

Schumacher, Francis Xavier ^[1]

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by B. W. C. Roberts, 1994

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Francis Xavier Schumacher, pioneer in the field of forestry mensuration, was born in Dayton, Ohio, the son of Joseph and Julia Lavender Schumacher. He attended Emanuel's Parochial School prior to entering St. Mary's College (which became the [University of Dayton](#) ^[2]) in 1909–10 for one year of study in philosophy. Afterwards he took a six months' business course at Miami Commercial College and then worked as a bookkeeper for a Dayton wholesaler until 1912. In the 1912–13 school year he studied forestry at the [University of Michigan](#) ^[3].

In Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canada, he spent two years ranching, homesteading, railroad surveying, and logging that involved topping towering Douglas firs. He next worked briefly for the National Cash Register Company before entering the U.S. Army in 1916. Schumacher served as a company commander of infantry in the Meuse-Argonne, Saint-Mihiel, and Ypres-Lyn offensives before being wounded by gunshot in the left foot. He received the Distinguished Service Cross, the Belgium Croix du Guerre, and the Purple Heart. Discharged in 1919 with the rank of captain, he reentered the University of Michigan where he received a bachelor of science degree in forestry in 1921. With no doctoral program in forestry available, after considering a doctorate in philosophy, he decided to pursue his studies in forestry independently. For several months he served as a ranger with the U.S. Forest Service in Salmon, Idaho. In the fall of 1921 he became an instructor at the [University of California](#) ^[4] and also served as a research assistant to Professor Donald Bruce on projects in forest mensuration.



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In 1925 Schumacher was placed in charge of the work in forest mensuration both in the School of Forestry and in the Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of California. Three years later he became a professor and conducted the first university course in the United States—and perhaps the first in the world—that introduced the use of a statistical method as a research tool in forestry. Soon afterwards a number of other universities adopted similar courses. In 1930 he accepted the position of silviculturist and chief of forest measurements with the U.S. Forest Service. In this capacity Schumacher conducted research projects in forest mensuration and, as a faculty member of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School in Washington, D.C., trained government foresters in statistical methods for forestry research. In 1935 he was promoted to the position of senior silviculturist. In the same year he collaborated with Donald Bruce on a college textbook, *Forest Mensuration* ^[6], which became widely used and had several English editions as well as a French one.

In 1937 he became a professor of forestry at [Duke University](#) ^[7]. While at Duke he trained foresters from many parts of the world in forestry biometrics. Before joining the faculty of Duke, Schumacher had considerable experience in forestry research and had published articles as well as the textbook with Bruce. From 1937 to 1946 he served as an associate editor of the *Journal of Forestry*, and in 1942 he collaborated with R. A. Chapman on a forestry textbook, *Sampling Methods in Forestry and Range Management* ^[8].

After his retirement from Duke in 1961, Schumacher served as professor emeritus of forestry until his death. When he retired, the School of Forestry alumni created the F. X. Schumacher Forest Biometrics Library. In 1961 he became a special consultant with T. S. Coile, Inc., forest land consultants of [Durham](#) ^[9]. In 1963 he served as a visiting professor at the [University of Stellenbosch](#) ^[10] in the Union of South Africa.

Schumacher, known as "Schu," was elected a Fellow in such professional societies as the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) ^[11] (1942), the [American Statistical Association](#) ^[12] (1957), and the [Society of American Foresters](#) ^[13] (1959). He held membership in the Biometrical Society; Xi Sigma Pi, an honorary forestry association; Phi Sigma, a national honorary biological society; and Sigma Xi, a national scientific society.

In 1958 he was a recipient of the Achievement Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Profession of Forestry^[14], conferred by the Appalachian Section of the Society of American Foresters^[15]. In 1959 North Carolina State College^[16] gave him an honorary doctor of science degree. And in the same year he was presented an award for "Outstanding Achievement in Biological Research Contributing to the Advancement of Forestry" by the Society of American Foresters. He was the fourth American to be so honored for his pioneering efforts in the application of biometrics to the study of forestry.

He married Muriel McBride on 16 Sept. 1931 in the Church of the Peoples, a mission church on the East Side of New York City that was demolished when the United Nations building was erected. Their two children were Sally Ann and Donald Francis Xavier.

Schumacher's hobbies included fishing, painting, and studying and visiting the Civil War battlegrounds. He died at a Duke University Medical Center^[17] at age seventy-five and was buried in the National Cemetery, Raleigh^[18].

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