The Canadian Who Reforested Florida: Clinton Huxley Coulter
A Case Study on Publishing to Preserve Forest History

Barry Walsh
Editor, Kendrick Manuscript Project, for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry, Tallahassee, FL USA. barrywwalsh@cs.com

Ed Barnard, Poster Presenter
Forest Pathologist and Supervisor, Forest Health Program, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry, Gainesville, FL USA. barnare@doacs.state.fl.us

Abstract: Clinton Huxley Coulter of Windsor, Ontario, came to the United States to study forestry at the University of Michigan. When he joined the Florida Forest Service in 1928, the state needed a ready supply of seedlings for a major reforestation effort in cutover pinelands. Coulter established the state’s first pine nurseries at Raiford and Olustee, using cones he collected himself. Rising through the ranks, he became State Forester in 1945. By 1957, when he and Governor LeRoy Collins planted the 1 billionth tree raised in a state nursery, Coulter truly had become the Canadian who reforested Florida. Coulter is among the forestry trailblazers featured in “A History of Florida Forests,” by Baynard Kendrick and Barry Walsh, Editor, being prepared for publication by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry. The Kendrick manuscript, first written in 1967, has been edited, updated, and illustrated. The lesson learned is to join forces to salvage forest history by the telling of it.

Keywords: Clinton Huxley Coulter, Florida forest history, reforestation

Introduction

Clinton Huxley Coulter (1903–1987), of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, studied forestry at the University of Michigan and joined the newly established Florida Forest Service (FFS) in 1928 (Widner 1968, Figure 1). The Florida Legislature had established the FFS to manage the state’s cutover and neglected forestlands then being ravaged by wildfire. A massive reforestation effort was needed, but private landowners, who held most forestlands in the state, had to be convinced that regeneration was feasible and profitable. In addition to encouragement, they needed a ready supply of seedlings. In 1929, Florida’s first State Forester, Harry Lee Baker, assigned young Coulter to the task (Maunder 1977). Coulter established the state’s first pine seedling nursery at the Raiford Correctional Institution west of Jacksonville. Assisted by prison inmates (Coulter 1931, Figure 2A,B), he experimented with longleaf pine (Pinus palustris) and slash pine (Pinus elliotti), using seed from cones he collected locally. Slash pine showed more vigorous early growth, which was a selling point with private landowners. Coulter later established a second pine nursery at Olustee to bolster the supply of planting stock for the reforestation effort (Figure 2C). Coulter rose through the ranks (Coulter 1966, Figure 3) to become Florida State Forester in 1945. He served as an SAF Councilman (1954–1957) and was elected SAF Fellow (1957) (Grosenbaugh et al. 1983). As State Forester, Coulter worked with the Governor and the Florida Forestry Association on a Keep Florida Green campaign (Figure 4). Over the years, Coulter worked with a succession of Forestry Board members, who advised the Governor on forest policy (Florida Forest Service, 1928–1968, Figure 5). The highlight of his career occurred in 1959, when he officiated with Florida...
Governor LeRoy Collins in planting the 1 billionth tree raised in a state nursery (Figure 6). Ten years later, Coulter put off retirement to guide the agency through its first year of reorganization as the Division of Forestry (DOF) in the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Figure 7). Following retirement, he remained active in forestry projects (Wright 1988), and his legacy lives on (Figure 8).

The Kendrick Manuscript

Hux Coulter is among the memorable forestry trailblazers featured in “A History of Florida Forests” being prepared for publication by the Kendrick Manuscript Project. Sponsored by the Florida Division of Forestry, the manuscript is an illustrated, 500-year history of Florida forests.

The Coulter story was especially appropriate for the Canadian Institute of Forestry and Society of American Foresters Joint 2004 Convention. Preserving forest history, such as that of the Canadian who reforested Florida, is the purpose of the Kendrick manuscript.

Publication of “A History of Florida Forests” has been a long time coming. In 1966, the Board of Forestry, appointed by the Florida Governor to supervise the Florida Forest Service and set forest policy, commissioned Baynard Kendrick to write a forest history of the state. Kendrick, a Florida history author and award-winning detective novelist, also had a long career in Florida forest industries. He rose from traveling salesman in the 1920s to become president of Putnam Wood Products.

Kendrick acknowledged “the untiring cooperation and dedication” of State Forester Coulter. Without Coulter’s assistance, Kendrick noted, “The book could never have been written.” In 1967, Kendrick submitted his manuscript entitled, “Florida’s Perpetual Forests,” to the Board of Forestry. The manuscript found itself in the midst of the state government’s reorganization. In 1969, when the Florida Forest Service became the Division of Forestry, the Kendrick manuscript was placed in the DOF Library, where it has served as a little-known reference on Florida forests, forestry, and related forest industries.

From time to time, the DOF discussed publishing the Kendrick manuscript, and in 2001, DOF Director Earl Peterson authorized the Kendrick Manuscript Project to prepare the work for publication. DOF Senior Planner Jack Dodd led the effort in obtaining a matching-funds grant from the Florida Department of State’s Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation. The DOF contracted with Barry Walsh to serve as project editor. Walsh, a Florida Division of SAF member and former Senior Editor of the Journal of Forestry, is Managing Editor of Selby Botanical Gardens Press in Sarasota and has a writing and editing practice. In addition to editing the Kendrick chapters, she compiled sidebars, illustrations, and two chapters updating the history from 1967.

Salvaging Forest History

The Kendrick Manuscript Project has been a collaborative effort of many interested in preserving Florida’s forest history. In 2000, Ed Barnard of DOF (then Chair of the Florida Division of SAF and now incoming Chair of the SAF Philosophy and History Working Group) suggested the project to DOF Director Earl Peterson. Barnard had learned of the Kendrick manuscript from Don Post, a retired professor from the University of Florida, School of Forest Resources and Conservation (UF-SFRC). Post, who assisted Kendrick with research for the manuscript in 1966–1967, is quoted extensively in a chapter on water-driven sawmills.

The DOF assigned Jack Dodd to coordinate preparation of the Kendrick
manuscript, assisted by Ray Mason, U.S. Forest Service and DOF (retired). Charles Maynard, Chief, DOF Bureau of Forest Resources and Planning (and current Chair of the Southeast SAF Section), supervised the project, aided by Assistant Chief Patricia Garner. Mark Hebb, Chair of the DOF Heritage Committee, provided oral interviews of forestry “old-timers” in the state. Walsh visited and photographed historic sites and interviewed the Coulter family. Barnard located historic sites and illustrations, contributed copy, and reviewed the manuscript, as did Dodd and Maynard.

Active in the project from the start was Wayne Smith, then Director of the UF-SFRC (now retired and Chair of the Florida Division of SAF). In addition to contributing copy and reviewing the manuscript, he provided illustrations and worked with Julie Helmers, UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Science, who conducted literature searches for the project. Jeff Doran, Executive Director of the Florida Forestry Association, provided archival material on the early years of forestry in the state and contributed copy. USDA Forest Service support by National Forests in Florida Supervisor Marsha Kearney and Forest Archeologist Rhonda Kimbrough included archival material and photos. Among the manuscript reviewers were John Greis, Southern Region, USDA Forest Service; Charis Coulter Powell, daughter of Hux Coulter); Harold Mikell, DOF Director (1987–1991, retired); Jacob B. Huffman and Kenneth B. Swinford, UF-SFRC (retired); and Bruce Piatek, Executive Director, Florida Agricultural Museum.

The Kendrick Manuscript Project is an example of how foresters can pool human and financial resources to publish the history of the people, places, and events that have shaped forest history in their region. The lesson learned from Florida’s Kendrick Manuscript Project is to join forces to salvage forest history by the telling of it.

Literature Cited


Figure 1. Learning Florida Trees. A young Hux Coulter joined the Florida Forest Service in 1928, fresh from the University of Michigan. A. He examines a fire-damaged longleaf pine that had been worked as part of the major naval stores industry in the state. B. Coulter (left) shows off the girth of “The Senator,” Florida’s champion baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*). This 3000-year-old giant, a living relic of Florida’s old-growth forests logged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, can be seen today in the Big Tree Park near Orlando. Trees of this size once encircled Florida swamps, many of which were logged and drained for development. Credits: A. Division of Forestry, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DOF). B. Florida State Archives (FSA).

Figure 2. Growing Florida Pines. Coulter’s assignment was to provide seedlings for a major reforestation effort. A. In 1929, he established the first Florida Forest Service tree nursery at the Raiford State Correctional Institution, west of Jacksonville. B. Raiford inmates were instrumental in planting and packaging the seedlings that reforested Florida. C. In addition to Raiford, Coulter established a pine nursery at Olustee. Both nurseries were located in the pinelands of north Florida. Credits: DOF.
Figure 3. Rising through the Ranks. Coulter (tall young man, back row center) assists with a Boys Forestry Camp established by State Forester Henry J. Malsberger at O’Leno State Forest (now O’Leno State Park) on the Santa Fe River. In 1945, Coulter succeeded Malsberger as State Forester. Credit: DOF.

Figure 4. Keeping Florida Green. Reforestation required persistence and protection. State Forester Coulter (left) met with Governor Millard Caldwell (seated) and X.L. Pellicer, Florida Forest and Park Association president, to plan the Keep Florida Green forest fire prevention campaign. The Association, founded in 1923 as the Florida Forestry Association (and known by that name today), was instrumental in lobbying the state legislature first for a forestry agency and then for a forestry school at the University of Florida (UF-SFRC 2004). Credit: DOF.

Figure 5. Advising Policymakers. For 24 years, State Forester Coulter worked well with the Florida Board of Forestry, the 5-member board appointed by the Governor to supervise the Florida Forest Service and set forestry policy for the state. In this 1956 photo, Coulter conferred with Board members (seated left to right) Norman Herren, Vice President; M.D. Andrews, President; and Frank M. Parker, Secretary. Standing (left to right) are Hux Coulter, L.P. Gibson, and Marcus G. Rawls. Credit: DOF.
Figure 6. Highlighting His Career. In 1957, Hux Coulter (left) and Governor LeRoy Collins planted the 1 billionth tree raised in a state nursery. Credit: FSA.

Figure 7. Capping His Career. In 1969, during reorganization of the state government, Coulter was persuaded to put off retirement to become first Director of the new Division of Forestry in the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Doing the persuading was Commissioner of Agriculture Doyle Conner, who as a boy attended Forestry Camp at O’Leno, where he first met Coulter. Shown here, Coulter (left) and Florida Governor Claude Kirk plant Florida’s 2 billionth tree raised in a state nursery. Reforestation was taking hold. It took Coulter 29 years to plant the 1 billionth tree but only half that time to plant the 2 billionth tree. Credit: DOF.

Figure 8. Passing the Torch. Hux Coulter retired as State Forester and DOF Director in 1970, but his legacy lives on. A. Remaining active in forestry projects, he dedicated a stone marker on the Blackwater River State Forest in memory of Florida’s first State Forester Harry Lee Baker, who hired him as a young forester and assigned him the task of reforesting Florida. Left to right are Commissioner of Agriculture Doyle Conner; third State Forester Hux Coulter (retired); State Representative Ed Fortune; John Bethea, Florida’s fourth State Forester, who had served under Coulter; and Judge E.W. Carswell. B. The Coulter legacy is supported by his children, who are forest history buffs. His son, Clinton Coulter, served as an attorney with the Commissioner of Agriculture, and his daughters, Charis Coulter Powell (left) and Sora Ann Gross were interviewed for the updating of the Kendrick manuscript, provided photographs, and helped reviewed the manuscript. Credits: A. FSA  B. B. Walsh.
A HISTORY OF FLORIDA FORESTS
By Baynard Kendrick and Barry Walsh, Editor

Commissioned by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry

The definitive, illustrated, 500-year history of Florida forests, forestry, and related forest industries.

In Preparation

Interested in hearing more about the book?

Yes. Contact me with details on ordering a copy of “A History of Florida Forests.” Here is my address:

Name
Street address
City State/Province Postal Code Country
Phone Fax Email

Copy, complete, and mail this form to
Florida Department of Agriculture and
Consumer Services, Division of Forestry
Bureau of Forest Planning & Support Services
3125 Conner Boulevard, Mail Stop-C23
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650