

**REPORT OF THE FORESTRY
COMMISSION OF
NEW HAMPSHIRE.
JANUARY SESSION, 1891**

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Report of the Forestry Commission of new Hampshire. January session, 1891 by Various

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REPORT OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION.

To the Legislature:

The members of the commission appointed by the Governor and Council in accordance with the provisions of a "joint resolution for the appointment of a commission to ascertain the feasibility of purchasing and preserving the forests of New Hampshire," approved August 16, 1889, having attended to the duties assigned to them, respectfully submit for your consideration the results of their investigations as embodied in the following report.

The joint resolution just referred to may be found on pages 139 and 140 of the Pamphlet Laws of 1889, and reads as follows:

"JOINT RESOLUTION FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION TO ASCERTAIN THE FEASIBILITY OF PURCHASING AND PRESERVING THE FORESTS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

"WHEREAS, the preservation of the forests of New Hampshire is essentially necessary, not only for the prosperity of our vast manufacturing interests, but also to preserve and increase that natural beauty of scenery so attractive to our visitors; and,

"WHEREAS, the hills and mountains in this State are being rapidly denuded of timber and rendered unsightly by the acts of private parties owning the same, therefore

"Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

"That the Governor, with the advice of the Council, is hereby authorized and empowered to appoint a commission consisting of three able and discreet men who shall examine and ascertain the feasibility of the purchase by the State of the whole or any portion of the timber lands upon the hills and mountains in the State, near summer resorts, or bordering upon the principal sources of the water-supplies needed for manufacturing purposes, with the view of preserving the same as public lands and parks, and report their finding to the next session of the Legislature.

Resolved, That the governor is hereby authorized to draw his warrant upon the treasury for the sum of one thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary to pay for the services and expenses of said commission.
"[Approved August 16, 1889.]"

A commission similar to this was appointed by the Governor and Council in accordance with the provisions of joint resolutions of the Legislature respectively approved July 29, 1881, and September 15, 1883. It was made the duty of that commission "to institute an inquiry into the extent to which the forests of New Hampshire are being destroyed by the indiscriminate cutting of wood and timber for transportation to other states; also, the effect, if any, produced by the destruction of our forests upon our rainfall, and consequently upon our ponds and streams, and into the wisdom or necessity for the adoption of forest laws."

This commission consisted of S. W. Hale, governor, Henry G. Jesup, Joseph B. Walker, William H. Hills, Joseph Barnard, William S. Ladd, Ithiel E. Clay, and William F. Flint. Their report was submitted to the Legislature at its June session in 1885. It covers one hundred printed pages, and discusses at considerable length the five following branches of the subject referred to them for investigation.

1. Forest areas.
2. The forests of New Hampshire in their relation to the amount of rainfall, the water-supply, and the climate of the State.
3. The trees and shrubs composing the New Hampshire forests, their distribution, relative abundance, and utility.
4. Forest management and re-forestation.
5. Forest fires.

As the condition of the forests of the State has not been greatly changed since the date of the former commission's report, and as some of the above topics are still as important in their practical bearing as they were at that time, they

have received our attention. We hope that all who read our report will again examine that of 1885.

Immediately after its appointment the commission met and organized by electing Joseph B. Walker president, George B. Chandler treasurer, and J. B. Harrison secretary. We have held public meetings and hearings in different parts of the State, have discussed forestry subjects and the value of our scenery in various public addresses, and in numerous articles published in the newspapers of the State and of the country in general. We have also consulted many citizens of New Hampshire who have long been familiar with the forests and waters of our mountain regions, endeavoring thus to avail ourselves as fully as possible of the observation and judgment of any persons who may have given special attention to the subjects which we have had under consideration. We wish to acknowledge here our obligations to all who have in any way aided our inquiries. We have received many letters of interest and value, and have observed with satisfaction frequent indications of increasing popular attention to matters connected with the value of the forests and scenery of the State.

DIRECT OBSERVATION.

We have, however, regarded actual, direct observation as necessary to intelligent and just conclusions, and have been unwilling to make a report upon the forests, streams, and scenery of the State without considerable investigation of their character and capabilities. Since the appointment of the commission we have examined most of our mountain country, especially the White Mountain region and the northern part of the State in general. We saw as much as possible of the condition of the forests and scenery around Fabyan's, Crawford's, the Glen and Profile houses, and about Bethlehem, and went up Mount Washington by the stage road from the Glen House, and came down by

the railway. We drove through the White Mountain Notch from Crawford's with a team, and went out the whole length of the Zealand Valley Lumber Railroad on a gravel train. We also looked about in the Upper Coös country, going up the Connecticut valley with a horse and wagon, from West Stewartstown to Connecticut lake, seventeen miles, and from there to Mr. Chester's camp at Second lake, nine miles. Crossing this lake in a boat, we followed a blind trail on foot through the forest to Third lake, a walk of six or seven miles, but we thought it nearer ten. We slept in the woods on the shore of the lake, and in the daytime examined the region. We have seen most of the mountain country of our State, going through, across, and around it by nearly every line of travel, — by railways, carriage roads, footpaths, and trails.

From Fabyan's, and about Wing Road, and in many places throughout the White Mountain region, one sees on the mountain sides extensive tracts which have been burned over, where the dead, unsightly tree trunks destroy all the value of the scenery for the present. The sky line, which in all fine landscapes appeals strongly to the imagination by its suggestions of infinite distance beckoning to fairer scenes beyond the utmost range of vision, is here utterly vulgarized and degraded by these straggling ranks of decaying stumps. While these repellent objects mar the scenery it will yield no delight to visitors who seek the solace and peace of nature among the mountains. But in a few years the dead trees will have fallen and disappeared. The slopes once burned over are now, in most cases, already green, as they are growing up with bush cherry and other shrubs which, though worthless for timber, will serve to clothe the hills with foliage until the burning is repeated. But, on the other hand, there are areas of considerable extent in different parts of the White Mountain region where in very dry seasons the deep, rich soil has burned slowly, like a mass of peat, remaining on fire for

weeks, and burning quite down to the underlying rocks. In some such cases the heat was so great that the heavy, green forest was entirely consumed. One man, whose land had thus been wholly blotted out, timber, soil, and all, said: "You could not pick up a club on a hundred acres big enough to throw at a dog." These areas of scorched and desolate stone will never be covered with forests again. The incidents and accidents of careless human occupancy of the region have here brought back the hard and forbidding conditions under which, measureless ages ago, nature began her work of clothing the bare mountains of rock with the lower forms of vegetable life.

If we look at it from a few miles away, the forest still appears to be unbroken over a large proportion of the White Mountain region, but when we go about on foot we find there has been almost everywhere a great deal of cutting, or, where it has not yet begun, the lumbermen are, in most districts, preparing for extensive operations. This has already caused alarm among the hotel proprietors and their guests, as they note the vigor with which timber-cutting is pushed forward in the vicinity of some of the great mountain houses.

THE WHITE MOUNTAIN NOTCH.

All tourists will remember the long and exquisite drive through the White Mountain Notch from Crawford's, the road shaded and embosomed under a bower of greenery, mile after mile, all the way. To what multitudes of people the enchanting coolness of these woods, and the murmurous music of their crystal waters have given rest and delight! Now the scene is ruined and its beauty blotted out. For a large part of the distance, the woods along the road have been cut off. The trunks of the white birches, which rose through the green leafage like slender shafts of silver, have been cut up into suitable lengths for the market, and the tops of the trees sprawl everywhere

across the ground in most repulsive confusion and entanglement. In summer the sun-glare is hot on the road, and the air seems entirely changed. We learn from the newspapers that since we were there a fire has burned over the ground along much of the way through this once delightful pass, but even before this the sylvan fragrance and freshness had departed. If anybody is inclined to say that a little matter of scenery in a particular place is not very important — the shade, and the springs, and a few patches of moss along a bit of mountain road — we must remind him that it is for these very things that thousands of people visit the mountain ranges of our State every year, and that if they cannot find these attractions here they will not come. Beauty of scenery has a distinct and increasing economic value, and it has long been an important source of revenue for the people of New Hampshire.

THE FUNCTIONS OF MOUNTAIN FORESTS.

The value and functions of mountain forests are little understood in this country, even by persons of a high degree of general intelligence. The subject, though of great economic importance, has hitherto received but slight attention here, but in Europe it has long been a matter of systematic knowledge and of practical administration.

1. The first and most important function of mountain forests is the preservation of the mountains themselves by clothing them with soil. The relation of mountain forests to the soil out of which they grow is very curious and interesting. The soil produces the trees, but the forest has produced the soil which now nourishes it. There was a time when there was no soil on the mountains of New Hampshire, nor on any portion of the Appalachian system; when the mountains were only ridges, slopes, and summits of bare rock. They were composed wholly of mineral substances, of matter entirely inert and incapable of supplying food to vegetable organisms. There was not