

*The Forest History Society and Grey Towers Press recently published The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot, edited by Harold K. Steen. The following excerpt from the book brings forth Pinchot's core diary entries concerning his vision of conservation as the foundation to permanent peace. As the entries illuminate, Gifford Pinchot networked with many individuals and organizations to organize an international conference on world peace. His wife, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot was equally involved, and carried on the work by staying in touch with atomic scientists, traveling to Greece to report on the refugee problems after World War II, organizing an exhibit called "Warsaw Lives Again" for the Library of Congress, and attending the United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources.*

# CONSERVATION AS THE FOUNDATION OF PERMANENT PEACE

***"FAIR ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES FOR ALL NATIONS"***

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**I**n his autobiography, Gifford Pinchot allocated twenty-two pages to the description of four conferences: the Conference of Governors (1908), the National Conservation Commission (1909), the North American Conservation Conference (1909), and the World Conservation Conference (1909). The first three were convened

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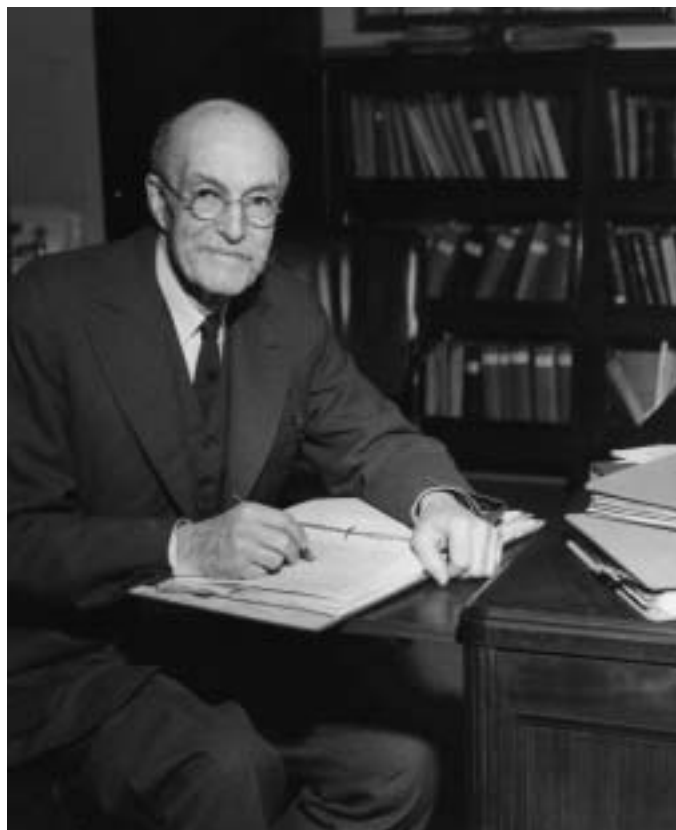
***BY GIFFORD PINCHOT AND HAROLD K. STEEN***

and produced proceedings, but the fourth was “killed” by President Taft as part of his larger attempt to rein in his chief forester.

Pinchot continued to press for a world conference and petitioned Presidents Wilson and Hoover, but to no avail. In late 1939, as World War II drew ever closer to American shores, he began again to push for a conference, this time with special emphasis on “permanent” peace. Even though direct American involvement in the war was still in the future, Pinchot wanted to get his plan to the president so that it could be worked “into the peace terms at the end of this war.”

He accepted an invitation to speak at the Eighth American Scientific Congress in May 1940, and his paper was published that August in *Nature*. The paper would go through several subsequent revisions, but the main points were firmly in place. He traced the history of his belief, beginning with the conservation philosophy of Theodore Roosevelt. With the war already upon Europe and Asia, Pinchot stated, “War is still an instrument of national policy for the safeguarding of natural resources or for securing them from other nations. Hence international co-operation in conserving, utilizing, and distributing natural resources to the mutual advantage of all nations might well remove one of the most dangerous of all obstacles to a just and permanent world peace.”

For another year, Pinchot continued to tinker with his proposal, then the diaries are fairly silent on the topic until 1945,



U.S. FOREST SERVICE PHOTO # 433352

*Gifford Pinchot wrote the bulk of Breaking New Ground during the 1940s, when he was also occupied with establishing an international conference to address conservation as a means for achieving permanent peace.*

when he worked through Franklin Roosevelt’s daughter, Anna Boettinger, and others to gain presidential attention. In August 1944 Pinchot wrote to the president, “I enclose for your consideration a suggested draft of a letter to Allied Governments proposing a Conference on the conservation of natural resources as a necessary requirement for permanent peace.” The State Department added its cautious support, concerned that it might conflict with the proposed creation of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. On March 28, 1945, Pinchot again wrote to Roosevelt that he would continue to refine his proposal for the president to review, following his return from Yalta.

FDR died on April 12, and during the funeral four days later, Pinchot discussed his peace plan with Henry Wallace, the former vice-president and former secretary of Agriculture. On May 8 President Harry Truman wrote to him, “My lamented predecessor placed great faith in your judgment and I shall like to think that I, too, can seek the counsel which you can give out of so rich and so long an experience.” On May 23 Pinchot noted in his diary, “Highly satisfactory talk with President Truman on World Conference at White House.”

When he met the president again during an FDR Memorial Committee meeting in August, which Truman chaired, Pinchot asked for two minutes to explain his views on atomic energy; could he write a proposal for the president’s consideration? Truman said that he could, that “he was thinking about that subject all the time.” To Pinchot, atomic energy was another natural resource to be



PINCHOT COLLECTION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

*Although during the 1940s Gifford Pinchot used Anna Boettinger and others to gain access to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, there were earlier times when the Pinchots and F.D.R. were close, and counted on one another to advance their platforms, as seen in this image with Cornelia taken in 1934.*

included in his broader plan for peace, and so the pertinent diary entries are included in this section.

Pinchot died October 4, 1946 without knowing whether his long-held idea would ever bear fruit. The editor of *Breaking New Ground* noted that Truman sent Pinchot's plan to the UN Economic and Social Council, and it was accepted and placed on the 1948 agenda. M. Nelson McGeary, Pinchot's chief biographer, states that the 1949 United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources was the official result.

It is fascinating to read Pinchot's diaries and watch him as he writes *Breaking New Ground* at the same time he is developing support for the world conference. In the autobiography he goes so far as to speak directly to his readers and explain that for the conference he is suspending the book's 1910 cutoff and will bring the reader up-to-date, that is, to the 1940s, when he is writing. He even quotes in full two letters by President Franklin Roosevelt. This blatant present-mindedness may be a bit of a jolt to the historical purist, but along the way Pinchot bent many conventions, some major and some minor, and the reasonable among us will agree that the world is better off for his pragmatism.

### 1939

**11/12 Washington** ...Dol, Earle Clapp, & Dick Basset, & their wives to lunch. Told Clapp about plan for world agreement in natural resources as part of peace...Will take peace plan to F.D.R..<sup>1</sup>

**11/13 Washington** I think this was the day I saw Henry Wallace, told him in confidence about plan for conservation & peace. He said Franklin most anxious to be known as peace maker in this war. He thought well of my taking it to Franklin.<sup>2</sup>

**11/18 Washington** ...Talk with Graves about Conservation & Peace plan. He is strong for it. Also with Dol in p.m.<sup>3</sup>

**11/20 Washington** Graves, Dol & I spent the morning working over plan for F.D.R. to work conservation & fair access to natural resources for all nations into the peace terms at end of this war. Harry read us a superb memo that set the whole thing in train. C.B.P. & Dol had urged us to get at it.<sup>4</sup>

### 1940

**4/27 Washington** ...Invited to speak at Pan American Science Congress.

**5/6 Washington** ...Finished speech on conservation as foundation for permanent peace for American Science Congress.

**5/11 Washington** Spoke before 8th American Science Congress section of Agriculture & Conservation—about 140 present—on Conservation as the Foundation of Permanent Peace. Good talk, I think, but not especially well received. With Dr. Shantz will try for resolution. at Friday session of section.<sup>5</sup>

**5/14 Washington** Wrote resolution for Inter American Congress on conservation to advance permanent peace.

**5/15 Washington** ...p.m. called Holt. He said resolution approved by Resolution Committee & now before Section. Called Shantz [sic] & he went at once to meeting. Reported in a few minutes resolution. Passed with addition referring to Pan American Union. No opposition. Dinner at Henry Wallaces. Showed him resolution. Also Grady, assistant secretary of state, who seemed favorable.

### 1941

**2/25 Washington** ...at Department. Harry Graves came in & we talked Pan American Conservation Committee. He advised conservation inventory of what each nation needs, not only of what it has. Good sense.

**2/26 Washington** Saw Hull a.m. & outlined Inter-American conservation plan. He approved vigorously. Left resolution & description with him. He seemed old. Met Berle. He seemed to approve.<sup>6</sup>

### 1945

**1/17 Washington** ...Memo from Franklin enclosing Stettinus [sic] suggestion for area conferences instead of International Conference on Conservation.<sup>7</sup>

**1/19 Washington** Buffet luncheon at the White House. Roosevelt to take up proposed International Conservation Conference with Churchill and Stalin.<sup>8</sup>

**1/20 Washington** To F.D.R.'s Inauguration with C.B.P. We stood in the snow on the South Lawn to hear him speak from South Porch of White House. Afterwards finished draft of letter for F.D.R. for 40th birthday of Forest Service. On C.B.P.'s suggestion, will enclose copy of letter to Franklin to Mrs. Boettinger.<sup>9</sup>

**1/21 Washington** On C.B.P.'s suggestion, enclosed copy of letter to Franklin and draft for Forest Service to Mrs. Boettinger, and Mrs. Mather delivered letters to Franklin and Mrs. Boettinger at White House Sunday afternoon. About 6:30 Mrs. Boettinger called up to say that she had read parts of my letter to the president and he suggested that I prepare an outline for the international conference, to reach him not later than 4 o'clock Monday afternoon.<sup>10</sup>

**1/22 Washington** Worked on short statement for F.D.R. on International Conservation Conference. Talks with Lorwin, Wetmore, Zon & C.B.P. Statement delivered to White House by Mrs. Mather at 10 minutes to 4. Immediately afterwards Miss Tully telephoned to say that Franklin would send letter to Forest Service and authorized me to see government experts in preparing longer statement during his absence. That was fine! Quite fine!<sup>11</sup>

**1/24 Washington** Henry Field came at 10:30 to talk plans for the conference. To Soil Conservation Service in afternoon—to see Bennett on getting data together for conference.<sup>12</sup>

**1/26 Washington** To the office. Talk with Watts about International Conference. Saw Wheeler of R.E.A. who agreed to prepare material promptly.<sup>13</sup>

**2/5 Washington** ...Henry Field brought Oscar Cox in to talk about the conservation conference. He will prepare an outline for the meeting. Very satisfactory talk.<sup>14</sup>

**2/8 Washington** Amos Taylor for lunch. Good talk about the proposed conference. He will send some material.<sup>15</sup>

**2/10 Washington** To see Finch at the Carnegie Endowment for material for the conservation conference. Didn't get much.<sup>16</sup>

**2/12 Washington** Conference work in the morning. Book and conference in the afternoon. Talk with Zimmerman of the Soil Conservation Service who brought material for conference prepared there. As I pointed out they had left all consideration of permanent peace out of the picture.

**2/14 Washington** Busy day. Work on conference. Nearly two-hour talk with O.C. Merrill in the morning about place of power





*Pinchot meets with Forest Service chief Lyle Watts, on the eve of the agency's 40th anniversary to look over war products developed by the Forest Products Laboratory.*

in the plan. Then with Mrs. Burns, formerly of the Natural Resources Planning Board. Good talk with Morris Cooke at 3. Monroe Smith at 4, and I went to see Miss Janet Richards afterward. Good & tired.<sup>17</sup>

**2/17 Washington** To the office...Dr. Gerayd Johnson, of Columbia University, whose name was suggested by Bruce Bliven, came in to talk about Conservation as a Basis of Permanent Peace, and very kindly agreed to dig up some examples of war caused by the lack of natural resources.<sup>18</sup>

**2/18 Washington** C.B.P. and I to see Felix Frankfurter and tell him about proposed international conference, over which he showed great enthusiasm.<sup>19</sup>

**2/22 Washington** Work on the conference all day. In the morning talk with Amos E. Taylor, who submitted a statement, and in the afternoon with Dr. Langer who agreed to supply historical data on natural resources as causes of war. So far I have not struck anybody who was not enthusiastic over the conference plan.<sup>20</sup>

**2/23 Washington** Working on conference in the morning. Lunch with Lorwin at the Cosmos Club and long talk about the conference. I left him a big envelope full of papers to go over. He sees clearly the very great danger of stepping on the toes of other existing organizations.

**3/16 Washington** Met Wickard at 10 o'clock in his office, with Watt[s], Tolley, and Wheeler. Wickard had understood from F.D.R. that the proposed World Conference would deal only with forestry and was obviously afraid it would interfere with the plans of the Food and Agriculture Administration. After I explained the situation Wickard agreed and repeated several times that there was no conflict. After lunch, Hassett, secretary to the president, called me up and said the president wanted to see me and that he would arrange for a time early in the coming week and let me know.<sup>21</sup>

**3/27 Washington** Hassett phoned from White House that the president wants to see a copy of the plan.

**3/28 Washington** Completed the plan, with a few very small changes and Leila & I, with little Jimmy took it down to the White House.<sup>22</sup>

**4/10 Washington** Henry Field came to talk about World Conference. Sent letters to F.D.R. and Miss Tully to White House, about Conservation as a Basis of Permanent Peace.

**4/12 Washington** ...Late this afternoon, C.B. called me. At first I couldn't understand what she said. Then came the dreadful news of the president's death. At first I didn't believe it. But it was true.

**4/14 Washington** The president's casket on a caisson drawn by 6 white horses was accompanied on the station at 10 a.m. by battalions of blue jackets, field artillery, air forces, women's auxiliary forces, and the streets lined with a saddened people. The funeral service was at 4 in the East Room of the White House. Talked with Henry Wallace about plan.

**4/16 Washington** Truman made admirable address to Congress. Wrote to Mrs. Boettinger and saw Charlie Taft who disagreed about natural resources being the principal cause of war but he was strong for a World Conference just the same.<sup>23</sup>

**4/19 Washington** ...Stettinius called about 4:30 to talk about proposed World Conference. He is for it on basis of conservation and said repeatedly he was heartily for it as a step toward permanent peace. That is a great surprise, and a great satisfaction. There is nothing to be done at San Francisco [formation of United Nations], but whole question will come up when first meeting of new world organization takes place. He said the American delegation would back it. Stettinius has whole correspondence with F.D.R. and copy of my completed plan.

**5/23 Washington** Highly satisfactory talk with President Truman on World Conference at White House.

**8/6 Milford** ...Atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima today.

**8/20 Milford** ...Wrote scratch of possible newspaper release on atomic bomb, and its future control.

**9/5 Washington** Meeting F.D.R. Memorial Committee in White House, Truman presiding. I asked for 2 minutes talk after meeting. Truman said I could see him whenever I wanted to. Authorized me to see Wallace & Anderson at his request on international conservation conference. Said I could get help from government officials as F.D. had authorized. I said I would give him outline of proposed conference by December 15. Truman said OK. He might want to mention it in his message to Congress. I said I would write him a letter about atomic power. Would he be sure to see it? Truman said he would. Truman said he was thinking about that subject all the time. Very satisfactory talk.<sup>24</sup>

**9/12 Washington** With C.B. saw Henry Wallace about World Conservation Conference. For it, of course, but at first didn't see where Department of Commerce came in. I said atomic power must be considered. He agreed. Suggested I see Amos Taylor.

At 3 p.m. saw Secretary Anderson. Enthusiastic for conference.

**9/15 Washington** Good talk with Senator McMahon on atom. Showed him draft letter to Truman & letter to newspapers. He strongly approved. Suggested change in his bill as in letter to Truman. He approved. Work on letters all day. Finished Truman letter & signed it.<sup>25</sup>



FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY PHOTO COLLECTION

*Pinchot was at his home in Milford, Pennsylvania when he received news that the United States dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima.*



CORNELIA BRYCE PINCHOT PAPERS, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

*Cornelia Bryce Pinchot actively used her influence to bring together politicians, scientists, humanitarians and others.*

**9/17 Milford** Material for letter to newspaper editors on atomic power taken to duplicating company today. Stationery will be printed this week, and letter gotten out next week. To be put in mail in four groups, October 2 for Rocky Mountain states, October 4 for southern and prairie states west of Mississippi, October 5, states west of Alleghenies, October 6, New England states. To be printed [by newspapers] not before morning of October 8.

**9/20 Milford** Received letter from Truman that there will be no monopoly control of atomic energy, and that when his program is finally outlined, I will be "entirely satisfied with it," and that he is "more than happy" to have my views on it.

**10/12 Milford** Talk with C.B. about atomic bomb. She wants to do more about it. We heard Gram Swing on radio on that subject.<sup>26</sup>

**10/20 Washington** C.B.P. suddenly invited to New York to meet with atomic scientists—afternoon, dinner, and evening. To return by plane tonight—but to meet again every other Saturday. An interesting opportunity.

**10/23 Washington** Several atomic scientists here for lunch—Dr. Farmer of Tennessee and others.

**10/31 Washington**... Evening with C.B. to Cooperative Forum. Heard Dr. Urey on the atomic bomb. Most interesting.<sup>27</sup>

**11/3 Washington** ...a dinner to atomic scientists with Drs. Present, Bruce, English, Szilard, Coudan, Kaplan, *et al.*, at which were present Senators Hill & Morse, Will Clayton, and a number of ladies. Most interesting talks by the scientists. I urged Coudan & Kaplan to send a telegram to the president telling who they are and why they want to see him. And do it before Attlee lands in America. Got to bed at 1 a.m.<sup>28</sup>

**11/11 Washington** Took things easy while C.B.P. telephoned all day invitations to various people for the atomic dinner tonight. About 30 people came, including Senators Downey and McMahon with Congressman Kefauver, Patterson, and Clare Booth Luce. 8 or 10 atomists came: Borst, Coudan, Present, Szilard, Rush and a number of others.<sup>29</sup>

**11/26 Washington** Mail and work on World Conference. Saw Henry Wallace in the morning, who thought there was no hurry in turning material in to Truman on account of Ickes...Talked with atomists. They will take up letter for C.B. from Urey and statement of what they want her to do in Paris.<sup>30</sup>

**11/27 Washington** Harry Slattery to lunch. He made some good suggestions about the world conference.<sup>31</sup>

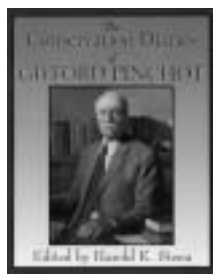
**12/13 Washington** ...Saw Truman at 10:45 and submitted plan for World Conference on Conservation. He spoke highly of the plan but made no final decision saying he would submit my papers to "some of my intimates." I am very hopeful.

1946

**2/10 Washington** ...Afternoon: tea party for atomic scientists, and others. The atomists came about 5 and stayed believe it or not until 9:30 talking to C.B.P. I went in only for half an hour.

**2/25 Washington** Oscar Chapman and Beany [sic] Baldwin to lunch. Long talk with Oscar about the World Conservation Conference in which he is deeply interested and which is now in his hands. I do hope he gets promoted to full secretary.<sup>32</sup> □

*Harold K. Steen retired as President of the Forest History Society in 1997 and is now a senior fellow for the Pinchot Institute of Conservation.*



*The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot*, Edited by Harold K. Steen is available from the Forest History Society, \$29.95 cloth, 230 pages, ISBN 0-89030-059-3; or \$19.95 paper, ISBN 0-89030-060-7, plus \$4 shipping and handling, 701 Vickers Ave., Durham, NC 27701 or call with credit card orders at (919) 682-9319. Orders can also be made through Island Press at [www.islandpress.org](http://www.islandpress.org).

#### INDEX OF NAMES (ADAPTED BY CAROL SEVERANCE)

1. Dol is Herbert A. Smith, a Yale classmate and best friend of Pinchot; head of editorial and publication programs for the U.S. Forest Service. Earl H. Clapp served as associate chief, and then acting chief U.S. Forest Service (1939–1943). F.D.R. is Franklin Delano Roosevelt, U.S. president. (Pinchot also refers to him as Franklin in the diaries.)
2. Henry A. Wallace was the secretary of Agriculture (1933–1940); U.S. vice-president (1941–1945); secretary of Commerce (1945–1948).
3. Henry S. Graves, a Yale classmate and friend who served as dean of the Yale Forest School and chief of the U.S. Forest Service (1910–1920).
4. C.B.P. also called "C.B." and "Leila" is Cornelia Bryce Pinchot, Gifford's wife.
5. H. L. Schantz, Division of Wildlife Management, U.S. Forest Service.
6. Cordell Hull, secretary of State (1933–1944); winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, 1945. Adolf A. Berle, Jr., assistant secretary of State for Latin American Affairs (1938–1944); ambassador to Brazil (1945–1946).
7. Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., secretary of State (1944–1945); U.S. Representative to the United Nations (1945–1946).
8. The three leaders met at the Yalta Conference, February 4–11, 1945.
9. Anna Boettinger, Franklin D. Roosevelt's daughter.
10. Elizabeth Mather, Pinchot's secretary and aide.
11. Lewis L. Lorwin, Foreign Economic Administration. Alexander Wetmore, assistant secretary of the U.S. National Museum (1925–1945); promoted to secretary of the Smithsonian Institution (1945–1952). Raphael Zon, scientist, U.S. Forest Service. Grace Tully, President Roosevelt's secretary.
12. Henry Field, anthropologist and personal advisor to F.D.R.; director of the "M" project. Hugh Bennett, chief, Soil Conservation Service.

13. Lyle F. Watts served as chief, U.S. Forest Service (1943–1952). Joseph C. Wheeler worked for the Rural Electrification Administration.
14. Oscar Cox served as the assistant solicitor general in Roosevelt's cabinet.
15. Amos E. Taylor, economist, Economic Foreign Policy Bureau, Department of Commerce.
16. George A. Finch, head of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
17. Oscar C. Merrill, an engineer and power specialist. Eveline Burns, past chairman of the Natural Resources Planning Board. Morris L. Cooke, an electric power engineer.
18. Bruce Bliven, a liberal progressive, served as editor of the *New Republic* from 1930–1955.
19. Felix Frankfurter, justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1939–1962).
20. Dr. William L. Langer, scholar-historian who taught at Harvard, and served as deputy chief and chief of the Research and Analysis Division, Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Truman awarded him a Medal of Merit in 1945.
21. Claude R. Wickard, secretary of Agriculture (1940–1945). Howard R. Tolley, United Nations Interim Commission on Food and Agriculture.
22. Little Jimmy is Gifford Pinchot's nephew, James Pinchot Gaston.
23. Charles Phelps Taft II, attorney; son of president William Howard Taft.
24. Clinton P. Anderson, U. S. Congressman representing New Mexico (1941–1945); secretary of Agriculture (1945–1948).
25. Senator Brien McMahon, from Connecticut served on the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.
26. Raymond Gram Swing, news reporter and influential radio commentator.
27. Harold Clayton Urey, a geochemist, received the Nobel prize for chemistry in 1934, and served as director of War Research, Atomic Bomb Project, Columbia University (1940–1945).
28. Leo Szilard, a physicist and molecular biologist worked in the Manhattan Project's Metallurgical Laboratory in Chicago. He also worked diligently to persuade President Truman that dropping an atomic bomb on Japan would lead to an arms race with Russia, and in July, 1945 penned a petition, signed by fellow scientists, asking the president "to rule that the United States shall not, in the present phase of war resort to the use of atomic bombs." Irving Kaplan worked as a physicist on the Manhattan Project, in the Division of War Research at Columbia. William L. Clayton, assistant secretary of State, served on the interim committee to study post-war control and development of atomic energy. Clement Attlee, Prime Minister of Great Britain.
29. Sheridan Downey, U.S. Senator from California; Estes C. Kefauver, U.S. Representative from Tennessee; Ellis E. Patterson, U.S. Representative from California; Clare Booth Luce, U.S. Representative from Connecticut.
30. Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior.
31. Harry A. Slattery, a longtime acquaintance of Pinchot's served as special assistant to Harold Ickes, undersecretary for the Department of the Interior, and administrator, Rural Electrification Administration (1939–1944).
32. Oscar L. Chapman served as assistant secretary (1933–1946), under secretary (1946–1949), and secretary of the Interior (1949–1953). Calvin Benham "Beanie" Baldwin served as the assistant to Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, and as the head of the Farm Security Administration (1940–1943). When Pinchot penned this entry, Baldwin was the executive vice-chairman for the National Citizens Political Action Committee.