

2016

# Three men in the wilderness: Ideas and concepts of nature during the Progressive Era with Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and John Muir

Jeffrey A. Duke  
*University of Northern Iowa*

Copyright ©2016 Jeffrey A. Duke

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.uni.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Natural Resources Management and Policy Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

---

## Recommended Citation

Duke, Jeffrey A., "Three men in the wilderness: Ideas and concepts of nature during the Progressive Era with Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and John Muir" (2016). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 307.  
<http://scholarworks.uni.edu/etd/307>

This Open Access Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

Copyright

JEFFREY A. DUKE

2016

All Rights Reserved

THREE MEN IN THE WILDERNESS:  
IDEAS AND CONCEPTS OF NATURE DURING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA  
WITH THEODORE ROOSEVELT, GIFFORD PINCHOT AND JOHN MUIR

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Jeffrey A. Duke

University of Northern Iowa

July 2016

## ABSTRACT

When I began this research in the summer of 2014, I endeavored to find out how Americans comprehended nature in the Progressive Era. By the Progressive Era the historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared the frontier to be closed. This notion that no wide open spaces remained to be conquered altered the American people's attitude towards nature. The perspectives of three men who were at the forefront of environmental policy illustrate how America's understanding of nature had changed. These three men were twenty-sixth President Theodore Roosevelt, professional forester Gifford Pinchot and naturalist John Muir. Describing the similarities and differences in these men's perspectives on nature is the theme of *Three Men in the Wilderness: Ideas and Concepts about Nature during the Progressive Era with Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and John Muir*.

In Roosevelt, there existed a young boy who immersed himself in the natural world to overcome his childhood physical ailments. As an adult, Roosevelt displayed both the masculine and feminine side of his patriarchal, upper-class personality to promote conservationism in his administration. Pinchot grew up in the world of industrial barons and believed that he could make forestry a profitable industry. To this end, Pinchot engaged in educating future generations on the science and business side of forestry. Muir was a

naturalist who encouraged people to make a spiritual connection with nature.

This connection Muir believed, allowed middle class people to rejuvenate themselves by communicating with nature. While researching this thesis, I have found that the perspectives of these three men on nature sometimes overlapped and mirrored one another. I have also discovered how their advancements in public life transformed some of their opinions on the topic of environmentalism. In my conclusion, I describe how all three of these perspectives encountered each other around the polarizing issue of damming the Hetch Hetchy Valley.

THREE MEN IN THE WILDERNESS:  
IDEAS AND CONCEPTS OF NATURE DURING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA  
WITH THEODORE ROOSEVELT, GIFFORD PINCHOT AND JOHN MUIR

A Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Jeffrey A. Duke

University of Northern Iowa

July 2016

This Study by: Jeffrey Duke

Entitled: Three Men in the Wilderness: Ideas and Concepts of Nature during the Progressive Era with Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and John Muir.

Has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in History

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Dr. Brian E. Roberts, Chair, Thesis Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Dr. Barbara A. Cutter, Thesis Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Dr. Thomas G. Connors, Thesis Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

DEDICATION

In loving memory of Heather L. Baures

1983-2013

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Working on this thesis over the past two and a half years has been a great privilege. I am very grateful to Dr. Roberts, and his esteemed colleagues, in the University of Northern Iowa history department for all their guidance. The Rod Library staff has given me invaluable assistance in helping me acquire the resources I needed. I also thank my parents for encouraging me and helping me with transportation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: THEODORE ROOSEVELT: BOY SCOUT IN CHIEF.....	13
CHAPTER 2: GIFFORD PINCHOT AND THE BUSINESS OF FORESTRY .....	35
CHAPTER 3: JOHN MUIR ENVIRONMENTAL EVANGELIST.....	54
CHAPTER 4: THE HETCH HETCHY CONTROVERSY .....	71
CONCLUSION.....	87
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	93

## INTRODUCTION

Professional forester Gifford Pinchot told the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* that he did not see the harm in allowing some limited sheep grazing on public lands. Naturalist John Muir became incensed upon reading Pinchot's comments and decided to confront him. This confrontation occurred in the lobby of a Seattle hotel where both Muir and Pinchot were participating in a surveying trip for the National Academy of Sciences' National Forest Commission on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1897.<sup>1</sup> Muir marched up to Pinchot and shoved the article in his face demanding to know if he had really expressed this opinion on the matter of sheep grazing. Pinchot casually replied that he did indeed believe in allowing some limited livestock grazing on public land. Infuriated, Muir snapped, "In that case, I don't want anything more to do with you!"<sup>2</sup>

This difference of opinion on the proper way to care for the new natural environment of the new national parks displays the variety of new perspectives on environmentalism during the Progressive Era. Another story involving Muir and twenty-sixth president Theodore Roosevelt also illustrates how those who cared for America's wilderness in the Progressive Era approached their activism differently. Roosevelt and

---

<sup>1</sup> Char Miller. *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*. (Washington: Island Press 2001) 121

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, see Gifford Pinchot *Breaking New Ground* for his account of this incident

Muir spent three days camping in Yosemite National Park in the spring of 1903. As they hiked among the woodlands, Roosevelt pointed out all the bird species just by listing to their calls. He was disappointed that Muir could not do that too. Muir, on the other hand, spoke of the spiritual connection shared by all the flora and fauna in the park and how humans were part of that connection as well. Resting by the fireside, Roosevelt boasted about his prowess as a hunter and a tracker. Hearing this greatly disturbed Muir and he gave the President a piece of his mind. "Roosevelt," Muir asked "When will you ever get -over this boyishness of killing things?"<sup>3</sup> To this Roosevelt answered, "Muir, I think you are right."<sup>4</sup>

As the nineteenth century came to a close, pioneers had been replaced by ambitious industrial tycoons who laid down tracks of rail, or wells to mine oil. The once open range had been fenced in and canopied forests were dissipated by two hundred years of axes. Many species of animals had gone extinct, while still more were on the verge. Upon this stage of environmental turmoil emerged the politicians, businessmen and naturalists of the Progressive Era. Each of those aforementioned characters are represented in this thesis *Three Men in the Wilderness: Environmentalism in the Progressive Era through the Prisms of Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and John Muir.*

---

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Brinkley. *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America.* (New York: Harper 2009), 544

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,

During the Progressive Era, two mentalities equated with environmentalism emerged: the conservationist and the preservationist. Both of these ideologies came from the common consensus that America's natural resources were close to being depleted at an alarming rate. Simply put, conservationists and preservationists agreed that America's wilderness and wildlife faced a dire situation as the twentieth century dawned. They just disagreed on the most effective way to address this crisis. For example, conservationists assumed a managerial and pragmatic role when it came to environmentalism. Pinchot believed that the best way to conserve the natural resource of timber involved harvesting the forest land wisely as a farmer harvested crops. Preservationists, by contrast, viewed certain endangered areas of natural beauty as sanctuaries not to be desecrated by human industrialization.

Sometimes the distinctions between these two viewpoints were not so simple, as they tended to overlap. Pinchot loved the forests but understood that cutting a tree down was an unfortunate reality of forestry. Muir loved places like the Yosemite and the Hetch Hetchy valleys, but he also realized that some transportation and infrastructure was needed to bring tourists to these places. Muir, like all Americans at the close of the nineteenth century, marveled at trains and automobiles. Roosevelt remained an avid sportsman all his life. Yet, Roosevelt sometimes felt that he would like to live in solitude with nature away from the human race. This thesis is an effort to explore their similarities as well as their differences.

Much has been written about these men and their contributions to American conservationism already. There are many books and articles comparing and contrasting two of these men at the same time. Books like Char Miller's *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* and Douglass Brinkley's *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Fight for America*.<sup>5</sup> Articles such as John M. Meyer's "Gifford Pinchot and John Muir and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought"<sup>6</sup> and Christine Oravec's "Conservationism vs. Preservationism: The Public Interest in Hetch Hetchy Controversy".<sup>7</sup> What this thesis seeks to do, however, is to chronicle all three of these men and their comprehensions of nature in the Progressive Era. This established the realization that America's wilderness had a strong impact in all of their lives as young men. Roosevelt found nature on the vacations his family took to the Adirondacks and Germany's forests when he was a small boy trying to cure his asthma. Pinchot grew up in an elite French American family who owed their fortunes to the lumber industry. After graduating from Yale, he traveled to the forests of continental Europe to study unique methods of forest conservation. Muir escaped into nature in his mid-twenties when he wanted to avoid being drafted into the Civil War. Weaving their

---

<sup>5</sup> Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*. (Washington: Island Press, 2001.)

Douglas Brinkley. *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America*. (New York: Harper 2009)

<sup>6</sup> John M. Meyer. "Gifford Pinchot and John Muir and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought." *Polity*. Vol.30 No.2 (1997)

<sup>7</sup> Christine Oravec. "Conservationism vs. Preservationism: The 'Public Interest' in the Hetch Hetchy Controversy." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol.70, Issue 4(1984)

stories together became the primary focus. Once this was accomplished it became necessary to bring them, and their views on nature in the Progressive Era, to the forefront with the Hetch Hetchy Dam controversy.

This result was achieved by scouring biographies and memoirs of Roosevelt, Pinchot and Muir. When it came to locating biographies on Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Battle for America* by Douglas Brinkley served its purpose of focusing on the conservationist aspect of Roosevelt's life. Brinkley did a thorough job of narrating Roosevelt's lifelong passion for nature from childhood to his post presidency. Another source on Roosevelt's life was Kathleen Dalton's *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life*.<sup>8</sup> In this biography Dalton illustrates Roosevelt's ideals of the adventurous life and masculinity.

The most detailed Pinchot biography was Char Millers' *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*. In this biography, Miller described how radical the concept of forestry was when Pinchot introduced it to the American people. Miller also chronicles Pinchot's journey in becoming a new kind of environmentally aware politician. The other biography on Muir was Donald Worster's *John Muir: A Passion for Nature*.<sup>9</sup> Worster's biography of Muir focused on his use of nature as a sanctuary to

---

<sup>8</sup> Kathleen Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous life*. (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2002)

<sup>9</sup> Donald Worster. "John Muir and the Modern Passion for Nature," (*Environmental History* Vol. 10 No.1 Jan.2005)

help him find refuge in America after the Industrial Revolution. After utilizing the secondary biographical sources on these men, the time had come to venture into their primary works.

The search for primary sources involved an examination of their memoirs, transcripts of speeches and statements and published essays. Reading Roosevelt's public addresses, articles and correspondences proved to be effective in locating primary sources relating to instances where Roosevelt addressed the issue of conservation. Two specific instances are the centennial anniversary of Colorado's statehood and his speech at the National Conference on Conservation in 1908. The first of these speeches came from a collection of works by Roosevelt called *A Strenuous Life; a Collection of Essays and Addresses*.<sup>10</sup> A few chapters from Roosevelt's *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* where he describes his relation to the natural world as a hunter served this academic need as well.<sup>11</sup> A discussion of the relationship between Roosevelt's conservationist agenda and early years of the Boy Scouts in America can be found in Ernest Thompson Seton's excerpt from his book on the condition of young men in nineteenth century society titled, *The Boy Scouts of America: A Handbook of Woodcraft, Scouting and Life-Craft*.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life; essays and addresses*, (New York: The Century Company, 1900), 203

<sup>11</sup> Theodore Roosevelt. *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (New Jersey: Literature House 1970 c1885)

<sup>12</sup> Ernest Thompson Seton, *Boy Scouts of America: A Handbook of Woodcraft, Scouting and Life-Craft*. (New York: Doubleday, 1910).

Overall, the primary sources on Pinchot consisted of two memoirs. The first of these was his memoir *Breaking New Ground* where he chronicled his ascension as a professional forester and the ascension of forestry in America's academic, scientific and agricultural circles. Pinchot wrote another memoir titled *The Fight for Conservation* where he lauded all the progress he and Roosevelt made while working in his administration.<sup>13</sup> Between the two of these, *Breaking New Ground* proved to be the most effective primary source for research on Pinchot. In both the Roosevelt and Pinchot chapters of this thesis, Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" is incorporated.<sup>14</sup> Turner declared the frontier closed in this 1893 essay and the theme of a physical frontier which no longer existed is very applicable to the environmental legacies of Roosevelt and Pinchot.

A collection of essays and recollections of Muir titled *John Muir: Nature Writings* is a detailed grouping primary sources.<sup>15</sup> This collection contained his memoirs titled *Stories of my Boyhood and Youth* where he described his childhood in Scotland and his experience as the son of immigrants in northern Wisconsin. This collection also held Muir's description of his journey to the Gulf of Mexico called *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf* as well as a description of his first year in the Sierra Mountains called *My First*

---

<sup>13</sup> Gifford Pinchot. *The Fight for Conservation*. (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1910).

<sup>14</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Microfilms, 1966).

<sup>15</sup> John Muir. *Nature Writings: The story in my boyhood and youth, my first summer in the Sierra, The Mountains of California, Stickeen and selected essays*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1997).

*Summer in the Sierras*. Additionally this collection included some of Muir's most significant essays on nature preservation where he describes the wildlife and landscape of the Sierra mountain region. These writings included, "Hetch Hetchy Valley", "God's First Temples", and "Save the Redwoods." All of them proved to be useful in illustrating Muir's passion for the spiritual and aesthetic value of America's wilderness.

Scholarly articles were the other secondary sources used to describe the contributions of Roosevelt, Pinchot and Muir to environmentalism in the Progressive Era. In the chapter on Roosevelt, are articles by Rob Hardy, Richard Slotkin, and Philip Deloria. Rob Hardy discusses the feminine influence in Roosevelt's passion for conservation in, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Masculine/Feminine Complex."<sup>16</sup> Richard Slotkin examined Roosevelt's public rhetorical messages on conservation in, "Nostalgia and Progress; Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier."<sup>17</sup> There were two other scholars who wrote about Roosevelt's rhetorical presence Daniel O. Buehler and Leroy G. Dorsey. Finally, a chapter in Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* which chronicled the differences between Earnest Thompson Seaton and Daniel Carter Beard regarding the characterization of Native American culture in the activities of the Boy Scouts.<sup>18</sup> This

---

<sup>16</sup> Rob Hardy, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Masculine/Feminine Complex" *New England Review Series* 26 Vol.6 (2005).

<sup>17</sup> Richard Slotkin. "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier", *American Quarterly* Vol.33 No.5 (Winter 1981).

<sup>18</sup> Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (Yale University Press, 1999).

chapter was useful in helping relate Roosevelt's public personification of both Seton and Beard's comprehensions of Native American culture.

The scholars used as secondary sources to write about Pinchot were Char Miller, James G. Lewis, M.Nelson McGeary, Stephanie Pintcel, Harold T. Pinkett, William G. Robbins and Steven Ponder. Miller described Pinchot's evolving sense of environmentalism during his career. Miller wrote about Pinchot's developing attitude towards the environment in "The Greening of Gifford Pinchot."<sup>19</sup> James G. Lewis described how the Pinchot family all became conservationists in, "The Pinchot Family and the Battle to Establish American Forestry."<sup>20</sup> M.Nelson McGeary wrote an in depth study of Pinchot's personality in, "Pinchot's Contribution to American Forestry."<sup>21</sup> This study was important in understanding how future generations interoperated Pinchot's legacy. Stephanie Pintcel's chronicle of the development of forestry in France, where Pinchot would go to study forestry, in, "Some Origins of French Environmentalism: An Exploration."<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Char Miller, "The Greening of Gifford Pinchot". *Environmental History Review* Vol.16 No.3 (1992).

<sup>20</sup> James G. Lewis, "The Pinchot Family and the Battle to Establish American Forestry" *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 66 No. 3

<sup>21</sup> M. Nelson McGeary. "Pinchot's Contributions to American Forestry" *American Society for Environmental History* Vol. 5 No.2 (Summer1961)

<sup>22</sup> Stephanie Pincetl, "Some Origins of French Environmentalism: An Exploration," *Forest Conservation and History*, Vol. 37 No. 2 (1993).

In his book *Gifford Pinchot: Public and Private Forester*, Harold T. Pinkett discussed Pinchot's early career as a professional forester. With Pinkett presented a great deal of information on the work Pinchot did for the Biltmore estate and the forests of upstate New York in the 1890s. William G. Robbins studied the transition that the Bureau of Forestry underwent when Pinchot took over replacing Bernard Fernow with, "Federal Forestry Cooperation: the Fernow-Pinchot Years."<sup>23</sup> Stephen Ponder examined all the publicity Pinchot gave to the Roosevelt administration's conservation agenda in, "Gifford Pinchot: Press Agent for Forestry."<sup>24</sup> Also, Michael McCarthy studied the public backlash in the western United States towards Pinchot and Roosevelt's conservationist policies in, "The Pharisee Spirit: Gifford Pinchot in Colorado."<sup>25</sup>

Scholarly sources on Muir primarily examined his writing and oratory skills in describing the beauty of the Sierra mountain region. Christine Oravec, Mark Stoll, Donald Worster, Kevin Michael Deluca, Dennis C. Williams, and Roderick Nash were the scholars I used to examine Muir's words and legacy. Oravec wrote about the mechanics of Muir's orations on preservation.<sup>26</sup> Mark Stoll and Dennis C. Williams discussed Muir's

---

<sup>23</sup> William G. Robbins, "Federal Forestry Cooperation: The Fernow-Pinchot Years." *Journal of Forest History* Vol. 28 No.4 (Oct. 1984).

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Ponder, "Gifford Pinchot: Press Agent for Forestry" *Journal of Forest History* Vol. 31 No.1 (Jan.1987).

<sup>25</sup> Michael McCarthy. "The Pharisee Spirit: Gifford Pinchot in Colorado". *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* Vol.97 No.3 (Jul, 1973)

development in a spiritual sense. Worster and Deluca focused on how Muir's personality changed and stayed the same through societal advancement. Nash analyzed Muir's political activities in his quest to preserve the treasures of the Yosemite Valley.

The treasure of the Hetch Hetchy Valley glimmered brightly and the controversy over whether or not to dam it served as the focus the final chapter. Robert W. Wrighter's *The Battle for Hetch Hetchy: America's Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* discusses the dire situation that the city of San Francisco found itself in. Christine Oravec wrote about the public reaction to the damming of Hetch Hetchy, in, "Conservationism vs. Preservationism: The 'Public Interest' in the Hetch Hetchy Controversy." John M. Meyer researched how Pinchot and Muir embraced both conservationism and preservationism with, "Gifford Pinchot and John Muir and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought." Jen Huntly Smith Examined the topic of what tourism was like in Yosemite National Park in the Progressive Era and how those who explored Yosemite promoted it in, "Nature and Progress in Yosemite." Roosevelt came into the Hetch Hetchy debate by theorizing what he and Muir discussed in their 1903 camping trip to Yosemite National Park. This thesis also examines the way Pinchot and Roosevelt organized the 1908 Governor's Conference on Conservation in relation to Muir and how Roosevelt choose to memorialize Muir in the appreciation he wrote about Muir shortly after Muir's death.

This thesis's intent is to bring these personalities together around the concept of environmentalism at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Each of these men made their own special contribution to protecting America's wilderness and wildlife for future generations. This thesis concludes by stating that the varying perspectives all three of these men had regarding environmentalism remained current in the environmentalism movement for the rest of the twentieth century and on to today.

## CHAPTER 1

## THEODORE ROOSEVELT: BOY SCOUT IN CHIEF

“It was an ordinary small boy’s collection of curious, quite incongruous and entirely valueless, except from the standpoint of the boy himself. My father and mother encouraged me warmly in this, as they always did in anything that could give me wholesome pleasure or help to develop me.”<sup>1</sup> These are the reflections of twenty-sixth President Theodore Roosevelt regarding his vast collection of taxidermy animals, particularly birds. Abraham Lincoln carried a copy of William Shakespeare’s works, which he read from in solitude; and Franklin Roosevelt had his stamps. Comparatively, Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt did not make Shakespeare and stamp collecting a hallmark of their legacy the way Theodore Roosevelt made conservation a hallmark of his.

This fascination began when a boy discovered a dead seal on a slab of wood in a Broadway market.<sup>2</sup> Eight-year-old Teddy brought that seal home where he skinned it and preserved the skeleton. From that moment on, Theodore Roosevelt changed his persona in many different ways while interacting with nature. These roles and identities included the hunter, the collector, the naturalist, the conservationist and the

---

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Roosevelt. *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*. (Charles Scribner’s and Sons: 1920) 14

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

preservationist. Each one of these personalities appealed to a different sensibility about nature in American society in the Progressive Era.

Growing up in a wealthy Victorian society gave Roosevelt a privileged vantage point from which to observe nature, thereby establishing a new relationship with nature accustomed for the emerging twentieth century. As a public speaker Roosevelt had to know his audience. He knew that he had to communicate publicly as a fearless frontiersman who could uphold America's nationalistic attitude about nature. Underneath this public façade dwelt the key aspect of Roosevelt's personal attitude towards nature which really drove his passion for conservation. This was his nurturing side which gave him the ability to care about matters such as the extinction of endangered flora and fauna and their environments.

The scholarly works that will be examined in this chapter focus on aspects of Roosevelt's personality in both public and private setting. Douglass Brinkley conveyed a message centered on all the tactical social and political maneuvering Roosevelt had to do in order to cement his attitude towards nature in American culture.<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Dalton and Robert Hardy detail Roosevelt's youthful ventures which sparked his interest in the natural world.<sup>4</sup> Both Hardy and Dalton pointed out that Roosevelt was a very

---

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America*. (New York: Harper, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous life*. (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Rob Hardy, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Masculine/Feminine Complex" *New England Review* Series 26 Vol.6 (2005).

unhealthy and a vulnerable child and that this experience helped him identify with the plight of the American wilderness in the early 1900s. Richard Slotkin examined Roosevelt's rhetoric on the stump pertaining to his views the state of American culture in relation to environmental matters.<sup>5</sup> Philip Deloria discussed the cultural attitudes expressed by Boy Scouts of America founders Ernest Thompson Seton and Daniel Carter Beard.<sup>6</sup> Roosevelt, in his public persona wove a very careful thread between both Seton and Beard's cultural views on Native Americans. This chapter will show how all the tactful political maneuvering that Roosevelt did in order to send his message about conservation was attributed to his public display of his frontiersman attitude as well as his sense of oneness with American wildlife.

This is the impact that Roosevelt said that reading *Our Young Folks* had on him as a child. "As a small boy I had *Our Young Folks*, which I then firmly believed to be the very best magazine in the world. A belief-I may add-which I have kept to this day unchanged, for I seriously doubt if any magazine for young and old has ever surpassed it."<sup>7</sup> When he was a young boy, Roosevelt read *Our Young Folks* avidly. What was significant about this magazine was that it contained stories about young girls as well as young boys. In "Theodore Roosevelt and the Masculine and Feminine Complex," Rob Hardy points out

---

<sup>5</sup> Richard Slotkin. "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier", *American Quarterly* Vol.33 No.5 (Winter 1981).

<sup>6</sup> Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 15.

that Roosevelt admitted in his memoirs to thoroughly enjoying those stories where the protagonists were female.<sup>8</sup> He did this however, at the risk, in his own words, of seeming, “effeminate.” He seemed to cover up the feminine influence on his life.

Female writers in the nineteenth century expressed certain ideas through their work which reflected the ideas of women’s role in society at the time. The central theme of these stories involved women being the caretakers in society with just as much enthusiasm as they were in the home. A key element of this ideal involved the humane treatment of animals. Vacations into the country with the intention of rejuvenating physical and emotional health served as another similar element. Both of these elements would come to the forefront in the stories to issues of *Our Young Folks* submitted by Louis May Alcott, Lydia Maria Child and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Hardy explains that the issue of cruelty towards animals rose greatly in the American conscience after the abolition of slavery.<sup>9</sup> It is easy to understand why Hardy makes the claim that, “The ‘girls’ stories’ in *Our Young Folks* provided the women who wrote them with a means of exerting that influence on young readers, both girls and boys, and it is evident that from early on Theodore Roosevelt felt that influence.”<sup>10</sup> For example,

---

<sup>8</sup> Rob Hardy, “Theodore Roosevelt and the Masculine/Feminine Complex” *New England Review Series* 26 Vol.6 (2005), 177.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

young Theodore Roosevelt identified with the stories of the young city girl who was changed by her stay in the country.

He also drew inspiration from *Our Young Folks'* mission to teach young boys how to be kind to defenseless animals. He confessed to his friend Edward Sanford Martin that he raised his son Ted to be kind towards animals, women and weaker boys as he had been one himself.<sup>11</sup> Hence, it can be assessed that although Roosevelt may not have touted the personal female influence on his life, he drew great influence by stories written by female writers with female protagonists who promoted kindness towards animals and rejuvenation in the wilderness. Or, as Douglas Brinkley put it, "The masculine side of his nature wanted to hunt big mammals while his feminine side wanted to nurture small songbirds."<sup>12</sup>

In her biography of Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life*, Kathleen Dalton examines Roosevelt's interest in nature in a psychological way. According to Dalton, Roosevelt used nature as a release long before he attained the Presidency. For example, as a young boy he used nature to help him deal with the mundane occurrences of boyhood. For example, when he wanted to defy his mother's orders he ignored her by attending to his bird collection.<sup>13</sup> More importantly, Dalton examines

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>12</sup> Douglas Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America*. (New York: Harper, 2009), 636.

<sup>13</sup> Kathleen Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous life*. (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2002): 52.

how nature provided solace for Roosevelt help him to cope with childhood trauma. As a child, Roosevelt suffered from asthma and he was very frail which made him a target for bullies. Dalton takes into account a time in his early teens when his parents sent him to Maine for the summer in hopes his asthma could be cured. Unfortunately, he found himself at the hands of bullies and he couldn't fight back.<sup>14</sup> This incident served as a turning point in the young aristocratic boy's life. Roosevelt resolved to spend the rest of his life trying to overcompensate for the physical prowess that he lacked because of the asthma that burdened him. This was the vulnerable side of Roosevelt which helped him identify with animals that faced extinction. This is also the side of him that Richard Slotkin overlooks.

Richard Slotkin wrote extensively on Theodore Roosevelt and his attitude towards Native American culture. In his article, "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier", Slotkin gave a rather brazen interpretation of Roosevelt as a conquering frontiers man.<sup>15</sup> Slotkin is right when he describes how Roosevelt believed hunting on the frontier as a, "chivalric aristocracy of an earlier age." Using the Boone and Crockett Club, a nature organization Roosevelt established in the 1870s with his naturalist friend as an example of this aristocracy, Slotkin explains that Roosevelt hoped that this club would instill a "manlier code of values for the sons of the

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Slotkin. "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier", *American Quarterly* Vol.33 No.5 (Winter 1981): 612.

upper class.”<sup>16</sup> What Slotkin failed to grasp was the Roosevelt’s concept of manliness on the frontier expanded beyond simply hunting and conquering. Moreover, Slotkin concludes that Roosevelt only cared about conserving the frontier from the perspective of an ethnocentric conqueror. He reaches this conclusion by relying on quotations in speeches and writings Roosevelt created for a public approval of the culture of the times. It is easy to realize that Roosevelt would, in public addresses and writings, place the dynamic mission of Victorian upper-class men and boys against savage places occupied by primitive people. According to Slotkin, the Boy Scouts embodied Roosevelt’s myth of “a new social form—one in which the basis of social adhesion was race consciousness, and in which hierarchies were pragmatically selected from the action of racial warfare and wilderness hardship.”<sup>17</sup> Slotkin misses out on the idea that an element nature conservation also existed in the Boy Scouts. These elements of nature conservation in Roosevelt presented itself in the mission he created for the Boone and Crockett Club.

Roosevelt’s public expressions of natural conservation began in the 1890s when he and fellow naturalist George Bird Grinnell established the Boone and Crockett Club. Douglass Brinkley provided a thorough description of the origins of the Boone and Crockett Club in his 2010 book *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the*

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 614.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 630.

*Battle for America*. During his time as a ranchman on the South Dakota prairie, Roosevelt witnessed many hunters killing buffalos recklessly in number. He believed that these game animals should be conserved and their populations sustained for future generations. George Bird Grinnell was one of the more prominent environmental figures of the day who would review *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, as the editor of *Forest and Stream Magazine*. Roosevelt and Grinnell would develop a friendship based on their mutually interest and passion for wildlife preservation. In 1887, Roosevelt and Grinnell decided that there should be an organization of high society gentlemen who were also big game hunters; this club would become the Boone and Crockett Club.

The Boone and Crockett Club focused primarily on ending the poaching of endangered large game animals in the western United States. Basically, Roosevelt wanted sportsmen to establish a nourishing preservationist and intellectual naturalist mentality toward endangered game. Roosevelt and Grinnell were concerned with more than simply establishing hunting laws. Both of them shared a passion for natural history and educating the public about the biological histories of these extraordinary animals such as bison, antelope, bears and wolves. By doing this, Roosevelt hoped to motivate future generations to preserve these animals and their environments.

Roosevelt shared his passions for natural history and zoology with other club members from a variety of professional backgrounds. Doing this also helped Roosevelt give the cause of wildlife conservation a great amount of visibility on the national stage.

Establishing the Bronx Zoo gave the Boone and Crockett Club an outlet to use zoology to educate people about the natural world. Roosevelt and his fellow Boone and Crockett Club members believed that people could grow to appreciate the animal kingdom by learning as much as they could about these creatures and their environments. To this end, the Boone and Crockett Club created exhibits at the Bronx Zoo with the intent of informing as well as exhibiting.<sup>18</sup>

Roosevelt's passion for wilderness conservation constructed itself around the notion that the wilderness can enhance a man's integrity and courage, or, to put it more bluntly, turn boys into men. Roosevelt established this creed as he lived and worked on his cattle ranch in the Badlands hunting wild game. *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* was the account Theodore Roosevelt published of his time as a refined eastern society ranchman in South Dakota during the 1880s.<sup>19</sup> Throughout *Hunting Trips*, Roosevelt cataloged the environments, behavioral patterns and biological characteristics of game animals in the prairie. He organized *Hunting Trips* by focusing on some of the most prominent game animals that he tracked. These included deer, elk, big horned sheep, and an assortment of waterfowl. There are sections of *Hunting Trips* where Roosevelt focused on what gunnery best suited a certain kind of prey. Not only did Roosevelt describe his prowess as a hunter, but he also expressed concern for the dwindling

---

<sup>18</sup> Douglas Brinkley. *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the crusade for America* (New York: Harper 2009): 277.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore Roosevelt. *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (New Jersey: Literature House 1970 c1885): 260.

population of an animal that had been synonymous with the glory of the fabled great western prairie--the American Buffalo. Roosevelt explained in chapter thirteen, entitled "The Lordly Buffalo" that, "The extermination of the Buffalo has been a veritable tragedy in the Animal world."<sup>20</sup> He also explained, "It may truthfully be said that the sudden and complete extermination of the vast herds of the buffalo is without parallel in prehistoric times."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, while Roosevelt took great pleasure in hunting and collecting large game, he understood that the buffalo should not face extinction at the hands of reckless poachers.

Although not stating it directly, Roosevelt used his vivid descriptions of the ruggedness of the plains and forests to indicate that such ventures there were not for the faint of heart. Roosevelt believed there was an aura of refinement and nobility in hunting wild game. This sense of refinement came from the time he spent hunting and trapping as a young man with his hunting clubs. Nobility and honor meant a great deal to Roosevelt because of his genteel upbringing. By his ethical standards even wild beasts deserved to be treated with a sense of gamesmanship and dignity. Here was the curious naturalist and the environmentally conscious preservationist dwelling within the big game hunter. He explained in *Hunting Trips*, "Hunting the black-tail is beyond all comparison a noble sport. Indeed, there is no kind of plains hunting, except only in the

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

case of the bighorn, more fitted to bring out the best and hardiest of the many qualities which go to make up a good hunter.”<sup>22</sup>

At one point in *Hunting Trips*, Roosevelt discussed the importance of a man’s ability to find his way through the untamed backwoods. “If possible,” Roosevelt advised, “he should locate his camp, in his mind, with reference to a line and not a point; he should take a river or long ridge, for example. That at any time he could strike back to this line and follow it up or down till he gets home.”<sup>23</sup> Primarily, Theodore Roosevelt understood nature as a dangerous environment to be overcome. In *Hunting Trips*, he related an account of his adventures herding cattle in minus ten-degree weather, “We wore the heaviest kind of all-wool underclothing, with flannels, lined boots, and great fur coats, caps and gauntlets and mittens, but yet after each ride, one or the other of us would be almost sure to come in with a touch of frost somewhere about him. This generally happened while riding over a plain or plateau with a strong wind blowing in our faces.”<sup>24</sup>

By the time Roosevelt returned from the range and settled into his public service career in the 1890s, the frontier in the minds of the American people had been pushed back to the realm of nostalgia. Even though the physical frontier no longer existed, the

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 110.

American people still rallied to it as a symbol of national pride and conquest. University of Wisconsin historian Frederick Jackson Turner made this point clear in his groundbreaking essay titled, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."

Delivered at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, Turner began his essay by arguing that the real history of America was not in its colonial founding on the eastern seaboard but rather in western expansion of civilization conquering the wild western frontier.<sup>25</sup> Americans have kept moving and changing the boundaries of the frontier both physically and politically many times over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first frontier came about during the early eighteenth century in the form of the Indian frontier along the Alleghany Mountains. After the Revolutionary War, the frontier then shifted to the Northwestern Territories and the Ohio Valley.<sup>26</sup> It can be deduced that the frontier boundaries had been pushed as America's civilization had expanded to the point where in 1893 the frontier included American outposts overseas.

What is noteworthy is that Turner did not simply limit his essay to the physical expansion of the American frontier; rather he emphasized what the frontier and its conquest meant to America's national identity. Since the time of America's first colonial settlements, the frontier had been characterized as a deadly and barbaric place. A place so dangerous that only the bravest men could conquer its perils and create a civilized

---

<sup>25</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Microfilms, 1966), 200.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

society in its midst. According to Turner, this expansion of American civilization displayed a great sense of pride for the United States. America was a nation of determined and courageous men who, over the previous two hundred years, tamed the savage frontier with superior military, cultural and industrial means.

In the final paragraphs of, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Turner contended that although the frontier seemed to have been civilized and conquered, the spirit of expansion still existed in the American psyche as the twentieth century dawned. Turner wrote, "He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of the American life has now entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will clearly demand a wider field for its existence."<sup>27</sup> Roosevelt established this "American energy," as the cornerstone of his administration's policies, driving American civilization upward and onward.

Roosevelt's address to the quarter centennial celebration of Colorado's statehood in Colorado Springs in 1901 consisted of a message very similar to Frederick Jackson Turner's. This address was entitled "Manhood and Statehood," and was included in a collection of speeches Roosevelt entitled *The Strenuous Life*. Roosevelt began his address by claiming it was indeed the rugged pioneer whose struggles against the elements provided America with its sense of national character. In the fourth

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 227.

paragraph of “Manhood and Statehood,” he pointed out that, “The Chief factor in producing the Revolution and later in producing the War of 1812, was the inability of the mother country to understand that the freeman who went forth to conquer a continent should be encouraged in that work and could not and ought not to be expected to toil only for the profit of glory.”<sup>28</sup> He also spoke extensively about the expansion of American civilization, pushing the frontier from the Alleghenies to where it existed at the beginning of the twentieth century. “Thenceforward it advanced by leaps and bounds, and the frontier pushed westward across the continent with ever increasing rapidity until the day came when it vanished entirely.”<sup>29</sup>

The significance of his wording here is that Roosevelt considered this geographic expansion to be a profound triumph for the American people, but by 1901 that expansion had run its course. Hence, Roosevelt understood that the American people would have to develop a more wholesome and nourishing a relationship with nature. Roosevelt’s use of the term “our race” appears numerous times in his Manhood and Statehood address. The term “our race” can be best assumed to have been referring to American civilization, in its creation in a place far from Europe, and the triumph of that civilization over a land once thought to have been only inhabitable by trappers and Native Americans.

---

<sup>28</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life; essays and addresses*, (New York: The Century Company, 1900), 203.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

One final key point that Theodore Roosevelt made in his address was that although Americans had conquered the frontier there was still much work to be done. Roosevelt exclaimed, "It would be a sad and evil thing for this country if ever the day came we considered the great deeds of our country if ever the day came when we considered the great deeds of our forefathers as an excuse as an excuse for our resting slothfully with what has already been done."<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that while Roosevelt understood that times had become "gentler" the frontier, or as it had become the wilderness, could be used to strengthen the fortitude of American civilization.<sup>31</sup> Like Frederick Jackson Turner, Roosevelt realized that the frontier had disappeared due to industrial expansion in the west. Conclusively, Theodore Roosevelt's true impression of the American wilderness centered on his theory that it could be used to instill a sense of resourcefulness, courage and integrity in the American citizens of the emerging twentieth century. He wanted to keep the legacy and cultural identity of the frontiersman intact within American civilization even though the physical frontier had vanished long ago.

This notion did not belong to Roosevelt alone. A new generation had been raised in a new kind of environment. These children were being brought up in the new moneyed middle class. This new middle class generation of boys did not have to

---

<sup>30</sup>Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life; essays and addresses*. (New York: The Century Company, 1900) page 210.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

overcome the elements and build their dwellings as their forbearers had. By the turn of the twentieth century, a movement had begun in both England and America. This movement was a result of the need created by the idle time many middle class dwelling boys had on their hands. Something had to be done in order to help the next generation of young men rejuvenate themselves in the natural world.

A firsthand account of the Boy Scout movement which dominated the turn of the twentieth century is critical to understanding the reasons for the movement's passion.<sup>32</sup> This account comes from Ernest Thompson Seton a British born Canadian and founder of the Boy Scouts in America; this is an excerpt from his *Boy Scouts of America: A Handbook of Woodcraft, Scouting and Life-Craft*. First and foremost, Seton let it be known that as the Industrial Revolution came to pass, the forthcoming generation of teenage boys had been extremely domesticated. Prior to this social and economic transformation, Seton observed, boys were being raised with a sense of dignity now lost. "He was respectful to his superiors, obedient to his parents, and altogether the best material of which a nation could be made."<sup>33</sup> One of the most harmful

---

<sup>32</sup> For more information on the emergence of the Boy Scouts in England and America see Charles William Hackensmith, "Contributors to the Scouting Movement in North America," *Canadian Journal of the History of sport and physical education* (1973).

<sup>33</sup> Ernest Thompson Seton, *Boy Scouts of America: A Handbook of Woodcraft, Scouting and Life-Craft*. (New York: Doubleday, 1910), 20.

consequences of this paradigm shift meant that many young boys had lost the ability to be self-sufficient and actively engaged in society.<sup>34</sup>

Seton knew full well about the rise of youth athletic programs but he bemoaned the fact that they separated young men into two distinct groups: the spectators and the athletes. The spectators watched the game while the athletes actively engaged in competition. His argument amounted to the fact that every young man in society must be active to succeed in the real world's field of competition. Another serious disease derived from the Industrial Revolution--consumerism. Seton found a simple remedy for this disease; bring these young men out of their urban homes and into nature where they would replenish their true strengths<sup>35</sup>, much as Theodore Roosevelt had done when he was a young boy on family trips in the Adirondacks. A key aspect in Seton's manual regarding the development of boys in nature was "honors by standards" and they provided a strong foundation for the early American Boy Scout movement. Seton set out to develop the boys' intellectual and emotional traits along with their physical attributes. He believed that no one of those three qualities should be given more attention than the other.<sup>36</sup> What is significant to Seton here is that boys should be rewarded not by beating the other fellow; rather they should be rewarded by raising

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 23.

themselves to a higher level of consciousness by developing a new set of skills.<sup>37</sup> This higher level of consciousness is exactly what Roosevelt obtained through his lifelong passion for nature. Thus, it was by no coincidence that he embodied so much of the values of original founders of the Boy Scouts.

National Boy Scout commissioners, Daniel Beard and Ernest Thompson Seton each played their own crucial role in the development of the identity and legacy of the American Boy Scout Society in the 1910s. Understanding the key differences between the values of Seton and Beard regarding boy scouting is essential to finding how Boy Scout culture reflected Roosevelt's ideals of conservation. This is the very issue that Philip Deloria explored in chapter four of his book *Playing Indian*. According to Deloria, in the early 1900s, Daniel Carter Beard found Ernest Thompson Seton's admiration for Native American Culture in the training of Boy Scout deplorable.<sup>38</sup> Daniel Carter Beard, founder of the Sons of Daniel Boone which he would later merge with the Boy Scouts, believed that the Boy Scouts core values stemmed from the pioneer's concept of adventure. By the emergence of the Progressive Era the term "wilderness" came to be a substitute for the subdued frontier. Nature provided an escape from the diseases of city life; both Seton and Beard concurred with this theory.

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (Yale University Press, 1999): 96.

Seton paid homage to the noble Native American brave to represent positive manly characteristics. Beard, on the other hand, thought Native American's and their culture symbolized simply another element of the frontier which had been overwhelmed by settlers and their way of life. Theodore Roosevelt seemed to view the wilderness (as that had come to substitute the frontier) as a place of American civilizations triumph over savagery, or the wild land's animal *and* human inhabitants.<sup>39</sup> He felt that the society of the settlers stood in a dominant position over Native American society and that it was proper for American society to embrace some of the more noble aspects of Native American culture. Doing so, in Roosevelt's view, brought the common American man closer to nature and helped him cultivate a new found appreciation for America's natural splendor. Roosevelt believed that Native Americans were just *another aspect* of the natural world to explore with the end result of such exploration being the enrichment of American civilization.

Two fantasies or, masculine identities, entrenched themselves within the Boy Scouts during the Progressive Era. One of these identities centered on the pioneer who, over the past 200 years, conquered the frontier. The second identity consisted of a crude cultural perception of how American society assumed Native Americans lived before being colonized (i.e. Bill Cody's Wild West Show, and Indian tourism). By embracing this caricature of Native American culture Roosevelt and Seton believed they

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 99.

were honoring the spirit of the Native Americans. Therefore, Roosevelt embraced Beard's ideology of the conquering pioneer but dressed him up in the garb of Seton's Native American Brave. Combining these two characters helped Roosevelt establish his public identity as a civilized man with the ability to adapt to an uncivilized wilderness. As his administration drew to a close Roosevelt wanted to cement his legacy in conservationism, if not so much in deed (congress made this hard to do), at least in word. Doing so involved bringing together those people who had just as much influence as he did to hear his great message about the state of environmentalism at the turn of the twentieth century.

Roosevelt opened his address by making sure that his audience understood the monumental cause of this gathering, "The occasion for the meeting lies in the fact that the natural resources of our country are in danger of exhaustion if we permit the old wasteful methods of exploiting them longer to continue."<sup>40</sup> Once the primary cause had been stated Roosevelt then pointed out how most of the earth had already been explored since ancient times and that no corner of the globe remained unknown to man.<sup>41</sup> In the early days of America's colonization (and up to its founding), the President explained, wood had been the primary natural resource used to sustain civilization. His rationale for stating that fact came from the present circumstance in

---

<sup>40</sup> Theodore Roosevelt "Conservation as a national duty." <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/>

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

which the American people could no longer afford to use the forest as an obstacle in the way of settlement as they had been doing for 200 years. Moreover, new resources such as coal and oil had emerged since the industrial revolution.<sup>42</sup>

The cultivation of these resources made it even more imperative to see that these resources would not damage the environment. Roosevelt then separated the most commonly used natural resources into two categories. Oil, gas and coal fell into the first category as relatively new forms of natural energy for relatively new forms of industry. He wanted the business community to realize that even though these new resources enabled American industry to expand in ways never before imagined, that didn't exempt business leaders from their responsibility to regulate their output. The second category consisted of resources like water, wood and soil elements of America's splendor. Roosevelt believed that it was important to use these resources wisely and preserve them in their natural beauty.<sup>43</sup>

Roosevelt pointed out, "When he exhausted the soil of his farm, he felt that his son could go west and take up another. The Kentuckian or the Ohioan felled the forest and expected his son to move west and fell other forests on the banks of the Georgian exhausted his farm and moved into Alabama or the mouth of the Yazoo to take

---

<sup>42</sup> Leroy G. Dorsey and Daniel O. Buehler write extensively on Theodore Roosevelt's rhetorical skills. Leroy G. Dorsey. "The frontier myth in Presidential Rhetoric: Theodore Roosevelt's Campaign for Conservation." *The Western Journal of Communication* Vol.59 Issue 1, (Winter 1995) Daniel O. Buehler. "Permanence and Change in Theodore Roosevelt's Conservation Jeremiad". Vol.62 Issue. 4 (1998).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

another.”<sup>44</sup> His point was that, as the twentieth century dawned, American rural and urban cultivation of natural resources has expanded all over the country and now what was left of the untilled soil and unlogged forest needed to be preserved. Roosevelt closed his speech by presenting a key theme in what the real meaning of conservation is. He pontificated, “So this nation as a whole should earnestly desire and strive to leave to the next generation the national honor unstained and the national resources unexhausted.”<sup>45</sup>

Roosevelt encountered a great deal of resistance towards his conservationist policies throughout his Presidency. In fact, when he left office, a national park system had yet to come into being. He needed the assistance of an official who had spent his professional career understanding how civilized populations can manage wilderness in order to insure its protection. Such an official was a Yale graduate who would come to be known as the founder of American forestry, Gifford Pinchot.

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 12.

## CHAPTER 2

### GIFFORD PINCHOT AND THE BUSINESS OF FORESTRY

Just before he began his studies at Yale in 1895, Gifford Pinchot's father asked him if the prospect of being a forester interested him.<sup>1</sup> It did not take a great amount of contemplation on Gifford's part for him to realize that nature preservation was his true calling at the tender age of eighteen. Although Pinchot's family owed their fortune to the lumber industry, he became the standard bearer for forest conservation at the turn of the twentieth century. He conceived of forests as a bountiful natural resource, rather than an inconvenient obstacle hindering civilization's immaculate progress. Throughout his career as a forester, the policies of Gifford Pinchot would be received as invasive and foreign to American culture. His ideas regarding forest preservation were unique in that their origins came from Europe where governments conserved their wilderness with a very different methodology. This methodology involved treating the wilderness itself as a natural resource to be conserved and regulated by the state.

Four key uses for America's forests found a home in Gifford Pinchot's forestry policies. First, Pinchot had grown up in a profitable family, and knew how to do business; therefore, he reasoned that forestry could serve as a profitable industry. Second, Pinchot had a keen interest in agriculture, so the conservation of trees became

---

<sup>1</sup> Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*. (New York. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947), 1.

an agricultural art form. Third, there was the element of creating good will among the American public which Pinchot saw to by promoting America's forests as a valuable public resource. Education stood as the fourth level of forestry in the Pinchot agenda. In France, Pinchot observed university students researching forestry in order to become professional foresters; this prompted Pinchot to strive for this academic agenda in American universities. This chapter will examine all four of these characteristics in detail while chronicling Gifford Pinchot's professional life in forestry during the Progressive Era.

Several historians have written about Gifford Pinchot's life and contributions to conservationism. They have also written about the conservation circumstances which influenced Pinchot's agenda. Char Miller chronicled the ideological transformation of Pinchot over the span of his professional life.<sup>2</sup> Fredrick Jackson Turner wrote about the death of the American frontier and Pinchot embodied Turner's Farmer and Trader.<sup>3</sup> James G. Lewis provided an account of how the Pinchot family made conservation a family affair.<sup>4</sup> M. Nelson McGeary researched the positive and negative aspects of

---

<sup>2</sup> Char Miller, "The Greening of Gifford Pinchot". *Environmental History Review* Vol.16 No.3 (1992).

Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*. (Washington: Island Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894.)

<sup>4</sup> James G. Lewis, "The Pinchot Family and the Battle to Establish American Forestry" *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 66 No. 3 (Spring 1999).

Pinchot's legacy which historians have debated over the years.<sup>5</sup> Stephanie Pintcel examined the natural policies of nineteenth century France resulting in the establishment of the Ecole de Nancy School of forestry where Pinchot studied.<sup>6</sup> William G. Robbins compared how the Bureau of Forestry operated under Pinchot to the way it was run by his predecessor Bernhard Fernow.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Stephen Ponder analyzed the methods Pinchot used to help Roosevelt promote conservationism to the American public.<sup>8</sup>

Char Miller is the most renowned scholar of Pinchot's life and work. He chronicled Pinchot's ideological evolution in "The Greening of Gifford Pinchot". At the beginning of this article Miller made the argument that while Pinchot was credited with starting the conservation movement; after the 1960s the environmentalism community shifted to support John Muir instead. In Miller's opinion, this change in the perception of Pinchot's legacy came about due to the way the conservation movement changed its view of Pinchot.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> M. Nelson McGeary. "Pinchot's Contributions to American Forestry" *American Society for Environmental History* Vol. 5 No.2 (Summer1961).

<sup>6</sup> Stephanie Pintcel, "Some Origins of French Environmentalism: An Exploration," *Forest Conservation and History*, Vol. 37 No. 2 (1993).

<sup>7</sup> William G. Robbins, "Federal Forestry Cooperation: The Fernow-Pinchot Years." *Journal of Forest History* Vol. 28 No.4 (Oct. 1984).

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Ponder, "Gifford Pinchot: Press Agent for Forestry" *Journal of Forest History* Vol. 31 No.1 (Jan.1987).

<sup>9</sup> Char Miller, "The Greening of Gifford Pinchot". *Environmental History Review* Vol.16 No.3 (1992) 3.

When Pinchot studied forestry in Europe, he felt disappointed in the monarchical air which European forestry espoused. Pinchot believed that forestry in America should serve to benefit all the people rather than just the elite.<sup>10</sup> Miller pointed out that the fundamental difference between Department of Forestry boss Bernhard Fernow's methods of practicing forestry and Pinchot's methods. Fernow promoted forestry through science and economics while Pinchot contributed politics; advancing the cause of public forestry on the national stage.<sup>11</sup> During his time in the Roosevelt administration, Pinchot adamantly stressed a correlation between the Bureau of Forestry and the lumber industry as being essential to successful conservation. Miller states that a few years after leaving Washington, Pinchot became disappointed in those bureau officials who he believed were cow-towing to the will of the lumbermen and land grabbers.

Miller made it clear that in his public service career Pinchot revealed two different versions of himself. The first version of Pinchot existed when he was working as Forest Bureau chief under Roosevelt until 1909 then under Taft until 1910. There Pinchot was a forester who *used politics* to promote conservationism for the Roosevelt

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 9.

administration. As Pennsylvania's governor, Pinchot became a politician who *used conservationism* to promote his agenda for public service.

Rather than shrinking from the conservationist agenda he established with Roosevelt, Pinchot expanded his ideas of conservation when he became the governor of Pennsylvania. During his two terms as governor of Pennsylvania, Pinchot broadened his conservationist agenda to ensure the survival of people as well as plants and animals. He stood for the striking coal miners against the high ranking monopolists. Moreover, during the New Deal era, Pinchot established work relief camps developing roads that linked agricultural areas to urban market places. When he was working with the Bureau of Forestry, Pinchot primarily concerned himself with keeping private forests in the possession of their proprietors. When he was a governor in the 1930s, however, Pinchot felt strongly about preserving both public and private forests. Therefore, Miller concluded: "Rather, his legacy lies in his greening, in his deliberate evolution and complicated effort to reach an ever more complex understanding of the tangled relationship between humanity and the natural world in which it exists."<sup>12</sup> Just as Pinchot began his forestry career Frederick Jackson Turner had declared the western frontier to be officially closed. This resulted in a serious change in the way Americans perceived their natural resources.

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 16.

In *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, Turner cited farmers and traders as two primary characters in the dramatic expansion of the American frontier. Turner explained the expansion and the place of traders and farmers in the expansion: “The unequal rate of advance compels us to distinguish the frontier into the trader’s frontier, the rancher’s frontier, or the miner’s frontier, and the farmer’s frontier. When the mines and cow pens were still near the fall line the traders’ pack trains were tinkling across the Alleghenies, and the French on the Great Lakes were fortifying their posts, alarmed by the British trader’s birch canoe. When the trappers scaled the Rockies, the farmer was still near the mouth of the Missouri.”<sup>13</sup>

It stands to reason that Pinchot perceived trees to be both a tradeable resource and a crop to be farmed. Pinchot was able to embody both Turner’s trader and farmer. When he worked as a spokesman for the economic value of forestry preservation he played the part of the Trader. When he helped private land owners manage the aesthetic appearance, and ecological health of their forests, he played the role of Turner’s frontier farmer. Rather than being the product of hardy western pioneer stock Pinchot’s lineage belonged to some wealthy east coast lumber tycoons. A family like this greatly benefited him when he wanted to expand America’s involvement in forestry during the early twentieth century.

---

<sup>13</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894.): 208.

In his article, “The Pinchot Family and the Battle to Establish American Forestry”, James G. Lewis describes how all the members of Pinchot’s family contributed to forestry in the Progressive era. Pinchot’s father, James, made his fortune in land speculating, and did business in the lumbering industry. James felt bewildered at the amount of damage done by excessive deforestation. He encouraged both of his sons to pursue careers in forest management.<sup>14</sup> James also took the initiative himself by building his prestigious Pennsylvania estate, Grey Towers, on a sprawling land of pastures and forests.

Pinchot’s family also played a key role in his decision to establish a Yale School of Forestry with a training facility at Grey Towers. With Lewis’s research, it can be deduced that the Pinchot family did not come upon this decision at the spur of the moment. In fact, the idea of establishing forestry as an academic discipline had been an idea James Pinchot had been percolating for a decade.<sup>15</sup> The Pinchot family pumped a great deal of money into the Yale School of Forestry to the tune of \$150,000 which, being a private endowment at a private institution, helped them avoid relying on legislative donations.<sup>16</sup> Most impressive, were the facilities James Pinchot constructed on the Grey Towers property. James oversaw the establishment of a small library, a classroom and a

---

<sup>14</sup> James G. Lewis, “The Pinchot Family and the Battle to Establish American Forestry” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 66 No. 3 (Spring 1999) 144.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

lecture hall. Pinchot's mother, Mary, served as a hostess to the students who would live on the estate in boarding rooms during summer school. Conclusively, Lewis attributes the national recognition of the issue of forestry and the survival of the institutions dedicated towards its service, not just to Gifford Pinchot, but to the generosity of his entire family. This is indicative of the fact that the money needed to promote forestry in the early twentieth century came from powerful families like the Pinchots.

M. Nelson McGeary is the third historian to elaborate on the legacy of Pinchot and conservation movement. In his article titled *Pinchot's Contributions to American Forestry*, McGeary critically examined several aspects of Pinchot's personal and professional persona; emphasizing their impact on the conservation movement. McGeary went on to reveal that Pinchot had the personal tendency to view people and issues in a very black or white way. He also came across as very impetuous when reacting to adverse situations. For the rest of the article, McGeary examined three key criticisms and four key contributions which historians have attributed to him in the field of conservation. Pinchot overstated his own importance when it came to his contributions to forestry is the first criticism. Rather than disprove this particular criticism, McGeary supported it with the facts that Pinchot dismissed all of Fernow's accomplishments in forestry as well as calling his father, James Pinchot, the true father

of forestry.<sup>17</sup> A second criticism is that Pinchot's actions did not fully support his "man of the people" rhetoric. McGeary debunked this idea by stating that Pinchot grappled with workers and farmer's rights as a governor.<sup>18</sup>

Thirdly, there is the criticism that Pinchot did not wholly embrace conservationism as strongly as he should have. Once more, McGeary supports this criticism with the assessment that Pinchot cared more about use of the land for agricultural purposes rather than scenery and recreation. McGeary also focused on the positive contributions Pinchot made to conservationism. These included forestry's opening of new job markets, the development of a United States forest service, his administration skills and, most important, popularizing forestry as a national issue.<sup>19</sup> Pinchot had a clear understanding of the lackadaisical attitude of the federal government towards forestry. Although parks and preserves had been created, forestry was still much obscured in the American administrative and public lexicons. This reception also made it clear to Pinchot that he needed to study forestry with a very hands-on approach. In the 1880s, that sort of approach could not be found at America's elite academic institutions.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

Rather, Pinchot would have to travel to Europe where forest preservation had been engrained in both the academic and professional spheres. Historian Stephanie Pincetl described the genesis of environmentalism in France in her article titled "Some Origins of French Environmentalism: An Exploration." In this article, Pincetl addressed the social, philosophical and governmental concepts surrounding the establishment of environmentalism in French culture. By doing so, Pincetl sets the scene for Pinchot's first hand encounter with a type of forestry he sought to emulate in America.

Beginning with the philosophical aspect; Pincetl made note of the fact that the original debate on the true purpose of nature in France presented itself through the ideas of Jean Baptiste Rousseau and René Descartes.<sup>20</sup> For example, Descartes's founded his views in science, therefore nature existed to be examined and manipulated by humans. Rousseau, on the other hand, understood nature as a place where mankind could escape to a new way of spiritual living. Pincetl believes that French environmentalism developed form off-shoots of both of these Enlightenment philosopher's viewpoints.<sup>21</sup> From the middle ages to the eighteenth century, most of the forests belonged to kings, clergy and noble families. These circumstances were altered by the French Revolution. According to Pincetl, the major environmental

---

<sup>20</sup> Stephanie Pincetl, "Some Origins of French Environmentalism: An Exploration," *Forest Conservation and History*, Vol. 37 No. 2 (1993): 80

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

question in the Revolution's aftermath asked was who would control the forests now that they no longer belonged to the ruling class.

When it came addressing this critical issue, the French government established a Water and Forest Administration in 1801 with a strong emphasis on scientific forest management.<sup>22</sup> An institution was established to train pupils interested in this emerging field of study. The establishment of the Ecole de Nancy in 1824 stood as paramount to the endeavors of Gifford Pinchot. Admission to this academy remained very restrictive; it served as a place for those born of the elite to study preservation. Finding a new scientific, aesthetic and recreational use for nature formed the centerpiece of their curriculum.<sup>23</sup> These steps during the nineteenth century made, according to Pincetl, forestry another element of French infrastructure. These newly preserved forests had different meanings for several categorizations of French society such as the romanticists, preservationists and industrialists. Pinchot arrived in this social landscape when he enrolled to study forestry at Ecole de Nancy.

Primarily, Pinchot's studies focused on three key areas of forestry. Silviculture served as the primary discipline, silviculture involved what constituted a forest, how trees grow and reproduce and how to protect them. Forest organization followed as the next area of study. This discipline stressed the importance of forest capital and how

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

to gain top profit from forest growth. The third area of study was forest law.<sup>24</sup> Like Roosevelt as a young man, Pinchot's passion for nature was gained from hands on experience as opposed to sitting in a lecture hall or a library. Pinchot's most cherished memories, and where he acquired his most valuable insight, arose on his excursions into France's national and communal forests. Most significantly, seeing these forests gave him a firsthand experience with forestry as a crop.<sup>25</sup> During his studies at Ecole de Nancy, Gifford Pinchot encountered renowned forester Sir Dietrich Brandis. Of all the advice he gained from Brandis, he found the view point Brandis offered on what to do about forestry in America most intriguing. Brandis made it clear to Pinchot that: "Nothing general can be done until some State or large individual owner makes the experiment and proves for America what is so well established in Europe that forest management will pay."<sup>26</sup>

Pinchot made a commitment to utilize the forestry training he received at Ecole De Nancy, and from his journeys in Europe's forests. With the intention to engender a new conscience towards preservation among the American people. First, he would need to find a forest in America where he could practice his trade. Billionaire George Vanderbilt's extravagant Biltmore country estate in western North Carolina would provide him with such a venue. When Pinchot first beheld this mansion in the summer

---

<sup>24</sup> Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947), 11.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 15.

of 1892, he described it as, “a magnificent chateau of Indian limestone. With the terrace and stables it was a thousand feet in length. Its setting was superb, the view from it breath-taking.”<sup>27</sup> At Biltmore, Pinchot would use the estate grounds and surrounding forests to achieve four key measures. These measures included a new way to cut the old decaying timber, while preserving the lush undergrowth so new plants could grow, planting new species of trees in the forest to rejuvenate the ecosystem; establishing a recreational element for visitors and creating a living laboratory where students could receive hands on experience in forestry.

The nationwide publicity the project received was the most significant indicator of Pinchot’s success at Biltmore estates. To put it in the most basic terms; this was the first widely acknowledged professional example of modern forest management the American people beheld. Accolades poured in from many different media and scientific outlets. For example, the most recognized journal on the topic of public forestry, *Garden and Forest*, lauded Biltmore as, “what must be considered the most important step in the progress of American civilization, as it records what the results of the first attempt that had been made on a large scale in America to manage a piece of forest property on the scientific principles which prevail in France, Germany and other European countries”<sup>28</sup> Pinchot’s endeavors received the greatest acclaim in Chicago during 1893

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>28</sup> Harold T. Pinkett, *Gifford Pinchot: Private and Public Forester*. (University of Illinois Press: 1970), 26.

where the images of Biltmore's forests were displayed at the World's Columbian Exposition. Immensely proud of their home state's renovated attraction, Henderson, North Carolina's "Gold Leaf," newspaper raved:

We cannot leave the Forestry Building without reference to the display which was made by Mr. Vanderbilt for his forestry estate at Biltmore. We find in this exhibit maps representing his entire property, numerous photographs representing the forest as he finds it, and many other illustrations indicating the probable future usefulness and value of his estate. This exhibit in itself far surpasses any others, and should interest lumbermen from the North and Northwest in our state.<sup>29</sup>

Not only did Pinchot's project gain recognition from the national media, but it also tripped academia's trigger. Many college students, and graduates, came to Biltmore seeking training in the practice of forestry. To this end, Pinchot established an academic program in forestry at Biltmore Estate in 1896. As his experience in forest management developed, Pinchot realized that he could build a self-run program designed to help manage forests across the country.

Opportunity knocked in 1893 when Pinchot decided to open his own forestry consultant business in New York City. "Consulting Forester" became Pinchot's new professional title. Ne-Ha-Sa-Ne Park in the Adirondack Mountains provided Pinchot with the ideal laboratory to practice consulting skills. George Vanderbilt's brother-in-law, Dr. W. Seward Webb, was so impressed by the conservation work Pinchot had done

---

<sup>29</sup> "North Carolina at Chicago. Report of the Executive Committee of the Board of World's Fair examiners for North Carolina upon the exhibit of this state." *Golden Leaf* September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1893.

at Biltmore he asked the young forester to survey his woods in the Adirondacks.<sup>30</sup> Here, Pinchot was able to focus on his goals of cutting old growth while preserving young plants. Pinchot believed that the larger older trees stunted the growth of the emerging foliage. He wanted to log the older spruce while protecting the younger spruce for another crop. The survey of the winter of 1897-1898 led to the establishment of a set of rules for logging in Ne-Ha-Sa-Ne Park. Primarily, these rules focused on, forest fire prevention, cutting felled trees into logs to preserve young growth crushed by their fall, and making contracts with lumbermen to carry out these laws.<sup>31</sup>

Even though Pinchot had enjoyed immense success with his consultant firm, his passion for forest conservation would take him to Washington D.C. to oversee the protection of America's forest at the federal level. Historian William G. Robbins describes the evolution of the bureau of forestry from its inception, as the division of forestry, under Bernhard Fernow to the leadership of Pinchot in his article "Federal Forestry Cooperation: The Fernow-Pinchot Years."

Like Pinchot, Fernow had studied forestry in Europe but both he and Pinchot applied their knowledge of forestry to American conservationism in different ways. Upon his appointment, in 1886, Bernhard Fernow set to laying the ground work for the

---

<sup>30</sup> Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company 1947) 75.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

division of forestry. Two chief concerns at the time were the industrial use of forestry, and the establishment of cooperative studies in forestry, particularly railroad companies. Therefore, Fernow's division of forestry was well respected in the business community. When it came to agriculture, Fernow wanted farmers to leave all unimproved land to the practice of scientific endeavors.<sup>32</sup>

According to Robbins, Pinchot's personality carried the Division of Forestry to new heights. In 1901, he presided over the division as it transitioned to a federal bureau, and by 1905, 63 million acres had been preserved. Pinchot saw forestry as a public interest, not just for industry, but for the health of the American ecosystem. Therefore, the real radicalism in Pinchot's innovation came from the fact that he wanted to raise ecological awareness. He raised this awareness by convincing the public that nature was a resource and a resource which could best be protected by governmental regulation of America's wilderness. Of course, he could not do this alone, and Roosevelt's ascendancy to the presidency provided a professional and personal partnership custom made for conservation.

Stephen Ponder provided an in-depth account of how Pinchot helped Roosevelt by utilizing the media, and politics, to spread environmental awareness and activism. In "Gifford Pinchot: Press Agent for Forestry," Ponder explains that when Pinchot joined

---

<sup>32</sup> William G. Robbins, "Federal Forestry Cooperation: The Fernow-Pinchot Years." *Journal of Forest History* Vol. 28 No.4 (Oct. 1984).

the division of forestry in 1898 he expanded the mailing list from 1,200 to 6,000 names which included 2,000 newsletters.<sup>33</sup> Pinchot pulled out all the stops when it came to speaking engagements, public exhibitions and photo opportunities. From 1898-1910, the bureau published 108 million copies of advertisements, pamphlets and reports on conservation.<sup>34</sup> Roosevelt had Pinchot write all his speeches regarding natural conservation. When Roosevelt had to travel across the country to speak on ecological matters, Pinchot would provide him with information on the environmental conditions in the places on his itinerary. According to Ponder, Circulation of information on the most significant events planned by the administration was of the utmost importance. For example, shortly before the meeting of the American Forest Association in Washington D.C. Pinchot made sure that several newspapers across the country had news releases of the event.<sup>35</sup>

One thing that Pinchot understood very well was that visibility was the most important way to drum up public support. An example of this was in the Mississippi River tour of 1907. This Presidential envoy transported of Roosevelt down the river giving him the opportunity to bring the cause of conservation to the people of the delta

---

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Ponder, "Gifford Pinchot: Press Agent for Forestry" *Journal of Forest History* Vol. 31 No.1 (Jan.1987) 28

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

region.<sup>36</sup> Essentially, Pinchot spent all eight years of the Roosevelt administration helping Roosevelt spin his legend as an adventurous, nature loving, cowboy. Unfortunately, not all westerners were buying into the lore. In the Rocky Mountain region, many ranchers, land barons and farmers believed that Roosevelt's frantic conservationist spree was infringing on their way of life. In, "The Pharisee Spirit: Gifford Pinchot in Colorado," G. Michael McCarthy described this public backlash against what opponents of conservationism in the west called "Pinchotism." According to McCarthy, Pinchot's rhetoric about conservation for the ecological wellbeing of the country struck a sour note with the western frontiersmen.

From his first days in the Department of Forestry in the late 1890s, Pinchot visited Colorado and expressed the need for land and forest preservation. Pinchot, however, was not about to be satisfied with just sitting in his Washington bureau making decrees from on high. Instead, Pinchot endeavored to answer his naysayers by taking his case directly to the Colorado ranchers, land barons and farmers. When he did this for the first time in 1901 he was met with a very cold reception. Many of those westerners viewed Pinchot as an elitist east coast interloper.<sup>37</sup> He was called a monarch and dictator. As with Roosevelt, a common theme was shared in the Pinchot experience. Along with Roosevelt, Pinchot rose to the task of persuading a nation

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>37</sup> Michael McCarthy. "The Pharisee Spirit: Gifford Pinchot in Colorado". *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* Vol.97 No.3 (Jul, 1973) 363.

whose culture had been based on the belief that resources were limitless to cease and desist in their excessive consumption.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, the American people observed the country and the city lifestyles separate. Land in the west should be set aside, some argued, as a place of refuge from the vices of the city. A growing demand in recreation from the middle class made conservationism essential. Through his efforts, Pinchot wanted to make it clear that industry and forestry needed each other. Forests in Pinchot's view, could be managed as an agricultural crop provided their plants were used wisely. Both he and Roosevelt preoccupied themselves with threat that overconsumption would deplete the natural resources of America's forests. Roosevelt needed the forests to serve as a haven for a new generation of strapping young city lads, such as himself, to assert their masculinity. There remained another perspective through which this fascination with nature took hold in the Progressive Era. American forests possessed a spiritual aura. It was this aura that John Muir, a Scottish immigrant with a passion for exploration, would convey to the American people.

## CHAPTER 3

### JOHN MUIR: ENVIRONMENTAL EVANGELIST

John Muir believed that, “Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.”<sup>1</sup> He hoped that people could feel rejuvenated by nature. He was far more than just a naturalist. From the time he left the University of Wisconsin for Canada, he had been a student of natural biology and botany. He did not identify himself in any national, religious or political way. Rather, he saw himself as an earthling first and foremost. The crux of his cause involved making sure people would always have tranquil natural landscapes like the Yosemite Valley and the Hetch Hetchy Valley. Both his words and legacy have been the topic of scholarly debate. Some scholars want to place him on a pillar of economic virtue, while others have come to reveal the more economically savvy aspects of Muir’s personality. Natural history consumed him so fervently because it made human beings’ achievements so small and nature’s grandeur so immense. Muir’s desire was for people to stand in awe of nature as opposed to seeing nature as an object to be manipulated.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Muir. “Hetch Hetchy Valley”. *Sierra Club Bulletin*. Vol. 4, No.4 January 1908.

Historians have explored many aspects of Muir's legacy. Christine Oravec examined the nature of Muir's words and message.<sup>2</sup> Mark Stoll, Dennis C. Williams and Muir himself provided some insight into the role nature played in his spiritual journey.<sup>3</sup> Donald Worster and Kevin M. Deluca wrote about Muir's societal evolution through his acquirement of fortune and fame.<sup>4</sup> Roderick Nash analyzed Muir's political activities in his quest to preserve the treasures of the Yosemite Valley. This chapter will conclude by placing Muir in the role of nature's strongest defender. In doing so, it will lead into the next chapter where Roosevelt, Pinchot and Muir became locked in ideological combat over the fate of the Hetch Hetchy Valley.

Contrary to what several generations of legend have constructed, Muir was not some random wanderer who stumbled upon Yosemite and introduced it to the American public. By the time Muir arrived in Yosemite in 1868, it had been designated a nature preserve for public use by Abraham Lincoln four years earlier. The land in and around Yosemite slowly grew as a tourist attraction for camping and hiking. When he arrived in Yosemite, Muir found work as a sheep herder. This experience taught him that when it came to interacting with nature this form of agrarian domesticity was not

---

<sup>2</sup> Christine Oravec, "John Muir, Yosemite, and the Sublime Response: A Study in the Rhetoric of Preservationism." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. 67 Issue 3(1981).

<sup>3</sup> Mark Stoll, "Milton in Yosemite: 'Paradise Lost' and the National Park Idea". *Environmental History* Vol.13 No.2 (Apr.2008).

Dennis C. Williams. *God's Wilds: John Muir's Vision of Nature*. (Texas A&M University Press 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Donald Worster. "John Muir and the Modern Passion for Nature," *Environmental History* Vol. 10 No.1 (Jan.2005).

what he had in mind. He became greatly discouraged as he beheld the devastation these flocks wrought upon the natural landscape as they grazed. Instead, he desired a mutual existence with wild plants and animals. Such an existence would give him the opportunity to communicate with nature in a meditative way, seeking spiritual enlightenment.

Many Americans were aware of the natural beauty of the Yosemite Valley through paintings and articles in nature magazines. However, Muir wanted to enlighten people to the fact that the true value of Yosemite's natural landscape went beyond surface level visual observation. He did not arrive in Yosemite simply to observe, but to grow emotionally and physically from his relationship with the park's wildlife and scenery. He showed no interest in categorizing Yosemite's flora and fauna in a scientific sense, as Roosevelt would have done. Rather, he desired to immerse himself in the spiritual harmony which connected all living things.

In Muir's view, plants and animals were not objects to scientifically categorize, as Roosevelt saw them, nor were trees crops to be wisely cultivated as Pinchot saw them. Muir's understanding of America's wilderness came from an emotional place rather than a rigid pragmatic one. He saw nature as a living organism with qualities that could enhance all five senses as well as the human spirit, and emotional qualities of love, compassion and humility. This belief is what motivated Muir to promote and protect the

ecological haven that was Yosemite Park for the rest of his life. How he did this, and what it meant, has been debated and discussed among many scholars.

Christine Oravec, in her 1981 *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* article titled “John Muir, Yosemite, and the Sublime Response: A study in the Rhetoric of Preservationism,” discusses the core elements of Muir’s environmental message to the American public. According to Oravec, Muir wanted to stir up as much public support for the preservation of the Yosemite Valley as possible. To achieve this goal, Muir made his descriptions of the Yosemite Valley very artful. Doing so greatly influenced the readership living in the east coast’s major cities who had never seen the picturesque landscape of the Yosemite Valley.<sup>5</sup> Oravec described the literary techniques which Muir used to describe the beauty of the Sierra Mountains and forests. One of these tactics was to prompt a “sublime response” from the reader in order to captivate their aesthetic emotional senses.<sup>6</sup>

Muir wanted to create a character in his narrative that his audience could relate to; a character who would be known as the “True Mountaineer.” This mountaineer was an explorer who remained humbled while surrounded by the majesty of Yosemite’s natural wonder and had no desire to alter the surrounding landscape. Promoting natural landscapes, like the Yosemite Valley, as a place of spiritual rebirth was a goal of Muir’s

---

<sup>5</sup> Christine Oravec, “John Muir, Yosemite, and the Sublime Response: A Study in the Rhetoric of Preservationism.” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. 67 Issue 3(1981) 247.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

writing. Emphasizing spiritual rebirth served two purposes. First, it helped Muir's audience understand the concept that their polluted urban homes were hazardous to their spiritual wellbeing. Secondly, Muir wanted his readers to understand that people needed to be humbled by the beauty of America's wilderness.

Muir's fascination with mountains centered around his belief that God placed mountains on earth as an obstacle for only the most spiritual and courageous people to overcome. This is why, in Oravec's view, Muir promoted Yosemite's mountains as landforms that could build leadership in those who chose to explore them.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in an ideological vein similar to that of Roosevelt, Muir believed that the American wilderness could enhance personality traits in those who honored its splendor. By appealing to his reader's desire for spiritual rebirth, courage and leadership, Muir gave the American public the incentive to protect the Yosemite Valley as the twentieth century dawned. It is important to explore where, and how, Muir attained his sense of spirituality in relation to the wilderness.

Such an exploration begins by discovering how the Yosemite Valley came to be associated with the biblical Garden of Eden. This association was made possible by the wide publication of John Milton's 1667 poem titled *Paradise Lost*. Historian Mark Stoll described how Milton's *Paradise Lost* came to be associated with the Yosemite Valley, and those like Muir who fought to protect it. In his article titled, "Milton and Yosemite:

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 252.

'Paradise Lost' and the National Parks Idea", Stoll explained how Muir found it very easy to use Milton's *Paradise Lost* in his descriptions of the Yosemite Valley. Stoll contributes the idea that: "Quite naturally did Muir draw on Miltonic images to defend the valley from human destruction and exploitation, for Yosemite resembled Milton's description of Eden as much as any place in America, and even the world."<sup>8</sup>

In, *Paradise Lost*, Milton described the world as the lush and peaceful Eden where Adam and Eve lived as one with all other lifeforms around them. Thus, it was easy for Milton to appeal to the human need for spiritual purity. In Milton's Eden, there were elements of good and evil. Good took the form of the bright light of day casting over this ecological utopia and evil arrived in the dark shadows and nightfall. Therefore, no matter how pristine this world seemed, it was constantly in danger of evil's forces of destruction.

Stoll proceeded to outline the three ways in which Milton's *Paradise Lost* became associated with Yosemite Valley. According to Stoll, *Paradise Lost* took three routes to the Yosemite Valley: landscape architecture, art and literature. Those living in the hustle and bustle of nineteenth century cities perceived the vast country estate as their personal Miltonic Eden. In the two centuries following the 1667 release of *Paradise Lost*, the English middle class took to gardening as a serious form of art. In fact, Muir

---

<sup>8</sup> Mark Stoll, "Milton in Yosemite: 'Paradise Lost' and the National Park Idea". *Environmental History* Vol.13 No.2 (Apr.2008) 238.

recalled how much his father tried to make the garden of his Dunbar Scotland boyhood home an Eden for the Muir family to enjoy.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, as city dwellers grew to appreciate nature's splendor as a tranquil escape the demand for immense urban parks grew as well. As time went by, people became appreciative towards these parks serving as a therapeutic haven. This appreciation among the public made it easy for Muir to attract readers to the beauty of the *natural* Eden that was the Yosemite Valley. Stoll pointed to landscape art as the second path which brought Milton's Paradise Lost to the Yosemite Valley. In the 1820s, artists belonging to the Hudson River School of painting used Miltonic themes in their paintings of America's wild landscape.<sup>10</sup> These paintings sometimes depicted a bright sun contrasting with dark clouds, mountains surrounding deep, fertile valleys and raging falls and rivers. Human beings were minimized or nonexistent in these landscapes. Moreover, these paintings hung in the parlors of the affluent in America.<sup>11</sup> As a result of this, many well connected people found it enthralling to contribute to the natural preservation effort.

Stoll's third path was literature. Of course, as Stoll points out, Muir was not the only middle to late nineteenth century writer inspired by the Yosemite Valley. Several

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 247. For more information on Muir's childhood in Scotland, and as a teenage immigrant in Wisconsin, see John Muir. *Stories of my Boyhood and Youth*. (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Company, 1913).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 252.

authors equated the nature preserve in Yosemite Valley with the original Eden. One myth which Stoll is quick to dispel is that Muir had no knowledge of the Yosemite Valley before he arrived there in 1868. In fact, as Stoll reveals, Muir had read about the Yosemite Valley extensively a year before his expedition. As Muir journeyed through the southern United States he carried Milton's *Paradise Lost* with him.<sup>12</sup> When he arrived in the Yosemite Valley he used Miltonic words like Eden, glory, holy and heavenly to describe the majesty of the mountain scape.<sup>13</sup> All in all, Stoll concludes that at the beginning of the First World War people stopped associating Milton with natural landscapes. Nevertheless, the legacy that ties national parks with an undamaged Eden, as Milton described and Muir adhered to, still remains.

Historian Donald Worster is a biographer of Muir. In his article "John Muir and the Modern Passion for Nature," he described how Muir transformed personally and professionally. Worster argued that Muir's passion was tied, in ways we have not fully appreciated, to ideas of equality growing out of modern democratic cultures.<sup>14</sup> To understand Muir's passion, Worster claimed, it is important to understand the idealistic realities going on in Scotland and the United Kingdom at the middle of the nineteenth

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 261. For more information on John Muir's journey through the South and, subsequently to Yosemite, read John Muir. *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*. (Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 1916).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Worster. "John Muir and the Modern Passion for Nature," *Environmental History* Vol. 10 No.1 (Jan.2005) 9

century when his family immigrated to America.<sup>15</sup> Democracy created a need for land ownership, private property, economic consumption and production that would alter the way people would interact with nature.<sup>16</sup> It was this aspect of emerging American cultural identity that Muir rebelled against or encouraged people to break away from. Muir's spirituality dictated that he saw God as a free flowing spirit in nature. Therefore, according to Muir, the best way to get in touch with this God was to live in the wilderness away from the emerging soulless industrial giant Muir witnessed American society becoming.

As Muir accumulated money and stature from his writing his friends became rich upper class intellectuals, governmental luminaries and business men.<sup>17</sup> Most of the Miltonian idealism had taken a back seat to the affluent notoriety Muir had attained. By the end of the nineteenth century, most of Yosemite had become a playground for the business class and their families. Therefore, according to Worster, these tourists expected modern comforts of home in the land which Muir worked so hard to protect.<sup>18</sup> Eventually, Muir viewed nature as a few special places rather than the all-encompassing way he used to. He began to dress formally and drink with men in high society. Stoll presented Muir's spiritual side, which came to the forefront when he first arrived in

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,

Yosemite. Worster, on the other hand, displayed Muir's economically pragmatic side as his fame allowed him to advance in early twentieth century society. These two images of Muir, the explorer of the 1860s and the accomplished writer and activist of the early 1900s, have scholars debating his legacy.

Kevin Michael DeLuca also discussed Muir's evolution in his article "Trains in the Wilderness: The Corporate Roots of Environmentalism." First, DeLuca challenged the way Muir has been portrayed by historians and biographers. According to DeLuca, Roderick Nash cast Muir in the role of environmental hero.<sup>19</sup> DeLuca claimed that many historians of environmentalism in the nineteenth century have depicted nature as a place removed from industrialization or a place to escape civilization all together.<sup>20</sup>

What DeLuca ultimately argued is that, with an alternative historical view, wilderness can become a vision created by both environmentalist and industrialists. DeLuca says that Muir could not have raised awareness about Yosemite a National Park without the help of the Southern Pacific Railroad.<sup>21</sup> The Southern Pacific Railroad transported many artists, poets, naturalists and, of course, tourists to Yosemite Nature Preserve. It was this expedient transportation of the population to Yosemite helped develop the support that would make Yosemite a national park. Moreover, Deluca

---

<sup>19</sup> Kevin Michael DeLuca. "Trains in the Wilderness: The Corporate Roots of Environmentalism," *rhetoric and public affairs* Vol.4 Issue 4 (2001) 634.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 636.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 639.

explained that the Southern Pacific Railroad created a magazine called *Sunset*. *Sunset* published the works of several of the artists and poets who painted and wrote about the splendor they witnessed at Yosemite.<sup>22</sup>

A thorough examination of Muir's spirituality is found in the concluding chapter of Denis Williams's *God's Wilds: John Muir's vision of nature*. Here, Williams examined Muir's spirituality in relation to the times in which he lived and the causes he championed. For example, Williams pointed out that Muir wanted people to believe that God's revelation could be found in nature just as fervently as William Jennings Bryan wanted to persuade people that God's revelation could be found only in the Bible.<sup>23</sup> Muir felt that God led him into the wilderness to offer him spiritual guidance. This guidance inspired Muir to become a messenger for those who wished to find a connection with God in a temple that God made more glorious than any one man could construct.

According to Williams, Muir perceived the Yosemite Valley as a place where people could find love and compassion away from the urban sins of corruption and greed.<sup>24</sup> Although Muir may have written about glacial formations for his associations in the scientific community, he really felt most impassioned writing about how God

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 639.

<sup>23</sup> Dennis C. Williams. *God's Wilds: John Muir's Vision of Nature*. (Texas A&M University Press 2002) 194

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 197.

formed the earth in his journals. Muir wrote extensively on natural history, but he felt most at home writing about nature's connection to divinity. While Muir worked with mechanics and industrial arts during his time as a student at the University of Wisconsin, he began to feel increasingly apprehensive about an industrialized America. In the 1860s, Muir witnessed America becoming a nation striving towards industrial progress at the expense of its natural landscape. Muir understood this so called progress to be unholy, and by the time of the Civil War, he decided to leave America and find refuge in the Canadian wilderness where he could pursue his studies of the natural world.

Muir believed that when it came to spiritual guidance nature performed two important tasks. The first of these tasks was pointing mankind to God. The second task was to give people moral qualities like harmony, joy and love.<sup>25</sup> An effective way to understand the role that spirituality played in Muir's environmentalism is to examine the writings of the man himself. Primarily, Muir's aim was to humanize the natural world. Muir did this in order make people sympathize with the devastating circumstances facing the flora, fauna and landforms of Yosemite National Park. There are many examples of this.

One such example is described in his essay titled "Save the Redwoods." Here, Muir emotionally described the harvesting of these majestic trees: "This grand tree is of course dead, a ghastly disfigured ruin, but it still stands erect and holds forth its'

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 197.

majestic arms as if alive and saying, “forgive them they know not what they do.”<sup>26</sup> Not only did he humanize these natural wonders, but he also made sure the reader understood their divinity. In his essay titled “Hetch Hetchy Valley” he compared the qualities of Hetch Hetchy Valleys’ two mighty waterfalls: “No two falls could be more unlike-Tueeulala out in the open sunshine descending like thistledown; Wapama in a jagged, shadowy gorge roaring and thundering, pounding its way like an earthquake avalanche.”<sup>27</sup>

Muir employed an effective tactic in his writing by placing the reader in the park itself. A glowing example of this is how he described Hetch Hetchy Valley on a beautiful summer’s noon: “Imagine yourself in Hetch Hetchy. It is a sunny day in June, the pines sway dreamily, and you are shoulder deep in grass and flowers. Looking across the valley through beautiful open groves you see a bare granite wall 1800 feet high rising abruptly out of the green and yellow vegetation and glowing with sunshine, and in front of it the fall, waving like a downy scarf, silver bright, burning with white sun-fire in every fiber.”<sup>28</sup> This kind of writing gave the reader an experience which connected them with the natural landscape.

---

<sup>26</sup> John Muir. “Save the Redwoods” *Sierra Club Bulletin*. Vol. 9, No. 1 January 1920.

<sup>27</sup> John Muir. “Hetch Hetchy Valley” *Sierra Club Bulletin*. Vol. 4, No.4 January 1908.

<sup>28</sup> John Muir. “Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park”. *The Century Magazine*. Vol 30. No. 5 September 1890.

Like Pinchot, Muir understood the impact that human expansion had on the ecosystem, on this topic Muir wrote: “These ravages (ignoring the lives of the young undergrowth at the expense of the larger cut timber), however, of mill-fires and mill-axes are small as compared with those of the ‘sheep-men’s’ fires. Incredible numbers of are driven to the mountains pastures ever summer and in order to make every paths and to improve the pastures, running fires are set everywhere to burn off the old logs and undergrowth.”<sup>29</sup> Unlike Pinchot, however, Muir believed that the ultimate goal of wise use should not be for the wise use of natural resources alone. Instead, Muir’s conceptualization of wise use centered on using the Yosemite and Hetch Hetchy Valleys to give people a tranquil place to form a spiritual connection to nature.

When it came to religion, Muir pulled no punches in letting his audience know who was on the side of morality when it came to preservation. He was never timid about using the Miltonian dramatism into his essays. Referring to the proponents of the Hetch Hetchy dam, Muir railed: “Their arguments are curiously like those of the devil, devised for the destruction of the first garden-so much of the very best Eden fruit going to waste; so much of the best Tuolumne water and Tuolumne scenery going to waste. Few of their statements are even partly true, and all are misleading.”<sup>30</sup> Just because he

---

<sup>29</sup> John Muir. *“God’s First Temples: How Should we Preserve our Forests?” Nature Writings: The story in my boyhood and youth, my first summer in the Sierra, The Mountains of California, Stickeen and selected essays.* New York. Penguin Books. 1997

<sup>30</sup> John Muir. “Hetch Hetchy Valley”. *Sierra Club Bulletin*. Vol. 4, No.4 January 1908.

felt most of the political class were in the wrong when it came to environmentalism, Muir did not demur from polishing his political savvy.

Environmental historian Roderick Nash discussed Muir's political maneuvers in his essay "John Muir, William Kent and the Conservationist Schism." Nash's article recounts the political relationship between Muir and California congressman William Kent. This account began in 1903 when Kent expressed interest in preserving a wooded area of sequoia trees at the basin of San Francisco's Mount Tamalpais.<sup>31</sup> Both Muir and Kent agreed that a reserve like this would be very beneficial to those city dwellers searching for a tranquil natural escape. Moreover, when Kent made an appeal in December of 1907 to Pinchot to preserve Redwood Canyon he used pictures and descriptions by Muir as part of his application.<sup>32</sup>

Much to both Kent and Muir's delight, Roosevelt declared that particular Redwood forest as a national monument in 1908. When it came time to name this new monument, Roosevelt suggested that it be named Kent Woods. Kent balked and instead advised Roosevelt to name the new place after Muir. Muir was touched deeply by this, so much so that his Sierra Club made Kent an honorary member. Unfortunately, this good will was not to last. As the 1910s came to pass, the divisions developed between those who wanted to use Yosemite to help create the modern parkland and those who

---

<sup>31</sup> Roderick Nash. "John Muir, William Kent, and the Conservationist Schism," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 36 No. 6 (Nov. 1967) 424.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 425.

wanted to use Yosemite for the conservation of natural resources. This division would play itself out in the controversy over the Hetch Hetchy dam.

In Kent, Muir assumed that he had a strong preservationist ally. Muir communicated to Kent that the Hetch Hetchy Valley was a particularly impressive enclave of American wilderness that needed to be preserved. Kent believed this too but he had a problem, his constituents who called San Francisco home. The situation facing Kent centered on the fact that these urban constituents were clamoring for a fresh water supply; particularly after the disastrous San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Thus, Kent reached what must have been a hard thought decision in 1913 when the dam was being considered in Congress. He told the House: "I can only lay claim to being a nature lover myself. I think that is a matter of record," and went on to claim that the damming was good for conservation.<sup>33</sup> This enraged Muir and he felt that the last honorable man in Congress had turned his back on him. It is clear that Muir's passion for the Hetch Hetchy Valley drove him unrestrained into the fracas of the American political system.

Although Muir may not have liked the pollution and noise of the railroad, he knew of the publicity and prosperity it brought. He understood that, both environmentalists and industrialists were needed to promote and sustain nature preserves like the Yosemite Valley. Throughout his life, Muir believed in nature's healing power of spiritual rejuvenation. Although his fame may have distanced him from

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 430.

the environment of an idealistic explorer to that of a refined nineteenth century gentleman Muir still cherished those areas of pristine beauty. The Hetch Hetchy Valley was such a place and Muir dedicated the rest of his life to preserving it. He had interacted with Roosevelt and Pinchot before and their viewpoints would be crucial in deciding the valley's fate.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HETCH HETCHY CONTROVERSY

Right from the outset, in 1896, newly elected San Francisco mayor James Phelan intended for his city to establish a renewable water source. This planning began in the 1870s and 1880s when city engineers surveyed the Hetch Hetchy Valley. Phelan ran San Francisco as a savvy politico who had a tremendous inner circle among the city's elite. It has been said that nature meant little more to him than a backdrop for urban development.<sup>1</sup> This development had come a long way since San Francisco became thriving port city. In the Gold Rush days, San Francisco used water boats and crude wells to obtain fresh water.

By the 1860s, however, two public water companies had set up shop; the San Francisco Water Works and the Spring Valley Water Works. These two companies would merge with each other, in 1904, creating the Spring Valley Water Company.<sup>2</sup> City officials felt very ill at ease about having to rely on this company as the city's primary source of fresh water. They did not want to have to deal with corporate red tape in

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Righter. *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America's Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism*. (Oxford University Press 2005) 47

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

order to maintain their city's water supply. Ideally they desired to use a natural source of water which involved flooding the Hetch Hetchy Valley.

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1906 a 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked the San Francisco Bay Area.<sup>3</sup> This quake caused an estimated 3,000 fatalities. 227,000 people lost their homes, and many had to resort to living on the streets. Not only did the damage from the shock waves turn buildings to rubble but the devastating fires engulfed everything in their paths as well. In the aftermath, many Bay Area residents accused the fire department of not having a sufficient supply of fresh water to fight the blaze. A disaster which cost so many lives gave an emotional component the impassioned debate over whether or not to dam the Hetch Hetchy Valley.

In order to understand the magnitude of the Hetch Hetchy Dam controversy, it is imperative to understand the ideologies on either side. These ideologies were the two dueling over what each believed to be the best use for environmentalism in the Progressive Era. During the Progressive Era, conservationists and preservationists held their stances on the fate of natural landscapes like the Hetch Hetchy Valley. Christine Oravec explained this phenomenon in her article. "Conservationism vs. Preservationism: The 'Public Interest' In the Hetch Hetchy Controversy." Generally, Oravec's argument was that conservationists prevailed in the Hetch Hetchy debate because they

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 59.

emphasized “Public Interest” in their promotion for the damming of the valley.<sup>4</sup>

Defining public interest was, according to Oravec, at the center of both sides of the Hetch Hetchy debate.

Oravec brought to light the fact that the preservationists found themselves at a serious disadvantage. The conservationists possessed a copious amount of political clout making it extremely hard for the preservationists, like Muir, to alter the opinions of those who sought to dam Hetch Hetchy for the public good. This is not to claim that the preservationists did not have their share of successes. In the early years of the Roosevelt administration, Secretary of the Interior Ethan Hitchcock denied the appeals of San Francisco city officials to create a reservoir on Hetch Hetchy’s Lake Eleanor.<sup>5</sup> Hitchcock reasoned that the exposure to such scenery would greatly benefit future generations. Conservationists’ response to these denials was to paint a picture of the preservationists as mere nature lovers. A recurring theme during the Hetch Hetchy controversy involved two combative ideologies armed with their own definition of who the “public” really was.

According to Oravec, both sides of the controversy had their own special influential spheres at their disposal. The conservationists had an inside track leading to several elected officials who believed that the citizens living in the Bay Area had a

---

<sup>4</sup> Christine Oravec. “Conservationism vs. Preservationism: The ‘Public Interest’ in the Hetch Hetchy Controversy.” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol.70, Issue 4(1984) 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

greater public resource claim to the water from the Hetch Hetchy Valley.<sup>6</sup>

Comparatively, the preservationists tended to utilize their wide readership of their environmental publications to promote the aesthetic value of Yosemite's scenery. Up until the congressional hearings of 1912 and 1913, the preservationists had been successful in persuading the public to keep Hetch Hetchy in its present condition, but over time the tables would turn in the conservationist's favor. An overriding sentiment in the social and political culture greatly benefited the conservationists. What Oravec believed was that the primary theme of the Progressive Era dealt with serving the public needs in the most effective way possible. Therefore, a renewable source of water for the citizens, or "public" of San Francisco, greatly exceeded the aesthetic desires of Muir and his allies who were derided as a fringe group of "nature lovers."

Learning as much about how Roosevelt, Pinchot and Muir understood the social and political dynamics surrounding the Hetch Hetchy controversy is imperative. Political Scientist John M. Meyer, described the philosophical differences regarding environmentalism between Muir and Pinchot. In "Gifford Pinchot, John Muir and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought," Meyer described the similarities and differences of Muir and Pinchot's evolving ideas about environmentalism. Initially, Meyer pointed out that before entering the public sphere neither Muir nor Pinchot had any political training. Pinchot arrived in Washington with the purpose of being a bureau

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 4.

chief and Muir arrived in Yosemite intending on waking the public to the spiritual powers of her scenery. Therefore, at the outset of the twentieth century both of them would gradually have to learn how to work with the political system as neither of them had spent the last twenty years priming themselves for elected office as Roosevelt had done.<sup>7</sup> Muir would use his talent as a grassroots organizer and Pinchot would use his skills as publicity man to engage the political class to their respective ambitions for America's wilderness.

According to Meyer, Pinchot had two different viewpoints on how to practice environmentalism in his mind at the same time. Pinchot really did appreciate America's wild beauty. As Roosevelt's primary spokesperson for his administration's environmental program, he visited many America's most beautiful landscapes. However, he was also a businessman who felt that forestry should be a lucrative industry. Being an expert on the use of natural resources gave Pinchot the incentive to make the pragmatic use of these landscapes a priority.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it is easy to understand why he believed that Hetch Hetchy's most important service should be to the immediate civic needs of the public.

The public interest was important to Muir as well, except that he felt that the public could benefit more from an emotionally intimate connection with Hetch Hetchy's

---

<sup>7</sup> John M. Meyer. "Gifford Pinchot and John Muir and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought." *Polity*. Vol.30 No.2 (1997) 268.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

natural wonders. According to Meyer, Muir's position on nature was much more complicated than a generation of scholars has assumed. There is the prevailing scholarly interpretation of his relationship to the wilderness. American culture has cast Muir in the role of a wild man whose energy came from living in the wilderness in a primitive way. This, as Meyer revealed, was the most prominent characterization of Muir, but not the only one.

There is another side to Muir's views on mankind's relation to the wilderness, which, in some way, mirrors Pinchot's. Muir also felt that while the majesty of the Redwoods was a precious part of America's landscape he knew that, "Timber is a necessary bread," and "no scheme of management failing to recognize and properly provide for this want can possibly be maintained."<sup>9</sup> Quotations like these complicate the commonly held scholarly view of Muir as some lord protector of the woodlands. Therefore, while Muir sought to leave sacred places such as Hetch Hetchy as unaltered as possible, he like Pinchot, remained well aware of the need for natural resources to advance economic production.

Even though Muir certainly knew how to organize public support to draw political attention to his vision for Yosemite, Meyer implied, he had no real political agenda.<sup>10</sup> Meaning that he never identified himself with any political philosophy or

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 279.

party. Muir sought only to enhance society through, what he felt could be, a more harmonious union between people and nature. When he met with Roosevelt, he wanted him to see the beauty of the Yosemite Valley through a spiritual and emotional prism. Muir hoped that Roosevelt would engage in this activity and encourage the American people to do the same. These conflicting views between Roosevelt, Pinchot and Muir on how to interact with nature would display themselves in the political sphere and, in the public, during the debate over the Hetch Hetchy dam.

Tourism in the late nineteenth century targeted an emerging class of Americans who made their homes in the peripheries of major metropolitan areas. When these tourists visited a nature preserve, like Yosemite, they were typically middle class couples and families who had not been exposed to nature in such an intimate way. One of the earliest curators of Yosemite preserve was a former gold prospector named James Hutchings. Historian Jen A. Huntley Smith discussed Hutchings' impact on Yosemite tourism in her article, "Nature and Progress in Yosemite". James Hutchings was born in England in 1820 and arrived in Yosemite during the 1849 Gold Rush.<sup>11</sup> In the 1850s, he moved to San Francisco and opened a publishing company. During the summer of 1855, he and a couple of old friends, plus two Miwok guides, explored Yosemite, looking for natural wonders to write about. They were not disappointed, and Hutchings began to write about the scenery of the valley.

---

<sup>11</sup> Jen A. Huntly Smith. "Nature and Progress in Yosemite." *Nevada Historical Quarterly*. Vol.36 No.2 2003. 175.

In 1864, he ended his career as a publisher and moved to Yosemite. This is where he built a hotel and a saw mill. It was Hutchings who hired Muir to work at his saw mill when Muir arrived in the valley in 1868. Hutchings' most significant account of the Yosemite wilderness was an account he wrote called, *In the Heart of Yosemite*.<sup>12</sup> *In the Heart of Yosemite* contained vivid descriptions of the valleys, mountains, and rivers in the Yosemite nature preserve. Hutchings also added pictures of his woodcuttings and lithograph paintings. He had this book published in two ways, the first as a five-hundred page volume, and he also published another version as a tourist guide. Who were these tourists that read Hutchings' *In the Heart of Yosemite*, where did they come from and what drew them to Yosemite?

Huntley addressed these quandaries by examining the patterns of leisure activities these tourists took part in. An important point raised by Huntley was that these tourists of the nineteenth century who visited Yosemite intended to make that place a temporary home on a yearly basis.<sup>13</sup> Of course the main attraction was Yosemite's sublime scenery. Books written by Muir and Hutchings helped the tourists to attain a clear understanding of the natural beauty which awaited them, as well as the connection Muir hoped they would make with it. According to Huntley, two classes of

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 181.

people emerged from the tourist explosion in the nineteenth century, the consumer and producer class.<sup>14</sup>

By and large, the producer class encompassed the racial minority population of the resort. These included families of Mexican and Chinese employees who worked in the hotel as launderers and cooks. Native American women were used as a part of the tourist entertainment in that they sold spiritual trinkets and gave weather predictions. By contrast, the consumer class were European Americans of affluent means. These tourists came to Yosemite to be pampered and rejuvenated by participating in recreational activities in the mountain valley. Huntley concluded, that the emergence of this form of tourism connected consumerism and commodification to nature and progress.<sup>15</sup>

Muir, however needed those who visited Yosemite to see beyond the physically accessible traits of its landscape. This was Muir's aim when he wrote about the grandeur of Hetch Hetchy Valley in his essay, "Hetch Hetchy Valley." Muir began this essay by telling the reader that the Sierras contained more than just the one Yosemite Valley. He introduced the reader to Hetch Hetchy, a valley similar to Yosemite in that it

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 184.

was formed by the same geological phenomenon, with the Toulume River flowing through its ravine, just as the Merced River through Yosemite.<sup>16</sup>

A primary goal of Muir in his descriptions of natural landscapes was to place the reader in the middle of nature's splendor. He did this in "Hetch Hetchy Valley" by writing, "Imagine yourself in Hetch Hetchy on a sunny day in June, standing waste deep in grass and flowers (as I have often stood), while the great pines sway dreamily with scarcely perceptible motion."<sup>17</sup> In addition to transporting the reader to Hetch Hetchy, he had an uncanny ability for giving the Hetch Hetchy valley' qualities which appealed to human sensory. For example, this is how Muir described the streams in Rancheria Creek, "And besides all these a few small streams come over the walls at wide intervals, leaping from ledge to ledge with birdlike song and watering many a hidden cliff-garden and fernery but they are too unshowy to be noticed in so grand a place."<sup>18</sup> In writing this piece, Muir had more in mind than to just enchant his audience but to make a significant argument for keeping the Hetch Hetchy Valley in pristine condition.

Muir believed that every strong civilization in history needed natural beauty preserved for their citizens' recreation and personal health. According to Muir, average citizens met this desire with their floral displays in their yards and windowsills.<sup>19</sup> He

---

<sup>16</sup> John Muir. "Hetch Hetchy Valley." *Sierra Club Bulletin*. Vol. 4, No.4 January 1908.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 811.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 812.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 814.

presented an argument with pragmatic evidence of what would happen to the entire Sierra park system if the Hetch Hetchy Valley turned into a reservoir for San Francisco, “Should Hetch Hetchy be submerged for a reservoir, as proposed, not only would it be destroyed, but the sublime canon way to the heart of the High Sierra would be hopelessly blocked and the great camping ground, as the watershed of the city drinking system, virtually would be closed to the public.”<sup>20</sup> When Muir learned about President Roosevelt’s intention to visit Yosemite and spend some time with him in Yosemite he knew that this would be an opportunity to let Roosevelt understand the importance of preserving the landscape.

In May of 1903, the two nature lovers met to get acquainted through sharing their common affinity. Both Roosevelt and Muir changed their lives, and personalities, greatly through excursions into the wilderness. Roosevelt escaped to the wilderness after the deaths of his first wife and his mother. Muir sought refuge in the wilderness after the saw mill accident which temporarily blinded him. Also both of these men studied natural science extensively in college. Roosevelt studied zoology at Harvard and Muir studied botany and biology at Wisconsin. Thus, more than fate brought these two men together.

However, throughout their expedition, the difference between Roosevelt’s interpretation of nature and Muir’s could not have been more apparent. One particular

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 816.

exchange between these two men illustrated their differing opinions on mankind's relation with nature as nothing else can. While resting by the fire Roosevelt told Muir about his endeavors in big game hunting. Muir responded to this by asking Roosevelt, "When are you going to get over this boyishness of killing things,"<sup>21</sup> to which Roosevelt replied, "Muir, I guess you are right."<sup>22</sup> In spite of their differing perspectives, Roosevelt was extremely delighted to go camping with Muir. He wrote Muir a few days after he left Yosemite:

My Dear Mr. Muir; I trust I need not tell you; my dear sir, how happy the days in Yosemite were I owe to you, and how greatly I appreciate them. I shall not forget our three camps, the first in the solemn temples of the sequoias; the next in the snowstorm among the silver firs near the brink of the cliff, and the third on the floor of the Yosemite, in that open valley, fronting the stupendous rocky mass of El Captain; with the falls thundering in the distance on either hand.<sup>23</sup>

Deep down Roosevelt wished that he could be like Muir when in his appreciation of nature. Roosevelt had a side of him that wanted to escape into the wilderness and live off the land undetected for a while. Moreover, many nineteenth-century upper class men, like Roosevelt, wanted to live as Muir had in the 1860s but they could not. Thus, they went on ranching and touring to satisfy this inner desire while adhering to class norms and standards.

---

<sup>21</sup> Douglas Brinkley. *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America*. (New York: Harper 2009), 544.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Elting E. Morison, John M. Blum and John J. Buckley eds. *The letters of Theodore Roosevelt, Vol.2* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951.).

During this camping trip to Yosemite, not many people in the political sphere outside of Northern California were presenting their opinions on what should become of the Hetch Hetchy Valley. It would take the earthquake of 1906 to bring the issue of damming the Hetch Hetchy Valley to the national forefront. In the meantime, Roosevelt, with Pinchot in tow, continued making a public exhibition of conservation for the American people. No method of public visibility remained idle. Muir kept himself busy as well by growing the membership in his Sierra Club which he started in 1892.

The Sierra Club was the preservationist embodiment of the Boone and Crockett Club. Like the Boone and Crockett Club, the Sierra Club's members came from a vast array of professional backgrounds including, biologists, artists, natural historians and agriculturalists. Through his Sierra Club, Muir enacted his mission which centered on giving his associates all the motivation necessary to promote all the physical and emotional values of Yosemite National Park. Every president has to say goodbye to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue eventually, and in 1908 Roosevelt was preparing to do just that. However, he would not let his time in office end without a final cannonade for conservationism.

In May of 1908, Roosevelt organized what would be the culmination of all his administration's hard eight-year-long fight to preserve America's wildlife with the 1908 White House Conservation Conference. All of the governors from across the country were invited and this was of course heavily promoted in the media by Pinchot. The

attendee list consisted of more than just politicians: industrialists and scientists also arrived at the White House. At this conference Roosevelt gave an impassioned speech on the dire need for the conservation of America's natural resources, wilderness and wildlife.

How did the participants translate this call into action for the good of the country? Most significantly the governors participating in it drew up a declaration supporting conservation.<sup>24</sup> Thirty-six states would go on to establish the conservation commissions and a National Conservation Association was born too. Also, the conference of governors was such a success that President Roosevelt would organize a North American Conservation Conference that was held on February eighteenth, 1909.<sup>25</sup> Muir's name did not appear on the guest list.

Being left out of such a tremendous event greatly disturbed Muir. Pinchot served as the primary organizer for this conference. In some conscience way, Muir must have felt that Pinchot aimed to turn Roosevelt against him. He had known both Roosevelt and Pinchot for the past decade. Therefore, Muir possessed some inclination that their professional and personal background gave them a more economically stilted view of the Hetch Hetchy controversy. Simply put, by the time the 1900s gave way to the

---

<sup>24</sup> Paul Russell Cutright. *Theodore Roosevelt: The Naturalist*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956); 181.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

1910s, Muir came to understand that Roosevelt and Pinchot could not be counted as staunch allies in the fight to preserve Hetch Hetchy.

This can best be illustrated by examining the correspondences between Roosevelt and Muir in the late 1900s. On September 16, 1907, Roosevelt wrote Muir from his Oyster Bay resort. He had been pondering the issue surrounding the Hetch Hetchy conflict from both Muir and Pinchot's point of view. Roosevelt wanted to make it clear to Muir that he would always be a conservationist, but when it came to the Hetch Hetchy Valley, a greater need emerged in the foreground of his mind. "I will do everything in my power to protect not only Yosemite, which I have already protected, but other similar great natural beauties of this country," Roosevelt asserted.<sup>26</sup> He went on, "but you must remember that it is out of the question permanently to protect them unless we have a certain degree of friendliness towards them on the part of the people of the state in which they are situated."<sup>27</sup>

Through this particular correspondence with Muir Roosevelt made it clear that while conservation would always be one of the primary cornerstones of his presidential legacy; he also believed, as most seasoned politicians do, that the will and physical needs of the people take priority. A couple of months later Muir wrote Roosevelt yet

---

<sup>26</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to John Muir. Oyster Bay New York September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1907. Elting E. Morison, John M. Blum and John J. Buckley eds. *The letters of Theodore Roosevelt, Vol.2* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

again. In this letter, Muir intended to clearly state exactly what he felt about the idea of someone damaging the Hetch Hetchy Valley. He began, "Several weeks ago I addressed a communication to the Hon. James R. Garfield, Secretary of the interior, protesting against the use of the Hetch Hetchy Valley, one of the most magnificent and hospitable features of the Yosemite National Park, as a reservoir for a proposed water system for the City of San Francisco."<sup>28</sup>

In the next paragraph, Muir told Roosevelt that defenders of the dam only favored the Hetch Hetchy Valley because it would be more cost effective for the city than the other water sources available. Muir closed the letter by encouraging, or demanding as he felt the situation getting dire, that Roosevelt should spend time thinking about the emerging opposition to the dam. "The growing opposition, which starting from and originating among the best people of San Francisco, and which is rapidly spreading throughout the country, against this destruction as a place of resort of the Hetch-Hetchy Valley warrants on your part a most careful consideration of the entire proposition; and such an investigation would undoubtedly satisfy you of the availability of other sources of water supply and justify you in preventing this act of destruction and desecration."<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> John Muir to Theodore Roosevelt. November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1907. Retrieved from [http://vault.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/letters.aspx](http://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/letters.aspx).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, all three of these men had changed their public positions dramatically from when they first encountered one another in the 1880s and 90s. In 1910, Roosevelt had left the Presidency to his trusted ally William Howard Taft. Roosevelt used his new stature as a former president to live out still more of his boyhood ambitions through escaping into the natural world. For example, he and his sons ventured to Africa where they hunted exotic big game. Pinchot never had any intention of forming the type of personal connection with Taft as he did with Roosevelt. Even the professional connection between them was one of great hostility. Eventually, Pinchot was fired from the Taft administration in 1911 and was not too disappointed at having to move on with his life.

After leaving Washington, Pinchot published a recollection titled, *The Fight for Conservation*. In *The Fight for Conservation*, Pinchot greatly lauded all the hard work he and Roosevelt had done for conservation.<sup>1</sup> Muir had no mention in this recollection. By the 1910s, Muir had settled down in Martinez, California moving around the social circles of the upper class. Although not the wide eyed explorer of the 1860s, Muir still felt passionate about protecting the most impressive aspects of America's wilderness. He remained determined to use what few years of life he had to stand firm on the

---

<sup>1</sup> Gifford Pinchot. *The Fight for Conservation*. (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1910.)

preservation of the Hetch Hetchy Valley. In the first summer of 1913, the Senate finally began to debate whether or not to dam Hetch Hetchy for San Francisco's water supply.

Pinchot appeared before a hearing by the House Committee on Public Lands to deliver testimony where he voiced his support for the damming of the Hetch Hetchy Valley. He arrived right at the point, "So we come now face to face with the perfectly clean question of what is the best use to which the water that flows out of the Sierra can be put. As we all know there is no use of water higher than domestic use."<sup>2</sup> Pinchot defined the 'public' as those who lived in urban areas and only ventured to the national parks for vacations. His defining the public in such a way is important because he knew that these same people lived in San Francisco and required a consistent source of fresh water. Former San Francisco Mayor James Phelan also appeared before the committee.

When Phelan was asked if he was connected with the Wilson administration in any way he responded, "I have also participated in many hearings which have been held on this subject. I realize that the committee has gone into all the questions at this hearing, so I will only emphasize the fact that the needs of San Franciscans are pressing and urgent." Next former Mayor Phelan surprised the committee members when he reached into his briefcase and produced a letter written by Sierra Club member, and a close friend of Muir, Robert Underwood Johnson. Phelan read Johnson's letter allowed in its entirety. In this letter Johnson questioned the credibility of the lawmakers to

---

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Congress House of Representatives, Committee on the Public Lands, Hearings Hetch Hetchy Dam Site, 63<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session. Roderick Nash. *The Call of the Wild*. (New York : G. Braziller, 1970) 86.

decide the fate of Hetch Hetchy because they had no intellectual understanding of what human modification of this magnitude could do to the environment.

Johnson believed that the primary reason for city officials desire to dam Hetch Hetchy was due to the cheapness of the valley as a water source. In the letter that Phelan read Johnson cautioned that it might be a mistake to dam Hetch Hetchy and come to find later a more suitable water supply. Johnson closed his letter with this message, "I believe California would not consent to give up the great reservations. Moreover, I believe that the people of the state are opposed to the destruction of the Hetch Hetchy, and that this can be demonstrated if the bill can be delayed until the December session."<sup>3</sup> As time went by, what was to be done with the Hetch Hetchy Valley became a topic of public debate. The media machine in San Francisco had a strong role to play in this debate in how it communicated their views to their readership.

For example, the *San Francisco Call* served as a major media outlet in the Bay Area at the turn of the century. On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1912, a headline in *The San Francisco Call* read, "Nature Lovers Cornered in the Hetch Hetchy Debate."<sup>4</sup> This editorial assailed Robert Underwood Johnson as a loopy nature lover, "Pure water is more important than all the scenery in the world. Robert Underwood Johnson knows

---

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*,95.

<sup>4</sup> "Nature Lovers Cornered in the Hetch Hetchy Debate" *The San Francisco Call*. (1912, November 22<sup>nd</sup>.)

this because he would not undertake a climb with his beloved Sierra Mountain Club into the most beautiful scenery of the mountains without slinging a well filled canteen over his shoulder.”<sup>5</sup> This columnist was just getting warmed up. This was the scathing concluding sentence, “From the attitude of Secretary Fisher toward the self-styled nature lovers, who love all nature but human nature, and his general indication of fairness, it may be believed that San Francisco will get its permit from the Department of the Interior, and subsequently from congress.”<sup>6</sup>

In his February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1912, *San Francisco Call* editorial former city engineer, and Sierra Club member, Marsdon Manson outlined five key points as to why the valley should be dammed.<sup>7</sup> The Sierra Club split over the Hetch Hetchy controversy because some of its members lived as big movers and shakers in San Francisco’s upper class making them very influential in matters related to the needs of the city’s infrastructure. His first point was that Hetch Hetchy had no significant features which were worth preserving. Next, Manson explained that Hetch Hetchy was rather physically inaccessible to many travelers. Third, he believed that many other more scenic places existed in the Yosemite Valley and fourthly he claimed that there were other places that were more adequate campsites. Finally, Manson closed his piece by bringing to light the

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Marden Madson. *The San Francisco Call*. February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1912.

view that if Hetch Hetchy were turned into a lake it would be a very scenic and beautiful lake.

On December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1914 senate decided to grant the approval to use the Hetch Hetchy Valley as a future dam site. The final voting tally read 43; yeas, 25 nays and 27 absentees.<sup>8</sup> Much of the opposition came from representatives on the east coast while most of the yeas came from those representatives living in the western United States.<sup>9</sup> In a hospital in the downtown Los Angeles, not the cabin nestled in a lush Sierra valley, John Muir laid down to die on Christmas Eve 1914.

Shortly after his death, Roosevelt wrote an appreciation of Muir in an article for *Outlook Magazine*. In this piece, Roosevelt glowingly reflected on the joyful times he and Muir spent camping in Yosemite Park. Roosevelt explained Muir's personality this way, "There was a delightful innocence and good will about the man, and an utter inability to imagine that anyone could either take or give offense." Roosevelt concluded his eulogy with these words, "John Muir talked even better than he wrote. His greatest influence was always upon those who were brought into personal contact with him. But he wrote well, and while his books have not the peculiar charm that a very, very few

---

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

other writers on a similar subject have had, they will nevertheless last long. Our generation owes a lot to John Muir.”<sup>10</sup>

All three of these men owed their lives, and places in America’s history, to nature. They all found delight in nature as young boys. In Muir and Roosevelt’s cases, nature gave them a haven to rejuvenate themselves in the aftermath of tragedy. When they were in college, all three of them studied some aspect of the natural sciences. Moreover, they all met each other through professional endeavors having to do with nature preservation. Yet each of these men understood that nature could serve a special purpose for the American people as the twentieth century emerged. Roosevelt believed that the wilderness would give a new generation of young boys the chance to develop self-sufficiency in the face of adversity. Pinchot knew that America’s forests would not be around in the next century if they were not properly conserved and cultivated with an adherence to a strict set of guidelines. Muir felt that if people were wrapped up in this consumer culture they would become emotionally docile. Thus, Muir held the wildernesses aesthetic glory in high regard as a tonic for the human mind body and soul. All of these viewpoints enveloped themselves in the American psyche during the progressive era, and would continue to do so, when future generations of Americans asked themselves *how should we coexist with all the natural beauty this country has to offer?*

---

<sup>10</sup> Theodore Roosevelt. “John Muir: An Appreciation” *Outlook Magazine* vol.109 1915.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Buehler, Daniel O. "Permanence and Change in Theodore Roosevelt's Conservation Jeremiad". *The Western Journal of Communication* Vol.62 Issue. 4. 1998

Brinkley, Douglas. *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America*. New York. Harper. 2009.

Cutright, Paul Russell. *Theodore Roosevelt: The Naturalist*. New York. Harper and Brothers. 1956.

Dalton, Kathleen. *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous life*. New York. Alfred K. Knopf. 2002.

Deloria, Philip. *Playing Indian*. Hanover. Yale University Press. 1999.

DeLuca, Kevin Michael. "Trains in the Wilderness: The Corporate Roots of Environmentalism," *Rhetoric and public affairs* Vol.4 Issue 4. 2001

Dorsey, Leroy G. "The frontier myth in Presidential Rhetoric: Theodore Roosevelt's Campaign for Conservation." *The Western Journal of Communication* Vol.59 Issue 1, 1995

Hackensmith, Charles William. "Contributors to the Scouting Movement in North America," *Canadian Journal of the History of sport and physical education* 1973

Hardy, Rob. "Theodore Roosevelt and the Masculine/Feminine Complex" *New England Review* Series 26 Vol.6. 2005.

Lewis, James G. "The Pinchot Family and the Battle to Establish American Forestry"  
*Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*. Vol. 66 No. 3

Madson, Marden. *The San Francisco Call*. February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1912.

McCarthy, Michael. "The Pharisee Spirit: Gifford Pinchot in Colorado". The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, Vol.97 No.3 1973

McGeary, M. Nelson. "Pinchot's Contributions to American Forestry" *American Society for Environmental History*. Vol. 5 No.2. 1961

Meyer, John M. "Gifford Pinchot and John Muir and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought." *Polity*. Vol.30 No.2. 1997

Miller, Char. *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*. Washington. Island Press. 2001.

Miller, Char. "The Greening of Gifford Pinchot". *Environmental History Review* Vol.16 No.3 1992

Morison, Elting E., John M. Blum and John J. Buckley eds. *The letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, Vol.2 Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951

Muir, John. *Nature Writings: The story in my boyhood and youth, my first summer in the Sierra, The Mountains of California, Stickeen and selected essays*. New York. Penguin Books. 1997.

Muir, John. "Hetch Hetchy Valley". *Sierra Club Bulletin*. Vol. 4, No.4 January 1908.

Muir, John. *Stories of my Boyhood and Youth*. Boston. The Atlantic Monthly Company. 1913.

Muir, John. *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*. Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin Company. 1916.

Muir, John. "Save the Redwoods" *Sierra Club Bulletin*. Vol. 9, No. 1 January 1920.

Muir, John. "Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park". *The Century Magazine*. Vol 30. No. 5 September 1890.

Muir, John. "God's First Temples: How should we preserve our Forests?"  
*Nature Writings: The story in my boyhood and youth, my first summer in the Sierra, The Mountains of California, Stickeen and selected essays*. New York. Penguin Books. 1997

Muir, John to Theodore Roosevelt. November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1907. Retrieved from [http://vault.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/letters.aspx](http://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/letters.aspx).

Nash, Roderick. "John Muir, William Kent, and the Conservationist Schism," *Pacific Historical Review*. Vol. 36 No. 6. 1967

Nash, Roderick. *The Call of the Wild*. New York : G. Braziller, 1970.

"Nature Lovers Cornered in the Hetch Hetchy Debate" *The San Francisco Call*. 1912, November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

"North Carolina at Chicago. Report of the Executive Committee of the Board of World's Fair examiners for North Carolina upon the exhibit of this state." *Golden Leaf* September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1893

Oravec, Christine. "Conservationism vs. Preservationism: The 'Public Interest' in the Hetch Hetchy Controversy." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol.70, Issue 4.1984

Oravec, Christine. "John Muir, Yosemite, and the Sublime Response: A Study in the Rhetoric of Preservationism." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. 67 Issue 3.1981

Pincetl, Stephanie. "Some Origins of French Environmentalism: An Exploration," *Forest Conservation and History*. Vol. 37 No. 2 1993

Pinchot, Gifford. *The Fight for Conservation*. New York. Doubleday, Page and Company.1910.

Pinchot, Gifford. *Breaking New Ground*. New York. Harcourt Brace and Company. 1947.

Pinkett, Harold T. *Gifford Pinchot: Private and Public Forester*. University of Illinois Press. 1970.

Ponder, Stephen. "Gifford Pinchot: Press Agent for Forestry" *Journal of Forest History*. Vol. 31 No.1 1987

Righter, Robert W. *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America's Most Controversial Dam And the Birth of Modern Environmentalism*. Oxford University Press 2005.

Robbins, William G. "Federal Forestry Cooperation: The Fernow-Pinchot Years."  
*Journal of Forest History* Vol. 28 No.4. 1984

Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Strenuous Life; essays and addresses*. New York. The Century Company. 1900.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*. Charles Scribner's and Sons. 1920.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*. New Jersey. Literature House 1970  
c1885.

Roosevelt, Theodore to John Muir. Oyster Bay New York September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

Roosevelt, Theodore "Conservation as a national duty."  
[http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu /](http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/)

Roosevelt, Theodore. "John Muir: An Appreciation" *Outlook Magazine* vol.109 1915.

Slotkin, Richard "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier",  
*American Quarterly* Vol.33 No.5 (Winter 1981)

Smith, Jen A. Huntly. "Nature and Progress in Yosemite." *Nevada Historical Quarterly*.  
Vol.36 No.2 2003

Stoll, Mark. "Milton in Yosemite: 'Paradise Lost' and the National Park Idea".  
*Environmental History* Vol.13 No.2 (Apr.2008).

Seton, Ernest Thompson. *Boy Scouts of America: A Handbook of Woodcraft, Scouting and Life-Craft*. New York. Doubleday.1910.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Microfilms, 1966.

U.S. Congress House of Representatives, Committee on the Public Lands, Hearings Hetch Hetchy Dam Site, 63<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session.

Williams, Dennis C. *God's Wilds: John Muir's Vision of Nature*. College Station. Texas A&M University Press. 2002.

Worster, Donald. "John Muir and the Modern Passion for Nature," *Environmental History* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Jan., 2005).