Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement: 1900-1916

Carolyn Merchant
University of California, Berkeley

Nowhere has women's self-conscious role as protectors of the environment been better exemplified than during the progressive conservation crusade of the early twentieth century. Although that role has been rendered all but invisible by conservation historians, women transformed the crusade from an elite male enterprise into a widely based movement. In so doing, they not only brought hundreds of local natural areas under legal protection, but also promoted legislation aimed at halting pollution, reforesting watersheds, and preserving endangered species. Yet this enterprise ultimately rested on the self-interested preservation of their own middle-class life styles and was legitimated by the separate male/female spheres ideology of the nineteenth century aimed at conserving "true womanhood," the home, and the child.

In his book *The Fight for Conservation* (1910), Gifford Pinchot praised the women of the progressive era for their substantial contributions to conservation. He cited the conservation committee of the Daughters of the American Revolution (chaired by his mother), the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, "founded by ladies," which carried out some of the earliest work done in that state, the national forests preserved by Minnesota women, and the Calaveras Big Trees set aside by the women of California after a nine year fight.[1]

Writing his definitive history of the progressive conservation campaign in 1959, Samuel Hays also acknowledged the enthusiasm of women's organizations for conservation and their staunch support, until 1913, for Pinchot as leader of the movement. Historians Robert Welker (1955) and Stephen Fox (1981) amplified other female contributions, especially to the Audubon movement and the hiking clubs, while admitting that much remains to be learned regarding women's role in conservation.[2] Behind these brief tributes to their substantial contributions lies an untold story of immense energy, achievement, and dedication by thousands of women. Although only the most prominent women appear in recent historical studies, without the input of women in nearly every locale in the country, conservation gains in the early decades of the century would have been fewer and far less spectacular.

Fig. 1

Mrs. Lovell White
California Federation of Women's Clubs
Club Life, 4, no 6 (Feb. 1906)

In the nineteenth century, women had developed interests and organizations that paved the way for their work in the conservation and reform movements of the progressive era. Literary clubs oriented toward culture drew women together for mutual improvement and shared experiences, while the women's rights and abolition movements exposed them to the political process and the public arena. Leisure time had afforded middle and upper-class women opportunities for botanizing, gardening, birdlore, and camping. Propelled by a growing consciousness of the panacea of bucolic scenery and wilderness, coupled with the need for reform of the squalor of the cities, women burst vividly into the public arena in the early twentieth century as a force in the progressive conservation crusade.[3]

Who were these women of the conservation movement? What were their accomplishments, objectives, and ideals? How did they interact with the men who promoted conservation? What ideological framework did they bring to the crusade and to the conflicts that developed within it?

I. Feminist Conservation

The General Federation of Women's Clubs

In 1900, Mrs. Lovell White of San Francisco, (Fig. 1), the brilliant, dynamic founder and president of the women's California Club, took up the cause of forestry. Founded at the home of Mrs. White on a cold rainy evening in 1897 in the wake of the first and abortive California suffrage campaign — a campaign "brilliant, rich in experiences" with a "a spirit of wholesome comradeship," — the California Club merged in January of 1900 with women's clubs throughout the state to form the California Federation of Women's Clubs. With Mrs. Robert Burdette of Pasadena as president and Mrs. White as vice-president at large, the first meeting was steeped in conservation ideals.[4]

"The preservation of the forests of this state is a matter that should appeal to women," declared Mrs. Burdette in her opening address. "While the women of New Jersey are saving the Palisades of the Hudson from utter destruction by men to whose greedy souls Mount Sinai is only a stone quarry, and the women of Colorado are saving the cliff dwellings and pueblo ruins of their state from vandal destruction, the word comes to the women of California that men whose souls are gang-saws are meditating the turning of our world-famous Sequoias into planks and fencing worth so many dollars." The forests of the state, she went on, were the source of the state's waters and together they made possible the homes and health of the people of California. "Better one living tree in California, than fifty acres of lumberyard. Preserve and replant them and the State will be blessed a thousandfold in the development of its natural resources . . ."[5]

In the years that followed, Mrs. White, as President of the California Club's Outdoor Art League, President of the Sempervirens Club, and later Chair of the Forestry Committee of the General Federation of Women's Clubs made a national reputation "working unceasingly in behalf of forestry." "Whenever her name is associated with any project," asserted a tribute to her in 1906, "it is looked upon as a guarantee of success for the very good reason that she has engineered so many undertakings by her executive strength and progressive spirit."[6]

In 1900 Mrs. White became alarmed by a report that the Calaveras Grove of Big Trees in the Stanislaus watershed of the western Sierra, discovered in 1850 and of world renown, was scheduled for cutting by an eastern lumber firm. The Big Trees, (**Sequoia gigantea**), were the largest known redwoods in existence, many measuring over 12 feet in diameter with bark up to two feet thick.[7]

In February of that year, Mrs. White asked Mrs. A.D. Sharon, a club member who was in Washington, to request the introduction of a joint resolution in Congress calling for the acquisition of the grove on behalf of the public. Success was immediate and too good to be true! In March Mrs. White received a telegram from Mrs. Sharon: "Bill passed House Friday, Senate Monday, President signed Tuesday."[8]

Mrs. White soon realized that the bill had only authorized negotiation to purchase. No funds had been appropriated. But with cutting delayed owing to the owner's cooperation with the law, Mrs. White as president of the Outdoor Art League began a nationwide campaign for purchase of the trees as a national park.

After a bill failed to pass the house in 1904, she organized a petition drive that collected 1,500,000 signatures and was endorsed by dozens of national organizations. Upon its presentation to President Theodore Roosevelt, the first special presidential message was sent to Congress "at the request of an organization managed by women," urging preservation of the groves. In addition, Mrs. White arranged to have large photographs of the most prominent trees, named after presidents and generals of the United States, sent to key congressional committees.[9]

With Congress still refusing to act, Mrs. White embarked on a personal campaign to lobby every senator and representative in Congress. Finally in 1909 a bill was passed and signed by Roosevelt that authorized exchange of the Calaveras Groves for lands of equal value in the U.S. Forest Reserves. Hailed as a great triumph by the Women's Clubs, preservation of the Big Trees was not yet achieved. No lands satisfactory for the exchange could be found by the owner, Mr. Whiteside. The situation remained in limbo until 1926, when announcement was made of plans to cut the South Grove. At that point the fight was taken up by Mrs. Harriet West Jackson who as president of the Calaveras Grove Association determined to press for a state park in lieu of the national park originally authorized. With the assistance of the Calaveras Garden Club, the North Grove was finally set aside in 1931. But not until 1954, largely through a statewide education campaign conducted by Mrs. Owen Bradley, did the South Grove become part of the state park system.[10]

Mrs. Lovell White was also the president of the Sempervirens Club that in cooperation with the California Federation of Women's Clubs and the Women's Club of San Jose succeeded in creating the Big Basin State Park that preserved large stands of California's other redwood, **Sequoia sempervirens**. In 1900 Mrs. Carrie Walter and Mrs. Louise Jones of the San Jose Women's Club joined a party of six other individuals including representatives of the Sierra Club, the City of San Francisco, photographers and nature lovers. The party spent several days in Big Basin camping in "tents on the bank of a clear stream, fringed with azaleas, and shaded by giant redwoods." Sitting around the campfire in the evening, they discussed a strategy for the preservation of the sequoias.[11]

The upshot was the formation of the Sempervirens Club (later known as the Save the Redwoods League) composed of men and women under the guiding hand of Mrs. White who were dedicated to saving the area from the saw. After securing an option on the land, the club conducted an education campaign through photographs, circulars, newspapers, schools, civic organizations and the women's clubs. A bill introduced into the state legislature in 1901 was bitterly opposed by business interests, lumber companies, and politicians. Finally the Assembly, convinced by public opinion, passed the bill and the Senate followed by a narrow margin. Through a statewide telegram campaign, intense pressure was put on the governor to sign in the last days of the veto period, and finally Big Basin became a state redwood park.[12]

Recognizing the need for trained men to manage and protect the state forests, the women of the California Club in 1903 drew up a bill to be introduced into the State Legislature to establish a School of Forestry at the University of California, Berkeley. At that time the only three schools

of forestry in the U.S. were all on the East Coast, and West Coast forests presented special problems. In her plea to club women to use their influence to support passage of the bill, Mrs. George Law Smith, president of the forestry section of the California Federation argued, "The need of guarding against forest fires and of lumbering the tracts, so that the industry may be permanent, necessitates the establishment of a School of Forestry where a sufficient corps of trained men may be graduated to take charge of the forests and administer them scientifically . . . In view of the vast and many sided interests involved your help is solicited to secure from the Legislature an appropriation to establish a school of forestry at the University of California, Berkeley."[13]

While these efforts were underway in California, across the country in Minnesota, Mrs. Lydia Phillips Williams of the Minnesota Federation was organizing a repeal of the "Dead and Down Timber Act" in order to save the Chippewa Forest Reserve from "Board Feet" lumbermen. With Mrs. Mira Lloyd Dock, a "whirlwind" on the Pennsylvania Forestry Commission and fifty other women, Mrs. Phillips chartered a steamer for an excursion into the reserve to create publicity for the repeal. Predictably, one of the two available steamers was discovered to have blown a boiler, while the other had been engaged a few hours before by a lumberman for a week. Undaunted, the women engaged the aid of a visiting boiler inspector, blacksmiths, carpenters, and plumbers who readied the ailing steamer for departure the following noon.[14]

Soon after setting out, they discovered a number of beautiful old pines that had been burned at the root, thereby qualifying for cutting under the act. "Not a leaf, twig, or grass blade was scorched, there was no sign of tramp or camper, but on examining the burning in the noblest tree of all the group, we discovered a small kerosene lamp almost melted down." That trophy of the expedition became the symbol of the women's campaign to save the reserve.[15]

Upon their return, women were sent to Washington to interview wavering congressmen who favored the Dead and Down Law. They told them: " 'We represent the State Federation of Women's Clubs, which has a membership of between six and seven thousand and you know that six or seven thousand women represent six or seven thousand husbands and a few thousand sons who will possibly vote as their fathers vote.' Some two weeks later, having retired from the field, we dared to send a batch of petitions to this same member and received his gracious reply: . . . 'I desire to assure you, if I can advance the interests of the forest reserve movement in any way, command my service at any time.' "[16]

Nationally, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, founded in 1890 had been active in forestry since the turn of the century as part of a felt obligation to become informed on the most urgent political, economic, and social issues of the day. Selecting women in each state who were familiar with the principles of forestry to head the clubs' forestry committees, local members first conducted campaigns to save waste paper and clean up their towns and cities. They formed coalitions with civic organizations engaged in the beautification of yards, vacant lots, school yards, and public buildings by planting trees and shrubs. Following the example of German women, with whom they corresponded, they planted long avenues of shade trees. They also worked toward the acquisition and

preservation of wooded tracts of land wherein "Nature should be left unrestrained."[17]

Local forestry committees formed study groups that emphasized both aesthetic and utilitarian aspects of forestry as the conservation of wood and water. The Forest Service provided literature and sent guest lecturers on trees and forestry to club meetings. *Century* magazine supplied them with articles on conservation, while local libraries were encouraged to acquire books on forestry. With these aids women avidly identified individual species and studied family characteristics and uses. Some, with the aid of a microscope, went on to study individual parts or to count tree rings. Others prepared topics for discussion or conducted research in the mythology and poetry associated with a given species.[18]

In addition to keeping 800,000 members informed of the conservation policies and achievements of Roosevelt and Pinchot, the General Federation's Forestry Committee played an influential role in the passage of legislation to protect forests, waters, and birdlife. Under the direction of Mrs. Lydia Phillips Williams (1904-6), who had been active in the movement to preserve Minnesota's forests, Mary Gage Peterson (1906-8), an enthusiastic conservationist who had learned forestry at the family's Peterson Nursery in Chicago and on her numerous excursions to forests in Norway, Sweden, and Germany, Mrs. F.W. Gerard (1908-10) from Connecticut, and Mrs. Lovell White (1910-12), who had established a national reputation in saving the Calaveras Big Trees, the committee coordinated efforts to support such projects as the creation of national forest reserves in New Hampshire and the Southern Appalachians and passage of the Weeks Bill for protection of the watersheds of navigable streams. In 1910, 283 clubs reported that they had sent letters and petitions for state and national legislation on forest fire laws, tax remission for reforestation, and the appropriation of demonstration forests, while 250 clubs were active in the movement for bird and plant protection.[19]

The Massachusetts clubs published a *Directory of Historical Trees* that marked the location of some important historical event or were preserved for posterity as in the case of the seventy year old Avery Oak rescued from certain fate as planking for "Old Ironsides." In 1904 the women conducted a campaign to exterminate the gypsy and brown-tail moths that attacked New England trees. Men, women, children and "self-supporting undergraduates" turned out to paint gypsy moth nests with creosote and to burn brown tail nests. Clubs obtained creosote at 50¢ a gallon from dealers in Boston, along with half pint oyster cans and brushes.[20]

In Florida, club women were instrumental in creating state forest reserves, while the women of Maine were active in setting aside Mt. Katahdin as a state forest. In Louisiana, Mrs. John Wilkinson organized a State Forestry Association to work for forestry legislation and then in 1908 went on to organize the Federation's Waterways Committee.[21]

The star of Pennsylvania's conservation efforts was Mira Lloyd Dock, the only woman to become a Pennsylvania State Forestry Commissioner. In 1897 she presented a paper on "Forestry" to the Federation of Pennsylvania Women, and an important 1904 paper became a standard reference for local forestry committees. In 1912, as vice-chairman of the Federation's Conservation Department she presented a lengthy summa-

tion of conservation efforts in Pennsylvania that included many achievements of women.[22]

In 1886, she reported, the Pennsylvania Forestry Association was organized by "some ladies of Philadelphia." Thereafter women were active in the effort to authorize the State Forest Reserves, initial purchases for which were made in 1897. In 1911 the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women was created to provide practical education in field, laboratory, and greenhouse work as well as marketing, and Dr. Caroline Rumbold, who had graduated from the University of Munich, was put in charge of a special state commission for eradication of the Chestnut tree blight with an operating budget of $275,000.[23]

The lobbying efforts of women resulted in the creation of the Pennsylvania Department of Forestry. According to a clipping in the *Journal of the American Forestry Association* in 1909, "the State of Pennsylvania never would have had that department if it had not been for the organized efforts of the women of Pennsylvania . . . On the morning the bill for this matter was under consideration, every desk in the House of Representatives and the State Senate was flooded with petitions from the women and their husbands . . . The women of the state made it impossible to kill it."

In 1909, under the leadership of Mrs. John Wilkinson of Louisiana, the Federation formed a Waterways Committee to promote the development of water power, clean water, and cheaper, higher volume transportation. The rationale for women's involvement lay in the effect of waterways on every American home: Pure water meant health; impure meant disease and death. Additionally, beautification of waterfronts, as had occurred in the watertowns of Europe, would lead to patriotism and love of one's country.

Soon water conservation projects were underway in 39 states and 619 clubs including the establishment of reference libraries, community plans for pure drinking water, and sanitary waterfronts. Public campaigns took place to introduce conservation education into the schools in the form of textbooks, speakers, conferences, newspaper publicity, and pamphlets. In many states such as Delaware, women held contests for school children and awarded prizes for the best essays on waterways. They conducted public education campaigns on the importance of the conservation of natural resources and of clean water and waterfronts.[26]

Joseph Ransdell, chair of the National Rivers and Harbors Committee speaking to the Tenth Biennial Convention of the Federation in 1910, acknowledged the important contributions of the women's clubs to conservation. "I appeal to you as a representative of the men who need and wish the help of women. We know that nothing great or good in this world ever existed without the women. We consider our movement one of the greatest and best ever inaugurated in the union and we know that women can help us."

In 1910 the Federation reorganized its forestry and waterways committees under a Department of Conservation headed by Mrs. Emmons Crocker of Fitchburg, Massachusetts and added a birdlife representative, Mrs. Francis B. Hornbrooke, also of Massachusetts. This Department sent representatives to the Second National Conservation Congress in St. Paul

Fig. 2

Lydia Adams-Williams

A writer and lecturer on Conservation.

Forestry and Irrigation, 14 (June 1908) p. 350

Minnesota in 1910 and the National Irrigation Congress at Pueblo, Colorado.[28]

Mrs. Crocker was an exceptionally knowledgeable and dynamic individual. She addressed the Federation's Tenth Biennial Convention in 1910 on the subject of national waste, and delivered a comprehensive report on the activities of the Conservation Department to the 11th Biennial in 1912.[29] At the 1912 National Conservation Congress, she was enthusiastically received when she lectured on the scientific foundation of the conservation of natural resources and its relation to life in its broadest sense.

> If we do not follow the most scientific approved methods, the most modern discoveries of how to conserve and propagate

> and renew wherever possible those resources which Nature in her providence has given to man for his use but not abuse, the time will come when the world will not be able to support life and then we shall have no need of conservation of health, strength, or vital force, because we must have the things to support life or else everything else is useless.[30]

The forest, she observed, provided the basic support system on which life depended — it made humus, conserved soil minerals, prevented soil and wind erosion, staved off pollution, and through the marvelous action of chlorophyll converted "carbonic acid gas" (CO_2) into pure air. Water conservation was equally essential because water power conserved coal which in turn "conserves the purity of our atmosphere." A pure water supply thus conserved human health, strength and life. Waxing eloquent about the interconnectedness of all life, Mrs. Crocker excoriated those in her audience who downgraded the value of animal life by reducing it to a pastime for sentimentalists. Women should play a direct role in conservation by refusing to wear hats decorated with feathers, not only of the endangered egret, but less choice species as well.[31]

During the period 1907-1912, women contributed notices, news items, reports, and articles to *Forestry and Irrigation,* the journal of the American Forestry Association. They pointed out women's work to save forests in places such as Colorado, Vermont, Maine, and New York, printed lengthy summaries of progress in conservation as reported at the Federation's biennial meetings, and announced protest actions such as that taken by Mrs. D.M. Osborne of Auburn, New York who, outraged by telephone pole workers who had mercilessly trimmed her trees without permission, "drove off the workmen and cut down the poles."[32]

Mrs. Lydia Adams-Williams, (Fig. 2), a self-styled feminist conservation writer and member of the Women's National Press Association was particularly vociferous in her efforts to popularize women's accomplishments. Her article "Conservation — Women's Work," (1908) in which she characterized herself as the first woman lecturer and writer on conservation, complained that "man has been too busy building railroads, constructing ships, engineering great projects, and exploiting vast commercial enterprises" to consider the future. Man the moneymaker had left it to woman the moneysaver to preserve resources. She placed women's role in conservation squarely in the context of feminist history:

> To the intuition of Isabella of Spain, to her tenacious grasp of a great idea, to her foresight and her divine sympathy the world is indebted for the discovery of a great continent for the civilization we enjoy today and for the great wealth of resources . . . And as it was the intuitive foresight of a woman which brought the light of civilization to a great continent, so in great measure, will it fall to woman in her power to educate public sentiment to save from rapacious waste and complete exhaustion the resources upon which depend the welfare of the home, the children, and the children's children.[33]

In "A Million Women for Conservation," (1908) again taking liberal notice of her own accomplishments, Mrs. Adams-Williams discussed the resolutions passed by the women's clubs in support of the conservation

efforts of Roosevelt, Pinchot, the Inland Waterways Commission, the Forest Service, the Geological Survey, and the American Mining Congress. The Federation in Washington, D.C., of which she was a member, was the first to pass these resolutions followed by four other national women's organizations the combined membership of which totalled one million.[34]

The General Federation began to play an important role in the national conservation movement by 1908. The president of the Federation, Mrs. Sarah Platt Decker of Denver, was the only representative of a woman's organization at the White House Governor's Conference on Conservation in 1908, although she was not invited to speak. Mrs. F.W. Gerard of Connecticut, chair of the Forestry Committee for the years 1908-1910, attended the Conference of the National Conservation Commission held in Washington in December of 1908 as a follow-up to the Governor's Conference.[35]

Mrs. Philip N. Moore, (Fig. 3), president of the Federation from 1908-1910, was a member of the executive committee of the National Conservation Congress during its first four years, was a presiding officer in 1912, and became its vice-president in 1913. Tribute was paid by the president of the Congress to her "rare ability" to organize and preside over large numbers of enthusiastic women. Mrs. Moore of St. Louis, Missouri, a leader in educational and philanthropic work, was born in Rockford, Illinois, graduated from Vassar College, and later became one of its trustees. She had been active for many years at the local, state, and national levels of the Federation. The voice of Mrs. Moore and dozens of other women were heard loudly and forcefully at the National Conservation Congresses held from 1909-1912.[36]

Woman's National Rivers and Harbors Congress

In 1908, seven women in Shreveport, Louisiana banded together to form the Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress that would cooperate with the National Rivers and Harbors Congress then headed by Joseph E. Ransdell. Within fourteen months, under the leadership of its president, Mrs. Hoyle Tomkies, it had grown to 20,000 members and had held a national congress in Washington, D.C. at which twenty states were represented. By 1910, its membership had risen to 30,000 (including a few men), represented thirty-nine states and territories, and was cooperating with other women's conservation organizations. A chapter of fifty women was formed in Honolulu, Hawaii as a result of efforts by the Women's College Club of Hawaii, the governor and his wife, and the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.[37]

On the state and national levels the Congress worked to support rivers and harbors bills on waterway development and urged passage of the bill for the preservation of Niagara Falls in the spring of 1909. It pressed for clean shores and streams, held conferences and public gatherings to educate the public, and sent lecturers to churches to preach on the "moral standpoint" of conservation.[38]

On a local level the members focused on introducing conservation education into the schools, conveying to the nation's children their responsibility to save the country's natural resources. The Congress sponsored essay contests and met with teachers and clubs in an effort to create public awareness. The chapter in Honolulu worked with senior high school

Fig. 3

Mrs. Philip N. Moore
of St. Louis, Mo.,
Vice-President, Fifth National Conservation Congress
Proceedings of the Fourth National Conservation Congress
(Indianapolis, 1912), p. 48.

students to begin reforestation of the Punchbowl area of the city.

At the First Conservation Congress in 1909 in Seattle, Margaret Russell Knudsen of Hawaii, representing the Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress, spoke of the importance of women's work in water conservation:

> It has been said that this is a woman's age and surely the signs of that fact are not wanting, for within these beautiful grounds of the Exposition are still echoing . . the stirring words of eloquence and power of some of the foremost women of the world . . . who have journeyed not only from distant states . . . but from capitals of Europe to discuss the great questions of the day.[39]

As Mrs. Tomkies expressed it, "Our work is mainly to educate upon the subject . . . We are putting forth all the energy and influence we can muster for the cause, lest the enemy come while we are sleeping and sow in the peoples' minds the tares of 'individualism' and non-conservation."[40]

Like the General Federation, the Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress sent articles to *Forestry and Irrigation* for the purpose of heightening the public awareness by covering "the nation with a network of information that will in time bring men and women to a full realization of our country's possibilities for permanent prosperity, and to demonstrate . . . the rapid and sure decadence of the country unless the national government takes the conservation of these in hand."[41] Mrs. Lydia Adams-Williams, the corresponding secretary of the Congress, reported on the meeting held in Washington, D.C. in December 1908 at which Gifford Pinchot praised the women as "a power in any work they undertake." Frederick Newell "traced the forestry movement from its inception, about twenty years ago, at a meeting with a handful of people — 'mostly women, who loved trees' — to its present great proportions." Mrs. Tomkies noted that if the Women's Congress only had more money to spend on promotion, the Congressmen of the U.S. would have to plead as had a Colorado legislator when he wrote to the President of the General Federation of Women's Clubs: "Call off your women. I'll vote for your bill."

The Daughters of the American Revolution

In 1909 Mrs. Mathew T. Scott was elected President General of the 77,000 member Daughters of the American Revolution. A representative of the more liberal wing of the DAR who had recently defeated the conservatives in a national election, Mrs. Scott was an enthusiastic conservationist who encouraged the maintenance of a conservation committee consisting of 100 members representing every state. The chair of this committee was Mrs. James Pinchot, mother of Gifford Pinchot, who by that token as well as her conservation efforts was said to have "done more for the cause of conservation than any other woman."[43]

Pinchot himself addressed the 18th DAR Congress in Washington in 1909, praising the members for their efforts against "land grabbers" and suggesting certain conservation projects for further action. At the 1912 convention Pinchot thanked the women for their efforts in aiding the passage of the Alaska coal bill, the LaFollette legislation regulating grazing, and invited them to take up the cause of water power. The DAR Pinchot said on another occasion, "spells only another name for the highest form of conservation, that of vital force and intellectual energy."[44]

Other conservation efforts of the DAR were directed toward the preservation of the Appalachian watersheds, the Palisades, and Niagara Falls (then threatened by over-usage of water by power companies). In

fact, as Mrs. Carl Vrooman pointed out to the National Conservation Congress of 1911, "these 77,000 women do indeed represent a perfect Niagara of splendid ability and force — enough, if intelligently directed, to furnish the motive power to keep revolving all the wheels of progress in this country." In 1905-6 women nationwide had responded to Horace MacFarland of the American Civic Association whose editorials in the *Ladies' Home Journal* on the preservation of Niagara Falls had produced tens of thousands of letters to Congress.[45]

DAR members worked to generate publicity and enthusiasm for conservation and forestry in their communities. The conservation committee sent letters to state governors asking advice on how they could best help each state's conservation efforts. "Most of the governors," reported Mrs. Jay Cooke Howard, "preferred to have us turn our attention to the children rather than to the men." The DAR's newsletter therefore ran a conservation column for its members' use explaining how to inculcate in children the virtues of conservation over wastefulness along with other DAR values of truth, patriotism, and obedience.[46]

The DAR's President General, Mrs. Scott, was an advocate of scientific agriculture as a branch of conservation. A widow who managed a 20,000 acre model farm in Illinois, she paid her employees' expenses to attend the state agricultural college. She also wholeheartedly supported agriculture as a profession for women.[47]

The Audubon Movement

The post-civil War resurgence of high fashion for ladies had, by the end of the century, taken an immense toll on American bird-life in the creation of exotic styles in millinery. Bird feathers and whole birds nestled atop the heads of society's upper and middle-class women. Bonnets of "saphire blue-velvet trimmed with flowers and a gay colored bird;" hats of ruby velvet trimmed with lace, birds, and aigrette; and "coquettishly bent hat(s) of white leghorn, with . . . trimmings of white plumes and chiffon" were thought to lend a chic, elegant air to milady.[48]

By the decade of the 1880s, hundreds of thousands of song birds, swallows, Baltimore orioles, egrets, and terns had been sacrificed to the whims of fashion and the pockets of milliners. Editorials in *Field and Stream* during the years 1883-4 called attention to the national tragedy and recommended laws for bird protection. Responding to the urgent need, the American Ornithologists' Union in 1886 prepared a bulletin, published as a supplement to *Science* with 100,000 copies issued separately, presenting a "Model Law" for the protection of birds and a collection of articles documenting the wholesale destruction of birds, appealing on their behalf to the ladies of the country.[49]

The first Audubon societies, organized in 1886, protested the "abominable" habit of wearing feather fashions. Growing rapidly to 30,000 members in six months and encouraged by the passage of laws in

New York and Pennsylvania, the Societies' founders began publication of *Audubon Magazine* in 1887. Women who sought to educate their sisters to the peril of birds formed Audubon clubs, such as the one at Smith College where two young female students developed a plan to protect plume birds.

> 'Go to it,' said they. 'We will start an Audubon Society. The birds must be protected; we must persuade the girls not to wear feathers in their hats.' 'We won't say too much about the hats, though,' these plotters went on. 'We'll take the girls afield, and let them get acquainted with the birds. Then of inborn necessity they will wear feathers never more.'[50]

"Birding" rapidly caught on at Smith with early morning field trips led by luminaries such as John Burroughs, or by student observers who aroused enthusiasm for living rather than dead plumage.

This early movement, however, was doomed. It received no national press attention after 1889. Audubon Magazine ceased publication that year and by 1895 the A.O.U. was hopelessly discouraged by the rampant wearing of feathers.[51]

Then the tide turned. Within three years Audubon Clubs and state societies sprang spontaneously into existence in Massachusetts, where the vice-presidents included Mrs. Louis Agassiz, president of Radcliffe college, and Mrs. Julia J. Irving, president of Wellesley, in Pennsylvania, New York, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Iowa, Minnesota, Rhode Island, and the District of Columbia. In 1898 a score of ladies met in Fairfield, Connecticut to form the Audubon society of the State of Connecticut, electing as president Mrs. Mabel Osgood Wright, (Fig. 4), popular author of *The Friendship of Nature* (1894), *Birdcraft* (1895), *Birds of Village and Field* (1898), numerous articles in the *New York Times* and *Evening Post,* and nature stories for children.[52]

Soon thereafter, with the publication in 1899, of the first issue of the Audubon Societies' new official journal, *Bird Lore*, Mrs. Wright took on the task of editing the magazine's Audubon section and of reporting the latest developments in the politics of bird preservation. She requested that the secretaries of the initial nineteen state societies, all but one of whom were women, send news and notes to broaden and strengthen the movement. Contributors to the journal, in addition to Mrs. Wright, included women writers such as Olive Thorne Miller, author of the popular *Bird Ways* (1885), *In Nesting Time* (1888), *Little Brothers in the Air* (1892), and *A Bird Lover in the West* (1894); Florence A. Merriam (Bailey) who wrote *Birds Through an Opera Glass* for young people in 1889 and *A-Birding on a Bronco* (1896) modeled on Mrs. Miller's earlier success; and Neltje Blanchan (Doubleday) among whose achievements were *Bird Neighbors* (1897) and *Birds That Hunt and Are Hunted* (1898), and many other women who sent in short articles of general interest.[53]

Two sex-linked issues dominated the early years of *Bird Lore*: the protection of game birds from male hunters and nests from boy egg-thieves, and the protection of plume birds from extinction in the cause of ladies' fashions. In 1897, Julia Stockton Robbins reported that a 'hat show' conducted by the Pennsylvania Audubon Society had resulted in the establishment of Audubon Departments by many milliners. In Chicago

wholesale milliners cut down on the use of egret and wild bird feathers and began using domestic ones instead. In Wisconsin the aid of both clergymen and milliners was enlisted in a broad protection campaign. At the New York State Audubon Society's second annual meeting "Madame Lilli Lehmann whose love of animals was perhaps greater than her love of music, made an eloquent appeal to women to cease from feather-wearing." In Rhode Island, according to secretary Annie Grant, an "Audubonnet" display of 150 beautiful and attractive feather hats demonstrated that they could be made without the plumage of wild birds.[54]

Fig. 4

Mrs. Mabel Osgood Wright
President Connecticut Audubon Society
Bird-Lore 15 (1913)

Frank Chapman, general editor of the magazine put the responsibility for defying fashion directly on the women themselves: "Is there no appeal from fashions' decree? Woman alone can answer these questions and the case is so clear she cannot shirk the responsibility of replying."[55]

For a time the campaign seemed to be gaining ground. But in 1900 an inexplicable resurgence in fashion feathers from terns, gulls, and grebes took immense tolls along the Atlantic seaboard and Mrs. Wright called on the members for increased action. By this time only five states had passed the A.O.U. "Model Law." Nevertheless, during the first decade of the twentieth century public consciousness over conservation and reform helped to rout the milliners and plume-hunters. By 1905, twenty-eight states had passed the "Model Law" and Audubon societies were calling for international cooperation, particularly from the British where the plume trade centered. Bird reservations, patrolled by Audubon wardens, had been created in many states and the Thayer fund established to raise money for legislation and enforcement efforts.[56]

Still, however, the sale of white "aigrette" feathers increased at such an unprecedented rate that white egrets and "snowy herons," seemed doomed to extinction. All known rookeries were continually pillaged during the breeding season when the beautiful "nuptial" feathers (or aigrettes) appeared, with death to the parent and certain starvation for the young. After feathers were pulled, the birds were left to die or tied up as decoys. The Audubon Society appealed to the National Federation of Women's Clubs for help: "The club women of America with their powerful influence should take a strong stand against the use of wild birds' plumage, and especially against the use of the Aigrette . . . . A close affiliation between this Association and the National Federation of Women's Clubs would be mutually helpful."[57]

In 1903, an impassioned plea by women to women against the wearing of egret feathers appeared in the California Federation of Women's Clubs' newsletter. "Remember ladies, that every aigrette in your hat costs the life of a tender mother. We see the evidence of wholesale destruction of birds in shop windows on the street, in cars, and everywhere . . . In order to have the plumage at its best, it is necessary in some instances to skin the birds alive . . . With each old bird killed . . . many of the young birds are still unable to care for themselves . . . At least women may desist from wearing any sort of plumage in their hats, as they have so repeatedly been urged to do."[58]

At the Conservation Congress of 1909, William Finley of the National Audubon Societies addressed the assemblage on the agricultural benefits of birds and urged that the vandalism of the plume hunters be halted. "As long as women demand these plumes, men will be found to supply them." At the close of the Congress, Miss Gillette of New York proposed a resolution, unanimously adopted, calling for forbearance in the wearing of any feathers that entailed the killing of wild birds, for the protection of nests, and for the education of children that they might learn "to love all birds of the earth."[59]

Mrs. Gerard, Chair of the General Federation of Women's Clubs' Forestry Committee appealed to the women at their 1910 Biennial Convention: "Our work for the Audubon Society is not as active as it should be. Can we logically work for conservation and expect to be listened to,

while we still continue to encourage the destruction of the song birds by following the hideous fashion of wearing song birds and egrets upon our hats? . . . If women can raise the freight rates, because of the size of their hats, they can reduce the insect pest by changing the trimming."[60]

Speaking to the 1912 Conservation Congress, Mrs. Crocker of the GFWC's Conservation Committee asked a personal favor of the women present: "This fall when you choose your fall millinery . . . I beg you to choose some other decoration for your hats . . . You have no idea what you do when you wear these feathers until you really think deeply into it, and I am not speaking of the egret . . . wholly, but of the less choice feathers. There is one exception to this rule and that is the wearing of the ostrich plume which are naturally shed and can be collected without killing the birds. Will you not spread this gospel, not only to yourselves, but all the other women need to be asked to do the same thing."[61]

In October 1913, a new Tariff Act was passed that outlawed the import of wild bird feathers into the United States. It was so vigorously enforced that newspapers were filled with accounts of "the words and actions of indignant ladies who found it necessary to give up their aigrettes, paradise plumes, and other feathers upon arriving from Europe. Two days after the new law went into effect, Audubon Save the Birds Hats were being advertised in New York for $5 to $15 apiece. Congratulations poured in from all over the world for the Audubon Society's great victory.[62]

So rare as to be on the verge of extermination a few years before, by 1915 egrets in guarded rookeries in the southern United States, numbered 10,580 along with 50,000 little blue herons and an equal number of ibis. Public opinion had shifted so far toward bird protection that far fewer "bad bird laws" were being introduced into state legislatures. The work of a decade and a half had begun to show results.[63]

II. Conservation Ideology

The Conservation Trilogy

Although the women of the organizations represented at the National Conservation Congresses were public activists in their local communities, they nevertheless accepted the traditional sex roles assigned to them by late nineteenth century American society as caretakers of the nation's homes, husbands, and offspring, supporting rather than challenging the two spheres ideology of the nineteenth century.

At the National Congresses, women repeatedly called on the traditions assigned them by society in justifying the public demands they were making. Unwilling and unable to break out of these social roles, and supported by the men of the Congresses, they drew on a trilogy of slogans — conservation of womanhood, the home, and the child.

The Conservation of True Womanhood

The "conservation of true womanhood" was a subject repeatedly stressed by women at the Conservation Congresses. Mrs. Scott of the DAR pleaded "as the representative of a great National organization of the women of the land, for the exalting, for the lifting up in special honor, of the Holy Grail of Womanhood."[64]

Speaking to the Conservation Congress of 1909, Mrs. Overton Ellis of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, called conservation "the surest weapon with which women might win success." Centuries of turning last night's roast into hash, remaking last year's dress and controlling the home's resources had given women a heightened sense of the power of the conservation idea in creating true womanhood. "Conservation in its material and ethical sense is the basic principle in the life of woman . . . ."[65]

In her presidential address to the General Federation's Tenth Biennial Meeting in 1910, Mrs. Philip N. Moore set conservation in its context for women as "no new word, no new idea," but a unifying theme for the contributions of women to society as the conservors of life.[66]

Mrs. Carl Vrooman, also of the DAR, emphasized the ideal woman's subservience to the man in conservation. "We may not, it is true, formulate any new policies for you, or launch any issues, or make any very original contributions to your program, but there is one thing women can bring to a movement of this kind — an atmosphere that makes ideas sprout and grow, and ideals expand and develop and take deeper root in the subsoil of the masculine mind."[67]

The Conservation of the Home

The home as the domain of true womanhood became the second theme in the conservation trilogy. The National Congress of Mothers, represented by Mrs. Orville Bright of Chicago, dedicated itself to conservation of natural resources for "the use, comfort, and benefit of the homes of the people." Mrs. Bright adopted the utilitarian philosophy of the progressives in stressing that conservation primarily benefitted human life rather than other organisms, since the fate of forests, land, waters, minerals, or food would be of little consequence were there "no men, women, and children to use and enjoy them."[68]

Margaret Russell Knudsen of Hawaii, of the Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress argued at the 1909 Conservation Congress that conservation of the home was the special mission of woman. The "mark of civilization was the arrival of woman on the scene . . . In no national movement has there been such a spontaneous and universal response from women as in this great question of conservation. Women from Maine to the most Western shore of the Hawaiian Islands are alive to the situation, because the home is woman's domain. She is the conserver of the race."[69]

Conservation of the Child

Third in the trilogy was the link between the conservation of natural resources and the conservation of the children and future generations of the United States. According to Mrs. John Walker, a member of the Kansas City chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution, woman's role

in conservation was dedicated to the preservation of life, while man's role was the conservation of material needs. "Woman, the transmitter of life" must therefore care for the product of life — future generations. The children of the nation should not be sacrificed to "factories, mills, and mines," but must be allowed "to enjoy the freedom of the bird and the butterfly . . . and all that the sweet breast of Nature offers so freely."[70]

Mrs. Overton Ellis of the General Federation of Women's Clubs promoted the conservation of children's lives at the 1909 Congress: "Women's supreme function as mother of the race gives her special claim to protection not so much individually as for unborn generations."[71] Mrs. Welch also of the General Federation asserted that what conservation really meant was conservation of child life. Because the unscrupulous use of child labor in the name of money, "the god of greed," was claiming the lives of children by the scores, without the conservation of children's health and well-being, the conservation of natural resources had no real meaning. The Federation was dedicated to "the enactment of laws which shall tend to the conservation of the vital forces represented in the mothers of the race and the children who are the country's future citizens."[72]

Women's Suffrage and the Conservation Movement

Although the women who attended the National Conservation Congresses were speaking out on public affairs of interest to the nation's welfare, they were limited in their influence on legislation through lack of the vote. By the time of the conservation congresses, several states (Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah) had given women the vote and a nationwide women's suffrage campaign was underway. Mrs. Scott of the DAR noted the possibility that women might sometime in the future "undertake, in addition to their other duties, the heavy responsibilities of the voter and political worker."[73] Although women representatives at the congresses did not have a platform that related suffrage to conservation, nevertheless, the issue was frequently mentioned.[74]

Although the General Federation of Women's Clubs did not take an official position on the extension of the vote to females until late in the suffrage movement, the issue was raised at the Federation's Tenth Biennial (1910). In her speech on "Equal Suffrage," Miss Kate N. Gordon, Vice-President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, cited the census of 1900 that had revealed that 117,632 more women than men in the United States were literate with the ratio constantly increasing owing to the vast influx of illiterate male immigrants. Women, she argued, should have the right to express an opinion through suffrage on matters of vital importance to their lives. Taxes, the milk supply, public health, education, and moral conditions were all issues that directly affected the sphere of the home, which through the female vote would be represented in the Legislatures. "We have never had a democracy," she asserted, "we have only had a sex oligarchy and . . . there are some men and women who are not satisfied with existing conditions resulting from a sex oligarchy . . . We don't want a man-made world; we don't want a woman-made world, but we want a world where the opinions of men and women rate equally and then, and not till then, will we have a true democracy."[75]

The anti-suffragists, however, also drew on conservation rhetoric — "the watchword of the hour" — in arguing against the extension of the

vote to women. Suffrage was not a "natural" right bestowed on human beings at birth, proclaimed Alice Chittendon of Brooklyn. On the contrary "in opposing the extension of suffrage to women, we are seeking to conserve woman's natural forces for the great work Nature has given her to do. The conservation of energy strengthens one's forces, while diffusion weakens them . . ." Scientific and biological evidence, she said, indicated that the "welfare of the State and Race" would suffer if the burden of suffrage were added to all the other responsibilities of womanhood. As civilization grew out of its savage state wherein women had had more power (as, for example, among the Iroquois, Lycians, and Saxons) to its present level of development, the "law of intended differentiation of sex activity" took effect. 'Each sex should have its own work to do . . . in the social and intellectual world,' she asserted, quoting a "recent writer,"[76] and concluded:

> A diffused energy cannot be a vitalizing one . . . If woman must now assume the responsibilities and duties of political life — if she must do man's work in addition to her own, it will mean a diffusion of her own natural powers and energies, and we shall have deterioration and not progress . . . I would have woman seriously consider whether she may not better serve her day and generation by conserving her God-given powers for her own great work as a Home-maker, rather than diffuse her forces by seeking to do man's work also.[77]

III. Denouement

The Fifth National Conservation Congress opened in Washington, D.C. on November 18, 1913 and proceeded for three days. Its vice-president, Mrs. Philip N. Moore of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, did not speak. Nor did any other woman from the Federation, the DAR, the Country Women's Clubs or the Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress. The sole female voice heard was Miss Mabel Boardman from the American Red Cross who lectured on "Conservation of Life in the Lumber Camps."[78]

American Forestry (the new name of the journal of the American Forestry Association) carried a full report on the meeting in its November issue. Descriptions of the activities of the Congress were accompanied by the portraits of fifty men who had chaired and worked on the committees. A photograph taken the night of the Forestry Banquet on November 19 showed some 160 men seated at round tables before a speakers' platform. Mrs. Philip N. Moore was not among them.[79]

A brief note in the Forestry Committee's report to the Congress seems to provide the explanation for the absence of women:

> The desirability of . . . an organization (to represent the mutual forestry and lumbering interests) was emphasized by the presence at (the Fourth National Congress in) Indianapolis (1912) of a number of men who were no longer in need of the general educational propaganda relative to the conservation of natural resources, but attended the Congress for the purpose of meeting progressive men in their own and related lines and securing specific information helpful in the solution of their own problems.

> The need for a working organization and a rallying point, where mutual and more or less technical problems may be discussed is felt particularly by the forestry and timber interests . . . the active workers desired an opportunity to exchange views on technical problems . . .[80]

Conservation and forestry had come of age as technical professions. As such they were no longer accessible to women. After 1912 the American Forestry Association ceased to print articles or news items on the work of women in forestry. Lydia Adams-Williams disappeared from the scene.[81]

A second explanation for the disappearance of women also seems plausible. That same year the popular nationwide struggle for the preservation of Hetch Hetchy Valley, a part of California's Yosemite National Park, reached its conclusion. With the passage of the Raker Act by Congress in 1913, the City of San Francisco won its long battle for a public water supply. The women of the conservation crusade had worked hard to preserve the valley as an integral part of the park.

Gifford Pinchot, the women's early inspiration and supporter in conservation efforts had taken the opposing side, recommending at the congressional hearings that a dam be constructed across the valley to serve the interests of thousands of city people rather than accommodate the needs of the few who camped and hiked in the area. The women's clubs, unable to support or understand Pinchot's position, openly split with his approach to conservation. From 1908 until 1913 they worked for preservation of the valley.[82]

Soon after a City of San Francisco referendum in November 1908 favored construction of the dam, John Muir had taken the Hetch Hetchy issue to the nation. Many in the conservation movement rallied to support its preservation through letters and telegrams to the House Committee on Public Lands which held hearings in January 1909. Among them were women who had camped in the valley, who were members of the Sierra Club or Appalachian Mountain Club, and who were opposed to the commercial use of such a scenic wonderland.[83]

Martha Walker of Los Angeles pointed out that "it would be a glittering example of our 'commercial spirit' were we to lose Hetch Hetchy." She had spent all her summers in the Sierras and was confident that soon easterners would "come to know the wonders of these high Sierra hillsides, with their gardens of beautiful flowers and great trees."[84]

Eva Channing of Boston who visited California in the summer of 1908 was a firm believer "in national parks and the right of people to have them safeguarded." Martha Haskell, also of Boston, who had camped there and wanted to preserve it for the people, pointed out that the cost to the nation was far greater than for San Francisco to seek water elsewhere. Grace Esther Dattle of San Jose, who had visited the valley, knew that it would one day be needed as an overflow for visitors to Yosemite.[85]

Others represented women's organizations or spoke on the basis of professional experience. Mrs. William Hanson of the Forestry Committee of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs wrote that those "imbued with the forestry spirit" were anxious to conserve remaining woodlands. Mary Worstell of New York City had lectured more than 150

times for the New York Board of Education on Yosemite National Park and her extensive travels in the Sierras. From Virginia City, Nevada came a telegram from Laura McDermott who was outraged that "America's greatest gift from the Creator is about to be sacrificed at the feet of Mammon." . . . "I am a graduate of the University of California, a botanist and hope to be a protector of nature's wilds," she concluded.[86]

Prominent among those testifying at the Senate hearings on February 10 was Harriet Monroe, Sierra Club enthusiast, editor of *Poetry Magazine*, and representative of 500 members of the Chicago Geographical Society and 5,000 members of the Saturday Walking Club. Her brief argued that irreparable injury would be done to the beauty of the valley:

> United States Army engineers and others have reported that San Francisco is exceptionally well placed for water supplies; that the present source may be developed to three times the present consumption; and that no less than 14 other sources are easily available. Why then should she be permitted like some ruthless Cleopatra, to dissolve this pearl without price in the cup she lifts to her lips?"[87]

After the House committee voted by only 8 to 7 in favor of the dam construction with a strong dissenting minority report, and the Senate failed to report the bill out of committee, the resolution was temporarily withdrawn. But the battle lines were only beginning to form.[88]

By December of 1909 Muir had begun to bombard the popular magazines with articles and photographs describing the scenic wonders of the valley. The *Federation Courier*, official organ of the California Women's Clubs, ran his "Brief Statement of the Hetch Hetchy Question" in December announcing that the bill would soon come before Congress. As president of the Society for the Preservation of National Parks (formed because the San Francisco based Sierra Club was divided 589 to 161 against the dam), Muir had collected the endorsement of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the California Federation, and many other State Federations who all adopted resolutions protesting the scheme. On the east coast the same article was carried in the Federation's *Woman of Today* published in Boston. By the end of 1910, 150 women's clubs throughout the country were actively engaged in the campaign to preserve Hetch Hetchy Valley.[89]

The women's support for preservation was viewed dimly by the men of the opposition. Marsden Manson, San Francisco's city engineer who supervised the surveys and plans for the dam, believed that his opponents consisted largely of "short-haired women and long-haired men" who were members of the "so-called nature-loving societies like the Apalachian [sic] Club of Boston, the Saturday Evening Walking Club of Chicago, **et id genus omne**." He maintained a "list of names and addresses of people objecting to (the) use of Hetch Hetchy," that included numerous women and believed it necessary to dispel fallacies perpetrated by "individuals and corporations acting behind the screen of well meaning and innocent nature lovers."[90]

Manson found an ally, however, in Caroline K. Sherman of Chicago who had met him on a visit to Yosemite and told the Forestry Department of the Chicago Federation of Women's Clubs of his "intimate ac-

quaintance with every tree, shrub and herb," of his "close study of the sequoias," and of his ancestor, John Clayton, "whom we all knew as the botanist for whom Claytonia was named." Assuring the club that he was not a "cold-blooded engineer, ignorant of forestry, and indifferent to beauty," while Muir although a poet and artist "could not speak with the authority of a sanitary engineer," she argued that health should come first and "then as much beauty as possible." She was convinced that she had "carried her audience completely" conveying to the women Manson's view that "monopolists professing to be interested in 'conservation' " were using the "holy word 'conservation' for conserving their own private interests."[91]

Because President Taft, who followed Roosevelt to the White House, and his secretary of the Interior Richard Ballinger were at odds with Pinchot, a decision on the question was temporarily postponed. But by the first year of the Wilson administration in 1913 the fate of the valley was sealed. With the new Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane, a San Francisco attorney, favoring the project, the House rapidly scheduled hearings for which the preservationists were unable to marshal forces. In September when the House passed the bill 183 to 43, preservationists nationwide threw themselves into the fray.[92]

The National Committee for the Preservation of Yosemite National Park headed by Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of *The Century*, and Charles Eliot, president of the First Conservation Congress circulated brochures on "The Hetch Hetchy Grab" and "The Invasion of Yosemite National Park." Among prominent citizens listed as preservationists for the park were Mrs. Emmons Crocker, chair of the Conservation Committee of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. On the committee, which represented most of the states of the union, were twenty-five women, some of whom, like Mrs. Philip N. Moore, were General Federation leaders now openly opposed to Pinchot. In fact the stance taken by women prompted William Kent, congressional representative from the San Francisco Bay Area to write to Pinchot that the conspiracy against the dam was "engineered by misinformed nature lovers and power interests working through the women's clubs."[93]

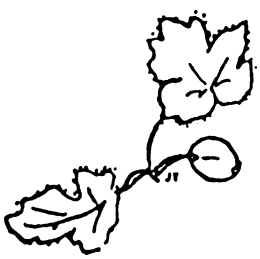
Although preservationists lost the battle over Hetch Hetchy in December 1913, they had aroused the nation. The passage of the National Parks Act in 1916 that established an administration in the Department of the Interior for the numerous parks created since 1872 gave them some compensation for its loss. Increasingly women availed themselves of opportunities to visit the National Parks and meet the challenges of wilderness outings.

The Sierra Club afforded women expanded opportunities for wilderness and on many club trips, female members began to outnumber males. More women than men had become members of the National Parks Association by 1929.[94]

On a national level the conservation movement slackened during the second decade of the twentieth century, with the erosion of government backing, the narrowing of support for Gifford Pinchot and the professionalization of forestry and water-power engineering. Although women were not active in the professions or as visible on the national level as they had been at the height of the conservation crusade, their interest in

the creation of parks, gardens, and bird preserves did not vanish with the decline of organized conservation. The General Federation of Women's Clubs continued to maintain a Conservation Committee, and the Audubon societies provided women with avenues for leadership as secretaries and presidents of local chapters. Constituting approximately 35% of the Audubon national membership in 1905, the number of women had risen to slightly over 50% by 1915.[95]

During the decade and a half that introduced the century, women's organizations had helped the nation to achieve enormous gains in the conservation of natural resources and the preservation of scenic landscapes. Yet the platform for promoting these objectives had been a mixed one. Working closely with the men of the movement, women frequently saw themselves as ideologically opposed to what they perceived as commercial and material values. Feminist and progressive in their role as activists for the public interest, they were nevertheless predominantly conservative in their desire to uphold traditional values and middle-class life styles rooted in these same material interests. These contradictions within the women's conservation movement, however, were in reality manifestations of the similar mixture of progressive and conservative tendencies that characterized the progressive era itself.



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