University of North Carolina Asheville
Journal on Undergraduate Research
Asheville, North Carolina
December 2019

Raising the Biltmore Flag: Birth of the Biltmore Immortals

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Abstract

Carl Alwin Schenck was largely responsible for introducing forestry as a discipline to the United States. Arriving at the Biltmore Estate at the request of George Vanderbilt in 1895 in order to manage the estate's silviculture, Schenck later opened Biltmore Forest School, the first forestry school in the United States. Between 1898 and 1913, Schenck graduated several hundred students, among them many of the first professional foresters in the United States. Bound by what Schenck called "The Biltmore Spirit," the camaraderie among Biltmore's graduates, the Biltmore community helped support Schenck while impoverished during his old age. This thesis largely utilizes primary sources from Carl Schenck himself, correspondence among Schenck's students, and writings from early American foresters Gifford Pinchot and Walter J. Damtoft, alongside supporting secondary sources.

1. Body of Paper

On a warm summer evening in Northern California, 1951, Guy Carleton Hawkins, a longtime employee of the New England box-company, stopped at the side of Route 101. He, along with his wife, had been on a lengthy trip touring the National Parks of the United States and Western Canada. Their destination tonight, however, was something different, and far more personal: a grove of Redwoods dedicated to Doctor Carl Alwin Schenck, pioneering forester, and former teacher of Hawkins at the Biltmore Forest School, the first school of forestry in the United States. While speaking at a Biltmore reunion held in Jefferson, New Hampshire during the early 1950s, he reminisced over his time at Biltmore Forest School, "I lived again with you among the giant yellow poplars of the South; I spent an hour at Sunburst; at Cadillac, on the Atlantic on the *Nieuw Amsterdam*, in the forests of Germany, and I'm not afraid to admit that I shed a few honest tears of full-hearted feelings."[1]

Although Hawkins graduated from the Biltmore Forest School in 1911, he continued to remember the Biltmore Forest School long after 1911. Rather than simply an alma mater, the Biltmore Forest School created a spirit of adaptability that bound graduates through the decades, and culminated with the creation of the "Immortals" graduate community in the mid-20th century. The Biltmore Immortals comprised of former Biltmore students and lecturers, their families, and other Americans closely affiliated with Carl Schenck. When Schenck's failed attempts at balancing his German citizenship with an American forestry affiliation led to his marginalization in the United States and by scholars, the Biltmore Immortals came to his aid and helped immortalize Schenck through the creation of monuments in his name.

Carl Schenck has long held a minor role in the history of American forestry, compared to the better known Gifford Pinchot or John Muir. Schenck, a German citizen, was invited from Germany to the Biltmore Estate in Western North Carolina in order to introduce European "Scientific Forestry" policies to George Vanderbilt's Appalachian estate. Having taken over from forester Gifford Pinchot, Schenck proceeded to open his own school on the premises of Biltmore, introducing modern forestry practices to American students. Despite Schenck's role in introducing new forestry practices to the United States, he still stands in the shadow of foresters like Pinchot for reasons ranging from an estranged relationship between Schenck and Pinchot, to a poor relationship with rural North Carolinians, to suspicions raised about his German loyalties. Many of these aspects are represented in the scholarship of the last few

decades. When describing Schenck, environmental Scholars paint a picture of a man who attempted to create a balance between his loyalties to Germany and German forestry practices and his forestry work in the United States. Schenck's attempts at balancing German citizenship with an American forestry affiliation instead led to his marginalization in environmental history scholarship.

That marginalization is most represented in the field of environmental history, where academics such as Mason C. Carter, and Brian Balogh have simply refused to engage with Schenck at all. In Carter's *Forestry in the U.S. South: A History*, Carter referred to Pinchot as the dominant influence on American forestry, while Carl Schenck was not even briefly mentioned, even though the start of American forestry at Biltmore was discussed.[2] In the *Environmental History* article "Scientific Forestry and the Roots of the Modern American State: Gifford Pinchot's Path to Progressive Reform," author Brian Balogh identified Schenck as Pinchot's successor at Biltmore. However, Balogh gave no credit to Schenck for the birth of forestry in the United States.[3] All credit for that instead went to Pinchot and his Yale Forest School. While Schenck's brief mention is not surprising given that Pinchot's involvement with American progressivism is the focus of Balogh's paper, Balogh discussed the origins of the early American forestry culture that Pinchot helped pioneer. Specifically, Balogh argued that the American progressive and American conservation movements were closely linked at the start of the 20th century. Given that Schenck was also involved in both of these movements, the absence of Schenck in Balogh's work is unusual.

When Carl Schenck has received real acknowledgment, the tone of scholars' coverage of Schenck's has frequently leaned negative, as with Environmental Historian Char Miller who credited Pinchot with the responsibility for the dawn of American forestry at Biltmore. However, Miller was careful to mention that Pinchot was not solely responsible for American forestry, as there was also Carl A. Schenck. Miller portrayed a tense relationship between Schenck and Pinchot: Pinchot viewed Schenck as elitist, while Schenck viewed Pinchot as unconcerned with his forestry position at Biltmore. Schenck is portrayed by Miller as a sort of foil in Pinchot's early career. Miller than portrayed Schenck as a failure at sustaining his Biltmore Forest School, and who proceeded to hide out in Europe following his service in the German Army during World War I. Miller soon left Schenck behind and began recounting Pinchot's successes at his own Forest School, at Yale. Schenck was later mentioned by Miller simply as "His (Pinchot's) German Colleague," rather than by name.[4]

While Miller described a tense relationship between Schenck and Pinchot, historian Kathryn Newfont described a similarly hostile relationship between Schenck and the Appalachian people in her 2012 work *Blue Ridge Commons*. In *Blue Ridge Commons*, Schenck was portrayed as a high-handed feudal baron, who viewed the Biltmore Estate as a fiefdom, and the Appalachian people as peasants. Newfont's point of view is understandable, given that *Blue Ridge Commons* framed Appalachian locals' view of woodlands as a sort of "commons," a norm that was disrupted by Vanderbilt's forestry projects. Newfont described Schenck's frequent confrontations with mountaineers who believed their way of life in what is now Pisgah National Forest was being threatened by Schenck and his new forestry practices. Newfont asserted that Vanderbilt and Schenck considered themselves the owners of Pisgah, and that the Appalachian people were an obstacle. Outside of the context of his interactions with the local people around Pisgah, Schenck received little mention, but given that *Blue Ridge Commons* focused primarily on the past sociological aspects of the forest in Appalachian culture, it is understandable that a brief moment like Vanderbilt's "intrusion," should be a minor note.[5]

While scholars' coverage of Schenck has frequently been negative, when Schenck has been mentioned at all, some recent works by Karl Jocoby, Marci Spencer, and Jonathan Hill have been more positive. In Karl Jacoby's *Crimes Against Nature*, early conservationists are portrayed as being in competition with local people. Jacoby agreed with Newfont that Carl Schenck had an often pained relationship with local people. However, Jacoby also associated Schenck alongside Gifford Pinchot, John Muir, and Theodore Roosevelt as a member of a "Pantheon of Conservation Prophets."[6] In Marci Spencer's *Pisgah National Forest: A History*, Schenck was portrayed as a pioneer in American forestry, while Pinchot's role at Biltmore was downplayed. In his thesis "Crossing the Atlantic," Jonathan Hill credited a Trans-Atlantic crossing of ideas spearheaded by Carl Schenck as the primary catalyst for American Forestry. Hill blamed Schenck's removal to the margins of environmental history on his feuds with Pinchot. Hill's statements are significant, because they shift the Pinchot-Schenck feud to the front and center of forestry historiography, rather than as a mere sidenote.

Carl Schenck is by no means absent from the historical record and has rarely been ignored wholesale. However, Schenck has largely been moved to the sidelines of forestry history because he, a foreigner, made an enemy of a rising star: the all-American Gifford Pinchot. Thus, Schenck has primarily been mentioned in terms of his relation to Pinchot, or in a local historical context as a curious character. This is despite the fact that he opened the first forestry school in the United States, or that many of his students (such as Verne Rhoades) went on to become prominent foresters in the rising American industry of forest management. It should be noted that Schenck has been mentioned more frequently in recent works of environmental history such as Spencer's *Pisgah National Forest: A History*.

Schenck's star may be rising once again as a figure in American forestry history. This work will attempt to discover the role of Biltmore Forest School affiliates in resurrecting Schenck's reputation.

The foundation for the Biltmore Forest School was laid during the second half of the nineteenth century, alongside the importation of the concept of forestry from Europe to the United States. Forestry had been a well-developed scientific discipline in Europe, particularly in Germany, for over a century.[7] By this time, the usable forestlands of New England and the Midwest had been largely exhausted, but the American South had been spared due to high transportation costs created by isolation. With the increasing industrialization of the South following the Civil War, lumber companies were now descending on the south like a swarm of locusts.[8] Formalized forestry methods were needed in the United States now more than ever, and in 1887, Prussian forester Bernhard Fernow, wrote "The United States alone, among the civilized nations, has as yet failed to perceive the wide bearing which a proper forestry policy has on the material and moral developments of a country." While studying forestry abroad in Europe, Gifford Pinchot, the man who would one day be the first chief of the United States Forest Service, was told by Germano-British forester Sir Dietrich Brandis that the only way forester could reach the United States was if a large landowner could prove forestry's profitability.[9]

That large landowner was George Vanderbilt, who, in 1889, purchased 5,000 acres near Asheville, North Carolina. Under the eye of landscape artist Fredrick Law Olmstead, the Biltmore Estate's design began to manifest. While attempting to work out how best to design the grounds, Olmstead asked Vanderbilt the purpose of his estate. Vanderbilt replied that he foresaw the Biltmore Estate as taking the form of a massive park, which Olmstead believed to be unwise. Olmstead asserted that, "The woods are miserable, all the good trees having again and again been culled out and only runts left." In Europe, an estate like Biltmore would most likely become a cross between a game preserve, and a managed woodland for the purpose of timber harvesting. Olmstead believed that a managed woodland at Biltmore would be "a great value to the country to have a thoroughly well organized and systematically conducted attempt in forestry, made on a large scale."[10] The Biltmore Estate only needed a trained forester to pioneer a new American forestry culture.

There were two such pioneering foresters at the Biltmore Estate. Gifford Pinchot, recruited in 1893, was the first..[11] In the spring of 1895, German forester Carl Schenck was recruited by George Vanderbilt at the recommendation of Sir Dietrich Brandis.[12] Schenck was a protege of Brandis, and a graduate of the University of Giessen.[13] The relationship between Schenck and Pinchot was often strained, and Pinchot eventually left Vanderbilt's employ to advance his own career in forestry.[14] Schenck, alone in a foriegn country, with customs he did not always understand, realized he needed American assistance in running forestry operations at Biltmore.[15]

Schenck's American assistance came in the form of several young forestry apprentices, among them, lifelong friend Fritz Olmstead.[16] Schenck began giving forestry lectures to his apprentices on rainy days. Schenck's lectures created a mutually beneficial relationship where Schenck taught his apprentices about forestry, and they taught him American customs and forest conditions.[17] By 1898, Schenk's arrangement with his apprentices had become the Biltmore Forest School, the first school of forestry on the American continent.[18]

As the first American school of forestry, the Biltmore Forest School was a unique combination of German ideals of scientific efficiency combined with more American ideals of practicality and egalitarianism. At the Biltmore Estate, Schenck's students existed just as much to assist Schenck at C.A. Schenck and Company, Schenck's forestry consulting company that serviced the American South.[19] The culture of the Biltmore Forest School was rugged and informal: students, who came from every region of The United States, were allowed to smoke at any time, and dressed in "cowboy styles."[20] The Forest School advocated a practical curriculum in opposition to the curriculum of Pinchot's Yale Forest School (opened 1900), which Schenck believed to be overly theoretical, there being no active forestry occurring near Yale.[21] The primary instructor was Carl Schenck himself and no courses other than forestry were offered, although Schenck was eventually able to recruit additional lecturers from related scientific fields, among them Dr. Harry D. Oberholster who lectured for 4 weeks every summer on Zoology, Dr. A.D. Hopkins on Entomology, Edgar D. Broadhurst on forest law, and Dr. Homer D. House on Botany.[22] Many of these instructors remained part of the Biltmore community in later years, and some such as Oberholster received their own chapters in the second volume of the biographical collection *The Biltmore Immortals*.[23] Although located in an area of Pisgah Forest called the Pink Beds, the student body frequently travelled elsewhere.. Brief excursions were made by Biltmore Forest School's student body to other areas of the American South, and Darmstadt, Germany, when Schenck needed to fulfill his military obligations.[24]

Because the Biltmore Forest School was the first of its kind, Schenck believed that the quality of its graduates was important for the future of American forestry. Therefore, only about ⅓ of his students received degrees.[25] Schenck selected students for graduation by, among other things, an examination in tree identification, in which all senses were employed: "from seeing, feeling, smelling, and chewing."[26] The tree identification exam could be taken by a Biltmore student at any time, and required a perfect score of 100% for a pass. "It was with fear and trembling that we went to

him and asked to take the exam on 'Tree Identification'," said Biltmore graduate J. Harold Peterson, who continued, "The Doc, of course, could flunk anyone he wished to by asking him an almost impossible question regarding the identification of trees and woody species."[27] The purpose of the exam, therefore, was to prevent any forestry student who Schenck believed did not earn a degree from receiving one.

Rather than viewing Schenck's eccentricities and German characteristics with suspicion, the students of Biltmore Forest School embraced their teacher's background. The close relationship between Dr. Schenck and students created a bond between teacher and alma mater that lasted until Schenck's death. When 1899 graduate Coert duBois recalled that he often anthropomorphized trees as he spoke, duBois attempted to transcribe Schenck's accent: "Yah, take him," the Doctor would say, "Ze nahsty brahnchy fellow. See how he iss crowding ze lovely little white oak." "Zoke blaggums (black gums) zey are pigs! duBois! Zose stree trees ahead of you, ze beech, ze scarlet oak and ze basswood. Which one shall we take out and why?"[28] According to Fritz Olmstead, Schenck's English "is generally quite understandable, but it is not always fairly to be called English, and it is occasionally a little perplexing."[29] These traits, rather than alienating his students, endeared them to him.

Although Dr. Schenck was adored by his students, he was very much a product of Wilhelmian Germany, a society that Pinchot viewed as autocratic.[30] And indeed, Schenck initially distrusted democracy. Even years later, Schenck expressed some degree of begrudging admiration for feudal society, describing the forestry of old German feudal estates as being superior to state-run forestry operations.[31] Because of Schenck's reactionary political beliefs, rural North Carolinians viewed Schenck as an elitist, and Vanderbilt as a prospective feudal baron with designs on ending Appalachia's commons-based society.[32] Decades later, it was exactly Schenk's uneasy relationship with American-style democracy that caused his marginalization in American forestry.

Not helping Schenck's relationship with the local people of Western North Carolina was the unruly behavior of the Biltmore Forest School student body. Dr. Charles William Elliot, President of Harvard College observed that Schenck's students were "immoral and given to drinking."[33] Dr. Elliot's observations were not new, as Biltmore students frequently inflamed the already tense relationship with locals through their alcohol-induced antics. For example, 1909 graduate George W. Butz recalled an occurrence where several Biltmore students goaded a local moonshiner to "pound on an old water tank," in the town of Biltmore, creating a disturbance.[34] Schenck agreed that the drinking of his students had begun to spiral out of control, leading him to construct a clubhouse in order to "concentrate the drinking propensities of the students."[35] From this clubhouse, the Biltmore Forest School held monthly "song celebrations" called Sangerfests. Sangerfests were later looked back on fondly by Schenck and students alike as an occasion when Biltmore Forest School students were able to bond. Following Schenck's later full from grace, it was again a positive relationship with his students that saved him.

During the 1910s, Biltmore Forest School began its decline, but the blow did not come from the Appalachian people "below." Instead, Biltmore Forest School's demise came from above. Over the years, Schenck's relationship with George Vanderbilt deteriorated, and in 1909, Vanderbilt demanded Schenck's resignation.[36] Because the Biltmore Forest School was self-sustaining through tuition fees, it continued to exist as a travelling school until 1913. The new curriculum began with a trip to Europe. Locations visited were Darmstadt, Germany, France and Switzerland. After a tour of European forestry, Biltmore Forest School returned to North America to visit Sunburst, North Carolina, Axton, New York,and the Pacific Northwest, among other locations.[37]

For the students of Biltmore Forest School, the institution was as much of a community as it was a school. Unfortunately, by 1913, Schenck was supporting Biltmore Forest School from his own pocket and was forced to close it due to lack of money. The students of Biltmore Forest School valued the sense of purpose and community it had provided them in their young adulthood. To some Biltmore students like Yung-hsi Tong, reunions were to be the only way to keep the Biltmore spirit alive in a world without social media. Yung-hsi Tong was concerned that the lack of an alma mater might prevent the opportunity for reunions, and cause the Biltmore community to fade away.[38] This was by no means the unanimous opinion however, and another, Doherty, wrote Schenck to say, "Biltmore among its graduates cannot die and as long as any of us live it will continue to wield an influence over us for the better, and when discouraged the word Biltmore will call us to arms and give us courage to start all over again."[39] Doherty's view eventually proved the correct one, but although Schenck continued to meet and correspond with his students, the legacy of Biltmore fell silent, until the catalyst for its rebirth during the 1930s.

Although the 1930s spelled the beginning of the Biltmore Spirit's resurrection, they also heralded Schenck's fall from grace. The 1930s were a time of rapid change in Germany as the authoritarian Nazi regime came to power. Carl Schenck openly supported Hitler's regime, although he did not join the Nazi party itself.[40] Schenck's support for Hitler, in his own words, came from a combination of Hitler's ability to unite the different German states and put an end to "dynastic selfishness and political beneficiaries."[41] Schenck also believed that the Nazi regime was a positive force for German forestry, because Germany's annexation of Austria brought fresh supplies of timber and pulpwood[42] In 1937, in Schenck's annual Christmas letter to his Biltmoreans, Schenck expressed a belief that "Hitler's regime has

done, however and undeniably, more for good forestry and more for good game laws than what was done by all imperial and democratic governments before him."[43]

Schenck's relationship with the The Third Reich is best encapsulated by his 1939 correspondence with Emmanuel Fritz, a professor of forestry at Berkeley. During their correspondence, Fritz casually mentioned that he wanted to visit Germany to study German forest utilization methodology, but "the way in which your government keeps Europe in an unsettled condition" made Fritz hesitant to visit Germany.[44] Schenck insisted that "Hitler for the Germans is what George Washington is for the Americans: The man who saved them from the Treaty of Versailles made by the English and by the French." Still not satisfied that his point had been properly made, Schenck then compared Hitler's annexation of Austria and Czechia to Abraham Lincoln's unification of North and South in The United States, but that unlike Lincoln, Hitler had "unified" Germany "without shedding a drop of blood." Schenck declared that he would be a "fully-fledged Nazi today were it not for the treatment of German Jews which in my opinion is unjust, un-German, and unwise," and that he had been compelled "mentally, by the course of economic, social, of political, of military, of ethical developments in my fatherland to surrender to Hitler." Schenck ended his screed by stating that in the future, American historians would look upon Hitler kindly as a German Lincoln.[45] Although unbeknownst to either Schenck or Fritz at the time, this letter would come back to haunt the Biltmore School community in Schenck's later years, and permanently sever any remaining official ties that remained between Schenck and the United States.

Even with the coming war, Schenck remained committed in his correspondence with and assistance of Biltmoreans. Schenck's assistance of the mother of one of his former students is a particularly good example of this, as it indicates that the Biltmore community was strong enough to include family members of Biltmore graduates. In what would be his last major contribution to the Biltmore Community before the commencement of hostilities, Carl Schenck assisted Dwight J. Peterson, mother of Biltmorean Harold J. Peterson, in a trip to Europe. On May 20, 1939, Peterson wrote to Schenck that Dwight intended to spend 3 weeks in Denmark, before taking a train to Lindenfels to visit a friend. Could Schenck outline a trip for Dwight on German railroads?[46] While outlining a trip for Dwight that July, Schenck warned her that she may encounter "unpleasantness and tactlessness in store somewhere in my fatherland, be it in a streetcar or a railroad car, in a theater, in a restaurant, or elsewhere," before seizing the opportunity to preach about Hitler, and to downplay fears of war. "I assure you that we, within Germany, do not entertain any fears of a war being near. WE KNOW THAT HITLER DOES NOT WANT A War." Shenck told her. After all, Hitler was more concerned with "huge schemes of art-encouragement" and "does not want the Poles to lose ANYTHING in their Danzig interests." He closed his proselytization with "Anyway, since Hitler does not want a war, and since there cannot be a war unless Hitler accepts it, there will not be any. WE ARE POSITIVE ABOUT THIS."[47] On September 1st of that same year, the Nazi regime invaded Poland, and commenced almost six years of bloody world war, during which Schenck worked in forestry for the German government.

In 1945, as the Allied armies closed in on Berlin, Hitler committed suicide in his bunker. With the European Theater of World War II at an end, Schenck was also left disillusioned with the Nazi regime that he had previously supported. "I was convinced up to the moment when Poland was invaded, that Hitler was opposed to any war whatsoever and for any purpose. I was an idiot, politically," Schenck told Peterson some years later.[48] When Berlin was split between the Americans and the Soviets, Schenck was left financially destitute. His stocks and bonds were inaccessible in Soviet-held East Berlin, and his house in Darmstadt had been destroyed by bombs.[49] Schenck had also lost access to his two insurance policies, given to him by Vanderbilt during Schenck's time at Biltmore. Both policies, worth about $12,000. had been seized as enemy assets by the Office of Alien Property, under the Trading with the Enemy Act.[50] Schenck, once a prominent figure in American forestry, was now marginalized and distrusted by the United States.

Just as the war forced Europe into a state of rebuilding, the now marginalized Carl Schenck was forced to rebuild relationships with his American friends. By 1946, Schenck had moved back into his self-built house at Lindenfels, which had been largely untouched by the war.[51] While in Lindenfels Schenck had begun to teach again, this time for family members and local children, whom he instructed in various subjects such as foreign languages, geography, math, and science.[52] As he rebuilt some semblance of a life, Schenck began to rekindle old friendships through correspondence, many of whose sons had served in World War II, among them, Lieutenant John W. Campbell Jr., son of Biltmorean John W. Campbell, a 1913 graduate.[53] Schenck struck up a friendship with the Lieutenant, who visited Schenck periodically following World War II. Schenck even offered to show the young Lieutenant his father's old school records, but warned him, "There is one dark blot on his honor just discovered by me on his school record: He failed the exam in tree-identification, right here in Lindenfels from where I write! Terrible!"[54]

Schenck's reunification with Peterson's son Bud, however, introduced Schenck to the tragic consequence of the war Germany had started. During the war, Bud, a tank commander with General Patton's 3rd army, was severely wounded after his tank, the only one in Bud's unit left intact after 72 days of combat, was destroyed during battle. Bud came out of the battle with both legs broken and over 50 pieces of shrapnel embedded in his body, and although he soon recovered physically, he ceased singing, a hobby of his that had interested Schenck in the past.[55] Peterson told Schenck

that "The war took something out of him, or maybe it put something in."[56] Stories like Bud's forced Schenck to grapple with the consequences of his choices, and Schenck feared that his American friends were turning their backs on him.[57]

Even in light of Schenck's uneasy relationship with the United States, many former Biltmore students still remembered him fondly, and believed that it was time for a resurrection of the Biltmore community, through the financial and material support of Schenck's American friends. At the urging of Peterson, Biltmoreans helped support Schenck via CARE Packages of relief supplies.[58] While corresponding with former student George W. Butz, Schenck revealed that he had received a directory created by Biltmoreans John "Tex" Woods and Charlie Musante, which contained the contact information of surviving Biltmore graduates and affiliates. "The school is dead since 1913---and it is not forgotten!" Schenck marvelled. "Really, that is a sort of immortality. Anyhow, the spirit is there, and what is immortality unless it is immortality of the spirit?"[59] Schenck's use of the word "immortal" was prescient: over the course of the following decade, "Immortals" replaced "Biltmorean" as the preferred term to describe members of the Biltmore Forest School community.

The Biltmore Forest School directory became especially useful for Schenck, as he tried to mitigate his newfound poverty by utilizing his Biltmore Directory to attempt a recovery of his two American insurance policies. In order to regain his insurance policies, Schenck employed Francis C. Reed as his attorney, who was also the attorney of Schenck's American nephew George W. Merck.[60] Reed's plan was to petition Congress via several dozen testimonials, in affidavit form, attesting to Schenck's contributions to American forestry. Reed wrote to R.S. Kellog, a former lecturer on forest statistics at the Biltmore Forest School, and requested that Kellog act as a conduit for Reed's request.[61] The call to action was successful, and Reed began to receive affidavits "almost daily."[62] By June of 1949, Reed had received over 35 such testimonials.[63]

The next step of Reed's strategy was in creating a convincing case that Schenck not only was never a member of the Nazi party, but was in fact, a persecutee. Schenck had not been a member of the Nazi party and in fact he had been forced to live in Darmstadt for the duration of the war because non-party members were not allowed more than one residence.[64] Schenck had also been persecuted by the Nazis on at least two occasions, where he was forcibly removed from meetings. The first occurred when Schenck verbally objected to a speaker for an unspecified reason, and the second after he presented a remonstration in protest of the dismissal of his pastor. On this second occasion, Schenck was physically assaulted and nearly put in a concentration camp until he agreed to burn the petition.[65]

The outlook of Schenck's case appeared positive, and by the end of 1948, Schenck's Amercan friend J.H. Bloedel had convinced Senators John J. Williams of Delaware and Warren G. Magnuson of Washington to take on Schenck's case as a pet project.[66] Together, Reed and Williams began an investigation into Schenck's relationship with the Nazi government. If it could be proved that Schenck had been anti-Nazi during the Second World War, his assets would be released to him.[67] This had worked once before, following the First World War when Schenck had been able to get these same assets released by working with the late Senator T. Coleman Dupont of Delaware, and Schenck hoped that it would work again.[68]

Forestry professor Emmanel Fritz proved that it would not. In the summer of 1949, Fritz gave a letter to the Alien Property Custodian that he had received from Schenck some ten years earlier. A secretary of the Alien Property Custodian then wrote to Senator Magnuson, "Since Dr. Schenck is not a 'persecutee' within the purview of Section 32 of the Trading with the Enemy Act, as amended, I do not feel that the evidence presented on behalf of Dr. Schenck warrant making this case an exemption."[69] Carl Schenck would not be getting his insurance policies through procedural means. Schenck eventually legally recovered his assets following a massive write-in campaign by Biltmore graduates as the Senate passed a bill entitled "For the Relief of Doctor C.A. Schenck."[70] However, Schenck's insurance policies were never released by the Alien Property Custodian.[71]

Despite, or perhaps because of this setback, the Biltmorean community had begun to consider holding a Biltmore Forest School reunion in the summer of 1950.[72] With the release of the Biltmore Directory several years prior, it was now easier than ever for the Biltmore alumni and affiliates to reunite in one grand reunion, scheduled for the last week of May, 1950. George W. Butz boasted, "Barring inclement weather, I believe this reunion is going down in history as one of the best and most unique of any school reunion in the country, not just currently, but in comparison with the past and future."[73] Whether or not this comment is hyperbolic was irrelevant to the Immortals, because the idea that the Biltmore Forest School was going to die away following its 1913 closure now proved to be unfounded. There was now going to be a Biltmore Forest School reunion. And not only the some 120 graduates that Tex identified in his Directory invited to the reunion, but so was the the US Senate, in order to bring attention to Schenck's legal plight.[74]

By this point, the Biltmore Immortals had long ago infiltrated not only forestry, but dozens of other American professions. Edward Merriam Griffin, an 1896 apprentice of Schenck's was, in the words of Pinchot, "the very-first man destined to make a 'working plan' for a National Forest."[75] 1901 graduate George H. Wirt developed the first manual for managing Pennsylvania's State Forests.[76] At the time of the reunion, 1909 graduate George W. Butts owned the Butz Lumber Company, a leading provider of western timber, according to Butz.[77] 1910 graduate Ed Conger, an

employee of Bell Systems, was a timber valuation expert, and also owned his own timber plantation in Aiken, South Carolina. Many, like 1910 graduate LeVan Bollinger, left forestry, although believed that the Biltmore Forest School had taught him the "business common sense" to succeed as an agent of a life insurance company.[78] Peterson was president of 5 different companies as well as an amateur radio operator.[79] E.H. Ballard was a rental agent for an apartment complex.[80] Overall, the different occupations represented by the Immortals ran the gamut between at least 45 different professions up to and including dentists, senators, and flying school operators.[81]

During May of 1950, this cross-section of 20th century America met at the Pink Beds, the site of the old Biltmore schoolhouse, where a bronze tablet to their mentor Carl Schenck was unveiled. A message from Schenck was introduced and read by Peterson, Butz, and Merck, and the day ended with a banquet. The following night, they held a Sangefest. Those who were still able to be present in Western North Carolina on Thursday, June 1st, left for Aiken, South Carolina. where 1910 Biltmore graduate Ed Conger owned a 19,000 acre pine plantation. At Conger's pine plantation, a service was given for deceased Biltmore alumni, and another bronze tablet to Carl Schenck was placed.[82] Peterson referred to the reunion as a prenominal success, and marvelled that "some thirty-five graduates could come back after not having seen each other for forty years and bring their wives whom they have never met before and everyone having a wonderful time and seem to be just as natural as forty years ago."[83] Even decades later, Carl Schenck still served as a sort of binding agent to this diverse group, indicating that for some segments of American society, the name "Schenck" still held importance.

Part of the reason that Schenck was so successful in his role as a binding agent for the Immortals community, was because he still advised his former students. Shortly after the first Biltmore Reunion, Ed Conger went to Schenck for a character reference on another Biltmore Forest School graduate, G.A. Schulze. Schulze, came to Conger with a plan for the development of hybrid pine trees.[84] Schulze wanted to know if he could use the Conger-Schenck plantations for his experiments.[85] Conger was concerned over whether or not Schulze would keep his word, and requested a character evaluation of Shulze from their former teacher. Schenck provided Conger with a decent, although not entirely glowing reference of Schulze, "His rating in silviculture, mensuration, and policy was insufficient for a degree under the Biltmore rulings currently prevailing in 1909. He has made up, however, for this deficiency in two other topics so that his average-rating was 78.5%."[86]

Although Schenck had never stopped corresponding with his students, it had been decades since he had last seen most of them in person. At the behest of the American Forestry Association, who had had begun to recognize the importance of the Biltmore Forest School, Schenck was invited to tour the United States.[87] Reunited with many of his students, Schenck was inspired to collect autobiographies of Biltmore graduates, and publish them in a grand collection. Schenck's goal in collecting student biographies was to emphasize the influence of Biltmore Forest School students on both forestry, and 20th century American life.[88] Upon returning to Europe, Schenck wrote a letter to Peterson, who, during Biltmore Forest School's reunion era, was "the engine that runs the show," in mobilizing the Biltmore community.[89] In it, Schenck requested that the autobiographies of Biltmore graduates be about two to three pages in length, and detail the subject's family, school, interests, inspirations, religion, occupation before Biltmore, and occupation after Biltmore until the present day.[90]

Schenck's attempts to collect autobiographies were complicated by a diverse myriad of factors ranging from a lack of confidence in achievements, to lack of communication, and to the increasingly advanced ages of all involved. Most frequently, Schenck struggled in getting Biltmore graduates to provide pictures to show alongside their autobiographies. In some cases, such as with Biltmorean H.H. Goodale, Schenck resorted to joking threats: "You are compelling me to take, from my collection of photos, that of some guy, German or otherwise, and placing your name to it."[91] Others, like Schulze, were concerned that their careers weren't noteworthy.[92] Schenck however, firmly rejected Schulze's request to not be included in the final collection, saying " You are wielding a very good pen and you are having original thoughts; and thus your life history-even if its contents are not particularly interesting-will captivate the reader by its style and by it philosophies."[93] Schulze eventually sent Schenck his autobiography, which was published in the first volume, and in the opinion of Schenck, "climaxed" the collection, with a humorous and folksy tone comparable to Mark Twain.[94] Although Schenck's claim to fame was the Biltmore Forest School, Schenck, working decades later from the founding of Biltmore Forest School, believed the upcoming biographical collection to be his masterwork.[95]

Unfortunately, while Schenck's late life renaissance was remarkable in just how far removed it was in time from the founding of Biltmore Forest School, it had an unfortunate side effect. Many former students had died, and could not send in autobiographies. In these cases, Schenck requested that family members or close friends of the deceased write the requested biographies.[96] In the biographical section of *The Biltmore Immortals* for 1912 graduate Carl Hammond Nye, his widow Madeleine M. Nye wrote, "In closing, I want you (Schenck) to know how much Carl enjoyed his contact with you through the years. He admired and loved you deeply. When any word came from you, his face would always light up."[97]

As Carl Schenck collected the autobiographies, his own advanced age became evident, and his health began to fail him. Concerned that he might die before the autobiographical collection was published, Schenck requested that in the event of his death, the collection should be sent to Ed Conger for publishing.[98] Despite such concerns, the completed ensemble was published successfully in 1953. Entitled *The Biltmore Immortals*, the biographies collected within were of a terrific variety, reflecting the diversity of Biltmore Forest School's graduates.[99] The biographies ranged in length from two or three pages as requested, to de Bois's and Peterson's 75 and 31 page behemoths that necessitated publishing in a second volume (to be published alongside some 25 other graduates who sent in their autobiographies too late).[100] From this point on, Biltmoreans were referred to as "The Immortals, "After all," remarked Peterson, "why shouldn't we be called 'The Fifty Immortals' by our old Doc? That's what we are to him, and when one sits down and reads what kind of a gang we are and have turned out to be, I guess he did not do a bad job training us."[101]

Around the same time *The Biltmore Immortals* was being edited and published, the Biltmore Forest School community decided to combat Schenck's blacklisting in American forestry by dedicating to him a grove of Redwoods in Northern California. Out of the diverse menagerie of American trees, Schenck had always been particularly fascinated by the Redwoods. Schenck had once marveled to Verne Rhoades about the Redwoods "Trees 3,000 years old, born at the time of Simson in Palestine and of the Trojan War and flourishing and perfectly healthy." Unintentionally foreshadowing his memorialization among the Redwoods, Schenck added,"the dead are living."[102] When Schenck had damned himself to Emmanuel Fritz, they had been discussing the Redwoods. Now, he was going to be immortalized among them, but not alone. Schenck requested that he be allowed to pick another 20 other pioneers of American forestry in the Schenck Grove, designating a tree for each pioneer, "thus making the Grove as a whole stand for something greater than the accomplishments of any one man."[103] At the request of Schenck, a separate grove was later dedicated next to his, dedicated to his recently deceased friend Fritz Olmstead.[104]

Due to failing health, Schenck was not present for the dedication of either of these groves. Schenck's declining health had a concern of the immortals as far back as 1948 when they pitched in to buy Schenck a hearing aid.[105] Since 1948, Schenck's health had only gotten worse, and in the spring of 1953, Schenck suffered a heart attack, leaving him bedridden for several weeks.[106] and while Schenck was visiting the United States later that year, George Merck noted that he was not as strong as he had been the previous summer, and had developed constant wheezing and a disturbing cough that "starts up all too frequently."[107] From 1953-1955, Schenck was frequently bedridden.[108] Any further reunions would have to either occur in Lindenfels, or, if any the United States, when his ashes were spread over the Schenck-Olmstead Grove in California.[109] Schenck continued to edit and compile the collection of biographies that were to make up the second volume of *The Biltmore Immortals*, but Schenck lamented that this was becoming increasingly difficult as his cognition declined.[110] On May 7, 1955, Carl Schenck passed away.

Although Schenck's name is still tarnished today, the death of Schenck ironically brought about a slight resurrection of Schenck's reputation. This was because his Biltmore Forest School had created something greater than any one man. Schenck's school had created a community, which alongside a body of shared memories, manifested itself physically at a special Biltmore Wing of the St. Paul Forest Museum. The Biltmore Museum was to hold all collected "Biltmoreana" donated by the Immortals as well as Carl Schenck himself.[111] It's purpose was to recognize Schenck's contributions to forestry.[112] However, this was only a temporary holding site, and the Biltmore Collection was moved to North Carolina State University (then North Carolina State College) new D.H. Hill Library, where it resides today as the Carl Alwin Schenck Papers. North Carolina School of Forestry also created a Carl Alwin Schenck Distinguished Professorship award and one of their managed woodlands was later named the Carl Alwin Schenck Memorial Forest.[113]

The story of Carl Schenck and the Biltmore Forest School is not just a story of forestry, although it certainly is that. It is the story of a community, of perseverance of spirit, of both mortality and a lack thereof, a testament that the ripples created by the impact of a person's life will continue long after they have departed among the people they know, and the places they have been. The members of Schenck's community, the Immortals, did their best in resurrection Schenck's reputation. And they succeeded to some extent. Although Schenck is often absent from the history books, monuments to Carl Schenck and the Biltmore Forest School still stand today in the form of the C.A. Schenck Memorial in Pisgah National Forest, to the Carl Schenck Memorial Forest in Raleigh, to the Schenck Olmstead Grove in the Pacific Northwest. The graduates and lecturers of Biltmore Forest School, and their families, came from all walks of life, and supported each other in their undertakings, becoming immortal not just through their contributions to forestry, but through their friendships and dedication to each other and to their teacher, Carl Schenck.

2. Primary Source Bibliography

Damtoft, Walter Julius Collection. D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville, Asheville, NC.

Walter Julius Damtoft, a graduate of Yale Forest School, was referred to as the "first industrial American forester." He worked with Biltmore Forest School to help create the "Cradle of Forestry in America." This collection contained 10 boxes, mostly containing correspondence, alongside one box of newspaper clippings, and miscellania such as an interview transcript. This interview transcript was particularly notable, as Damtoft, the interviewee, defended Schenck's reputation, following an attempt by the interviewer attempted to downplay Schenck's contributions to forestry, and criticised Schenck for "not understanding the American." Also of note is a letter from Schenck in which he named Damtoft and Champion Fibre Company as his spiritual successors in forestry, and a 1941 letter to the Robertson family of Champion Fibre Company, where Schenck expressed his support for Hitler.

Rhoades, Verne Collection. D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections. University of North Carolina at Asheville, Asheville, NC.

Verne Rhoades was an alumnus of Biltmore Forest School, and in 1910 he , entered the United States Forest Service. Because he was a student at Biltmore Forest School, he became familiar with the German field of scientific forestry and likely used its methodology during his work at Pisgah National Forest. This two box collection contained correspondence between Rhoades and Schenck, and Rhoade's autobiography, which was different from the autobiography that he provided for *Immorals*.

Schenck, Carl Alwin. Papers., D.H. Hill Library, Special Collections, NC State, Raleigh, NC.

This collection contains 102 boxes of articles, correspondence, diaries, field notes, manuscripts, student records and photographs. Schenck's Papers range in date from the 1880s to the 1980s. Most of the items contained are written in English, but a minority of the written materials, primarily from Schenck's early career, are written in German. Because Schenck's communications in German are directed at Germans rather than Americans involved in forestry, they hold no relevance to the scope of the thesis, which focuses on the Biltmore Forest School. A sizeable amount of the collection is digitized, primarily Schenck's personal and professional correspondence from the late 19th and early 20th century, as well as a 1900 technical report on Russian forestry, some of the Biltmore Estate's technical forestry reports, Schenck's budget, and notebook reports on climate.

2.1 Books

Pinchot, Gifford. *Breaking New Ground*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1947.

As one of the leading figures of American conservation during the early 20th century, Pinchot's *Breaking New Ground* gave an important view of the evolution of forestry. Schenck's own memoirs were written as a response to the progressive (In Schenck's belief "socialistic") political viewpoints espoused by Pinchot.

Schenck, Carl A., and Ovid Butler. *Cradle of Forestry in America: The Biltmore Forest School, 1898-1913*. Durham, NC: Forest Historical Society, 1998.

Cradle of Forestry in America were Schenck's memoirs, in which he discussed his fifteen years working in forestry at Biltmore, and in the Western North Carolina region, including his eventual falling out with Vanderbilt. It is titled "Cradle of Forestry," because Schenck largely introduced the new European science of forestry to the United States during this period.

Schenck, Carl, ed. *The Biltmore Immortals*. Darmstadt, Germany: L.C. Wittich, 1953.

The Biltmore Immortals was a two volume, biographical compilation of fifty Biltmore graduates. The first volume was edited by Carl Schenck, and sold to former students and their families as a piece of Biltmore memorabilia. Included in the autobiographies are information on the students family and background, their time at the Biltmore Forest School, and their careers following graduation. Autobiographical passages of deceased students are typically written by their widows.

3. Secondary Source Bibliography

3.1 Books

Carter, Mason C., Robert C. Kellison, and R. Scott Wallinger. *Forestry in the U.S. South: A History*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2015.

This work focused primarily on the point of view of Gifford Pinchot when covering the origin of American forestry, and forestry at Biltmore. Carl Schenck was not covered at all, however, it was invaluable in its portrayal of early American forestry, and the absence of Carl Schenck when Biltmore was covered, was noteworthy in and of itself.

Jacoby, Karl. *Crimes Against Nature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Written by Karl Jacoby, a professor in the history department at Columbia University, *Crimes Against Nature* offered a critical look at the conservation movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Carl Schenck was described alongside George Perkins Marsh, Gifford Pinchot, John Muir, and Theodore Roosevelt as a member of the "Pantheon of Conservation Prophets."

Miller, Char, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism.* Washington DC: Island Press, 2001. 8, 11.

This work was a biography of Gifford Pinchot, aimed at redeeming Gifford Pinchot's own declining reputation, which Miller believed had suffered from attacks by historians Rodrick Nash and Stephen Fox. Fox and Nash, according to Miller, viewed Pinchot only as a sort of stepping stone towards American environmental reform. Miller acknowledged Schenck, but only briefly.

Newfont, Kathryn. *Blue Ridge Commons*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012.

The main idea of *Blue Ridge Commons* is that forested wildlands were viewed by the Appalachian people as a sort of "commons," used by everybody. According to Damtoft, Carl Schenck had a stormy relationship with local Appalachians, because he viewed them the way he would a German peasants. According to Newfont, the presence of the Biltmore Estate disrupted Appalachia's commons-based society.

Spencer, Marci, *Pisgah National Forest: A History.* Charleston: The History Press, 2014.

Written by environmental educator Marci Spencer, published by The History Press, and with a foreword written by Forest Service historian Dr. James G. Lewis, *Pisgah National Forest* provided a sweeping overview of the development of forestry in North Carolina. Schenck played a prominent role in the work. Many of Schenck's early difficulties involved differing priorities between Schenck's approach of scientific forestry, and Pinchot's more traditional view of forestry based around clearcutting. Spencer implied that this played a role in Schenck's cultivating of new foresters at his Forest School. Following Schenck's dismissal from the Biltmore Estates, his Forest School was moved to Pisgah.

Vanderbilt, Arthur T, *Fortune's Children: The Fall of the House of Vanderbilt*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1989. 272-273.

Written by a descendent of the Vanderbilt family, *Fortune's Children* covered the rise and fall of the Vanderbilt family fortune. While a chapter is dedicated to George Vanderbilt, Schenck is never mentioned, although Pinchot is.

4. Other Secondary Sources

Balogh, Brian, "Scientific Forestry and the Roots of the Modern American State: Gifford Pinchot's Path to Progressive Reform," *Environmental History* 7, No. 2 (April 2001). 215.

Through a point of view that Gifford Pinchot was the "Progressive Era's Forrest Gump" Balogh argued that the rise of progressive and conservation movements were concurrent and interrelated.

Hill, Jonathan, "Crossing the Atlantic: Carl Schenck and the Formation of American Forestry." (Undergraduate Thesis, Duke University, 2017), at Duke University Libraries.

Hill's thesis written for Duke University covered the rise of Carl A. Schenck in American forestry, and his eventual departure Biltmore due to a combination of a decline in Vanderbilt's fortune. According to Hill, Schenck was largely forgotten by historians in favor of his predecessor at Biltmore, Gifford Pinchot.

5. Endnotes

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103. Fredrick Olmstead to Newton B. Drury, 25, April, 1952, Box 14, Folder 4, Carl Alwin Schenck Papers.
104. Carl Schenck to Biltmore Immortals, Dec 1951, Box 2, Folder 32, Walter J. Damtoft Collection, Ramsey Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Asheville, Asheville, NC.
105. Carl Schenck to LeVan Bollinger, 16 Dec, 1948, Box 15, Folder 6, Carl Alwin Schenck Papers.
106. Carl Schenck to David Naramore, 25 March, 1953, Box 19, Folder, Carl Alwin Schenck Papers.
107. George Merck to Harold J. Peterson, 19 June, 1953, Box 20, Folder 19, Carl Alwin Schenck Papers.
108. Carl Schenck to William Mills, 16 Jan, 1954, Box 19, Folder 12, Carl Alwin Schenck Papers.
109. Carl Schenck to Harold J. Peterson, 13 Jan, 1954, Box 20, Folder 20, Carl Alwin Schenck Papers.
110. Carl Schenck to LeVan Bollinger, 25 Jan 25, 1954, Box 15, Folder 7, Carl Alwin Schenck Papers.
111. Carl Schenck to J.H. Bloedel, 18, Dec, 1952, Box 15, Folder 4, Carl Alwin Schenck Papers.
112. Carl Schenck to Ed and Dorothea Conger, 17 Dec, 1952, Box 15, Folder 17, Carl Alwin Schenck Papers.
113. Dean R.J. Preston, "Response to Presentation of Biltmore Scholarship" in *The Biltmore Immortals* Vol. II. 221-222.