

## Damtoft, Walter Julius <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Damtoft, Walter Julius

by E. Kaye Lanning, 1986

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**11 Nov. 1890–22 Nov. 1976**



Walter Julius Damtoft. Image courtesy of the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

<sup>[2]</sup>Walter Julius Damtoft, forester and business and civic leader in western North Carolina, was born in Southport, Conn., the son of Knud Julius and Dagmas (Jacobi) Damtoft. He received a bachelor of philosophy degree from the Sheffield Scientific School of [Yale University](#) <sup>[3]</sup> in 1910 and a master of forestry degree from Yale in 1911. From 1911 to 1917, he served as a forest examiner with the [U.S. Forest Service](#) <sup>[4]</sup> in Colorado, Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, New Hampshire, and North Carolina. In 1917 he was named administrative assistant of the [Pisgah National Forest](#) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Upon his appointment as chief forester of the Champion Fibre Company of Canton, N.C., in 1920, Damtoft became one of the nation's first full-time professional industrial foresters and the first trained forester to be employed by a pulping enterprise in the Southeast. Other positions he held with the pulp and paper company included assistant secretary, assistant secretary-treasurer, assistant division manager, assistant secretary of the general woods department, and vice-president and general manager of Hamilton Laboratories, a Champion subsidiary in [Asheville](#) <sup>[6]</sup>. He retired in 1958. At Champion, he and President Reuben Robertson were early pioneers in adapting forest conservation, selective cutting, and reforestation practices to commercial timber operations. Through speeches, demonstrations, and articles, he urged area farmers, industries, and state officials to manage the forests so that they could continue to be used in the future.

Damtoft's civic duties were numerous. He served as a member of the board of directors, Asheville Division, [Wachovia Bank and Trust Co.](#) <sup>[7]</sup>; trustee, Memorial Mission Hospital; director, Forest Genetics Research Foundation; codirector, Forest Products Division, Economic Stabilization Administration; director, Forest Product Division, Office of Price Stabilization; vice-chairman, North Carolina Board of Conservation and Development; industry panel member, Regional War Labor Board; and industry member, North Carolina State Labor-Management Committee. Other offices included

general chairman, 1947 Southern Governors' Conference; secretary, Western North Carolina Committee for Development of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; vice-president, Society of American Foresters; president, Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association; director, American Pulpwood Association; president, North Carolina Forestry Association; and member, American Forest Products Industries, Inc. He was chairman of the board of appeal, Asheville District Selective Service; chairman of the Canton Planning Commission; a member of the Asheville Zoning and Planning Commission and of the North Carolina Industrial Council; president of the Western Carolina Manufacturers Association and of the North Carolina Traffic League; and director of the North Carolina Citizens Committee and of the Asheville Chamber of Commerce. He also belonged to the Newcomen Society, the Yale Forest School Alumni Association, Civitan, Mountain City, Pen and Plate, and Downtown Clubs.

Damtoft was awarded an honorary doctorate of forest science by [North Carolina State University](#) [8] in 1954 and was an honorary alumnus of the [Biltmore Forestry School](#) [9]. In 1956 he received the Achievement Award of the North Carolina Forestry Association.

Damtoft married Keene Martin in 1917; she died the following year. In 1921 he married Dorothy Athenson of Asheville. They had two children, Anne Elizabeth Damtoft Campbell and Walter Athenson Damtoft. Damtoft was a Democrat and an Episcopalian. He was buried at Riverside Cemetery, Asheville.

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#### Additional Resources:

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[3] <http://www.yale.edu/>

[4] <http://www.fs.fed.us/>

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