culture or landscape design or forestry were not just reporting on the latest discoveries in their respective fields, but were also participating in a larger cultural debate about the appropriate role of expertise in scientific research and in shaping public policy. This debate had profound national consequences, eventually broadening the responsibilities of the federal government and influencing the intellectual contours of modern America.

Contributors to Garden and Forest, for example, used the journal to boldly propose a new agenda for political action in the United States. Nowhere was this more evident than in the magazine’s advocacy of the emerging science of forestry, of which Sargent was a staunch supporter. Editorials calling for the preservation of the nation’s forested estate and editor Stiles’ aggressive solicitation of articles by foresters who shared these sympathies established Garden and Forest as the voice of those who sought closer federal supervision of public woodlands.

This demand was a tough sell, as its staff and writers recognized: Americans had little interest in federal land management, and no taste at all for the regulation of resource exploitation by a powerful bureaucracy, especially during a period when the Industrial Revolution was consuming vast quantities of timber. To change public opinion, they would have to disseminate counterarguments, a task that Garden and Forest supported with evident enthusiasm. In its ten volumes, the journal published an astonishing number of articles related to forestry—more than 450; together, they helped educate a populace that hitherto was ignorant about this science and its social significance.

Europeans, by contrast, knew a lot about the subject, benefitting from political cultures—either monarchical or republican—that assumed considerable power over public and private property: they had long experimented with forest management and had developed professional schools to promote research and educate forest managers. Americans who worried about the rapid disappearance of their forests were encouraged to study European models, first by George Perkins Marsh’s pathbreaking Man and Nature: The Earth as Modified by Human Action (1864), and later by Garden and Forest. In looking eastward, they resembled reformers in other fields who over the next seventy years would participate in a vibrant transatlantic exchange of ideas; these Americans—whether concerned about urban social services or devastated landscapes—

from THE AXE IN ITS RELATION TO ORNAMENTAL TREES.

It is a curious fact that Americans, who have destroyed more trees wastefully and foolishly than the people of any other country, and have stood and seen their forests, the envy of the rest of the world, swept away with hardly a voice raised in protest, are more unwilling than other people to use the axe in cases where the cutting of trees is really essential. A hundred square miles of forest may be swept by fire from some mountain range through the carelessness of an idle hunter, a mountain stream may be ruined, and the fertility of a smiling valley threatened. It is all taken as a matter of course, and is looked on as one of those unfortunate occurrences which the community is powerless to prevent. The forests of the national domain are robbed of their timber, and the public is satisfied with the simple acknowledgment of the general government that it has not the power or authority to protect its own property against the organized bands of plunderers who have been preying on it for a quarter of a century or longer. This indifference to trees when they are composing elements of the forest is a marked feature in American character, and is all the more marked from its contrast with our feelings about trees individually, especially trees which we have planted ourselves or have seen planted. When a tree is cut in one of the parks of this city there is a protest raised against the so-called barbarity of the act by a hundred voices which are silent about the destruction of the Adirondack forests. The protest in the one case is as much the result of ignorance and indifference as the silence in the other, and it is as necessary to use the axe, if the beauty and value of ornamental plantations are to be maintained, as it is to save the forests on the headwaters of important streams. . . .

[Editorial. Garden and Forest 3 (1890): 545]
readily accepted European prescriptions for resolving social ills through governmental intervention.2

Almost every number of Garden and Forest, for example, included news from abroad. One squib that editor Stiles inserted announced that a Société des Sylviculteurs de France et des Colonies had been formed “for the purpose of diffusing the knowledge of silviculture and increasing the popular interest in this art.” Why bother with such a minor event in France? Because the new organization’s ambitions mirrored those of the American magazine’s patrons and other readers. Stiles also made space for lengthy reviews of books that described the latest European advances in forestry science and devoted many columns to enthusiastic first-hand accounts of tours of forests in Russia and Italy, England, Germany, and France. Priority was given, however, to learned assessments of the transferability of the European experience to the New World. One of those who so argued was Gifford Pinchot, who while studying at L’École nationale forestière in Nancy, France, wrote a series of articles on European forestry for Garden and Forest. In one that compared various governmental forestry systems in Europe, he pointed out that the “principles which underlie not only German, but all rational forest-management, are true all the world over,” Gifford Pinchot observed, “but the methods into which the same principles have developed are as widely dissimilar as the countries in which they are being applied.” That being the case, there was one European country that “may best claim our attention”—Switzerland. Its “history of forestry . . . of peculiar interest to the people of the United States,” he suggested, “because in its beginnings may be traced many of the characteristics of the situation here and now, and because the Swiss, like the Americans, were confronted by the problem of a concrete forest-policy extending over the various states of a common union.”3

Other authors reached similar conclusions, and like Pinchot exemplified the opportunities inherent in cross-cultural fertilization: Carl A. Schenck, a German-born and -trained forester who managed George Vanderbilt’s vast forests at Biltmore, North Carolina, also established the first American forestry school there in 1898; that same year Bernard Fernow, his countryman, became the first head of Cornell’s School of Forestry after serving as the third chief of the U.S. Bureau of Forestry from 1886 to 1898. Pinchot, along with his family, underwrote the Yale School of Forestry in 1900. Throughout their careers as foresters and educators, each man was sensitive to the difficulty of importing cultural institutions,
but each knew that the development of forest management in America would initially depend on European ideas.4

Fernow and Pinchot in particular beat the drum for an augmented governmental presence on public lands, a position that Sargent seconded strongly in his editorial campaign for forest reservations. Moreover, their writings had educational value for a growing cadre of professional foresters that was just beginning to carve out a distinct niche within the field of landscape management. "If I say that forestry has nothing whatsoever to do with the planting of road-side trees, that parks and gardens are foreign to its nature . . . that scenery is altogether outside its province," Pinchot asserted in Garden and Forest in 1895, "I am making a conservative statement with which every forester will agree." Its connections with "arbiculture and landscape art" derive from the fact that "it employs to a certain extent the same raw material . . . but applies it to a wholly different purpose." American foresters, like their European counterparts before them, were staking out their turf.5

This assertion of professional specialization, when linked to the slow but significant growth of public support for an increased federal intervention in forestry management, was invaluable in developing a political movement devoted to conserving natural resources. It is of lasting significance that this new ethos of conservation, which would dominate early twentieth-century political discourse in America, found its first sustained and vivid expression in Garden and Forest.

Endnotes


3 Garden and Forest (hereafter, GeF) 4 [1891]. 22.


5 Char Miller and James G. Lewis, "A Contested Past: Forestry Education in the United States, 1898–1998," Journal of Forestry 97 (1999) 38–43; Gifford Pinchot, "The Need for Forest Schools in America," GeF 8 [1895]: 208; Sargent and Pinchot publicly disagreed on one aspect of the professionalization of forestry, namely, the use of military officers as forest guards on the nation's forests. Sargent favored training military officers in the principles of forestry, while Pinchot believed that only a professional civilian service was appropriate. GeF 3 [1890] 581, 3 [1891]: 9, 4 [1891]: 150; 9, 4 [1891]: 34–5. As intense as their disagreements would become, they were convinced that the federal government must patrol these valuable public lands, their care could not be left to the states or corporations.

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