

This Day in History... September 10, 1875

The American Forestry Association

The American Forestry Association was founded on September 10, 1875, in Chicago, Illinois. It's one of America's oldest national conservation organizations, with a mission of "Creating Healthy and Resilient Forests, from Cities to Wilderness, that Deliver Essential Benefits for Climate, People, Water and Wildlife."

The creation of the organization was spearheaded by Dr. John Aston Warder. Born in Philadelphia in 1812, Warder had a love for nature from an early age. He went on to have a successful medical practice for 20 years, while maintaining his interest in nature. He worked with several horticultural and agricultural organizations and was a proponent for gardening and landscape design, including the beautification of parks.

Warder gave up his medical practice in 1855 to spend more time in horticulture. He wrote several books on the subject and soon turned his attention to forestry. In the years following the Civil War, the country underwent significant industrial expansion. Massive forests were destroyed to make room for farms, towns, and railroads. Warder recognized the dangers of this rapid forest destruction and wanted to intervene before it was too late. Warder was also one of the first people to suggest planting trees in the western plains to help prevent soil erosion and provide protection from the wind.

The AFA donated the first live White House Christmas tree, a tradition that continues today.

Then in 1873, Warder was made the US Commissioner to the World's Fair in Vienna. He closely studied the forestry exhibits of each country and compiled the data for use back in America. Warder was inspired by what he saw at the fair and issued a call for Americans interested in forest planting and conservation to meet him in Chicago. They met there on September 10, 1875, and established the American Forestry Association (AFA). The group was dedicated to the responsible use of trees as resources,

and promoted tree-planting and education. Warder was elected their first president, remaining in that position until 1882.

Within a year of the AFA's founding Minnesota created its own state forestry association. Eighteen other states followed in the years to come. In 1882, the AFA held the first American Forestry Congress in Cincinnati's Eden Park. The meeting coincided with the first National Arbor Day tree planting, that included 50,000 people.

In 1888, the AFA published a paper titled "Notes on Some of the Forest Features of Florida." The paper was a major influence in the practice of prescribed burning, which is good for the health of forests and helps to reduce the number of major wildfires.

In 1891, the AFA successfully campaigned for the passage of a bill that enabled the president to establish forest reserves. That year, President Harrison set aside nearly 13 million acres as forest reserves. In 1894, the organization introduced its own magazine, the first conservation magazine in the country. In the years to come, the AFA played a major part the passage of important conservation legislation including the Forest Reserve Act (1897), Weeks Act (1911), and the National Park Service Organic Act (1916).

In 1921, the AFA launched extensive memorial tree planting campaigns, to help increase tree cover in cities across the country. First Lady Florence Harding planted the first tree in Washington, DC. Over the years, the AFA has championed several causes, notably the prevention of forest fires. They also established the first National Urban Forest Conference in 1982, eventually convincing Congress to pass national urban forestry legislation. Also in the 1980s, they launched the Global ReLeaf program, planting millions of trees around the world.

In 1992, the AFA was renamed "American Forests," to reflect its conservation efforts. American Forests has remained at the forefront of forest conservation, funding more than 1,000 forest restoration projects in every state, planting 65 million trees, and increasing tree cover in on dozens of cities.



In 1940, the AFA established the National Register of Big Trees, recording the largest living tree of every species found in the US.



In 1958, the US Forest Service recognized the AFA for its decades of forest fire education.



Issued in conjunction with the AFA's 1958 annual meeting.



The AFA worked with President Franklin Roosevelt to create the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933.



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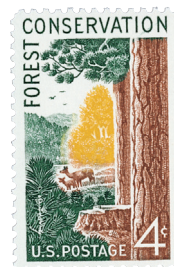
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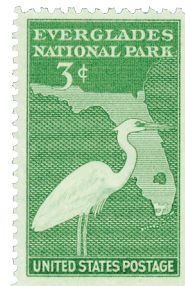
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