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Expert Vision: J. Horace McFarland in the Woods

*And then the "Nature" fiend, with high-brow talk
Of "aerial perspective" and of "luminous shadows."
Seeing a photographic masterpiece
In every winding country-road.¹*

WHEN HE LECTURED BEFORE public audiences in the 1910s, American Civic Association (ACA) president J. Horace McFarland liked to talk about a recurring scene from his professional life. In the scene, McFarland sat at his office desk in Harrisburg, drafting memos to fellow City Beautiful reformers, reading legislative reports concerning scenic preservation, and meeting with his many visitors. All the while, his eyes flitted to the photographs on his office walls, images of wild scenery that he had taken on trips into the mountains of northern Pennsylvania. The noise and motion of the city dropped away when he looked at the trees, streams, and distant ridges. The sudden stillness of the office and the crispness of the photos carried him out of the capital and into the wild. No, he could not make the trip just yet. He was needed in the city, and so the woods must wait.

This compromise became a defining vision for McFarland in the first three decades of the twentieth century, despite the fact that he was hardly a prisoner in Harrisburg. He enjoyed the company of an active circle of friends and colleagues. He found places of great natural beauty in the city's parks, in the renovated riverfront, and in his own garden filled with roses

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¹ Michael Gross, "The Seven Stages of a Photo-Fan," *Photo-Era: The American Journal of Photography* 43 (1919): 312.

and peonies. Yet it served his interests to present himself as biding his time while gazing at framed mountain scenes. The idea of an urban professional pursuing his life's work, while constantly hemmed in by the white-collar world, was central to his script. Yes, he found ways to break out. As he reminded those assembled at a forestry conference in 1929, state highways allowed him to work in the morning, eat lunch at home, and still savor the "solemn shade" of the wild before dinner. Likewise, when he relocated for weeks of leisure in the mountain resort of Eagles Mere, in Sullivan County, McFarland knew that he could return quickly to Harrisburg if need be. Sequestering oneself in the mountains was a delight, yet a man like McFarland could not simply abandon professional duties. He encouraged businessmen to take their families, noting that patriarchs could work in New York or Philadelphia in the week and steal away on the weekend. He needed the city, he loved the city, and yet he spoke often about fleeing from it.²

McFarland's rhetorical sleight-of-hand was part of his effort over several decades to convince others that he had the credentials to guide them in thinking about nature. Although he became quite well known during this period, he was a rather unremarkable scenery advocate. His pronouncements on preservation and aesthetics echoed the insights of contemporaries who wrote for the popular press or coordinated their energies through local clubs. His boosterism was on par with that of a slew of individuals who promoted various resort destinations and getaway spots. He was an exemplary elite man of his era, right down to his disdain for hot dog stands. In terms of his public life, McFarland's defining characteristic was his drive to be a tastemaker and someone recognized as in the know. McFarland's career is a case study in the invention of expertise—an expertise wielded in the name of reserving places like Eagles Mere for aesthetic uses. The back-and-forth between the mountains and the city was the heart of his outdoor knowledge. For an audience of city and town residents linked by the era's religious, civic, and commercial institutions, McFarland offered a vision of nature that was always mediated by technologies of perspective and access. To him, cars were a functional way to reach the mountains and the platforms from which city dwellers made the transition into

²J. Horace McFarland (hereafter JHM), "Bringing the Folks to the Forest," Feb. 1, 1929, New England Forestry Congress, J. Horace McFarland Papers, MG 85, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA (hereafter McFarland Papers); JHM, "Eagles Mere This Summer," ca. 1910, McFarland Papers.

wild settings. Cameras were both a useful means of recording scenes for later recollection and devices to train aesthetic experiences. Through these technologies he translated the mountain woods for an urban, middle-class audience.

Historians have studied turn-of-the-century outdoor promotion closely, and they have generally concluded that the elitism endemic to these efforts mark the preservation and conservation movements as two more examples of the Progressive quest for control over the world. Comfortable city dwellers felt authenticity slipping from their lives, so they reached out to undeveloped hinterlands or distant forests to capture a sense of purpose. This process, scholars stress, created a strict dichotomy between the natural and the unnatural. It has been almost two decades since William Cronon pointed out the harm of this lingering valorization of distant, human-free wilderness at the expense of the everyday coupling of people and their environments. Expending time and effort to save the pristine mountain peak with its virgin forest runs the risk of neglecting the urbanized and commercialized, yet still natural, worlds in which many environmentalists live. There is wildness all around us, Cronon cautioned, “if we only have eyes to see it.”³

McFarland’s example suggests that the creation of a wilderness aesthetic was not just a power play used to control mountain forests but also a strategic move within the handful of professions that collided to form environmental advocacy campaigns. He was a public relations strategist before such a position formally existed. In their study of PR efforts in the decades before the organized profession emerged, Margot Lamme and Karen Russell found that social reformers, religious leaders, and government officials all used the techniques that would eventually become the bedrock of corporate PR departments. Across time and place, note Lamme and Russell, the motivation behind such work was either to make money, to recruit members, to establish legitimacy, to rally voters or consumers against something, or to advocate *for* something. Much of the history of environmental reform in the United States has understood advocacy as the prime motivation for outreach, while paying little attention to Lamme

³William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York, 1996), 86. Among the many studies that portray the urban elite’s role in wilderness protection and promotion are David Stradling, *Making Mountains: New York City and the Catskills* (Seattle, WA, 2007); Kevin T. Dann, *Across the Great Border Fault: The Naturalist Myth in America* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2000); and Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville, TN, 2000).

and Russell's third function: PR's effect of vouching for the expertise of those involved. McFarland was often an overt activist, but even when he was not endorsing a specific policy or appropriation, he relied on others adopting his way of seeing. His authority was not a given, especially within the specialist circles of botany, photography, and forestry—he had to earn it slowly, adapting his experience in the publishing and promotion trade to the business of telling others how to experience the outdoors.⁴

My focus on the means of McFarland's authority complements the history of the environmental movement. Since Cronon's call for a more explicit recognition of the politics of wilderness, historians have attempted to show evidence of both the wild in the city and the city in the wild. Some have called for recognition of a continuum of outdoor promotion and reform movements, in which nature and culture were always present but in varying degrees. Examining McFarland's cultivation of expertise can help us see the hybridity at play in the outdoor promotion work that occupied much of his professional life between 1900 and 1925. If he was a star of the cultural elite, he was a nervous star; he did not assume that he had an automatic audience willing to listen. Instead, he relied on a type of expertise that stressed practical experience in the woods. The self-styling of expertise was certainly a manifestation of cultural elitism, but the techniques with which McFarland tried to secure his expert status are worthy of close attention.⁵

⁴Margot Opdycke Lamme and Karen Miller Russell, "Removing the Spin: Toward a New Theory of Public Relations History," *Journalism and Communication Monographs* 11 (2009): 338–41. See also Lamme's "The 'Public Sentiment Building Society,'" *Journalism History* 29 (2003): 123–32; and Scott Cutlip, *Public Relations History: From the 17th to the 20th Century, the Antecedents* (Hillsdale, NJ, 1995).

⁵Ellen Stroud, *Nature Next Door: Cities and Trees in the American Northeast* (Seattle, WA, 2013), 23. Among the works that focus closely on nature/city hybrids are Shen Hou, *The City Natural: "Garden and Forest" Magazine and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Pittsburgh, 2013); Kelly Enright, *The Maximum of Wilderness: The Jungle in the American Imagination* (Charlottesville, VA, 2012); Kevin C. Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America's Conservation Ethic* (Lawrence, KS, 2009); and Abigail A. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890–1960* (Minneapolis, MN, 2006). Paul S. Sutter, in *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle, WA, 2002), 23, contextualizes the 1930s environmental movement within the rise of car ownership and road building after 1910, revealing that scenic beauty lovers built a nostalgic lust for a wildness that seemed to have been "banished" from their lives. Although it was this push for wide-reaching roads that spawned the Depression-era wilderness movement, the experience of the wild beyond the windshield became the epitome of consumer liberation. The first "gasoline carriages" attracted city dwellers who wanted to "fly on outstretched wings" into the countryside. See Christopher Wells, "The Road to the Model T: Culture, Road Conditions, and Innovation at the Dawn of the American Motor Age," *Technology and Culture* 48 (2007): 506, 515.

McFarland legitimized his views of the wild by adapting a series of skills that he first used in the city. First, he applied techniques of spatial reform and beautification to structure experiences for city dwellers who were unaccustomed to the highlands. He took the serious business of landscape (and social) engineering and bent it to the recreation needs of urbanites. Second, he recast his lifelong zeal for automotive and photographic technology, creating a way for amateurs to experience the mediated wild. He seized these tools of leisure to develop a system of contemplating the outdoors. McFarland worked to establish his expertise in both aesthetic appreciation of nature and technical mastery of the newest means of engaging with it. All the while, he staked a claim to these forms of expertise through tales of his excursions on wheels and on foot several hours north of the capital.

The Lobbyist

McFarland was born in the central Pennsylvania town of McAlisterville in 1859. His father, a nursery owner and printer, published what McFarland later called a “belligerent temperance weekly.” The economics of the printing business caught the youth’s attention early, and by the age of twenty he combined his father’s pursuits, becoming a printer “for nurserymen, florists, and seedsmen.” His business, Mt. Pleasant Press, was lucrative enough to fund his passions for travel and photography and incorporate him into the capital’s cross-pollinating civic, commercial, and cultural elite. McFarland studied plants avidly, having joined Pennsylvania’s horticulture society in 1881. He published his first wave of articles on horticulture at the turn of the century, becoming *Outlook* magazine’s plant and tree writer. His contributions to *Outlook* led to the publication of *Getting Acquainted with the Trees* in 1904. In the same year, he began a three-year stint writing the monthly “Beautiful America” column for the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. He was a popularizer in print and a schmoozer in person, meeting as many people as he could. His knowledge of the printing industry led him into both business partnerships that spanned the nation and into regular speaking engagements. He referred to his various publishing interests as “constructors of catalogues and builders of business.” In 1911, he taught students in Harvard Business School’s Technique of Printing course. His glowing endorsements of printing devices and instructional guides appeared often

in the trade press. By the time he was fifty, he had established himself as a reliable authority in multiple facets of life.⁶

McFarland was a major player in a fairly small circle of beauty advocates in central Pennsylvania, and it would have surprised few of his friends and acquaintances that he took a leading role in the Harrisburg beautification campaign that emerged in late 1900. When the political effort made great local strides, McFarland wrote about its victories for a national readership eager to apply his model. His highly visible position in the movement allowed him to climb the swelling ranks of city reformers. To accompany his high standing in the printing industry, he made his second professional name as the president of the ACA, a position that he attained in 1904 and held for the next two decades. His leadership of the ACA marked him as the most visible of what historian William Wilson labeled the “organized, dedicated, and informed laymen” who drove the City Beautiful movement. McFarland was the consummate publicist, speaking before audiences big and small and writing columns in any magazine, journal, or newsletter that would have him. By the time of his death in 1948, he was best known for his campaign to save the scenery of Niagara Falls from industrial development, and for his lifelong promotion of roses.⁷

McFarland’s presidency of the ACA made him a national leader of the aesthetic wing of the conservation movement, steeped in what historian Jon Peterson considered its “genteel aestheticism and its sublime faith in the all-knowing expert.” His emphasis on aesthetics drew criticism from self-described utilitarian conservationists. Yet, when he argued for scenic preservation in the early twentieth century, he did so in ways that were absolutely pragmatic and unquestionably strategic. McFarland embodied what historian Kevin Armitage has called the “multitudinous cultural complexities of the conservation movement.” He worked both the halls of government and the crowds at civic clubs. He used his position in the

⁶ JHM, ed., *Floral Designs* (Harrisburg, PA, 1888); “J. Horace McFarland,” *Inland Printer* 48 (1911): 436; Ernest Morrison, *J. Horace McFarland: A Thorn for Beauty* (Harrisburg, PA, 1995), 29, 57, 98; Jan Knight, “The Environmentalism of Edward Bok: The *Ladies’ Home Journal*, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, and the Environment, 1901–09,” *Journalism History* 29 (2004): 159; *National Nurseryman* 16 (1908): 185–46; “Harvard’s Course in Printing,” *Inland Printer* 47 (1911): 913 (This article identifies the course as the “Technic of Printing,” though Harvard publications call it the “Technique of Printing”).

⁷ William H. Wilson, “J. Horace McFarland and the City Beautiful Movement,” *Journal of Urban History* 7 (1981): 315. Wilson notes that McFarland delivered his motivational “Crusade Against Ugliness” speech at least 250 times in the decade after the Harrisburg campaign, typically charging fifty or seventy-five dollars per appearance. On the Harrisburg reform community, see Susan Rimby, *Mira Lloyd Dock and the Progressive Era Conservation Movement* (University Park, PA, 2012).

ACA to speak to municipal officials and business groups about conservation on their terms and positioned himself as their ally. When he campaigned against the aesthetic blight of hot dog stands along city streets, he encouraged thoughtful simplicity in the design of the shacks. More appealing stands would not only harmonize with their surroundings but also bring in more customers. Instead of advocating for the abolition of billboards, “a sort of fungus on the body politic,” he pushed for the establishment of dedicated commercial corridors with a lower speed limit. The landscape and the “signscape” could coexist, he reasoned, as long as advertisers realized the damage they did to sales. If they limited their exposure, they would turn more heads and make more money. Everyone would win.⁸

In other words, McFarland was an adept lobbyist, always considering what he wanted to gain in light of what people in power wanted to hear. He was not alone in these talents; the geographer Terence Young observed that when the ACA focused on a given issue, its “well-positioned members, who knew how to effect change, quickly sought out and organized local support.” McFarland told anyone who would listen that if only government officials viewed outdoor scenery as a “productive resource,” the United States might compete with Europe for the “millions of beauty travel.” He likewise targeted middle-class audiences by turning spatial reform into a prescription to save cities and stave off class conflict. His column in the *Ladies' Home Journal* was a frequent source of prodding; he encouraged readers to do everything from cleaning up their backyards and planting flowers to joining local reform clubs. He promoted the “direct economic effect of suggestion and environment” as a way to keep urban mobs in check. If white-collar urbanites refused to bankroll the repair of their cities to deflect crowding and labor conflict, they risked losing their privilege to a class war. “Parks are cheaper than policemen,” he observed, and he saw adding green spaces to cities as a first step in reform. But it would be a first step only. The public was well intentioned, he reasoned, but it needed to be mobilized. His favorite tools were flattery and an overwhelming amount of supportive detail. He applauded Harrisburg’s beautification campaign

⁸ Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890–1920* (Cambridge, MA, 1959), 194–95; Jon A. Peterson, “The Birth of Organized City Planning in the United States, 1909–1910,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 75 (2009): 127; Kevin C. Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America’s Conservation Ethic* (Lawrence, KS, 2009), 10; JHM, “Why Billboard Advertising as at Present Conducted Is Doomed,” *Chautauquan*, June 1908, 20; JHM, “Bringing the Folks to the Forest”; JHM, “Pennsylvania’s Scenic Supremacy,” radio address on WBAK Harrisburg, Nov. 26, 1928, McFarland Papers.

in 1901 and 1902 as a masterful use of local media. When the campaign started, he wrote in the *World's Work*, "each of the three daily papers in the city was supplied with carefully prepared matter to inform the voters, in a cumulative fashion." High school boys carried map- and diagram-laden pamphlets door-to-door twice a week.⁹

McFarland knew that a great many of the people answering those doors or reading his articles were women. He worked closely in the Harrisburg campaign with women such as Mira Lloyd Dock, who had studied botany at the University of Michigan and was a staple of the central Pennsylvania lecture circuit. McFarland presented himself to women as an ally—a wise counselor who knew how the world worked and believed that women had a significant role to play in it. He was a firm supporter of the municipal housekeeping brand of activism on the part of women, and it was through civic clubs, he hoped, that such housekeeping would take root. When experts like McFarland exercised social and political power in the early twentieth century, it was because they exhibited types of experience that were persuasive to the inexperienced (what the historian Peter Dear calls "culturally sanctioned" experience). Experts might stand alone as *the* voices to which others should listen, but their claims to expertise are always formed within a social context and tested among peers who judge their merits and help them build their reputations. For McFarland, the "force of accuracy and the grace of clear statement" convinced others that they were

⁹ Terence Young, "Social Reform through Parks: The American Civic Association's Program for a Better America," *Journal of Historical Geography* 22 (1996): 461; JHM, "Shall We Have Ugly Conservation?" *Outlook* 91 (1909): 596; Knight, "Environmentalism of Edward Bok," 159; JHM, "The Wrong Education" (Mar. 1906 draft of "Education in Ugliness"), McFarland Papers; JHM, "Twenty Years of Scenery-Saving in America," *Landscape Architecture* 20 (1930): 306–7; JHM, "Shall We Make a Coal-Pile of Niagara?" *Ladies Home Journal*, Sept. 1905, 19; JHM, "Are National Parks Worth While?" *Proceedings of the National Parks Session of the American Civic Association, Held Wednesday Evening, December 13, 1911, in the New Willard Hotel, Washington, D.C., as Part of Its Seventh Annual Convention* (Washington, DC, 1911), 10; JHM, abstract of an illustrated address on "Crusade Against Ugliness," McFarland Papers; JHM, "The Awakening of a City," *World's Work*, Apr. 1902, 1931. McFarland appealed to politicians by emphasizing the things that would keep them in office. He promoted a national park bureau to President Taft in 1911 by arguing that urban park systems improved "community values" and raised tax revenues along their borders. Taft could win himself influential friends wherever he promoted parks. In 1918 McFarland buttonholed Felix Frankfurter, the head of the War Labor Policies Board, on behalf of the Commission on Living Conditions of War Workers. If Frankfurter wanted to improve workers' "stability" and utility, McFarland urged, then the "amenities of life need[ed] to be considered in connection with the efficiencies of life." If war workers were immersed in pleasant workplaces and housing, they would meet any quotas asked of them. See JHM, "Are National Parks Worth While?" 12; Felix Frankfurter to JHM, Nov. 10, 1918, and JHM to Felix Frankfurter, Oct. 12, 1918, McFarland Papers.

in the presence of an expert. One of the peer groups that mattered most to his status was reform-minded women with organizational clout.¹⁰

His efforts on a local scale convinced McFarland that the public was a force that could be shaped by expert hands. “Public opinion in America is dominant,” he wrote in 1908, “and when aroused, restless.” The “cumulative” approach adopted in Harrisburg was something that McFarland carried with him; he assumed that his readers were following along. And yet he found a pervasive political disengagement everywhere he looked. He diagnosed it as a problem inherent in a consumer society. McFarland’s goal was to mobilize professionals and use them as an “unconscious combination of militant citizens.” The historian William Wilson found that McFarland and his fellow sponsors of the Harrisburg clean-up plan were middle-aged, educated, economic elites with a firm sense of class duties. McFarland’s politics were elitist; he was committed to preserving a power structure that doled out incentives to the masses. The urban professional class would be the force he used to make his ideas stick, and his rhetorical power over them would build through explorations of places they had never experienced.¹¹

Getting Acquainted

It was within this context that McFarland worked to establish himself as an expert. Both of his audiences—the decision makers and their constituents—might embrace policy proposals that promised tangible benefits and carried the weight of experience. As McFarland noted privately in 1915, he believed that he had the “welfare of the community and the nation at heart.” This was a simple way of describing the national goal that the ACA secretary Richard Watrous had announced three years ear-

¹⁰ Rimby, *Mira Lloyd Dock*, 24, 42; Peter Dear, “Mysteries of State, Mysteries of Nature: Authority, Knowledge, and Expertise in the Seventeenth Century,” in *States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and Social Order*, ed. Shelia Jasanoff (London, 2004), 207; JHM, “Statement in Regard to the Lecture on Color Photography,” *Journal of the Engineers Society of Pennsylvania* 1 (1909): 259.

¹¹ JHM, “Why Billboard Advertising as at Present Conducted Is Doomed,” 37; JHM, “Militant Citizenship,” baccalaureate address to Christian Association of Lebanon Valley College, Annville, PA, June 9, 1907, McFarland Papers; JHM, “The Ignorance of ‘Good’ Citizens,” *Outlook* 82 (1906): 273; Joseph M. Phillippi, “At the Men’s Convention in Harrisburg, Pa.,” *Religious Telescope*, Nov. 18, 1908, 8; Nico Stehr and Reiner Grundmann, *Experts: The Knowledge and Power of Expertise* (London, 2011), 35; JHM, synopsis of address, “See Pennsylvania First,” Engineers’ Club of Central Pennsylvania, Apr. 16, 1915, McFarland Papers; JHM, “Shall We Make a Desert of America?” Apr. 1908, McFarland Papers; William H. Wilson, “Harrisburg’s Successful City Beautiful Movement, 1900–1915,” *Pennsylvania History* 47 (1980): 216–17; Morrison, *J. Horace McFarland*, 70–71.

lier: an “atmosphere that makes for health, happiness, good citizenship, and material prosperity.” McFarland had forged his reputation in the Harrisburg beautification campaign. As he attempted to connect the city and the wild in the public imagination, however, his leisure time beyond the city increased in rhetorical significance. The raw material of those efforts was McFarland’s time on the roads and trails of Pennsylvania’s wild spots. And so his project became the translation of one man’s private enjoyment of the outdoors into a widespread appreciation of nature.¹²

Class and gender privilege were vital to the assumed translatability of his vision; they allowed him to avoid too much scrutiny and to escape the question of why he, of all people, should be heeded. His professional life was launched from business connections within the Harrisburg Board of Trade, and he recognized the concerns of industrialists and other employers. The language he used in print and in person assumed the authoritative tone of a man who dined regularly with powerful men. He was a leisurely motorist, an ambitious photographer, and a studied woods Rambler, a combination that depended on affluence and male privilege. The money bought him access and his choice of paraphernalia. His involvement in enthusiast clubs—fraternities of technical ingenuity and gendered gate-keeping—reinforced the claim that men could distinguish themselves from women by adopting a serious, regimented recreation style. The mysterious aura of legitimacy suggests how the printer from McAlisterville became the president of the American Civic Association. Dear argues that experts rely in part on an “unanalyzable residue of brute credibility” that can be maintained only through a collective willingness not to ask too many questions. Cross-examining experts to find the limits of their experience ends up weakening their overall claim to expertise. McFarland worked himself into positions in which he determined the path and focus for others. He was used to having the last word.¹³

The gravity that he needed to speak to Board of Trade members joined with the conversational, yet omniscient, manner of the advice columnist to produce McFarland’s rhetorical approach. As he understood it, what was “good for America” was a mixture of commercial success and spiri-

¹²JHM to Daniel Beard, Nov. 13, 1915, McFarland Papers; Richard B. Watrous, “Civic Art and Country Life,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 40 (1912): 191. See the related description of McFarland as a “lay advocate” in Julian C. Chambliss, “Perfecting Space: J. Horace McFarland and the American Civic Association,” *Pennsylvania History* 77 (2010): 487.

¹³Dear, “Mysteries of State, Mysteries of Nature,” 209, 222. For a discussion of expertise as it emerged in the realms of horticulture and landscape architecture, see Hou, *City Natural*, 55–57.

tual sustenance. When he titled his 1904 book *Getting Acquainted with the Trees*, “acquaintance” was an apt description of his goal. Visitors to the outdoors—read as middle-class men and women with enough aesthetic training to grasp his insights—would not develop a dependence on, nor even necessarily a close friendship with, the wilderness, but could get just enough of an experience to want more. A reviewer in St. Louis remarked that McFarland “chatted” his way through the book, and to welcome effect. “In lieu of getting acquainted with the trees themselves,” the reviewer noted, “getting acquainted with Mr. McFarland’s book is fairly pleasant.”¹⁴

Acquaintances came in many forms, but scenic roads and mountain enclaves were the two venues through which McFarland encouraged budding outdoors enthusiasts to become more familiar with nature. First, his plan was to shape the way in which motorists experienced the wild by easing them into it; rural roads that were maintained by the state could feature carefully managed flora to frame the road scenically. As the physical link from the city to the wild, scenic roads prepared urbanites for their experience of the woods. If designed correctly, roads could educate through the power of what he called “sightliness.” McFarland’s ideal was a natural area that looked natural, a place that had experienced human intervention but hid it well. He liked to quote the author and photographer Wallace Nutting, who praised the Pennsylvania countryside as “never wild or terrible,” but consistently pleasant. The steady motion of automobile travel allowed the state’s rolling landscape to reveal itself, and McFarland believed that planned roadside nature was just as vital as the proverbial untouched forest.¹⁵

¹⁴ JHM, “Shall We Have Ugly Conservation?”; Benjamin Johnson, “Wilderness Parks and Their Discontents,” in *American Wilderness: A New History*, ed. Michael Lewis (New York, 2007): 113–14; Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, 145; “Review of Recent Publications,” *St. Louis Republic*, Apr. 30, 1904, 8. Cutting down trees and creating scenery were parts of a whole. McFarland claimed that forests had been “provided by the Creator for the resting of tired brains and the healing of ruffled spirits, as well as for utility.” National forests should be cultivated with calculated efficiency, producing marketable timber quickly by following “purely economic” principles. The economics of national parks, on the other hand, related to their effects on the people who visited them; park guests were so invigorated by natural wonders that they returned to their lives with renewed drive and productivity. See JHM, *Getting Acquainted with the Trees* (New York, 1904), v; JHM, synopsis of “See Pennsylvania First”; and JHM, “Shall We Make a Desert of America?” See Thomas R. Dunlap, *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (Seattle, WA, 2004) for a discussion of spiritual traditions in American environmental thought.

¹⁵ JHM, abstract of an illustrated address on “Crusade Against Ugliness”; JHM, “Wrong Education”; JHM, “Pennsylvania’s Scenic Supremacy.”

At his most evangelical, McFarland used the concept of the road as a “well-ordered” museum that could educate the traveler about the worlds beyond the treeline. Outdoor attractions in the eastern highlands were, for him, the “great vistas . . . waterfalls . . . [and] picturesque roads,” all of which made it “worthwhile to go into the woods.” As important pieces of the experience of nature, roads had to meet certain aesthetic standards. He wanted to use state funds to line highways with plant life that “belonged” in the vicinity. In a *Country Calendar* article he criticized road maintenance officials for clearing the “more delicate and beautiful” plants and leaving behind “vigorous but really unpleasant weeds.” The notion of engineering naturalness along highways fit his predilection for a thin layer of human order superimposed on areas that seemed otherwise untouched. He insisted that country roads needed footpaths built next to them as a way for the enlightened, enthusiastic public to travel “between farm and farm, or suburbs and open country, or even from town to town.” His plan was ambitious, to say the least; he predicted that state funding for footpaths would be repaid by mass use, yet he surely knew that the audience for long-distance trails was quite small in the 1920s. The footpaths he imagined would wind their way along the natural contours of the land at a slight remove from the road, offering the walker an experience of the forest without the intrusion of close auto traffic. Such a plan would help offset the “penalty on legs” issued by the automobile boom of the post-World War I era. For a car lover like McFarland, this was a way to find a happy medium.¹⁶

His work on zoning boards encouraged him to apply emerging planning principles to country highways. “Public orderliness” in cities could be applied readily to the sparsely populated areas beyond. Like all other attempts to sculpt the environment in a democracy, McFarland explained to Harrisburg’s Rotary Club, zoning was necessary to allow experts to teach the public what was in their best interest. In order to keep the “pig out of the parlor,” he sought advice from people who were committed to a new era of thoroughfares. In 1920, McFarland consulted Philip Buttrick, a forester at the Michigan Agricultural College. Buttrick, who trained in the Yale Forest School a decade earlier, published an article in *American City* that echoed McFarland’s emphasis on using “enlightened

¹⁶JHM to Allen Chamberlain, Dec. 23, 1914, McFarland Papers; JHM, “Bringing the Folks to the Forest”; JHM, “Shall Our Country Roads Be Beautiful or Ugly?” *Country Calendar*, Aug. 1905, 369; JHM, “What about the Country Highway?” *National Municipal Review* 10 (1921): 221, 225.

public sentiment” to pressure governments into investing in road beautification. Tree-lined ways, Buttrick believed, could transform Americans’ experience of movement through and between cities. McFarland pushed Buttrick to consider how the cosmetic improvement of highways fit into a more ambitious project to reengineer the nation’s transportation system. At a time when car registrations were increasing and the national railroad system had lost whatever effectiveness it once had, McFarland predicted that roads would become the crucial element of American social and commercial life.¹⁷

McFarland’s other medium for outdoor promotion was the place at which he spent the most time when not in Harrisburg: the mountain-top borough of Eagles Mere. The history of the site as a resort began in the 1880s, when the land—a lake surrounded by dense forests—was purchased by a group of bankers and industrialists known as the Eagles Mere Syndicate. They built hotels, a bathing beach, docks, streets, and private cottages around the lake while marketing the site vigorously as a destination. McFarland arrived on the scene in the summer of 1897 and traveled there most summers after that. The Chautauqua movement passed through Eagles Mere at the turn of the century, spurring further growth. The years around 1910 marked the time of greatest change, when the syndicate demolished the structures around the beach and moved them farther into the woods, to make an afternoon near the lake seem like time in deep wilderness. McFarland cited “world-traveled observers” who praised the lake’s border of “unspoiled primeval forest growth.” Eventually, McFarland hoped, the sunbather would see water, trees, and glimpses of a “dainty little tea-house toward the west, and just the tips of the other necessary buildings.” While the rest of the state had devolved into “ugliness and wickedness by the sins of neglect and of greed,” the resort was engineered to recede into the past.¹⁸

¹⁷ “Extracts relating to the zoning address to the Harrisburg Rotary Club, Monday, 26 January (1931),” McFarland Papers; JHM to Mira Lloyd Dock, May 28, 1903, McFarland Papers; Morrison, *J. Horace McFarland*, 73; “Dr. J. Horace McFarland,” *Recreation* 42 (1949): 559; JHM to Philip Laurance Buttrick, July 19, 1920, McFarland Papers; Buttrick, “Tree-Planting Plans for Michigan’s Highways,” *American City*, July 1920, 11–12.

¹⁸ JHM, *Eagles Mere and the Sullivan Highlands* (Harrisburg, PA, 1944), 17; JHM, “A New Eagles Mere: Some Letters That Might Be Written,” Mar. 24, 1910, McFarland Papers; JHM, “Pennsylvania’s Scenic Supremacy”; JHM, “How Can the Association become a More Vital Factor in the Physical Life of the Community?” Feb. 21, 1908, speech to state YMCA at Connellsville, McFarland Papers; JHM, “A Summer Lake Carnival,” *Suburban Life*, July 1909, 9; JHM, “The Highest Development of the Summer Camp,” *Suburban Life*, July 1908, 20.

He gushed over the three road approaches to his mountain perch, viewing them as a key part of the aesthetic experience of a stay. From the east, travelers enjoyed a trip “reminiscent of Alpine journeys.” From the west, the trip from Williamsport featured the idyllic valley of Muncy Creek and a road surrounded by native flora. The approach from the northwest presented the motorist with mountain views “not excelled anywhere in America.” He gestured toward advertising the resort to the fifteen million people he located within an overnight trip, yet he certainly did not want crowds to ascend to the mountaintop. Eagles Mere was a one-thousand-acre site that comfortably fit several hundred people at the height of the summer season. McFarland knew that a self-selection process would apply; only certain types of people read his articles or attended his talks, and only some of them were likely to visit. Who would appreciate Eagles Mere? People who were “not in love with noise and smoke and roar and racket.” This was elite signaling at its best, conveyed to people who mostly lived in noisy, smoky cities and understood a temporary escape from them as a matter of taste. Whereas the masses had their play-worlds on the coast or in the cities, discerning men and women took to the trees. As McFarland tried his hand at landscape architecture, zoning, botany, and boosterism between 1900 and 1925, he honed a voice to make people listen.¹⁹

Cars and Cameras

McFarland wanted people to mimic the aesthetic choices he made when he went to the woods. His reach for expertise relied upon his audience's faith that he knew what he was doing, especially when it came to operating in the wild. Cars and cameras became crucial to teaching people how to see well outdoors. The machine in the garden did not seem the least bit incongruous to him. He pitched his command of technology as a general command of aesthetic ambience on the roads and in the woods of northern Pennsylvania. Both popular technologies required an attention to detail, which McFarland hinted was also the foundation of a way to appreciate the wild outdoors. His extraordinary focus, he showed, had been trained over a lifetime of travel, and cars and cameras offered tangible proof of his experience.²⁰

¹⁹ JHM, *Eagles Mere and the Sullivan Highlands*, 18; JHM, “Summer Lake Carnival,” 9; JHM, “Eagles Mere This Summer”; JHM, “New Eagles Mere”; JHM, synopsis of “See Pennsylvania First.”

²⁰ On the social authority and “mediator status” derived from stories of travel, see Ninna Nyberg Sørensen and Finn Stepputat, “Narrations of Authority and Mobility,” *Identities* 8 (2001): 313–42.

McFarland was an avid motorist, keeping meticulous records of his operating costs and distances traveled. He represented the first generation of popular motorists, people who learned that driving required technical know-how and statistical precision. He liked to display his auto knowledge, telling a federal official in 1924 that he would save the government 5.3 cents per mile if he took a train to Washington instead of driving. This kind of obsessive attention to detail carried into his presentation of nature. His talks were filled with references to exact mileages and driving directions. He believed that central Pennsylvania's "scenic supremacy" came from its diverse collection of river valleys and mountain ridges. The valleys, gaps, passes, and headlands made the state unique, and it was from cars that most people would experience them. By 1920, as he reached his sixties, he was content to view nature from a distance, with a chauffeur to drive him around the state and a camera next to him. This seems the epitome of the systematized, "motorized recapturing of nature by the city-dweller," yet the logic of the daring man behind the wheel remained. The roads between Harrisburg and Eagles Mere might have been improved by turn of the century, but there was still enough adventure on those paths to mark the drive to the mountains as a gendered domain of mastery.²¹

McFarland epitomized the male touring photographer who was mythologized by camera manufacturers in the early part of the century. These were the wealthy professionals who worked relentlessly in daily life and then broke away in fits of leisure. Eastman Kodak Company specifically targeted men "who own cars and have money in chunks." The combination of car and camera made both the journeys and the images produced during them the prize of the privileged few. Eastman Kodak's 1910 catalog of portable cameras featured fourteen pictures of people in automobiles, and in all of them, men drove the cars while women, if present, rode as

²¹JHM to John Gries, Nov. 5, 1924, McFarland Papers; Morrison, *J. Horace McFarland*, 241; JHM, "Pennsylvania's Scenic Supremacy"; Gijss Mom, "Civilized Adventure as a Remedy for Nervous Times: Early Automobility and *Fin-de-siècle* Culture," *History of Technology* 23 (2001): 163. John Urry argues that car culture "coerces people into an intense flexibility." The division of lives into work, domestic, consumer, and recreation spaces, all separated by great distances, forced motorists to manage time and space in new ways. Cars made possible a desire for individual flexibility in travel that soon became fraught with social pressures. Examples of those pressures were the new aesthetic rules that automobility fostered. Mimi Sheller examines the lived experience of car use, particularly the ways in which driving elicits "aesthetic, emotional, and sensory responses." She posits that when it comes to cars, cultural rules about how one should sense the world in motion also become fundamental rules about feeling. John Urry, "The 'System' of Automobility," in *Automobilities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Nigel Thrift, and John Urry (London, 2005), 28; Mimi Sheller, "Automotive Emotions," in *Automobilities*, 222, 226.

passengers. The company used the fantasy of men eternally behind the wheel to encourage purchases. It presumed that men would control the post-trip narration of the photographs as well. Eastman Kodak stressed the parallels between operating a car in the wild and learning the photographic process. In some of the promotional photos, men conferred while fixing a tire or navigated their machines through difficult stream crossings. The catalog's writer opened with the promise of the accelerated sublime, rooted in manly control:

In front of you, a long white ribbon of road. Behind you, a white cloud of dust. On either side, fields, mountains, a river, a valley—the country passing by. Beneath your feet, an engine purring and gurgling, the hum of exhaust droning a low note of comfort. As the throttle creeps forward and the spark slowly advances, the hum rises an octave to the middle register; it sings of the pleasures of swift motion, the joy of the bouncing springs and the exhilaration of the soft air on your face. And then, as the engine picks up, the song skies to the upper register, higher and higher, until as the air meets your face in a wayward rush that beats at the eyes and all but pulls the breath from your body, it becomes a single screaming note.

This portrayal of physical sensation checked by sensible control featured prominently in McFarland's thinking about technology in the outdoors.²²

McFarland believed in the lasting power of scenic mobility. He narrated specific trips along roads that lingered in his mind. In speeches and columns, he tried to convey his memories of special roads, like the “easy mountain road” beside railroad tracks that cut through viburnum “particularly characteristic” of an area. The experience of driving along a road through rhododendrons, pines, and hemlocks that “belonged there” struck him as a profound education. It was a tactile type of learning that made everything *feel* as if it was in its right place. The visual harmony of the moving scene had to be evident to his audience, but relatively few people would have been able to identify indigenous plants. That left experts like McFarland to make judgments on the right and wrong place for particular flora, and he was quick to declare only certain trees and shrubs as “worthwhile.” A kind of drive-through nature study could be had, as the speed afforded by modern cars and roads harmonized with the spectacle of engi-

²² Eastman Kodak Co., *Motoring with a Kodak* (Rochester, NY, 1910), 3, 6. On the sensations of speed and danger in recreation, see Claudia Bell and John Lyall, *The Accelerated Sublime: Landscape, Tourism, and Identity* (Westport, CT, 2002).

neered wildness. McFarland trained viewers in seeing more than they ever expected on the way to their destinations.²³

McFarland considered often how natural scenes opened themselves up to viewers. Although he believed in the power of photographs to drive interest in beautiful places, he knew, too, that they could not capture the experience of being *in* a landscape. Popular images of the Alps and the Rockies, for instance, had convinced northeasterners that those mountain ranges defined majestic scenery. Not so fast, McFarland cautioned: “the impression of majestic height relates mostly to the position from which one sees the hills and mountains.” The Alps or Rockies might be high, but travelers who wanted to appreciate them found themselves too embedded in the landscape to perceive that elevation. Pennsylvanian mountains, on the other hand, were situated in ways that placed the majesty of the landscape on an ever-approaching horizon for the motorist. “There are points in Pennsylvania,” he noted, “looking from which the eye may rest upon true Alpine conditions, lacking only in summer the snow-covered summits.” When men pulled over at a wayside to let their passengers enjoy the view, they mimicked the production of scenery that McFarland modeled. Roadside vistas were gifts that cars gave to drivers and that drivers gave to their fellow travelers. Swift motion along narrow roads, too, created sensory experiences that passengers felt as much as saw. Cars, writes one historian of motoring, “gave back the foreground that had been lost by the train.” Even so, cameras could do only so much to capture the experience of trees flying by and the wind in one’s hair.²⁴

The evolution of camera technology at the turn of the century meant that photographers with even meager experience could create more images in conditions that had previously made photography an ordeal. For those photographers who were not professionals, yet were also not rank amateurs, new vistas opened up. Photography was not yet ubiquitous in the early twentieth century; cameras were still expensive, and developing images required a specialist’s skills, or money to pay a specialist. The cameras that emerged around the turn of the century, however, allowed people like McFarland to produce more images with less concern about cost and effort. In his twenties and thirties, McFarland joined the swelling ranks of American amateurs who first gravitated to the smaller cameras with

²³ JHM, “Bringing the Folks to the Forest.”

²⁴ JHM, “Pennsylvania’s Scenic Supremacy”; Mom, “Civilized Adventure,” 166.

dry gelatin plates of the 1880s and later to the more portable offerings of Eastman Kodak. Writers in *Outing* magazine praised the “beautifully light apparatus” for affording greater access to the outdoors, but they also criticized 90 percent of amateur snapshots as “simply worthless rubbish” because the photographers knew little. McFarland built his photographic know-how slowly to counteract the haste that he saw in too many fellow enthusiasts. His advice marked him as what John Stilgoe might label a “popular” photographer who knew the language of “serious” photographers. He was conversant with many techniques and understood how to use them to build relationships with viewers, but he did not rely on image making for his income or delve deeply into the chemistry of developing negatives. He referred to himself in 1909 as a “camera fiend,” and in the same year, *Hampton’s Magazine* listed photography as his leading hobby.²⁵

By the turn of the century, McFarland *thought* through his cameras. He illustrated the view of photography as a “promiscuous way of seeing,” with the mobile technology propelling users to seek out and briefly fixate on sights that they might otherwise ignore. In this mode, journeys become shaped by the obligations introduced by the camera—there are sights that simply must be captured. McFarland pressured himself to deliver scenes to his audience of prospective travelers. His approach to image making echoed the methods of the pioneering landscape photographers of a generation before who had used pictures of western mountains to entice the public and index the outdoors. William Henry Jackson’s emphasis on capturing Yellowstone scenes that seemingly “demanded” to be photographed—and his recognition that he was the first person to have captured them in that way—was similar to the motivation that McFarland found along the roads and in the woods.²⁶

McFarland was a devotee of the stereopticon, a projection device used in illustrated lectures. In 1898 he discussed plans to buy a \$250 stereopticon for a Harrisburg Sunday school that would be used for public lectures during the week. Images could educate, he told Mira Lloyd Dock, and his goal was to “keep on increasing the information and intelligence of our people by the use of the lantern.” From that point on, he trained himself to

²⁵ Reese V. Jenkins, *Images and Enterprise: Technology and the American Photographic Industry, 1839 to 1925* (Baltimore, 1975), 112; “Hand Cameras,” *Outing*, Oct. 1899, 100; John R. Stilgoe, *Landscape and Images* (Charlottesville, VA, 2005), 299; JHM, “Summer Lake Carnival,” 37; “He Helped Save Niagara,” *Hampton’s Magazine*, June 1909, 865.

²⁶ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. (London, 2002), 128; Bob Blair, ed., *William Henry Jackson’s “The Pioneer Photographer”* (Santa Fe, NM, 2005), 57, 73, 75.

create lantern slides. His widely traveled lectures from the 1910s and 1920s rotated through hundreds of his Eagles Mere slides alone. The slideshows were meant to test the limits of photography. When natural scenes were the focus of a photographer's work, there was always the threat that they would overwhelm the viewer. In terms of size, color, flatness, and degree of detail, prints struggled against limitations that negated the deep, expansive sensations one felt within a forest. The experience of nature was elusive; many who wrote about the outdoors at that time noted that their sensations were difficult to translate for those not present. The naturalist John Muir faced this when he wrote about the mountains of the American West. He strained to convert the sublimity of his experiences into the beauty that magazine and newspaper readers seemed to want. Camera manufacturers made this difficulty part of their sales strategy and tried to convince consumers that pictures could become their *personal* memories, pleasant to others, perhaps, but never truly shared.²⁷

Slide shows could retrieve some of the outdoor spectacle through enlargement, coloring, and, of course, expert narration. There was an art to these shows, as well as a commercial aspect. Lecture bureaus in cities across the United States rented slides and scripts to consumers who wanted to put up shows for guests in their own homes. An excellent illustrated lecture aimed to transport the audience to the site, a feat that could be hard to accomplish due to the hardware at the venues in which McFarland spoke. *Photo-Era* editors spoke directly to people like McFarland in 1911 when they offered a litany of complaints from the viewpoint of the lecture audience: cracked slides created prism effects, poorly focused stereopticons made viewers squint, slides that were too big jammed in the carriage, unevenly lit screens produced unwanted shadows, and finger prints on slides ruined the illusion of being in a landscape.²⁸

McFarland was encouraged in his presentation efforts by his Eagles Mere neighbor William Simon, a chemist from Baltimore. By the time of his death in 1916, Simon had mastered the technical side of color pho-

²⁷ JHM to Mira Lloyd Dock, Sept. 24, 1898, McFarland Papers; JHM, "See Pennsylvania First"; Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1989), 78; Michael P. Cohen, *The Pathless Way: John Muir and American Wilderness* (Madison, WI, 1986), 241. Eastman Kodak counseled, "You cannot get up any great enthusiasm over the little pictures of mountain scenery—unless you have been in the same place; but let us see you go over your own collection after you have made it and see if you haven't a rhapsody or so to get off about the beauty of some sunset or the magnificence of some view." See Eastman Kodak Co., *Motoring with a Kodak*, 9.

²⁸ C. H. Claudy, "The Lantern at Home," *Photo-Era* 26 (1911): 64; "Abuse of the Optical Lantern," *Photo-Era* 26 (1911): 26.

tography and was recognized as one of the leading American practitioners of the innovative Lumière process. Using special plates coated in potato starch, the Lumière “autochrome” produced images that were impressive renditions of landscape scenes. Simon introduced the technique to the Engineers’ Club of Central Pennsylvania in 1908 as a seismic shift for photography. He was remembered by the *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* as the only man of his time who had photographed a rainbow accurately. Ads for McFarland’s printing company boasted that his staff had been the first Americans to produce autochromes in November 1907 and that the results were “simply astonishing.” He slowly found that they were of variable use in lectures. Although McFarland called autochromes “perfect color memoranda” in 1909, after a decade of using them he knew that the intensity of light needed to project the color images was hard to come by.²⁹

When McFarland summarized his expert vision in the woods as advice for novices, he presented two related principles. First, he argued that true understanding came when viewers controlled their ambitions. They should not try to take in too much at once, he counseled, but limit their view to discrete elements in their turn. How did amateur woods walkers know what to look at or what to take a picture of? Their focus should stay on specific items—the “jewels of nature” as McFarland presented them over the decades. Visitors to the woods should attend to a lone hemlock casting its shadow on a hill or a single bluebell working its way out of the underbrush. Even visitors at overlooks must concentrate on one aspect of the scene. They should focus, McFarland advised, on the foreground at the expense of the background. When taking photographs, this meant “subduing the importance” of the background with lenses that produced a pleasant haze surrounding the object. This generally went against the advice of professionals, who recommended that photographers allow elements of the natural background to “assert themselves,” instead of making them soft, unfocused canvases. Not for McFarland; when taking pictures or simply walking, he meant to maintain control. A stroll through the woods brought with it a strong sense of duty.³⁰

²⁹ *National Nurseryman*, June 1908, 184; JHM, “Statement in Regard to the Lecture on Color Photography,” 260; “Simon, William,” *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 17 (New York, 1920), 218; JHM, “Horticultural Photography,” *Standard Cyclopaedia of Horticulture* (New York, 1919), 2600; JHM, “The Romance of Color Photography,” *Suburban Life*, Dec. 1909, 298, 337.

³⁰ JHM, *Photographing Flowers and Trees and the Use of Natural Forms in Decorative Photography* (New York, 1911), 40, 42; “Outdoor Backgrounds,” *Photo-Era* 43 (1919): 145.

Second, he voiced one of the most calculated explanations of the picturesque mode of viewing landscape in his accompanying rule. When instructing how to take a good photo of a tree, McFarland urged readers to treat everything in the scene that was not the tree itself as a “landscape accessory.” Scenes could be composed in a photograph or assembled in one’s mind by mixing and matching these accessories, walking around to include some in the frame and exclude others. Everything was a surface to McFarland, and so the difference between good images and bad images was not determined by how they commented on nature, but by how they reflected beauty. Thinking of nature as a series of landscape accessories was symptomatic of a “masculinist” tradition in geographic and environmental thought that emphasized indexing and altering the outdoors. In this tradition, nature existed for human benefit, and reworking it to get one’s desired result was the most appropriate form of engagement with it. In addition to patience, what the woods walker needed was “intelligent, and not arbitrary or didactic art training.” If travelers allowed someone like McFarland to teach them about visual forms, they could manipulate landscape accessories at will. If we hold McFarland to his own rules about framing the natural world—following along as he tried to create lasting pictures instead of what he dismissed as “mere photographs”—we can glimpse expertise in the making. Each of the following images built his repertoire of experiences offered to his audiences of “militant citizens.” Each told people what to expect and what was expected of them.³¹

Many of McFarland’s photos showed scenic views from roadways, with the road as a key part of the composition. These images encouraged audience members to imagine themselves on a motor tour and simulated his assumed stance of a city dweller. An image from August 1916 captured this style (Fig. 1). Taken five miles north of Eagles Mere on a dirt road above Loyalsock Creek, the autochrome shows three men touring the highlands with an automobile. One of the men sits in the car, while the other two have gotten out to look at the town of Forksville in the distance. One of the standing men holds his hands to his face, suggesting that he is looking at the scene through viewing glasses. The town sits in the creek valley, and three overlapping mountains lead the viewer’s gaze into the distance.

³¹JHM, *Photographing Flowers and Trees*, 51–52. On masculinism in turn-of-the-century geography, see Karen Morin, *Frontiers of Femininity: A New Historical Geography of the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Syracuse, NY, 2008); Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits to Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN, 1993); and Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1975).



Fig. 1. *Loyalsock Road*. Manuscript Group 85, J. Horace McFarland Papers Lantern Slides. Courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives.

Conventional picturesque landscape scenes placed an observer at a vista in the immediate foreground, allowing the viewer of the image to share in the perspective of the person at the site. To take this photograph, McFarland moved far enough away from the trio that the resulting image was as much about them embedded in the landscape as it was about the view that they took in. The situation he sought was this encounter between attentive tourists and the pleasant country. Locating the car in the middle distance allowed McFarland to highlight the vegetation lining the road as well as the trees and fields in the valley below. This image would have worked well as a part of his scenic preservation lectures; it encouraged viewers to imagine not only the scenery of such a drive, but also the thrill of the journey. McFarland rated the Loyalsock corridor's views as some of the best in the nation.

The photo from the road outside Forksville performed further alterations to picturesque standards. Art critics and naturalists alike had traditionally treated the picturesque as a means through which women engaged with nature. In a hierarchy of sensibilities and artistic styles, photographic tastemakers considered the interpretation of nature as pleasant and orderly



Fig. 2. *Road from Laporte*. Manuscript Group 85, J. Horace McFarland Papers Lantern Slides. Courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives.

to be less intellectually demanding than treatments that highlighted the natural world's indifferent power, overwhelming size, and routine violence. The "higher" levels of outdoor perception, especially versions of the natural sublime, were the domain of men. When McFarland took such a picture, then, he literally illustrated his attempt to get more Pennsylvanians thinking about the prettiness of their state as an asset. This included a professional class of city-dwelling men. The men above Forksville illustrated a movement that fascinated McFarland: shifting back and forth from the wild abandon of cars to the solemnity of the roadside. A. H. Beardsley, the editor of *Photo-Era's* "Crucible" department for savvy technicians, observed in late 1919, "It is astonishing to note the number of amateur photographers who fail to use automobile-trips to photographic advantage." Beardsley shared with McFarland a consumer's mentality, through which any drive became a chance to "obtain much valuable picture-material." He warned readers that if they were passengers, and not behind the wheel, they would contend with the driver's zeal to complete the trip as quickly as possible. McFarland recognized "picture-material" when he saw it. He subdued the background of the image by making the men, the

car, and the brush surrounding them the most defined part of the scene; everything beyond them was softened.³²

A second McFarland slide, when placed alongside the view above Forksville, highlights the gender conventions at play in roadside viewing. McFarland took this image on the same motor tour in August 1916, several miles to the southeast of Eagles Mere (Fig. 2). The photograph shows a view of the Muncy Creek valley toward the southwest, with North Mountain cutting in from the left of the frame and a series of rolling hills and ridges receding into a white haze. This second autochrome relied on a fair amount of “printing in” clouds during development to give the sky an attractive depth. The site, known locally as Fiester’s View, was named for the Fiester family, who lived in the farmhouse shown in the middle distance. To the right of the house, in the shade of a stand of trees, sits an automobile with two almost imperceptible male figures standing by it. Closer to the camera, along the dirt road that drops down the hill toward Sonestown, another man stands and looks toward the view. Apart from the panorama itself, the other focal point of the photograph is the trio of women in the foreground, backs to the camera, surveying the scene before them. It is likely that the car that brought them there was behind McFarland, at a makeshift parking area already worn in by motorists.³³

The most noticeable difference between McFarland’s techniques in the two images is his positioning of the surrogate viewers. The men above Forksville and the women at Fiester’s View stood in for the audience members who viewed the images during McFarland’s illustrated presentations. The women’s status in the image diverges from the men’s in terms of their relative inaction. McFarland clearly posed the women in a way that was not evident in the first image. They stand several yards away from the road, in a spot that gained them no scenic advantage but that allowed McFarland to adopt his favorite “over the shoulder” effect. The women are positioned in the foreground, whereas the men in the previous image are far enough away from the viewer to make their activities part of the composition. The absence of the car from the second image contributes to this effect, naturalizing the presence of the women in a way that the pre-

³² Susan Schrepfer, *Nature’s Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence, KS, 2005), 42; A. H. Beardsley, “The Automobile and the Beginner,” *Photo-Era* 43 (1919): 264–65.

³³ *Williamsport Sun-Gazette*, Sept. 16, 1937. The vista was officially renamed “Wright’s View” in 1929, after the state’s highway commissioner Paul Wright ordered the road paved so that more tourists could access the view. See *Altoona Mirror*, July 10, 1929.

vious image did not. Though their dress does not inscribe them with rural status, the women look like landscape accessories. Audiences were meant to imagine the men in the first photograph dismounting from the automobile, grabbing their field glasses, examining details in the landscape, and then continuing on their way. The women at Fiester's View, on the other hand, are mere models for the art of looking.

With persistence and hardy tires, travelers on the roads near Forksville or Sonestown eventually came to Eagles Mere. In addition to the lake, the clean air, and the genteel company, McFarland argued that the woods surrounding the resort were the prime attraction. An image that McFarland captioned *Woods View* (Fig. 3) demonstrated his vision of nature as a source of psychic rejuvenation. He took the photo in the woods around Eagles Mere in 1907. The hemlocks surrounding the lake, he wrote the following summer, gave a "good forest color." In his association of trees with the spectacle that they afforded the observer, McFarland joined a long aesthetic tradition that valued the orderly and delightful visual field. Order emerged in black and white slides through the rendering of light and shadow. McFarland likely shot this image from the Laurel Path, a walking trail that had circled the lake since the previous decade. Turning to the side and shooting low through the trees, McFarland captured the dense underbrush of mountain laurel and ferns that covered much of the northern Appalachian highlands. Though the photo was not a traditional picturesque scene with a distant horizon, it contained a central picturesque element. McFarland framed the scene with tree trunks that formed a doorway into the forest. These trunks provide a sense of depth to a photo that consists almost entirely of foreground. Viewers' eyes likely moved to the space between the trunks, imagining a trail among the brush that was not actually there.³⁴

Walking trails around the lake and into the woods helped foster a sensation of timelessness. On new trails that McFarland helped build in 1909 and 1910, guests could commune with scenery without needing the "mountain legs and mountain lungs" of the "hardy man." The Arrow Paths, groomed, blazed with arrows, and posted with regular signs, opened up the woods to women and anyone else who sought "safety, convenience, and beauty." McFarland touted the individual sites reachable via these routes, such as the unusual Eagle Rocks or Moosehead Passage, as the "best of

³⁴JHM, "Highest Development of the Summer Camp," 20.

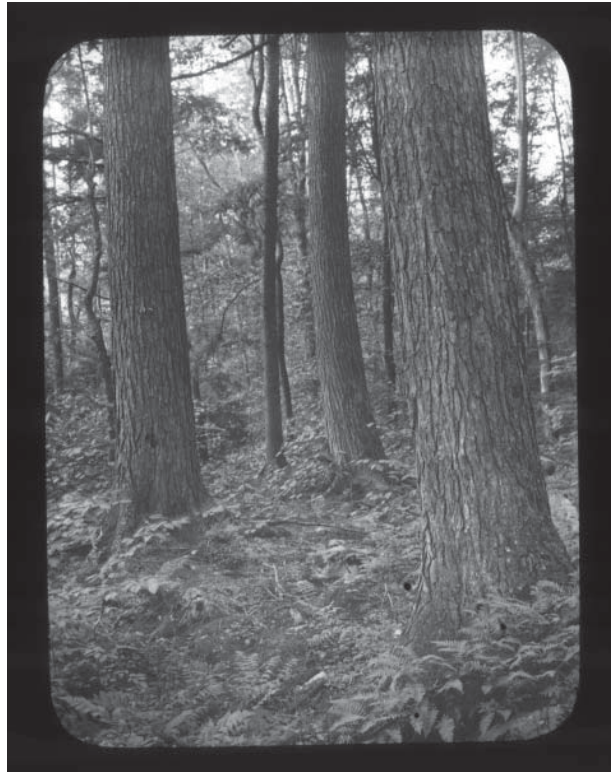


Fig. 3. *Woods View*. Manuscript Group 85, J. Horace McFarland Papers Lantern Slides Courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives.

the virgin forest.” He liked to think of the resort as “shut in” by trees that had survived since the age of Columbus. The gently graded foot paths allowed even casual travelers to see these sights, but as of the 1920s, few people had actually visited Eagles Mere. *Woods View* depicted the pleasant emptiness that McFarland used as part of his claim to expertise. The solitary trip into the wilderness was a powerful motif for him, despite his tendency after 1900 to visit Eagles Mere with family, friends, or his chauffeur. While the crowds splashed on the beach or dawdled on the dock, McFarland knew, the individual could break away to play at isolation. The blunt caption suggested the type of narrow focus that the walker adopted when even mid-distance views were obscured. Thinking of the landscape as a collection of accessories, McFarland found an angle that combined old trees, young trees, ferns, and broken sightlines extending into the forest. In

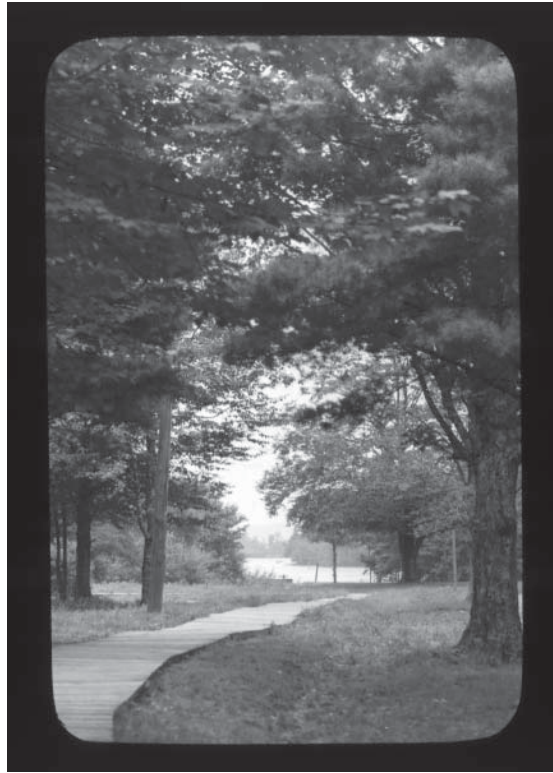


Fig. 4. *Lake View*. Manuscript Group 85, J. Horace McFarland Papers Lantern Slides. Courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives.

a 1906 article in *Outlook* magazine, he called this process “hunting in the May woods.”³⁵

Woods View functioned as the “before” shot to the “after” image provided by another Eagles Mere photograph. To capture *Lake View*, McFarland stood on the boardwalk that led to the north end of the lake and aimed his camera south, toward the shoreline (Fig. 4). This was his own corner of Eagles Mere, where he owned a cottage (“Bide-a-Wee”) and spent most of his time while on site. McFarland followed the advice of photography magazines in displacing the path in the frame, drawing the viewer’s eye along it instead of allowing it to cut the scene in half. The middle ground of the image was most in focus here, with the foreground trees blurry and

³⁵JHM, “Eagles Mere This Summer”; JHM, “New Eagles Mere”; JHM, “Summer Lake Carnival,” 9; JHM, “Hunting in the May Woods,” *Outlook* 83 (1906): 190.

the distant lake indistinct in the summer light. Light and shadow mattered more than natural detail in a composition like this.³⁶

The boardwalk in *Lake View* fulfills a similar function to the pathless space between the trees in *Woods View*; both beckon the viewer forward. The journey in *Lake View*, however, would have offered none of the adventure that waited in the mountain forests. The boardwalk was part of what McFarland praised as sensible construction at the resort. It represented the “simple best of civilization” that made life easy—but not too easy—at Eagles Mere. A humble walkway accentuated the aesthetics of the site, whereas the “boardwalky stuff” at popular spots such as Coney Island or Atlantic City obliterated their respective scenes. In this photograph, McFarland hoped to show off the boardwalk, to boast of the “New Eagles Mere” that was built after 1910. However, he did not caption the image with an eye toward the walkway, but instead stressed what the visitor saw from the walkway. Whereas *Woods View* is almost nothing but the woods, the lake is hardly visible in *Lake View*. It is “subdued” as part of the background. Here was an approximation of the photographer’s daily routine, walking from his house each morning to see the lake, chat to fellow residents, and figure out what to do with his day. The photo allowed McFarland to bring his audience further into his world, to recreate the experiences that made an eye trained for the outdoors.

Indeed, more often than he created views conveying pristine nature, McFarland attempted to model visitors’ interaction with the mountain woodland. These were his most tourist-friendly images, ones that converted the forests of Sullivan County into the specific scenic spots that became part of the “Sullivan Highlands” in semipopular parlance. *Shanersburg View*, an autochrome taken in 1911 (Fig. 5) exhibits this mode of imagery. In this picture, a young girl stands with her back to the camera at the edge of a dense stand of shrubs and trees that mark the slope of a hill. She looks over them, toward the eastern horizon. In the distance sits a hazy forest punctuated by Shanersburg Run. The girl lifts a hand to her face, shading her eyes from the day’s brightness or perhaps holding field glasses. The slide contrasts the girl’s white dress with varying shades of green and gray. McFarland’s technical mastery of outdoor photography is on display here. He avoids the most common mistake made when photographing from vistas; by using the appropriate light filter, he achieved a pleasant contrast

³⁶“Print Criticism,” *Photo-Era* 26 (1911): 37.



Fig. 5. *Shanersburg View*. Manuscript Group 85, J. Horace McFarland Papers Lantern Slides. Courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives.

between the sky and foreground, so that neither of them dominate the other.³⁷

An image like this reveals McFarland's true colors as a scenery enthusiast. His fellow outdoors promoters tended to present the woods as a living interconnected system rather than an array of ornaments. McFarland was in it for the individual sights that he could photograph, figuratively crossing them off of his master list. He recognized his "heresy" in using wide-angle lenses when photographing landscape, but he defended his choice as a painter might. In his photography guidebook from 1911, he was careful to distinguish his style of image making from that of other photographers who happened to be outdoors. His work, he stressed, was "decorative photography," a catchall phrase for imagery that emphasized form and composition over the workings of the natural world. A wide-angle lens allowed him to get more background in the frame, but he never meant the background to be anything but a hazy set in front of which his

³⁷ John Nichol, "Lantern Slides," *Outing* 35 (1899): 100.

subjects sat. Those foreground subjects—flowering trees, beds of laurel, girls in white dresses—could be presented to lay audiences as examples of the highlights of a drive or walk.³⁸

By contrast, the men who wrote to photography magazines seemed intent on patrolling the border between serious photographs and pretty pictures. The former were made with expert ability and mechanical precision before the shutter opened, whereas the latter were doctored after the exposure had been made. One writer to *Photo-Era* complained that too many images that were celebrated by art galleries displayed a “lack of technical knowledge or power of execution by photographic means.” They were pleasant, yes, but they were also “half-breed paintings.” The argument was mirrored in the magazine’s monthly features for two distinct sets of readers. The male-edited “Crucible” column provided a “monthly digest of facts for practical workers,” such as the chemistry behind photography and mechanical processes. “The Round Robin Guild,” on the other hand, was edited by women during the same period and was presented to an amateur audience assumed to have a good number of women within it. This column considered the effects of the seasons on photography, the basics of developing prints, and tips for winning photo competitions. Many writers in the national photography press followed the example of W. S. Lee, who masculinized the technical side of photography when he wrote in 1919 that “some shoot well and others shoot often, but most fail to shoot hard enough to make a sure killing.”³⁹

Although McFarland used his share of hunting metaphors when writing about outdoor photography, he had no qualms about embellishing images to generate the desired effect. He criticized “fake color reproductions,” but he knew how to use the autochrome development process to highlight selected elements and diminish others. Of the images discussed so far, *Shanersburg View* conforms most to the ideals of the picturesque. In it, McFarland places viewers over the shoulder of a surrogate, omits evidence of how she arrived at the spot, and directs the image’s perspective through a window framed by trees and bushes. The scene aided McFarland’s praise of Eagles Mere as a tasteful family resort, thus the picturesque elements of a tinted sky and a natural “window” onto the horizon were certainly worth

³⁸ Raymond Torrey, Frank Place Jr., and Robert Dickinson, *New York Walk Book* (New York, 1923), xiii; Dann, *Across the Great Border Fault*, 30; JHM, *Photographing Flowers and Trees*, 4.

³⁹ “Photographic Pictorialism,” *Photo-Era* 26 (1911): 97; W. S. Lee, “Snapshots,” *Photo-Era* 43 (1919): 254.

stressing. The image also models the type of reverence before nature that he preached throughout his career of scenic preservation. To reach this remote spot on the trail required effort, and the girl's reverent demeanor suggests that she recognized the beauty before her to be worth the trip. McFarland posed her in the same overt style that he used in the photo of Fiester's View. Standing on a rock in the middle of nowhere, the girl is a pupil in a veritable outdoor aesthetics lesson taught by the man with the camera. The artist's implicit claim is that the girl could receive the aesthetic message that the scene offered—presumably because of her company at the overlook. In naming the image *Shanersburg View*, McFarland heralded the process by which a nondescript spot to the east of Eagles Mere became part of a constellation of branded, signed, and mapped sites in an elite tourist landscape. McFarland named many similar vistas between 1900 and 1920, using specific names to entice his peers onto trails and direct their experience once they were lured in.⁴⁰

A final image from McFarland's collection suggests the type of immersion in the landscape that the young girl could not hope to achieve. Captioned *Primeval Forest*, the image showed what it was like to be in the general vicinity of the previous photo, but down in the depths of Shanersburg Run, instead of viewing it from above (Fig. 6). In this composition, three men stand in the bed of the creek, with bags and canteens slung around their necks and walking sticks in hand. One of them leans against a fallen tree that serves as a focusing device for McFarland. The composition is one of his standard types: rocks and branches in the foreground give way to diagonals of terrain in the middle distance, receding to a lighter background that is more suggested than depicted. The trees, bending their way upward from the steep slope, are McFarland's joy, the "primeval forest" that he drove for hours and lugged camera equipment to capture. A working lumber camp was located within a mile of this spot, but the image portrays an untouched wilderness. Only the presence of the men and the impression of a walking path leading from the bottom-right corner of the frame interrupt the scene. The "interior" quality of the picture, with its greens, browns, and grays, reinforces McFarland's observation that there are no "pure" colors in nature. The autochrome comes close to depicting what the eye would have perceived: the muted, shady atmosphere at the bottom of Shanersburg Run.⁴¹

⁴⁰ JHM, "Romance of Color Photography," 337.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 336.



Fig. 6. *Primeval Forest*. Manuscript Group 85, J. Horace McFarland Papers Lantern Slides. Courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives.

Primeval Forest shows men at ease within a landscape instead of beholding it from afar. They have gotten to the bottom of things, as it were, and for a while there are no more spectacles to appraise. The photographer makes their pause in the creek bed a subject of interest, and the discrepancy in size between the men and their surroundings conveys the scale of the woods and the possibility of quiet moments in every dip. The forest does not appear large enough, however, to evoke the God-fearing emotions usually associated with the sublime. This is the “woody” forest, a term McFarland used to define city dwellers’ estimation of a forested area that *looked right*. It plays the part of stately backdrop for men’s actions. They had gotten themselves there, and they would soon hike back out, reaching the comforts of the resort well before dinner was served at the Forest Inn. McFarland, too, had shouldered his equipment down the trail to this site. The logistical ordeal of photography did not dictate a purely functional style, but rather contributed to a tendency of “probing, analyzing, and active observing” in the outdoors. McFarland portrayed himself as a master of this trinity, using patient contemplation to build a visual vocabulary. In this, he was in line with the photography columnists who

encouraged woods walkers to stop and study their surroundings, to avoid the tug of the trail before them and stay in one spot for as long as it took to make an excellent image. The figures in the image certainly could have been women; McFarland wrote of taking female companions deep into the woods to see sights. But the logic of the picture worked better with men playing the roles of explorers. They had worked hard to reach a special spot, and they deserved a rest.⁴²

Club-like, Yet Democratic: McFarland and Expertise

If McFarland liked to talk often about the photographs hanging on his office walls, there was another detail of his mountain experience that he shared frequently with readers and listeners. When he stayed at Eagles Mere for days or weeks on end, he lived in a cozy cabin whose front door had a sturdy lock on it. He never used the key, however, for his time in the mountains was an idyll that would never be broken by such things as burglary. Likewise, when he used the bathhouse on Lake Eagles Mere, he never secured his valuables before launching his boat into the water or lazing on the beach. One did not need to consider such things. When he searched for terms to describe the social atmosphere at Eagles Mere, as he did in an article for *Suburban Life* in 1908, he settled on “club-like, yet democratic.”⁴³ The people who frequented the resort were of a type—the type with wealth and decorum.

McFarland exhibited the inherent elitism of wilderness advocacy in the early twentieth century. His definitions and appreciation of wild areas was predicated on the availability of solitude, which required limiting devices to keep the masses out of the woods. The most common limiting devices were cost and accessibility. McFarland wrote about Eagles Mere for people who could afford Eagles Mere. His carefree trust in his fellow visitors would have collapsed if the site had become truly popular. He complained in a 1928 radio address about the “ravages” of “piratical tourists.” Likewise, when he promoted footpaths along country roads as a democratic device, engineered for “citizens and taxpayers” who were unable to “travel on the wings of an explosion motor,” he never explained the logistics of the dream. He must have recognized that long-distance trips on foot by signif-

⁴² JHM, “New Eagles Mere”; Orwell, *Real Thing*, 99–100. For examples of such photographic advice, see Beardsley, “Automobile and the Beginner,” 264–65; and Parker Field, “The Appalachian Mountain Club,” *Photo-Era* 52 (1924): 190.

⁴³ JHM, “Highest Development of the Summer Camp,” 20.

icant numbers of people were a fanciful vision, yet it did not stop him from speaking about new road and trail systems as if their value was indisputable. The result of this way of thinking was that if the wild *was* preserved, then it was preserved for the very type of people who relied professionally and economically on the commercial metropolis. The mountains became a getaway for white-collar urbanites.⁴⁴

There was another aspect to the “club-like, yet democratic” descriptor. McFarland wrote in 1908 that the woods around Eagles Mere were always there, “ready to make [him] over.” The rejuvenation that he thought possible from walking through the woods was a scenic therapy for people who lived out of touch with the natural world. In his hundreds of illustrated lectures, McFarland presented the eastern highlands as a setting, an outdoor stage on which outsiders performed in prescribed ways. The setting was both natural and man-made, yet McFarland, like many outdoor popularizers, imagined that the mountains were empty. There were no locals there, no one to offer competing interpretations of wild landscapes. And so the Appalachian setting was a place for outsiders to put their commercialized lives in context by encountering scenic beauty. McFarland imagined that people who followed his advice would find the mountains “so perfectly natural and “woody.” Whereas foresters or botanists would have scoffed at an uncritical conception of “woodsiness” (or his related notion of “sightliness”), McFarland embraced it. His favorite spots represented not wilderness, but rather wilderness imprinted with roads, cars, cameras, cabins, paths, and expert advice on how to use them all correctly.⁴⁵

McFarland’s direct influence on his audiences is difficult to measure. His professional reputation as an expert on scenery survived well into the 1920s, when he adopted a less demanding work schedule and devoted himself to his home garden in Harrisburg. By this point, the City Beautiful impulse had come and gone. The ACA may have paid a price for

⁴⁴ Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 83; JHM, “Highest Development of the Summer Camp,” 18, 20; JHM, “Pennsylvania’s Scenic Supremacy”; JHM, “What about the Country Highway?” 225. Ronald Foresta makes a similar point about the development of the Appalachian Trail in Ronald Foresta, “Transformation of the Appalachian Trail,” *Geographical Review* 77 (1987): 78.

⁴⁵ JHM, “Highest Development of the Summer Camp,” 18; Morrison, *J. Horace McFarland*, 29; JHM, “New Eagles Mere”; JHM, “Summer Lake Carnival,” 37; JHM, “Shall We Have Ugly Conservation?”; Johnson, “Wilderness Parks and Their Discontents,” 122. Johnson notes that conservationists of the era tended to see inhabited woodland as inefficiently managed and thus tried to minimize reminders of human habitation. See the related discussion about New England tourism in Richard Judd, *Common Lands, Common People: The Origins of Conservation in Northern New England* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 226–28.

McFarland's commandeering of the spotlight. Throughout his presidency, the group had a skeleton staff and a modest membership, and the thousands of small civic groups throughout the nation found it easy to engage or disengage with the ACA at will. The result was an "ephemeral, indistinct air" to the ACA, which was not helped by the professionalization of city planning in the 1910s. Planners soon worked directly with municipal governments, cutting out cultured, connected elites who excelled at working as middlemen. The type of physical access and mobility that McFarland relied on to project expertise became simultaneously more attainable by middle-class Americans and less compelling as a source of authority.⁴⁶

Nonetheless, for at least a decade, McFarland was in the driver's seat of the scenic preservation movement in the United States. He knew enough about horticulture to grow roses and identify plants and trees. He knew enough about aesthetics to speak to civic groups about what was pleasant in the world. Yet, his expertise was not in either of those fields, but in the translation of them to a middle-class public and the fostering of a democratic feel to a decidedly club-like set of preoccupations. The perceived purity and incompleteness of remote places such as Eagles Mere was the key to this claim of expertise. For McFarland, it was not a matter of Cronon's "bipolar moral scales," which judge the tree in the wilderness more favorably than the tree in the city park. Nor was it an escape from history, for McFarland believed that what had been made by humans could be remade. In his mobile logic, Eagles Mere needed the city as much as the city needed Eagles Mere—and everyone needed him, because he had the trained eye. His audiences might put themselves in his shoes, so to speak, as he walked in the woods. Marginal places like the northern tier of Pennsylvania, when viewed from Harrisburg, were useful to experts such as McFarland because of their marginality. Elite preservationists conveyed a perception of the woods as a hypothetical destination worth guarding. The people *might* pursue it because they were convinced by men like McFarland, but they might also never make the trip, secure in the knowledge that someone had already gone there for them.⁴⁷

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⁴⁶ Wilson, *J. Horace McFarland*, 326–27.

⁴⁷ Denis Cosgrove and Veronica della Dora, eds., *High Places: Cultural Geographies of Mountains, Ice, and Science* (London, 2008), 223; Cronon, "Trouble with Wilderness," 80, 89.