

The First Year—Growing Pains

January 19, 2020, marked the one-year anniversary of when the Forest History Society began working in its new headquarters. In many ways we haven't missed a beat, but in others, it seems that everything has changed; every decision is made within a new context. This is an exciting time for FHS, its leadership, staff, supporters, members, the forestry community, and the fields of forest, conservation, and environmental history.

It took many months to settle into our new quarters. The staff deftly organized materials while setting up offices and preparing for on-site researchers. Creating and posting signage and recognition plaques to recognize our many benefactors became a top priority. An emergency generator was delivered and tested to ensure climate control for the archives and power to other essential areas.

Slowly, the newness of arriving each morning to a fantastic workplace became commonplace, although I don't think the awe will wear off anytime soon. Visitors are all understandably impressed, and those who had been to our previous location are especially wide-eyed. The forestry and conservation community is increasingly recognizing this new point of pride.

Without benefit of publicity, calls to use our new meeting space, the Lynn W. Day Education Center, started coming in. We have concentrated on hosting programs aligned with the FHS mission. So far, we've hosted 100 folks for the Duke Forest annual public meeting, a visit from 90 middle-school students, and a two-day colloquium recognizing the 250th

birthday of Alexander von Humboldt, the influential scientist, explorer, and naturalist. We've held open houses for the local chapters of the American Institute of Architects and the Society of American Foresters, and for two neighboring retirement communities.

As envisioned, both the library and the archives are witnessing a healthy increase in their collections of books and records. This spring the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) in Freiburg, Germany, will send its archival records. This came about because a FHS member connected us with the GFMC, whose goal is reducing the harms of wildfire and increasing knowledge about the role of natural fire and sustainable application of fire in land-use systems.

Of course, as with any new construction, there remains a "punch list" of items for the building contractor to address. Because of a subcontractor error, we experienced high humidity levels in the archives that caused some materials to develop a visible mold. The problem was caught early and was completely remediated last September. The testing company remarked that we now likely have the cleanest archive in the region.

On May 3, 2019, we celebrated with a grand opening. How heartwarming it was to see 160 of our donors, friends, members, leaders, and staff enjoy the results of their support and the work of those who came before us! The event included a welcome in the Harley Langdale Jr. Foundation Lobby, building tours, a ribbon cutting on the George H. Weyerhaeuser Plaza, and a reception. In honor of Smokey Bear's 75th anniversary, our staff created a display drawn from the Rudy Wendelin collection housed at FHS for the L.



Michael and Karen C. Kelly Exhibit Hall. Some of Rudy's original artwork and a 1950s version of the Smokey Bear suit was shown for the first time, and many attendees had their photo taken with Smokey Bear. A fun time for our guests, who came from all around the United States and Canada.

With such a resource to launch the Society into the future, it is important to make sure that our priorities are clear and we have a well-developed vision. We are now preparing a strategic plan. We've already brought together librarians, archivists, and historians to consider the Society's future as a specialty library and archives and provide recommendations for its leaders to consider. The process will also include a leadership survey, a membership survey, and a workshop at the October 2020 board meeting. Our best opportunity for success is when everyone participates.

This also applies to your membership contribution: it is easiest to succeed when everyone participates. Without funding, the recommendations of the strategic plan will remain only aspirational. Please help us make the most of the opportunities provided by our new headquarters by renewing your membership. Be a part of history!