

ARTHUR H. CARHART AND THE BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE WILDERNESS

In: The Forest Protection or Custodial Management Era, 1910-1933

Adapted from Terry West's Centennial Mini-Histories of the Forest Service (1992)

Arthur H. Carhart was a national leader of the early 20th century conservation movement, especially in advocating wilderness areas. He was born in Mapleton, Iowa, in 1892, and received his bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and city planning from Iowa State College in 1916. He served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during World War I, then joined the Forest Service as its first landscape architect in 1919.

Arthur Carhart viewed wilderness as a recreational experience and proposed that summer homes and other developments not be allowed at Trappers Lake on the White River National Forest in Colorado. After surveying the Superior National Forest in the Quetico-Superior lake region in 1921, he recommended only limited development and became a strong advocate for wilderness recreation for that roadless area. Carhart later wrote that "there is no higher service that the forests can supply to individual and community than the healing of mind and spirit which comes from the hours spent where there is great solitude. It is significant that people who have experienced the fullness of wilderness living, specifically men of the forests (Forest Service), have initiated and labored for keeping some parts of them as wildland sanctuaries."

Carhart resigned from the Forest Service in 1922 to practice landscape architecture and city planning in the private sector. His dream to protect wilderness recreation areas from development took the Forest Service 4 more years to accomplish. With Aldo Leopold's successful effort to have an administrative wilderness established in 1924 on the Gila National Forest, time was ripe for additional wilderness designations on the national forests.

Secretary of Agriculture William H. Jardine signed a plan to protect the Boundary Waters area in 1926, and it was dedicated as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in 1964 with it finally becoming a wilderness in 1978. Chief William Greely was willing to endorse the concept of wilderness areas and, in 1926, ordered an inventory of all undeveloped national forest areas larger than 230,400 acres (ten townships). Three years later, wilderness policy assumed national scope with the promulgation of the L-20 regulations. Commercial use of the areas (grazing, even logging) could continue, but campsites, meadows for pack stock forage, and special scenic "spots" would be protected. It would take many years until a national wilderness policy, set by Congress, would be enacted as the Wilderness Act of 1964.

In 1938, Carhart was appointed director of the Colorado program for Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration. He wrote numerous articles, many for the *American Forests*, the publication of the American Forestry Association. He also wrote a number of books on conservation matters including: *The Outdoorsman's Cookbook* (1944), *Fresh Water Fishing* (1950), *Water—or Your Life* (1951), *Timber in Your Life* (1955), *Trees and Game—Twin Crops* (1958), and *The National Forests* (1959).