Episode 14:
The Mountains are Calling

And welcome, planners, to the fourteenth episode of the VERY UNofficial AICP podcast. I'm Jonathan Miller, and thank you all so much for joining.

I hope everyone enjoyed their weekend. I know that a lot is going on in everyone's lives these days; apparently that's just become the norm, especially with studying for the AICP exam.

To update your day countdown, registration is over. So if you missed it, you'll have to wait until the next round; and if you didn't miss it, you've got six to twenty days until the exam window. So, it's crunch time.

We are going to jam a bunch of more one-off topics today, but hopefully we can put it in a way to help you remember how it all worked and played out.

So, the late 1800's really emerged as a time when environmentalism started to take off. You could probably point to the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 as the catalyst since before then we really didn't see much of, well, the just plain beautiful country in the west.

After that though, explorers came from far and wide, and really began to take notice at the sheer beauty of it. Well, that and add to it growing tensions of the squalid living conditions in the cities, and BAM! Environmentalism began to take root; starting in a slightly unusual way.

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The ability to create National Forests on an executive level didn't come about until General Revision Act of 1891, but that was actually a reaction to a previously passed act from 1873: The Timber Culture Law Act.

In short, since it isn't really our focus here, the Timber Culture Law Act basically gave away hundreds of acres if certain conditions were met; like planting trees in order to, well, cultivate the timber trade.

This act however, had more holes in it than swiss cheese. And land speculators, ranchers, mining companies – lots of people - took extreme advantage of it. So much so, that the General Revision Act - sometimes called the Land Revision Act - was passed in 1891.

So, first thing was first, Section 1 of the Act repealed the Timber Culture Law Act; some following sections amended some other acts that were applicable at the time. But for our purposes here, they saved the best for last. Section 24, the last section, probably the most significant section of the whole thing, allowed the P.O.T.U.S. to create forest reserves on public lands by proclamation.

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Now this doesn't mean that there weren't any National Parks. Yellowstone was a national park in 1872, and the Federal Government had reserved several other lands - like Yosemite - which we'll get to later.

These reservations through were done through Acts in Congress. Section 24 of the General Revision Act

though? Well, that allowed the President to create the forest reserves unilaterally by proclamation.

This was actually so significant that it - Section 24 – sometimes gets its own name: The Forest Reserve Act of 1891; much more aptly named. But remember, it was Section 24 of the General Revision Act, or Land Revision Act of 1891 that gave the President that power.

And Benjamin Harrison, the then-president, didn't waste any time putting it into effect.

The Revision Act was passed on March 3rd, 1891. Side note, you'll need to know the year, but not the exact date. This is just a fun fact of just how fast the President put the act to use.

So, it was passed on March 3rd, 1891, and on March 30th, 1891 - only 27 days later - President Harrison took 1.2 million acres of the Yellowstone Valley and added it to the very first National Park, originally established in 1872 in Wyoming: Yellowstone National Park.

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Around this same time was the emergence of arguably one of the most notable environmentalist of all time: John Muir. Hell, his nickname is John of the Mountains, and he's known as the Father of National Parks.

Anyways, John Muir was a Scottish immigrant as a very young kid, and didn't exactly live an early life that would scream out environmentalist to you. First, he grew up extremely religious, memorizing almost all of the old and new testaments, then he went to the university of Wisconsin-Madison for two years and never graduated, never even registered as more than a freshman, and probably took the most ad-hoc collection of classes. Basically, whatever sounded interesting.

He travelled around a bit after that working several odd jobs, and thanks to a weird accident at a factory that nearly left him blind; he decided enough was enough, and he had found his purpose. According to him, "This affliction has driven me to the sweet fields. God has to nearly kill us sometimes to teach us lessons."

So, at this point, he walks south to Florida from Kentucky, then hops a random ship to Cuba, then back to New York, and then finally, to San Francisco. The guy did a lot of travelling and botanical studies.

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Once in San Francisco, he travelled out to the Yosemite Valley where he was immediately taken in by everything he saw. He even built a cabin along Yosemite where he lived for a couple years, and built the cabin in a way that overlapped slightly with the creek so it would run through the corner; all so he could hear the running water.

Anyways, he continued travelling and studying, and eventually took on the role of preservationist; and his first effort? Yosemite Valley.

Now remember, Yosemite Valley had already been pulled from private lands; that was done by a congressional act in 1864. But it wasn't under federal protections, it was a State Park.

Now at this time, there were homesteaders who took up living on the land despite it being public lands and they had domesticated livestock – sheep - all over Yosemite and the Sierras, and John Muir spent considerable time studying the effects.

In 1889, he eventually got the associate editor of Century Magazine to camp with him in Yosemite to see the destruction of what he called hoofed locusts. And after seeing the effects, the associate editor agreed to print whatever Muir wanted, and to help introduce a bill to make Yosemite a National Park.

Remember now, 1891 and the General Revision Act hasn't happened yet.

So, Muir wrote – and had published - two articles: The Treasures of the Yosemite, and Features of the

Proposed National Park.

And in 1890, Yosemite became a National Park. Unfortunately though, it was still to be held under State control - which seems odd - but whatever.

(08:16)

On the success of the Yosemite campaign, it's no wonder that Henry Senger, a professor at U.C. Berkeley approached Muir about forming a club dedicated to the recreational enjoyment of the Sierra Mountains.

So, in 1892, the Sierra Club was formed with John Muir as the first president.

They didn't just promote the Sierras for recreation though. They were actually very active in lobbying for environmentalism. Almost immediately, efforts rose to cut the newly minted Yosemite National Park in half.

As a result, the Sierra Club - which had 182 inaugural members, most of whom were scientists - did what scientists do and started holding educational and scientific meetings to promote Yosemite and the Sierra Mountains.

Ultimately, they were successful in fending off the reduction, and succeeded in finally getting Yosemite transferred from State to Federal control.

(09:27)

In 1896 though, Muir became acquainted with a guy name Gifford Pinchot. I know, super special name. Anyways, Pinchot was an environmentalist in his own right, but much different than Muir.

Muir was more of a preservationist, while Pinchot was more of a conservationist. And that distinction led to many debates through articles over the years.

Pinchot believed that the Forest Reserves should be created for forest conservation. Essentially, these reserves could be used for timber, but only as trees were replanted to ensure sustainable logging practices.

You see, it was his view that forestry was tree farming, and he wanted to ensure the long-term viability of tree farming. And in 1897, he got his wish when the Forest Service Organic Administration Act of 1897 was passed.

Formally called the Sundry Civil Appropriations Act of 1897, which I don't think anyone would know what in the hell that was. The Forest Service Organic Administration Act basically permitted timber production as a reason for creating a forest reserve.

It did some other things too, like gave the Department of the Interior the authority to make the rules and regulations, gave the General Land Office the ability to hire the employees, and gave the mapping responsibilities to the USGS.

While the General Land Revision Act gave the president the power to create forest reserves by proclamation, the Forest Service Organic Administration Act gave the power to regulate them to the Department of the Interior.

Now our friend Gifford Pinchot, Chief Forester of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, wasn't too happy though. You see, he was advocating to have the reserves placed under the authority of the Department of Agriculture. That way, the forests and foresters would be under the same department.

Our other friend John Muir and the Sierra Club agreed, and together they were successful when in 1905, the Forest Transfer Act was passed, which basically just transferred the forest reserves from the Department of the Interior and General Land Office to the Department of Agriculture and Bureau of Forestry.

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So, what did we learn today?

A whole hell of a lot. Like, even trying to summarize this seems daunting, but here we go.

Due to a bunch of loopholes that no one saw in the Timber Culture Law Act of 1873, big business was monopolizing the timber trade on public land. So, Congress passed the General Revision Act of 1891 to, well, generally revise the acts before it. This nullified a lot of the loopholes, but also gave the President the ability to create forest reserves by proclamation.

At this same time, a Scottish immigrant named John Muir, fell in love with nature and took on an activist role trying to preserve the Yosemite Valley as a National Park; just like the first National Park: Yellowstone (and that was in 1872 by the way).

Ultimately, Muir was successful, which gave him a bunch of notoriety. So in 1892, he helped form - and became the first President of - the Sierra Club; arguably one of the first real environmentalist advocacy groups.

Shortly after that, Muir butted heads with a conservationist named Gifford Pinchot, who eventually became the Chief Forester of the Department of Agriculture. And he advocated to allow timbering - read as tree-farming - on forest reserves, and got his wish in 1897 with the Forest Service Organic Administration Act.

He complained about that though, because he wanted the control of the forests with the foresters in the Department of Agriculture. And he eventually got that wish too in 1905 when Washington passed the Forest Transfer Act.

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And there you have it! That's the windmill version of the General Revision Act, John Muir, the Sierra Club, the Forest Service Organic Administration Act, Gifford Pinchot, and the Forest Transfer Act.

If you want to know more about it, links to all of the information used in putting this episode together is in the show notes.

For those of you playing along at home, our question last week was, "What was Henry George's solution to the relationship between progress and poverty?" This was more open-ended than I'd like, but our answer here was a single land tax.

Remember, the relationship was that increasing progress resulted in increasing poverty, and it was his belief - and many agree - that a single land tax, if applied appropriately of course, could eliminate abject poverty altogether and ensure that the benefits of progress were seen by everyone.

If you want to play along this week, our question is going to be a little trickier, but whatever, "What was the first National Park, and when was it established?"

If you have any questions or comments, go ahead and email me or send me a message through the website, Instagram or Facebook, whatever.

Also, go on and click subscribe for this podcast on whatever platform your using, or choose wisely and sign up on the show's website so you can follow along with future episodes, help prepare for the exam and supplement all of your other study regimens.

And if you know any planners taking the exam or know someone who finds this type of stuff interesting, make sure you share it out and leave a rating. I will totally be your best friend if you do.

Make sure you tune in next week. It is going to be all over the map, literally and figuratively. We've

talked a lot about some of the historical events that helped guide planning and set the stage, but we're in the late 1800's now and not one, not two, but three planning - for lack of a better word – methods, or ideologies emerge.

In 1880, we get the first Company Town in Pullman, Illinois. In 1893, we get the very well-known World's Columbian Exposition - or Chicago World's Fair - which ever you want, which sparked the City Beautiful Movement. And in 1898, we get the book which sparked the Garden City Movement, "Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform," by a fan of alliteration apparently: Ebenezer Howard.

So, be sure to not miss it. Thanks again everyone, 'till next time.

Links:

GENERAL LAND LAW REVISION ACT & FOREST RESERVE ACT:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Revision_Act#:~:text=Often%20seen%20as%20a%20proactive,unclaimed%20land%20for%20public%20domain.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_Reserve_Act_of_1891
http://www.minnesotalegalhistoryproject.org/assets/Land%20Revision%20Act%20%20(1891).pdf

SIERRA CLUB:
https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sierra-Club
https://vault.sierraclub.org/history/origins/
http://vault.sierraclub.org/history/timeline.aspx

JOHN MUIR:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Muir

FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organic_Act_of_1897