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Gifford Pinchot's Photographic Aesthetic

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GIFFORD PINCHOT’S PHOTOGRAPHIC AESTHETIC

By
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Gifford Pinchot’s Photographic Aesthetic

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Gifford Pinchot’s aesthetic developed in childhood and combined the pictorial considerations of the Hudson River School with the use philosophy of early landscape architecture and the format of early western survey photographers. Pinchot and photography came of age during the American industrial revolution; at a time when medium and man seemed to encompass both art and science. Gifford Pinchot used photography to ask the questions what is the proper course? what is the appropriate plan of use?
In May of 2006 I was hired as the USFS Region One Archivist. I am greatly indebted to everyone at Public and Governmental Relations for their support, especially Partnership & Special Programs Coordinator Steve Kratville. From the start of this project USFS Historian Aaron Shapiro assisted me in locating photograph collections and provided valuable insight on the history of the USFS. My research would not have been possible without the help of the Marsh Billings Rockefeller National Historic Park (MBR) and Grey Towers National Historic Landmark (GTNHL). I want to thank Christina Martz, Resource Manager, MBR; Lori McKean, Assistant Director for Programs and Communication, GTNHL and Rebecca Philpot, Museum Specialist, GTNHL.

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INTRODUCTION

“‘But who shall describe the sequoias?’”

On May 4 1891, Gifford Pinchot visited Colony, California to view the “giant forest” of sequoias.¹ He had gone out West to survey the land for economic opportunities for the Phelps Dodge Company, a corporation owned by extended family on his mother’s side.² He wrote in his diary of a timber so magnificent he could scarcely describe it. He was not only captivated by the size of the sequoias, but also by their beauty. In his praise of the tree’s form, Pinchot used a vocabulary primarily established for the evaluation of art. Pinchot wrote of “the perfect shape, the massive columns, but above all the marvelous coloring of the bark.”³ These observations were not about the timber’s economic potential nor did they include technical jargon or mathematical notations regarding the trees. What he offered instead was an immediate, aesthetic response to nature, one that was developed in childhood.

From an early age, Gifford Pinchot understood the power of imagery, whether it was a painting or a photograph (Figure. 1). As a member of an established East Coast family, Pinchot was privy to modern scientific and artistic debates. His parents were active participants in the formation of his character; instilling a sense of civic obligation and morality in him at a young age. They provided him with guidance, political and social contacts, financial independence, and an appreciation for and understanding of art.⁴

³ Harold K. Steen, ed. The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot, 44.
His parents supported numerous contemporary American landscape artists including Sanford Gifford, for whom Pinchot was named.  

Gifford Pinchot grew up in a time when the East became aware of the West as never before. Western survey photographers like Carlton E. Watkins, Timothy O’Sullivan and William Henry Jackson used photographic imagery to present the West as a grandiose, pristine landscape devoid of humanity. Pinchot’s early photographic projects sought to negate the myth of a wild uninhabitable West by asserting the importance and necessity of man’s place in the management of the landscape. With the exception of Weed, Pinchot’s aesthetic developed as a reaction against the artistic choices of these early survey photographers.

Charles Leander Weed’s photographs of Yosemite are pictorial representations of man in nature. Weed’s images often included human subjects for scale. His photographs recorded factual details of the landscape as opposed to capturing the essence or ephemeral qualities of a scene. Weed, like Pinchot, seems to have had both aesthetic and scientific considerations for his photographs. Both men understood the importance of being able to establish an image’s authenticity. Pinchot capitalized on the public’s perception of photography and used the medium to help make the case for professional forestry in the America.

Contemporary landscape architecture also had a crucial effect on the development of Pinchot’s aesthetic. George W. Vanderbilt introduced Pinchot to the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and Pinchot’s parents hired the renowned architect

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6 Harry Hopkins, *Spending to Save* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1936) IX.
Richard Morris Hunt to design their country estate in Milford, Pennsylvania.\(^7\) Hunt and Olmsted’s beautifully planned and controlled environments provided a basis from which Pinchot’s own aesthetic developed.

Moreover, Pinchot’s place in the exclusive world of elite East Coast society allowed him to form personal relationships with some of the most influential and wealthy patrons of the time. The world of wealth and privilege that surrounded Pinchot offered him an exclusive opportunity to use his social status and family fortune for the benefit of the greater good. It’s likely that Pinchot was first exposed to the art of public relations and its handmaiden photography, through one of his or his family’s acquaintances in business or politics. Theodore Roosevelt wrote that he and Pinchot were men of similar purpose and background.\(^8\) Their shared belief in conservation and landscape management produced a unified vision of resource management in America. Like Roosevelt, Pinchot understood that powerful imagery could influence the public’s perception of a cause or a candidate. Pinchot learned early on that the only way to control the imagery was to produce it himself.

The Pinchot family and their patronage of traditional artistic mediums, like painting, shaped Gifford’s aesthetic. As a young forester, Gifford Pinchot needed a new medium with democratic appeal, something that could convince both the large pocketbooks in Washington and the residents of the forests. His choice of photography, a new and seemingly commercial medium, was risky. Critics in both the arts and sciences were troubled by the medium’s inherent contradictions, “what part is man and what


machine? what part is science and what art?”⁹ Despite the ongoing debate among scholars, the public interpreted the photograph as an immediate, faithful record.

Pinchot epitomized the spirit of American potential and possibility in the late nineteenth century. He capitalized on the idea that the United States was not merely a new world but an entirely different kind of world.¹⁰ He had been in Chicago in 1893 when Frederick Jackson Turner read his famous address on the closure of the West at the World’s Columbian Exposition.¹¹ The “West” Turner spoke of did not exist on any map. It was, rather, a philosophical meeting ground. Turner’s West resulted out of a need for definition and distinction, a desire to determine who we were and who we were not; it was an invisible line between civilization and savagery.

Despite its ‘closure’, the West continued to thrive in myths and legends and gave inspiration to countless works of art and literature. The unknown rough-and-tumble landscape was no more; in its place stood small towns, large farms and vast tracks of land controlled by the government. As an agent of the government, Pinchot collected and took photographs. He used these photographs to convince the politicians that the western landscape could be made economically viable through forestry. Pinchot’s use of photography reveals his sophisticated understanding of the ability to blur the line between photography as evidence and photography as propaganda. At Pinchot’s first public

exhibit in the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, he presented photographs that illustrated a new possibility, a plan using aesthetics to emphasize economic potential. Pinchot emerged at the turn of the century as the quintessential modernist, part forester, part politician and part artist.

THE COURSE OF THE EMPIRE

Frederick Jackson Turner wrote that the idea of the perpetual westward movement away from one’s roots was a uniquely American concept. The Pinchot family’s arrival in the United States was the result of just such a movement. The paternal line of the Pinchot family originated in Breteull, France, where they ran a profitable dry goods business. Pinchot’s great-grandfather Constantien Pinchot and his grandfather, Cyril Pinchot were ardent supporters of Napoleon Bonaparte and fought with him at Waterloo. In March of 1816, after Napoleon’s defeat, sixteen-year-old Cyril and the rest of the Pinchot family fled west to the United States to escape the Bourbons. They did not leave France empty handed; they acquired a ship and took the majority of their business inventory with them. Upon arrival in their new homeland, the Pinchots set out to reestablish themselves as sturdy American republicans.

America’s first industrial revolution was underway in 1819 when Constantien purchased four hundred acres of land outside Milford, Pennsylvania. By 1826, the

15 Char Miller, “All in the Family: The Pinchots of Milford.” 118.
Pinchots had become the biggest landowners in the county. They stripped the hills surrounding Milford of trees and floated the logs down the Delaware River. The profits were used to buy more land whereupon they repeated the process. They gave no thought to replanting or “managing” the land. The money they made came at a cost; the wilderness that had once surrounded their home was gone, destroyed by an unregulated timber industry. It is important to note the irony between the origins of the Pinchot family fortune and Gifford’s future philosophy of conservation. Gifford was able to pursue the profession of forestry and to support causes like conservation because of the vast sums of money his family made by clearing the land.

Gifford Pinchot’s father, James, was raised on the ax-ravaged hills of Milford and in the comfort of a New York City townhouse. Born in 1831, James became a successful executive and at the age of twenty-five a partner in a Wall Street firm that specialized in importing wallpaper. He was so successful that in 1875, at the age of forty-four, he was able to retire. James wanted to use his wealth and status to establish himself as a cultured gentleman of means.

Gifford’s aesthetic development benefited enormously from his father’s retirement and the circle of artistic personalities and philanthropic causes that James pursued. James was an avid collector of American landscape art, especially the second generation of painters affiliated with the Hudson River School. He bought paintings by Eastman Johnson, Jervis McEntee, John Ferguson Weir and Thomas Worthington

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17 Ibid., 22.
19 Char Miller, “All in the Family: The Pinchots of Milford.” 122.
20 Preservation Design Group, 1.
21 Ibid., 10.
Whittredge. The more money he made, the more art he bought, lending pieces to museums in the United States and in Europe. He was more than a client; to the artists he patronized he was a “friend and lover of the fine arts.” James’s friendships introduced Gifford to the Hudson River School aesthetic.

James’s friendship with Hudson River School artists such as John Ferguson Weir was based upon a shared appreciation for and understanding of complex environmental transformations. Weir’s paintings lamented man’s irresponsible use of resources. He illustrated the landscape as a harmonious “Garden of Eden” and Americans as active participants in its defilement. In other paintings, Weir illustrated man’s responsible use of machines to extract resources effectively from the landscape. In the painting titled *Forging the Shaft*, Weir depicts man as the machine, using heat to shape the raw material into a resource (Figure. 2). Weir’s paintings advocated a policy of use not abuse by illustrating both the repercussions and the benefits of choices to both man and the landscape.

The duality of Weir’s imagery would have undoubtedly had an effect on Gifford. Gifford knew Weir though his father and later as a student at Yale where Weir was a Professor of Art. Unlike other Hudson River School artists that illustrated only the inevitable destruction of nature, Weir used the canvas to pose the problem and to offer a solution. In viewing Pinchot’s own photographs, the pictorial evidence suggests that

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23 Char Miller, “All in the Family: The Pinchots of Milford.” 133.
26 Ibid., 27.
27 Ibid., 108.
Weir’s use of multiple images in concert with one another, each illustrating a different outcome or effect influenced Pinchot’s own developing photographic aesthetic.

Gifford was made aware of the importance of visual culture through his father’s numerous accolades and associations. In retirement, James Pinchot successfully cultivated a life that included all the necessary causes and important cultural institutions of the time. He was named a Fellow for Life to the National Academy of Design. He was an early subscriber to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. He took an active role in the establishment and funding of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. James also served on and was an important contributor to the pedestal committee for Statue of Liberty.

Between philanthropic engagements, James Pinchot frequently traveled to Europe. His trips through Germany, England, and France had a profound effect on his family’s life. While in Europe, he became convinced that there was a way to heal and bring order to the eroded and irregular terrain of the American landscape. James was impressed by the tidiness of the French landscape and their use philosophy. The French utilized the landscape for maximum economic and aesthetic benefit. He thought that if Europe had embraced industrialization and sustained its forests, so too could America. James sought out and befriended individuals like architect Richard Morris Hunt and

31 Char Miller, “All in the Family: The Pinchots of Milford,” 133.
32 Joseph A. Arnold, 495.
33 Ibid., 496.
34 Ibid., 495.
landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted who shared the belief that by improving the landscape one could improve the quality of life lived there.

The quality of James Pinchot’s financial life improved substantially in 1864 when he married Mary Eno. In 1838, Mary Eno was born in New York City. Her father, Amos Eno, was a wealthy merchant and land speculator. The Eno family had come to the United States a full two hundred years before the Pinchots. They arrived in the early 1600s and established a plantation in Simsbury, Connecticut where they cleared forests to farm. The marriage between Eno and Pinchot provided James access into the world of elite eastern society and exposed him to its cultural concerns and institutions. Mary’s family’s name, old money and social status combined with his “new money” to grant them entrance and acceptance to the uppermost circles of society.

Amos Eno was an established patron and member of many of the same cultural institutions as James Pinchot. Amos collected American landscape art but unlike his son-in-law James, he had no desire to acquaint himself with the artists personally. The evidence suggests then, that Gifford was presented with two views on the role of the artist. The relationship between Gifford’s maternal grandparents, Amos Eno and Lucy Phelps and the artist was regarded strictly as a business transaction, whereas his father, James, was personally acquainted with numerous artists long before he could afford to purchase works of art.

40 Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*, 49.
In 1850, Amos Eno purchased the Luman Reed home in New York City.\textsuperscript{41} The home initially appealed to the Enos because it had an art gallery.\textsuperscript{42} Reed had been the original patron of Thomas Cole’s\textit{ Course of the Empire} series and his paintings were still installed in the Reed home when the Enos purchased the property.\textsuperscript{43} The series was comprised of five paintings entitled\textit{ The Savage State, The Arcadian or The Pastoral State, The Consummation, Destruction} and\textit{ Desolation}.\textsuperscript{44} The ominous series depicted the cycle of the American empire from creation to decay.

Cole’s series\textit{ Course of the Empire} illustrates the environmental and social costs borne as a result of defiling the landscape in order to build a new empire.\textsuperscript{45} The paintings contain allegorical references to the contemporary struggle between humanity’s quest to civilize the land and the power of nature to resist such efforts.\textsuperscript{46} Mary Eno was twelve years old when her family purchased the Reed home and Cole’s paintings. Eight years later in 1858, the Eno family sold the\textit{ Course of the Empire} series to the New York Historical Society.\textsuperscript{47} Mary Eno’s early exposure to the work and ideas of the Hudson River School, her knowledge of the art world and large dowry complemented James Pinchot’s close relationship to second-generation Hudson River School artists like

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\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 49.
\textsuperscript{46} Char Miller, \textit{Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism}, 49.
\end{flushright}
Eastman Johnson. The union allowed the newlyweds to develop not just friendship with artists but a private collection of their works.

The Pinchots wealth allowed Mary to provide Gifford, his brother Amos and sister Antionette with cultural experiences abroad. For several years Mary and the children spent their summer holidays in England or France while James Pinchot remained in New York City. While in Europe, Mary expressed an interest not in the painted landscapes hanging on museum walls but in the literal landscape outside her door. She was impressed by man’s ability to create and control the landscape in the real world more so than in a painting. On a trip to England with the children she wrote in admiration of the well-kept lawns and hedges of the countryside that, “the hand of man gives charm to even the most beautiful of nature’s works.” Mary’s praise for the meticulously kept landscapes of England would have illustrated to Gifford that nature, even in its most pristine state, could be bettered or perfected by man.

In 1871, James commissioned a portrait of Mary, Gifford, and Antoinette from the noted French artist Alexandre Cabanel (Figure. 3). That summer family went to France for sitting. James purchased the painting and its gold-leaf frame with twelve thousand pieces of gold. In the painting, the family is dressed in costumes and posed as French aristocrats of the late middle ages or early renaissance. The painting alluded to their desire to be seen as American aristocrats with European ancestry. To James Pinchot, how his family was represented in art was as important as the art in his collection. In light

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48 Preservation Design Group, 10.
49 McGeary 9
50 Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*, 50.
51 Ibid., 58.
53 Ibid. In 1871 James Pinchot’s twelve thousand pieces of gold was the equivalent of about $19,000.
of this, Gifford learned at a young age, that art, specifically painting, could be used to portray an attitude or idea. The image was important and it was important to have powerful imagery.

Gifford Pinchot’s aesthetic was influenced by the art his parents collected and the art their dealer, Samual Avery, promoted. Avery was a well established and sought after dealer based in New York City. His most notable clients were Isabella Stewart Gardner of Boston, Massachusetts and William H. Vanderbilt, Gifford’s future employer. From 1876 to 1893 artists, critics, collectors and dealers like Avery interpreted their professions not merely as a business, but as an activity with significant moral and social purpose. The services provided by Avery legitimized and gave credence to the emerging American Art scene.

The Pinchots too, valued the American artist’s ability to interpret the landscape. In the mid-nineteenth century, the term “landscape” became less about a location’s actual geographical traits, and more about a specific artist’s personal interpretation of the land.

In order to better understand a particular interpretation, one had to know the biases of the interpreter, be he an artist, philosopher, poet or writer. The Pinchot’s were in a position to understand that interpretation as evident by their friendship to several Hudson River School artists including painter Thomas Worthington Whittredge. It’s possible that the importance Gifford’s parents placed on understanding the artist as an individual and their work as a personal interpretation led Gifford to believe that the validity of the work was

54 Char Miller, Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism, 109.
56 Robert L. McGrath, 1.
57 Ibid., 35.
58 Char Miller, “All in the Family: The Pinchots of Milford.” 135.
tied directly to his relationship with the artist. If Gifford knew the artists as a truthful and honest person then so to must be his work. The interpretation of and search for truth in art shaped Gifford’s photographic aesthetic.

Gifford Pinchot’s aesthetic was influenced by depictions of landscapes and by his actual experiences in them. The landscape wasn’t just something to hang on the wall, it was a physical location and to the Pinchot family, a refuge. Industrialization had expanded rapidly, increasing congestion and breaking down the distinctions between commercial and metropolitan areas. Elites like the Pinchots began to retreat from the city in the woods.\textsuperscript{59} Paintings portrayed the forest and the garden as an oasis away from the urban masses. Excursions to places like the Adirondacks were not a luxury, but a necessary enrichment of one’s life. As Gifford grew up he was sent out into the woods to become a man. In a culture increasingly focused on masculinity, manhood was synonymous with knowing and understanding the land not just through books but with tangible experiences.\textsuperscript{60}

Gifford’s aesthetic also developed from the larger philosophical issues and moral debates of the time. Artists and writers like Cole and Whittredge used both painting and literature to address and debate these issues publicly. In the late 1850s, the relationship between the client and the artist also began to change. Artist and literary critic Jasper Francis Cropsey wrote of the desire by both creator and commissioner to document the wild and picturesque haunts of the United States before they disappeared.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 16.  
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 65.  
“high and sacred mission” of the American painter. Their shared desire to depict the sentimental American landscape in paintings however, did not result in a singular interpretation. In many cases, artists drew upon the landscapes of their childhood long since altered by the needs of a growing civilization. Patrons interpreted these scenes with a sense of nostalgia for a bygone era; they looked upon the lone cabin in the forest not as someone’s home, but as reference to a way of life other than their own.

Cropsley and other critics believed that if the American landscape lost its wild character, then the American public stood to lose its unique identity. He wrote of sheltered lakes and secluded forests that had been laid bare, of shaggy pines and hemlock shorn of their locks; the wilderness that remained was “left to blister in cold nakedness.” Hence, the wilderness depicted by countless romantic artists was not simply a piece of inspired scenery: the blistering trees were not just allegorical but a new reality which they themselves were witnessing.

The reality to which Cropsley was witness had long since passed by the time Gifford Pinchot came of age, but the method by which Cropsley interpreted that reality had a lasting effect on Gifford’s photographic aesthetic. When Cropsley’s painting Autumn on the Hudson was first exhibited in New York City he displayed leaves collected from his home next to the painting. Cropsley wanted to assure the viewer that the colors he had painted weren’t imagined or artificial. To Cropsley the authenticity of his work was of the utmost importance. His need for truth, or the perception of it,

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62 Ibid., 239.
63 Barbara Novak, 136.
64 Perry Miller, 239.
65 Ibid.
provided a counterbalance to the personal and emotional ties the public had to the scenery he depicted. Cropsley used the leaves as proof of the truthfulness of his artistic depiction. Gifford Pinchot’s aesthetic was rooted in this same sentiment, artistic means for scientific ends.

Pinchot adapted the aesthetic of late 1850s American landscape art to convey a new message about forest management through photography. While working for the National Forestry Commission in North Carolina Pinchot photographed a group of men operating a dredging machine deep in the wilderness (Figure. 19). The resulting image shows man and machine working together against the vast wilderness. In his photograph, Pinchot captured the personal struggle and triumph of these men against a uniquely American backdrop, the swamps of North Carolina. In the 1850’s the term preservation encompassed the entire spectrum of the concerns, issues and ideas about the environment. Scientists, artists and philosophers were raising the same question: if we truly were a civilization “born out of the wilderness,” then we had to preserve some of this wilderness to understand where we came from. Initially the most crucial areas to preserve were those with scenic or historic qualities. At this early juncture, the words “preserve” and “conserve” were interchangeable. Both indicated that land and resources were to be kept intact, in a safe or sound state.

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69 Robert L McGrath, 34.
70 Perry Miller, 241.
71 M. Nelson McGeary, 86.
The movement to preserve historic and scenic areas aided the advancement of forest protection.\textsuperscript{72} The goal of the early American conservation movement was scenic preservation.\textsuperscript{73} By preserving natural monuments and their inherent aesthetic qualities, America was able to cast off European expectations and models in favor of a uniquely American aesthetic.\textsuperscript{74} Artists began thinking about the canvas as a way of preserving the landscape.\textsuperscript{75} As America became an international political and economic player, the landscape of the country gained a newfound sense of credibility. Writers and artists in America began looking at the view outside their own homes with the idea that their scenery, their mountains and lakes were equally desirable subject matter and perhaps better than the cultivated and manicured landscapes of Europe. An appreciation for the uniqueness of American landscape developed.

Painter and writer Thomas Cole argued that people who thought that, “American scenery possesses little that is interesting or truly beautiful; that it is rude without picturesqueness, that being destitute of antiquity it may not be comparable with European scenery” were wrong and needed only to look outside to view the treasures of their own country.\textsuperscript{76} To Cole by far the most impressive quality of the American landscape was its wildness.\textsuperscript{77} Europe’s tamed grounds and cultivated gardens were the result of man’s imperfect hands shaping the landscape in an attempt to recreate the wilderness that existed so effortlessly throughout the American landscape. In his numerous trips to Europe, Pinchot’s photographs of the American landscape were a source of interest and

\textsuperscript{72} Harold T. Pinkett, 12.
\textsuperscript{73} Robert L. McGrath, 64.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
excitement to the foresters he met. Pinchot’s photographs offered indisputable proof of the wildness and grandeur of the American landscape.

In 1859 the American painter Thomas Worthington Whittredge returned from Europe and proposed that instead of painting European vistas that most people had never and would never see, why not paint the American landscape? Whittredge’s suggestion is likely to have been interpreted as radical and foolish in the European salons he had recently visited, but for the growing community of American artists his idea was revolutionary. He wrote that art was universal, that it knew no boundary, and belonged to no country or continent. Whittredge acknowledged the sense of uncertainty and excitement felt by his fellow American artists, dealers and patrons as to their status. He wrote:

We are looking and hoping for something distinctive in the art of our country…something peculiar to our people, to distinguish from the art of other nations and to enable us to pronounce without shame the oft repeated phrase ‘American Art.’

Whittredge and James Pinchot were acquainted before either was famous or wealthy. As James’s fortune grew, he was able to purchase several paintings by his friend. James purchased Whittredge’s painting Old Hunting Grounds in 1867 at the Exposition Universelle in Paris (Figure. 4). He loaned the painting to the Philadelphia Centennial

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78 Harold K. Steen, ed. The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot; See Page 36, April 28 and 29 1890 correspondence with Herr Oberland Fortmeister Coaz; Page 37, May 1, 1890 correspondence with Professor Elias Landolt; Page 38, October 8, 1890 correspondence with Professor Robert Hartig.
80 Ibid.
82 Char Miller, “All in the Family: The Pinchots of Milford.”
Exhibition in 1876. When James purchased it, *Old Hunting Grounds* was also known as “the Cathedral of the Wilderness.” The foreground of the painting depicts a dark body of water, on either side of which stand tall, slender trees arching upward and inward to form a frame. Inside that frame, a yellow glow surrounds a grove of white barked aspen trees. The painting’s association with a cathedral came from these framing devices and from the stained glass-like light of the aspen grove.

*Old Hunting Grounds* was about the possibility of renewal and a second chance for humankind in the Eden that was America. Whittredge’s second chance was not for the men of his or James Pinchot’s generation. He foresaw that it would be necessary for future generations to revert to a time when human activities were in concert with the landscape. In his memoirs, Whittredge wrote that the only way for American Art to produce something truly distinctive was for art to forge a close relationship with both our unique landscape and peculiar form of government. The relationship Whittredge foresaw, between government and art, would not be forged by him or James but rather by Gifford.

James’s gentlemanly pursuits in the arts, particularly his patronage of the Hudson River School, exposed his young son, Gifford, to the complex moral predicament between man and nature. Thomas Cole, founder of the Hudson River School, used his paintings to capture the timeless virtue of the American landscape. The scenery depicted was exclusively American and encouraged a sense of nationalist pride amongst

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84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 James F. Cooper, 37.
87 Char Miller, “All in the Family: The Pinchots of Milford.” 135.
89 Robert L. McGrath, 108.
buyers and dealers. Buying a Hudson River landscape, particularly one by Cole, or the outspoken Whittredge, could be likened to the modern-day practice of buying goods made in the U.S.A.; it was interpreted as a patriotic duty.

The canvases of the Hudson River School were filled with patriotic subjects emphasizing the importance of God in country. In these landscapes, beauty served holiness and nature’s beauty was a manifestation of God’s presence. James Pinchot was affected by the American scenery depicted and the premise that the artists of the Hudson River School were trying to capture an actual landscape or a location that was going to be lost forever to the expanding population. The majority of the Hudson River School painters subscribed to a similar formula, depicting a domesticated scene in the foreground and wilderness in the background. While, painters like Whittredge, used art as way to preserve nature in its most pristine state, other Hudson River School artists, like Sanford Gifford used their canvases to provoke discussion on the issue of man and nature.

Sanford Gifford, Thomas Whittredge and James Pinchot knew one another in both public and private life. In 1866, Sanford Gifford accompanied Whittredge to New Mexico as a part of the United States Geological Survey (Figure. 5). Sanford was a frequent guest of James Pinchot at his Milford estate. James and Mary named their son Gifford for their good friend Sanford and chose him as Gifford’s godfather. A year after Gifford was born; Sanford painted *Hunter Mountain Twilight*, which hung in the Pinchot

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90 Ibid., 3.
91 James F. Cooper, 30.
93 Robert L. McGrath, 94.
94 Ibid., 124.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
house throughout Gifford’s life (Figure. 6).\textsuperscript{97} It was an important work of art in Gifford Pinchot’s life.

The questions raised by Sanford Gifford in his painting \textit{Hunter Mountain Twilight} about man and the landscape, nature and civilization would be posed to Gifford Pinchot again and again throughout his life; what is the proper course? what is the appropriate plan of use? Sanford grew up in the shadow of Hunter Mountain, in the \textit{wildness} of Thomas Cole’s America. His father and grandfather worked as tanners who had cut down Cole’s hemlock trees in order to extract tannin from their bark.\textsuperscript{98} As a result of his family’s enterprise and extensive logging, Sanford Gifford’s home looked nothing like Whittredge’s “Cathedral of the Wilderness”. His cathedral was littered with stumps.

\textit{Hunter Mountain Twilight} was set in the Catskills Mountains.\textsuperscript{99} The foreground of the painting has been cleared, but remains littered with stumps. The clearing provides an opening to view a small stream meandering through the valley floor. Four cows are gathered around the stream to drink along with a man. To the left of this man are two structures; one is possibly a barn and the other a house nestled into the trees. A fence borders the property intermittently. Deciduous trees in autumn hues encircle the scene and extend into the background. Two trees rise above the rest and are darker in color. These trees, the man, and the source of the stream form a triangle, placing the two tall trees within the sight line of the man.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 135. Gifford Pinchot was born August 11, 1865
\textsuperscript{98} Char Miller, “All in the Family: The Pinchots of Milford.” 135.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
The foreground and middle ground of the painting are comprised of warm colors: oranges, browns and reds. In the background, five receding hills and/or mountains are layered behind one and other. As the mountains recede, they take on a cooler blue tone to contrast with the warm yellow sky. On the right side above the mountains there is a scattering of clouds. In the center of the sky the first star of twilight has appeared, along with a white sliver of a moon.

The painting was about salvage. Stumps are scattered across the cleared land of the foreground, representing the state of the forests in the East. This is also the human sphere, a landscape to be known and properly used by man. In the middle ground, the man and his cows are firmly anchored to the cleared earth and enclosed by a fence bordering the forest. The boundary between the thick growth of trees behind the fence and the cleared land in front can be interrupted as a metaphor for the geographic boundary between man and nature but also between East and the West. The yellow light of sky highlights the forest and the choice facing the nation. Should we continue the practice of using the land without planning, without any thought for the future, or do we as a society stop and try to reevaluate our priorities, not just for the benefit of ourselves, but for benefit of future generations?

Many scholars have interpreted Sanford’s painting and James Pinchot’s purchase of it as a foreshadowing of Gifford’s future career. According to Pinchot biographer Char Miller Gifford’s job was “to put the trees back” and to repair the landscape. By suggesting that James and Sanford might have interpreted the scene as a type of premonition or calling limits the analysis and restricts the importance of the work to their personal legacy. The message of *Hunter Mountain Twilight* was powerful because it

100 Kirk Johnson, 2.
raised broad questions about man and the landscape, nature and civilization. The issues raised by Sanford Gifford were not just about finding a solution for his and James Pinchot’s generation, but for the country as a whole. Gifford’s challenge was not to replenish the trees of a single valley but the felled forests of the entire nation.

*Hunter Mountain Twilight* was not the only painting in which Sanford Gifford used the stump as a symbol. In an earlier painting, *Scribner’s Pasture* of 1860, Sanford compressed the landscape into a single small field. 101 A man walks with his dog through a field of stumps; small groups of young trees fill in the background. Sanford painted *Scribner’s Pasture* while serving in the Union Army during the Civil War. 102

The warm yellow glow of *Hunter Mountain Twilight* is absent from *Scribner’s Pasture*. There is no land beyond the horizon, no West to even contemplate using, or saving. Sanford wrote of being affected by the photography of Alexander Gardner, specifically *Harvest of Death* (Figure .7). 103 Both painting and photograph allude to the lack of hope and expectation as to the outcome of the present conflict.

Sanford’s repetitive use of the stump likens to Gardner’s framing of body after body in the viewfinder of his camera. In *Hunter Mountain Twilight*, Sanford casts the last glow of the setting sun upon a barren clearing of stumps. It is possible these stumps, like Gardner’s bodies are not symbols at all, but artifacts or vestiges of a conflict laid to rest. 104 In order for wars to be won men had to die, in order for progress to occur trees had to be felled. The purpose of the war was not to save a single man but an entire nation.

101 Robert L. McGrath, 53
102 Ibid., 54.
The purpose of forestry was not to save a single tree, “because every tree has to die”, but to save the forest. In his autobiography *Breaking New Ground* Pinchot wrote that he “hated to see a tree cut down, even knowing you cannot practice forestry without it.” Sanford Gifford’s painting *Hunter Mountain Twilight* was about contemplating the cost of progress and a future beyond the present, beyond the East, and into the West.

**THE ERA OF EXPLORATION: WESTERN SURVEY PHOTOGRAPHY 1865-1890**

By 1865, the American Civil War had ended. The ravages of war had destroyed the southern landscape and the bustling industrial economy of the North was in dire need of a steady supply of raw materials to ensure progress. The focus of the nation shifted from North and South to West. The West was perceived as a blank canvas, a landscape that could be transformed into whatever Americans needed it to be, despite factual and geographical realities. Tension developed between economics and ethics; the capitalist desire for profit and concern about the potential exploitation of the Eden that was the West. The West was a landscape known to most solely through paintings and photographs, not first hand experience. The photograph became the most significant means of disseminating information on the western landscape. Photographers of the East produced the majority of the imagery of the West, and as such, it was thus it was subject to their established aesthetic considerations. Gifford Pinchot’s aesthetic was shaped by eastern photographer's westerns images and the public programs that developed during the era of exploration.

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107 Anne F. Hyde, 358.
In order for groups that advocated protection of the West to succeed their ideas had to be introduced as a policy that worked in conjunction with and to the benefit of preexisting economic practices. Early advocates had to show that the conservation and preservation of the West would ensure economic prosperity whereas unregulated economic activity was likely to create short-term gains but certainly led to further destruction. To convince the public of the viability of their cause both sides made advantageous use of the new medium of photography. A series of government and privately sponsored survey expeditions were undertaken. The West was presented as an entirely new and uniquely American subject and, as such, could be captured by the most modern and evocative medium, photography.

In his 1835 essay on *American Scenery*, Thomas Cole wrote that America’s association with the West was not so much about the past as it was about the present and the future. The West was our opportunity to prove that America was indeed better than Europe; we could succeed in less time; we could save what could not be saved in Europe and preserve what Europe no longer possessed, our “wildness”.

Conservation, the cause with which Gifford Pinchot would be associated, began with the intention of preserving the landscape primarily by documenting it. The photographic imagery of the western American landscape developed from the romantic painterly tradition that focused on illustrating the complex moral predicament between nature and civilization. To artists, writers and culturally concerned citizens the impending extinction of America’s “wilderness” was seen as akin to the historic fall of

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110 Perry Miller, 240.
Rome or the devastation resulting from the recent Civil War. Conservationists heeded the signs and called upon artists to swiftly and accurately document these environmental atrocities in light of the landscape’s imminent demise.111

The prevalence of photographic imagery in America between 1865 and 1890 was possible because of the development of the wet-plate process. Almost all early landscape photographers utilized the wet collodion development process, invented in 1851 by Frederick Scott Archer.112 The process produced high quality prints, but was also very dangerous as the chemicals used in the development of images were extremely flammable and explosions were common early on. The photographers themselves risked inhalation of the poisonous fumes every time they entered their development tents or wagons.

Archer’s process used large bulky wooden cameras and sensitized light soluble glass plates to take images. The plate was set in the camera for a few minutes and then carefully removed under a black cloth camera hood. The plate was immediately “fixed” in a bath of silver nitrate.113 Once fixed, the glass plate served as both a positive and negative. Archer’s process allowed photographers to make ambrotype and albumen prints.

An ambrotype was created by painting the back of the actual glass negative black in order to reveal the image on the reverse.114 The ambrotype was fragile as it had to be sealed in a case and thus was not very useful for early outdoor photographers. The

111 Ibid.
albumen print was by far the more popular method. Albumen prints were originally developed in France and were made popular in the America by the French publisher Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard.\textsuperscript{115} Albumen prints were produced by coating paper with a mixture of egg whites and sodium chloride.\textsuperscript{116} The paper was dipped in a bath of the mixture and dried. This process allowed photographers to prepare paper in advance and store sheets that weren’t used.

The popularity of photography in the mid-nineteenth century was due in large part to a renewed interest in nature and the outdoors. Advances in photographic equipment resulted in a portable process that established photography as a legitimate, gentlemanly pursuit. The most important feature of Archer’s process was the glass plate. The plates came in multiple sizes and allowed the photographer to take large-scale photographs.\textsuperscript{117} The glass plate acted as both a negative and a positive and enabled the photographer to produce multiple copies of a single unique image.\textsuperscript{118} These copies could be sold to individuals and publishers across the country. Archer’s process coincided with the rise of the first serious group of landscape photographers and transformed outdoor photography from an acceptable hobby into a profitable career.

In the 1840s and 1850s landscape photography was ‘pure’, insofar as it was dedicated to the depiction of nature for its own sake.\textsuperscript{119} Over time, photographers became invested in what they saw reflected in the ground glass and depictions became interpretations. The initial goal of “capturing” or photographing nature in its rarest of moments became obsolete. By the early 1860s, the photograph was no longer just an

\textsuperscript{115} Mary Warren Marien, 53.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{117} Weston J. Naef and James N. Wood, 66.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 16.
ephemeral record of the landscape; it had become an artistic creation unto itself.120 Standards on aesthetic criteria were established, informally at first, and then later to meet the specific expectations of the government.

In the late 1850s and 1860s government photographers, like William Henry Jackson, Timothy O’Sullivan, Carlton E. Watkins, and Charles Leander Weed had mastered the process and the technical aspects of photography. These photographers and the projects they worked on provided the basis from which Pinchot shaped his own photographic aesthetic and his future photography program at the Forest Service. Jackson, O’Sullivan, Watkins, and Weed had worked independently for various government surveys all over the West. Albums and exhibits of their photographs were shown in New York, Boston, New Haven and Washington.121 Government survey photographers produced some of the earliest images that display a uniquely American aesthetic.122 They portrayed the landscape not as the object of reverence, but as a resource with potential and possibility for exploitation. They used photographic processes to produce larger-than-life depictions of the most finite details. Weed was the exception to the group, establishing a tradition of straight photography that would reverberate throughout Gifford Pinchot’s professional life.

In the 1850s San Francisco was the most important training ground in the United States for outdoor photographers at the crucial turning point when the daguerreotype died and was replaced by the glass plate process.123 Weed was in California in 1859 and took

120 Ibid., 70.
121 Weston J. Naef and James N. Wood, 71.
some of the first photographs of Yosemite. San Francisco daguerreotypist and entrepreneur Robert Vance employed Weed and provided him with photographic equipment. Weed used 18 x 21” mammoth sized glass plates to take his photographs and printed his images on pocket-size 4 x 2 ½” carte-de-visite. Weed’s images used scale to define the relationship between man and nature as equal.

Weed was not the last photographer in Yosemite, less than a year later Carlton E. Watkins, of San Francisco photographed the valley from many of the same locations as Weed. Both photographers documented Yosemite with their own unique aesthetic approach. The visual evidence suggests that Gifford Pinchot adopted the approach used by Weed.

In his image of *Yosemite Valley from the Mariposa Trail* from 1864, Weed presents the valley as compact; distinct layers become fainter and less defined as space recedes (Figure 8). The dark foliage covering the slope of the foreground is separated by a trail that provides an easy visual entry for the viewer. At the end of the trail, a man stands with his hand against a lone and bare tree that rises above the mountains into the cloud-filled sky. The trail, the tree and the man are the three key elements to Weed’s image. Weed’s combination of trail, tree and man provided a clear format from which Gifford devised his own photographic aesthetic. Like Weed, Gifford’s photographs were controlled. Each image had a clear entry and focal point. The most important connection between Weed and Pinchot is their shared use of the human figure to denote scale.

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125 Ibid., 201.
In Weed’s photograph, *Yosemite Valley from the Mariposa Trail* the image’s entry point is the trail; it invites the viewer into the scene. The centrally-located tree provides an easily identifiable focal point for the image and the man helps define the scale of the landscape and ensures a human connection (Figure 9). The “truthfulness” or validity of Weed’s image actively discourages manipulation in the development process. If the man was real then so to must be the landscape. Weed’s photograph depicts *man in nature*.

A year later, in 1865, Carlton E. Watkins took his own photograph from Mariposa Trail in Yosemite (Figure. 10). Watkins’s *Yosemite Valley from the Best General View* differs from Weed’s in that it is not about *man in nature* but the distinction between *man and nature*. His image is romantic, a pure and pristine nature devoid of humanity. He presents the valley as grandiose, expansive and overpowering. In Watkins’s image, the trail is no place to stop and take in the view. A perilous cliff separates the foreground from the middle ground. The tree, which seemed strong and supportive in Weed’s image, is frail and ominous. Watkins’s image has no true sense of scale. His print is soft and painterly whereas Weed’s is crisp and reveals textures. Pinchot would later adopt Weed’s practice by constructing his photographic imagery with specific entry and focal points and by including himself and other rangers in the image for scale.

Photographers of the era had two options for framing the figure in the ground glass. The first portrayed man as small, powerless and dwarfed by his surroundings. The second technique utilized man’s silhouette as a means of presenting his presence against a sheets of light, water or sky. While either technique allowed for

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127 Barbara Novak, 164.
128 Ibid.
manipulation, the first offered Gifford Pinchot what he needed, the perception of truth. Just as Crospley collected leaves to validate the colors used on his canvas Weed, and later Pinchot, used themselves and others in photographs to validate the reality of the landscape.

In 1860, Weed left California for Hong Kong with a fellow associate to open a new gallery for Robert Vance.\footnote{129} Upon his departure, Weed sold all his negatives to San Francisco publisher Henry Chase. The latter, in turn, sold some of Weed’s negatives to Thomas Houseworth, who ran a photography store in San Francisco.\footnote{130} Weed had no interest in establishing an identity for himself as a photographer and he signed very few of his images. By the time Houseworth received the negatives, there was no way to confirm whether they were the work of Weed or the more famous Watkins. While there were significant differences between the aesthetics of Weed and Watkins their subject matter often came from identical locations. As such, it was similarity of place, not aesthetic, that caused confusion as to whether a photograph was the work of Weed or Watkins. The visual evidence suggests that Gifford Pinchot was influenced by the aesthetic of Weed, not Watkins, but because of the haphazard manner with which Weed signed his images, its possible Pinchot knew the work of Weed but not his name.

In 1866, Houseworth sent some of Weed’s unsigned images for exhibit in the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris.\footnote{131} Whether or not Houseworth was intentionally capitalizing on the likeness of Weed’s photographs to the more commercially successful imagery of Watkins is unknown. The similar choice of locations between the two men’s photographs was enough to cause officials at the exposition to declare the unsigned

\footnotesize\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{129} Peter Palmquist, 194.
\item \footnote{130} Ibid.
\item \footnote{131} Ibid.,191.
\end{itemize}
images the work of Watkins, not Weed.\footnote{Weston J. Naef and James N. Wood, 73.} It was not until six years later that the photographs in the exposition were acknowledged as the work of two distinct individuals. In 1874, Weed’s images were finally published by E. & H.T. Anthony, of New York in *Sun Picture of Yosemite.*\footnote{Ibid., 73.}

Gifford Pinchot grew up during the rising popularity and rampant reproduction of western survey photography. In the early 1870’s, eastern publishers began mass-producing popular images from government survey albums.\footnote{Douglas Waitley, *William Henry Jackson: Framing the Frontier* (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Co., 1998) 190.} Photographs by Jackson, Weed and Watkins were reprinted and sold by dealers across the country, often without crediting any of the photographers. William Henry Jackson, in particular, was not able to regain publishing rights to his own photographs until the copyright law of 1891 was passed.\footnote{Ibid., 190.} The desire of individuals to have a piece of the mythic West for themselves combined with a renewed sense of nationalism fueled the production of these western landscape photographs. Moreover, the United States was on the cusp of its one hundredth anniversary as a nation. There was an unspoken societal call to arms that this was the time for the United States to distinguish itself from Europe.\footnote{Anne F. Hyde, 374.} The photographs from western surveys offered proof of the vastness of the American empire and its inexhaustible resources.
MAN AND NATURE

As a member of the Pinchot family, Gifford reaped the rewards of the American empire’s resources. He grew up in a prestigious house and received the best formal education money could buy. Gifford was raised in New York City and at his family’s estate in Milford, Pennsylvania. He and his younger siblings Amos and Antoinette had a French governess, spent winters in the city and summers in the country. In 1881, Pinchot attended Philips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. Two years later, he withdrew from school due to an issue with his eyes. James and Mary sent Gifford, along with a private tutor, into the wilderness of the Adirondacks for restorative care.

Before leaving Gifford was given a book by his brother Amos, *Man in Nature; The Earth Modified by Human Condition* by George Perkins Marsh. Originally published in 1864, a year before Gifford was born and two years before Sanford Gifford painted *Hunter Mountain Twilight*, Marsh’s book offered a defense of the formation of the Adirondack forest preserve on aesthetic grounds. Pinchot’s health recovered in the rugged scenery of the Adirondacks and potentially through Marsh’s book, he learned of the fight to preserve the land.

Marsh was originally from Vermont and served as an ambassador to several Middle Eastern countries. His book was about man’s relationship with the land and his cumulative effect upon it. The book offered a critique of European practices and a warning to Americans that their still evolving resource policy must emphasize use not

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137 Pinchot Institute for Conservation Studies, 3.
139 Ibid., 65.
140 Ibid., 55.
141 Robert L. McGrath, 48.
abuse. Marsh saw America as a nation on the cusp of redemption or damnation. If Americans continued to abuse their landscape they faced destruction from within, a potential fall akin to the likes of Rome. If America chose ‘use’ they would be redeemed.

In his book, Marsh wrote of the choice now facing the American public.

Could this old world which man has overthrown be rebuilt, could human cunning rescue its wasted hillsides and its deserted plains from bareness, from nakedness? And restore the ancient fertility and healthfulness of the slopes of Lebanon… the thronging millions of Europe might still find room on the eastern continent and the main current of immigration be turned towards the rising instead of the setting sun.

The slopes of Lebanon Marsh referred to were once a forest of cedars. Marsh interpreted the destruction of the environment as an event of biblical proportions. He called upon a new generation to join his crusade against the destruction of the forest. Nineteen years later Gifford wandered the same woods Marsh fought to save, reading his book and perhaps contemplating whether to answer Marsh’s call.

In the fall of 1885 at the age of twenty, Pinchot attended Yale University. Numerous forces, his family, friends, professors, and potentially Marsh’s book eventually led him to forestry. At the time, there was no such degree and so he took meteorology, botany, geology, and astronomy. It’s likely that Pinchot was influenced by Marsh’s belief that the destruction of the earth was an event of biblical proportions. Pinchot announced his intent to join Marsh’s crusade to his family, friends and fellow students at

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145 George Ferguson. *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press) 29. According to Marsh the destruction of the environment was an event of biblical proportions and the fight to save the land, a modern day crusade. In his discussion of the Slopes of Lebanon is furthered when one considers the cedar is often viewed as a symbol of Christ.
146 Preservation Design Group, 2.
147 Harold T. Pinkett, 16.
his college graduation. As class commencement speaker, Pinchot spoke of wanting to “minister” to the forests of the United States. In order to do so, he would have to go to Europe to learn about forestry. On October 5, 1889, Gifford Pinchot boarded the SS Elbe for London.\textsuperscript{148}

**AN AMERICAN FORESTER IN EUROPE**

On October 18, 1889, Pinchot arrived in London.\textsuperscript{149} Gifford came to Europe to buy forestry books, visit the Exposition Universelle in Paris and to get a job.\textsuperscript{150} His first stop was at the British Forestry Department. Pinchot met with Sir Dietrich Brandis, a German who had headed the British Forestry Department in India.\textsuperscript{151} A few days later Brandis’s assistant, Dr. Schenck, took Pinchot on a drive through the grounds of Windsor Castle.\textsuperscript{152} Pinchot was impressed by the beautifully cultivated landscapes, “I have never seen a more beautiful drive...herds of deer grazing under magnificent oak and beech trees...the arrangement of the trees and turf was ideal.”\textsuperscript{153} The controlled composition of Weed’s photographs and the artistic aesthetic of the Hudson River School had come to life before Pinchot’s eyes.

In a subsequent meeting with Brandis, Pinchot confessed his admiration for the strict organization and symmetry of the English countryside. Brandis warned Pinchot that the effects he praised and the subtle aesthetic he envied had taken years to cultivate.\textsuperscript{154} Pinchot was not deterred by this warning. He wrote to his father at once and informed

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\textsuperscript{148} Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*, 81.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*, 80.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
him of his plan to stay in Europe and study forestry in France with Brandis.\footnote{Ibid., 82.} Pinchot knew that no one back in the United States would take him seriously without further study on his part.

In France Pinchot visited the Exposition Universelle and saw forestry exhibits from all over the world (Figure. 11). On October 24, 1889, he arrived in Paris, “How glad I was to be in Paris again! It seemed like the good old times, almost when I was studying at the Le Jardin des Plantes and the family was here.”\footnote{Harold K. Steen, ed. The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot, 32.} The exposition featured exhibits on forestry, textiles, mechanical and fine arts and numerous other disciplines. Photographs were used in displays throughout the exposition. At the time, the debate as to whether photography was an art or a science had not yet been settled. As such, exposition organizers had a difficult time determining if photographs were being used to illustrate something in an exhibit or if they were the exhibit.\footnote{Steve Edwards, “Photography, Allegory and Labor.” Art Journal, Vol. 55, No. 2, Summer 1996 [database online] : available from www.jstor.com; internet, accessed, 22 June 2007, 47.}

Pinchot returned to the \textit{Eaux et Forêts} a few days later on October 29 to meet with the director of the exhibit and ask him about Brandis’s forestry program.\footnote{Harold K. Steen, ed. The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot, 32.} In his diary, Pinchot wrote of being “overwhelmed” by the sheer volume of imagery, so much so that he had to leave the exhibit and rest on the benches outside.\footnote{Ibid., 33.} Pinchot’s experience at the Paris exposition showed him that it would be important to know not only about the profession of forestry, but the various methods, like photography, by which he could inform the public of the United States about the discipline.
In 1890 Gifford enrolled at the L’Ecole Nationale Forestière in Nancy, France (Figure. 12). The British Forestry Department ran the school which consisted of formal classes and excursions to Switzerland and Germany. As an indication of the importance of photography to Gifford, he had previously written home requesting images and on January 1, 1890 he received a “fine lot of photographs from home.” Initially, he had sent for the images because he felt they would “bring me at once into good relations with the German foresters”. It is also possible that after seeing the Paris exposition, he felt he would need photographs to illustrate the differences between American and European landscapes to his professors and fellow students.

Before visiting Germany, Pinchot left Nancy for Sihlwald Switzerland. On April 28, he met with Herr Oberland Fortmeister Johannes Coaz, head of hunting and fishing and Herr Ulrich Meister, head of the Sihlwald forest. Pinchot showed the Swiss foresters his photographs. Coaz told him that his images were “the best, the finest he had ever seen.” The praise of a leading figure in his chosen profession seemed to give Pinchot the assurance he needed that photography was to be a crucial medium for the advancement of forestry.

Over the course of the summer Pinchot, Coaz and Meister exchanged countless photographs of American and European landscapes. On May 6, 1890 Pinchot wrote in his diary, “sent four photographs to Meister Coaz.” Pinchot also took his own photographs

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162 Char Miller, Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism, 81.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid., 37.
of European forests and on June 3, 1890, he returned to London to have his images developed (Figure. 13 & 14).\(^{166}\) In addition, James and Mary sent Gifford huge photographic enlargements of the land around Milford.

In August 1890, Pinchot finally arrived in Germany (Figure. 15).\(^{167}\) His mammoth size plate photographs of the Appalachian, Pacific and Adirondack forests were “well received” by the German foresters.\(^{168}\) In his diary, Pinchot noted how these professionals evaluated his images.\(^{169}\) He observed their reactions and took notes on the messages his picture conveyed. Gifford later wrote in his autobiography *Breaking New Ground*, “these pictures clearly paid there way. Whenever I showed them, as I did to every forester I could, they put me in a position to hear discussions and learn facts that might never have been open to me without them.”\(^{170}\) The majority of the foresters Pinchot showed his photographs had not yet traveled to the United States and as such it’s likely their questions were focused on the imagery being depicted and not the photographic technique Gifford used.

On October 8, Pinchot met with Professor Robert Hartig in Munich, Germany.\(^{171}\) Professor Hartig was so impressed by Pinchot’s photographs that after reviewing them he asked Pinchot to evaluate his own collection of images.\(^{172}\) Despite a positive response from Professor Hartig and other German foresters, Pinchot decided that the Swiss method of forestry would work best in the United States. The German method was too rigid and according to Pinchot would not work, as the “national character”, of the American public

\(^{166}\) Ibid., 36.
\(^{167}\) Ibid., 37.
\(^{168}\) Ibid., 38.
\(^{169}\) Ibid.
\(^{172}\) Ibid.
was too different from that of the German’s.\textsuperscript{173} Pinchot elected to use the Swiss combination of economics for aesthetic benefit.

In October, the trip with Brandis ended. Brandis tried to convince Pinchot to stay and finish his degree in Nancy, but Pinchot was eager to return to the United States and “found the profession of forestry.” On December 16, 1890, he arrived back in New York.\textsuperscript{174} His first job was to survey land in the Adirondacks for the brother in law of George Washington Vanderbilt, Dr. William Seward Webb.\textsuperscript{175} The job was Pinchot’s first professional appointment as a forester. The position allowed him to apply the lessons he had learned in Europe and more importantly begin and try to repair the very same stump ridden land illustrated in Sanford Gifford’s \textit{Hunter Mountain Twilight}.

\textbf{AN AMERICAN CULTURE OF NATURE}

By March of 1891, Pinchot had completed the survey for Webb and had headed West. Through a relative on his mother’s side, he was hired on at the Phelps-Dodge Company to evaluate land resources in Arizona and Southern California.\textsuperscript{176} The trip was important because it provided Gifford with a chance to experience and interpret the West for himself. On the train to Arizona, he read Atkinson’s account of Powell’s trip through the Grand Canyon.\textsuperscript{177} Pinchot was immediately struck by the differences between the East and the West.\textsuperscript{178} Mountains and canyons he had previously known only through black and white coffee table albums appeared before him in living color. Upon arriving at the Grand Canyon on April 19 Pinchot noted simply, “it cannot be adequately

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\textsuperscript{174} Ibid, 19.
\textsuperscript{175} Gifford Pinchot, \textit{Breaking New Ground}, 75.
\textsuperscript{176} McGeary, 25.
\textsuperscript{177} Harold K. Steen, ed. \textit{The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot}, 12.
\textsuperscript{178} Char Miller, \textit{Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism}, 98.
\end{flushright}
described." It took him three days to be able to articulate his reaction to the natural monument before him.

Began to get some faint idea of its beauty and grandeur...it is so deep it masks the width and width masks the depth, and a man can only wonder. At sunset it is magnificently beautiful and magnificently terrible. But the great power of it lies in its serenity. It is absolutely peaceful.

Pinchot’s reaction to the Grand Canyon reads as a deeply personal, experience. It is likely that he did not expect to be so affected by the landscape. The evidence suggests then, that having seen paintings, countless photographs and the scenery of Europe, he assumed that nothing remained in the natural world that might humble him.

On May 9, 1891 Gifford arrived in Yosemite, California. He was prepared to be as astounded and moved by the scenery as he had been in Arizona, but his reaction was more melancholy than awe. He lamented having seen the canyon first and in his diary he insisted that it wasn’t that it “isn’t wonderful and wonderfully beautiful but it can’t touch the canyon.” Before visiting either location, Gifford had seen a collection of photographs of Yosemite and was convinced of Yosemite’s superiority by the pictorial evidence presented to him. Whether or not Gifford saw images of the Grand Canyon before arriving is unknown but his experience at both sites resulted in a clear message: photographs, like paintings, could be subject to individual interpretation, and could manipulate or distort the reality of a location. If Gifford was going to rely on photography to convey his message about forestry his images had to have validity and be seen as truthful depictions, not subjective interpretations.

179 Ibid., 99.
181 Ibid., 45.
182 Ibid.
183 Char Miller, Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism, 381.
Gifford arrived back in Simsbury, Connecticut in August.\textsuperscript{184} Seven months earlier, on his way out West he had made a stop in Asheville, North Carolina at the Vanderbilt estate, Biltmore. George Washington Vanderbilt offered Pinchot a job on his return in the fall. On October 14, 1891, Vanderbilt made good on his offer at an informal meeting held at Grey Towers.\textsuperscript{185} At the meeting, Gifford was formally introduced to architect Richard Morris Hunt and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Hunt and Gifford knew one and other as Hunt had designed the Pinchot family estate, Grey Towers, and was a friend of his father, James Pinchot.

The Biltmore estate was an American palace located in the middle of over 125,000 acres.\textsuperscript{186} The land had been bought piecemeal from individual owners, each growing different types of trees and crops.\textsuperscript{187} Construction of the estate began in 1890, while Gifford was away in Europe.\textsuperscript{188} With construction underway, Vanderbilt also secured the services of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted.\textsuperscript{189} Olmsted had recently completed a redesign of New York’s Central Park; he was also a friend of the Pinchot family and had designed the landscape and gardens around Grey Towers (Figure. 16). Olmsted laid out the plans for the landscape surrounding Biltmore and persuaded Vanderbilt to hire Pinchot to implement them.

Pinchot’s collaboration with Olmsted proved to be tremendously influential to the young forester. Olmsted’s goal at Biltmore was to blur the lines between wilderness and

\textsuperscript{184} Harold K. Steen, ed. \textit{The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot}, 47.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{186} Gifford Pinchot, \textit{Biltmore Forest; An Account of its Treatment, and the Results of the First Year’s Work}, (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1893) 1.
\textsuperscript{187} “Trees to Be Wisely Used” \textit{New York Times}, 17 December 1893.
\textsuperscript{188} F.H. Tainter, and B.M. Cool. \textit{This Was Forestry In America; The Biltmore Forest School 1898-1913}, Clemson: Department of Forestry Clemson University, 1985, 2 [R-1 Archives; Historical Files 1680; History Program].
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
civilization and establish a new harmony.\textsuperscript{190} He believed that human beings required a harmonious and orderly landscape on which to live, even if that landscape was wilderness.\textsuperscript{191} The aesthetically pleasing landscape would translate into a healthier well-being for society. The harmony Olmsted sought didn’t just happen naturally, it was constructed by man. To Olmsted all landscapes, including those framed within the camera lens were constructions, a phenomenon of nature and a product of culture.\textsuperscript{192} He believed that by improving the landscape one improved the quality of life lived there.

In December of 1891, Vanderbilt formally hired Gifford as the Biltmore Resident Forester.\textsuperscript{193} He negotiated a salary of $2,500 in exchange for managing the grounds and preparing an exhibit for the state of North Carolina to enter in the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago.\textsuperscript{194} On January 22, 1892 Gifford arrived in Asheville to start work.\textsuperscript{195} Pinchot wrote that the purpose of Biltmore was to “prove what America did not yet understand, that trees could be cut and preserved at the same time.”\textsuperscript{196} He spent the spring working on his forest management plan. In May, he began marking profitable trees ready for harvest and making selective cuts so as not to damage the younger trees.\textsuperscript{197} His goal was to produce a clean forest with room for growth. Gifford’s primary concern, as evident by his diary entries, was not whether his plan was actual

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{192} Char Miller, Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism, 103.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{195} Harold K. Steen, ed. The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot, 54.
\textsuperscript{197} “Trees to Be Wisely Used” New York Times, 17 December 1893,1.
working, but how to construct his forthcoming exhibit.\textsuperscript{198} In May of 1892, Gifford returned to Europe to consult with Swiss foresters Coaz and Meister about his exhibit.\textsuperscript{199}

Gifford arrived in Zurich, Switzerland on May 31 for a meeting with Ulrich Meister.\textsuperscript{200} In his diary, he acknowledged feeling foolish as he “had no photos” to show Meister of Biltmore.\textsuperscript{201} Gifford told Meister that his idea for the exhibit was to build a model of logs from Biltmore. Meister disagreed and told Gifford, “models of treatment aren’t practical for a fair.”\textsuperscript{202} He suggested that Gifford use photographs or photochroms in the exhibit.\textsuperscript{203} The next day, Pinchot went to see about getting photochroms made.

A photochrom is a color lithograph made from a black and white negative.\textsuperscript{204} The process was originally developed in Switzerland and was brought over to America in the 1890s by the Detroit Photographic Company.\textsuperscript{205} Photochroms were labor intensive, very expensive and according to Pinchot, “hence out of the question.”\textsuperscript{206} Gifford spent the next month in Germany and Switzerland visiting photographers and developers, such as Gang, Oreille and Fussli, inventors of the photocrom.\textsuperscript{207}

On July 28, Pinchot returned to New York and discussed his new plan for the exhibit with Harvard botanist Charles Sprague Sargent.\textsuperscript{208} Sargent agreed with Meister and encouraged Pinchot to drop the log model all together and just use photographs.

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 58.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{204} R.M. Burch and Williams Gamble. \textit{Color Printing and Color Printers} (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1910) 5.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.
Pinchot agreed, noting “Photos Best” in his diary after the meeting. The final decision as to whether photographs were allowed rested with Vanderbilt and the World’s Columbian Exposition head of forestry exhibits W.I. Buchanan, the current head of the Forestry Division in the Department of Agriculture. Buchanan requested that all forestry exhibits embrace “wood in a natural state.” On July 31, Pinchot met with Buchanan, who approved the use of photographs in his exhibit. Later that day, he also met with Vanderbilt who concurred with Buchanan and gave Pinchot a “contribution” to fund the development of the photographs.

On October 26, 1892, Pinchot submitted his application for a space at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. He was one of many exhibitors to use photographs in his display. In fact, photographs were used in almost every exhibit to illustrate particular features or to just attract attention, other exhibits focused on advances in the process or technology of photography. Fair organizers hired official photographers to document the event and countless amateurs snapped pictures of themselves at the exposition. In the spring of 1893 Pinchot accompanied his exhibit by train from Asheville to Chicago.

At the World’s Columbian Exposition, exhibitors were divided first into departments and then into groups. There was no department or group specifically

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211 Ibid.
212 Ibid., 58.
213 Ibid., 58.
214 Ibid., 58.
216 Ibid., 58.
assigned to photography, so Pinchot’s exhibit was in the department titled “States and Territories of the United States” and the group “North Carolina.” Gifford was not the only family member to take part in the exposition. His father had loaned *Hunter Mountain Twilight* for the exhibit in “Department K, Fine Arts; Group 146, exhibits from private collections.” James Pinchot had previously loaned *Hunter Mountain Twilight* to various institutions for exhibit. This particular loan might simply have been an extension of his other philanthropic and artistic endeavors. It is also possible, that his decision to loan the painting to the very same event that his son Gifford was to debut his work in forestry was not mere coincidence, but a well thought out choice. If the purpose of Sanford’s painting was to encourage dialogue and discussion about land use or if more specifically Gifford’s job was to “put the trees back” then Biltmore was the manifestation of that goal. The photographs in Gifford’s exhibit were proof that he had repaired the landscape.

Gifford’s exhibit was entitled “Biltmore Forest, The Property of Mr. George W. Vanderbilt; An Account of its Treatment and the Results of the First Year’s Work.” The exhibit was comprised of large photographs and maps that were intended to show the improvement of the land under scientific management. The photographs were primarily images of a landscape before and after forest management (Figure. 17 & 18).

The photographs taken by Pinchot of Biltmore show his aesthetic connection to Charles

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218 Ibid., 124.  
219 Ibid.  
220 James Pinchot had previously loaned *Hunter Mountain Twilight* in 1866 to the National Academy of Design in New York; in 1867 to the Exposition Universelle in Paris; in 1870 to the Yale School of Fine Arts; 1881 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.  
222 McGeary, 31.
Leander Weed’s photographs of Yosemite, as well as his use of the compositional strategies employed by the Hudson River School artists.

In the majority of Gifford Pinchot’s photographs from Biltmore he or his assistant adopts the same pose as Weed’s figure in *Yosemite Valley from the Mariposa Trail* (Figure 8 & 17). In Weed’s photograph a man stands with his back to the camera on the edge of cliff, his arm is outstretched resting against a tree. The figure in Pinchot’s image, like Weed’s, is presented not as *man and nature* but as *man in nature*. In many cases, the figure in Pinchot’s photographs has adopted a more relaxed stance, than that of Weed’s, with a hand in his chest pocket and legs crossed. The posture of Pinchot’s figure indicates that he is not only in nature, but comfortable in it. Both Pinchot and Weed align the figure next to a tree. In Pinchot’s case, perhaps even more explicitly than in Weed’s, the pairing of figure and tree was necessary to denote how much taller a tree could grow under the care of a forester.

In almost all of Pinchot’s photographs from Biltmore, the figure stands in the middle ground (Figure 17 & 18). The majority of Hudson River School painters divided their compositions in half, the human sphere in the foreground and the wilderness in the background. In the case of *Hunter Mountain Twilight*, man had already abused the foreground, forcing him to move to the middle ground. Pinchot’s photographs of Biltmore have either a barren or a forested foreground. The background is covered by a thick wall of trees; the message being that under man’s proper management, the forest will flourish, and grow even closer to the human sphere.

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224 Robert L. McGrath, 94.
Pinchot’s photographs of Biltmore told a story of success and the potential for profit in forestry. His exhibit was hugely popular, so much so that Vanderbilt ordered 10,000 additional copies of his pamphlet to be distributed for the “good of the forestry cause.”\textsuperscript{225} Pinchot used his own funds to send copies to newspapers and magazine editors across the country.\textsuperscript{226} The problem was that Biltmore was not an economic success, if anyone had bothered to read the fine print, they would have noticed that Pinchot was not paid.\textsuperscript{227} If he had received the agreed upon salary of $2,500 from Vanderbilt, then the experiment would have lost money.\textsuperscript{228} At Biltmore Pinchot learned that imagery trumped information, that photographs, not words told the story most effectively.

In 1895, Pinchot resigned as Resident Forester of Biltmore.\textsuperscript{229} On January 15, 1896, he was appointed to the National Academy of Sciences, National Forestry Commission.\textsuperscript{230} As a primary investigator, Gifford’s job was to investigate and document western public lands. In June of 1896, he arrived in Montana.\textsuperscript{231} Over the course of his travels that summer, he frequently stopped to take photographs of the landscape.\textsuperscript{232} In August, Pinchot submitted his final report to the National Forestry Commission.\textsuperscript{233} He

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{227} “Trees to Be Wisely Used”, \textit{New York Times}, 17 December 1893. In the article it states that Gifford’s expenses for the Biltmore experiment were $9,911.76. Gifford’s total profit from sold wood was $9,519.36 resulting in a loss of $392.40. This information was included in the second to last paragraph of the article.
\textsuperscript{228} F.H. Tainter, F.H. and B.M. Cool. \textit{This Was Forestry In America; The Biltmore Forest School 1898-1913}, Clemson: Department of Forestry Clemson University, 1985, 3. [R-1 Archives; Historical Files 1680; History Program].
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{230} Harold K. Steen, ed. \textit{The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot}, 68
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid., 72, 78, 81. Gifford records taking photographs on June 9, July 18 and July 19, 1896.
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., 47.
later noted disappointment that none of his photographs had been included in the final draft.  

In the spring of 1897 Gifford returned to North Carolina. He worked with William Ashe of the North Carolina Geological Survey to produce a pamphlet entitled *Timber Trees and Forests of North Carolina*. The publication featured a compilation of Pinchot’s images from his time at Biltmore as well as new photographs from North Carolina. Unlike at Biltmore, the focus of this publication was not to record an entire landscape, but rather a single tree (Figure. 20). Gifford’s photographs were intended to aid in identifying and distinguishing between different types of trees. For each species, he took a full-length photograph and inserted a smaller detail of the tree’s trunk.

The pictorial evidence suggests that Gifford choice of layout and cropping technique was influenced by the aesthetic of earlier geological survey projects established by survey director Clarence King. King believed in the need for truthful imagery and that, “each tree trunk and mossy rock having its portrait painted from a certain point of view without change or disillusion.” It is possible that the inset detail was intended to highlight the variable characteristics of the bark and to allow for identification of a tree. It’s also likely that Pinchot used the image of the base of the tree to send a specific economic message to the North Carolina Geological Survey, that the base of the tree was

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234 Gifford Pinchot, *Report of the Special Committee Appointed to Obtain Information from Official Sources* (Washington D.C.: National Forestry Commission, 1896). There were no images included in the copy of the report I obtained. The text did not indicate what happened to the images but the USFS Region One Archives does have an image of Gifford Pinchot in Montana from the same time period. Washington Office Number, 1032. Regional Catalog, 99-8441.a.


236 Ibid., 1.

as useful as the trunk it supported; one could not exist without the other. The stump, even those that littered the canvas of Hunter Mountain Twilight, was indeed a useful resource.

In June of 1897, the Department of the Interior hired Gifford as confidential forestry agent.\textsuperscript{238} He was chosen by Secretary Cornelius Bliss to evaluate some of the twenty-one million acres of land recently incorporated into the National Forest Reserves.\textsuperscript{239} In July, Gifford and his brother Amos headed West.\textsuperscript{240} On July 19, they arrived in Priest Lake, Idaho.\textsuperscript{241} Gifford wrote in his diary of “being up to late” and “doing little beyond photography.”\textsuperscript{242} It is unlikely that Gifford’s decision to evaluate the reserves by photographing them came from Secretary Bliss or other government personnel. Major histories and early records of the United States Geological Survey focused on listing what scientists were employed and what format their results would be printed in.\textsuperscript{243} Even on well-known surveys, like those that employed William Henry Jackson or Timothy O'Sullivan, the official U.S.G.S. record does not list their involvement.\textsuperscript{244} Gifford’s decision to photograph the reserves was likely a result of his experiences in Europe and at Biltmore. These experiences illustrated to Gifford that the camera was mightier than the pen.

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid, 2
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 742.
By August, Gifford and Amos were on their way to Monte Cristo, Washington to view the newly established Olympic Forest Reserve.\footnote{Char Miller, “Gifford Pinchot: Photographer.” Environmental History, Vol. 8, Issue 2, April 2003 [database online] ; available from www.historycooperative.org/journals.html; internet, accessed 20 December 2007, 1.} They arrived in Everett, Washington on Friday August 13, and discovered they would have to wait until Monday to catch the train to Monte Cristo.\footnote{Ibid.} At 6:45 a.m. on Monday, August 16, 1897, Gifford and Amos boarded the train to Monte Cristo, and by 7 p.m. that night, they were on their way to Columbia Peak, Washington.\footnote{Ibid., 2.} In the five hours, he was in Monte Cristo, Gifford took only one photograph, just as he and Amos were leaving (Figure. 21).\footnote{Ibid.} The image is composed but blurry indicating that Amos may have moved while Gifford took the photograph. On the back of the photograph, he later wrote the caption, “notice the large tree stumps next to buildings.”\footnote{Ibid.} As in the canvas of *Hunter Mountain Twilight* stumps littered WC the town Monte Cristo.

Perhaps subconsciously, Gifford arranged his photograph of Monte Cristo in the camera’s viewfinder just as Sanford Gifford composed the scene for *Hunter Mountain Twilight* thirty-one years earlier on a canvas. The foreground of Gifford’s photograph is covered with stumps that extend right up to the edge of the print. A bare dirt road runs at an angle, dividing the town in two. Amos stands about halfway, down the middle of the road. The town’s few remaining buildings flank both sides of the road.

In the background, three receding hills seem to layer one behind the other. The lower potion of the first and closest hill has been logged and is now covered with stumps. The second hill, the largest of the three, is still covered with dense forest. It cuts across
the photograph at a sharp downward angle. The third and smallest hill is the furthest away and still covered in trees. The densely packed trees on the third hill seem to blend into a single mass. In the top left corner, a cloudy sky looms over Amos and the town.

The tree stumps that fill the immediate foreground of Gifford’s photograph of Monte Cristo reference the stump-strewn foreground of *Hunter Mountain Twilight*. The bare dirt road that divides the town of Monte Cristo echoes the bare clearing of *Hunter Mountain Twilight*. In both painting and photograph, a single is man shown in the middle ground, dwarfed by his natural surroundings. In Pinchot’s photograph, a grey cloud filled sky has replaced the luminescent yellow light over Hunter Mountain. In *Hunter Mountain Twilight*, a fence denotes the boundary between landscape and wilderness. In Pinchot’s photograph the town of Monte Cristo backs up against a large expanse of un-logged hillside, the stark distinction between the realm of man and the realm of the wild has begun to break down. Thirty-one years after Sanford painted his melancholic landscape *Hunter Mountain Twilight*, Gifford seems to be asking the same questions. What is the proper course? What is the appropriate plan of use?

**A REALIST AESTHETIC**

In 1898, Gifford was appointed The Forester of the Division of Forestry in the United States Department of Agriculture. He saw photography as a valuable tool by which the public could understand his new government agency. In 1899 he noted that progress had been made during the year in the creation of a photographic description of the forests. In his first year, Gifford established the Forest Service photograph

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250 History Branch. ‘The History of Information and Education.’ *The Forest Service History Line*, Washington D.C.: USDA, USFS, Fall 1972, 1 [R-1 Archives; Historical Files 1630-1; Forest Service Publications].
collection with images from his personnel collection. By 1901, the Forest Service had over 4,900 photographs in their collection.

Gifford Pinchot was part forester, part artist, and part politician. He interpreted forestry both as an art and a science and he used the tools of these disciplines to convey his message. Realism in American art relied on truth, organized compositions, and recognizable scenery. Pinchot used these tenants in his photographs to bring order, efficiency and prosperity to the landscape. Like the painters of the Hudson River School he cropped, edited and captioned his images to tell a particular story and convey a very specific message. Pinchot used photography not as art for art’s sake, in the modern sense, but rather as art for forestry’s sake.

Acclaimed photographer Edward Steichen wrote that the value of photography was not that it could show you the world, but that it had the power to show you the world in a way you had never seen it before. Photography allowed Gifford Pinchot to present the American landscape to the public, not as an ephemeral artistic creation but as an actual physical location with practical utility and transcendental beauty. As a forester, Gifford subscribed to utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s mantra “the greatest good, for the greatest number in the longest run.” Pinchot’s use and understanding of the photographic medium is perhaps one of his lesser-known greatest goods. His early exposure to aesthetics shaped his view as a photographer and a forester. He believed that

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252 Ibid.

253 Ibid.

254 Ibid.


forestry would cure the land and make it possible to restore the landscape of Hunter Mountain, and that by documenting the landscape, by photographing it, he furthered the cause of conservation.

In 1891 Gifford Pinchot visited colony California to view the “giant forest of sequoias”. He recorded his observations in his diary writing, “when the black marks of fire are sprinkled on the wonderfully rich deep ochre of the bark the effect is brilliant beyond words.” His observations used a vocabulary associated with the evaluation of works of art or literature. Gifford Pinchot’s aesthetic developed in childhood and combined the pictorial considerations of the Hudson River School with the use philosophy of early landscape architecture and the format of early western survey photographers. Pinchot and photography came of age during the American industrial revolution; at a time when medium and man seemed to encompass both art and science. Gifford Pinchot used photography to ask the questions what is the proper course? what is the appropriate plan of use?

257 Harold K. Steen, ed. The Conservation Diaries of Gifford Pinchot, 44.
258 Ibid.
Figure. 1

Gifford Pinchot
c.a. 1870
Image courtesy of Grey Towers NHL.
Figure 2

John Ferguson Weir,
*Forging the Shaft*,
Oil on Canvas, ca. 1847-1877,
Figure. 3

Alexandre Cabanel
*Antoinette, Gifford and Mary Pinchot*,
1871, Oil on Canvas,
Image courtesy Grey Towers NHL.
Figure. 4

Thomas Worthington Whittredge
_The Old Hunting Grounds_,
1864, Oil on canvas, 36 x 27",
Figure 5

Sanford Gifford (seated) sketching in southeastern Wyoming, 1870. Photograph by William Henry Jackson, Image courtesy U.S.G.S.
Figure 6

Sanford Gifford

*Hunter Mountain, Twilight*,
1866, Oil on canvas, 30 5/8 x 54 1/8”.

Image courtesy Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection.
Figure. 7

*Harvest of Death,*
Negative by Timothy O’Sullivan
Print by Alexander Gardner, 1863
Image courtesy Library of Congress.
Figure 8

Charles Leander Weed,
_Yosemite Valley from the Mariposa Trail_,
Albumen print, ca. 1859,
Image courtesy Cleveland Museum of Art.
Figure. 9

Charles Leander Weed,
Detail, *Yosemite Valley from the Mariposa Trail*,
Albumen print, ca. 1859,
Image courtesy Cleveland Museum of Art.
Figure. 10

Carleton E. Watkins,
*Yosemite Valley from the “Best General View”*,
Albumen Print, ca. 1866,
Image courtesy Library of Congress.
Figure. 11

Forestry Pavilion,
Exposition Universelle, Paris, France,
albumen print, 1889
Image courtesy Library of Congress.
Figure. 12

Gifford Pinchot in a larch grove with children of a local forester, Bonn, France, 1889, Washington Office #1158,
Image courtesy USFS Region 1 Archives.
Figure. 13

An exceedingly productive Spruce forest, Bavaria
Photograph by Gifford Pinchot, ca. 1890.
Figure. 14

Masonry dams built to control torrent. Students of French Forestry School to the right, French Alps. Photograph by Gifford Pinchot, ca. 1889
Figure 15

Group of Spruce under beech.
Germany, Photograph by Gifford Pinchot, ca. 1890.
Figure. 16

Top: Present Condition of Central Park,
Bottom: Effect Desired of Central Park, Photograph & Drawing Composite
Frederick Law Olmsted, 1858,
Image courtesy Municipal Archives City of New York.
Biltmore Forest An Account of its Treatment, and the Results of the First Year’s Work
Photograph by Gifford Pinchot, 1893
Image courtesy North Carolina State University Special Collections.
Figure 18

_Biltmore Forest An Account of its Treatment, and the Results of the First Year’s Work_
Photograph by Gifford Pinchot, 1893
Image courtesy North Carolina State University Special Collections.
Figure. 19

Dredge cutting a logging canal in a cypress swamp.

North Carolina Geological Survey Bulletin
Photograph by Gifford Pinchot, 1897.
Image courtesy North Carolina Special Collections.
Figure. 20

*Timber Trees: Forests of North Carolina*
Photographs by Gifford Pinchot, 1897.
Image courtesy North Carolina Special Collections.
Figure. 21

Monte Cristo
Photograph by Gifford Pinchot
Image courtesy USFS; Washington Office #730.
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