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GIFFORD PINCHOT - Father of the Forests



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The dark side of American enterprise was exemplified by the state of the nation's forestlands in the last quarter of the 19th century. The timber industry had enjoyed a free hand for decades. As a result of clear-cutting and other systematic mutilation, erosion had scarred many areas, and unimpeded run-off had caused destructive floods. To end this waste of our natural treasures, a dedicated conservationist named Gifford Pinchot rose to the occasion.

Gifford Pinchot was born into a wealthy family in Connecticut in 1865. In his youth he developed a love of the outdoors, especially hiking, camping, and trout fishing. Upon graduating from Yale, his father suggested he consider forestry as a career. Lacking study opportunities here, he spent time in Europe, where effective forest management had long been practiced.

Pinchot developed an expertise in forestry matters and was much sought

after as a consulting forester. This led to his selection to head the Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division in 1898. He authored legislation to improve and protect our forests, and his dynamic enthusiasm for conservation led to a close association with Theodore Roosevelt, who sponsored him for Boone and Crockett Club membership. When Roosevelt became president, the role of the U.S. Forest Service was expanded with Gifford Pinchot solidly in place as the nation's first chief forester.

When President William Howard Taft succeeded Roosevelt, conflicts arose. Taft did not share Pinchot's zeal to buck heads with corporate America over protection for forestlands, and in 1910 Pinchot was fired. He became heavily involved with politics and was closely associated with Roosevelt in his failed attempt to regain the presidency as the candidate of the Bull Moose Party.

Pinchot made three failed attempts to run for the U.S. Senate. He was twice elected governor of Pennsylvania. In between these terms, he took his family and a group of naturalist friends on a seven-month tour of the South Pacific aboard a schooner he named the Mary Pinchot, after his mother. This voyage is chronicled in his book, *To the South Seas*.

During Gifford Pinchot's government service, the number of national forests increased from 32 in 1898 to 149 in 1910 for a total of 193 million acres. Pinchot and Roosevelt together made conservation a national policy. Roosevelt wrote:

Among the many public officials who under my administration rendered literally invaluable service to the people of the United States, Gifford Pinchot, on the whole, stood first.

Gifford Pinchot detailed his years as head of the U.S. Forestry Service in his autobiography, *Breaking New Ground*, which he completed just before his death from leukemia in 1946. His home, Grey Towers, in Milford, Pennsylvania, has been given to the U.S. Forest Service to serve as a museum and training center for foresters. His legacy lives on! ■

Selected Writings by Gifford Pinchot

- A Primer on Forestry* (1899)
- The Use of the National Forests* (1907)
- The Fight for Conservation* (1910)
- To the South Seas* (1930)
- Just Fishing Talk* (1936)
- The Training of a Forester* (1937)
- Breaking New Ground* (1947)



LEFT: "With His Tail In My Possession, I Was Master." From *To the South Seas*.

BELOW LEFT: "Expecting A Roar From The Jungle," 1910 Cartoon from Philadelphia Record. From *Breaking New Ground*.

RIGHT: Gifford Pinchot as he appeared toward the end of his tenure of office as Forester. From *Breaking New Ground*.

