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

by Mark I. West

After Carroll's book about Wonderland was published, readers thought of lots of clever answers. You can read about them in two books, *The Annotated Alice* and *More Annotated Alice* by the same man who's writing this *Oz* book." (*Visitors from Oz* 57)

L. Frank Baum's marvelous land of Oz and Lewis Carroll's topsy-turvy Wonderland converge in Martin Gardner's unassuming suburban house located in the mountain town of Hendersonville, just a few miles from Carl Sandburg's home. Like Sandburg, Gardner moved to Hendersonville at an age when most people make retirement plans, but unlike Sandburg, Gardner has not slowed down a bit since becoming a North Carolinian. Gardner and his wife, Charlotte, arrived in Hendersonville in 1981. In the years since then, Gardner has brought out a new book every year or two, including his own Oz novel entitled *Visitors from Oz: The Wild Adventures of Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman*, published by St. Martin's Press in 1998, and *The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition*, published by W. W. Norton in 2000.

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.