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VIRGINIA

FORESTRY SPECIALIST

ANNUAL REPORT

1931

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ANNUAL REPORT
EXTENSION WORK IN FORESTRY

DECEMBER 1, 1900 to NOVEMBER 30, 1901.

By

Walter C. Byrne

Extension Forester

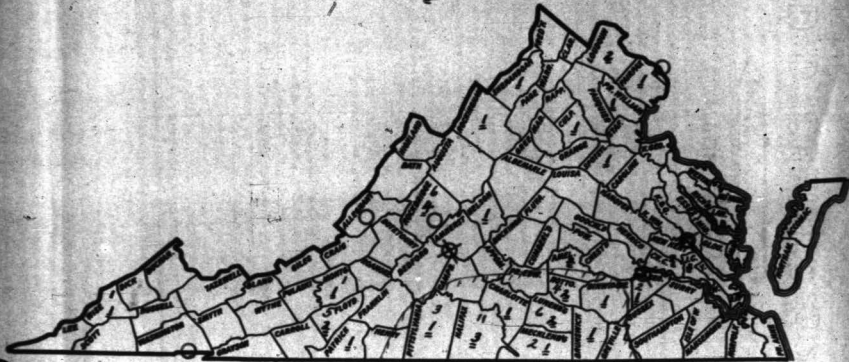
To

John E. Hutchinson, Director Extension Division

Virginia Polytechnic Institute

Area in which flue cured tobacco is grown and so the best field for improvement cuttings.

- 2 Number and location of demonstrations mostly thinning and weeding demonstrations.
- Location of pulp mills (indicates those which have actively cooperated).
- 2 Number and location of visits to counties.



(1) Organization:

The organization of the Forestry Department remains unchanged. Under a joint agreement participated in by the United States Department of Agriculture, the Virginia Forest Service and the Extension Division of V. P. L., one full time specialist is employed. He reports to the State Forester as regards subject matter and to the Extension Director as regards method of presentation.

(2) A year of Emergency Work:

The drought of 1930 created an emergency which interfered seriously with the development of any organized program of work. The county agents were so preoccupied with calls for relief work (government loans, red cross, etc.) and with the immediate problem of producing something to eat and something with which to feed stock during the coming winter that they did not have the time to follow their own programs. Quite naturally, forestry work suffered even more than projects which promised immediate returns. In addition to this situation, the market for practically all forest products suffered still further decline through 1931. This made it impracticable to press any project which had been built around the sale of forest products.

As foreseen when I prepared my plan of work, there have been an unusual number of calls for assistance in the treatment of ailing trees. Some of the calls were occasioned by insect injury and some by other more or less obvious agencies, but by far the larger number were evidently attributable to the 1930 drought. The number of such calls probably exceeded the total for the preceding five years. Very little could be done in most cases, but the seriousness of the loss to the individual owner and the constant threat of an epidemic which might

be caught in an incipient stage, made it desirable to investigate as many of these cases as could be done without going to undue expense. In the majority of cases the location and the description of the trouble did not seem to warrant investigation and so were handled by correspondence.

(3) Changes in the relation of extension work in forestry to allied projects:

The resignation of Dr. Ledwick who has been giving so much of his time to the investigation of problems affecting farm forestry and wood utilization was a severe blow. Plans for giving forestry instruction to students taking agricultural education had to be, for the present, abandoned. It is the hope of the administration to renew this work as soon as the financial situation clears up, but it was unfortunate to have to give it up just as it appeared to be well established. Before leaving, however, Dr. Ledwick prepared two additional bulletins that are of much value. The first of these "Marketing Woodland Products in Virginia" was issued as Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin, No. 576, in December 1930. The other, "Farm Forestry for Virginians" was issued as a bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute with Dr. Ledwick and the extension forester as co-authors. These two with the one reporting a survey of Wood Using Industries of Virginia issued last year, give a good foundation for the intelligent handling of farm forests and the sale of their products as soon as the business depression clears up enough to make sales possible.

(4) The Situation:

Approximately three fifths of the land area of Virginia is either occupied by tree growth or is lying idle because of the lack of such cover. Of these

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fifteen million acres of actual and potential forest land, approximately half is included in what is usually regarded as "farms". There are no records to show how much of this area is being handled by its owners for continuous production or according to any particular plan, but certainly a very small part. One million three hundred thousand acres are reported as "woodland pasture" which usually means that it is of little value either for woodland or pasture. Of the remaining forest land a majority has been "culled from above" so many times that it has degenerated to little better than a weed patch, yielding a mere fraction of which it is capable.

The area of idle or waste land in farms appears to be on the increase. Two factors are at work here. First:- In addition to the normal decrease in the area under cultivation that has been taking place since about 1900, there is a marked tendency toward abandonment in the back country and clearing other, but usually no better, land within reach of improved highways. Second:- Abandoned farm land does not recede as readily and completely as it did a few years ago. Young trees do not bear seed in such abundance as do old trees, nor are they able to outstep their seeds over as wide a territory. A few years ago tall, full crowned old yellow pine trees occurred almost everywhere - in the woods (towering above the surrounding hardwoods), along ditch banks, fence rows and road sides. Whenever a field was turned out, it seeded in almost immediately to a dense stand of young pine. Today these prolific seed trees have largely disappeared and with them have gone the millions of seeds which they bore almost every year. Fields that are "turned out" now are more apt to do one of three things (1) stay bare and gradually wash away (2) become foul with brush and weed growth or (3) seed into a sparse stand of pines which not only fail to use the land to capacity but will produce only rough, lanky, trees of little or no value.

As an offset to these two influences, fires are less frequent and less severe than they have been in the past and the areas reforested by artificial means increase each year (slowly perhaps but increases). But so far as idle and waste land on farms is concerned the balance is unfavorable.

During the past year other influences have been at work. The 1933 drought put many marginal farmers out of business and it seems likely that low prices in 1931 will finish others. To offset this, city dwellers are drifting back to the country; some to live with relatives and some to operate farms which were abandoned during recent boom years. The permanence of this movement will depend upon the rate and completeness of business recovery, but the immediate result is the clearing up of a considerable amount of land just as it is well started on the way to being reforested.

Virginia farmers have always fallen back on their woods to help them over periods of financial stress. This year is no exception. Where they have taken the precaution to sell their product before cutting the trees, their timber has performed a valuable service, even though the forest may have been left in poor condition. But where the timber has been cut in the hope of selling the product, the owner stands a very good chance of losing both his timber and the labor that went to harvest it. Wood using industries have suffered from the depression as severely as other lines and so are unable to purchase normal amounts, much less the increased offerings of thousands of hard pressed farmers. No opportunity has been overlooked for warning farmers of this danger.

(5) Phases emphasized:

Limited market possibilities and shortage of money with which to purchase

planting stock made it necessary to confine most of the work this year to projects which could be built around the home demand and which did not involve a cash outlay. It was further necessary to confine work to those counties and seasons in which the county agent could get away from his emergency work enough to catch up with his program as far as forestry projects were concerned. Fuel wood is one product which is cut every year regardless of droughts, depressions or drought. It is cut on almost every farm and it is about the only product that can be made from the low quality material that makes up such an important part of the material taken out in the course of thinning and weeding operations. On most farms fuel wood is over-abundant as a byproduct of cleaning fence rows, altering buildings, squaring up fields, cutting timber for sawmills, etc. Throughout the fine cured tobacco areas however, there is an additional outlet. In addition to house wood, large quantities of wood are required for curing the tobacco crop. The bright tobacco area, therefore, offers the best opportunity for making improvement cuttings appear attractive. The more heavily cleared valley counties come next and it is in these two areas that most of the improvement cuttings have been made.

An exception to this general situation was the allocation of 1000 cords of pulwood business to the farmers of Halifax by the Bedford Pulp and Paper Company the latter ^{part} of October. This business was the direct result of the efforts of County Agent Hall and is being handled through the Halifax County Farmers' Social Clubs. (For details see section 7.) Work on this project has started off unexpectantly but will mostly be done during the coming winter. It was hoped and expected that the more hard pressed farmers would jump at this chance to sell some of their slack season labor, but it is the best farmers in the county who are

signing the contracts. Evidently the poor farmer thinks more of his glack season than he does of a chance to sell it. It is a fine thing never-the-less and has set forward the forestry program of Halifax county by several years.

Calling the random farm forest in the process of getting out stove wood, fine wood or pulpwood has been the principal project this year. In Halifax county it was possible to take all three - at least there was the option of all three. Trees that show no promise are marked for removal. Those that will make acceptable pulpwood are so utilized. Those that are too small, crooked, defective or of the wrong species are worked up into fine wood or cord wood. So far as it goes, it is an almost ideal situation. The demonstrations in Floyd and Rockbridge counties were, of necessity, built around the home demand for cord wood.

An attempt to interest farmers of the coal mining section in use of the calling principle while cutting mine props has not been successful. As the county agent in Wise county expressed it "they seem to fear that we are trying to 'put something over' on them." These farmers see good blue grass pasture on adjacent (lime stone) land and firmly believe that all they need to do is to get rid of the trees and they can have similar pastures even though their soil may be entirely different. Such an attitude is hard for a forester to overcome: he has an axe to grind. Perhaps soil surveys will help, but it is going to require the combined educational efforts of the soils, agronomy, farm management, livestock and forestry departments if this senseless clearing of steep mountain land is to be checked before all of the top soil goes to silt up the Mississippi river channel and contribute to the flood hazard.

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(c) Publications:

The temporary side tracking of the regular program has made possible the preparation and publishing of several bulletins and articles which have been in prospect for some time.

In the spring of 1930 while a thinning demonstration was being conducted in Gloucester county, one of the men present showed an unusual amount of interest and understanding. Investigation revealed that here was a farmer who had been practicing a very practical and profitable brand of forestry for a period of over thirty years. Believing that an account of what this man had done would carry more weight with the average farmer than any amount of precept as to what should be done, the story of his entire operation was secured and used as the basis for a fair exhibit. Favorable comments that came in regarding this exhibit and the mimeographed record which accompanied it, led the writer to believe that the story was worth putting into bulletin form. This was done under the title "Farm Forestry: A Concrete Example". The bulletin is being given wide distribution.

Believing that there was need for a publication which would bring together those forestry facts and principles which seemed most applicable to Virginia farm conditions, the writer collaborated with Dr. J. H. Ledyard in the preparation of a bulletin on "Farm Forestry for Virginians". This was published as a V. P. I. bulletin rather than an extension bulletin but is available for extension work.

As a follow-up of Dr. Ledyard's bulletin on "Marketing Woodland Products in Virginia" had as a means of keeping the information therein up-to-date, questionnaires are sent to representative wood using industries throughout the state, three times a year (February, June and October) and a volume of their replies issued under the caption "Timber Market Conditions". This, of course, falls far short

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of the Outlook information that is gathered and issued by the Department of agricultural economics on farm crops, but serves a useful purpose. It is the belief of the writer that some agency in the U. S. Department of Agriculture (probably the Forest Service) should assemble data of a nature comparable/assemble^{to that} in the preparation of crop outlook reports and then issue an outlook report that would serve as a guide in the marketing of farm timber. A non-perishable crop like timber should profit by such a report even more than farm crops.

The little "Grip Sheet" of forestry news notes and timely suggestions has been continued as have radio addresses. It is difficult to get any definite measure for results from these activities as very few replies or inquiries are received. It seems quite likely, however, that they reach more people than we realize. One of the other specialists commenting on this subject of how many people we reach, recently commented, "If you think no one is listening to you, just say something that is unpopular. You will come to the conclusion that everyone is listening." It seems that he had struck an unpopular note and that the response had been all that anyone could wish.

(7) A good piece of work by County Agent Hall.

During the fall of 1930 when the furzing situation seemed to be at its worst, County Agent Hall of Halifax county asked for assistance in locating a market for pulpwood to help his farmers over the existing emergency. Letters to all of the pulp plants which seemed to be favorably located, brought the information that they could not possibly use any more wood than they had under contract, so the matter was dropped. On October 22, 1931, the Halifax Pulp and Paper Company, operating at Big Island and Colman Falls, got in touch with Mr. Hall and asked

him if his people were still interested. He answered them that they were and was allocated 1,000 cords of business at \$6.00 per cord of peeled, pine pulpwood. (The cord in this case meaning a cord of 128 cu. ft.)

Deeming this to be of sufficient importance to warrant a special meeting, Hall called together the county committee of the Farmers' Social Club organization for the afternoon of October 27th and invited the forestry specialist to sit in at the meeting. The plan decided upon was: (1) To distribute the business through the various social clubs. (2) To limit the amount of business allotted to one farmer to two carloads (approximately 25 cords). (3) To give first preference and, if possible, to confine all of the business to those who would agree to make use of the thinning and weeding principle in taking out the trees. (4) To designate one member from each participating club to handle all of the business for that club (order cars when needed, make up carloads and keep record of amount each person put into mixed cars, see that wood comes up to specifications and carry all correspondence with the company). (5) To allow each representative a fee to be decided upon by each club. (6) To put on a series of demonstrations just as soon as the individual clubs had ratified the plan and then start cutting immediately.

By November 23rd, all preliminaries had been disposed of and they were ready to go to work in earnest. Nine demonstrations were put on November 23rd, 24th, and 25th. It was very gratifying to see that practically all of the men with whom forestry work had been done in past years were interested in this project and had a good enough grasp of the fundamentals to go ahead with their cutting without waiting for the special pulpwood demonstrations. They were mostly present but merely to check up on what they had done and to encourage others who

were a little doubtful regarding the practicability of the scheme.

An unexpected turn of events was the fact that it was not the hard up farmers (the ones who complain most bitterly about hard times, low prices and high taxes) that are taking these contracts but the best farmers in the county. This situation has its dark and bright side. Many of these people are in bad shape financially, with nothing in sight with which to pay tax bills. There is a chance for any man who has the timber and the energy to take in \$150 cash; every penny of it net. Yet he raises every objection he can think of and refuses to take part. The bright side is that this 1,000 cords of business is in the nature of a trial order; to see whether or not it is practical to thus do business directly with the farmer and so save to him the commission usually paid to a middle man. These good farmers are much more apt to put the project through in a way that will be satisfactory to the company than would these poorer farmers who refuse to participate.

The forestry specialist expects to spend as much time on this project as is necessary to put it through. If it proves satisfactory to both company and farmer there is reason to hope that larger orders may be placed in the future and that the farmer may come to look forward to the sale of a stated amount of pulpwood each year and so add another cash crop to his farm business. If it works out well in Halifax county, it will be easy to interest county agents in other favorably located counties. That is in the future. Right now it is \$6,000 in cash at a time when \$6,000 looks bigger than it has for many years and bigger than we hope it will for many years to come.

(8) Looking ahead.

Virginia, in common with the rest of the United States, is in the midst

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of an economic adjustment towards which she has been headed since colonial days. Soils, forests and mineral deposits have been exploited for their virgin richness and then abandoned (frequently to waste away through erosion and fire). In other words we have been living on a green diet and now find ourselves faced with a skin milk problem of no mean proportions. Soil fertility and forest wealth can be rebuilt. Mineral deposits are another story; they are not renewable.

Agriculture must rebuild the soils. Forestry must rebuild the forests. The extension forester must take for his, the problem of rebuilding the farm forests and at the same time of making them contribute regularly to the farm income. It can be done. It has been done (witness Mr. Walker's demonstration as recorded in Farm Forestry; A Concrete Example). The farmer must be taught to think of his forest land as an integral part of his farm and to include it in his plan of farm management. That plan must take into account that the primary functions of the farm forest are to:-

- (1) Put to productive use all land which cannot be farmed profitably and permanently.
- (2) Supply such forest products as may be helpful in the operation of the farm.
- (3) Supplement the farm income through the sale of surplus products.
- (4) Round out the farm labor year by supplying profitable employment for farm labor, work stock and equipment during slack seasons.

Four phases of the farm forest problem seem to stand out:

- (1) Rebuilding the forest capital to a point where current growth (interest) can be counted on for a substantial income.
 - (2) Developing and educating markets to utilize the variety and class of material that is available, or is made available in the course of carrying out (1).
- //

- (3) Regulation of cutting and selling so as to substitute an annual or periodic income for the present forest and farms system.
- (4) Harvesting the matured crop in such a manner as to insure prompt and complete regeneration.

The first of these involves extensive use of the thinning, weeding, and culling principle in the removal of such products as fuelwood, pulpwood, stove bolts, etc., protection of the forest from fire, insects and other harmful agencies and the reforestation of idle and submarginal farm land. The second involves a study of markets and the encouragement of industries which are capable of utilizing small size and low grade material. Existing industries must be shown how it is to their advantage to so modify their purchase policy as to encourage the farmer to keep his forest permanently productive. The third step involves the breaking down of a time honored custom, that of selling timber by the boundary, and substituting for it a rotation system which calls for a smaller but annual harvest to be taken out by farm or local labor during periods of slack work on the farm. Step four involves the use of seed trees, partial cuttings or whatever artificial system will best produce the desired results.

Many farmers are still dominated by the tradition that trees are an encumbrance and that use of the land requires that the trees first be cleared away. Farm forestry work must overcome the influence of that out-of-date tradition, must get timber recognized for what it is - one of our important farm crops - and then secure the adoption of practices which will insure to the owner the full benefits of that crop.

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Calendar of Field Work

Month	CVT's	Field Agents	Visits	Days	Adult Meetings	Prayers	C-S Clubs
Dec.	0	11	4	---	0	00	0
Jan.	10	0	2	0	2	00	---
Feb.	0	10	0	7	0	00	2
Mar.	10	7	2	0	4	110	1
Apr.	10	4	---	---	---	---	---
May	10	0	2	1	1	00	---
June	0	0	0	2	---	---	4
July	00	4	2	---	---	---	2
Aug.	10	10	1	1	---	---	2
Sept.	17	0	2	---	---	---	2
Oct.	15	14	0	0	0	00	2
Nov.	10	0	4	10	1	00	---
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Distribution of Field Work

County	No. Visits	Days	County	No. Visits	Days	County	No. Visits	Days
Ashe	2	0	Jones City	2	0	Ft. George	1	2
Bunswick	1	0	Lenoir	2	0	Ft. William	1	0
Chas. City	2	0	Lenoir	2	0	Northridge	4	0
Charlotte	1	0	Hertleberg	1	2	Rockingham	1	0
Caloper	1	0	Montgomery	1	1	Shenandoah	1	0
Davidson	1	0	Nelson	1	0	Wise	1	1
Fairfax	1	0	Hottoway	2	4	Fredericksburg	1	1
Floyd	2	2	Patrick	1	0			
Halifax	2	11	Pittsylvania	1	2	25	00	40

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

Va. A. & M. Col. and
Poly. Inst. and U. S.
Dept. of Agri. Cooperating.

EXTENSION SERVICE

Blacksburg, Virginia.
October 31, 1931.

Dear Sir:-

You will find enclosed a summary of market conditions for Virginia grown timber and other forest products, as reported to me during October 1931 by representative wood using industries operating in this state. In order to make these summaries really useful they should represent as wide a range of industries and regions as possible. You have in the past cooperated to the extent of filling out and returning one of our questionnaires but for some reason your October reply failed to reach me. In February I will again call on you and I trust that you will regard the service of sufficient value to warrant your cooperation. *

These periodic reports are of tremendous value to the landowner who may have timber which he wishes to market. I trust they may be of interest and value to the purchaser of this material as well.

As forester with the Agricultural Extension Service it is my objective to see the forests on Virginia farms handled on a crop basis. To do so will enable the owner to realize a regular income from the forested portion of his farm and will insure a dependable supply of raw material to the manufacturer.

Being an entirely new line of thought to most people, I have found it difficult to explain just what is involved when I speak of handling the forest on a crop basis. To meet this difficulty I selected what I regarded as a very practical example of farm forestry and have written it up as bulletin 124 of the V. P. I. Extension Service.

I am enclosing a copy of this bulletin and hope you will find time to read it. Mr. Walker never heard the word "forestry" until a few years ago but he was doing a good job just the same. Incidentally there is no slack season on the Walker farm.

Yours for a better understanding between timber producer and timber user and a larger and more dependable income for both.

Wilbur O'Byrne

Wilbur O'Byrne,
Extension Forester.

WO'B:f

** Sent to those who failed to return the questionnaire*

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

Va. A. & M. Co. and
Poly. Inst. and U. S.
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Yours for a better understanding between timber producer and timber user.

Wilbur O'Byrne

Wilbur O'Byrne,
Extension Forester.

WO'B:f

* Sent to those who returned the
questionnaire properly filled out.

TIMBER MARKET CONDITIONS

October 1931.

The following market trends for various timber products in Virginia are summarized from questionnaires received from selected representatives by the Virginia Agricultural Extension Division at Blacksburg, Virginia. These reports are issued every four months. (Feb. June, Oct.)

In general it may be said that there are no prospects for increases in demand or price for the various products. The price in most cases has reached the bottom, and is such that it does not pay to produce the items. Expected demands for manufactured products have not materialized, and the stocks on hand are excessive. Again, the timber owner is strongly advised not to cut his trees unless he has contracts for the sale of his material.

EXCESSIVE WOOD. The demand for this item has fallen off sharply in the past three months and prices have fallen with the demand. Prices reported range from \$7.50 per long cord of 180 cubic feet down to \$5.00, with offerings exceeding demand at these prices. The above is all for peeled pine.

STAVE WOOD. With the slackening in the demand for barrels which is natural at this season, the demand and price for stave wood has suffered still further decline. Unpeeled pine is quoted at \$3.25 to \$3.50 per cord of 160 cubic ft.

PULPWOOD. Peeled pine is being bought at from \$5.00 to \$6.00 per cord of 160 cubic feet. Unpeeled pine is as low as \$5.00 per cord of 180 cubic feet at the mill and \$4.25 at shipping points. Some poplar and gum and a little pine is still being moved at as high as \$8.50 but this price is paid only on old contracts which will not be renewed at that figure. Some mills report a slight improvement in business but at the low prices that have prevailed for sometime. Most of them are over-supplied with wood delivered under old contracts. This wood must be used before additional purchases are made, to avoid deterioration.

EXTRACT AND TANNING MATERIALS. Most of the plants are carrying excessive stocks and restrict buying to material trucked to the plant. No sassa was purchased this year due to an over-supply from last year. Chestnut wood is quoted at \$4.40 to \$4.50 per cord of 160 cubic feet and chestnut oak bark at 55¢ per hundred pounds; both delivered at plant.

INSULATOR PIN STOCK. Locust is quoted at from \$10.00 to \$12.00 per cord of 128 cubic feet with one mill paying \$13.00 per cord of 152 cubic feet. When purchased by the board foot the price quoted is \$45.00 per M. feet. Oak is quoted at \$7.00 per cord; one plant requiring 152 cubic feet to the cord and another 160 cubic feet. No increase in either demand or price is expected in the near future.

DOGWOOD. The price paid for dogwood is about the same as in June, ranging from \$10.00 to \$13.50 per cord of 128 feet or its equivalent. A decrease in both demand and price is predicted for the near future.

HANDLE STOCK. Hickory is quoted at prices ranging from \$8.00 to \$12.00 per cord of 128 cubic feet or from \$20.00 to \$25.00 per M. feet b.m. depending on grade. Oak is quoted at \$7.00 per cord or \$16.00 per M. feet b.m. Ash at Front Royal is quoted at \$12.00 per cord. No improvement is seen for the near future.

SAVINGS. The demand for savings has not changed materially from that reported in June. It could not be much poorer. Oak and poplar are selling at from \$10.00 to \$20.00 per M. feet log scale depending upon grade and location. (No. 4 logs when purchased bring as low as \$8.00) Chestnut is quoted at \$8.00 to \$10.00 per M. feet log scale. Pine is quoted at \$10.00 to \$12.00 per M. feet log scale with little demand and \$4.00 per cord of 128 cubic feet for crating material. All prices are quoted f.o.b. mill. There are no indications of improvement in the near future.

VENNER LOGS. No change is anticipated in price or demand during the next 4 months. No. 1 poplar and oak logs are quoted at from \$25.00 to \$29.00 in the vicinity of furniture factories. Gum and Sycamore are quoted at about \$5.00 less. No. 2 logs in the same territory bring from \$15.00 to \$10.00 for the same species. In the trunk and bag territory No. 1 logs (gum, poplar and oak) are quoted at \$15.00 and No. 2 logs at \$9.00. In the truck package section gum is quoted at \$16.00 while one mill using only selected Bowl Gum pays \$31.00. All prices per M. board feet log scale, f.o.b. mill.

LUMBER. There is little change in either price or demand. Oak #1 and #2 ranges in price from \$18.00 for No. 2 where it is separated to \$30.00 for No. 1 in 4/4 stock. 6/4 - 8/4 & 12/4 runs \$2.00 to \$3.00 higher. Poplar in 4/4 stock is quoted at from \$15.00 to \$20.00. Hickory in 8/4 stock is quoted at \$20.00 but is in demand in limited quantities only. Walnut is quoted at \$40.00 for No. 2 and \$60.00 for No. 1. All prices are per M. feet lumber tally f.o.b. plant.

Several operators foresee a slight improvement in demand but expect prices to remain stationary for the present.

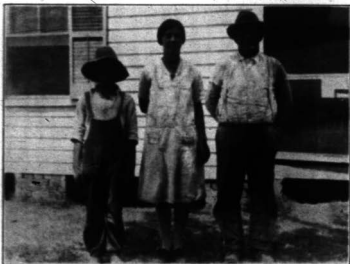
Ties. No demand for switch ties. Cross ties selling at very low prices. Off woods almost no sale. White oak No. 1 no sale; No. 2, 25¢ to 35¢. No. 3, 45¢ to 55¢. No. 4, 65¢ to 75¢. No. 5, 75¢ to 85¢. Mixed oak from 5¢ to 15¢ less than white oak of same size.

Several purchasers expect a small increase in demand but at same prices.

Farm Forestry: A Concrete Example

BY

WILBUR O'BYRNE, *Extension Forester*



A Virginia farmer who makes a living on his farm and
uses his woods to get ahead

VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE AND POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
AND THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, COOPERATING
EXTENSION DIVISION, JNO. R. HUTCHESON, DIRECTOR
BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

DISTRIBUTED IN FURTHERANCE OF THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF MAY 8 AND JUNE 30, 1914

ASSISTANCE THAT CAN BE RENDERED BY THE EXTENSION DIVISION OF
THE VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

The Extension Division carries the Agricultural College and United States Department of Agriculture to the farmer and farm home. It endeavors to meet their problems in soils and crops, horticulture, dairying, live stock, poultry, agricultural engineering, home economics, agricultural economics, and community development. This is done by personal visits, meetings, and correspondence of County Farm and Home Demonstration Agents and Specialists, through boys' and girls' and women's club work, cow testing and purebred live stock and other associations and organizations, and the distribution of bulletins, circulars, newspaper articles, etc.

Application for information or assistance with any farm or home problem should be made to the Director of the Extension Division, Blacksburg, Virginia.

EXTENSION DIVISION STAFF

JULIAN A. BURRUSS	President
JOHN R. HUTCHESON	Director
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H. N. YOUNG	Agricultural Economist

THE man who has a piece of woodland where during the winter months he cuts his firewood and fencing and a few logs for the repair of buildings and implements, and during certain years when prices are high cuts some logs for the neighboring sawmill, but at the same time looks after the piece of woods, clears it of dead timber and other rubbish, thus keeping out fire and insects, and otherwise makes an effort to keep the land covered with forest —
SUCH A MAN PRACTICES FORESTRY.

His forest may be small or large, his ways of doing may be simple and imperfect, the trees may not be the best kind for the particular locality and soil, they may not be as thrifty as they should and could be; but nevertheless here is a man who does not merely destroy the woods nor content himself with cutting down whatever he can sell, but one who cares for the woods as well as uses them, one who sows as well as harvests. **HE IS A FORESTER,** and his work in the woods is **FORESTRY.**

FILIBERT ROTH

Farm Forestry: A Concrete Example

By WILBUR O'BYRNE, *Extension Forester*

The Best Poor Land Crop

Approximately half of the land on Virginia farms is either occupied by tree growth or is lying idle because of the lack of such growth. Each census report since 1900 has shown a smaller acreage, both in farms and in the area under cultivation. In 1925 there were 17,210,174 acres included in what the census bureau classes as farms, of which 5,368,188 acres were listed as crop land. In 1930 the corresponding figures were 16,728,620 acres and 5,058,317 acres. Thus, in five years there was recorded a decrease of 481,554 acres in Virginia farm land and a decrease of 309,871 acres in the area under cultivation. And the same thing is taking place in other states.

This gradual but steady decrease in the area under cultivation is easy to understand. Crops that were once regarded as suited only to Virginia and adjoining states are now grown from Canada to Florida and west to Texas.

Improved varieties, modern farm machinery and better cultural methods have increased yields, while automobiles, trucks and tractors, by replacing horses, have forced the production of food and fabric crops on millions of acres

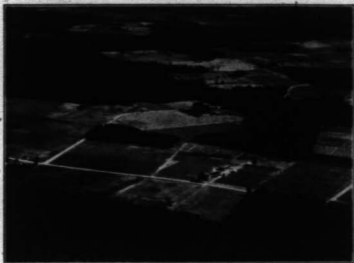


Fig. 1.—A farming section in Eastern Virginia from the air. Notice how the farms are made up of woods and fields intermingled. Each is made more valuable by the presence of the other. Photo by the State Conservation and Development Commission

where horse feed was formerly grown. The result has been an overproduction of many farm crops and correspondingly low prices.

Thoughtful farmers recognize this situation and realize that the only solution is to concentrate farming operations on the more productive lands and to devote the remainder to some crop which makes fewer demands in the way of seed, soil, fertilizer and labor. And in most instances that crop is timber.

A Regular Income from the Farm Woods

A constantly increasing number of farmers are getting a considerable portion of their yearly income from the sale of timber grown on their farms. Others would like to do this but they are at a loss to know just how to go about putting their timber on a crop basis. It is for the benefit of these that this account of the operations of Mr. W. H. Walker down in Gloucester county is presented.

Mr. Walker's problem was similar to that of thousands of farmers. The soil on his open land was shallow and poor; his woods had been stripped of everything for which the former owner could find sale, and he was forced to make a living for his family while he was rebuilding his property. By deep plowing, suitable crop rotations and proper fertilization he has built a productive soil. By good salesmanship he has located and developed a market for the class of material of which he wished to dispose. By good management and hard work he has made the farm yield a good living while he was building it up. This story deals with his woods operations only.

Mr. Walker has had certain markets that are not available to farmers living in all sections of the state, but he has lacked other markets that would have enabled him to carry on his improvement work much more rapidly. It is not the purpose of this publication to suggest that others do the same things but that they do the same kind of thing he has done. Where his operation has differed from the usual is in the fact that he has given first consideration to the future productive capacity of his forest and has made current income secondary. He has harvested his own timber; first in order to be certain that it was properly done, and second to utilize slack season labor. Finally, he has taken advantage of such markets as there were at hand to dispose of the low grade material that had accumulated in his woods through years of neglect. In brief, he has given to his woods the same kind of careful attention he has given to the cultivated portion of his farm, and he has found it profitable.

Judged by his farming operations alone, Mr. Walker would rank anywhere as a good farmer. Judged by Professor Roth's definition, as it appears at the beginning of this bulletin, he is also a good forester.

How It Was Done

This is the very simple story of how one Virginia farmer has made the timbered portion of his farm contribute its full share to the farm income and at the same time increase in value. There is nothing spectacular about it, nor is it a get-rich-quick scheme, but it may be considered as a splendid example of practical FARM FORESTRY, as contrasted with *commercial forestry, public forestry or luxury forestry.*

The farm forest should supply the forest products that are needed on the farm; supplement the farm income through the sale of surplus products; and round out the farm labor year by supplying profitable employment for labor, livestock and equipment during slack seasons. This operation does all three.

The farm as it now stands consists of 58 acres in cultivation—mostly the original homestead, and four woodland areas acquired over a period of eighteen years. For the sake of convenience in describing them and showing how each one has been handled these areas have been designated:

Block "A" — 48 acres of woodland acquired in 1900
Block "B" — 34 acres of woodland acquired in 1905
Block "C" — 26 acres of woodland acquired in 1918
Block "D" — 74 acres of woodland acquired in 1918

182 acres of woodland
58 acres of cultivated land
240 acres, total area of farm

Locating a Market

In considering the possibilities for profit in connection with any crop, the first concern is markets. In this case, most of the trees that were suitable for lumber had been stripped from the land before it came into the hands of the present owner. About all there was left was young growth too small to market in conventional ways, cull trees which were diseased or of poor form, and weed species which the former owners had regarded as valueless. It was necessary, therefore, to locate or develop markets which would take such products as could be made from these inferior trees; trees that could never make good individuals themselves and were interfering with promising young growth.

Products That Could Be Sold Locally

Pound Poles.—Throughout Tidewater Virginia there is a steady and active demand for what are usually termed "pound poles." These poles are cut from tall, slender trees found growing in the familiar pine thickets, and are used by commercial fishermen to support their nets. (Figure 2.) They vary in length according to the depth of the water where the net is to be placed, and in diameter with the kind of bottom in which they are to be set. A pole that is to be stuck in the mud need not be as heavy as one that must be driven into a hard bottom. The majority of pound poles vary from twenty-five to seventy-five feet in length and from one and one-half to four inches in diameter at the top. Prices range from fifty cents apiece delivered at the water front up to four or five dollars, depending upon the size of the pole and the trading ability of the seller.

Pound poles are gotten out in various ways. Many fishermen cut their own poles during the off season and get out a few for sale. They usually pay the timberland owner so much apiece on the stump and cut what they want. Having no interest in the future productivity of the land, they are apt to cut only the choicest trees, and to cut them without regard to the resulting stand. Many land owners, with the short sighted policy of Americans toward their forests, do little if any better. A few cuttings of this type are apt to leave the woods in such poor condition that it will take years of careful management to return the forest to normal.

On this farm a different system is followed. The poles are sold by the piece delivered to the water front. The owner does the cutting and delivering. Only those trees which can be spared from the stand are cut. Whereat the



Fig. 2.—A pound net in Chesapeake Bay. Pound poles make an excellent market for the slender trees which are removed when pine thickets are thinned. Photo by Virginia State Chamber of Commerce

professional pole cutter is interested in good poles, this land owner is interested primarily in what is left to grow. He wants a full stand of high grade trees, spaced for best growth. Excess trees, inferior species and poorly formed individuals are cut wherever their removal will favor more valuable growth. Those that will make pound poles are sold as such. Those that are too crooked or otherwise defective can always be made into fuel.

Records have not been kept in such a manner as to show the exact number of poles sold each year. The owner states, however, that the smallest number disposed of in any one season was 300, while the greatest was 1,500; that the price range has been from 60 cents to \$1.50 per pole; and that he has averaged well over \$250.00 per year, cash income, from the sale of pound poles.

Fuel Wood.—Gloucester county has no railroad. Coal must come in by boat and is expensive. Most people, therefore, burn wood. Many of those living in town (especially the fishing communities) own no timberland so must purchase their wood. Some prefer pine, some oak, but the rank and file care little what species they buy just so it is cut to the size they want and is thoroughly seasoned.

With this market at hand and a forest full of weed trees and culls (the result of generations of abuse), Mr. Walker provided himself with a good gasoline driven wood saw (Figure 3) and went after the cordwood business in his community. Whenever a lull came in the farm work, he took such labor

as could be spared and went to the woods. Beech, gum, sourwood, sycamore, maple, birch, hornbeam, defective dogwood, oak, and hickory, and injured, diseased, and excess trees of all species, were turned into cordwood and ricked



Fig. 3.—A power saw that can be taken into the woods saves handling the wood one time. This outfit has been in use for twenty-two years. Aside from sawing wood, the engine has driven a thresher, ground feed, and supplied power for other jobs. A good outfit that has been well cared for

up along the woods roads to season. When fall and winter came, that wood was sawed to stove length and delivered. At \$3.25 per load, fuel wood has brought in an average of over \$325.00 per year in addition to what was used on the farm.

Lumber.—Because of the depleted condition of the woods, little saw-timber has been cut except that needed for building and repairs on the farm. This was invariably cut by the owner and hauled by him to a nearby sawmill. Every building on the place (and there is an ample supply of them) is a strictly "home grown" building. In 1901 approximately thirty thousand feet of lumber and timbers were cut for the present residence. In 1903 another thirty thousand was cut for a barn and approximately fifty thousand to sell. Each year since then from two to four thousand feet have been cut for repairs and small construction jobs. This lumber, totaling well over 165 thousand feet, was worth (after allowing \$6.00 per thousand for sawing) at least \$14.00 per thousand feet board measure, or an average of \$77.00 per year for the entire period of thirty years since the forestry operations started. In addition

to this, a sale of \$250.00 worth of timber was made in 1930, bringing the average up to approximately \$80.00 per year from lumber.

It is interesting to note that this sale of \$250.00 worth is the only timber that has been sold on the stump during the entire period of thirty years.



Fig. 1.—This truck delivers cordwood, brings lumber from the sawmill, and does all manner of odd hauling

Railroad Ties.—Five hundred ties were sold one season but did not net enough to warrant further tie operations. Since then a few ties and hardwood logs of tie length have been cut from time to time and traded to sawmill men in payment for sawing the lumber that was needed about the farm. No records have been kept of the tie operations since the first one.

Pulpwood.—For a few years during and immediately following the war poplar and gum pulpwood brought good prices. This offered the first opportunity to get rid of the cull poplar, gum and other bottomland hardwoods that had accumulated in the hardwood portion of the forest. No record was kept of the quantity of pulpwood disposed of, but all the time that could be spared for three or four years went to getting out this type of pulpwood. This operation pretty thoroughly cleared the woods of the cull trees of those species that were salable.

A pulp and paper mill located at West Point consumes large quantities of pine pulpwood. Up to the present this plant has not extended its purchase area to that portion of Gloucester county in which this farm is located; but it is only a question of time until it does. Those pine trees which are too



Fig. 5.—Pulpwood from thinnings. This is a profitable operation where there is a market for pulpwood. It is not yet possible on the Walker farm. Photo by United States Forest Service

large or ill formed for pound poles, but whose removal would benefit the stand, can then be cut and marketed as pulpwood.

The Story of How the Farm Was Built

With this understanding of available markets, let us see how Mr. Walker built up his farm from an original homestead of 60 acres with inadequate buildings to a well rounded farm of 240 acres with all necessary equipment.

The accompanying sketch map (Figure 6) shows how one piece of timberland after another has been added and worked into the regular scheme of farm management.

The fifty-eight acres of cultivated land are made up of a large portion of the original homestead and suitable areas from the various tracts that have been acquired from time to time. It is all in a high state of cultivation, producing crops which compare favorably with the best in the county. To cultivate this land there is a full line of up-to-date and well-cared-for machinery, including a truck, tractor, thrasher, gasoline driven wood saw, feed grinder,

manure spreader, riding cultivator, etc. All equipment is in good repair and protected from the weather by implement sheds, built by the owner from lumber cut on the farm and sawn at nearby sawmills.

Block A.—This tract of 18 acres was acquired in 1900. Two years previously it had been cut over in a sawmilling operation which took all of the

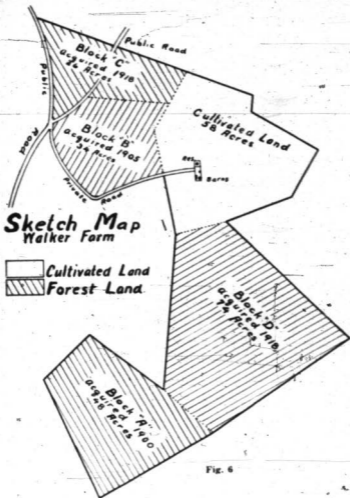


Fig. 6

larger trees, both pine and hardwood. Fortunately, sawmills at that time did not cut such small logs as they did a little later, so that in 1901 when lumber for a new home was needed, there was no difficulty in cutting between thirty and forty thousand board feet for that purpose. In 1903, when a new barn was to be built, eighty thousand feet more of sawlogs were cut and taken to the sawmill. Thirty thousand feet went into the barn; the other fifty thousand were sold to pay for sawing the lumber and for labor employed to build the barn. During 1902 and 1903 something over 500 railroad ties were cut and sold. The returns from these were unsatisfactory, so no further general sales of ties have been made. In addition to the above operations, a few sawlogs have been removed from time to time as lumber was needed about the farm. A few pound poles have been removed almost every year as crowding developed among the young pines, while the laps from these operations together with culls and weed trees of all descriptions have given a steady supply of cordwood for home use and for sale.

Block A is about one-sixth bottomland, where hardwoods are favored and five-sixths uplands, where every effort is made to encourage pines to make up the major portion of the stand. Most of the sawlogs and railroad ties, and a fair share of the pound poles and cordwood listed under financial returns, have come from this block.

In 1906 a severe fire came from the outside and burned about half of this block, but abundant seed trees soon reset the burned areas to pines. Since then no fires have occurred on the entire place. Today the block is well set with young, fast-growing pines, with a considerable amount of larger timber ready to meet any emergency. Each year cordwood and pound poles are cut from some part of this block in the course of thinning and weeding operations.

Block B.—This tract consists of twenty-five acres acquired in 1905 and nine acres of the original homestead. Fifteen acres were in corn 30 years ago but seeded in to a dense stand of pine soon after. This old field pine (Figure 7) now makes up some of the most promising young growth on the farm. It is just coming into sawlog size. Pound poles were first cut 13 years ago and some have been taken out each year since. Pines which were too crooked to make pound poles were taken out, along with undesirable hardwood growth, and marketed as stove wood.

The other 19 acres of this block were typical of the cut-over upland pine forests of eastern Virginia. A few old growth pines escaped the first operation because of poor form or some defect. These scattering veterans reseeded the area and were then removed from time to time as lumber was needed. Some pound poles and a considerable amount of firewood has been taken from this tract; the firewood coming from laps, weed trees (mostly undesirable oaks) and "doty" spruce pines.

Today the entire block is well set to young pines that are kept in a thrifty, fast growing condition by periodic thinning and weeding operations.

Block C.—This block consists of the uncleared portion of a 37-acre tract acquired in 1918. A sawmill, operating in 1906-7, had removed every-



Fig. 7.—The road to market. Block B, to the right, was in corn thirty years ago. Pound poles and cordwood have been sold from this block for the past thirteen years. Note the pile of seasoned cordwood ready to be sawn and delivered

thing that was considered to have value. Defective trees left by the sawmill operator and trees on adjoining land supplied plenty of pine seed so the area is well set with young growth, mostly pine. Pound poles and cordwood have been cut from some portion almost every year since 1918.

Block D.—This tract of 74 acres was acquired in 1918 immediately after having been closely cut. The tract is about one-third bottomland, where hardwoods make up the stand, and two-thirds upland, where pine is the preferred species. In 1906 a severe fire burned about half of this tract, but pine reproduction soon became established on most of the burned area. These young pines are now yielding some pound poles.

When this tract was cut in 1917 beech (of which there was a great deal) was regarded as valueless and left behind. The characteristic form of beech in that section is a short, limby tree with a tremendous spread of very dense crown. Of little or no value themselves, they occupy a great deal of space and shade the ground so heavily that nothing else can grow. On this tract, therefore, the urgent problem has been to get rid of these beech "weed-trees"



Fig. 8a.—Rough, limby beech trees have been cut primarily to encourage the more valuable pine. At the time this picture was taken pine seedlings were already present and growing nicely



Fig. 8b.—Nine years after such a beech tree had been removed. Note the decaying stump entirely surrounded by thrifty young pines. There are hundreds of examples similar to this in Block D

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
STATE OF VIRGINIA

EXTENSION SERVICE
 Virginia,
 1931.

so that young pines could take their place and make better use of the ground. (See Figures 8a and 8b.)

Beech wood, although difficult to work, makes excellent fuel so fuel wood has been the principal product from this block. A few sawlogs and pound poles have been removed from time to time, but each year large quantities of fuel wood have been taken out. Laps, dead stuff, misshapen oaks and other weed trees have made up part of the cut, but beech cut primarily to favor the more valuable pine) has furnished the bulk of the wood cut from this block. Along wood roads (which are kept open by frequent use) are ricks and piles of body wood and lap wood, cut whenever someone had a little slack time. When fall and winter come the gasoline saw (Figure 3) will be taken to those piles and that wood, now thoroughly seasoned, will be sawn to convenient lengths, loaded directly into a wagon or truck, and delivered to a regular and satisfied customer. Fuel wood coming from this farm is good wood; thoroughly seasoned and cut to a convenient size for stove, fireplace or heater as ordered.

The Story Briefly Told

This record of Mr. Walker's forestry operations is presented in the hope that it may contain suggestions that will help other farmer-timberland owners in their efforts to better fit their woods operations to their farm operations and to make the wooded portions of their farms contribute more fully and more regularly to the farm income.

In discussing what he has been doing, Mr. Walker stated that his idea has always been to make a living on his farm and to use his woods to get ahead. He is succeeding in this to a remarkable degree. That he is a good farmer, his neighbors will all agree. They understand his farming operations. That he is a good forester, this record abundantly shows.

What he has done other farmers can do to a greater or less degree if they will but think of their timber as a crop, and give to it the thought and attention they give to the other crops on their farms.

Financial Returns

In considering the financial returns from these operations it should be remembered that all of the wood sold from this farm, with the exception of a few sawlogs, came from trees which former owners considered worthless. They were trees that might be compared to the weeds and thinnings removed from a corn field when it is hoed. Yet these trees—the weeds, culls and thinnings of the forest crop—have not only paid for the operation but have brought in a gratifying income. The real crop trees remain, to be harvested when they reach maturity. Averaged for the entire thirty-year life of the

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W. O. Byrne
 W. O. Byrne,
 District Forester.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
STATE OF VIRGINIA

EXTENSION SERVICE

Blacksburg, Virginia.
November 3, 1931.

OFFICE OF AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL
INDUSTRY AND FORESTRY INVESTIGATIONS
AND FOREST SERVICE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON

operation. The actual cash income from the forested portion of the farm has amounted to:

Product	Average Annual Income	Total Income
Product	\$250.00	\$7,500
Pound polewood		
Fuel wood (wood used at home)	325.00	9,750
Lumber	80.00	2,400
Ties	12.00	350
Pulpwood		
	\$667.00	\$20,000

Forestry Facts Frequently Overlooked

THE greatest value of a forest is not in the accumulation of timber but that it is forever renewable.

There are on almost every farm areas of poor, worn or rough land which can be neither cultivated nor pastured profitably.

Growing timber is the only way to make most of those areas pay taxes; properly handled these areas will contribute regularly to the farm income.

Every farmer finds it necessary to do some work in his woods each year; cutting fuelwood if nothing more.

When he is doing that work, he will keep the crop idea in mind and use the same culling principle he applies to his livestock. He can gradually and steadily build it into a valuable and productive property. And if he does this "he is a forester and his work in the woods is forestry."

Dear Sir:-

I am enclosing a brief account of the forestry work of a very practical and successful Virginia farmer. I hope you will find time to read and study it for such suggestions as may be applicable to your own situation.

In my efforts to interest our farmers in the practice of forestry, I have found it difficult to make them see just how the details could be worked out. Since two farms rarely present the same problems in market possibilities, in timber resources or in labor requirements, it has seemed out of the question to lay down any program that would be generally applicable. Therefore, in order to present the idea in concrete form I selected a farm on which the writer has worked out an effective system and got the story of just how it was done. This little bulletin tells that story.

I wish particularly to call to your attention the definition of forestry that appears at the beginning of the story and then to how well Mr. Walker has fulfilled those conditions. You will notice that the improvement of his forest has been due not to the outlay of time or money, but to the fact that all of the work that went into the harvesting of any forest product was done to contribute to the rebuilding of the forest.

Your county agent will be glad to help you put your woodland under management and so place it on a crop basis.

Very truly yours,

Wilbur O'Byrne

Wilbur O'Byrne,
Extension Forester.

WO:Brf

This letter and bulletin referred to were sent to my sister's mailing list