

ARBOR DAY: ITS HISTORY AND OBSERVANCE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649020614

Arbor Day: Its History and Observance by N. H. Egleston

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N. H. EGLESTON

**ARBOR DAY: ITS
HISTORY AND
OBSERVANCE**

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

ARBOR DAY:

ITS HISTORY AND OBSERVANCE.

BY

N. H. EGLESTON.



WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1896.

LB 3528

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LETTER OF SUBMITTAL.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
Washington, D. C., January 29, 1896.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the accompanying bulletin on Arbor Day, prepared by your direction.

Its aim is to give an authentic account of the origin, history, and uses of the day—now observed throughout our country and also in other lands—which has been regarded with interest by the Department ever since its observance began, and to offer such suggestions and helps as may serve to increase its usefulness.

It is impossible to sketch the history of Arbor Day in even the briefest manner without frequent reference to the present Secretary of the Department, with whom the day is so intimately connected. If the writer of this bulletin had felt at liberty to disregard the restraints imposed by the official character of the work, a much more frequent mention of Mr. Morton's name would have been the result.

Some of the illustrations in the bulletin, especially those of leaves, are from Apgar's *Trees of the Northern United States*, copyright, 1892, by the American Book Company, to whom thanks are due for permission to use them, it having been found impracticable to prepare original figures of this character without delaying the bulletin until after the arrival of the time set apart in many States for the observance of Arbor Day. Similar thanks are due to others also for like favors.

I take occasion here also to thank the superintendents of public instruction and others who have so readily and courteously responded to my invitation and rendered aid, by suggestion or otherwise, in the preparation of this publication. Wherever material from such or other sources has been incorporated in these pages I have endeavored to give credit to the respective authors. For the rest the writer is responsible.

Respectfully,

N. H. EGLESTON.

HON. CHAS. W. DABNEY, Jr.,
Assistant Secretary.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	Page
Commercial value of trees.....	5
Origin and history of Arbor Day.....	9
States and Territories observing Arbor Day.....	18
Arbor Day celebrations.....	19
Methods of observing Arbor Day.....	20
Addresses and extracts.....	22
Arbor Day—Its origin and growth, by J. Sterling Morton.....	22
Observance of Arbor Day by schools, by Hon. B. G. Northrop.....	27
Arbor Day for the Commonwealth, by Dr. E. E. Higbee.....	28
Value and uses of Arbor Day, by Prof. George Mull.....	29
Planting trees a patriotic duty.....	32
Schools of agriculture and horticulture, by Hon. Charles R. Skinner.....	34
Encouraging words for Arbor Day.....	36
Trees and schools.....	38
Trees as living things.....	39
Trees in masses—forests.....	43
Trees in their leafless state.....	46
Leaves, and what they do.....	47
The best use of Arbor Day.....	50
Tree planting.....	53
Street planting.....	55
Planting on school grounds.....	59
Planting on lawns and in parks.....	62
Aids to success in planting.....	63
Method of planting.....	64
Opinions of representative men.....	64
Suggestions for programmes.....	67
Miscellaneous readings.....	68
Selections for recitations.....	77
Topics for Arbor Day essays.....	80

INTRODUCTION.

Arbor Day, from being only a humble expedient of one of our Western States a few years ago, has become a national holiday and one of our important institutions. Its original design has been modified since its observance has become associated with our schools. It is now not only a day for tree planting for economic and æsthetic purposes, but its observance has been made the means of securing much valuable knowledge in regard to plant and tree life, of cultivating in the young the powers of observation, and kindling in their minds an interest in natural objects which will be a lifelong source of benefit and pleasure.

Is it too much to hope, also, that this Arbor Day festival, engaging our children in its observance so generally and so pleasantly with songs, recitations, and the planting of trees and shrubs around the school-houses and along the streets or in public parks and other places, may have the effect of developing in coming generations a keener appreciation of the value and the beauty of trees than has hitherto been felt in our country, and that thus the reckless destruction of our forests, now going on with such threatening consequences, may be arrested before the calamities are upon us which have befallen other countries through the loss of their trees?

ARBOR DAY: HISTORY AND OBSERVANCE.

COMMERCIAL VALUE OF TREES.



Arbor Day has its abundant justification in the surpassing value of trees from whatever point of view they are considered. Their beauty is felt by all. Nothing contributes so much to make the world a pleasant place of abode for man. Just as anyone has the true home feeling and seeks to create a home for himself, he seeks the trees as being an indispensable aid in the accomplishment of his purpose. He must have the trees around his dwelling place. He must have their shelter and their shade, their beauty of form, of leaf, and blossom, and fruit, their ever-varying aspect with every change of earth and sky, of sunshine and cloud. In short, he must have their companionship in his daily life. But

looked at apart from all such feeling and sentiment, looked at not in their living but in their dead state, looked at as mere lumber or material for man's constructive purposes, for the thousand uses of daily life, the trees have an almost incomparable value. Estimated by their money value alone the products of the forest exceed those from almost any other source.

We speak of the "precious metals," gold and silver; and they are so precious in the esteem of most persons that multitudes are ready to forsake all other occupations and rush in pursuit of them wherever they may be found or there is even a faint hope of finding them. Now we give to the hunters of these precious metals special privileges in the prosecution of their quest such as are not given to people engaged in other employments. It would seem that the mining of gold and silver is the most important interest of the country. It certainly holds a very prominent position in the public estimation.

But the last report of the Director of the Mint gives the value of the product of the gold and silver mines of the United States for the year 1894 as follows: Gold, \$39,500,000; silver, \$31,422,000; total, \$70,922,000. At the same time, the most recent and careful estimates of the value of

the products of our forests during the same year make it \$1,058,650,859, or fifteen times that of gold and silver.

Another comparison is very significant. If we add to the gold and silver products that of all other minerals, including such prominent ones as iron, copper, lead, zinc, coal, lime, natural gas, petroleum, salt, slate, building stones, and the twenty-five or more remaining, which are less important, we shall have for the value of all our mineral products obtained during the year 1894, \$553,352,996, or only about one-half the value of our forest products.

Again, we may make a comparison in a different direction and with no less striking results. The statistical report of the Department of Agriculture gives the value of our cereal crops for the year 1894 as follows:

Wheat.....	\$225,902,025
Corn.....	551,719,162
Oats.....	214,816,920
Rye.....	13,395,476
Barley.....	27,134,127
Buckwheat.....	7,040,238
Total.....	1,043,007,948

or less by \$15,000,000 than our one forest crop.

Is it not worth our while, therefore, to perpetuate if possible such a crop, and to guard against anything which threatens to diminish it? Ought we not, by every means within our control, to see that the source of this most valuable supply is not lessened in its capability of yielding such a preeminently valuable contribution to our welfare and comfort?

The need of tree planting, looked at in the wide view, results from the fact that we have been and are depleting our forest area at an unreasonable rate. The spread of population into the great treeless plains beyond the Mississippi has made a largely increased demand for lumber, and in response to that demand we have been for years consuming our forests at a rate far beyond the supply furnished by their annual growth. The best estimates make the annual consumption of our forests, for fuel and lumber chiefly, 25,000,000,000 cubic feet. To furnish this amount would require the produce of the annual growth of 1,200,000,000 acres of woodland, whereas our total forest area is less than 500,000,000 acres, which is no more than we need as a permanent stock of woodland for the country. It will be seen, then, that more than half of our annual consumption is a draft by so much upon our forest capital, when we should be only drawing from the forests the amount of their annual growth, or the interest of that capital. How long would it take a millionaire to become a bankrupt if he should be annually trenching upon his money capital at a like rate?

Few persons realize the enormous and often wasteful—that is, unnecessary—consumption of our forests. That consumption amounts

to 350 cubic feet per capita, as against 12 to 14 cubic feet per capita in Great Britain and about 40 cubic feet in Germany.

Some specifications may help us to apprehend the situation. Our railroads consume, on an average, annually for their construction 500,000,000 cubic feet of our very best timber. Our mines use for internal props and for the reduction of their ores immense amounts. One mine may be taken as an illustration. The Anaconda Mining Company, of Montana—well named Anaconda, in view of its enormous capacity for swallowing the forests whole, as it were—made a statement four years ago, now on file in one of the Departments of the Government, from which it appears that during a period of six months it consumed 65,000 cords of wood and 18,500,000 feet of lumber. At the same time the company stated that its daily consumption hereafter would be, wood 700 cords, lumber 100,000 feet, and its consumption for the year 1892 would be, wood 255,000 cords, lumber 40,000,000 feet. This lumber is mostly in the form of timber used as mine props.

Most of the wood and timber used by this and other mines in the Rocky Mountain and other western regions is cut from the public lands. Such is the indulgence shown by the Government that those engaged in mining or even prospecting for mines are allowed to cut and consume the timber on the public lands free of cost and with only such restrictions as may be made by the Secretary of the Interior. These restrictions are not close or narrow in character, and are easily evaded if not absolutely ignored, and so are to a great extent practically inoperative. The scanty appropriations of Congress do not allow the Secretary of the Interior to retain a sufficient number of inspectors to watch the immense extent of territory occupied by the forests and take notice of the depredations which may be made upon them, and even when depredations are occasionally discovered it is very difficult to secure a conviction and inflict the penalty prescribed for the offense.

To show the extent of these depredations and the scale on which the forests are consumed, may be instanced the case of one mining company in Dakota against which the Government has brought suit for the sum of \$688,000, this being the alleged value of the trees cut less than 8 inches in diameter, which restriction had been placed upon the permit to cut. What must have been the number and value of the larger trees cut and consumed by this company? The operations of the Anaconda Company are carried on upon so large a scale that it is said they refuse to make a contract for less than 40,000 cords of wood in any single case, and their contracts range from that amount to 200,000 cords, while nearly 1,000,000 cords are constantly kept on hand. The company held last year a permit from the Secretary of the Interior to cut from four sections of public land within twelve months 14,000,000 feet of timber. The great Comstock Lode of Nevada is, if possible, a greater anaconda, whole mountains of forest having gone into its capacious