

Oral History Interview With

Ralph S. Hosmer

by

Elwood R. Maunder

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This is Elwood R. Maunder on September 26, 1960 in Ithaca, New York, in the home of Professor Ralph Sheldon Hosmer, and we're going to talk today about some of the early days in the Forest Service.

MAUNDER: Now, Ralph, I want you to just briefly tell me about your origin, where you were born, your early boyhood and going to school. Can you tell me a little about your background?

HOSMER: Well, in the first place I'm a New Englander by birth and by ancestry. Our family, the Hosmers, came from Kent, England--a place called Hawkhurst, some thirty odd miles south of London, and two brothers came over to Boston in 1635 and 1636. The elder brother went down to Connecticut and settled at Hartford, and the other brother, from whom I descended, went to Concord, Massachusetts, when that town was established as a town in 1637. So, my grandfather moved away from Concord itself. My mother was Julia Sheldon of Deerfield, Massachusetts and her mother was a Williams. The Williams and Sheldon family went to Deerfield in the Connecticut Valley about 1650. Some of the family descendants are living in Deerfield today--so that straightens out who I am.

MAUNDER: When were you born, Ralph?

HOSMER: I happened to be born in Deerfield because my mother went home when I was about to arrive so that she could be under the care of her own physician and a great personal friend. So I was born in Deerfield, Massachusetts on March 4, 1874. I'm now 86 and a half.

MAUNDER: I see. Your father and his father before him were ministers, isn't that right?

HOSMER: They were Unitarian ministers. My grandfather, who was the one who left living in Concord and moved out to Unitarian parishes. He was a Harvard graduate--he was given a doctor of divinity by Harvard--he was for 33 years from 1836 to 1866 at the First Unitarian Church in Buffalo, New York, and after the Civil War for a time he was the president of Antioch College in Ohio. He returned later to New England where he was minister at Newton, Massachusetts. I can remember the Golden Wedding he and his wife celebrated in the early '80s.

MAUNDER: Tell me, what do you recall most about your boyhood in New England?

HOSMER: Well, my father was a Unitarian minister and was settled for a while in Deerfield to take his brother's place during the Civil War while his brother James--James Kendall Hosmer, the historian, was in service. My father then went to a parish at Bridgewater in Plymouth County, Massachusetts and then to Salem, Massachusetts, the old town on the coast north of Boston. For seven years I lived in that historic town of Salem and some of the things that stand out especially are the museums. The old sea captains when they came back from the South Seas and elsewhere, always brought something which they put in the museum--there was a good deal of truck brought back, but there were some very valuable things. The museums in Salem are just pictures from hundreds of ships that existed in this country at that period of time. I remember in St. Troy that was {Query Author} quite frequently. Perhaps that was outstanding-- I began public school there.

MAUNDER: You went to the public school there? What were your special interests as a boy growing up?

HOSMER: Well, I happen to be an only child and I was always rather closely associated with my parents and other older members of the family. Perhaps, rather more so than most children are and the things that I most remember I think are family events. I remember my grandfather, of whom I've already spoken, used to come to visit sometimes as an older man.

MAUNDER: Of course, there was a good deal of talk of church affairs, I suppose.

HOSMER: Naturally. My grandfather married the daughter of Dr. James Kendall of Plymouth, Massachusetts. The minister of the first church there--probably one of the early Unitarians who organized the American Unitarian Association in 1825 in Boston. He was installed in Plymouth, January 1, 1800 and pastor 57 years until his death in 1857--he was a very well-known man. And that goes back to other New England lines through the Kendalls.

MAUNDER: Did you ever consider going into the ministry yourself?

HOSMER: No, I don't think I did. But I've always been pretty closely associated with the Unitarian churches, I believe.

MAUNDER: You have always been an active member of the local...?

HOSMER: Yes, including the one here in Ithaca.

MAUNDER: I see. Tell me, how did you first become interested in the field of forestry?

HOSMER: Well, I think I had some natural interests in trees and shrubs--I'm no horticulturist, but I have known and I've--the real reason perhaps was that when I was about 15 I had the only serious illness that I ever had in my life, which was a pleural pneumonia--and just pulled through with the help of a skillful physician--but when I finally began to get well he said, "The thing for you to do, Ralph, is to stay about two years out in the outdoors and don't do too much and walk all you can--and just live outdoors. And so I did. Well, that came at a time when I should have been-- had just the year before enrolled in the first class of the Boston Latin school--the famous old first public school in Boston and I was in the middle of the second year. If I had gone ahead that would have brought me into the class of Harvard '97. But, all that went out the window. I spent most of my time in those next two years walking around and riding on bicycles and keeping out-of-doors. My exploration of the adjoining country were visits to the Arnold Arboretum, which was five or six miles from where we lived in Dorchester, the southeast corner of Boston. Then Dr. Green, my physician said, "I want you to go out and help my man do some chopping in our wood lots in Milton," which was an adjoining town. And so, perhaps going with Pat, his Irish workman and the dog went along and I learned under Pat how to fell trees and that was perhaps the actual beginning of forestry.

MAUNDER: That was a period of convalescence for you, following your pneumonia attack, and during that time you were out of school, you didn't --you were not going to any classes of any kind?

HOSMER: No. I did a little studying with a tutor, but many of the basic subjects I never did have properly. Then came the opportunity at Arnold Arboretum, which was located in connection with the Bussey Institution, which was then the agricultural department of Harvard University. Frederick H. Storer, who was well-known for many years for his major textbooks, taught there Agriculture and its relations to chemistry was the theme of that institution. While its number of graduates was not too large, many of the men who did graduate from that were successful in the world of science. Some at Cornell have been in that group. I feel greatly indebted to --getting from intimate connection with Storer--the scientific approach in his teaching. Although his course was in chemistry I've never done anything with directly, but I got to know him personally very well.

MAUNDER: He had a very strong influence upon you, is that right?

HOSMER: Yes, he did. That was a three-year course, one year at the Bussey Institution at the stone building on the grounds of the Arnold Arboretum near Boston and then two years in Cambridge at Harvard in the Long Scientific School. I took various courses in geology and the basic subjects, and then received in June, 1893, from Harvard a degree, Bachelor Agricultural Science--which was my first Harvard degree. And then later, I became a temporary member so-called of the class at Harvard College--1896, by having attended certain same classes that the Harvard '96 men did and I've already attended the 50th anniversary of that class reunion. I expect to go to the sixty-fifth this next year in June. Am I saying too much?

MAUNDER: No, no--that's all right. Your study then at Harvard was pointing you in what direction of professional life? What did you aim to do after you got out of school?

HOSMER: Well, at that time I got--especially to Cambridge--I lived at home in Dorchester and went out every day--which was quite a long trip on the streetcar--rather than living at Cambridge--I was directing myself as far as I could see toward something to do with forestry. Partly it was because of my work with the trees at

the Arnold Arboretum and with one of the professors at the Bussey Institution. So little was known about forestry in those days that I could have been much better advised as to what to take in the way of courses at college--there was nobody that knew anything about forestry.

MAUNDER: Who was your advisor at Harvard?

HOSMER: Well, as long as I was connected with Bussey, Dr. Storer, and Benjamin Watson, who was the professor of horticulture. I was working in the Arnold Arboretum and perhaps John George Jack, one of the assistants had brought me to Sargent, the head of the Arnold Arboretum. I never had anything directly to do with Sargent, but I did with Jack, who was a very helpful person in learning trees.

MAUNDER: What sort of a person was Sargent?

HOSMER: Well, Sargent was a wealthy man who had a big estate and who's great, wonderful botanist, whose great volumes on the {Query Author} of the United States--13 volumes, \$25 apiece--and it was the basis of all of the dendrology and American trees, and active in a great many different ways.

MAUNDER: How did you look upon him when you were a student there, was he very highly regarded?

HOSMER: Oh, he was one of the outstanding leaders in the whole botanical field in the entire country, and particularly in Boston.

MAUNDER: Can you describe him to us?

HOSMER: Well, I actually didn't know him. I know how he looks from photographs, but I don't--

MAUNDER: Didn't you ever encounter him there?

HOSMER: Very seldom. Most of his work was done at his own home or after the Arboretum had the building. I think even so, he usually worked in his own study in {Query Author}.

MAUNDER: Oh, I see.

HOSMER: At the azalea time each year, he and his wife opened their house for two or three days in the week when the flowers were at best and I may have met him that way, but I can't say that I personally knew him.

MAUNDER: This was at a time when forestry was just beginning to be recognized...

HOSMER: This was in the early '90s.

MAUNDER: Where did you first hear of forestry from such men as Fernow and Pinchot and Schenck?

HOSMER: Well, they came somewhat later. I think I've been a member of the American Forestry Association since that period--certainly about '95 continuously.

MAUNDER: You were a member of the American Forestry Association since the middle 90s, in other words.

HOSMER: Yes. Which was pretty well back, of course.

MAUNDER: Well, the association goes back to about 1876, doesn't it?

HOSMER: Yes.

MAUNDER: In other words, it had been in existence about twenty years when you became a member.

HOSMER: Yes, but it was still a pretty small organization then.

MAUNDER: It was.

HOSMER: I had another connection a little while after I received my degree from Harvard, Bachelor of Agricultural Science. I was employed by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and for a little while worked in their library in Boston and then naturally I began to hear about forestry and some of Fernow's publications. From 1886 to 1896 he was the head of the then Division of Forestry of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington. Many publications from his office were coming out, and at that time were on file in the library of the Horticultural Society.

MAUNDER: What were you doing specifically for the Horticultural Society at that time?

HOSMER: Well, I was as sort of a general library assistant. They had frequent meetings, usually a monthly meeting and sometimes even more often. Reports of that were written up by the secretary. I usually read proof of the--I went over the {Query Author} and transcript newspaper under careful instructions--"always read the proofs three times--always three times"--and so I learned how to form that useful job and I got to know more people in that way and the discussions of the things that were being shown in the way of {Query Author} and fruits and what-have-you. That was downtown in those days. The Horticultural Society is now down in Back Bay by the Symphony Hall.

MAUNDER: What could you say about the attitude of the horticulturalists at that time towards the new thought in forestry that was beginning to come over to this country from Europe?

HOSMER: Well, there was a great deal of interest shown by certain people. One of the important men at the Horticultural Society a little later, when I went down to Washington, gave me a rather flowing letter of introduction, which rather surprised me when it was presented. I'm not sure it was altogether--he praised me a little more highly than he perhaps should have. It was evident that it was to send me along the scientific work. That was in the Division of Soils in Washington before I was later transferred to forestry under Pinchot.

MAUNDER: Now, let's just go back a little bit here. You were working for the Massachusetts Horticultural Society...

HOSMER: That's a matter of two years or so...

MAUNDER: Two years, and that was from when, 18--?

HOSMER: No, my degree was from Harvard in 1894 and it took as long as two years--about a year and a half.

MAUNDER: And part of that time you were still going to Harvard, is that right?

HOSMER: Well, I stayed in Harvard until June '95 and I went on up to Washington in '96. I guess it was a matter of months rather than years.

MAUNDER: You went then straight to Washington from your ...?

HOSMER: Then for a little while--I've forgotten whether that was before or after the Horticultural Society, I worked for the city of Boston under the Metropolitan Parks System of Massachusetts. Some of the big bulldogs which are now a park race were being laid out. I actually set stakes and ran some lines in locating the Blue Hill Avenue which went out toward Blue Hills on the southeast side of Boston. So I feel I--the work which under Charles Elliott Norton--no, I've got the name wrong--under Elliott--president Elliott's son--he was the one who made those plans.

MAUNDER: These included planning boulevard trees...

HOSMER: Olmsted and Elliott was the firm and the Metropolitan Park system of Massachusetts--the long series of reports which our grant set forth. I had a lot to do with some of that in a small way. But I was nevertheless in it so that I came to know of a good many and to know actually personally one of the Olmsteds--I was in a class together with him at Harvard.

MAUNDER: Was that Fritz Olmsted?

HOSMER: No. There was another Olmsted, a cousin of his, who was later in California, whom I had a great deal to do with. I don't want to say it and then say it wrong.

MAUNDER: What directed you to going to Washington in search of a job--how did you happen to come to that decision?

HOSMER: Well, it was along in the mid-nineties there was no landscape architecture except in the state way in this work I've been describing. A good many people were pretty hard up and didn't have money for it and I didn't have influence enough to get into either of the leading offices in Boston and there wasn't much doing. Forestry as a whole hadn't been heard of. I naturally had to get a job and there was one offered, a position as forest assistant in the Division of Forest Soils in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Civil Service examination. On the strength of the things that I'd had at Cambridge, courses and other work and reading, I took that examination and passed it and was appointed to an office in that under Luther N. Whitney, who was then head of the Division of Soils, and then in the spring of '96 to '98 I worked in that division.

MAUNDER: What sort of work did you do there?

HOSMER: Laboratory work for the most part.

MAUNDER: Analyzing soils?

HOSMER: Both analyzing soils so they could be classified and also moisture studies--tubes with soils sent in from various parts of the country. I shook them out of the tubes and measured them with a chemical scale--heated them overnight, and measured them again, and then from that data I secured the figures that we were after that Whitney attached my name to his and that was my first official publication.

HOSMER: By 1898 quite a number of Harvard men had been graduated whom I'd known in Cambridge, some of whom were in the U.S. Geological Survey, and one man particularly who was in the Biological Survey in the Department of Agriculture. I was associated closely with them so I came to know a good many scientific men in Washington. Well, then in July, 1898 Dr. Fernow, after twelve years as Forester of the Division of Forestry, resigned to come to Cornell and head the New York State College of Forestry at Cornell University. From '98 Pinchot took over. There were two Civil Service examinations--one was by Pinchot himself and one was by Graves, his chief assistant, who later became the Dean of the Yale School of Forestry. Quite a number of men who had begun to hear something about forestry took those examinations, including myself, and that led to my transfer, at Pinchot's request, from the Division of Soils over to the Division of Forestry.

MAUNDER: How did you come to meet Gifford Pinchot for the first time--do you recall?

HOSMER: I remember I requested an appointment and went over to his office and talked with him. I think it was held at his house rather--in those days the Division of Forestry was in the old brick building which has long since--four-story brick building--long since disappeared from the Mall in Washington--where the huge present Department of Agriculture is. I think Pinchot asked me to come up to his house--he was living then on Rhode Island Avenue, though not in the big house he later built, and we had a very pleasant informal talk.

MAUNDER: How do you recall him? What was your first impression of this man?

HOSMER: Well, Pinchot was a very handsome man, tall and athletic carriage and very piercing eyes. When he looked at you, especially if he had much on his mind, Pinchot didn't have to tell you a thing twice to have you understand what he meant and how much he meant about what he was saying. The work which I'd done at the Arnold Arboretum in studying trees under Mr. Jack, as I had mentioned before, was just the sort of training that he wanted, among other things, a minor man whom he was looking for in the Division of Forestry. And the fact that I did know my trees was apparently one of the assets which caused him to approve my transfer. That was effected and it took some time in October, as I recall.

MAUNDER: This was the beginning of Pinchot's organization of a staff, is that right?

HOSMER: Fernow never had very many men anyway, and several of them either dropped out when he resigned or did drop out shortly afterwards, so that Sudworth {Query Author}, the dendrologist, the noted botanist who was a dendrologist with the Forest Service and one or two local men who were taken in on the business side and were not foresters--and then Graves and one or two other men who had worked with Graves all the while. I was the seventh man appointed under Gifford Pinchot.

MAUNDER: Who were the six previous to you? Graves was one, Sudworth was another.

HOSMER: There were several that had been with Fernow. I guess I'd rather not give those names now because I'm not sure of just the order.

MAUNDER: Were you still a bachelor at this time?

HOSMER: Oh yes. I wasn't married until 1913.

MAUNDER: When you came to Washington to work in your first job there, how much was your salary?

HOSMER: I think it was \$800.

MAUNDER: Eight hundred dollars a year?

HOSMER: The salary wasn't so much in those days.

MAUNDER: When you moved over to join Mr. Pinchot in his work were you given a raise?

HOSMER: I was, but not so much as one would first think. Pinchot's policy in the early years of the Forestry Division under him, was to take on student assistants who, in the rather large field parties which we had for the Forest Service. They were paid \$25 a month and traveling expenses if they were traveling for the government, but they paid their own way in the woods. And when they came to Washington in the winter they were paid \$40 a month--which isn't a palatial thing, but you can live on it.

MAUNDER: Is this what you were getting paid at that time?

HOSMER: Mr. Pinchot gave me--raised my salary from \$800 to \$1000, but it was arranged that after about a month, I went on one or two trips with Graves in the meantime--then I spent a good part of that winter of '98 in lumber camps in northern New England, New Hampshire primarily, without salary--which about made up for the \$25 a month arrangement if I had come in just as an assistant.

MAUNDER: Why were you without salary?

HOSMER: Well, because that was the custom. To take on college men who had an interest in forestry, but had to be tried out. Through the courses I had at Harvard and especially my work at Arnold Arboretum, I had done the equivalent of that, so it was not receiving salary--my expenses were paid up into the lumber camps of northern New Hampshire, but not salary during that period. I went down to Boston for Christmas, but otherwise I was living in logging camps.

MAUNDER: What lumber camps did you stay in? Whose camps, do you recall?

HOSMER: I can't remember off hand. I can get some of the names. Largely International Paper Company camps and some of them were on land which now--later became a part of the White Mountain National Forest.

MAUNDER: Can you describe these camps as they existed in those days?

HOSMER: Well, some of them were pretty--the expression "beanhole" was how the beans were cooked out-of-doors--about the most primitive way of living in the camps fifty-sixty years ago. And some of those camps were very much of that type. Most of the laborers were men farmers in the summer, came over from Prince Edwards Island and other Canadian places in the American provinces. The French-Canadian coming over of labor in the camps in New England didn't come until somewhat later. Of course, the same is true of northern New England. Some of the camps were better than others. I got enough to eat, but most of the time I lived with the scaler and only the assistant people had a comfortable cabin. Some of the time I lived right in the bunkhouse with the rest of the--about forty or fifty men all packed into one set of bunks.

MAUNDER: The old "muzzle-loader" type bunk, you mean?

HOSMER: Somewhat primitive arrangement. Fortunately, I didn't get any kind of insect--why, I don't know.

MAUNDER: Were there plenty of them around?

HOSMER: Plenty of them around. I must have been accepted, I guess. What I was actually doing--these camps were logging spruce, some balsam and occasionally white pine, but mainly spruce, which in two or three of the forests was very heavy stand. It was 300-year-old spruce and I was staying the rigging crew by measurements of rate of growth on felled trees. The camps in which I was working, the log went down to the river on 20 or 40 foot lengths, so the counting and measuring of the rate of growth on the stumps and on the cut part of the trees. It was rather cold weather and it was my job during that winter, on the basis of the figures which resulted from those cuts, I later based my thesis at Yale School of Forestry--and I was graduated there in 1902. That I believe is a matter of record now, in some of the recently published lists of some of the early degrees which were {Query Author}

MAUNDER: Well, now these statistics that you were making there in these camps were for the use of the Division of Forestry, right?

HOSMER: Yes.

MAUNDER: And this implied that some contract or understanding between them and International Paper Company, in order for you to be there, is that right?

HOSMER: Yes. Pinchot--that raises the whole question that one of the things that Pinchot did early in the game, when he became forester, when he was appointed, he arranged with the secretary that he should be known not merely as head of the department, there were plenty of heads of department, but he was to be known as The Forester, and that gave him a standing in a way. The Pinchot family, of course, was a very wealthy family. Both his father and mother had money--it was \$25 million or something of that kind--probably a good deal more than that in the end.

MAUNDER: Do you think this had anything to do with his acceptance from people of industry then, in that time, so as to make his representatives welcome in the camps, to do this kind of work that you were doing?

HOSMER: Well, the story of that offer of advice from assistants--the offer was open to anyone who had five acres of farm woodlots to the states--and then the foresters were sent out from Washington either in individuals or two men together--or else a considerable-sized party in the case of the state jobs, such as I did later in the Adirondacks and afterwards in California. There may have been thirty men in a party and

some of these other men were young college men who were {Query Author} to see if they wanted an offer and if the Forest Service wanted them as permanent members. Congress was impressed so the appropriations of the Division of Forestry under Pinchot went up and up and up--doubled for three years or so. All of that is a matter of record in the Forester's Report, which is on file and easily accessible.

MAUNDER: Did the companies at that time seem to be very much in favor, in sympathy with what Pinchot was doing?

HOSMER: In the first place, there seemed to be companies that were trying themselves to find out what it was all about and the hostility which later developed between Pinchot and certain lumber companies and his strong feeling that there needed to be federal regulation--that didn't come until later in the picture.

MAUNDER: In the earliest days there was some feeling of friendliness?

HOSMER: Why, yes. They were perfectly willing to have a stranger come in their camps--if you didn't mix up at all, as least they accepted it--with the local company management. He was just there doing his job. The only friction I ever had was from any of the individual men--all of them were very skilled choppers, of course, and they kept their axes in perfect condition. I asked one man one day if he could smooth off a bit of rough stem I had and he didn't want to do it. He said, "get an axe and do it yourself." and I apologized. But that's the only friction--they couldn't quite make out what I was doing--and they never did care to try to find out. When I came from town I brought back newspapers--stories of the last prize fight, why they were glad to see them. I seemed to keep on good terms and that wasn't an accident.

MAUNDER: Now, you were beginning to tell us a little bit about the experience you had up in the New England woods in the lumber camps, or were they pulpwood camps? Were they cutting pulpwood there or were they cutting timber?

HOSMER: It was mainly timber in those days.

MAUNDER: Mainly timber? This was then going into sawmills, is that right? And these camps were mainly those of the International Paper Company? Were any other companies involved?

HOSMER: I can't remember that offhand. That I've got some other notes on which might help.

MAUNDER: What was the attitude of the men in the camps towards the work that you were doing? How did they look upon you?

HOSMER: Well, they couldn't understand what this young man, a boy to them, with a bunch of papers, he seemed to be measuring the rings on the stump which they didn't really know existed, I guess what he was doing it for. He was a strange sort of a beast to them, but as long as he didn't bother them, they didn't bother him.

MAUNDER: I see. Didn't they ever inquire of you what this was all about?

HOSMER: I don't remember if they did or not, or if they did a short answer was quite sufficient for them.

MAUNDER: What sort of life did they lead in the camps at that time?

HOSMER: They would get up very early in the morning and after a hearty breakfast, walked out to where their particular job was during the day and then felling trees by use of double-bladed axes. I think they were using double-bladed in New Hampshire in those days--mostly in New York they did and then when it came late afternoon they'd come back to camp for supper and going to bed not so long afterwards. Twasn't a very exciting life, it was very hard work. As far as recreation went, there wasn't much of that. Outside of reading possibly an occasional newspaper, I don't remember that there seemed to be much of any reading on the part of anybody.

MAUNDER: How did they amuse themselves? What sort of entertainment did they have?

HOSMER: I think there was some card playing. I'm really not very clear on that. There have been several books written in late years--I've got some letters in a trunk upstairs that I wrote, that I think may have described the life. I've always for several years been meaning to dig out those letters if I can find them.

MAUNDER: I hope you will, because that would be very interesting to us. Well, now this data that you were gathering, were you filing this or sending it back to headquarters in Washington as you complied it, or?

HOSMER: Well, actually because of my arrangement with the Yale Forestry School, it was held in New Haven, that is, knowing that I was going later to the Yale Forestry School, it wasn't put into the file in Washington, though it may be there now, but it was rather brought back to New Haven and then when I got to New Haven I made use of it personally.

MAUNDER: I see.

HOSMER: And then it went back into the Yale School files and whether it was ever returned to the Division of Forestry, I don't know.

MAUNDER: In other words, you were being sent out in a sense, to get more training and experience in forestry by the Division of Forestry, and part of that included going back to school at Yale for a year, is that right?

HOSMER: That came a little later.

MAUNDER: Oh, it did.

HOSMER: You see, I was already in government service and had two years of it and had certainty things that the men at Yale generally acquired, but I hadn't myself been to Yale. The Yale School of Forestry which was essentially {Query Author} to stay in the Forest Service.

MAUNDER: Did Mr. Pinchot encourage you to go back to school and get your forestry training?

HOSMER: No, it was more or less automatic if you were going to be in the Forest Service you've got to be a graduate of a forest school.

MAUNDER: I see.

HOSMER: And as Pinchot and his family had organized the Yale School of Forestry and with the cessation of the work at Cornell, in 1903, Harvard and Yale were the only places to go. As it was set forth in some of my writings on the forest schools that developed later.

MAUNDER: Yes. How many years did you spend--how long a time did you spend in these camps up in New England?

HOSMER: I went up --Graves' was assistant forester in those days in Washington. I think he took me up in the first place on a trip to what's now the White Mountain National Forest and then later I moved on further up near White Mountain itself. One of the older men of these new men under Pinchot in the Division of Forestry came around to see me every two or three weeks at that time. He also was working with the International. He came one day bringing me a pair of snowshoes which I had never used and that made it much easier to get around. That was long before the days of skis. That was the means of motion in the winter on foot in the New England mountains.

MAUNDER: Where did you go from this assignment?

HOSMER: Well, I went back to Washington in the spring, I was called back about May and then I went back on salary then at the rate of \$1,000 a year and then the rest of that spring I was going out on some of the extension work on woodlots. G. Frederick Schwarz had joined the Division of Forestry and we made one trip into the Middle West and I made one alone into New England, visiting a number of different farms and wood lots, giving suggestions on the ground and then writing a report which was sent to them. And usually those suggestions were carried out by those who received them.

MAUNDER: They were carried out.

HOSMER: On the smaller people. A good many of the bigger companies didn't carry them out in a big way but they did begin certain practices and they found that these--that was after the surveys--considerable tracts were made by rather large parties--they found out that actual surveys--treat tree with calipers was a good deal more accurate than the land lookers. Some of those old lumbermen who could walk through the woods and come out with a total figure very close to the actual real amount, did very marvelous work, but there was no record. There was simply this gross figure they got from it and the owners of timberlands, the statistics which the foresters gave them were accurate in a way which only cost comparatively little more and even if that's all they did, when we made recommendations of how they should cut, that was something quite different.

MAUNDER: But they used their own methods for cutting.

HOSMER: They used their own methods for cutting.

MAUNDER: How did this effect Mr. Pinchot and the rest of you who were making these surveys? How did you feel about that:

HOSMER: Well, we were anxious, forestry was a cause in those days. All of us who followed Pinchot were so impressed by what he stood for and his magnetic way of drawing men to him. Anything that Pinchot said was right; there was no question about it, Pinchot had said it. We followed him through fire and flood. And that lasted for a good many years, and has continued to last with some of us, in part, at any rate, until his death. With probably the rest of us after we grew older and had more experience of our own, we couldn't go always all the way that Pinchot went in certain directions.

MAUNDER: How did Pinchot impart this almost evangelistic furor of his to you as individuals?

HOSMER: Just by being himself, I guess.

MAUNDER: Did you have regular meetings together in which he gave you pep talks, or how was it done?

HOSMER: Well, in 1900 that's when the formation of the Society of American Foresters came in. And there were only a comparatively small number of us altogether in the country, and one afternoon in November, word was sent around--we were all huddled together in three small rooms in this old Department of Agriculture building--desks and chairs almost on top of each other and Pinchot had a little office bedroom for himself where he lived, the door wide open most all of the time. If you wanted to see who was talking to him you just walked the stairs from that same place and you could see who he was talking with. That's the way it was done. And whoever in the crowd that Pinchot wanted to see, those of us who were in the office that afternoon at four o'clock. It was my good luck to be in the office, I might just as well have been out on a trip somewhere, but fortunately I wasn't. So, he and Graves and Price and several other men were the members who came to this meeting to see if it was desirable to set up a professional society and I described what happened there in one of my reports about the beginning of the Society.

MAUNDER: Well, there's no need for you to repeat that, because that's been done already.

HOSMER: Well, then afterwards, I happened to be chairman of the Committee on Arrangement as well as the first Treasurer of the Society and we had our meetings in Mr. Pinchot's house. A beautiful, great house with a big dining room.

Thomas {Query Author} who arrived {Query Author} in Washington and a careful program--a paper was read and discussed and then to which all of the men connected with the Division of Forestry were invited to come, and afterwards the "baked apple" supper, and Pinchot's {Query Author}, and plates of brown bread were served. And the men were living on \$40 a month in Washington in the winter--it was a godsend at least usually once a week to have something to eat. Pinchot purposely had it so and the butler kept bringing in and in and in--it's been joked about a lot but that was one thing that it did, and then secondly, Pinchot invited a great many different people, men of importance of the various government departments and never could we have met those men--many of us never at all could have met them except in such a way as that. And that helped to develop {Query Author} more than anything else possibly could.

MAUNDER: I suppose it also helped to spread the word about what you were doing among these men from other areas?

HOSMER: Quite. And then later, when we set up a publication, known as *The Proceedings*, these addresses and papers all went into that magazine and became the first professional literature what was go out by this organization of foresters.

MAUNDER: How did you pay for such a paper as that? You were all, most of you anyway, were on very small pay, I suppose you could do it by your dues, or was it...?

HOSMER: I think a good many gifts, of course, were received from not only Pinchot, but later from other people who were interested--who went to the Society for special purposes, but my recollection offhand is that *The Proceedings* were always paid for by the dues. I should check on that, Elwood. That information is all available in the file of our *Proceedings*, and in other publications the Society got off from time to time. Those didn't cost so much to print in those days. They were small editions of course, and also, that there was the magazine which Dr. Fernow had established, called a forestry quarterly which afterwards was combined and became the present JOURNAL OF FORESTRY. This is rather getting ahead of the future and mixing it up.

MAUNDER: Can you tell me a little bit about those discussions that you used to have at the Society of American Foresters in the beginning--there were only about eight or a dozen of you to begin with, weren't there?

HOSMER: Yes, of those directly in the Society, but there were all these student assistants. I joined the Society in the autumn of 1898 and then there was 1899 and then in the summer of 1900, in 1901, there were a lot of these field parties in all parts of the country, the West Coast and all the way from Maine--we're getting a little bit out of the chronological order here, but during the years, especially 1900 and 1901-1902 there were a considerable number of big field projects in which student assistants up to perhaps thirty men, the camps were going on, and many of those students were there in the following winter. And so there were plenty of people connected with forestry who hadn't yet been taken in formally and certainly hadn't become members of the Society because they weren't graduates of any forest schools yet. So that the meetings were different in character and most important of any of them was one night when Theodore Roosevelt came over to Pinchot's house, breaking a new precedent by doing so--the President does not go to a private house to speak--he did. T.R. was constantly doing things that nobody else had done before and that's remembered by everybody who had the good luck to be there and he told us straight from the shoulder what we ought to do as foresters.

MAUNDER: What did he tell you? Do you recall the...?

HOSMER: Well, that's all set forth in the first edition of the first number of *The Proceedings*.

MAUNDER: All right, we won't bother with details on that.

HOSMER: And then other nights the members of the Society, just a small number of us, seven regional members, and then there were seven or eight other members, older men who were in different parts of the

country and didn't happen to be in Washington the date we met, so pretty soon there were fifteen members, and then not before very long again, some of the first graduates of the forest schools began to come in.

MAUNDER: Where did Fernow stand in all of this organization of the Society--where did he stand? I get the impression, Professor Hosmer, that the Society of American Foresters in its first year or two, revolved pretty largely around the little group located then in Washington, D.C.

HOSMER: Yes, that's true.

MAUNDER: And for that reason it didn't bring into its discussions in any great way, men like Fernow and Schenck and others who were out away from Washington working in other parts of the country.

HOSMER: That I think can be said as true. Most of those men and some of them were professional foresters, were busy with their own affairs and Pinchot was doing certain things with these men who were just about--having been student assistants in the summer--were just about to come into the Society itself. And the things that happened at G.P.'s --we all called him G.P.--Gifford Pinchot--own house--the meetings were spoken of--whereas, well, Dr. Schenck for instance, was busy with his school for students down at the Biltmore estate in the south; Fernow was at Cornell and having troubles of his own in getting the Adirondack lands underway--started where the laws provided there should be a demonstration in the forest--some other men were doing their own work elsewhere in other places as you just said. So that, later these men had an active part in Society affairs and after Fernow had established the quarterly magazine at Cornell, naturally that carried a lot of information about what was happening in the Federal Service and elsewhere and in that way, more and more they--and finally, as I've already said today, that magazine was combined with the *The Proceedings* of the Society which was what was happening in Washington.

MAUNDER: Well, now at this time, about the turn of the century, there were really only a small handful of professionally trained foresters on hand here, were there not?

HOSMER: Well, you can see the first professional school in the country and on this continent, North America, was that established in the autumn of 1898, Cornell University and then the Yale Forest School opened in--two years later and the first class to be graduated from that was in 1902, June.

MAUNDER: So that the men that were formulating the Society of American Foresters, men like Pinchot and others, were principally European trained foresters, right?

HOSMER: Yes. Fernow, of course, was a German by birth and a graduate of German forest schools and he came to this country largely because Mrs. Fernow was visiting in Germany, they got acquainted and he followed her home when she came back to the United States and they were married. She was very active in helping him in all of his work.

MAUNDER: Tell me, who do you look upon as the father of American forestry?

HOSMER: Well, it's a little bit difficult. It seems to me personally that in a broad way from an educational standpoint, Fernow has rather a good claim to that. But when you say American it means so very many different things. You've got to sharpen it up and classify it. The first work, the first official foresters, men who were doing forestry in the Division of Forestry, was further back. Here again I'd rather give those names later. But there's no question that as a professional school the New York State College of Forestry at Cornell University in the autumn of '98 with Fernow as dean, was the first professional school. Dr. Schenck's school started about the same time. In the old German days, it was essentially a half century earlier, Hartig and Carter had master schools. They had apprentices and they would take some of the day off and give them lectures and then go to work in the afternoon. Just as Schenck did down at Deerport. But it's a very different thing from that to a college set up as the New York State College of Forestry at Cornell, University was under Fernow and so from an educational standpoint, being the first school in the North American continent, I think he can be called the father of American education in forestry. In administration there may be more chance for several people to be called so.

MAUNDER: Who would you consider?

HOSMER: That's where Pinchot comes in. During the years that Fernow was in Washington as head of the Division of Forestry he made a good many suggestions, but none of them ever got into laws to the extent of actual practice. And that didn't begin until, most of us think, until Pinchot started. Probably is controversial, of course, as to how different people think about it.

MAUNDER: Fernow never seemed to have that ability to sell his ideas to legislators or to executives at government the way that Pinchot did.

HOSMER: Decidedly not, and that's one reason why his work at Cornell wasn't a greater success. There's a {Query Author} confidential publication which is nevertheless on file in--when Theodore Roosevelt was governor he interviewed him in his office in Albany, New York, and T.R. said, "How are you getting on?" "Well, pretty well I think if the legislature would give me some money to work with," replied Fernow. Theodore drew a card and wrote on it, "Give this man what he wants, T.R., Governor.", and "Give this to chairman so and so." "Well," says Fernow, "Of course, I never did that because that would be introducing politics into the game and that's what I was trying to keep away from." Well, if that card had been presented, things might have happened and the accident situation might never have occurred, and T.R. might have been right behind Fernow afterwards. And that's the situation which a good many don't know, because some of us knew all the time, but there was an opportunity which Fernow lost there which, with his knowledge and ability in other ways, might have been very helpful to him, if he'd made use of T.R. The first thing, that of course, Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt were personal friends and constantly cultivated, so that was a wonderful team that got things done and had a great deal to do with the rapid events of forestry as a new profession--absolutely new profession--did find its place as early as well, certainly ten years ago, if not 20, when it was 40 years old.

MAUNDER: There was a great deal of personal rivalry among the leaders of forestry in those days.

HOSMER: Well, not necessarily rivalry, it may have worked out that way, but a somewhat I'd say, difference in approach and all those men were strong individualists, of course, naturally.

MAUNDER: They rubbed each other the wrong way.

HOSMER: Well, that sometimes happens, especially between Pinchot and Fernow and between Schenck and a good many others. Schenck was also a German and when he went back, I guess he was still an officer in the German army--

MAUNDER: This caused some sentiment against him, is that right?

HOSMER: Well, there's a good deal of literature on that subject, too, which goes into it for those who want to follow it. I was never in that personally and I'm not prepared to discuss it, not now anyway.

MAUNDER: Can you tell me a little bit about these working plans that you made up as a specialist working for the Forest Service in the early days, both for private landowners and companies?

HOSMER: Well, the idea was to demonstrate what forestry meant in practice and there were really three thoughts of plans which the Secretary of Agriculture had approved the general idea and Pinchot was told to carry it out. The certain statements of what the Division of Forestry stood for we afterwards turned into the Use Book, as the publication was called {Query Author} officially from that and as I've already said individuals, or small parties of two or possibly even a few more men, so you could make a few measurements, went to individual farms and spent part of the day, or spent two or three days and it was information given on the ground followed up by a carefully written letter or report which was sent very shortly afterwards to care of them. I think a great many of these led into what we call extension work in forestry nowadays. And then there was the work with larger organizations. I've already expressed the comment on that. And then there was the work with the states, which quite a number of states came in and wanted assistance and that was on a bigger scale.

MAUNDER: What was the reason why the recommendations in these working plans were not carried out any more than they were? What were the factors which entered in?

HOSMER: Well, it was a new thing. The lumber industry had grown up from small individual lumber companies. Sawmills go way back to the beginning of things in New England. Some of the regulatory laws to protect the forest, especially against fire, those are all matters of early literature and J.P. Kinney's book on forest law, and then one of his publications from Cornell, his master's degree here, {Query Author} before that {Query Author}. It was all new.

MAUNDER: New ideas aren't accepted very rapidly.

HOSMER: Well, this matter of cutting high stumps in northern New England. A heavy snowfall, four or five feet of snow, and cutting was done in the winter, and you tramped down the snow a little to find a good place to stand, to cut and then you cut it off. If the stump was three or four feet high, why it just was. It might have been too bad; perhaps there was more wood down there, but you had to bend over to cut it and you hadn't begun to use those saws, which also of course, saved the lower diameter, you weren't used to it--something new and the laborers knew less about it and it was hard to make them do it and you didn't realize that you were losing so much money. One of my {Query Author} shows by pictures what the trouble was there.

MAUNDER: What about the tax structure on forest lands, did that have any influence?

HOSMER: That was a very big story all by itself and it's altogether too late to start on it in this interview.

MAUNDER: But it was a factor of importance.

HOSMER: Oh, yes, certainly. And a good many of us have put in a good many hours on this tax structure.

MAUNDER: To what extent do you think the people in the Division of Forestry and later the Forest Service, in those early days recognized that fact? They were impatient with the landowners who didn't follow out their recommendations, but to what extent did they understand their recommendations weren't wholly practical?

HOSMER: Well, plenty of people were working on it. That's one reason why our annual meetings developed in the Society of American Foresters and then later why we broke up into state sections of the Society, so that there could be more opportunities for discussion and we've been continuously doing that until now--this is the 60th anniversary for the main organization--coming in November.

MAUNDER: Well, fairly early on though, in the history of the Society, there began to be a growing sentiment among the forestry people that the government ought to pass regulatory laws that would force landowners into cutting along prescribed methods that they set down and...

HOSMER: There have been some changes of opinion. One of the reasons that Pinchot sent me up in the winter of '98-'99, was that he wanted some of his men to be in touch with the lumber industry and one way of doing it as to be up and spend some time right in the camps and just see what was going on. So, naturally I was a city body, had never been in the woods in that way before, naturally I came out of the woods knowing a lot more about what the people whom I slept with in these common camps, my man in the next bunk to me may have been the chief chopper. I learned how he worked, even if he wasn't interested enough to see what his support of the papers was doing and I don't know that anybody else was sent out to do just that, but Pinchot's idea was that the axe and the held belonged together and one couldn't work without the other. The actual lumberman was the cutting edge and the foresters more or less directed it with the held and so that {Query Author} held and the lumberman were one organization together. So that's a very pleasant theory--but it didn't last very long. Afterwards, Pinchot got partly from his training in German that the only way to make private owners do things was to do it with a big stick and wielded by the federal government. State rules weren't enough and some the men working under him were somewhat more mature by that time, didn't quite agree with all the {Query Author} and so long in the 20s, after the war, there came that division in

the Society and men in the Forest Service office felt quite differently from what some of the other foresters did. All of which is a story by itself--later in the game.

MAUNDER: Well, I see here that we're almost down to the end of this tape, Professor Hosmer and perhaps we ought to break at this point and go to lunch with our friends, shall we do that?