



George L. Drake

1889-1979

George Lincoln Drake, a forester for Simpson Timber Company for twenty-four years, earned nationwide recognition for his dedicated work in forest management and conservation, fire prevention, and logging safety.

His achievements in those fields spurred esteem from many professional associations, as well as colleagues and friends.

Drake's career, which included 19 years with the U.S. Forest Service in Washington, Oregon and Alaska, helped to establish forest practices that today are recognized as major developments by the timber industry.

His lengthy service to Simpson ended in 1954 when he retired at 65 as vice president and chief forester.

George Drake, a distant relative of Abraham Lincoln, was born in Laconia, New Hampshire, in 1889. His father was at one time mayor of Laconia. Drake went to school intending to study mechanical engineering. He first attended New Hampshire State

University but transferred to Pennsylvania State University, where he earned a degree in forestry in 1912.

Soon after, he joined the Forest Service. "I came out West in August, 1912, and was assigned to a cruising party in southern Oregon on Klamath Lake," he related in an oral history, "A Forester's Log: Fifty Years in the Pacific Northwest," published in 1975. "After that work was completed in the spring, I came up to the Columbia and worked on a cruising job for about two months, and then we went to the Okanogan National Forest in northeastern Washington and made a cruise and a map of about a half-million acres. Most of it was an area that hadn't been mapped before. They even had the forest boundary signs a half inch over into Canada."

It was at a Halloween dance at Okanogan that Drake met a school teacher named Dora Polly. They were married in September, 1915.

The Forest Service transferred him to Alaska in 1914 and he stayed there until the end of World War I. Drake had attempted to enlist in

the Tenth Engineers, but was rejected because of a physical defect. Soon the Forest Service moved him back to Oregon where he was put in charge of Forest Service timber sales on the Whitman National Forest. Later, he moved to the Regional Office in Portland.

Drake's years with the Forest Service left him with valuable alliances that served him successfully after he joined Simpson Timber Company. He thought it important to maintain harmony with the Forest Service.

"There was a natural animosity toward the Forest Service when they first started administering the national forests. It was the beginning of certain restrictions that the economy of the West had never known. Nobody had ever told them how to do things or what they couldn't do. But through the years, I think the Forest Service matured and became more practical, and the industry mellowed on its part. Men have left the Forest Service and gone into private industry. A few have then criticized the Forest Service and hurt themselves and the industry more than they've helped. But others have retained the respect of the service and helped develop a harmony."

Drake's experience was invaluable for him and Simpson when the company entered into a 100-year Shelton Cooperative Sustained Yield Unit with the Forest Service in 1946, under provisions of Public Law 273, enacted by Congress in 1944. The unique project was begun to provide timber for harvest and insure a future crop through sound forest management practices in order to stabilize the economy of the communities of Shelton and McCleary, whose residents depended on the timber industry for a living.

During his years with the Forest Service, Drake worked effectively for the development of efficient spark arresters for steam logging equipment and, perhaps more importantly, was a forceful crusader for fire prevention programs in logging operations. He was one of the organizers of the Keep Washington Green Association.

After joining Simpson, Drake was instrumental in planning timber resource conservation and restocking of harvested lands. In addition, he was responsible for shaping Simpson's logging, forestry, fire prevention, safety and community relations programs.

His career prompted him to participate and play a leadership role in many timber industry-related associations and organizations.

He served two terms as president of the Society of American Foresters, and was the ninth recipient of its prestigious Gifford Pinchot award in 1967. He was active in the Western Forestry and Conservation Association for nearly 40 years and served as its president in 1944. Drake was a director of the American Forestry Association for six years and an influential member of its committees dealing with national timber issues.

He was president of the Pacific Logging Congress in 1937 when it convened in Seaside, Oregon, and he continued to lead discussions on logging technology at Congress meetings for 15 years after he retired from Simpson. He was honored for work in his field by the forestry schools at the University of Washington, Oregon State University, and his alma mater, Penn State. After retirement from industry, he and the late Clyde Martin, former chief forester of Weyerhaeuser Company, established consulting offices in Tacoma. Drake traveled frequently as a timber advisor in Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Scandinavia, and throughout the United States.

Drake took interest in forest developments in foreign countries experimenting with plantations of Monterey pine and Douglas fir, especially in New Zealand and Holland. He frequently arranged for foreign foresters to visit tree farms and tree nurseries in Washington State.

Drake was more than pleased with his career choice, as he said in his oral history. "Personally, it has been a very satisfying field of endeavor because we could see progress can be made, and always with the thought that

anything a forester does is for the general good of a lot of other people. It has a high standard and I try to tell that to the young fellows. It's not just the dollars you get...forestry is so many-sided that you're not just a straight forester: You're an engineer, or a botanist, or public relations man...selling the public is vital because without their cooperation, you don't get fire protection and practical state laws...I've never regretted that I went into forestry."

Drake's work in forest fire prevention included drafting organizational plans for a Northern California group of loggers and landowners which has functioned since the 1950's in Humboldt and Del Norte counties. He was one of the founders of the Col. W.B. Greeley Forest Nursery at Nisqually, Washington, the first industry-wide cooperative nursery developed for making seedlings available for planting on industrially-owned land.

Drake was one of a handful of professional foresters who drafted the Forest Practice Rules under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933. These rules, first applied by law and later voluntarily by the forest industry, were the forerunners of forestry principles of protection, reforestation and management which have since continued on an increasing pace on private lands throughout the United States.

A man of solid build and girth, with a New England accent and a flair for telling down-to-earth humorous stories, George Drake was in demand throughout his career as a speaker and toastmaster. He advocated cooperation and conciliation between the industry and agencies. One of his favorite phrases when arguments rose was to say, "You may be right. Let's sit down on a log and talk about it."

His theme in discussing forest management always emphasized faith in land and people. He saw forests and multiple use of timberlands as an essential element in the advancement and welfare of people. He often said, "We must have the support of people in our

management of forests. By demonstrating how this is in their best interests they will support us."

Drake's concern for demonstrating appreciation to people was evidenced during his career with Simpson. He saw that logging camps and locomotives bore the names of respected, long-time employees. His 1945 planning of Simpson's new Camp Grisdale, named after George and William Grisdale, long-time Simpson logging supervisors, created one of the forest industry's notable forest communities.

His contributions were remembered in many corners of the timber industry with respect and affection. One such tribute came from the bulletin of the Pacific Logging Congress: "George Drake was truly one of the great pioneers of developing West Coast forest industry with the rare ability to temper an evangelistic fervor for intensive forestry with recognition of economic practicability. The burgeoning second-growth forests of the Northwest are a timeless memorial to a truly fine and gentle man who dedicated his life to the principle of sustained yield forest management."

Drake died April 5, 1979, at his retirement home at Rancho Bernardo, California, two days short of his 90th birthday. His wife, Dora, died the previous year. Survivors include a daughter, Mrs. Barbara Beardon of Pebble Beach, California, and three grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. Drake were preceded in death by two sons, Robert, who died in his teens in Shelton in the 1930's, and Donald, who was lost at sea after volunteering for duty on a risky mission on a United States submarine during World War II. In their memory, Drake established a Robert and Donald Drake Memorial Scholarship Fund which is endowed to perpetually help Shelton, Washington, high school graduates attend schools of higher learning. An initial award of four \$1,500 scholarships was made to Shelton students in 1980.