight to ten feet in diameter and extending more than 100 feet into the sky. Here, too, Schenck demonstrated logging and sawmilling.

Finally, after three arduous but exciting days, the fair was over and the guests paid their departing compliments. The editors began filing reports and others filled the mails with letters to Schenck, telling how beneficial and important his object lessons had been. A North Carolina editor considered the events worthy of two columns of his editorial page and declared, after praising Schenck, that "So far as Vanderbilt is concerned, *The Chronicle* wishes the state had a thousand men like him. His vast investment of wealth in western North Carolina is not money squandered as by the whim of a rich man. . . . Vanderbilt is spending money not alone for his own pleasures but for the common good of posterity, in general, and North Carolina in particular."<sup>11</sup>

**D**ewspapers from as far west as Colorado and as far north as Canada carried articles giving similar extremely favorable publicity to Schenck, the Biltmore Forest School, and George W. Vanderbilt II. Defebaugh filled the *American Lumberman*, between December, 1908, and January, 1909, with highly enthusiastic and detailed descriptions of Schenck, Vanderbilt, the Estate, the School, and the events of the fair. An editorial in the *Asheville Gazette News* assured all readers that "Dr. Schenck certainly proved to all who were fortunate enough to see his work and gain his ideas that he is not a theorist but that he is extremely practical, and that the time has come when it is profitable from a financial standpoint to cultivate the forests, or rather let nature do its work unhindered." It also affirmed that "This meeting, aside from being a great advertisement to Asheville, is the starter of a movement that will eventually revolutionize the whole country."<sup>12</sup> A preceding editorial had expressed the hope that America at large would re-

<sup>11</sup>Charlotte *Evening Chronicle*, editorial, November 30, 1908.

<sup>12</sup>Asheville *Gazette News*, November 30, 1908, p. 4.



The joviality of Dr. Schenck greatly added to the picnic provided by Mrs. Schenck and her friends.

alize that North Carolina, through Biltmore, was in the "lead of the forestal procession," and vouched the opinion that the "journalistic world knows how big and important these things are, and what journalism knows the world will soon begin to perceive. Dr. Schenck's happy idea of a forest festival will do much to diffuse this information."<sup>13</sup>

Similar widespread editorials and many letters testified to the impact and success of the forest festival. Although possessed of a most fertile and imaginative brain, it is most unlikely that Schenck's original dreams had wholly encompassed the greatness of the reception which could be accorded his forest fair. Many years later, as he reminisced and composed *The Biltmore Story*, he confided that "I considered my Biltmore Forest Festival a great success." He was also convinced that the enthusiasm of the participants was not feigned: "For the first time in their lives they had seen real forestry in America; for the first time they had visited a tract of primeval woods not devastated, but actually flourishing, after lumbering. The men acted like the Greek soldiers of Xenophon when for the first time they saw the Aegean Sea. Actually I had arrived at the highest point of my career as

an American forester. From that time on there came a steady decline."<sup>14</sup>

In a sense he was right: By 1909 he had severed relations with Vanderbilt and by 1914 was back in Germany, having abandoned his forestry school. But in a larger sense he was wrong. Thanks partially to the widespread and lasting influence of the publicity generated by and reflected in the forest fair, partially to other factors, and especially to the loyalty of his Biltmore Forest School alumni, his fame became international. Thus he was repeatedly brought back to the United States, feted across the continent by foresters and statesmen, had forests (including giant redwoods) named in his honor, and was "immortalized" by the reestablishment of his old forestry school in the Pisgah Pink Beds and its conversion into the "Cradle of Forestry in America." Thousands of visitors annually tour his "campus" and learn more about his work.

Thus his fair, and his work in America represented by it, were indeed a success. Three cheers for Doctor Schenck! □

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, November 27, 1908, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Carl Alwin Schenck, *The Biltmore Story* (St. Paul: American Forest History Foundation, 1955), p. 165.