

ANNUAL REPORT 1998

From the Chairman

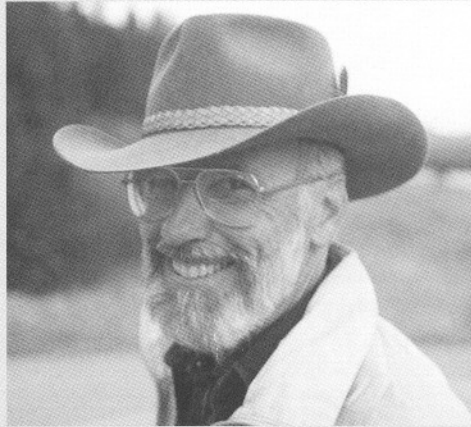
by Thomas R. Dunlap

For several years the Board of Directors has been developing and implementing a long-range plan that would strengthen the Society and its ability to further professional and public understanding of people and forests over time. This has been a long effort, involving all the board members and tasks that ranged from the very mundane to ones that were almost philosophical. By the time Gene Robbins finished his term we had worked out goals and hired a new President, laying the foundations that the Society needs to move forward. This last year we have begun, under the direction of our new President, Dr. Steven Anderson, to turn ideas into action. This has been an exciting year, and there is more in store.

The most important news is that Steve has had a successful first year as President. He arrived last June and quickly took charge of the Durham office. The transition, with the help of the staff, was smooth, and he was soon working on the established programs and on our new initiatives. He has been providing a vision, securing new funding for our work, seeking new members, and developing cooperative projects with other institutions. His report in this issue of *Forest History Today* gives more details. Some of you have met Steve on his various trips around the country and at professional meetings. I hope the rest of you can. He is an excellent and enthusiastic advocate who can, much better than a printed report, tell you what the society is doing and what you can do to help.

Our endowment (see Treasurer's Report) provided a strong base for our programs. The rising stock market has helped, and I am confident that our advisors, the Frank Russell Company and our treasurer, Ms. Patty Bedient, are doing an excellent job, but in the last year the board has taken steps to improve our immediate position and oversight. Our treasurer reviewed our investment guidelines to make sure they were appropriate for our situation and she made recommendations to the board for short-term reallocation of our investments to adjust for the current investment situation.

The Society continues to have a strong and established role in the preservation of records. Some are in our library and archives, but the Durham staff is also active in helping people and institutions place their records in appropriate repositories. We are making, and will make more, efforts to make this information available to everyone from experts to the general public. *Environmental History*, which the Society publishes with the American Society for Environmental History is the most visible academic



effort. It began well, has continued to improve, and is now what we believed it would be, the premier journal in the field. Costs continue to decline, and we are now beginning to accumulate a "rainy day" fund for the journal. For a more general audience we are continuing to develop the Issues Series, booklets that explore the historical background of important aspects of forest use and forest policies. These make the story of forests and people available to students, researchers, reporters, and the general public. The board is currently seeking to add more

titles and assure funding as we develop this area. *Forest History Today*, started when we merged academic journals with the American Society for Environmental History, we are developing as a less academic source of information for our members. We hope to expand this effort as time goes on. The aim is to produce a number of publications, some regular, others perhaps occasional, that will help everyone from the expert to the general public better understand forests and their importance to all of us.

Steve Anderson and the board are now working out with Duke University's Department of History, the School of the Environment and other academic units, plans for a distinguished lectureship in forest and conservation history. This would be a continuing series of lectures by nationally known figures in the field, sponsored jointly by Duke and the Society. The lectures would be given on the Duke campus, open to the public, and the texts would be published, making the information and ideas available to a wide audience. In next year's report I hope to tell you not only about the establishment of the series but the first lecture. More distant and less defined, but promising continuing benefits, are plans we are developing for cooperation on projects of mutual interest with the Pinchot Institute for Conservation. The Board met at Grey Towers in Milford, Pennsylvania last year and at our recent meeting in Biltmore, NC, had a general discussion with the Institute's board. We all look for good things from this effort.

Forests are and will continue to be an important part of our lives. In recent years we have seen stories ranging from forest use to forest preservation to forest fires threatening people's homes and lives. The Society's mission, to help the public and our members understand the context of our continuing relationships with forests, is therefore an important and timely one. Your support has helped the Society do that in the past and I know we can count on you in the future.

