The Evolution of Division

An Investigation of the Cultural Significance of Nature in America

A History by Zachary Strickland Johnson

All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts … That man is, in fact, only a member of a biotic team is shown by an ecological interpretation of history. Many historical events, hitherto explained solely in terms of human enterprise, were actually biotic interactions between people and land … Is history taught in this spirit? It will be, once the concept of land as a community really penetrates our intellectual life.

- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*[1]

[1] A quote taken from William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis*, Norton and Company, New York, New York, 1991, pg. 372

Often touted as the "largest wilderness park within city limits in the United States," Portland's Forest Park represents to all who experience its tranquil wooded setting an escape from the busied metropolitan confines of the city.[2] Throughout Forest Park's relatively short history many conservation groups in and around the Portland area are dedicated to "restor[ing] the native habitat of Forest Park."[3] Their goals include maintaining, preserving, protecting, and improving Forest Park "so as to enhance its value as an irreplaceable asset for wildlife habitat and for the use and enjoyment of the public."[4] Essentially these groups are striving to keep Forest Park *natural*. However, investigation into Forest Park's history reveals understanding Forest Park as natural forces Portlanders (and to a larger extent Americans) to ignore significant historical facts supporting the contrary. While these groups hold to an image of Forest Park as a representation of the Pacific Northwest's native wilderness, it is in fact a wilderness built and maintained by the hands of many people. This fact, in and of itself, is very interesting but also reveals a larger theme: an American cultural dependence upon a perceived natural nature.

Since the mid-nineteenth century nature has played a major role in defining the American identity. Americans have long understood their natural surroundings to be indicative of their great cultural worth and prominence. As a relatively young nation during the mid-nineteenth century America was struggling to find an adequate personification of its cultural identity. American art, architecture, music, and literature were unable to compete with that of Europe. With such an alarming lack of "constructed" culture American's turned to their natural environment to represent the

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[2] http://www.parks.ci.portland.or.us/Parks/ForestPark.htm
[3] http://www.noivyleague.com/Pages/about_us.html
[4] http://www.friendsofforestpark.org/html/about_us.html

American national identity. The grandiose and perceived virginal nature that dominated the American frontier became the ultimate personification of a uniquely American spirit as well as a representation of the vast cultural potential of the new nation.

However, such an understanding has many gross inherent cultural misconceptions and oversights. Such a vantage point is grounded largely in the essential understanding that humankind is in some way unrelated to nature, that nature is somehow something that human's act *upon* rather than *within*. By distancing themselves from nature Americans were able to force a division between the human and natural world – in that all "cultured" humans (sufficiently understood to be those peoples with European cultural roots) were operating in a sphere completely free of their natural surroundings, while those humans who were not "cultured" were seen as a part of nature, no more human than any animal population. Such a distinction allowed Americans to deny the native human presence that played an active role in the formation and maintenance of the land that they "inherited." This allowed the American people to see the nature they encountered as virginal and free of any human contact, which directly led to the American mythologizing of nature as virginal and free, void of any human presence.

This insistence on viewing nature and humanity as separate spheres persists to this day, although the American nature myth has undergone a transformation of sorts. The aim of this study is to examine the way in which nature, as a social construct, has allowed American citizens to refute fact, embrace myth, and deny the inherent ties between the human and natural spheres, as well as illustrate the shift of nature's role in the shaping of the American identity. The primary source for this investigation is Portland's Forest Park. Forest Park naturally lends itself to an investigation of this sort due to an

undeniable human influence, and the clarity of a population dedicated to the perpetuation of the natural myth.

Forest Park has throughout its relatively short existence garnered quite a following. As author Marcy Houle asks: "What is it that makes Portland … a leader among the cities of the nation in livability and appeal?" Clearly, for her, "part of the answer comes from … its outstanding natural beauty … – from the vegetation, mammals, and birds that characterize it." For Houle, and many others, Forest Park is "the essence of what is natural and wild and beautiful about the Northwest." Many find Forest Park to be a reminder of humankind's continual "coexistence with the natural world."[5]

I

Throughout American history there has been a general cultural juxtaposition of "urban" on one extreme and "rural" on the other. For Americans the two are generally assumed to be unrelated, in fact, many see them as oppositional, in that a simple definition of nature would be "not urban," and accordingly a simple definition of urban would be "not natural." Environmental historians have for over a generation questioned these as mutually exclusive categories, and no one has been more influential than William Cronon. Questioning the American impulse to separate the urban from the natural is the central aim Cronon's work *Nature's Metropolis.* Focusing on Chicago during the mid nineteenth century, Cronon explores the impact that both city and country have on each other and the resultant unity that they share. Cronon's fundamental claim is that the "urban and rural landscapes … are not two places but one" and by extension

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[5] Houle, Marcy, *ONE CITY'S WILDERNESS* , The Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon, 1987, pg. X

> they created each other, they transformed each other's environments … and they now depend on each other for their very survival. To see them separately is to misunderstand where they came from and where they might go … Worse, to ignore the nearly infinite ways they affect one another is to miss our moral responsibility for the ways they shape each other's landscapes and alter the lives of people and organisms within their bounds.[6]

As Cronon progresses his argument he finds "the more [he] learned the history of [Wisconsin], the more [he] realized that the human hand lay nearly as heavily on rural Wisconsin as on Chicago." Cronon recognized that there is a distinct connection between the urban and the rural, in that the "plowed fields and second-growth forests of southern Wisconsin" were no more natural "than the streets [and] buildings of Chicago."[7] Whether it was the connection between cut-over forests and Chicago lumber markets, or the increasingly appreciated serenity of the Wisconsin countryside, Cronon sees rural and urban as inextricably bound together, made and remade. It is this realization that leads Cronon to establish what he terms "second nature." Second Nature being the environment in which human and natural elements meet to produce something that is neither entirely human nor entirely natural, something akin to Forest Park.

With Cronon's graying of the self imposed division between the human and the natural, an interesting and complex instance presents itself which confounds any conclusions regarding what is and what is not natural and to what extent the human and the natural spheres are connected. In *Uncommon Ground*, Cronon pokes holes in our current sensibilities about natural and unnatural with his discussion of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, located in Denver, Colorado. The RMA has

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[6] Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis,* pg. 384
[7] Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis,* pg. 7

become, in many environmentalist circles, a topic surrounded by great intrigue and debate. According to Cronon himself, discussions center on the RMA's "paradoxical juxtapositions of toxicity and wilderness" and whether or not words like "natural" or "unnatural" are applicable to such a place.[8]

Prior to World War II, what is currently the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge experienced much the same settlement pattern as any similar location in the United States. Beginning in the early 1880s the land which would become the RMA was farmed extensively. However in 1942 the U.S. government bought the nearly thirty square miles of land and created the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, which became one of America's leading chemical weapons manufacturing sites. The manufacturing of chemical weapons, like napalm, continued through the Korean and Vietnam War efforts. Many of the weapons produced at the site "were never used and subsequently the site served as a primary location for destruction of such weapons."[9]

Production of chemical weapons continued until the late 1960's, when the land was sold to private industry to "foster economic growth. Several companies used the Arsenal site to produce pesticides and synthetic resins."[10] Shell closed the last factory at the RMA in 1982, and the following year the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency labeled the site too toxic for human habitation and the RMA was listed as a superfund cleanup site.

With the removal of the human presence, with the exception of cleanup teams, the RMA was essentially ignored. Left to itself, nature in the RMA began to experience a dramatic turn around, a land deemed too toxic for humans slowly became a natural

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[8] Cronon, William (editor), *Uncommon Ground*, Norton and Company, New York, New York, 1995, pg. 57
[9] Cronon, *Uncommon Ground* pg. 60
[10] Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, pg.60

refuge. Wildlife populations began to rebound – deer and bald eagles experienced a renaissance if you will, and vegetation regenerated. The land that was unfit for humans became, in their absence, a desirable natural habitat.

Humans in the RMA were operating under certain cultural presumptions – those being the understanding of a distinct division between that which is natural and that which is human – which allowed them to quite literally destroy the nature within the RMA; this in turn made the land unsuitable for a continued human presence. As nature within the Rocky Mountain Arsenal suffered so too did humanity. However without a human presence nature within the RMA began an intense regenerative process and it was able to overcome the hurdles of human manipulations and in essence become "natural" again. Reflective of the inherent ironies, some consider the RMA to be "one of the richest wildlife refuges in the West"; if not truly natural it has become to a certain extent more natural than Yellowstone or Forest Park, where a human presence has manicured the environment.[11] To understand the RMA as a natural refuge seems to be denying a significant portion of its history. However, Americans, generally speaking, are more than willing to look past such an unnatural past and embrace what some have called "the Nation's Most Ironic Nature Park."[12]

II

Americans did not always orient themselves or their culture towards their natural environs in the manner that they now do. In fact, during the early colonial period, beginning in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, nature was seen as something wicked and something to fear. Early New England Puritan colonists often

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[11] Cronon, *Uncommon Ground* pg. 58
[12] Cronon, *Uncommon Ground* pg.58

spoke to the corruptive capacity of nature, as William Bradford noted upon his arrival in 1620, nature in New England was "hideous and desolate … full of wild beasts and wild men … the whole country [being] full of woods and thickets, represent[ing] a wild and savage hew."[13] The land was understood to be fierce, untamed, and virginal. And such assumptions "legitimated the subjugation of wilderness [and] supported the Puritans' treatment of nature and their cultural superiority over it."[14] Puritans distanced themselves culturally from the perceived inherent evils of nature; however they also felt that "the pure virgin land when married to the industry and art of men could be recreated in the image of the garden Eve had lost. From this union, the fruits of the earth would be produced."[15]

However, nature's place in American society would be altered quickly and significantly. After gaining independence from England in 1776 America was left struggling to find a cultural product uniquely American that was substantial enough to equal, if not surpass, that of Europe – something that would allow Americans to claim cultural primacy internationally.

As the romantic tide swept through Europe and gained a strong following in America during the early and mid nineteenth century, Americans were inspired to look beyond traditional cultural constructs and quickly found something emblematic of their national superiority in the nature they encountered.[16] Grand natural monuments decorated the western landscape. Sights of inspiring awe could be seen from (what is

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[13] Merchant, Carolyn, *Ecological Revolutions*, University of North Carolina Press, 1989, pg. 101
[14] Merchant, pg. 100
[15] Merchant, pg. 101
[16] Romanticism was a literary movement that glorified nature as a wondrous and beautiful alternative to civilization. Within the movement nature was no longer understood to be the "devil's playground," but rather a restorative break from society.

today) Montana to Arizona, and from Wyoming to California. Assumed to be entirely virginal and untouched, Americans embraced these great natural monuments and understood them to be created solely by providence, a divine representations of America's cultural worth and an indication of their vast national potential.[17]

This tendency has come to be well understood in the historical investigation of Yellowstone National Park, officially established in 1872, Yellowstone served a nation in need. The park and its wild confines filled a cultural void for America as a whole; the perceived naturalness of the park was the epitome of the American cultural link with nature. The supposed virginal wilderness that covers portions of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming replaced the "man-made marks of achievement." As Alfred Runte argues, the "monumental scenery[,] instead of the past accomplishments of Western Civilization[, became] the visible symbol of continuity and stability in [America]."[18] American nature became the personification of the American national identity. However, such perceptions were grounded largely in myth, a myth fostered and perpetuated by an American public dependent upon the perception of a virginal wilderness.

Yellowstone is often advertised as one of the few places on earth where "nature proceeds … unhindered, [and] largely free of the conscious."[19] The park is also understood to be "one of the largest intact temperate zone ecosystems on earth today."[20] However, such statements enforce the perception of Yellowstone as a virginal wilderness, understanding the park to be largely "unhindered" and "free of the conscious" – truly and "intact ecosystem" – seems to deny a large and significant portion of Yellowstone's

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[17] Runte, Alfred, *National Parks: The American Experience*, University of Nebraska Press, 1997, pg. 6-12
[18] Runte, pg. 11-12
[19] http://www.nps.gov/yell/nature/pritchard/intro.htm
[20] http://www.nps.gov/yell/pphtml/nature.html

history. Recent scholarship in the field of environmental history has investigated a history that was effectively ignored by Anglo-Americans for nearly two centuries – that of Native Americans.

To truly understand American nature as virginal, Anglo-Americans needed to marginalize the impact that Native humans had on the land. Such a process was relatively easy. A division was long standing between the "cultured" Anglo-Americans and nature which allowed them to distance themselves from their natural surroundings – including native human populations – allowing Anglo-Americans to understand themselves as inheritors of a great and virginal nature. Native Americans were understood to act within nature, incapable of acting upon nature due to certain perceived cultural inadequacies. However, author Rebecca Solnit, in her work *Savage Dreams*, addresses the impact Native Americans had on Yellowstone's environment.

Culturally constructed as primitive hunter-gatherers, Native Americans were understood to have made merely superficial alterations to the landscape, making an impact similar to animal populations. Such understandings are incorrect assumptions perpetuated by a culture dependent upon a natural nature. Anglo-Americans have greatly downplayed the impact Native Americans had on their natural environments to secure the vision of an untouched wilderness. Solnit addresses this "great forgetting" by focusing on burning practices of the Native Americans in Yellowstone, and their effect upon the environment. By interviewing surviving tribe members, Solnit destroys the common perception of Native Americans as primitive hunter-gatherers. Solnit understands the burning techniques utilized by Native populations "to suggest that the people in question

had created the environment that sustained them."[21] Solnit even goes as far as to suggest that the Native Americans engaged in something more akin to primitive agriculture rather than hunting and gathering, finding that Native Americans employed "a variety of horticultural techniques which enabled them to directly influence the diversity, quantity, and quality of plant resources … so virtually every settler, miner, ethnographer, and missionary was fooled into thinking that the land they saw was 'virgin'."[22]

Author Chris Magoc also speaks to the "great forgetting" of Native Americans in Yellowstone. However, he cites the way in which Native Americans were presented to tourists visiting Yellowstone as a major contribution to the marginalization of Native American populations. Tourists visiting Yellowstone were often entertained by "Indians" performing tribal dances and other unique cultural rituals, and Magoc supposes that such exhibitions significantly marginalized the Native Americans in the eyes of many Anglo-Americans. By presenting themselves as nothing more than a source of entertainment for tourists, the Native Americans became "part of the exotic spectacle in [Yellowstone's] tourist culture."[23] Such scenes cemented for many Anglo-Americans the myth that while they themselves were separated from nature (and therefore uniquely capable of acting upon it) Native Americans were merely a part of nature – something that operated within nature as opposed to upon it.

The denial of a Native human population is not the only forgetting that went on in Yellowstone's early history. There were also many Anglo-American manipulations made to the "native" landscape to help develop and maintain the cultural myth of

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[21] Solnit, Rebecca, *Savage Dreams*, London, England, 1999, pg. 304-305
[22] Solnit, pg. 304
[23] Magoc, Chris, *Yellowstone: The Creation and Selling of an American Landscape*, University of New Mexico Press, 1999, pg. 58

naturalness that have long been overlooked. Today in Yellowstone there is a distinct effort, made by the National Park Service (NPS) to allow Yellowstone to revert back to its "natural" state, making it a place where "the buffalo herds … roam entirely free (that is until they reach the park's boarder), predatory animals are protected, bears seek sustenance from natural foods, …the ungulate populations are left to nature's regulatory devices, [there are] policies allowing natural fires to burn, and the reintroduction of a significant predator, the wolf, promises to restore an important ecological force to the landscape."[24];[25] However, such practices were not always NPS policy. In fact, the history of the NPS's administration of Yellowstone during the early twentieth century is a long tale of scientific ignorance and folly.

Detailing the foibles of the NPS in Yellowstone is the mission of Richard West Sellars' work *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*. Sellars, a historian employed by the NPS, speaks to the various managerial actions taken to present Yellowstone to the American and international public as a truly natural and edenistic environment. Sellars writes of early park management that included the stocking of fish ponds, the killing of various predatory species, the nurturing of various "attractive" species, and active fire suppression and he stresses the disastrous effects that each had on Yellowstone's ecosystem. Foreign fish populations began to dominate the waters, which led to great losses within the native fish community. The lack of predators, such as wolves (which were being killed on sight for much of the early twentieth century), coupled with unnatural breeding and feeding of deer and elk populations during the winter months which led to such "attractive" populations multiplying well beyond the land's carrying

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[24] http://www.nps.gov/yell/pritchard/intro.htm

[25] It is interesting to note that even when stating that the NPS is trying to allow Yellowstone to revert back to its natural state, there is still a noticeable human presence that many Americans would ignore.

capacity creating a decrease in the general health of the animals as well as a dramatic increase in deaths. And the active fire suppression led to larger and larger burns, climaxing with the summer fires of 1988 which burned over seven hundred and fifty thousand acres which accounted for nearly thirty six percent of the park's land.[26]

Sellars does not make any excuses for the actions taken by the NPS – in fact he understands the NPS's history within Yellowstone as having a very deleterious effect on the park's wildlife. However Sellars finds a general lack of scientific knowledge to be the main culprit behind the manipulations made by the NPS, not arrogance or ignorance. Anglo-American cultural oversights promoted a general lack of understanding regarding the natural world. The NPS created a wonderland with stocked lakes and an abundance of esthetically pleasing non-predatory animals to present an über-nature, something that every American could take pride in, as well as take part in.[27]

However, in the end "the touchstones for wilderness turn[ed] out to be an artifact of generations of human [construction] the model for all the park preserves of wilderness or pure nature around the world – [Yellowstone] – turns out to be no more independent than any other garden."[28] The nature and wilderness that had long been the most substantial characteristic of the American identity was in fact not natural at all. Nature is, and has been for thousands of years, the product of human influence and manipulations, and despite this knowledge many Americans continue to deny the truth and accept the mythic cultural construct – virginal nature.

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[26] Sellars *Preserving Nature in National Parks,* New Haven Connecticut, 1997. Historian Donald Worster makes much the same argument in his work *Nature's Economy* speaking about coyotes on the prairie stating that the human "distinctions in our national reaction to wildlife, chosen favorites as well as singled out enemies [, has assigned] every species to an absolute ethical category: good or bad." And the designation of "bad" species is generally accompanied with a strong effort to eradicate said populations (Worster also sites the gray wolf and grizzly bear populations as similar examples).

[27] Worster Footnote Coming Soon …

[28] Solnit, pg. 308

III

Lying in the hills to the Northwest of Portland rests some 5,000 acres of seemingly virginal nature, a sprawl of dense and untouched forest lands – a tribute to the nature that once dominated the Pacific Northwest. Since its inception in 1947 Portland's Forest Park has been described as "a rugged, forested, virtually uninhabited section of primitive Oregon" that offers visitors an escape from the metropolitan confines of nearby Portland.[29] When in Forest Park some say that "driving along [Leif Erickson Drive] which winds around deep ravines and precipitous cliffs" passing "dense stands of maples and alders and rapidly growing young firs" offers one the sensation of being truly "*in* the wilderness, miles from anywhere" until "suddenly there is the city right below."[30] The distance from the "modern world" felt in Forest Park seems to go without saying. Any visitor would be hard pressed to find any connection between Forest Park and the city of Portland with the exception of their closeness – in fact the two seem to stand in stark contrast. However, there is more that binds Forest Park and Portland than just close physical proximity.

Forest Park is nearly as much a human construct as the City of Portland. The perception held by many that Forest Park is a natural reserve is a wrong – is not a trail touched by a human hand as much as an avenue, the planting of a tree as much as the erection of a building, fire suppression as much as crime prevention. Although Forest Park still serves as an escape from city life to see it as disconnected from modernity is a gross oversight, however it happens, and with the mythologizing of nature in America

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[29] Anonymous, "Forest in a City," *Journal*, June 15, 1947, Mazama Collection pg. 51
[30] Dick Fagan, "Forest Park Drive Proves Worthwhile," *Journal* July 30, 1955Mazama Collection pg. 48 – emphasis added

will continue to happen. Making sense of this seeming paradox is difficult, but by investigating Forest Park's rich history the integration of human and nature becomes surprisingly evident – unignorable – the result being something that is neither entirely natural nor human but becomes something Cronon would recognize as "second nature" – a blending of the human and natural. However, the denial of clear human manipulations and maintenance by the city of Portland is also apparent.[31]

There is a substantial history of human manipulation that Oregonians have long overlooked. Like much of North America, the Pacific Northwest was dominated by Native American populations for thousands of years prior to the arrival of any Euro-American settlers. And much like other Native American populations, the native people of the Willamette Valley – the Kalapuya – did not live separate from nature, but rather communed with it on a daily basis. Evidence clearly shows that "native peoples annually burned the valley floor to maintain a vegetative cover that provided foods necessary for their diet." And this burning had a very substantial effect on the environment of the Willamette Valley, such burning "created in the valley large meadows interspersed with oak woodlands" with "dense forests develop[ing] only in the foothills and along streams and rivers, where cooler and moister conditions" limited the effect of the fires.[32]

Anthropologists have often struggled attempting to classify the Kalapuya. Unlike many other Native American populations of the Pacific Northwest, the Kalapuya residing in the Willamette Valley relied heavily on plants and vegetables as opposed to fish as

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[31] The term is first used by Cronon in his work "Nature's Metropolis" which studies the relationship between Chicago and the surrounding hinterlands. Cronon classifies Chicago's rural surroundings as second nature because of the intense human interaction – plowing, agriculture, foresting, and grazing by livestock.

[32] Boag, Peter, *Environment and Experience*, University of California Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992, pg. 3

their primary source of nutrition. Anthropologists have described "the Kalapuya culture as a modified blend of 'primitive river phase' and 'grassland' because of the nature of the Willamette Valley" which was composed of both "abundant streams and rivers and extensive prairies."[33] Historians have often questioned why "the Kalapuya did not rely on salmon and other fish for sustenance even though through their backyard flowed the Willamette River, which is, in terms of water volume, the tenth largest river in the United States." The answer: prior to the Anglo-American introduction of fish ladders "few salmon actually came to the upper Willamette River because the basalt cliff on the very northern course blocked them from entering the valley."[34] The only fish populations that could gain access to the upper river valley were the chinook, however the Kalapuya were unable to rely on the chinook because the Chinook tribe, a powerful neighbor to the north "controlled access to the falls, preventing other groups from harvesting" any of the fish.[35]

Instead of fish or shellfish the Kalapuya relied on plants and vegetables; although the Willamette River Valley does not naturally produce enough edible plants or vegetables to sustain even a tribe as small as the Kalapuya.[36] So "to maximize food and natural resources in an environment not as naturally abundant as the lower Columbia River and the coast," the Kalapuya utilized a seasonal routine, "moving through a variety of task-specific sites and manipulating the environment through the use of fire."[37]

The staple of the Kalapuya's diet was camas, "a member of the lily" which "requires open prairie habitat" to grow. However, "because geographical and

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[33] Boag, pg. 10
[34] Boag, pg. 11
[35] Boag, pg. 11
[36] According to Boag, anthropologists estimate that at their height the Kalapuya reached a maximum populations of approximately 13,500.
[37] Boag, pg. 12

climatological factors make [natural fire] in the Willamette rare, the valley would naturally have become overgrown with forest, and the camas would have become extinct." But due to the Kalapuya's "intentional burning of the prairies" forest species like the Douglas Firs and big-leaf Maples, competition to the camas, were eliminated while prairie species like long grasses and camas were able to thrive. The burns used to destroy forest did not affect the camas "since the bulb of the camas lies hidden underground and dormant at the end of summer," the period in which the Kalapuyas engaged in burning. In "the spring, the [camas] bulb [would multiply] and [sprout], sending up tall green shoots with … purple, blue, and white flowers."[38]

The Kalapuya clearly "altered the environment" they lived in preventing "the growth of dense and continuous forests, and maintained a sub-climax ecosystem of extensive grasslands and broad camas prairies;"[39] however, by the early 1840s they had all but vanished from the Willamette Valley. With the extensive influx of Anglo-American settlers the Kalapuya either died from unfamiliar diseases (a large malaria epidemic raged during the early 1830s) or starvation due to fire suppression by early settlers. Despite the rapid removal of the Kalapuya "the landscape that they and nature had created remained." Although "the environment of the long grasses underwent a drastic change" after the rapid decline in Native populations "during the last days of the Kalapuya and the first days of [Anglo-American] presence, the landscape of the Willamette appeared much as it had for hundreds of years." And the constructed nature encountered by early Anglo-American settlers "greatly influenced their early perceptions of and ideas about the relationship between themselves and the natural landscape of the

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[38] Boag, pg. 12
[39] Boag, pg.12-13.

valley."[40] And such an environment was assumed by early Anglo-American settlers to be the Pacific Northwest's natural state.

As early Anglo-American settlers began interacting with the Pacific Northwest, the environment was characterized by a "moderate, seasonally moist climate, along with marshy conditions … [which] in large part determined the flora" that grew there "and greeted the earliest Euro-American settlers." Early settlers encountered valley floors with large dense forests – sometimes "up to two miles wide – composed of Oregon ash, cottonwood, willows, red alder, and big-leaf maple, with Douglas fir and western red cedar sprinkled throughout." The hills were home to "Douglas fir, grand fir, ponderosa pine, and incense cedar, with western hemlock and western red cedar" flourishing in the relatively cool yet well drained hillside. The hills also held many "hardwood trees such as big-leaf maple, western white oak, and madrone … [with] their understory consist[ing] of shrubs such as hazelnut, ocean spray, and snowberry." Separating the hillsides and valley floors were "extensive meadows composed mostly of [tall] grasses, flowers, and scattered oak trees."[41]

That was the setting during the early nineteenth century when Anglo-American settlers first encountered the Willamette Valley – understood to completely untouched and pregnant with potential for future development. Settlers found rich fertile soil with a sophisticated river system, which provided transportation for goods to and from river ports which were relatively accessible.[42] By the mid nineteenth century settlements had sprung up in Linnton, Springville, and Portland. It was during this period during a massive population influx that the nature in the Northwest was first acted upon by Euro-

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[40] Boag, pg. 22-23
[41] Boag, pg. 9.
[42] Early settlers merely widened pre-existing foot paths constructed by Native Americans.

Americans. Those settling in and around what is today Forest Park claimed the land privately and began what was then a fairly light non- commercial logging campaign which provided early settlers with logs as building materials and scrap wood used for fire construction.[43]

However, logging soon became a major commercial activity, and by the late nineteenth century the Pacific Northwest was being heavily logged with little regard for the environmental consequences. Generally using slash and burn techniques, early loggers were effectively responsible for creating an environment that differed greatly from that which early settlers encountered.[44] With the rapid depletion of a native environment and constant reduction of timber populations a call for the preservation of forest lands emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The earliest proponent of the movement to establish Forest Park was Reverend Thomas Lamb Eliot, who arrived in Portland in 1867. Harvard educated and a Unitarian minister, Eliot dedicated himself to making Portland an enlightened city – "a moral and humane place" through social reform.[45] By 1888 his efforts had made little if any impact and Eliot feared that Portland was slowly becoming nothing more than a callous commercial center void of any moral character. Eliot's response was to incorporate nature into the city, to allow Portlanders the chance to free themselves from the strain and corruption of city living and escape into a worry free environment. One of his desired

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[43] "Forest Park: A Historical Sketch" http://www.noivyleague.com/Pages/forest_park.html

[44] Slash and Burn farming generally consisted of clear-cutting an area of any timber of market worth and then burning what was left which created rich topsoil which promoted intense agriculture. However after approximately four years (without crop rotation) the soil becomes drained of nutrients and unable to sustain any agriculture. At which point the land is generally turned over to farmers who graze livestock in the meadows that were once forest. Slash and Burn effectively transforms a forest into a grassland or meadow.

[45] "Portland's Forest Park" Houle pg. 9

locations was the Linnton Hills area to the northwest of Portland (what is today Forest Park).[46]

Through constant and "persuasive insistence" city officials created the Municipal Park Commission of Portland (MPCP) in 1899 and elected Eliot to its board of commissioners. Under Eliot's guidance the MPCP accomplished a great deal not the least of which was commissioning the Olmstead Brothers to plan a municipal park system for the city. With economic aid from the city of Portland Eliot and the MPCP welcomed John and Frederick Olmstead to Portland in 1903.[47]

The Olmstead Brothers from Brookline, Massachusetts, were the preeminent landscape architects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The two, Frederick and John, were responsible for some of America's most beautiful "natural" settings. The two designed New York's Central Park, Boston's Fens and River-way, and portions of Niagara Falls and Yosemite National Park. The Olmsteads were so skillful at concealing their "artifice that [the] projects [they] so brilliantly constructed … became largely invisible," and are seen today "as monuments of nature untouched by human" hands instead of the "artful wilderness" that they truly are.[48] It was this reputation that made the Olmsteads such a sought after commodity, and this reputation that would ultimately secure the future of Portland's park system.

Arriving in Portland late in 1903 the Olmstead Brothers spent three weeks "examining various parts of the city and of the surrounding country" as well as engaging

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[46] Houle pg. 9
[47] Houle pg. 9
[48] Anne Whiston Spirn, "Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmstead," *Uncommon Ground*, Cronon pg. 91

"in conference with [members of] the Park Commission and other interested citizens."[49] The results were submitted in their *Report of the Park Board*, which essentially outlined the importance of a park system, the role of citizens, the role of the city government in constructing and caring for a proper park landscape, as well as a detailed proposal outlining improvements that could be made to existing park sites, and also suggestions for future park sites.

One site that the Olmstead Brothers endorsed was "a succession of ravines and spurs covered with remarkably beautiful primeval woods" to the northwest of city center, which the brothers referred to as "Forest Park."[50] The Olmsteads understood the land to "have at present little commercial value" and while "some people look upon such woods merely as a troublesome encumbrance standing in the way of more profitable use of the land," clearly (to them) that was not the case. The Olmsteads' experience with the highly metropolitan East led them to believe that "such primeval woods would become as rare about Portland as they now are about Boston [in which case] future generations [would] be likely to appreciate the wild beauty and the grandeur" of such a reserve "and bless the men who were wise enough to get such woods preserved."[51]

Also, in their report the Olmsteads saw the construction of a park or parks as essential to the city's well being. They pointed out that parks enhance "the beauty of a city and [the] pleasure of living in it" and are also "exceedingly important factors in developing the healthfulness, morality, intelligence, and business prosperity of its residents [a passage that Eliot might strongly second]." In fact the brothers plainly, almost arrogantly, state that "no city can be considered properly equipped without an

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[49] Report of the Park Board, 1903, John and Frederick Olmstead, pg. 13
[50] Report of Park Board pg. 40.
[51] Report of Park Board pg. 40-41.

adequate park system" continuing "that a liberal provision of parks in a city is one of the surest manifestations of the intelligence, degree of civilization and progressiveness of its citizens."[52] Essentially the Olmstead brothers told the city of Portland that if it did not follow their recommendations the city and its citizens were uncivilized, unintelligent, and not worthy of their time.

The Olmstead brothers effectively manipulated the discourse to ensure the acceptance of their proposal. And in 1907, four years after the original proposal was submitted, the Olmsted proposal was accepted by the MPCP and put before the public for a vote. The public responded positively and voted to secure one million dollars in bonds to pursue suggestions made by the Olmsteads. However, the majority of the money was spent on restorative projects to pre-existing parks instead of on the acquisition of new lands. So, with much of the necessary land in private ownership and lacking the financial means to purchase it, Portland was forced to put the construction of Forest Park on hold.

While the Forest Park proposal was forced to lay dormant for some time, by 1912 support was strong enough for it again to become an issue. This time the voice of Emanuel Mische, a prominent Portlander and member of the MPCP, was added to Eliot and the Olmstead plan. Under the guidance of Mische the MPCP was able to bring E.H. Bennett, a noted city planner from Chicago to Portland to assess the city's current situation. Bennett offered *The Greater Portland Plan*, in which he addressed amongst other things Portland's park system. Bennett's discussion echoed much of what was said in the Olmstead report almost a decade earlier. Home to "deep splendid ravines and promontories from which the whole country [,] with the distant snow-capped mountains [,] come[s] finely into view" the hills to the west of the city were "practically virginal,"

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[52] *Ibid.*

and in Bennett's eyes an area that "must be reserved for public recreation." Reclamation and reservation of Portland's western hillside was a necessity for Bennett because "great woodland areas are the great life giving element of [a] city" and essential for a complete metropolitan experience. Bennett's passion for the project was clear; he put it simply: "Rome seen from Gaehuculum Hill is very beautiful. Let the citizens of Portland aim to make their City famous also for its beauty."[53]

After Bennett submitted his plan it, like the Olmstead plan, needed public approval and in 1913 it was up for consideration before the public. As attractive and emotional as Bennett's plan was, the two million dollar commitment scared many voters, and the plan was soundly defeated. With this defeat, momentum for the creation of Forest Park came to an abrupt halt, and it would be some time before the Forest Park movement would resurface.

As Portland's population expanded rapidly during the early twentieth century, nature experienced a similar contraction. By 1913 Portland was feeling the strain of this rapid population influx in two major ways: the city experienced both a housing shortage and an over-saturation of the labor market. As more and more people poured into Portland, fewer and fewer of them could find jobs or homes. With this bleak situation causing great problems the city of Portland turned to nature to find a solution.[54]

In 1914 the city established a wood cutting camp in the west hills along what is today Leif Erickson Drive to "provide work for the unemployed and fuel for needy families." The camps worked intensely utilizing "clear-cutting [which was the] prevailing practice in the logging of these sidehills" which severely devastated not only

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[53] Bennett, E.H., *The Greater Portland Plan,* 1912, pg. 21-23
[54] Houle pg. 10-11

the initial tree populations, but also the potential for future tree populations. The impact "would not have been so devastating had it not been for the repeated [burning]" which accompanied the clear-cutting. The fires from logging "swept repeatedly over much of [what is now Forest Park]" and what were once virginal stands of ash, cedar, maple, and fir became "a sea of bracken fern, weeds, and brush." Although it is not said how long these camps officially continued logging the West Hills, there is mention of a similar movement in 1937 (responding to the depression) to again log lands between what is today Springville and Saltzman roads.[55] The intensive logging efforts of 1914 and 1937 left the land "logged off and burned [over] by out of control slash fires. [After which much of the dilapidated land] was forfeited to Multnomah County [due to] delinquent taxes."[56]

As the city encouraged this logging in 1914 Portland realtors anticipated a large land boom. Developers began proposing large sub-divisions throughout the hills, and "thousands of lots were platted alongside imaginary roads." One developer, Richard Shepard, was so zealous that he began construction of a "scenic drive contouring in and out of Tualatin Mountain's steep ravines." By 1915 Hillside drive (Leif Erickson Drive) was completed at the cost of one hundred fifty thousand dollars, nearly double the expected price. Along with the inflated price a landslide caused by the logging venture occurred during the winter of 1915 which necessitated another three thousand dollars in repairs. Unable to pay for the maintenance himself Shepard began taxing the owners of the vacant lots platted alongside Hillside Drive. Many property owners, irritated by the high costs, did not pay. And with this refusal to pay "between 1915 and 1931, hundreds

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[55] Munger, Thomas *History of Forest Park*, 1960, pg 7
[56] Houle pg. 11

of lots, totaling fourteen hundred acres, were forfeited to the city of Portland for nonpayment of the assessments.[57];[58] Now out of private ownership, Multnomah County and the city of Portland controlled roughly five thousand acres of intensely logged and barely developed land. Out of accidental circumstances the land suggested by the Olmsteads and Bennett, was now in the hands of public authorities; now all they had to do was find the nature to go along with it.[59]

After being decimated by over aggressive logging and unproductive real-estate ventures, the land on Portland's West Hills lay vacant and denuded, left with only stumps which served as a reminder of the nature that once was, and an indication of the "nature" that could be. As logging in the Northwest was experiencing a boom and Portland's population continued to grow during the early twentieth century the Olmstead's prophetic vision of a "nature-less" future almost became a reality. With the rapidly growing population and continued vocational dependence upon logging nature in the Northwest was receding quite quickly – quicker than anyone could have anticipated (the Olmsteads predicted two to three generations). With the very real possibility of losing nature almost entirely, Portland was a city on the brink of an ironic disaster. Enter into this scene the Mazamas, a Portland based conservationist group dedicated to "the preservation of the forests and other features of mountain scenery as far as possible in their natural beauty."[60]

The Mazamas began a city wide movement to preserve nature (on some level) within Portland. During the early 1940's recognizing the West Hills' vast potential for

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[57] Houle pg. 11; In fact, only about one third of the property owners paid.

[59] The relationship between Multnomah County and the city of Portland is actually much more complicated, and addressed later in the paper. It is simplified now for effect.

[60] Mazama Constitution, Article II, 1896

"nature' and the people's desire for a "natural" escape, the Mazamas championed a movement to establish a large park within Portland's city limits.

In a letter to city commissioner Kenneth Cooper regarding a proposed plan for a 5000 acre city park in the West Hills, Wagner Carey spoke on behalf of the Mazamas as a whole stating that "in behalf of the Mazamas I am commending you and your assistants … with regard to the plans for a 5000 acre City Forest." Carey, and by extension the Mazamas, understood the "cut-over, burned-over terrain which [was under] consideration for a City Forest [as having] little if any value for residential purposes, industrial or commercial uses." Rather Cary felt that "given a fair chance [the land would] produce about as good a stand of timber as any other equal acreage in the United States or anywhere else." Continuing Carey rationed that "the cost of growing and maintaining such a forest [would] not be appreciably greater than the carrying cost should nothing at all be done" to the land.

When the letter to Commissioner Cooper was written in the spring of 1945, two years prior to Forest Park's inception, the Mazamas had not only placed themselves "on record in favor of the project [constructing the park], but [had] already taken direct action to that end." By the spring of 1945 the Mazamas had voluntarily constructed three miles of protective trails; also along the trail they had begun "planting Port Orford cedar, black walnut and other trees and seeds." What role Carey's letter played in the eventual construction of Forest Park one can not say, but it can safely be said that Forest Park owes its existence to the Mazamas and Carey's letter clearly outlines the Mazamas stance

on the issue – they were willing to pledge not only "moral support but very substantially otherwise."[61]

Forest Park became a topic of discussion within the Mazamas for the first time late in 1944. Appearing under the title "A SUGGESTION" in the September 1944 issue of the Mazama Bulletin an anonymous author wrote that a "small but efficient crew [had] cleared [a] main trail from Saltzman to Germantown Road" in a "region that now belongs to the City of Portland." This main trail offered "fine possibilities for branch trails through the canyons which, if developed, would delight thousands." The author concludes the brief article with a very instrumental suggestion: "the Mazamas [are] develop[ing] some of these by-trails as a group project" and "interested individuals [should] lend a hand."[62]

The following month another article appeared entitled "THE MAZAMA FOREST AND THE HARDESTY TRAIL," which continued the discussion of a Mazama presence within Forest Park. At this relatively early stage of involvement the author states that while the Mazamas had played a major role in many conservation projects in and around Portland "none of [them would] have the far-reaching significance of one that was incubated on Fred Cleator's trip to the Linnton Hills."[63] On the trip the author references it is suggested that Cleator envisioned the potential that Carey spoke of in his letter some six months later, that the "three to five thousand acres of cutover land … is of very little use except for a forest and recreational purposes." And as early as a local walk on September 17th the Mazamas began a small "reforestry movement on [the]

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[61] Wagner Carey, *Letter to City Commissioner,* Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 3
[62] Anonymous, SEPTEMBER 1944 BULLETIN, Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 4
[63] Fred Cleator was a leading Mazama for many years; he organized many "community walks" and was also the leading tree planter within Forest Park beginning in the early 1940's. Prior to this Cleator was a member of the United States Forest Service.

land by planting trees in a designated area to be called the Mazama Forest, with the hope that the example [would] be followed by other organizations, and that in time this [would] lead to the area being designated a public park."[64]

In little over two months the Mazamas had developed the idea of Forest Park from merely a discussion point with limited individual action to a fully sponsored movement within the organization. In November 1944 there was a call to any and all able bodied members with "any kind of tool, such as an axe, a sickle, brush hook or shovel," to participate in a community walk and trail building excursion along the Hardesty Trail in the Mazama Forest. Even members without any tools were encouraged to accompany the group, as those coordinating would surely "find something for [them] to do." Also on the trip "seedling walnuts and also some nuts" would be planted to unofficially start the Mazama Forest project.[65]

The following month, December of 1944, another trail making walk was planned again asking for those interested to "bring any trail making tools that [they might] have [and] if [they did not have any] to come along anyway." Also in the December Bulletin was a summary of the trip in November, which outlined the expedition and the various trees planted which included some walnut and chestnut seedlings with "the highlight of the trip" being "the planting of a large four foot Red wood, Sequoia Gigantea [a species not native to the Pacific Northwest]… dedicated to the memory of Mr. Hardesty." The

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[64] Anonymous, OCTOBER 1944 BULLETIN, Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 4
[65] Anonymous, NOVEMBER 1944 BULLETIN, Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 10

article also indicated that the following month there would be yet another trail making trip.[66],[67]

The January 1945 Bulletin outlines yet another trail making trip, it being the "third trip to this new project which the Mazamas are sponsoring," the objectives of this particular trip: more of the same – construct and extend trails as well as plant more seedlings (Walnut, Chestnut, and Port Orford cedar). Although the author's call to arms is a little intriguing, that author asks "all who [had] come out on [previous] trips [to be present], and also those members who are favorably inclined towards having a five-thousand acre wooded park [within] city limits" to be present as well.[68] It seems that here the author is clearly hinting at something far greater than merely a trip to construct trails and plant trees. By asking all those in favor of creating a city forest to be present numbers seem to be important. If the Mazamas could encourage enough members to be present on a "community walk" in support of a city forest than it would surely arouse some recognition within the larger Portland community and possibly bring non-Mazamas out in favor of a city forest.

And such tactics worked, and worked well. City officials had taken note of the Mazamas action within the West Hills and in an article appearing in the December 18, 1944 issue of the *Oregonian* that author notes that "plans for preserving the unique west hills skyline of Portland by creation of a 'city forest' … are in process of formation."

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[66] Anonymous, BULLETIN DECEMBER 1944, Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 10; William Hardesty was an avid naturalist, and became involved officially with the Mazamas in 1912 when he first began the practice of "local walks."

[68] Anonymous, JANUARY 1945 BULLETIN, Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 10

However, Commissioner Cooper noted that "it would require 'some time' before final plans [would be] ready for submission to the city council."[69]

As the Mazamas continued to engage in "do it yourself" conservation their message was being embraced by an ever broadening audience. By late 1944 and early 1945 the *Oregonian* was running story after story about the construction of a city forest which stoked public interest. And by early 1945 popular support was growing so rapidly and affecting such a broad audience that Portland's City Club endorsed the project and allowed popular sentiment to carry ideas of a city forest all the way to the City Council.[70] At this time the call for a city forest was almost undeniable; it seemed that the only thing standing between Portland and a city forest were mere technicalities (which included land consolidation between the city of Portland and Multnomah County).

In November of 1946 the Mazamas continued speaking of the benefits inherent in the creation and maintenance of a city forest. Such a "natural" reservation would become, according to a Mazama author, "a beauty spot which would afford nearby outdoor recreation for Portland people and their guests," a "sanctuary for wildlife," as well as a protective measure "from fire and erosion." And the author does not fail to mention the economic upside a city forest would provide, for in time the park would "yield an income from timber grown in the park."[71] The following month a call was again put out in the *Mazama Journal* to any "persons interested in the establishment of a

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[69] Anonymous, "Plan Proposes City Forest," *Oregonian*, December 18, 1944, Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 11

[70] The City Club was essentially the citizen's voice within the Portland political world. Formed in 1916, the group has since been acting almost as a "watchdog" over community doing effecting much positive change within Portland.

[71] Anonymous, "Forest Within a City," *Journal,* November 12, 1946 Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 35

municipal forest-park in the West Side Hills [were] invited to meet … in the Mazama clubrooms," where "a definite plan of action [would] be considered."[72]

The meeting was covered by the *Oregon Northwest Angler and Hunter*, and was described as "an event which [they] believe[d] [would] become historic." Throughout the meeting many prominent citizens spoke on behalf of a city park – Ken Martin of the Boy Scouts, Robert Platt, President of the Mazamas, Fred Cleator, as well as many other distinguished Portlanders spoke out in favor of the creation of a municipal park. The meeting concluded with the establishment of a permanent Citizens Committee with Thornton Munger (a retired forester) appointed as chairman, and it was "believed that an active committee [would] very soon obtain results."[73]

Shortly after the meeting Munger began an aggressive campaign arousing public interest "through talks, newspapers and radio."[74] And with Munger's goading the Portland community pressed even harder for the park they so desired, although there were "certain legal aspects [that needed to be] ironed out before a definite program [could be] formulated."[75]

Even with public sentiment soaring for the creation of a city forest Portland city officials were unable to move with any rapidity – there were certain laws restricting the direct transfer of County land to the city which made to prospect of the city forest very

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[72] Anonymous, "Forest-Park Talked," December 8, 1946, Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 35
[73] Anonymous, "Portland's City Forest," *Oregon Northwest Angler and Hunter,* December 1946, Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 35
[74] One way in which Munger and his advisors were able to garner public support was through an idea to make Forest Park a "Living Memorial." With the timing of the Forest Park debate almost coinciding with the end of World War II there was a movement to establish the Park as a "living memorial." Memorials "in the form of statues and monumental edifices are made from stone, or in recent times from metals and other lifeless materials[s]." And advocates of the living memorial felt that "nature" would be a fitting tribute to those lost in the war (taken from the Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 34, "How To Plan And Maintain a Memorial Forest").
[75] Anonymous, "Committee Voted For City Forest," *Journal,* December 13, 1946 Mazama Forest Park Archive Collection, pg. 35

bleak. However during this time Munger took very assertive action to solidify public support for the city forest. Munger began public tours of the proposed park area in April of 1946. Acting in conjunction with other local conservationists and preservationist groups (like the Boys Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and the Mazamas) Munger was able to host "the public at large … on a conducted tour of the proposed city forest."[76] As the wheels slowly turned toward the establishment of Forest Park Munger was elected chair of the Forest Park Committee of 50.[77] The Committee of 50 allowed Munger yet another avenue to address city officials regarding the necessity of a city forest. And as chair of the committee Munger was able to pressure city officials into withdrawing "from sale of all the tax-delinquent lands in the area [which included the proposed site for the city forest] pending further [legal] developments."[78]

With the passage of Senate Bill 220, which permitted "counties to transfer title of lands to cities or [the] federal government for park purposes" in March of 1947 and after nearly sixteen months of planning and petitioning the city council officially announced that the "forest-park [proposal would] come before the city council in a public hearing" on July 9th.[79],[80] During the hearing the city council would "consider recommendation of the city planning commission and the petition of [the] committee of 50."[81] Following the hearing the city council "almost unanimously" approved the construction of a municipal park in Portland's West Hills pending the "acquisition by the city of more than 1000

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[76] Anonymous, "Public Tours Set For City Forest," *Oregonian,* April 12, 1946, Mazama Archive Collection, pg. 23
[77] The committee of 50 was compromised of civic, commercial, and environmental advocates of Forest Park.
[78] Anonymous, "Group of 50 Formed in Support of Park," *Journal,* February 6, 1947, Mazama Archive Collection, pg. 45
[79] Anonymous, "Forest Park Due Here If Measure Approved," *Journal*, March 5, 194, Mazama Archive Collection pg. 38
[80] Anonymous, "Forest Park Proposal Up," *Journal,* June 4, 1947, Mazama Archive Collection pg. 50
[81] Anonymous, "Forest Park Proposal Up," *Journal*, June 4, 1947, Mazama Archive Collection, pg. 50

acres owned by the County."[82] Shortly after "the Multnomah county commission … indicated its willingness to declare some 1200 acres of tax-reclaimed land park property," which effectively made Forest Park a reality.[83] All that remained was the actual transfer of county land to the city of Portland and the payment of some $62,000 of unpaid taxes against the parts of the city owned portion (nearly 1400 acres) – both however were mere formalities. In a congratulatory letter to the Mazamas, Fred Peterson (city commissioner of finance) thanked and commended the Mazamas for their "interest and support in this wonderful project; and it [was his] fervent hope that that support [would] be continuing and all the steps to make [Forest Park] finally and permanently a park [would] be accomplished." Peterson ended his letter with a "congratulations on a job well begun," continuing, that "the first and most difficult step has been taken."[84]

By September of 1947 Multnomah County had completed the transfer of roughly 1200 acres of reclaimed county property to the city of Portland, and the city was able to fund the $62,000 needed to secure the remaining 1400 acres. On September 25, 1947 the city of Portland was finally able to dedicate Forest Park. Led by one of the park's biggest proponents – Thornton Munger – and attended by leading officials of both Multnomah County and the city of Portland Forest Park's dedication ceremony celebrated one of Portland's greatest struggles and most important victories – the permanent preservation of a "natural" environment within city limits.

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[82] Anonymous, "Council O.K.s 5000-Acre Forest Park," *Journal,* July 7, 1947, Mazama Archive Collection, pg. 50

[83] Anonymous, "Forest Park: Ours for the Asking," *Journal* July 28, 1947, Mazama Archive Collection, pg. 61

[84] Fred Peterson, *Letter to the Mazamas,* July 18, 1947, Mazama Archive Collection, pg. 54

Clearly from this history the examples of park supporters like Marcy Houle and others indicate an inability to properly represent the environment which they so passionately speak of or strive to protect. Portlanders, and more generally Americans, force a division between that which is inherently bound together – the natural and the human – and because of this distance allow a knowingly unnatural nature to fulfill a greater cultural need for a virgin wilderness. Today it seems that nature is no longer necessary to define the American culture internationally. Social and technological advancements have played sufficient roles in redefining nature's place within the American psyche. Americans now mythologize nature to provide a nostalgic retreat from an overbearing and intrusive modern culture. Instead of a need to define one's self in their natural environment, the contemporary quest for an unspoiled nature seems to be grounded in an attempt to elude the intrusive and overbearing cultural onslaught and escape to a peace and solitude no longer present within a modern metropolitan setting, if only for a moment.

The American reorientation to their perceived natural surroundings can be closely tied to the rise of a consumer culture during the early twentieth century. As America became an increasingly powerful country economically, with an ever expanding middle class, America projected their cultural superiority internationally through capitalism rather than nature. Nature no longer defined the nation, although the American public was still, to a large degree, dependent upon it. According to author Lizabeth Cohen, during the early twentieth century Americans were encountering a "rising standard of living [,] nationally circulated publications, syndicated news features, motion pictures, automobiles, standardized merchandise, and … radio" all of which led to a

"homogenization of American society."[85] But such advancements came at a cost. Workers were forced into monotonous routines with the introduction of the production line and the specialization of labor.[86]

With the rise in the standard of living, there was a general American migration to metropolitan areas. In pursuit of jobs which were relatively low skilled and relatively high paid many men turned to city based factory jobs. However, with "the accelerating transformation of the United States from a rural to an urban-based nation foretold that the [national] appreciation of nature would continue," although it would assume a different form.[87] Alfred Runte argues that "for most people, few factors more quickly erased the memories of [unnatural nature] than the confinement of city streets. Those recollections which survived were happy thoughts … of escape."[88] Nature represented a place where, as instrumental environmentalist John Muir put it, "thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over civilized people [would] find out that going to the mountains is going home, that wilderness [whatever its condition, or history] is a necessity, and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber … but as fountains of life."[89] Nature still played, and continues to play a major role in American cultural nationalism; however, it became "cultural nationalism with a new twist."[90] Instead of turning to a perceived nature as indicative of American cultural prominence, Americans now find the nature they encounter to be a nostalgic retreat from the restrictive confines of the modern metropolitan existence that they have so busily constructed.

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[85] Cohen, Lizabeth *Making a New Deal,* Cambridge University Press, 1990, pg. 100
[86] Nelson, Daniel, *Managers and Workers*, The University of Wisconsin Press Madison, Wisconsin, 1975, pg. 25
[87] Runte, pg. 85
[88] Runte, pg. 85
[89] Runte, pg. 84
[90] Runte, pg. 93

However, the nature that Americans value so highly as an escape from the modern constructions of metropolitan America is equally a human construct. Forest Park serves many within the greater Portland area as a "natural" escape; however few understand, or even acknowledge, Forest Park's entirely unnatural history. An overwhelming majority of Americans are unable to fully understand the connection that lies between the human and the natural; there has been a great cultural insistence on the separation of the two despite many historical efforts which clearly illustrate their inherent connection.

This perceived division between the human and the natural is strongly grounded in the uniquely American need to have a virginal nature – at first it was necessary to define the American culture, and today it is needed to escape from the constrictive modernity that has come to define America. By separating the human and the natural the Anglo-Americans, as a whole, were able to deny the native human element that had played a major role in creating the nature that they encountered. However, such a division has affected America in a very adverse way, for some time the nation was at risk of losing the very nature that it deemed so necessary. However with the efforts of John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Alfred Runte, and more recently William Cronon there is a growing appreciation for the connection between the natural and the human, and an increased understanding of concept of land as a community, and humans being an active member of that community.

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