

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Photographs and Memories

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Would you like to have a photographic memory? You do! It's the Forest History Society's historic photo collection in the Alvin J. Huss Archives. From its earliest days as the Forest Products History Foundation, the Society has collected photographs as part of its core mission to preserve forest and conservation history. Now numbering over 25,000 images, they are a mix of black and white prints, color prints and slides, glass (lantern) slides and plates, and albums. The earliest photographs date from the 1890s, but the bulk of the collection is more recent, dating mostly from the 1920s and after.

The main portion of the collection began in the 1960s through major gifts from the Weyerhaeuser Company and the American Forest Institute. Subsequent gifts from the American Forestry Association (now known as American Forests), Miller-Freeman Publishers, the National Forest Products Association, the Society of American Foresters, the U.S. Forest Service, the University of Nebraska, Harold Weaver, Robert K. Winters, and many smaller donations have rounded out the holding to its current size. New gifts are added to the collection as they are accessioned.

The photographs document the history of human interaction with the environment, covering a wide array of topics while focusing on the history of forests, conservation efforts including the Tree Farm Program, the forest products industry, and lumbering and sawmilling practices. Numerous auxiliary image collections include photograph albums compiled by forestry school students on field trips; collections amassed by foresters or forest products companies in the course of conducting everyday operations; and images used in the publication of forest industry magazines. Over the years, the photos from the collection have been used in books, magazines, exhibits and trails, educational presentations, films, and documentaries. Most recently we provided photographs that will be used in the Ken Burns documentary *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, to be released in the fall of 2009. Research in the photo collection has answered questions about land-use change over time, renovation of historic buildings, identification of harvesting equipment, and genealogical work, among many others.

The photographs are arranged by topic, meaning that similar activities in all regions generally have been placed together. The most obvious exception to this arrangement is the smaller collections donated by individuals—albums, for example—that tend to be regional. Thus, even though one may approach the collection with a regional interest, it will generally be necessary to search by topics.

Thanks to the Alvin J. Huss Endowment for Digitization and Outreach of the Archives, this process has become infinitely easier since we began digitizing the collection and making it accessible through a searchable database on the FHS web site. To date we have 19,273 photos available online, including



over 6,000 photos from the Society's collection and about 13,000 historic photos from the U.S. Forest Service—Region 9 (Northeast). This is currently the largest collection of U.S. Forest Service photographs anywhere on the Internet.

We of course also work on a smaller scale. FHS Archivist, Eben Lehman, was recently interviewed by the Alabama Forest Owners Association about the collection and how to preserve your own family or organizational images. You can see this webcast at <http://www.foa.org/CILive/CI080917.htm#lehman>. In addition to controlling temperature and humidity, he highly recommends keep-

ing caption information about each image.

There are two ways to peruse through the online collection. The first is to search by keyword, subject, caption, or photographer through the image database that can be found at: <http://www.foresthistory.org/Research/photos.html>. The other way is by using the folder level descriptions in the photo galleries found at <http://www.foresthistory.org/Research/FHSPhotoGalleries.html>. Images displayed in the FHS Image Database are low-resolution images provided for academic research purposes only. Higher-resolution electronic scans and copy prints may be requested by contacting the Society's headquarters.

More than a few people have contributed time and skill over many years to make the Forest History Society Photograph Collection well organized and more accessible. In the early years, Mary Beth Johnson, Nancy Marquez, and Roline Loung sorted through the mass and developed a workable order. Then, Leland J. Prater, retired U.S. Forest Service photographer and indexer of its own mammoth collection, volunteered his time to refine subject headings and to identify the primary topic of each photo. The project was made possible by a generous grant from the Laird Norton Foundation. Since then, Michele Justice, Elizabeth Hull, and Eben Lehman have made great strides in establishing the database and then making sure the data are complete and scanned images are of the highest quality.

The Society is always accepting significant additions to the collection. You can contact Eben Lehman at 919-682-9319 or eben.lehman@duke.edu for more information. If you would like to follow the FHS protocols for digitization and database entry you can find instructions at: <http://www.foresthistory.org/Research/DigitizationProcedures.html>.

Photographs are some of the most educational and instructional assets in archival collections. In order to continue this essential work, the Society has made worldwide access of its archives a priority on the *Stories of the Forest* fundraising campaign. This will ensure a consistent and ongoing effort to digitize the Society's photograph collections and its other documents. Towards this end, John and Ruth Huss committed \$1 million towards an endowment for this purpose. We invite you to join them and advance the Society's role in making visual images available to this and future generations. □