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Iowa's State Parks: A Various Language¹

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Iowa's state park system is distinctive because academically based natural scientists were instrumental in drafting the 1917 State Park Law, in shaping the initial policies, and in establishing the first parks. The mandate of the 1917 law was broad, but its original intent was to preserve and conserve natural resources; providing recreational enjoyment was secondary. Between 1920 and mid-century the founding vision was recast time and again by compromises that sprang from economic necessity, competing interests, and changing societal values. The ideal of resource protection has remained a guiding principle, however, in large part because strong personalities provided continuity of leadership from one generation to the next.

INDEX DESCRIPTORS: Iowa state parks, history; conservation, Jay N. "Ding" Darling, Ada Hayden, Thomas Macbride, G. B. MacDonald, Louis Pammel, Louise Parker.

The opening lines of an old and familiar poem, "Thanatopsis," by William Cullen Bryant read:

To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language.

Bryant's poem about death, which many of us read as students, may seem an unlikely source of inspiration for a discourse on the history of Iowa's state parks. The poet, however, had a remarkable ability to describe the American landscape, as evidenced by two of his other poems, "To a Waterfowl" and "The Prairies." Bryant's poetry was widely admired in the late nineteenth century, so all learned men and women of that generation read him. I chose the lines, however, not for their likely influence on the early-day park advocates in Iowa, foremost among them Thomas Macbride, but because they seem to convey, in much softer imagery, how differently reasonable people can see the same thing. My topic on this occasion is the subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, compromises that shaped the Iowa's state park system from its inception to about mid-century. The title also is an attempt to capture the essence of an expansive definition of parks, which influenced successive generations to create a multifarious system that, indeed, speaks "a various language" to all of us.

It is fitting that the 75th anniversary celebration should open in northeastern Iowa because this was the area that Thomas Macbride

and Samuel Calvin explored during the late 1860s and early 1870s, first as student and teacher, and then as colleagues at Lenox College in Hopkinton. These explorations led to a life-long collaboration that continued at the State University of Iowa, now the University of Iowa. Calvin became the university's first professor of natural science in 1873. In 1878, he persuaded Macbride to join him. Together, they became the department of natural science, with Calvin teaching geology and zoology and Macbride teaching botany. For Macbride, their early field expeditions also instilled a deep attachment to the distinctive scenery of northeastern Iowa, particularly the Devil's Backbone area in Delaware County that would become the first state park in 1920.

Although Iowa commanded a leading position in the state park movement during the 1920s and 1930s, Iowa was not among the first states to establish state parks. New York gets credit for designating the first state park in 1849, a historic site in Newburgh where George Washington headquartered during the Revolutionary War. However, the park movement in general was an integral aspect of the late-nineteenth century awakening to the massive toll on resources, especially timber and wildlife, that industrialization and westward settlement extracted. The park movement's inception at both the national and state levels is traceable to 1864, when the federal government ceded Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove, then part of the public domain, to California for a state park. (Yosemite was redesignated as a national park in 1905). By 1900, New York, California, New Jersey, Minnesota, and Wisconsin had designated, collectively, several forest tracts, scenic areas, and historic sites as state parks (Torrey 1926, Nelson 1928).

The places that became state parks reflect the motives of their advocates: forest conservation, historic preservation, and the protection of outstanding natural scenery. During the early twentieth century, progressive-era social reformers added to the list "human conservation," which typically meant providing rural recreational areas, especially for urban workers. Additionally, natural scientists in Iowa and elsewhere campaigned for state parks *in order to preserve* relicts of passing landscapes and to protect threatened wildlife species.

¹ Presented at the 75th Anniversary of Iowa State Parks, a joint meeting between the Iowa Academy of Science and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. A complete transcript of the meeting is available through the Iowa DNR. Dr. Conard's paper was solicited for publication by the J.I.A.S. after the April, 1995 meeting, and the paper was accepted on 7 Feb, 1996. The paper was not published at that time because we were waiting to publish the entire symposium. Most of the other papers, however, were not submitted. In the time since acceptance, Dr. Conard's book, *Quiet Places of Beauty: Parks, Preserves, and Environmentalism*, a more thorough treatment of her symposium address, was published in early 1997 by University of Iowa Press, which finds no conflict in our honoring the earlier acceptance of Dr. Conard's address for publication. We appreciate their cooperation.

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BEGINNINGS: THOMAS MACBRIDE

Thomas Macbride is the acknowledged visionary of state parks in Iowa. He initiated the call for "county," or "rural," parks in an 1895 address before the Iowa Academy of Science (Macbride 1896). Thus, this anniversary is also the centennial celebration of the state park "idea" in Iowa. By 1895, Thomas Macbride was one of the state's most distinguished and respected naturalists. His scholarly interests ranged beyond general botany to include slime molds and fungi specifically, paleobotany, forestry, and geology. He also was deeply concerned about the loss of Iowa's woodlands, the erosion of its soil, and the pollution of its waters.

In 1901, Macbride became a charter member of the Iowa Park and Forestry Association, an organization that drew its members chiefly from the Iowa Academy of Science, the State Horticultural Society, the state's colleges and university, and the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs. The Iowa Park and Forestry Association, which eventually became the Iowa Conservation Association, functioned as the political arm of Iowa's conservationists. As such, it was the driving force behind passage of the State Park Law in 1917. Several academic members of the Iowa Academy of Science also were leaders in the Iowa Conservation Association, among them archaeologist Charles Keyes of Cornell College, founder of the Iowa Archaeological Survey; botanist Bohumil Shimek, a former student of Macbride's and, from 1890 on, his colleague in the botany department; geologist George F. Kay, another colleague of Macbride's at the University of Iowa; botanist Louis Pammel and forester G. B. MacDonald of Iowa State College, now Iowa State University; and ornithologist T. C. Stephens of Morningside College (Christensen 1928, Pammel 1929-1930).

Macbride was not someone who was interested in parks from a purely aesthetic point of view. He always saw parks as part of a larger mission to preserve and protect natural resources. For instance, he chaired the Iowa Forestry Commission in 1908, a body he thought would be the institutional base of a permanent Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources (Macbride 1909). He was wrong about that, as it turned out, but he never abandoned the cause. Those who drafted the 1917 State Park Law, mainly academic scientists who were prominent members of the Iowa Conservation Association, shared his perspective. In this regard, the history of Iowa's park system is distinctive, for it was, in large part, the work of natural scientists who were affiliated with institutions of higher learning, but who also were drawn to practice "applied" science. The language of the State Park Law reflected this bias. It authorized the creation of state parks in order to preserve areas of scientific interest, of historical association, and of scenic quality. Under the law, the Board of Conservation also had a mandate to promote forestry; to preserve valued species of animal, plant, and bird life; and to gather information necessary for the conservation of natural resources in general (State of Iowa 1917).

At the time, the state park movement was still in its infancy, and the notion of what a state park should be was fluid. There was a general perception that state parks would be of a "lesser" order than the monumental national parks, such as Yellowstone, and that they would be of a different order than the designed landscapes of urban parks. However, Macbride was among the first in the country to attempt to define "state park" as a distinctive entity. By the early 1920s, he was no longer calling his idea a "rural" park, which in 1895 was mainly a convenience to distinguish his concept from that of urban or municipal parks. Rather, he had adopted the term "conservation park," a term clearly intended to link state parks with resource conservation. Yet Macbride was part of a generation that brought both moral conviction and romanticism to environmental thought. He frequently infused the discussion with an element of

the sacred. Thus, he saw "conservation parks" as the metaphorical equivalent of "great cathedrals" in which common men and women could commune with nature (Macbride 1922).

THE 1920s: LOUIS PAMMEL AND THE BOARD OF CONSERVATION

Intentionally or not, Macbride left his concept of state parks functionally vague. His definition of "conservation parks" did not explain what criteria might be applied to identify lands that were suitable for state parks or provide guidelines for state park development and management. The first Board of Conservation, organized in late 1918, was left to grapple with the very real issues that arose when it came time to transfer privately held land into the public trust.

Under the leadership of botanist Louis Pammel, the board negotiated state parks on a practical level. Pammel was no less a luminary in the state annals of natural science than was Thomas Macbride. In 1888, he succeeded Charles Bessey as professor of botany at Iowa State College. From then until he died in 1934, Pammel pursued a dynamic career that encompassed teaching and research, community and public service, and extensive public speaking. Additionally, he was a prolific writer with several published scholarly books and hundreds of articles (Pohl 1986).

To a very large degree, the state park system that took shape in the 1920s was influenced by Louis Pammel's sense of mission and political savvy. Landscape architect John Fitzsimmons, of Iowa State College, now Iowa State University, once said of Pammel, in his role as Chair of the Board of Conservation, that he "was so absorbed in preserving nature that he never saw the other side of the picture," the other side being recreation. "He would," in Fitzsimmons' words, "take a single tree in the middle of the road if somebody would give it to him" (Fitzsimmons 1941). In fact, though, Pammel bowed to political reality many, many times during the 1920s.

The process of deciding what would be included or excluded from the nascent state park system was not well planned in accordance with some agreed-upon policies. There was actually little planning as we would think of it today. In lieu of devising a land acquisition policy, the Board of Conservation hastily compiled a target list of approximately 100 areas, reasonably distributed across the state. For the most part, these were areas that Thomas Macbride, Bohumil Shimek, and others had recommended over the years. The list, compiled in 1919 and published in 1920, was entitled *Iowa Parks: Conservation of Iowa Historic, Scenic and Scientific Areas*.

The title did not mention recreation. In addition, even though "historic" was placed first in the title, the list did not include many places associated with cultural history. The places that were officially listed as desirable for state parks were lakeshores, wooded creeks, rugged stone outcroppings, Indian mounds (the only type of historic area mentioned), marshes, or rarities such as kettles. In short, the list included places that best revealed Iowa's geology and *natural* history.

Because the 1919 list is the closest the Board of Conservation ever came to establishing a policy to govern park acquisition, it is interesting to compare what amounted to a wish list with the board's 1931 report of accomplishments (Iowa Board of Conservation 1931). By then, the board had jurisdiction over 38 properties. A rough analysis reveals a "success rate," if one can call it that, of about 50 percent; that is, of the established parks in 1931, only about half of them had been on the 1919 list. There were no formal categories to distinguish the types of areas accepted into the park system, although by now the board was referring to them, collectively, as areas of historic, scientific, scenic, or recreational value. The park system, in 1931, included several places that are old favorites today: Backbone State Park (Delaware County), Lacey-Keosauqua (Van Buren),

Wild Cat Den (Muscatine), Maquoketa Caves (Jackson), Ledges (Boone), and Dolliver Memorial (Webster).

Eleven parks could be called "lakeshore or river parks," representing as they did the first steps toward acquiring land specifically for public access to lakes and rivers. This goal was embodied in 1921 changes in the State Park Law, which gave the Board of Conservation jurisdiction over all natural lakes and certain rivers. Lakeshore and river access parks included Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo), Eldora Pine Creek, now Pine Lake (Hardin), Pillsbury Point (Dickinson), and the Elbert Tract, now Walnut Woods (Polk). Some of these areas had been on the 1919 list; some had not.

The system also included three areas recognized as preserves, a distinction first made in 1928 when Woodman Hollow, near Dolliver Memorial State Park, was declared a preserve. The other two preserves were Barkley Memorial Preserve (Boone County) and Woodthrush Preserve (Jefferson). Both of these were donated parcels, and neither had been on the 1919 list. Additionally, there were two historic sites: Fort Atkinson (Winneshek) and Fort Defiance (Emmet), neither of which had been on the list. Finally, although it is true that the board often found something of scientific interest in each of the parks, only two small areas were selected solely for their scientific value: Gitche Manitou (Lyon) and Pilot Knob (Hancock and Winnebago).

On balance, the system, in 1931, was fairly diverse, and in this regard it reflected the mandate in the 1917 law. However, these parks and preserves also represented, to a greater or lesser degree, a series of compromises wrought of conflicting values, public demand, and competing interests.

Nowhere were compromises more evident than at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, which the 1931 report described as "one of the finest real conservation areas in the state." The park did contain a large expanse of woods, which, the report noted, was "never entered by the casual visitor." For casual visitors, there were miles of hiking trails to take them over tree-covered hills, along the bluffs of the Des Moines River, down to historic Ely's Ford, where early settlers had crossed the river, and by a cluster of Indian mounds. There were campgrounds and picnic areas. There was a lodge available for public gatherings. In addition, there was a nine-hole public golf course.

Even at the time, many people questioned the appropriateness of a golf course in state parks. The reason a golf course was allowed in Lacey-Keosauqua is to be found in the method by which the park was financed. Because the Board of Conservation worked with a limited budget, it encouraged cities, counties, and private citizens to assist with the purchase and, to a certain degree, the development of state parks. Lacey-Keosauqua was one of the first parks to be acquired in this manner. Local residents raised \$6,400 toward land acquisition, a sum that paid for 160 of the nearly 1,200 acres in the original park. Unbeknownst to the Board of Conservation, though, the Executive Council, a body comprising the governor, secretary of state, state auditor, state treasurer, and secretary of agriculture, took matters into its own hands. The Executive Council legally had final approval on all park matters and apparently agreed, although not in writing, "that suitable tracts within the park would be reserved for a public golf course" (Pammel c.1921). So, from the beginning, the Board of Conservation was forced to adjust whatever plans it had for developing Lacey-Keosauqua. The trade-off for local assistance was a nine-hole public golf course. When the board conducted a series of interviews in 1921 in an effort to clarify the situation and establish new lines of authority, one of the park "trustees," an ad hoc group of local overseers, candidly acknowledged that most of the people who had contributed to the \$6,400 park fund "knew absolutely nothing of the scientific features of the park" and "care[d] but little for the historical, but they [were] ardently interested in the recreational phases" (Strickling 1921).

After the golf course squabble, the Executive Council fell into a pattern of supporting almost all Board of Conservation recommendations. Also, in later years, the Board of Conservation and its successor, the State Conservation Commission, tried to limit the strings that came attached to local donations of land and money. Thus, in this respect, Lacey-Keosauqua was a learning experience. The historical significance of the golf course, however, is that it demonstrated the strength of public demand for recreational facilities in state parks. By 1931, there were public golf courses at three other state parks: Bellevue in Jackson County, Flint Hills, north of Burlington, and Wapsipinicon, near Anamosa. In addition, private golf courses were located adjacent to Eldora Pine Creek (Hardin) and Rice Lake (Winnebago) state parks.

There may have been a golf course at Lacey-Keosauqua, but there were no summer home sites, which the Executive Council also had agreed to allow within the park back in 1919-1920. Similar demands from local residents near Eldora Pine Creek and Backbone state parks eventually led the board to adopt a blanket policy of not permitting private cottages in any state parks. On this point Pammel was especially adamant. He asserted that the Board of Conservation had an obligation to ensure that all people had equal rights within state parks.

So, there were no summer homes in Lacey-Keosauqua. Nor were there deer or pheasants or bison, which local residents also had demanded without giving much thought to what it would take to maintain or manage these wildlife species. Actually, local demand for a deer park touched off a heated debate within the Board of Conservation. Voicing the reality-of-politics argument was Wm. Saunders of Emmetsburg, a former state representative, who cautioned that if the board opposed recreational spots in state parks, it could expect the state legislature to cut its appropriations. Saunders was referring to the 1923 battle over appropriations, when some members of the legislature threatened huge cuts because they did not agree with the direction Pammel was taking the board. Voicing the parks-as-sanctuaries argument was E. R. Harlan, curator of the State Historical Department, who opposed introducing any animal and plant species that were not a part of the natural history of the region (although he admitted that deer and elk had once roamed southeastern Iowa). Harlan also cautioned that deer would require some form of restraint in order to restrict their range. Indeed, this proved to be true at Backbone and Ledges, where deer *were* reintroduced.

Pammel's solution to the deer controversy at Lacey-Keosauqua was to initiate a study of the region's plants, animals, and history prior to designing a park development plan. The Lacey-Keosauqua plan represented the board's first attempt to balance local demands with the board's own ideas about what was appropriate development. Planning studies would thereafter precede development in state parks. In the end, Lacey-Keosauqua may not have exemplified Thomas Macbride's ideal of a "conservation park," but conservation interests were nonetheless served in the compromise.

The scientific community, which had worked long and hard for the State Park Law, looked askance at the increasing recreational use of state parks. So long as Louis Pammel chaired the Board of Conservation, conservationists within the Iowa Academy of Science could be sure their concerns received equal consideration. However, when he retired in 1927, the voice of scientific reason was gone. This change prompted the Iowa Academy of Science to become more vocal, at least for a time. The Academy, for instance, urged the board to set aside areas as sanctuaries for remnants of native plant and animal life, in keeping with the spirit and intent of the State Park Law (Shimek 1927). Demands from the IAS and a new group active in conservation politics, the Izaak Walton League, probably played a role in other board decisions to allow no more designated Boy

Scouts or youth group buildings in state parks, to establish wildlife refuges within certain state parks, to take the lead in pressing for water pollution control measures, and to continue opposing power dams near state parks, a controversial issue that spanned more than one decade.

There was one more important compromise in the 1920s. The park system contained many wooded areas, but there were no state forests, per se, and there was no real forestry conservation program. Pammel and G. B. MacDonald, head of the forestry department at Iowa State, saw this as the Board of Conservation's major failure. But it was not for lack of effort. During the very early 1920s, Pammel and MacDonald tried, twice, to establish a forestry program. Among other things, their proposals would have authorized the board to appoint a state forester and to establish a state tree nursery (MacDonald 1921).

The forestry proposals were entirely in keeping with the intent of the 1917 Act, but Pammel and MacDonald completely misjudged the politics of conservation in the 1920s. The Iowa Conservation Association gave the proposal its wholehearted support; but another old conservation ally, the State Horticultural Society, switched sides over the forestry issue. If the Horticultural Society had still been dominated by a mix of experimentalists and professors of horticulture, botany, and forestry, things might have turned out differently. But by the early 1920s, commercial nursery operators were a strong voice within the organization. It was this special interest group that now rose up to defeat the forestry proposal, fearing that a state-operated tree nursery would cut into their own profits. Consequently, forest conservation remained an unrealized goal during the 1920s.

Despite these setbacks, the Board of Conservation assembled, in about a decade, a state park system that earned Iowa a reputation as a leader in the state park movement. But the system also revealed the degree to which the board had come to function as a broker, balancing the demands of local citizens, political office holders, and special interest groups, including conservationists. As a result, there was a growing realization among natural scientists especially and conservationists in general that resource conservation problems could not be addressed adequately through parks and preserves or by the Board of Conservation alone.

THE NEW DEAL FOR STATE PARKS: MORE RECREATION

The 1930s saw the park system shaped in new ways by new forces. The New Deal response to the Great Depression—specifically, work relief programs—was one force. Another was Jay N. "Ding" Darling, better known to most Iowans as the Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist of the Des Moines Register, but who also was Iowa's most voluble proponent of scientific resource management in the 1930s. Darling should be equally remembered for his brainchild, the *Twenty-five Year Conservation Plan* (Crane and Olcott 1933). Working through the Izaak Walton League, Darling first orchestrated a campaign to create a Fish and Game Commission, a move designed to root out political cronyism in the Fish and Game Department. When the mission was accomplished in 1931, Governor Dan Turner then appointed Darling to a seat on the commission. Creation of the Fish and Game Commission elevated the administration of fish and game policy to the same level as the administration of park policy. Thus, the Board of Conservation and the Fish and Game Commission became partner, but separate, agencies handling different, but overlapping, aspects of resource policy.

At the same time Darling was spearheading the drive to establish the Fish and Game Commission, he took on the larger issue of state parks and resource conservation in its broadest sense. Speaking before the Iowa Ikes in 1930, he urged them to get behind legislation that

would establish a long-term state conservation plan (Darling 1930). This campaign resulted in a pioneering effort. In 1931, Iowa became the first state to undertake comprehensive studies designed to relate state park development to resource conservation needs on a long-term basis. The plan was jointly funded and developed under the auspices of the Board of Conservation and the Fish and Game Commission.

The *Iowa Twenty-five Year Conservation Plan* represents an impressive marshaling of scientific evidence to substantiate a long-term program for the protection and development of Iowa's resources. It also rationalized and organized a host of ideas and half-realized efforts that had been kicked around for more than a decade. Parks and preserves were key elements of the plan. Many existing state parks were to be reclassified as preserves in order to distinguish them from areas "intended to fill the demand . . . for recreational facilities." State parks, in other words, would include holdings large enough "to accommodate intensive recreation by large crowds in a setting of relatively unspoiled natural landscape." All together, the plan called for 17 state parks (10 existing and 7 new) distributed across the state so that no Iowan had to drive more than two hours from home in order to get to one.

The plan called for a separate system of preserves that would include prehistoric and historic sites, unusual geological phenomena, areas containing rare plants, forest tracts, sites of outstanding scenic beauty, and at least one large prairie tract. Preserves would admit some recreational use, but a half-dozen "sanctuaries" would not. The latter would be inviolate ranges for sharptail grouse, wild turkeys, prairie chickens, and other wildlife species. They also would provide the ultimate protection for rare plants, trees, and songbirds.

In addition to the park and preserve systems, the plan envisioned a wildlife management system on a scale never before imagined. It called for constructing as many as 30 artificial lakes in the southern half of the state, dredging existing lakes to enhance fishing and other forms of water-based recreation, and providing hundreds of public access points along streams and lakes. More than 100 sites were identified as potential refuges for upland game and migratory waterfowl. Tying together all these parks, preserves, wildlife refuges, fishing spots, and public hunting grounds was a planned system of scenic highways with scores of wayside parks.

In its final form, the thrust of the plan was to guide the orderly development of "more and better recreational facilities." Resource conservation programs were, of course, integral aspects, but the selling point was more public space for fishing, camping, boating, hiking, and hunting. Despite this emphasis on public recreation, the plan, in its entirety, attempted to make a greater place for wildlife in the park system. To make this possible, the plan also called for merging the Board of Conservation and the Fish and Game Commission into a new entity, the State Conservation Commission, a merger that took place in 1935.

Much fanfare attended the statewide conservation plan. Other states adopted it as a model, and it remained the primary reference for the State Conservation Commission well into the 1950s. By the early 1940s, however, Jay Darling, its chief architect, had become the plan's chief critic. He judged that more than half of the projects recommended in the plan had been completed or were underway, but the means by which they had been realized—federal aid—had undermined the basic aim of comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous planning. "Public attention," he noted, "became captivated by the struggle for CCC camps, and the background of unified planning . . . was lost sight of. . ." (Darling 1941).

Few people have ever found fault with the Civilian Conservation Corps, but Darling saw the CCC, the Works Progress Administration, and all the other New Deal agencies providing work relief during the Great Depression as a mixed blessing. Why? Well, mil-

lions of dollars of federal aid put tens of thousands of men to work developing state parks and restoring the public domain. This was good, although many people joked that WPA really stood for "We Piddle Around." Nonetheless, between 1933 and 1942, New Deal programs made it possible for Iowa to improve 25 existing state parks, and to add many more new parks, preserves, and recreation areas to the system. What bothered Darling was that so much of the effort had been focused on developing public recreational facilities and relatively less on "making a place" for wildlife.

When the New Deal came to a close, Iowa had about 90 areas that were variously classified as state parks, state recreation areas, lake reserves, forests, historic-archaeological areas, geological-biological reserves, or wayside parks. Park use had doubled to 3.6 million visitors annually. There were well-equipped overnight cabins in nine state parks, with public demand for many more. Three natural lakes had been dredged to enhance boating and fishing; 18 new artificial lakes were open for public use. Private concessionaires ran boat liveries out of new boat houses. Concessionaires also operated dining halls, refreshment stands, and bathhouses at many state parks. Steadily increasing numbers of private docks and commercial launches further pointed to the popularity of motor and sail boating. To meet public demand, some parks even stayed open year-round. For winter sports enthusiasts, there were ice rinks, toboggan slides, and ski runs. The State Conservation Commission, however, drew the line at tennis courts, swimming pools, and playground equipment. Despite constant requests for such facilities, the commission did not see these as fitting uses for state parks (Iowa State Conservation Commission 1940, 1942).

In essence, federal aid allowed Iowa to indulge public demand for recreation. However, even though Darling's criticism had some justification, the Conservation Commission did not entirely neglect wildlife. By the early 1940s, the commission managed nearly 80,000 acres of public lands and waters. Of this total, about 62,000 acres were managed as parks or preserves, a figure that included 45,000 acres of natural and artificial lakes. State forests accounted for another 13,000 acres. In addition, there were about 5,000 acres of designated wildlife refuges, game farms, and fish hatcheries, although many parks, preserves, forests, and lakes also had wildlife management areas. Finally, the commission held jurisdiction over 800 miles of streams and rivers (Iowa State Conservation Commission 1942).

Impressive as the system sounds, and by the early 1940s the numbers were sizable, these 80,000 acres represented less than one percent of the state's total land area. The remainder was mostly privately owned, and there were few controls over private land use in the 1940s. At best, the Conservation Commission could only provide environmental leadership by example.

Leadership by example is the approach that G. B. MacDonald took with the state's new forestry program when the opportunity came to him in the 1930s. Although MacDonald and Pammel had failed, during the 1920s, to establish forestry as one of the Board of Conservation's official responsibilities, MacDonald nonetheless served as the board's unpaid "consulting forester." After the federal Clarke-McNary Act was passed in 1924, MacDonald was instrumental in securing state appropriations for forestry work through the Extension Service rather than the State Department of Agriculture, which enabled him to supply nursery stock to the Board of Conservation for forestry work in state parks (MacDonald 1926). MacDonald also conducted the field research for and wrote the forestry section of the *Twenty-five Year Conservation Plan*, as well as more thorough investigations and recommendations that were published in the 1935 report of the Iowa State Planning Board. The contacts with federal officials he developed as a result of his dogged efforts to build a forestry program in Iowa appear to be the reason he was offered, in 1933, the position of state director of the Emergency Conservation Works

program, a post he readily accepted and held in addition to his professorship at Iowa State.

As director of the Emergency Conservation Works program in Iowa, MacDonald administered Civilian Conservation Corps projects, and he used his position to establish a forestry program. His strategy included state purchase of tax-delinquent lands, whenever possible, for conversion to state forest reserves. These were to be "areas that demonstrate true conservation in the sense of proper use of the land and water" (Iowa State Conservation Commission 1938). In 1935, he spent \$12,000 from funds he controlled to purchase the initial 390 acres of a rare stand of native white pines located in Dubuque County (Iowa State Conservation Commission 1936). White Pine Hollow, today a well-known preserve, thus became Iowa's first official state forest. In 1968, the forest was designated as a state preserve in order to further protect the white pines. White Pine Hollow is also recognized a National Natural Landmark.

Between 1933 and 1935, MacDonald negotiated the acquisition of 11,000 acres of cut-over woodlands, brush-covered tracts, and worn out fields, principally located in four southeastern counties—Lucas, Monroe, Lee, and VanBuren—and two northeastern counties—Allamakee and Clayton. In keeping with the principles of multiple-use management, these areas were slated for a combination of timber production, wildlife production, and grazing, with limited recreation. MacDonald also worked with the U. S. Forest Service to begin a program of federal land acquisition in Iowa. Tax delinquencies and farm foreclosures during the Great Depression opened up the possibility of large-scale land purchases for reforestation; and for a short time the U. S. Forest Service pursued the creation of a national forest in Iowa, but interest waned when prosperity returned and land was no longer available cheaply (Iowa State Conservation Commission 1938; MacDonald 1935, 1937, 1941). MacDonald was more successful in his efforts to establish a state tree nursery, despite renewed opposition from commercial nursery operators. By 1940, the nursery, located near Ames, was fully operational. Seedlings produced there were planted on the marginal and submarginal lands acquired for forests, were used to reforest state park lands, and, equally important, were sold to farmers for erosion control and reforestation purposes (Iowa State Conservation Commission 1940).

In 1935, when federal and state moneys began flowing, MacDonald had visions of placing no less than 900,000 acres of woodlands in state forest reserves. His expectation, however, far exceeded anything possible. The reality of federal and state aid did not even begin to match his vision. By the close of the New Deal, state forest holdings totaled approximately 13,000 acres. Federal reserves amounted to another 4,700 acres, and these eventually were transferred back to the state in the 1960s. Together, the approximately 18,000 acres of forest reserves represented a very small fraction of the estimated 2.5 million acres of remaining woodlands in Iowa at the time. No matter how small the gain in terms of acreage, though, MacDonald's efforts paid off in one important respect. He finally established forestry as a function of the State Conservation Commission. This was a goal that stretched back as far as the founding of the Iowa Park and Forestry Association in 1901.

THE 1940S: RESTORING THE BALANCE

During World War II, the pendulum began to swing away from recreational development for the first time since the mid-1920s. In part, this was because visitor use declined during the war years, making it possible for the Conservation Commission to shift its focus. However, it is also true that after the New Deal building boom, there was a natural tendency to take stock of what had been accomplished and to determine what elements of the state conservation plan remained undone. As a result, the Conservation Commission

began to fill some gaps in the park system. For instance, with revenue from a new federal funding source, the Pittman Robertson Act, the Commission embarked on an ambitious program to acquire fish and wildlife areas, a program that redressed the imbalance of the 1930s, when so much effort had gone into building recreational facilities.

Louise Parker, who was publicly known as Mrs. Addison Parker, wife of a prominent Des Moines attorney, joined the commission in 1937. Mrs. Parker quickly established her presence on the commission by focusing her efforts on two other neglected resource issues: historic sites and prairies. In 1940, the Commission agreed to administer the Iowa City home of territorial governor Robert Lucas and his wife, Friendly. Mrs. Parker then oversaw the restoration of this house, which was named Plum Grove. The commission also undertook a major archaeological study in preparation for restoring parts of Fort Atkinson, although no actual restoration work would begin until the mid-1950s. In 1943, the Abbie Gardner Sharp Cabin in Arnolds Park was added as a state monument. Mrs. Parker also nudged along the state purchase of about 1,000 acres near McGregor which, in 1947, were turned over to the federal government for the establishment of Effigy Mounds National Monument.

Acquisition and restoration of important historic sites fulfilled the intent of the 1917 State Park Law as well as the state conservation plan, and these activities continued into the 1960s. However, the commission never acquired staff expertise in cultural history; and, by the early 1960s it was seeking ways to shed these responsibilities. After passage of the federal National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, cultural resource management functions were transferred to the State Historical Society, but the historic sites already acquired remained in the system. They are reminders of the broad mandate contained in the organic act. Since then, of course, hundreds of park structures built in the 1930s have acquired the patina of history, and cultural resources management is once again a concern in state parks and preserves.

During the early 1940s, Louise Parker also led an effort to begin acquiring tracts for prairie preserves, a part of the state conservation plan that had been completely ignored in the 1930s. Botanist Ada Hayden of Iowa State College greatly facilitated this effort by preparing an inventory of prairie remnants (Hayden 1945, 1947). Hayden had studied under Louis Pammel and assisted him with his research both as a student and as a faculty member. For much of her career she lived in her mentor's shadow, but after his death in 1934, her own scholarly passions emerged. Hayden's prairie investigations provided the basis for acquiring a tract in Howard County, named Hayden Prairie after she died in 1950, and another in Pocahontas County, the Kalsow Prairie (Tiffany 1975, Lovell 1987, Isely 1989).

Prairie acquisition foreshadowed passage of the State Preserves Act in 1965 and the subsequent creation of the State Preserves Advisory Board to the State Conservation Commission. Hayden Prairie holds the distinction of being designated as Iowa's first state preserve under this act. Preserve status soon followed for Kalsow Prairie, Sheeder Prairie (Guthrie County), Turkey River Mounds (Clayton), Fish Farm Mounds (Allamakee), Wittrock Indian Village (O'Brien), Fort Atkinson (Winneshieck), Pilot Knob State Park (Hancock), and White Pine Hollow (Dubuque). In some respects, the State Preserves Advisory Board and the preserves this body monitors, probably come the closest to realizing the vision that Thomas Macbride, Louis Pammel, and other park advocates had in mind.

CONCLUSION

Seventy-five years ago, no one imagined that creating a state park system would be easy. At the same time, no one realized it would take three decades to assemble the basic elements that, in 1920,

many people felt a state park system should encompass. The journey from 1920 to mid-century recalls a passage written by another nineteenth century author, Henry David Thoreau. Speaking of his two years on Walden Pond, Thoreau wrote,

I learned . . . that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success, unexpected, in common hours.

And so it was that successive generations gradually advanced toward a more-or-less common goal. The 30-year process of negotiating different values and competing interests shaped a park system that, by 1950, had all the essential ingredients we enjoy today. The process also revealed that parks meant different things to different people. In the end, parks admitted far more recreational use than the framers of the 1917 park law would have liked. They also contained far less forest land than conservationists wanted. And, eventually, values shifted away from preserving cultural history in state parks. At the same time, Iowa made a place for nature in its state parks, and not just as scenic backgrounds for camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, boating, and water skiing—although there are plenty of these. Rather, the expansive notion of state parks manifest in the State Park Law, and reiterated in the *Twenty-five Year Conservation Plan*, stands behind our prairie and wetland preserves, stands behind our state forests, stands behind our wildlife refuges, stands behind state control over our lakes and rivers. In Iowa's state parks and preserves, nature does, indeed, speak a various language.

Today and tomorrow, we pause to consider the various languages that *we*, and others, speak when we talk about parks and preserves. Is it possible to obtain consensus about how parks and preserves should be managed? There are still diverse opinions about "appropriate" use, and special interests are more demanding than ever. As was true in the 1920s, there are those who would limit the jurisdiction and mandate of the Department of Natural Resources. Others question the department's commitment to protecting resources. Maintaining the delicate balance between public access and resource protection is a never-ending challenge. And the budget has never been large enough to achieve all worthy goals.

The larger question, of course, is *how* to maintain, even strengthen, that balance into the future. As we discuss the future, let us also consider the legacy of leadership in Iowa. During the 1920s, Iowa was so much in the forefront of the state parks movement that the organizing meeting of the National Conference on State Parks was held in Des Moines, in 1921. During the 1930s, Iowa was the first state to initiate comprehensive planning for state park and resource development. During the 1940s, Iowa was one of two states (Wisconsin was the other) to begin acquiring lands specifically to preserve prairie remnants and other scientifically important natural areas. Judging from the past, the question is not whether we can shape the future. The question is how we *begin* to shape the future. As we debate the issues, let us please listen to the various languages we hear.

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{Much of the information contained in this abbreviated history is drawn from extensive correspondence, reports, minutes, and other unpublished materials in the Louis H. Pammel Papers, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University; the Thomas Huston Macbride Papers, Special Collections, University of Iowa; the Minutes of the Board of Conser-

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