

Educational Corner—Submitted by Mike D. Moore

Reflections on Parish Storrs Lovejoy, a Michigan Conservation Legend

“P.S. He done a lot of good.” So ended the 1942 obituary of P.S. Lovejoy written by Harold Titus, author and member of the Michigan Conservation Commission. Lovejoy was a true renaissance man. Born in Illinois in 1884, he was the grandnephew of assassinated abolitionist Elijah Parish Lovejoy (1837) and the grandfather of the recently deceased Storrs Lovejoy Olson (2021), international renown biologist and ornithologist at the Smithsonian Institute.

Lovejoy studied forestry at the University of Michigan in the early days of the profession. During his time at the university, he spent time on the fledgling State Forest system at the headwaters of the Manistee River and also in the area east of Vanderbilt that became known as the Pigeon River Country. Seems he was working for Filibert Roth who served as the first leader of the State Forest system while also heading up the school of Forestry at Michigan. Lovejoy left Ann Arbor in 1907 to join the relatively new United States Forest Service in the west. He served as the Forest Supervisor of the Medicine Bow National Forest in Wyoming and the Olympia National Forest in Washington among other duties. In 1909, he worked with John Mullison in writing *The History of Medicine Bow Forest*. He later returned to Ann Arbor to join the staff of Roth in teaching forestry.

Always willing to write on any subject that interested him, he wrote for many periodicals during this time, not the least of which was a series in the *American Lumberman* on Paul Bunyan! He later was under contract to the Curtis Publishing Company as a staff writer and contributed many articles to *Country Gentleman* and the *Saturday Evening Post* on a variety of land use, forestry and agricultural subjects.

In a demonstration of his diverse interests, there exists the words to a song he composed about the life of a Forest Ranger. His wife recalled P.S. entertaining house guests by playing the banjo and singing his compositions.

For many years Lovejoy was active in the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters presenting thoughtful papers at their annual meeting. He served as chair of the Forestry Section for a few years and in 1935, he presented the Presidential Address which he entitled “Ecological Engineering.” P.S. also was a very active member of the Society of American Foresters. During the first ten years (1917 to 1926) of the publication of the Society’s technical *Journal of Forestry*, he is listed as a leading author, again focusing on land use. He often spoke at gatherings around Michigan generally discussing that a full third of the State was non-productive and it was time to plan for the future. An article in the Grand Rapids Progress in March of 1921 stated that Mr. Lovejoy would discuss the “millions of idle acres in Michigan” and “Mr. Lovejoy will discuss it with more than usual frankness.” Well, that was one way of putting it. More than one biographer has discussed Lovejoy’s cantankerousness. A straight talker, P.S. always made his position known.

The original Michigan Forestry Association (forerunner of the Michigan Forest Association) benefited from his time as an officer when he worked with Filibert Roth who was President of the organization for a time. He was a frequent speaker at their annual meetings, generally talking about solutions to the management of the abundance of cut-over burned-over forest lands in northern Michigan.

P.S. joined the newly formed Michigan Department of Conservation in the early twenties. He soon became heavily involved in the Land Economic Survey which undertook the task of surveying lands throughout Michigan noting soil and timber types, geology, forest lands, cultural institutions, and water features. As chairman of the Timber Taxation Committee, Lovejoy took a major leadership role in the November 28, 1922, Michigan Forestry Conference attended by over 50 leaders including timber landholders, professors from Michigan Agricultural College and the University of Michigan, and various representatives of state government. A full discussion of the problem of what was to happen to the cut-over lands in the future ensued. It was through the drafting of what was to become the Michigan Commercial Forest Act of 1925 that Lovejoy became known as the father of this legislation.

As Lovejoy had spoken and written over the years, the cut-over and burned-over lands of northern Michigan were being tax reverted to the State primarily due to the high taxes and could be considered non-productive. Tax relief was needed to ensure continued private ownership and enhanced management of these lands. The original act provided landowners with a reduced annual tax rate if they had a good faith attempt to maintain the land in forest growth and allow public entrance for hunting and fishing. At the time of harvest, there would be an additional yield tax payment. Although this Act has been modified in the last 90+ years, it still exists today.

Nearly 1,800 landowners participate in the program with more than 2.2 million acres listed, primarily in northern Michigan. It has greatly enhanced the ability of the forest products industry as the program allows timber investors to remain competitive in Michigan compared to other areas of the country.

Lovejoy was appointed the first Chief of the new Game and Fur Division in the Michigan Department of Conservation in 1927. He worked to establish game farms, game refuges, public hunting grounds and a research staff. He later became the Department's chief advisor of land planning and use.

He contributed to write articles on any subjects related to his interests and maintained a friendship with all of the luminaries of the day who were working in the conservation field. His work in the Department of Conservation led him to a close relationship with Aldo Leopold, land ethic specialist and author of *A Sand County Almanac*. Leopold was creating the first college degree in wildlife management at the University of Wisconsin and he was the first Professor of Wildlife Management in the United States.

Lovejoy and Leopold had parallel careers. They were both foresters, both worked several years as Rangers with the Forest Service, both were forerunners in the profession of wildlife management, and both were proficient authors, letter writers and speakers. It is fitting perhaps that Leopold wrote a substantial and glowing obituary for Parish Storrs Lovejoy in 1943 in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

It is my hope that some enterprising young natural resources author and historian will take on the task of writing a biography of P.S. Lovejoy. There are substantial written materials available at libraries and archives in Michigan and elsewhere. "P.S. He done a lot of good."

