

Alfred Cunningham Papers, 1910, 1931-1937, n.d.
(Correspondence Series)
Schenck Christmas Letter, December 1937

Transcription

[Transcription of a three-page typed Christmas letter from German forester and former Biltmore Forest School forest director Carl Alwin Schenck (1868-1955) to "Dear friends anywhere and notably in America" penned in Lindenfels and Darmstadt, Germany. In the letter, Schenck sends his friends wishes for a happy Christmas and new year and discusses such topics as: his and Mrs. Schenck's European travels during 1937; a trip he took to the Canadian Labrador which enabled him to renew forestry acquaintances made years before in Canada and the United States; and European forestry association meetings he attended and forestry lectures he gave during the year. The letter includes one paragraph on politics, concluding that "Hitler's regime has done, however and undeniably, more for good forestry and more for good game laws than what was done by all imperial and democratic governments before him." [p. 3, middle paragraph] The original spelling and formatting of the letter has been maintained in the transcription below without any editorial correction. Digital scans of each page of the letter are included at the end of this document. The letter is part of the [Alfred Cunningham Papers](#) held by the Library and Archives of the Forest History Society in Durham, North Carolina.]

From C. A. Schenck, Lindenfels and Darmstadt, Germany,
at Christmas 1937.

Dear friends anywhere and notably in America:

Here are my best wishes for a merry Christmas and for a happy New year, for you and for your loved ones!

And right here I might close: But I am anxious to say more, I am solicitous for your continued attachment, ---and how on earth can I expect you to continue attached unless you know what I have been experiencing during the year about to end? Now is the time to lighten old friendships anew as if they were that many candles on the Christmas tree!

It was not easy in 1937 for me to preserve all the time a full measure of philosophic serenity and aloofness: We (Mrs. Schenck and I) lost a brother and a sister when the year began, and a beloved and neighborly sister-in-law in the fall. And we had terrible worries among our nearest and dearest, so terrible that I am trying to forget them.

So much for the troubles, and now to the other side of life: March and April were spent in Rome and in Florence. Glorious Rome with St. Peters and Vatican and Forum and Pantheon and Villas Farnese, Borghese, Medici and d'Este! Glorious Florence, when it rains with its Palazzo Uffizi and Pitti, when it shines with its witchery of countrysideshows! I have been in Italy four times, and the fourth was the best: From the days of the Goths and the Longobards to the days of Hitler, the German soul seems to be infatuated by the sense of Italy.

The chief event of the year was not Italy however but was my trip (without Mrs. Schenck, unfortunately) to the wild woods of

Canadian Labrador, in June and July. The trip was a sort of a wild goose chase: A Dutch banking concern had offered, to some German friends of mine, all the stumpage on a huge and blue-blooded Canadian Seignory, the price to be paid in German marks. I was sent, with some others, to investigate. We found the Seignory, but we did not find the stumpage. But I found some other good things: A renewed contact with old friends, a knowledge of the good and pious fisher-folks living on the north shore of the gulf, and a revival of my long-neglected connection with Quebec combined with some glorious excursions guided by Ellwood Wilson, Jack Gilmour, Henry Roy and Fernand Boutin. On my way back, I "discovered" the Province of New Brunswick, with its University (J. M. Gibson and R. E. Balch), its Acadian Forest Experiment Station (B. W. Fleiger) and its capital harbor of St. John. Passing thru Boston, I snatched four hours to renew my old acquaintance with the Arnold Arboretum and with Alfred Rehder. Arriving in New York, I made the discovery of the Boyce-Thompson Institute for Plant Research which had for me more fascination than what ever did the shows shown in the Grand Museum of Natural History. Unfortunately, there was no time left in New York for a "Saengerfest" of the Biltmore Immortals. Mrs. Schenck and the Wagner-Bayreuth-Festivals were waiting for me on the other side.

Bayreuth, alas, was frustrated by Mrs. Schenck falling sick. We made up for the loss however by a trip to Munich where we had "The Rosencavalier", "The Flying Dutchman", "Cosi fan tutte" together with some heavenly trips to the Alps and to the Lakes nearby. Anyhow, in spite of mournings, we had music galore in 1937: Most unforgettable was Verdis "Aida" in Rome with Ben Gigli and Maria Caniglia. And there was "Othello" and "Freischuetz" and "Czar and Zimmermann" and "Rienzi" and "Poet and Peasant" and "Lilofee" etc etc. As to concerts, we heard Adolf Busch in Florence (Sonatas Brahms, Bach, Beethoven) and we heard my own stepson, violinist George Kulenkampff, in his orchestra concerts plaid in Heidelberg, Wiesbaden and Berlin (Brahms double, Brahms D-dur, Beethoven spring etc).

Now, dear friend, do not imagine that I am exchanging forestry for music: For forestry, I have made five trips to Berlin, one of them for the great international meeting of the forest experiment stations when and where the U. S. A. and Canada were sorely missed. I have also paid my respects to the meetings of the German Dendrological Society. I have delivered a festive address (on American trees fit for European introduction) at the Hann Muenden School of Forestry. My dear and beloved University of Montana had honored me by an invitation for the spring term, and I was chagrined when I had to decline. My greatest joy in forestry was an all-too-short visit by Nelson Brown-Syracuse and by Carlile Winslow-Madison. Unfortunately, I missed contacting the Tates (St. Paul) and the Corydon Wagners (Tacoma) when they were near. Fred Lyon kept me in touch with Ben Alexanders Masonite. All summer long, the old Schenck-premises in Lindenfels were flooded with guests, most of them of course not foresters but relatives including one G. W. M. of West Orange N. J. and on Georgiana Sch. Of Wilton Conn. My activities in forestry would have been greater had it not been for the continued presence of guests and for the

continued absence of a stenographer. A man minus a good typist is a poor type of a man, and a bad typist cause me to swear--- an admission which brings me to think of religion!

Religion! Every sunday, I attempt to read some sermon by Fosdick, some passage in the French Family Bible, some pages of Quaker literature and some of Will Durants philosophy. I am no churchgoer. But I have been attending services in Rome (catholic as well as protestant), services on the "Empres of Britain" (high church), holy mass on the S.S. "Sable I" (an Indian priest celebrating), hochamt at the French Eudiste church in Havre St. Pierre (Saguenay, with its admirable bishop J. M. Leventeux) and services at the American Church in Munich (Rev. Harold Belshaw). Is there a religious war in Germany? If there is--- as some Americans seem to think--- I am not aware of it. Both protestant and catholic bells are chiming, day by day and notably of a Sunday, in my own village of Lindenfels, and there is nothing to prevent me or any other Lindenfelsian from doing and from believing what I or he wants to. If there be any heathens, I am one of them. Anyhow, neither the christian nor any other religion can be killed by any sort of a government. A religion may die, however, from old age. History proves it.

Politics! I cannot claim that I am watching, with a due amount of interest, its various antics and trics and theatrics performed on both sides of the Atlantic and of the Pacific. Evidently, every nation wants peace. But the peace of the world cannot come unless France is willing to make peace with Germany. Unfortunately, Hitler's strenuous attempts in this direction (on which the American press seems to be silent) have been made in vain. Russia as an ally seems better to France than Germany as an ally. Hitler is a great and vociferous orator, and eloquent France, maybe, dislikes his brand of rhetorics. Maybe, too, that the French have not heard that phrase of Hitler's which has struck me most among his many pronunciations de 1937: "I have and I have had," he said, "three friends with me, all these long years: Before and in the war, WANT. After the war, SHAME. Since the war, WORRY." For me the history of politics as evidenced by the printed memoirs of great men and women is more thrilling and more edifying than are the prevarications of contemporary politics. I know that Hitler is misunderstood in America so as not to say that he is despised. Hitler's regime has done, however and undeniably, more for good forestry and more for good game laws than what was done by all imperial and democratic governments before him.

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Very sincerely,

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*Please send me a line of yours, please,
& tell me about Canada*