Martin Gardner: 
North Carolina's Historian of Oz 
and Annotator of Alice

by Mark I. West


Gardner's interest in Oz and Wonderland considerably predate his move to Hendersonville. Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1914 (five years before Baum's death), Gardner learned how to read by looking over his mother's shoulder while she read to him The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. Once he could read, he dashed through all of the Oz books as well as some of Baum's other fantasy stories. Gardner's childhood fascination with Oz never left him, but as he grew older he became equally interested in the creator of Oz. He was the first person to write a scholarly study of Baum's life, which appeared in 1957 in a book he co-edited with Russell Nye entitled The Wizard of Oz and Who He Was. Also in 1957, he became one of the sixteen founding members of The International Wizard of Oz Club.