

Alonza Beecher Brooks



Alonza Beecher Brooks was West Virginia's first forester. He wrote the first descriptions of West Virginia's forests and wood industries using a county-by-county format and wrote the first and still most famous book on West Virginia trees, which he himself illustrated with pen and ink drawings.

In 1909, the West Virginia Legislature enacted a forest, game and fish law and appropriated \$5,000 for the preparation and publication of a report on the forest conditions of West Virginia. "A.B.," as Brooks was known, was hired as the consultant to do the report, titled "Forestry and Wood Industries," which was published in 1911.

After serving as forester for the State Geological Survey in the 1910s, he was forester for the West Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station for five years, an agent for the United States Department of Agriculture in charge of forest disease activities in West Virginia and New York, chief game protector in West Virginia, and naturalist for Ogelbay Park in Wheeling, W.Va.

In 1942, he returned to his home near French Creek, W.Va., to revise his famous book, "West Virginia Trees." He pursued this project until he fell ill in 1943, and later died on May 16, 1944.

As West Virginia's first chief game protector, he formulated fish and game laws, and later developed these ideas as the first superintendent of the State Game Farm at French Creek. He was responsible for the development of the West Virginia State Forest and State Park systems. He was instrumental in the development of the forest fire tower system throughout West Virginia, and developed the nature program at Ogelbay Park.