

THE BILTMORE FOREST SCHOOL VISITS OREGON OPERATIONS:

A PHOTO ESSAY

Carl Alwin Schenck (1868–1955) was the founder of the Biltmore Forest School on George Vanderbilt’s estate in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1898. Carl Schenck took his Biltmore Forest School students on a number of field trips to Europe and through various regions of the United States to observe

silvicultural and logging practices, especially after he was no longer employed as chief forester of the Biltmore Estate beginning in 1909.

Schenck called the period of the Biltmore Forest School between 1909 and 1914 the “Odyssey.” His working fields included “headquarters” in Darmstadt, Germany; Mimizan-les-Bains, Landes France; Tupper Lake, New York; New Bern and Asheville, North Carolina; Cadillac, Michigan; and Marshfield (now Coos Bay), Oregon. Schenck’s memoirs are unclear as to the specific dates that the school visited each site. Students were able to begin their training at one site and end at another, as long as they completed the required amount of studies. He felt the “opportunity to establish personal contacts and friendships” at these locations would be important to them later in life.

The photographs below are taken from one of the school’s trips to Oregon. They traveled by train to Oregon and then by steamer along the coast. Schenck indicates that the transcontinental railroads were very interested in the Biltmore Forest School, offering all sorts of advantages if they would select particular routes. Schenck writes “On every trip west we traveled in

comfort, with two Pullmans and a dining car for our private use.” On the trip west the entourage stopped at Duluth, Glacier National Park, and Spokane. It is likely that the photographs below were mostly taken in 1911. In a 1953 biography of George H. Cecil published in the book *The Biltmore Immortals*, it mentions that Cecil, a “Biltmore Boy” himself, welcomed Schenck and the students when the school arrived in Portland in July 1911 “after its first grand transcontinental tour, en route for the C.A. Smith operations in Coos Bay, Oregon.”

The Schenck memoir from which the following images are drawn is located in the manuscript collection of the Forest History Society headquarters in Durham, North Carolina and is entitled *The Dawn of Private Forestry in America, Recollections of a Forester Covering the Years 1895 to 1914*. The captions provided are in Schenck’s own words except where noted for clarity.

A revised edition of the Schenck manuscript was published in 1955 by the American Forest History Foundation at the Minnesota Historical Society under the title *The Biltmore Story: Recollections of the Beginning of Forestry in the United States*. The 1955 book was reprinted in 1974 by the Forest History Society

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under the title *The Birth of Forestry in America: Biltmore Forest School, 1898–1913* and in 1998 by the Forest History Society in cooperation with the Cradle of Forestry in America Interpretive Association and the U.S. Forest Service History Program under

the title *Cradle of Forestry in America: The Biltmore Forest School, 1898–1913*. The latest edition is available from the Forest History Society for \$13.95, which includes shipping and handling.

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This is the type of the special train in which the Biltmore Forest School crosses the continent. Whenever it is desired by the school, the cars of the foresters are detached from the regular train and are sidetracked to a logging railroad for an inspection of the operations of its western lumber friends.

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The Biltmore foresters arrive in Portland, Oregon, [and are] welcomed at the station by their friends, among them George M. Cornwall, editor of the “The Timberman”; George Cecil, chief of District 6 in the [U.S.] Forest Service; assistant forester [J. B.] Knapp; state forester Elliot; [and] Henry Turrish; Lamont Rowlands; F. H. Ransom; and Victor Thrane representing James D. Lacey & Co.



FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY PHOTO COLLECTION, FHS455

On the holdings of the Chapman Timber Company, the [Biltmore Forest School] students and their leader get the first glimpse of a logging scene in the realm of the Douglas-fir. James McNaughton, the logging superintendent (white shirt), explains the situation. Notice that the logs, 42 feet long, are suspended between two small cars.



This is Arno Maren, vice president of the C. A. Smith Lumber Company at Marshfield, Oregon, unrivalled in his days as a builder of gigantic sawmills.



This is A. H. Powers who is confronted by the task to supply the C. A. Smith [Lumber Company's] mills, day by day, with 1,000,000 feet b.m. of logs — and he did it!



The C. A. Smith [Lumber Company's] sawmill at Marshfield (Coos Bay), Oregon, has a daily output of almost 1,000,000 feet b.m. of lumber. It is the largest sawmill in the U.S.A. There is but one difficulty: it is impossible to get rid of the offal of slabs, edgings, trimmings, and sawdust in its gigantic burning tower!



Two lumberjacks in the woods of the C. A. Smith Lumber Company at Marshfield, Oregon, pose to be photographed while laying low a giant Douglas-fir. The understory of trees in the rear consists of cedars and hemlocks.



A trestle bridge on the logging railroad is about ready for use. In the excavations of the roadbed, we find lots of charcoal; sure evidence that the present generation of gigantic trees stands on the cinders of its mother trees.



In the Oregon woods, it is often cheaper to put a railroad on stilts (piles and trestles) than to excavate a roadbed for its track. Notice in the picture the giant size of some logs in the center. The machines in the picture are pile drivers and donkeys.



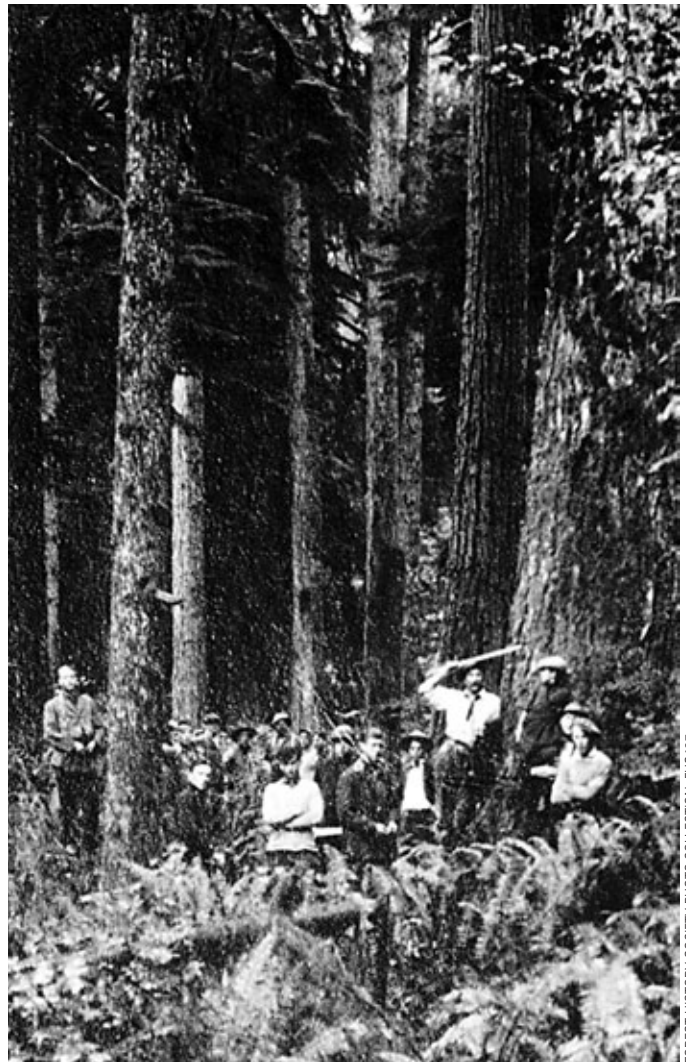
A close-up view of logging in the forests of Douglas-fir with an old-fashioned but reliable donkey engine.



A trainload of logs is about to arrive at its destination, the C. A. Smith sawmills in the harbor of Coos Bay [Oregon]. The slope in the rear of the picture, depleted many years ago, is covered by a promising second growth automatically produced.



The logging train has been unloaded. The logs were dumped into the river and they are now towed, held together in a boom which looks like a triangular flat boat, to the sawmills of the C. A. Smith Lumber Company in Marshfield, Oregon.



Accompanied by Augustus Adlesperger of the C. A. Smith Lumber Company, the Biltmore foresters cruise a section of primeval Douglas-fir at Coos Bay, Oregon.



The lumber as it comes from the sawmills of C. A. Smith [Lumber Company] is being loaded at once on steamers specially constructed for the purpose [of transporting] the lumber over a distance of 440 miles to the C. A. Smith lumber yard on the Golden Bay [San Francisco, California]. The three masts of the steamer "Nan Smith" may be distinguished in our picture behind a black derrick to the right of the lumber piles waiting to be loaded.



At some logging operations near Coos Bay, Oregon, ten men (including the logging boss) are standing and seven men are sitting on one single stump of a big Sitka spruce.



The best stand of primeval Douglas-fir owned by the C. A. Smith Lumber Company lies on Eden Ridge in the backwoods of Coos Bay [Oregon].



A very big but also very rough Douglas-fir felled on the holdings of McDonald and Vaughan at Coos Bay, Oregon. The [Biltmore] forestry students (on the four top logs) are scaling the lumber contained in the giant.



The boss of the woods and the boss of the Biltmore Forest School [Carl Alwin Schenck, left] are leaning against the big end of the giant [Douglas-fir] tree.