



JOHN FOX, JR.

John Fox, Jr. (1862–1919) was born in Bourbon County, KY, about seven miles East of Paris on the Paris-Winchester Road. His father, John Sr., was headmaster of Stony Point Academy, a progressive private school for boys and girls. John Fox, Jr. got a very good education there; he graduated at age 14, went to Transylvania for two years, and entered Harvard, where he graduated at 19, the youngest man in his class. He was unusually well educated and used to say that when graduated he knew more Latin and Greek than English.

Upon graduation, he got a job as a reporter for the *New York Sun*, but shortly gave it up because “as a reporter I was a flop.” He was a war correspondent for *Harper’s* and became a life-long friend of Teddy Roosevelt. He was also a war correspondent in Japan during the Russo-Japanese War, and later published a collection of stories about his time there--*Following the Sun Flag*. He moved to be with his brother in Jellico, TN, and took a job in a coal mining office. It was there that some of his ideas for short stories developed. His first story was “The Mountain Europa,” for which he was paid \$262.00 by *The Century* magazine. He was so pleased that he had the check photographed and hung it on his wall.

After retiring from teaching, in the early 1890s, Mr. Fox’s father moved the family to Big Stone Gap, VA, where several of his sons lived. John, Jr. soon joined his family there and began to soak up his surroundings and put his story ideas on paper.

He went on to write 14 novels and 45 short stories. Some stories were written in a day or two. He never had a story rejected. His novel, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, was the first in American literature to

sell a million copies, as well as his second novel, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*.

From 1894 until his death in 1919, Mr. Fox was in demand all over America and Europe to lecture about his beloved mountain folk and to read from his works. He charmed his audiences and became so popular that he had to become selective about which engagements to accept.

His many awards and honors included a medal conferred by the emperor of Japan. A complete set of his works were on display at the World's Fair in St. Louis in 1904, the same year he was chosen American author of the year. A Pullman car was named for him, and he was praised by legislators for his help in passing the copyright bill in Washington. In 1949 Duncan Tavern library was opened in his honor.

The John Fox, Jr., Library houses a number of personal items donated by the Fox family, including some of his original illustrations, pictures, writing desk, and the Fox family clock. Charles Scribner and Sons, who published all of his works, sent a collection of his manuscripts, one of them in his handwriting.



Sources:

"John Fox, Jr." by Bettie Tuttle, 1995.

"John Fox, Jr." article by John Ed Pearce, *Louisville Courier-Journal Magazine* August 25, 1985.

"Memories of John Fox, Jr., Friend of the Highlands," by William Cabell Moore (1957) published in *Kentucky Explorer*, Vol. 4, No. 7, January 1990.
