

Biographical Portrait

THE MATTOONS AND MCLEANS

DEEP FORESTRY ROOTS

by Andy Mason

Shirley Ann Mattoon was there on September 24, 1963, joining the large crowd that welcomed President John F. Kennedy to Milford, Pennsylvania, and Grey Towers for the dedication of the Pinchot Institute. On this day, Gifford Pinchot's ancestral home, was given by the Pinchot family to the American people and is now managed as a national historic site by the U.S. Forest Service. Known to her friends as "Sam," now 88 years old, Shirley was a celebrity at the 50th anniversary of the 1963 dedication. She had many other stories to tell us about that day and her family of foresters with connections

to Pinchot as we sat and enjoyed appetizers and sipped wine on a beautiful moonlit fall evening on the lawn in front of the Grey Towers mansion.

Sam's husband, John A. Mattoon, a second-generation forester and U.S. Forest Service employee, was also there in 1963 with just a few things on his mind. John worked for the national "I&E" office (Information and Education office, known today as the Office of Communication and Conservation Education), and with the chief of I&E (his boss) on assignment in Europe, John had a major role in coordinating the president's visit and the event.

When he retired in 1983, John Mattoon had more than 40 years of federal service that began in World War II, when he served as a naval aviator flying the Curtiss Helldiver bomber with the 88th squadron on the aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown*. For several heroic actions in the Pacific, he earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses and two Air Medals. He graduated from Penn State University before the war and received a master's degree from the Yale School of Forestry in 1950.

Early in his distinguished natural resources career, in the 1950s, John Mattoon was district ranger on national forests in



Sam Mattoon identifies herself in this 1963 photo of President John F. Kennedy at Grey Towers.

COURTESY OF THE MATTOON FAMILY

Colorado, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. He transferred to the Washington Office, where he worked closely with Forest Service artist Rudy Wendelin and others to help promote Smokey Bear into the icon it remains today. While in Washington, Mattoon and Wendelin also worked together to design the agency's shoulder patch that was used beginning in 1963 until the early 1970s.

After 24 years with the U.S. Forest Service, Mattoon transferred to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and continued his work to promote conservation and educate the public about it. He had a major role in developing the advertising campaign for Johnny Horizon, BLM's very successful symbol of the late 1960s and early 1970s that encouraged litter cleanup and brought attention to air and water pollution and other issues. He also worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and ended his federal career in the Department of the Interior working on the Alaska pipeline and the Endangered Species Act, among other issues. When he retired in 1983, his colleagues presented him with a framed simulated press release that described how he was widely admired throughout his long career by coworkers, the conservation community, and the news media for his "outstanding personal and professional integrity, unswerving loyalty, and dedication to open communication."

The forestry roots of the Mattoon family go deep. John Mattoon's father, Merwin "Chic" Mattoon, was also a Yale Forestry School graduate (class of 1914) and the



Sam Mattoon (right) stands with Margie Mattoon Cox (John Mattoon's sister) at the 1963 dedication.

first forest supervisor of the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina. The Pisgah was the first national forest established under the Weeks Act of 1911 and included a portion of the Biltmore Estate, where Gifford Pinchot first put scientific forestry to work in America. The first school of forestry in the United States—the Biltmore Forest School—was also there, now preserved as the Cradle of Forestry in America National Historic Site.

And the family roots go even deeper. Merwin Mattoon married Marguerite McLean of Simsbury, Connecticut, Gifford Pinchot's birthplace and early childhood home. Pinchot was close friends with

another McLean family member, George P. McLean. Gifford and George were said to be "soulmates" and loved the Simsbury woods. George would gain fame as governor of Connecticut and a three-term U.S. senator. Gifford also knew George's brother, John B. McLean; the two reportedly met in 1895 to help establish the Connecticut Forestry Association. Merwin was also personal friends with Gifford Pinchot and would fish with him as well as with L. L. Bean. Both Merwin and Marguerite Mattoon are buried in the Hop Meadow cemetery at Simsbury. William "Bill" Cox, grandson of Merwin, great-grandson



Fellow employees show off their new Forest Service shoulder emblems with John Mattoon (center) at the Pisgah Ranger District, Pisgah National Forest, 1963.



Singer Burl Ives, broadcaster Arthur Godfrey, and Secretary of the Interior Wally Hickel follow John Mattoon (far right) at a Johnny Horizon publicity event on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in 1970.

of John B. McLean, and nephew of John and Sam Mattoon, lives in Simsbury.

The Mattoon family tree includes yet one more forester: Wilbur Reed Mattoon, Yale Class of 1904. Known as W. R. or "Matty," he was one of the first extension

foresters who worked throughout the South to promote farm forestry and the possibilities of growing timber in that region. He is recognized for many publications and speeches and as one of the best writers in the Forest Service on forestry

matters¹. One example of his work is "Forestry Lessons on Home Woodlands" (USDA Department Bulletin No. 863), issued in 1920.

Through their associations with Gifford Pinchot, the U.S. Forest Service, other conservation agencies and organizations, the Yale School of Forestry, and a love of the woods, the Mattoons and McLeans certainly had a role in shaping early forestry and conservation in the United States. Thanks to Sam Mattoon and her family, we have now quilted these two families into that rich history. □

Andy Mason recently retired as director of the USDA National Agroforestry Center. This article was prepared with the aid of Shirley Ann "Sam" Mattoon, Bill Cox, and Margie Mattoon Cox. Tom Thompson and Karl Brauneis (both foresters and U.S. Forest Service retirees) also made important contributions to this story.

NOTES

1. Elwood L. Demmon, interview by Elwood R. Maunder, February 13, 1959, Forest History Society, Durham, NC.



"Party on Big Levels Federal Refuge—May 1939" is written on the back of this photo, along with the following identifications: "Standing (left to right): T. E. Clarke, Leo Couch, E. Addy, Dr. Jackson, C. O. Handley, Carl Nolting, M. A. Mattoon (tall man wearing a vest), R. M. Evans, D. J. Woolley, and H. S. Mosby. Bottom Row (left to right): B. C. Park, G. L. Varney, A. L. Nelson, S. P. Goodloe, Dr. H. L. Shantz, and Mr. Thornton."