The names of the founders of the American conservation movement—Marsh, Olmsted, Pinchot, and others—are familiar to many readers, but the less obvious tie that binds them is their religious roots. Nearly every one of them either had grown up in New England Congregationalism or was no more than one generation away.

FARMS, FORESTS, AND PARKS

AND THE CONGREGATIONAL QUEST FOR AN EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

Niagara created a sensation when the painting first went on exhibit in May 1857. Standing before the seven-and-a-half-foot-wide canvas, the viewer feels precariously perched above currents rushing to the edge of the precipice. The eye follows the rim of Horseshoe Falls as it curves back to reveal the full power and majesty of the plunging water. More than 100,000 people came to see Niagara Falls with "everything but the roar," paying 25 cents apiece for the privilege. Thousands more ordered copies of the forthcoming chromolithograph. In two tours abroad the painting amazed Britons as much as it had Americans. No higher tribute could have come than art critic and philosopher John Ruskin's astonished praise of the "truthfulness" of the painting's unprecedented portrayal of moving water.[1]

The artist who could convey the grandeur of nature so convincingly was no Transcendentalist but rather an orthodox Congregationalist, Frederic Edwin Church, of Hartford, Connecticut. While *Niagara* brought the ambitious young painter the international fame he craved, it also drew him into the nexus of leaders of the nation's nascent movement for conservation, forestry, agricultural improvement, and parks. With almost all of them he shared descent from Puritans who dwelt in the valley of the Connecticut River. It was no accident then that this movement rested on moral foundations laid two centuries earlier in a zealous quest for an equitable and sustainable society.

CHURCH AT THE CRADLE OF CONSERVATION

In 1879, landscape art connected Church with the very birthplace of the conservation movement, the estate of George Perkins Marsh's boyhood. Wealthy lawyer Frederick Billings was looking to buy some paintings by Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School of landscape painting. He contacted Church, who acted as broker after Cole's death for sales of paintings still in the family's possession. Billings needed appropriate paintings to decorate the Marsh house, which he had bought in 1869 upon his return to his picturesque hometown of Woodstock, Vermont,

BY MARK STOLL

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after a successful law career in gold-rush San Francisco. He acquired three Cole landscapes and hung them alongside paintings by Hudson River School artists Albert Bierstadt (whom he and his wife had met in California), Asher B. Durand, Sanford Gifford, John W. Casilear, and John F. Kensett. Later he added works by Church himself.

The Puritan aesthetic values behind the art of Church (from Puritan-founded Hartford, Connecticut) no less that in the works of Cole (from the old Puritan stronghold Bolton, Lancashire, England) mirrored the estate's Puritan landscape. Marsh's house, the grandest residence in Woodstock, "was set into a moral landscape that represented the old Vermont values of thrift, good craftsmanship, and success handsomely but not vulgarly expressed," biographer Robin W. Winks noted.[2] For Billings as for Marsh, the moral landscape evoked agricultural improvement, forest conservation, and appreciation of nature as the handiwork of God and as a resource for social improvement. Billings had read Marsh's conservation classic *Man and Nature* when it came out in 1864 and now dedicated himself to making the author's former home and estate a monument to conservation. He established a model farm, still operating today as the Billings Farm and Museum. As a member of the Vermont State Forestry Commission, Billings would write most of its 1884 report. In one of the first and most successful efforts at forest restoration, he reforested denuded Mount Tom overlooking Woodstock. Billings built carriage roads for public recreation and in effect transformed Mount Tom into a public park.

Just a year before he brokered the sale to Billings of three Coles for the Marsh house, Church joined a different restoration project of much greater scale than Mount Tom: creating an international park around Niagara Falls and restoring the natural beauty of its

Frederic Church's ambitious painting Niagara *led to his involvement with the nation's leading advocates and creators of parks, forest conservation, and agricultural improvement, including Frederick Billings and Frederick Law Olmsted.*

banks. Probably inspired by Yosemite Park's establishment five years earlier, Church first suggested a park at the falls around 1869. Frederick Law Olmsted, friend to both Church and Billings, mounted the campaign to make the park a reality. Church had known Olmsted, a distant cousin, in Hartford, where both had attended the same school and Center Congregational Church.[3] Olmsted had become principal designer and builder of New York's Central Park in 1857. When corrupt politicians ousted him from his job as overseer of park construction in 1862, he found employment in California managing the Mariposa mine near Yosemite Valley, where he worked with Billings, the mine's lawyer.

Billings helped make sure that Olmsted sat on the first Yosemite Park Commission in 1864, for which he designed a plan for its development (though it was never carried out). He also facilitated commissions for Olmsted for the designs of the campus of the new University of California in Berkeley, a park system for San Francisco, and the plan for the new city of Tacoma, Washington. Olmsted returned to New York in 1865 to resume work on Central Park. By the time of the Niagara campaign, he was the nation's greatest and most influential landscape architect.

These men—Church, Billings, and most especially Marsh and Olmsted[4]—were members of the first two generations of Connecticut Valley Congregationalists who brought about the American conservation program. With the exception of the German-born foresters Bernhard Fernow and Carl Schenck, nearly every leading conservationist either had grown up in New England

From left to right, George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Billings, and Frederick Law Olmsted. Their conservation careers developed in close parallel, starting with agricultural improvement and later expanding to forests and parks.

Congregationalism or was no more than one generation away. Drawing from the ideals of the Puritan community and inspired by a vision of a righteous republic, they advocated forest conservation as part of a larger agenda that included parks and agricultural improvement. The American conservation movement was born in the elegant steepled churches rising above the greens of Connecticut Valley towns.

IMPROVING THE LAND

The conservation careers of Billings, Marsh, and Olmsted developed in close parallel, starting with agricultural improvement and later expanding to forests and parks. Conservation sprang up from a seed of worry about the decline of New England farming and with it the New England town. Although agricultural reformers arose in all sections after 1820, Connecticut Valley Congregationalists, often educated at Yale, led the movement for scientific agricultural improvement. They put their faith into advancement in new agricultural methods pioneered by experimental farms, educational institutions, and experimental stations. They informed farmers of the latest advances and inventions through publications, government agencies, and agricultural colleges.[5] Nowhere does the evolution of the conservation and parks movements appear more clearly than in the career of Church's friend and kinsman Olmsted, who had been a gentleman farmer pursuing horticultural experiments on Staten Island before he ever thought about designing a park.

Conservation rested on foundations of the Calvinist and Puritan ideal of improvement of one's land and possessions, which explains why Congregational agricultural improvement was so moralistic and why ministers played such surprisingly prominent parts. American scientific agriculture began with Congregational minister and Yale graduate Jared Eliot, born in Guilford, Connecticut, to a prominent family of ministers. A critic of religious and political divisiveness, Eliot defended the ideal of an orderly and righteous commonwealth and extolled New England towns' beneficial effect on morals, industriousness, and order.[6] Improvement of New England's stingy soils, he was sure, would preserve moral order. Keen to use his talents for the public good, between 1748 and 1757 he published essays about his observations and in 1760 gathered them into the first American book on agriculture, *Essays upon Field-Husbandry in New England*. Eliot discussed agricultural techniques and inventions, including his plans for a simplified version of Jethro Tull's new seed drill.[7]

A half-century later, competition from the newly settled Northwest Territory, where farmers reaped abundant harvests from fertile lands, threatened the political and moral economy of New England towns. Agricultural improvers mustered with the weapons of science and education to battle twin evils: New England's poor soils and the emigration of its young to the disorderly, godless frontier. Local elites and farmers experimented with crops and methods, and monthly journals informed farmers of agricultural advances. Thomas Green Fessenden, the son of the Congregational minister of the Connecticut River town of Walpole, New Hampshire, founded the *New England Farmer* in 1822, one of the earliest and most influential American agricultural journals. Jesse Buel founded and edited *The Cultivator*, America's leading agricultural periodical, and authored several books on agriculture before his death in 1839. Born in Coventry, Connecticut, in 1778 and raised in Rutland, Vermont, after 1790, Buel echoed the words of Protestant theologian John Calvin to proclaim it the farmer's religious duty to improve the soil: "The new system of husbandry…regards the soil as a gift of the beneficent Creator, in which we hold but a life estate, and which…we are bound to transmit, UNIMPAIRED, to posterity."[8]

Hence it was particularly appropriate that Olmsted, after a single semester at Yale taking courses from the school's first science professor, Benjamin Silliman, decided in 1846 on a career as a modern scientific farmer, the first step on a winding path to an illustrious career as the nation's first landscape architect. As an ambitious novice, Olmsted sought advice at the Albany office of

Buel's successor, Luther Tucker of *The Cultivator*, for which his father had been the Hartford agent.[9] Born in Vermont to Connecticut natives, Tucker had recently founded *The Horticulturist* and would found *The Country Gentleman* in 1853. By good fortune, there Olmsted met Andrew Jackson Downing, whom Tucker had recruited as editor of *The Horticulturist*. From his Staten Island farm, Olmsted corresponded with Downing, sent contributions to *The Horticulturist*, and bought plants from Downing's nursery.[10]

To supplement agricultural journals, Buel and others supported a national government agency to aid farmers, an effort that came to fruition in 1839 under the direction of Henry Leavitt Ellsworth. This native of Windsor, Connecticut, was a graduate of Yale, a founder of the Hartford County Agricultural Society in 1817, and the first commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office in 1835. The new agency, the U.S. Bureau of Agriculture, collected and distributed seeds for farmers, published agricultural statistics, and engaged in chemical, botanical, and entomological research. Its successor, the Department of Agriculture, was created in 1862 and organized along lines proposed by Buel a quarter-century before.[11]

Along with journals, agricultural schools arose in New England to teach useful, improving knowledge to farmers and mechanics. In 1824 two Yale graduates, Josiah Holbrook and future Congregational minister Truman Coe, established the first, the Agricultural Seminary in Derby, Connecticut.[12] In the following decades, a hodgepodge of agricultural and industrial schools sprang up across the country. Congregational minister and Illinois College professor Jonathan Baldwin Turner campaigned for a national system of land-grant colleges. Born in Templeton, Massachusetts, and educated at Yale, Turner believed that agricultural improvement served religious purposes and would also hasten the Millennium.[13] Connecticut-born Senator Lyman Trumbull of Illinois persuaded Congressman Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont to sponsor the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, which passed with vital lobbying assistance from Congregational minister Amos Brown.[14] Over the next three decades Morrill introduced many bills in the House and then Senate to expand funding until, by century's end, 48 land-grant agricultural colleges had been founded. Morrill retired to Vermont in 1898 as a gentleman farmer, living in a Downing cottage and surrounded by Downing-inspired gardens.[15]

To further experimentation for improvement of farming, George W. Atherton campaigned for agricultural experiment stations in states with land-grant colleges, which the Hatch Act funded in 1887.[16] Born in 1837 in Boxford, Massachusetts, and educated at Yale, Atherton was inspired by Yale professor Samuel W. Johnson, a Kingsboro, New York, native of Connecticut ancestry,[17] who established the nation's first agricultural experiment station in 1875 at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, before it moved to Yale two years later. As Yale president Arthur Twining Hadley said, "The whole system of agricultural experiment stations may well be regarded as his monument."[18] The Hatch Act spread experimental stations across the nation.

In 1867, Olmsted began a long relationship with Cornell, an early land-grant college whose campus he designed and which employed one of the most energetic and prolific agricultural reformers of the age, Liberty Hyde Bailey.[19] Bailey's father was a Congregationalist, native of Vermont, and prize-winning Michigan farmer who raised his son on an intellectual fare of the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Paradise Lost*, and Charles Darwin. As horticulture professor at Michigan State Agricultural College, Bailey in 1888 was offered a chair in horticulture at Cornell's new Hatch Act experimental station, from which he made Cornell's agricultural program the foremost and largest in the nation. He was one of the instigators of the extension system that would bring advanced agricultural practices to local farmers. To keep bright young people from leaving the farm, he endeavored to educate rural children about the natural world around them so that they would love and appreciate it. A major proponent of the nature-study movement, he wrote monthly pamphlets for distribution to elementary teachers. He founded and edited *Country Life in America* and *Cornell Countryman* to make rural life more attractive. President Theodore Roosevelt asked him to chair his Country Life Commission, and Bailey wrote most of its 1909 report. He was also convinced that good farmers were religious farmers. In his best-known and most philosophical book, *The Holy Earth* (1915), he wrote, "If God created the earth, so is the earth hallowed; and if it is hallowed, so must we deal with it devotedly and with care that we do not despoil it, and mindful of our relations to all beings that live on it."[20]

FOREST CONSERVATION

Concern for agriculture extended to woodlands. Every farm needed a woodlot for fences, lumber, and fuel. In this way, American forestry and conservation emerged from concern for preserving the agricultural resource base for New England towns, which in colonial times for the same purposes had passed ordinances to regulate timber cutting. Billings's reforestation of Mount Tom complemented his model farm, while Olmsted's horticultural experience prepared him to choose and place trees, bushes, and flowers in his park designs and led him to an interest in forestry.

Similarly, Billings's hero Marsh had discovered forestry and conservation during his efforts to bolster declining New England agriculture and New England towns. His *Address Delivered before the Agricultural Society of Rutland County, Sept. 30, 1847*, laid out the prospect for further improvement of American agriculture, which he linked to civilization and social progress. To this commonplace observation Marsh added the need for "the introduction of a better economy in the management of our forest lands." He lamented how, "in the physical geography of Vermont, within a single generation," terrible changes had occurred:

> *The signs of artificial improvement are mingled with the tokens of improvident waste, and the bald and barren hills, the dry beds of the smaller streams, the ravines furrowed out by the torrents of spring, and the diminished thread of interval that skirts the widened channel of the rivers, seem sad substitutes for the pleasant groves and brooks and broad meadows.*[21]

After two decades of thought and research, Marsh addressed these issues in *Man and Nature*, widely recognized by historians as the single most powerful and influential work in the history of international conservation. Marsh, too, descended from Connecticut forebears who had journeyed in 1636 with Thomas Hooker and the Churches and Olmsteds from Massachusetts to found Hartford. Born in 1801 in Woodstock, Vermont, Marsh spent nearly half his 81 years far from New England, serving in Washington, D.C., as a politician and in the Ottoman Empire and Italy as a diplomat.[22]

Marsh's international, cosmopolitan outlook and reputation should not obscure their origins in quite provincial concerns and values. His wife remembered him as "the last of the Puritans"[23]

By 1864, when George Perkins Marsh published Man and Nature, *the area around his home was deforested (above). After Frederick Billings purchased the farm in 1869, he eventually replanted Mount Tom behind the house (shown below in 1890), constructed trails and carriage roads, and opened the area to the public for recreation. Today, the National Park Service maintains the house and land as the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park.*

BILLINGS FAMILY ARCHIVE, WOODSTOCK FOUNDATION, WOODSTOCK, VT

and as a promoter of New England's "intellectual, moral, and material prosperity. He regarded New England as the mother who was chiefly to form the character of the rising States of the West."[24] However, he observed in dismay as Vermont farmers struggled to survive economic pressures that led them to overcut their forests for timber and then overgraze their hilly meadows during the Merino sheep craze. Treeless mountains baked in the sun and eroded in the rain. Fish died as clear streams turned muddy. Towns declined as their young people sought out richer western lands. Not agricultural improvement, Marsh thought, but Puritan-style regulation of timber, grazing, and fisheries would solve Vermont's problems.[25] While a diplomat in Italy, Marsh wrote down his argument in *Man and Nature*. He drew examples from his extensive travels in the devastated landscapes of the Holy Land and the Mediterranean but he took his key insights from observations of his home state. Hoping to preserve New England villages from ruin, he argued for preservation of forests. Forests, in addition to supplying wood to future generations, would maintain the purity and flow of water and prevent soil erosion.[26]

Marsh's Congregational roots thoroughly informed the book, with its epigraph from a sermon by Congregational minister Horace Bushnell and its outbursts of Puritan moralism. The righteous farmer and citizen must give heed

> *to the necessity of restoring the disturbed harmonies of nature, whose well-balanced influences are so propitious to all her organic offspring, of repaying to our great mother the debt which the prodigality and the thriftlessness of former generations have imposed upon their successors—thus fulfilling the command of religion and of practical wisdom, to use this world as not abusing it.*

Marsh warned, "Man has too long forgotten that the earth was given to him for usufruct alone, not for consumption, still less for profligate waste."[27] With Calvinist, Miltonic overtones, he noted that "man, who even now finds scarce breathing room on this vast globe, cannot retire from the Old World to some yet undiscovered continent, and wait for the slow action of such [natural] causes to replace, by a new creation, the Eden he has wasted."[28] Man had been a poor steward, and would be surely called to account for neglecting the welfare of future generations.[29] With forests, of course, considering the very long period needed to regenerate woodland, the need to plan now for future generations was paramount.

Billings was far from the only son of the Connecticut Valley to answer Marsh's call to action. Having read *Man and Nature*, Franklin B. Hough, born in Martinsburg, New York, to a native of Connecticut, supervised the 1865 state and 1870 national censuses of New York, whose falling timber production alarmed him. Hough's pivotal paper "On the Duty of Governments in the Preservation of Forests" for the 1873 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, citing Marsh, noted the need to plan for future generations but the lack of incentive for individuals to do so. He proposed popular education on the economic value of planting trees, forestry schools to train educators and engineers, and government regulation of forests, all of which came to pass. Hough emphasized protection of Adirondack forests, having sat on a legislative commission to study their preservation in 1872. His actions were instrumental in the creation under Governor Grover Cleveland in 1885 of a state forestry commission and the Adirondack and Catskill forest preserves. The federal government tapped Hough in 1876 to assess the state of the nation's forests, and in 1881 he became the first chief of the new Division of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture to advise farmers on care of their woodlands. The following year he helped organize the American Forestry Congress and edited the *American Journal of Forestry*.[30]

In 1883, American Forestry Congress vice-president Nathaniel H. Egleston succeeded Hough. Another Marsh disciple, Egleston was a native of Hartford, graduate of Yale, and Congregational minister of the great Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards's old church in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Egleston had come to forestry through his interest in improving rural life and the New England village was his paradigm. His 1878 *Villages and Village Life: With Hints for Their Improvement* recommended planting trees in towns for beauty and in the countryside for utility.[31]

In 1886 Bernhard E. Fernow, born and trained in Prussia, replaced Egleston as head of the Forest Division. The first professional forester to hold the post, Fernow redirected the Division of Forestry away from advising farmers and toward managing forests under federal control. He played a role in the passage of the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, which provided for reservation of federal forested land from public sale, and the Organic Act of 1897, which defined the purpose of the forest reserves and mandated their management and protection and was sponsored by South Dakota Senator Richard F. Pettigrew, native of Vermont.[32]

In the meantime, Olmsted took an interest in forestry that would have major consequences for American conservation. Olmsted had worked with Billings in California when Billings read *Man and Nature* in 1864, and surely knew the book. His 1866 proposal for the grounds for the land-grant Massachusetts Agricultural College, now the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, assigned the hill on the site for forestry demonstration.[33] Olmsted repeated Marsh's points when he published a report on the Chicago fire in *The Nation* in 1871.[34] Then, in 1888, George W. Vanderbilt, son of neighboring Staten Island "farmer" William H. Vanderbilt and grandson of railroad magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt, consulted with Olmsted regarding land with spectacular views that he had bought in the mountains of North Carolina. Olmsted considered the Biltmore Estate's exhausted soils and cutover forests poor material for the park his client wanted. "My advice," he told Vanderbilt in 1891, "would be to make a small park into which to look from your house; make a small pleasure ground and garden, farm your river bottom chiefly to keep and fatten livestock with a view to manure; and make the rest a forest, improving the existing woods and planting the old fields."[35] Olmsted needed a forester to assist him, and at that moment aspiring forester Gifford Pinchot walked through the door while on a tour of American forests.

Pinchot's Biltmore experience would be his springboard to success and fame as America's greatest forester, and it was hardly coincidental that he appeared at that moment. His family knew Olmsted and had employed his services.[36] Olmsted might even have had young Pinchot in mind when he suggested reforesting Biltmore. Pinchot had graduated from Yale in 1889; ambitious to be America's first native-born professional forester, he attended France's national forestry school for one year, toured managed forests in France, Germany, and Switzerland, and returned home hoping one day to replace Fernow. Pinchot started at Biltmore in 1892, reported on his work at a forestry exhibit he prepared for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, and recommended his

replacement, a German forester named Carl Alwin Schenck. Schenck soon took over the work and in 1898 established at Biltmore the first American forestry school. Schenck would credit Olmsted, not Marsh or Hough or Pinchot, as "the inspirer of American forestry."[37] When Fernow left the Division of Forestry in 1898 to serve as the first dean of the New York State College of Forestry at Cornell, the nation's first state forestry school and first four-year forestry program, Pinchot succeeded him as head of the Forestry Division. In 1900 the Pinchot family funded the foundation of the Yale Forestry School, the nation's first post-graduate forestry program, to train professional foresters. Pinchot's greatest achievement was the creation of the Forest Service in 1905, when the forest preserves were moved from the Department of the Interior to the new Forest Service in Agriculture. Two years later he renamed the forest reserves "national forests" to emphasize their efficient and scientific use for the benefit of the nation.

Pinchot, who declared, "I was born a Connecticut Yankee,"[38] built American forestry on Connecticut Puritan values. He was born in 1865 in his grandfather Amos R. Eno's house in Simsbury, Hartford County, to a maternal lineage of Puritans and Huguenots. He was named Gifford after his father's friend, the painter Sanford Gifford, and grew up in a house surrounded by Hudson River School paintings that depicted the changing landscape of rural New York and New England.[39]

Moreover, Gifford Pinchot was close to his pious mother, who instilled in her son strong moral and evangelistic sentiments. He at first was inclined to a career in church work.[40] His father, James Pinchot, turned him from religion to forestry. Gifford's grandfather, a French immigrant, had made a great deal of money deforesting swaths of Pennsylvania, and his father became interested in forestry because he wanted to reforest family property. In his autobiography, Pinchot recalled the moment his father suggested a career: "'How would you like to be a forester?' asked my foresighted Father one fortunate morning in the summer of 1885, just before I went to college…. He was sure that Forestry must come to America… and…the time was ripe."[41] For Pinchot's twenty-first birthday in 1886, his uncle gave him the 1882 edition of *Man and Nature*.[42]

The forester never displaced the New England preacher in Pinchot, now a preacher of the forest "gospel of efficiency," in historian Samuel P. Hays's apt phrase.[43] "The conservation issue is a moral issue," Pinchot wrote, "and the heart of it is this: For whose benefit shall our natural resources be conserved—for the benefit of us all, or for the use and profit of the few?" He decried "the prodigal squandering" of natural resources, waste that was "often not merely without benefit but to the serious injury of the community." He insisted, "We, the American people, have come into the possession of nearly four million square miles of the richest portion of the earth. It is ours to use and conserve for ourselves and our descendants, or to destroy."[44]

For protection of private forests, Pinchot held that moral communities like New England towns would take better care of soil and forests, and the key to maintaining moral communities was a strong country church. In 1908, at the peak of his forestry career, Pinchot promoted the "country life" movement to make rural living more attractive and served on the Country Life Commission with like-minded Liberty Hyde Bailey. In the 1910s Pinchot and his cousin Charles Otis Gill, a Yale classmate and Congregational minister, coauthored two influential studies that Pinchot funded: *The Country Church: The Decline of Its Influence and The Remedy* in 1913, and *Six Thousand Country Churches* in 1919.[45] At a 1916 conference on country churches, Pinchot sermonized, "The country church can be made again what it was during the early days in New England, the strongest power not only for righteousness, which it is now, but also for the general success of country life and for the welfare of country communities." Like the missionary he once thought of becoming, he concluded, "The work which lies before the country church may well be second to no other in the power of its thrust toward a social order founded on the ethics of Jesus Christ."[46] Pinchot's forestry reinterpreted the Puritan goal of a moral, orderly society in terms of the nation's resources.

When Pinchot left the Forest Service in 1910, his friend Henry S. Graves succeeded him. Son of a professor from West Fairlee, Vermont, Graves had graduated from Yale and followed his friend Pinchot into forestry. He served as the first dean of the Yale Forestry School and was appointed dean again when he left the Forest Service in 1920.[47] Graves's successor from 1920 to 1928 was William B. Greeley, the last Connecticut-valley Yankee. Greeley was born in Oswego, New York, and raised on a ranch in Santa Clara County, California. His father and grandfather had been Congregational ministers in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, on the Connecticut River. Greeley was the first graduate of the Yale Forestry School to head the Forest Service. Having worked his way up through the ranks of the Forest Service, Greeley's understanding of lumbering was more practical. While on the one hand Greeley sought to expand public ownership of forests to replenish the cutover lands east of the Mississippi, on the other he sought a rapprochement of sorts with the lumber barons. The result was the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924, drafted by Greeley with the support of the lumber lobby, which made it easier for the Forest Service to buy land and encouraged greater cooperation with industry. Pinchot bitterly opposed it as a sellout to the lumber industry. Thereafter, Pinchot's moral view of forestry was marginalized, and communally based forestry as an aspect of farming gave way to commercial forestry of large tracts of nonagricultural land. The model of the New England town vanished.[48]

Puritan forestry died but its moral spirit survived in conservation, perhaps the greatest legacy of Pinchot's career. Here was a clear expression for the twentieth century of the Calvinist traditions of stewardship of the earth and the interconnectedness of nature, along with the Puritan priority of community over self-interest. Pinchot realized in 1907 that the "possible use or waste of natural resources…fitted into and made up the one great central problem of the use of the earth for the good of man," which "must be solved if the generations, as they came and went, were to live civilized, happy, useful lives in the lands which the Lord their God had given them." He discussed the idea with W J McGee, formerly of the Bureau of Ethnology. McGee formulated a succinct definition—"the use of natural resources for the greatest good of the greatest number for the longest time"—and convinced Pinchot "that monopoly of natural resources was only less dangerous to the public welfare than their actual destruction."[49] Shorn of its Puritan moralism, conservation today remains the least controversial and least politicized aspect of the American environmental movement.

PUBLIC PARKS

Olmsted's chance meeting with Downing in the office of *The Cultivator* in 1846 set in motion his dramatic rise from gentleman farmer to the nation's foremost landscape architect, parks advocate, and city planner. Son of Massachusetts natives, Downing in fact

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Frederick Law Olmsted was instrumental in Gifford Pinchot's hiring as the Biltmore Estate's forester. In doing so, Olmsted helped launch the career of another Connecticut Valley Congregationalist whose impact is still felt today, as evidenced by the map in the background showing the national forests in the early 1900s.

preceded him in all these fields and had published three books and many articles by the time Tucker recruited him to edit *The Horticulturist*.[50] Downing sought to disseminate tasteful landscape gardens and architecture throughout America. He contended that New England had the most tasteful American towns[51] and urged them as examples for town planning for new towns and suburbs fast springing up across the nation. New England towns also provided the model for the rise of city parks, themselves models for the first state and national parks. His 1850 essay "Our Country Villages" recommended "a large open space, common, or park, situated in the middle of the village…well planted with groups of trees, and kept as a lawn…. This park would be the nucleus or *heart of the village*,…for the common use of the whole village…."[52]

Old England, not New, alerted Olmsted to the democratic possibilities of large urban public parks. Olmsted set sail in 1850 for a walking tour of England and Scotland intending to make notes on agricultural practices for articles in *The Horticulturist*. He visited the new public park at Birkenhead and had a revelation. He reported, "Five minutes of admiration, and a few more spent in studying the manner in which art had been employed to obtain from nature so much beauty, and I was ready to admit that in democratic America there was nothing to be thought of as comparable with this People's Garden."[53] Olmsted had surely read editorials by William Cullen Bryant in his *New York Evening Post*. Born to orthodox Congregational folk in Cummington, Massachusetts, twenty miles from Northampton, Bryant had argued since 1844 in favor of a public park in New York City for its effect on "good morals and good order."[54] Horace Greeley, a New Hampshire–born Universalist of old Puritan stock, joined the campaign from his *Tribune*.[55] Downing published articles in 1848 and 1849 in *The Horticulturist* that advocated parks for America. At Birkenhead, Olmsted had found a pattern for New York's park. His "The People's Park in Birkenhead, Near Liverpool" in *The Horticulturist* in 1851 prompted Downing to write "The New-York Park" urging the mayor to act on a park for the fast-growing city. The New York legislature authorized Central Park in 1853, but political wrangling and lack of appropriations delayed progress until 1857.[56]

Without any training or experience, Olmsted found himself the landscape architect of New York's new park, which had it not been for Downing's death in 1852 in a steamboat accident would surely have been the job of Downing and his partner Calvert Vaux. In 1857 Vaux partnered with Olmsted in a design proposal for Central Park, "Greensward," in the English-garden style, which became the plan for America's first major city park and model for urban parks from Boston to San Francisco.[57] The approval of Central Park in 1853 prompted Hartford Congregational minister Horace Bushnell, Olmsted's friend and former next-door neighbor, to lobby city fathers for a park. In 1854 Hartford became the first municipality to purchase land for a public park with city funds, Bushnell Park.[58]

Central Park's design and purpose manifested the Puritan

social ethic. One goal was religious. Olmsted wrote that "it is one great purpose of the Park to supply to the hundreds of thousands of tired workers, who have no opportunity to spend their summers in the country, a specimen of God's handiwork that shall be to them, inexpensively, what a month or two in the White Mountains or the Adirondacks is, at great cost, to those in easier circumstances."[59] So skillfully did Olmsted hide the artificiality of the park that many religious visitors thought they were looking at the works of God. However, parks' primary purposes were moral and social, Olmsted argued. Well-designed parks would expose the public to good taste and healthy influences, and thus promote good morals and good order. Opportunities to relax the mind amidst beautiful expansive scenery, exercise the body, and escape the crowded, noisy, stressful city streets enabled people to be industrious, useful, moral citizens. People could not exercise their talents or contribute fully to the community if they were ill, weak, or enticed by the multitude of immoral amusements that cities offered.[60]

Yosemite Park, established in 1864 in the wake of Central Park, was also the creation of New Englanders. Israel Ward Raymond, born in New York to former Connecticut Congregationalists, wrote the letter to Senator John Conness in early 1864 that instigated the park.[61] Yosemite immediately inspired proposals to do something similar for Niagara. Church, the famous painter of *Niagara*, proposed such a park for the falls in 1869. Olmsted and architect H. H. Richardson went to inspect the falls. Like most visitors, they were utterly appalled at the "sordid interests" that had turned the falls into part industrial complex, part carnival, and part tawdry tourist trap. Olmsted began the campaign for the park and prepared a design with Vaux that restored the American bank's "wild" condition. Church lobbied the Canadians for a proposal for an international park. Against fierce political and commercial resistance the legislature approved funds, and in 1885 Governor Grover Cleveland signed the bill.[62]

Connecticut Valley Congregationalists continued into the next century to lead and guide the American parks movement. Ferdinand V. Hayden and Cornelius Hedges of Westfield, Massachusetts, were the principal advocates for Yellowstone, the world's first national park in 1872. William Kent, son of Connecticut natives and a Yale alumnus, cofounded the Save-the-Redwoods League in 1918, donated the land for Muir Woods National Monument, worked to establish California's Mount Tamalpais State Park, and coauthored the 1916 bill to create the National Park Service.[63] Two other cofounders of the Save-the-Redwoods League, Frederick Russell Burnham and Henry Fairfield Osborn, descended from Connecticut Congregational ministers.[64] Yale graduate George Bird Grinnell, grandson of the Congregational minister of Greenfield, Massachusetts, led the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910, and landscape architect Ernest F. Coe, New Haven native and Yale graduate, spearheaded establishment of Everglades National Park in 1934.[65]

CONGREGATIONALIST CONSERVATION

A surprisingly intimate group stood at the fountainhead of American agricultural improvement, conservation, forestry, and parks. Friendship, professional work, geography, and Puritan and Congregational backgrounds linked them. Church put the American landscape on canvas and preserved it in parks. Billings made the Marsh mansion a monument to Marsh's conservation ideals and facilitated Olmsted's rise to become the nation's leading landscape architect of parks and urban design. Olmsted gave Pinchot his first job, where he began a career of his own putting Marsh's ideas into practice.

The Connecticut River valley produced no Emerson or Thoreau. Congregationalists could commune with God in the woods with the best of them, but these practical folks rarely lost themselves in airy mysticism and never defended wilderness for its own sake, as something apart from its social benefits. Whereas Emerson contemplated the Oversoul and Thoreau sought life's meaning on the shores of Walden Pond, Congregationalists produced agricultural inventions and methods, governmental and educational agricultural institutions, conservation and forestry reserves, schools of forestry, the Forest Service, and city, state, and national parks. From small beginnings in the white-spired Congregational churches of New England towns came mighty works indeed. □

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NOTES

1. See John K. Howat, *Frederic Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 69–74; Franklin Kelly, "A Passion for Landscape: The Paintings of Frederic Edwin Church," in Kelly, ed., *Frederic Edwin Church* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989), 50–54.
2. Robin W. Winks, *Frederick Billings: A Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 303.
3. Howat, *Frederic Church*, 5; Charles Dudley Warner, "An Unfinished Biography of the Artist," in Franklin Kelly, ed., *Frederic Edwin Church* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989), 177.
4. For Billings and Congregationalism (or Presbyterianism in San Francisco or New York), see Winks, *Frederick Billings*, 5, 86, 172, 223, 258, 306, 308, 310.
5. See, for example, Steven Stoll, *Larding the Lean Earth: Soil and Society in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002); Percy W. Bidwell, "The Agricultural Revolution in New England," *American Historical Review* 26 (July 1921): 683–702.
6. Jared Eliot, *Give Cesar his due. Or, The obligation that subjects are under to their civil rulers, as shewed in a sermon preach'd before the General Assembly of the colony of Connecticut at Hartford, May the 11th, 1738* (New London, Conn.: T. Green, 1738); see Christopher Grasso, "The Experimental Philosophy of Farming: Jared Eliot and the Cultivation of Connecticut," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 50 (July 1993): 524.
7. Eliot, *Essays*, 138, 165.
8. Jesse Buel, *The Farmer's Companion or, Essays on the Principles and Practice of American Husbandry* (Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon, and Webb, 1839), 21, quoted in Stoll, *Larding the Lean Earth*, 90.
9. Laura Wood Roper, *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 11.
10. Roper, *FLO*, 44; Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*, vol. 1, *The Formative Years: 1822–1852*, Charles Capen McLaughlin, ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 75. On Tucker, see Tunis Garret Bergen, ed., *Genealogies of the State of New York*, Long Island ed., v2 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1915), 1001–1002.
11. Alfred Charles True, *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States, 1785–1925* (New York: Arno, 1929 [1969]), 14; and True, *A History of Agricultural Experimentation and Research in the United States, 1607–1925* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937), 22–34, 41.
12. The Connecticut school was preceded by Maine's Gardiner Lyceum, established in 1821 by Congregational minister Benjamin Hale. True, *History of Agricultural Education*, 31–37.
13. Brett H. Smith, "Reversing the Curse: Agricultural Millennialism at the Illinois Industrial University," *Church History* 73 (2004): 759–91.

14. Horace White, *The Life of Lyman Trumbull* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 2–3; True, *A History of Agricultural Education*, 52, 56, 83–84, 91–94, 103.
15. Coy F. Cross, *Justin Smith Morrill: Father of the Land-Grant Colleges* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), 12–13, 77–87.
16. Roger L. Williams, *The Origins of Federal Support for Higher Education: George W. Atherton and the Land-Grant College Movement* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 57; James Powell Weeks, "George Washington Atherton and the Creation of the Hatch Act," *Pennsylvania History* 56 (October 1989): 299–317.
17. Thomas B. Osborne, *Biographical Memoir of Samuel William Johnson, 1830–1909* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1911), 205.
18. "Report of the President of Yale University for 1910," quoted in Osborne, 211.
19. Roper, *FLO*, 321.
20. L. H. Bailey, *The Holy Earth* (New York: Scribner's, 1915), 14.
21. George Perkins Marsh, *Address delivered before the Agricultural Society of Rutland County, Sept. 30, 1847* (Rutland, Vt.: Herald Office, 1848), 18–19.
22. Dwight Whitney Marsh, *Genealogy of the Marsh Family* (Amherst, Mass.: Williams, 1886); David Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 3–9, 42–43; James Russell Trumbull, *History of Northampton, Massachusetts, from its Settlement in 1654*, vol. 1 (Northampton: Gazette, 1898), 107, 147; Sylvester Judd, *History of Hadley* (Northampton: Metcalf, 1863), 19, 23, 32, 34, 211, 212.
23. Quoted in Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, 377.
24. Marsh, *Life and Letters*, 29.
25. See Marsh, *Address; and Report Made under Authority of the Legislature of Vermont, on the Artificial Propagation of Fish* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press, 1857).
26. On the New England origins of *Man and Nature*, see Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, 275–278. See also Mark Stoll, "'Sagacious' Bernard Palissy: Pinchot, Marsh, and the Connecticut Origins of Conservation," *Environmental History* 16 (January 2011): 4–37.
27. George P. Marsh, *Man and Nature: or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (New York: Scribner, 1865), 8, 35.
28. Ibid., 264.
29. T. Gregory Garvey, "The Civic Intent of George Perkins Marsh's Anthrocentric Environmentalism," *New England Quarterly* 82(1) (March 2009): 111.
30. John A. Haddock, "Dr. Franklin B. Hough," in *The Growth of a Century: As Illustrated in the History of Jefferson County, New York, from 1793 to 1894* (Philadelphia: Shermon, 1894), 324–326; Franklin B. Hough, "On the Duty of Governments in the Preservation of Forests," *Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Twenty-Second Meeting, Held at Portland, Maine, August, 1873* (Salem, Mass.: Salem Press, 1874), 1–10; Harold K. Steen, "The Beginning of the National Forest System," in Char Miller, ed., *American Forests: Nature, Culture, and Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 51–53; Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., "Franklin B. Hough: First Citizen of the Adirondacks," *Environmental Review* 7(3) (Autumn 1983): 270–274.
31. John C. Hollister, *Historical Record of the Class of 1840, Yale College* (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1897), 21–23; Char Miller, "Amateur Hour: Nathaniel H. Egleston and Professional Forestry in Post-Civil War America," *Forest History Today* (Spring/Fall 2005): 20–26. Nathaniel Hillyer Egleston, *Villages and Village Life: With Hints for their Improvement* (New York: Harper, 1878), 12. On Hough and Egleston, see also Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service: A History*, centennial ed. (Durham, N.C.: Forest History Society, 1976, 2004), 9–21.
32. See Andrew Denny Rodgers III, *Bernhard Eduard Fernow: A Story of North American Forestry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 17. No doubt a Lutheran, Fernow did have one connection to Congregationalism in that he was married to his American wife, daughter of English-born parents, in Brooklyn's Pilgrim Congregational Church by Henry Ward Beecher.
33. Olmsted, *A Few Things to be Thought of*, 139.
34. Frederick Law Olmsted, "Chicago in Distress," *Nation* (November 9, 1871), 302–305, in *Papers*, vol. 6, *Olmsted, Vaux & Company*, 483–484.
35. Olmsted, letter to Frederick J. Kingsbury, January 20, 1891, quoted in Roper, *FLO*, 416.
36. Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2001), 102.
37. Carl A. Schenck, letter to Stella Obst, 24 August 1950, quoted in Roper, *FLO*, 467.
38. Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947), 32.
39. Miller, *Gifford Pinchot*, 108–110.
40. Amos Enos House, Nomination Form; Miller, *Gifford Pinchot*, 69–70. Pinchot was raised Presbyterian.
41. Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 1–2.
42. Miller, *Gifford Pinchot*, 55.
43. Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).
44. Gifford Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1910), 133, 8, 5.
45. Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 340–44.
46. Gifford Pinchot, "The Problem," in Paul L. Vogt, ed., *The Church and Country Life* (New York: Mission Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1916), 7, 10–11. On Pinchot and the country life movement, see M. Nelson McGeary, *Gifford Pinchot, Forester, Politician* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 100–102, 243–44.
47. "Henry Solon Graves, 1871–1951," *Yale Forest School News* 39(2) (1951): 22–24. Graves's father graduated from Amherst College; his mother was from Mansfield, Massachusetts.
48. Charles S. Carter, ed., *History of the Class of '70, Department of Literature, Science and the Arts, University of Michigan* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Burdick & Allen, 1903), 261; "William B. Greeley," *Biographical Record of the Graduates and Former Students of the Yale Forest School* (New Haven: Yale Forest School, 1913), 77; David T. Mason, "In Summary from a Forester's Point of View: Pinchot, Cary, Greeley: Architects of American Forestry," *Forest History* 5 (Summer 1961): 6–8; Miller, *Gifford Pinchot*, 277–91.
49. Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 322, 323, 326; Miller, *Gifford Pinchot*, 154–55.
50. David Schuyler, *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815–1852* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 1–8.
51. Andrew Jackson Downing, "Moral Influence of Good Houses," in *Rural Essays* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1853), 211–212.
52. Downing, "Our Country Villages," in *Rural Essays*, 240n, 241.
53. Olmsted, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*, vol. 1 (New York: Putnam, 1852), 79.
54. Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and The People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 26; Gilbert H. Muller, *William Cullen Bryant: Author of America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 222.
55. Rosenzweig, and Blackmar, 20, 138.
56. Roper, *FLO*, 66–77.
57. Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *Park and The People*, 120.
58. "Park History," *Bushnell Park Foundation* <http://www.bushnellpark.org/Content/Park_History.asp> (accessed April 7, 2010).
59. Olmsted, letter to the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park, May 31, 1858, in *Papers*, vol. 3, *Creating Central Park 1857–1861*, ed. Charles E. Beveridge and David Schuyler, 196.
60. Olmsted, "Preliminary Report to the Commissioners for Laying Out a Park in Brooklyn, New York," in *Papers*, suppl. ser., vol. 1, *Writings*, 86.
61. Harriet Raymond Lloyd, *Life and Letters of John Howard Raymond* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1881), 45–46.
62. Howat, *Frederic Church*, 5–6, 172–173.
63. Elizabeth T. Kent, *William Kent, Independent: A Biography* (n.p., 1950), 7–9, 51–70, 83; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4e (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 175.
64. The two other cofounders were John C. Merriam, descended from Massachusetts Puritans on his father's side and from Scottish Presbyterians on his mother's, and raised Presbyterian; and Madison Grant, an Episcopalian with Puritan, Presbyterian, Huguenot, and Dutch Reformed but no Connecticut Congregationalist ancestors, and a graduate of Yale. Stephen R. Mark, *Preserving the Living Past: John C. Merriam's Legacy in the State and National Parks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 27–30; Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Lebanon, N. H.: University of Vermont Press, 2009), 6, 8, 134.
65. Other offspring of New England (but not of the Connecticut Valley or Congregational Church) who led fights for creation of parks include George B. Dorr (Acadia), Virginia Donaghe McClurg (Mesa Verde), and Marjorie Stoneman Douglas (Everglades).