

GRAYBEARDS OF WISCONSIN FORESTRY

Whenever the forest resources of the state are under consideration, you are most certain to hear retold the story of "wicked" lumber barons and of wasteful pioneers. It has always seemed especially fitting for the youth of our state to learn that bit of forest history, for we count much upon the youth of today having a forceful part in restoring our forests. The achievements of many farm boys in Wisconsin today give every promise they will carry on in a truly constructive way.

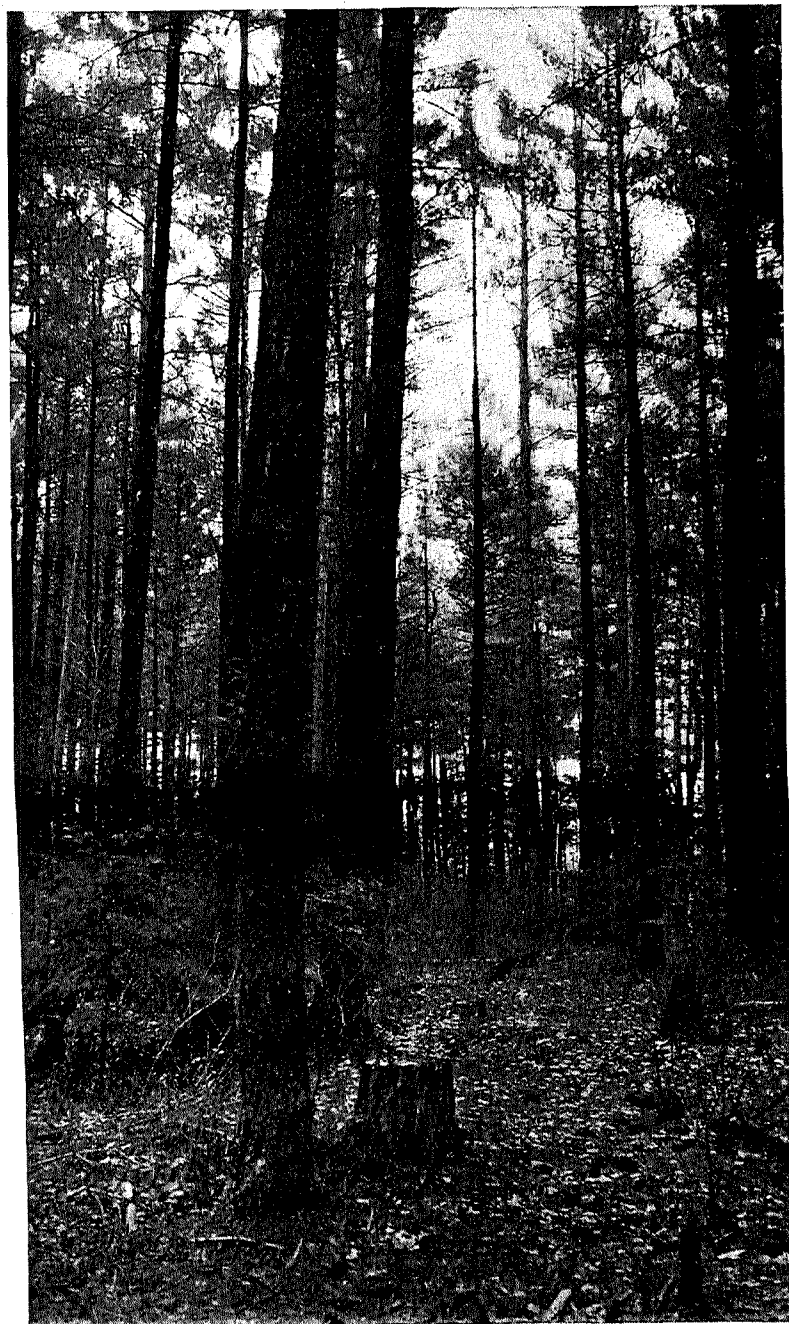
Between the earliest lumbermen of the state, and the youth for whom we hope much, is a small group of far-seeing pioneers in forestry work who have made real contributions to better forestry by having developed definite examples of success. What they have done speaks more loudly than anything we may say about them.—EDITOR.

By F. B. TRENK
Extension Forester

It was a smoky autumn that drifted over the north woods of Wisconsin, after the desperate drought of 1910. Day after day, enormous billows of smoke rolled skyward from the thousands of acres of slashings and timber which burned without hinder. La Crosse, Madison, Milwaukee, in the path of the northerly winds, breathed the pungent odor of pine wood smoke, dimly aware that a new chapter in the story of the north's desolation was being lived out. Only when spring came, was it possible to fully understand how enormous had been the losses. The aspen and cherry and birch, which we see on countless thousands of acres there today, are but the remnants of the "tree weeds" which started on these fired acres.

But far to the north, near the little settlement of Seeley, in Sawyer County, a strange thing had happened to a settler's woods, which had been set off for a permanent farm woodland. The fire had run through this settler's woods, as it did those of all his neighbors, but few of his trees were killed. The high-flying blue goose, on its northward course, saw here an island of green in an ash-gray wilderness.

Soren Uhrenholt, the settler, had learned of woods care in his native Denmark. When in 1900, he moved with his family to a one-



room house on a quarter-section of cut-over land, he had already determined that not all of his lands would be put to crops. Today he relates that he knew well enough there would come a time when the logging camp, which gave winter employment to settlers, would be no more, and if there were to be winter woods work, it would most likely be found in his own woods. Seventy acres, he thought, should give him and his growing sons something to do and something to sell every winter.

But there was the slash from the earlier logging. An itinerant log buyer had been along, and had even offered to increase this pile of slash by taking off some 40 thousand feet of standing timber which hadn't been thought worth while at the first cut. It would have been easy, he says, to have taken the small cash sum offered him, for he was desperately in need of money, but he chose the hard way out. Between times, while most of his labor went into the clearing of land for the then profitable crops of potatoes, he worked at getting rid of that ever-present hazard, the great piles of slash. We suspect today that the fear of destruction by fire of his pioneer home had more to do in promoting the slash clean-up than any old-world concepts of forestry. The important thing is that by 1910, when disaster struck, he was ready.

The lack of dry fuel on the ground, the densely packed woods duff, and the heavy shade cast by the thick young growth prevented the all-destructive crown fire. There was a surface fire only, and the losses it caused were small. Here had been demonstrated in a most effective way, just what could be achieved in "fire-proofing" a woods.

It was the very year after this fire, Mr. Uhrenholt tells us, he began his annual winter logging jobs, to produce poles and logs for sale. They continued without interruption until the winter of 1929-30. The record of these cuttings is no less amazing than the escape of his trees from destruction by fire. His records show that during that 20 year interval, he removed an average annual cut of woods products valued at \$500, with the peak income in the fall of 1929, when he took \$900 worth of Norway pine logs for cabin construction from a little over four acres. There is standing today on these seventy acres of wooded land, something over 300,000 board feet of timber.

Intensive timber farming has made possible this net growth increase in addition to annual harvests. Only sound, straight trees were permitted to grow in his woods, but all of these were given just the right amount of growing room. No livestock was ever permitted to trample the tree roots; in fact, pasture grasses simply don't grow there. The useless destruction of young timber when mature trees were felled just wasn't permitted. There was a right way to drop each ripe tree, and that is the way it was done.

It would be surprising, indeed, if a man with Mr. Uhrenholt's practical vision and accomplishments had escaped the attention of his neighbors. Recognition and honors have come to him. In January, 1916, the College of Agriculture of the University of Wisconsin

awarded him honorary recognition as an outstanding farmer and farm leader in the state. Some may have thought that recognition came late enough then; time has shown that his most productive years as a conservationist came afterward. He was appointed one of the first forest wardens of the state. He chuckles as he relates today some of his early efforts as a forest warden, answering fire calls in an old Model T Ford, his principal equipment, a shovel, an axe, and a supply of wet burlap sacks.

An admiring editor of a northern daily paper said of him in 1914, "He is the real conservationist, because he crops his pine as he crops his potatoes. His voice is mild and his manner is gentle, and he has the head of a philosopher. In 1900 his woods were estimated to have 40 thousand feet of pine. Since then, he has sold between 300 and 400 thousand feet, and still has more pine than when he started.—His mind is a sponge of information, and he will knock off a day's work any time to go to a farmer's gathering."

Looking back on nearly 40 years of farming in northern Sawyer county, this 82 year old pioneer once remarked, "When I first settled on this land, I believed three things were possible. I believed a farmer should have a well managed woods for winter labor and income. I think I have shown that is practical. I believed I could develop an orchard on the sloping hills east of the Nema-kagon. For three years now I have been picking apples from my trees there. I believed the Nema-kagon Valley here could be made the most profitable potato region of the state, and that the river could be developed to supply us with enough water to carry us potato growers through our serious drought periods. I am living in the hope that I will yet see this last belief become a reality. We can grow potatoes but we still need the water."

Yes, Mr. Uhrenholt, with the advances the agricultural engineers are making in the development of economical, portable irrigation systems, we can look forward with you to the time when your Nema-kagon River will stand between you potato growers, and those summer droughts, which more than once have caused the potato crop to fail.

There is a rich harvest of information in the Uhrenholt woodlands for three groups of persons. The botanist finds here the undisturbed association of many and varied plants. The forester will see, as in few places elsewhere in the state, what may be obtained in the intensively developed northern pine woods, unharmed by fire. The farm economist will find ample support for the theory that winter income from the woods is an important factor in a balanced farming operation.

Mr. Uhrenholt's philosophy of woods farming is given expression in this little couplet, which he gives as a free translation from the Dane:

"Where the plow won't go
And the Scythe won't sing,
A tree should grow."

is singled out by pa and ma and all the in-laws for a night's roosting, and when this happens, the top leader is pretty sure to be badly bent—often cracked. Most people would vow vengeance on the crows and let it go at that; but Grant Weidman, in spite of his 70 odd years, climbs to the tops of such injured trees, and much as one might bind a broken leg, uses lath as splinters to straighten the injured leader. It's a risky business and very likely isn't worth the hazard; but Mr. Weidman wants straight tree trunks in his plantations. He believes in doing things that way.

MOVIES FOR 8113

Some time after Jan. 1, 8113, people will gather at Oglethorpe university in Georgia, swing back a stainless steel door and find out just what was going on in this twentieth century. At least that is the plan that has been established at the southern university where they are building a crypt of civilization where material of the present is to be sealed up and saved for the future centuries.

And when that grand opening occurs, the new citizens will find moving pictures of Wisconsin game birds and of the present state efforts to bring back the forests. Conservation Director H. W. MacKenzie has contributed the Wisconsin films to the Georgia project.

Should the Wisconsin films fail to withstand the ravages of centuries in spite of all careful efforts to preserve them, the Wisconsin record will still be subject to review as the pictures are being reproduced on metal where they are believed certain to survive.

University authorities told Director MacKenzie that they could not give him a guaranty as to what may happen in the future. In fact they suggest that an impatient public may decide to steal a look after the lapse of only a few thousand years.

THE CENSUS CARD

● By the time you read this it is a good idea to sit back and examine your conscience as to whether you have complied with the law in filing your annual game census report. The law says that every hunter who was licensed last year must have his card in the office of the conservation department by Feb. 1. There is a provision that a hunter can be denied a hunting license if he has failed to meet the census card requirement. If you have not filled out the card and sent it in, chances are you will be among the delinquents Feb. 1 unless you act now.

WISCONSIN GAME REFUGES

By RALPH C. CONWAY

During the current deer season I talked to a hunter who had all the appearances and mannerisms of an old-time woodsman. Appearances were not deceiving as he stated that he has worked in the woods in Wisconsin since 1889.

Naturally we discussed changes in the deer country and other conditions pertinent to hunting in general. The gentleman was not aware of the fact that I was employed by the department during the first part of our conversation so when he stated that the country he considered to be real good hunting in that particular vicinity was cut up by a deer refuge, I was expecting a blast against such closed areas. To my surprise he said that the establishment of the refuge in question was one of the best moves ever made as far as the deer herd in that county was concerned.

The reaction of the average hunter to the closing of all or part of his favorite territory is not always so commendable although I am of the opinion that the majority of sportsmen are in favor of our present refuge program.

This season the cry again arose that the department, with the aid of the CCC camps, had driven the deer into the refuges previous to the opening day, so it might clear up considerable misunderstanding to here explain just what the purpose of the drives was and exactly where they were made.

The drives are solely for the purpose of determining the number of deer in various sections of the state both before and after the season as well as securing an indication of the buck-doe-fawn ratio and other pertinent information to aid both the conservation congress and the department in their recommendations regarding an open or closed season for any given year. There is absolutely no attempt made to "herd" the deer into a refuge if such "herding" were possible. The truth of this statement is very apparent to anyone who has ever witnessed one of the deer drives or counts.

In addition, the fact remains that during the period from 1935-1938 only 76 out of a total of 390 drives were made within one mile of a refuge or closed area; the balance of 314 were from 2 to 20 miles away. Certainly it would be a physical impossibility to "herd" any appreciable number into closed areas under these conditions if such was the purpose of the drives.

Further examination of the facts pertaining to deer drives shows that 318 out of the 390 drives were post season. Why were the majority of them made after the close of the deer season if we had any intention of controlling the deer kill in certain areas?

At the present time there are 225 game refuges totaling approximately 500,000 acres. Of these, 106 totaling 408,632 acres may be classed as deer areas, and the balance of 119 including 54,622 acres,