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1872-1889



The Falls of Niagara--From the Canada side, Currier & Ives, c1868. LC-USZC2-3376

1872

Congress passes "An Act to set apart a certain Tract of Land lying near the Head-waters of the Yellowstone River as a public Park," thus establishing Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, the first in the history of the nation and of the world; the *Report of the Superintendent of the Yellowstone National Park for the Year 1872*, published the following year, provides a portrait of the new park at its birth.

At the initiative of J. Sterling Morton of the State Board of Agriculture, Nebraska observes "Tree-Planting Day" on April 10, inaugurating the tradition which soon becomes known as Arbor Day. By 1907, Arbor Day is observed annually in every State in the Union, most importantly in the nation's schools, where (as revealed in works such as the 1893 booklet *Arbor Day Leaves*), it provides several generations of young Americans with their most significant training in conservation principles and practice.

1872-74

In a reflection of strong popular interest in American scenery, including wilderness scenery, the Appleton Company publishes *Picturesque America; or, The Land We Live In*, ed. William Cullen Bryant, a massive 2-volume work containing reports and descriptions of scenic places along with superb engravings based on the work of noted artists; the work circulates widely, creating enduringly influential popular images of some of the nation's most famous scenic spots.

1873

Under the influence of Marsh's *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*, Franklin B. Hough reads a paper at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in Portland, Maine, entitled "On the Duty of Governments in the Preservation of Forests;" this inspires the Association to prepare and submit a Memorial on forest preservation to Congress, which initiates Congressional interest in forest protection.

Initial publication of *Forest and Stream* magazine, which--especially under the leadership of George Bird Grinnell, senior editor and publisher from 1880 to 1911--becomes the major American sportsmen's magazine by the turn of the century and a forum for conservation advocacy.

Congress passes "An Act to encourage the Growth of Timber on western Prairies", known as the Timber Culture Act, granting settlers 160-acre plots if they have cultivated trees on one-fourth of the land for ten years; the act reveals the growing public concern with conservation of forest resources, though it ultimately proves unenforceable and is repealed in 1891.

mid-1870s

Scribner's Monthly publishes reports from the Western expeditions led by Nathaniel P. Langford, Ferdinand V. Hayden, T.C. Evert, John Wesley Powell, and others; these greatly stimulate interest in the natural beauties of the West.

1874-75

Typifying the increasing popular interest in wild nature as a resource for human recreation, *Scribner's Monthly* publishes articles advocating the virtues of family camping in various spots throughout the country.

1875

American Forestry Association founded by concerned botanists and horticulturalists; before c.1900, it emphasizes appreciation and protection of trees rather than forestry as an economic problem.

Congress passes "An act to protect ornamental and other trees on Government reservations and on lands purchased by the United States, and for other purposes," forbidding the unauthorized cutting or injury of trees on government property.

1876

John Muir publishes "God's First Temples: How Shall We Preserve Our Forests?," one of his earliest pieces of published writing, in the *Sacramento Record-Union*; in it, he suggests the necessity for government protection of forests.

The Appalachian Mountain Club is founded in Boston, emphasizing a sense of stewardship toward the New England mountain wilds as part of its organizational philosophy; it is one of the nation's first and most important private conservation-related organizations.

After Congress allocates \$2,000 in a Department of Agriculture appropriations bill for "some man of approved attainments" to report to Congress on forestry matters, Franklin B. Hough is appointed first Federal forestry agent, with the task of gathering statistics about the state of the nation's forests.

1877

Carl Schurz begins a four-year term as Secretary of the Interior; under his leadership, the Department of the Interior takes an active interest in conservation issues for the first time, and Schurz himself advocates far-sighted conservation policies, such as the creation of forest reserves and a Federal forest service.

Congress passes "An act to provide for the sale of desert lands in certain States and Territories," known as the Desert Land Act, offering claimants up to 640 acres at \$1.25 an acre if they have irrigated them.

1878

John Wesley Powell, then the geologist in charge of the U.S. Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, publishes *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States*, a pioneering work recognizing the West's unique environmental character, advocating irrigation and conservation efforts in it, and calling for the distribution of Western lands to settlers on a democratic and environmentally realistic basis.

Franklin B. Hough begins to issue a landmark four-volume *Report upon Forestry* to Congress, the first fruit of the Federal government's nascent forestry activities and a wide-ranging survey of information and issues pertinent to the management of the nation's forests.

1879

Congress passes a sub-section of an appropriations bill officially establishing the U.S. Geological Survey as a bureau of the Interior Department, with responsibility for "the classification of the public lands."

Congress authorizes the appointment of a Public Lands Commission to review Federal public land policy; members include John Wesley Powell, Clarence Dutton, and Clarence King. The Commission spends several months travelling in the West, surveying land use; late in the year, it submits a Report to Congress expressing differing views among the

Commissioners on how to rationalize land policy, however all its recommendations are ignored by Congress.

1880s

The American Forestry Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science advocate designation of Western timberlands as permanent public reservations.

1880

At the direction of the New York State Legislature, a commission led by State Survey Director James T. Gardner and Frederick Law Olmsted prepares a *Special Report... on the Preservation of the Scenery of Niagara Falls*, advocating State purchase, restoration and preservation through public ownership of the scenic lands surrounding Niagara Falls. Accompanied by a Memorial to the governor signed by more than a hundred prominent citizens, this *Report* defines the direction of the public campaign to save the beauties of Niagara.

1881

Division of Forestry provisionally established in the Department of Agriculture, with Franklin B. Hough as its first chief; until the Pinchot era, its role is largely confined to dispensing information and technical advice. The remaining volumes of the *Report upon Forestry* are issued until 1884 under Hough and his successor, Nathaniel H. Egleston.

1882

In this and the preceding year, the campaign to save Niagara through the creation of a state-owned reserve is energized by the publication in New York and Boston newspapers of a series of letters calling attention to the dangers threatening Niagara's scenery; the 1882 letters, by Jonathan Baxter Harrison, also circulate in the form of a pamphlet entitled "The Condition of Niagara Falls, and the Measures Needed to Preserve Them".

Clarence Edward Dutton publishes "The Physical Geology of the Grand Canon District" in the *Second Annual Report of the United States Geological Survey*, a precise and beautifully discerning account of a remarkable natural region which demonstrates the exceptional scientific and even literary merit of many of the government-sponsored scientific survey reports published in this era.

American Forestry Congresses meet in Cincinnati and Montreal.

The Wheelman, a magazine for enthusiasts of the new bicycling craze, begins publication; it subsequently publishes a number of articles urging the enjoyment of bicycle touring to wild and scenic spots, reflecting the growing interest in nature-based recreation in America.

George Perkins Marsh dies in Italy, where he has been serving as U.S. Minister since 1861; his grave is in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. At the time of his death, he is working on additional revisions to the latest edition of *Man and Nature* (which he had retitled *The Earth as Modified by Human Action*).

1883

The American Ornithologists' Union, a professional society of biologists who study birds, founded in New York City; like the first Audubon Society (founded in 1886 by George Bird Grinnell, though it lasted only two years), this reflects the growing concern with birds and bird protection in American culture.

1884

Undertaking his research under the influence of Marsh's *Man and Nature*, Charles Sprague Sargent, the visionary director of Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum, publishes a *Report on the Forests of North America (Exclusive of Mexico)* as part of the Tenth Census; in addition to important scientific information, this influential work warns of the need to reform destructive timber management policies.

1885

New York State establishes the Adirondack Forest Preserve, stipulating that it "shall be kept forever as wild forest lands": a milestone in conservation legislation.

Formal opening (July 15) of New York State Reservation at Niagara, including a speech by James C. Carter, later published in pamphlet form, which links the spiritual importance of scenery to a philosophy of public preservation; the Reservation is a precedent-setting attempt to preserve scenic beauty while accommodating natural-resource use, and the capstone of a citizen campaign of conservation advocacy.

1886

In an appropriations bill for the Department of Agriculture, Congress creates the Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy, and grants the Division of Forestry permanent status within the Department; C. Hart Merriam heads the Economic Ornithology Division, and Bernhard E. Fernow is Forestry Division chief.

1887

Exemplifying the significance of sportsmen as conservationists, George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt found the Boone and Crockett Club, which plays a major role in associating big-game hunters with the conservation movement; the Club eventually publishes several volumes of writings on hunting and conservation, including *American Big Game In Its Haunts: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club*, in 1904.

Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux prepare a detailed plan for the restoration of the landscape immediately surrounding Niagara Falls; published as a *Supplemental Report of the Commissioners of the State Reservation at Niagara*, the plan shows how the challenges and paradoxes posed by scenic preservation and the accommodation of visitors in a carefully-conserved natural setting intersected with those of the emerging profession of landscape architecture, of which Olmsted was the nation's greatest practitioner.

Charles Sprague Sargent founds and directs *Garden and Forest*, a literate, thoughtful, and informative weekly which does much to foster awareness of and interest in American

forests, trees, horticulture, landscape design, and scenic preservation during the ten years of its publication.

In an early act of wildlife conservation, Congress passes legislation granting the Seal Rocks off Point Lobos to San Francisco in trust for the people of the United States, on condition that the city "shall keep said rocks free from encroachment by man, and shall preserve from molestation the seals and other animals now accustomed to resort there."

1889

William Temple Hornaday publishes *The Extermination of the American Bison*, a report to the Secretary of the Smithsonian which had originally been printed in the Smithsonian's annual report for 1887, severely criticizing the near-extirpation of bison in the West, and advocating protection of what remained of the herds.

Congress passes "An act to provide for the protection of the salmon fisheries of Alaska," the first of several such Federal statutory attempts to protect this economically valuable resource.

1889-91

Editorials by Robert Underwood Johnson in *Century* magazine help turn public opinion in favor of Federal forest conservation.