

Robert F. Bailey
May 11, 2004
HIST 600F
Research Seminar

**SCIENTIFIC FORESTRY and URBAN PROGRESSIVISM:
The Development of the Maryland Board of Forestry, 1906 to 1921.**

On Saturday morning, April 16, 1921, a pair of canoes sat resting on a bank near the gently flowing Patapsco River. To the east, the sun struggled to pierce the gray clouds and misty fog blanketing the valley floor. Remnants of the sun's light dispersed through the budding box elders, sycamores and rock elms and cast the canoes in a patchwork of faint shadows. The temperature was balmy—about 60 degrees—and would remain so for the rest of the day; topping out at 69 by late afternoon.¹ The tranquil sound of the cool water sweeping over the rocks belied the scene's industrial heritage. Twenty years earlier, this location featured constant human activity, punctuated by the rhythmic sound of machinery. Now, the hollowed walls of the deserted Orange Grove Flourmill stood in crumbling defiance against the encroaching trees, Virginia creeper and poison ivy.² Only the railroad tracks, located directly behind the mill's ruins, and the occasional passing steam-powered train, contrasted this scene's garden-like ambiance. Baltimore City, though only a dozen miles distant, seemed a world away.

Later that morning, the sound of an approaching automobile further eroded Orange Grove's apparent isolation. In the auto were six men who sought to paddle the waiting canoes down the Patapsco to its confluence with the Middle Branch in Baltimore.

¹ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, April 17, 1921.

² Orange Grove Flourmill, Mill C of the Patapsco Manufacturing Company, burnt on May 8, 1905. For more on the history of Orange Grove during its industrial period, see Thomas L. Phillips, *The Orange Grove Story; A View of Maryland Americana in 1900*, (Washington, D. C.: The Author, 1972). The narrative here is based on photos taken a few years after mill burnt (which are included in Phillips' *The Orange Grove Story*), and my observations of the native tree and vine species that presently grow there.

These men, however, were not typical weekend adventurers. The expedition included: Frederick W. Besley, Maryland State Forester, Robert Garrett of the Baltimore Municipal Arts Society and various representatives from the State Board of Forestry, Baltimore City and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.³ These men aimed to explore the feasibility of constructing a “parkway” that would connect the Patapsco Valley with Baltimore City. Yet, they did not wish to completely reverse nature’s reclamation efforts. They hoped to make the valley more accessible while allowing it to retain its natural ambiance. A journey down the river itself, they anticipated, might reveal a better sense of the valley’s scenic and recreational value, as well as the cost for acquiring the riverfront property.

After the men disembarked from their auto, they shoved the canoes into the river and boarded. There were three men in each canoe, with Besley and Garrett wielding the stern paddles. After skillfully negotiating the rocky currents, the men paused two miles downriver at Avalon, where they portaged the canoes around Avalon Dam. Another vestige of the valley’s industrial heritage, the dam had been refurbished by the Baltimore County Water & Electric Company to provide fresh drinking water to residents in southwestern Baltimore County and City. While at Avalon, Boy Scout Troop number 158 greeted the adventurers and provided them with lunch. The *Baltimore Sun* reported that the “various State officials and their guests seemed to get a lot of enjoyment out of wieners and beans.”

After leaving Avalon, the men continued their journey down the Patapsco. The balmy temperatures and persistent cloud cover made this an ideal day for canoeing.

Along the way, the men witnessed the river transform from a swiftly moving rocky

³ In addition to Besley and Garrett, the party also included K. E. Pfeifer, Assistant State Forester, Edmund George Prince, Patapsco Forest Reserve warden, Joseph W. Shirley of the Baltimore City Topographical

stream into a gently flowing river surrounded by marshlands. After several hours of paddling, the expedition crept into the Middle Branch and in the late evening they arrived at the Ariel Rowing Club. Their journey was a success. According to the *Sun*, “repeatedly members of the party exclaimed over the beauty of the scenery.” They were particularly enamored by the Cascade Falls near Orange Grove. The heavily wooded landscape was also intriguing.⁴ Besley concluded, though perhaps inaccurately, that the land had never been cut-over. More significantly, however, the expedition was optimistic about acquiring the riverfront property. Though they still lacked an exact cost estimate, Besley believed that the \$12,000 left in the Forestry Board’s land purchasing fund would be adequate. Where land could not be purchased, he was confident cooperation with landowners could be secured. Over the next few days, both the morning and evening editions of the *Sun* eagerly reported on the proposed “Plan [for] Automobile Drive through Beauty Spot,” and the “Plan to Preserve Banks of Patapsco.”⁵ “If the plan is realized,” the *Evening Sun* wrote, “it [the road] will continue a section of the river for several miles up from the harbor which is now a source of great pleasure for canoeists; will prevent the marring of the famous ‘River road walk’ from Relay to Ellicott City, which has long been famous for its beauty, and will provide a beautiful drive for motorists.” This last point was especially exciting: the *Evening Sun* wrote that drivers

Survey Commission, and Alva Day of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

⁴ In addition to the ubiquitous tobacco plantations, the Patapsco River had once boasted several charcoal-fired iron mills during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These mills consumed considerable quantities of timber on a daily basis, and it is unlikely that they would have left any nearby timber stands untouched.

⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, April 16, 17, and 18, 1921, *Baltimore Sun*, Evening, April 16 and 20, 1921. Both *Sun* papers gave fairly detailed accounts of the events on April 16, 1921, but their accounts vary. According to the morning *Sun*, the expedition was larger, and it went directly by automobile to Avalon, where they Boy Scouts provided them lunch, and the men walked about a mile downriver to Relay, where they embarked on their canoe expedition. The *Evening Sun*’s reporting closer reflects the narrative given here. Since the morning *Sun* recounts the expedition’s enchantment with the Cascade Falls, which are located near Orange Grove, I am more inclined to agree with the *Evening Sun*’s interpretation.

would be able to “make a circuit through the city park systems and through this Forest Reserve, driving the greater part of the time through scenes of rare beauty.”⁶

This canoe trip is one of many examples that illustrate the Maryland State Board of Forestry’s close relationship with Baltimore’s progressive economic elite. Beginning in 1912, State Forester Besley and Robert Garrett, a partner in a leading banking firm and member of the Baltimore Municipal Arts Society, had coordinated their efforts to improve access to the Patapsco Forest Reserve’s recreational amenities. Besley and Garrett’s interests were complementary. Besley sought to protect Maryland’s timber supply and promote the benefits of scientific forestry to the general public. Garrett, a former Olympian and avid promoter of outdoor activity and exercise, saw the Patapsco Valley as a logical extension of the city’s growing park system. It was Besley’s relationship with Garrett and other urban interests that helped make the Forestry Board into a viable State institution.

Born out of a regional Western Maryland movement aimed at protecting Maryland’s shrinking lumber reserves, prior to 1912 the Forestry Board had been a cash-strapped appropriation struggling to fulfill its legislative obligations. Following that year’s legislative session, however, the Forestry Board’s operating budget more than doubled in 1913. By the decade’s end, the Board’s appropriation was seven times larger than in it had been 1912.⁷ Besley’s willingness to accommodate the Baltimore region’s progressive impulses was critical to this development. After 1912, the Forestry Board assisted urban progressives by expanding the Patapsco Forest Reserve to meet the city’s

⁶ *Baltimore Sun*, Evening, April 20, 1921.

⁷ The Board of Forestry’s operating budget was \$4,000 in 1912, \$10,000 in 1913, and \$28,580 in 1921. Totals were taken from the *Report of the Maryland State Board of Forestry for 1912 and 1913* and the

need for clean water resources, and by providing its citizens—especially middle-class whites—with an additional recreational outlet. Both of these efforts the urban elite hoped would facilitate suburban development.

This marriage, however, was not simply a marriage of convenience. Their goals shared key fundamental aspects. They both believed in the ultimate financial as well as environmental profitability of their endeavors, they both sought government assistance to achieve their goals, and they believed that their efforts would shape and mold human behavior—to a degree, their success depended upon this last aspect.

My purpose here is to articulate the interdependent relationship that developed between the Maryland Board of Forestry and the Baltimore City urban elite. Most scholarship concerning the development of Maryland's park system, albeit limited, has treated either Baltimore City or the state exclusively, with little regard for how each entity interacted—a trend that characterizes a lot of Maryland historical scholarship.⁸ In this case, not only did State and Baltimore interests interact, but also this interaction proved to be a critical turning point in the development of a State institution.

Report of the Maryland State Board of Forestry for 1920 and 1921. The totals are not adjusted for inflation.

⁸ For previous scholarship on the development of Baltimore's park system, see: James B. Crooks, *Politics and Progress: The Rise of Urban Progressivism in Baltimore, 1895 to 1911*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 127-154, Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 245, 249-258, W. Edward Orser, "A Tale of Two Park Plans: The Olmsted Vision for Baltimore and Seattle, 1903," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 98(4), (Winter 2003), 467-483, Kevin Zucker, "Falls and Stream Valleys: Frederick Law Olmsted and The Parks of Baltimore," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 90(1), (Spring 1995), 73-96, and Barry Kessler and David Zang, *The Play Life of a City: Baltimore's Recreation and Parks, 1900-1955*, (Baltimore: Baltimore City Life Museums and the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, 1989). For previous scholarship on the development of the Maryland State Board of Forestry, see: Geoffrey L. Buckley and J. Morgan Grove, "Sowing the Seeds of Forest Conservation: Fred Besley and the Maryland Story, 1906-1923," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 96(3), (Fall 2001), 303-327, Ralph R. Widner, ed., *Forests and Forestry in the American States: A Reference Anthology*, (Washington D. C.: The National Association of State Foresters), 145-152, 236-245, Ney C. Landrum, ed., *Histories of the Southeastern State Park Systems*, (Washington D. C.: Association of Southeastern State Park Directors, 1992), 80-91, and *American Forests Magazine*, (October 1956).

ORIGINS of the MARYLAND BOARD of FORESTRY:

Though it was intended to be—and ultimately became—a statewide endeavor, it was those living in Western Maryland who acutely felt the need for a more effective means of protecting and preserving the forestland. Despite efforts by settlers to clear the land during the 18th and 19th-centuries, Garrett County featured the most significant acreage of the Maryland’s remaining forestland. Even as late as 1914, 63 percent of the county remained wooded—though a considerably smaller percentage of that was “virgin.” According to Besley, “the good quality of the land early attracted settlers, and under the constant influx of immigrants, the best of the suitable lands have been cleared.” The county’s mountainous terrain deterred settlers from completely clear-cutting it. “The forests have, therefore,” wrote Besley, “receded from the valleys and are now mostly confined to the mountains and rugged slopes.”⁹ Though early settlers had left their imprint on the landscape, their land clearing efforts typically did not include river valleys where the rugged geography made farming impractical.

Turn-of-the-century lumber companies, however, saw the treed landscape as an untapped economic resource, and began making significant inroads into the region by the 1880s.¹⁰ Late 19th and early 20th century timber companies typically clear-cut land with little regard for conservation or environmental ramifications.¹¹ The detrimental effect of

⁹ F. W. Besley, *The Forests of Garrett County*, (Baltimore: Maryland State Board of Forestry, 1914), 7-8.

¹⁰ Besley, *The Forests of Garrett County*, 7. In 1914, Besley argued that the bulk of the region’s virgin pine forests were cut 35 to 40 years before.

¹¹ Several scholars have recounted the detrimental effects of “unscientific” forestry methods. See, Geoffrey L. Buckley, “The Environmental Transformation of an Appalachian Valley, 1850-1906,” *Geographical Review*, 88(2), (April, 1998), 175-198, Ronald L. Lewis, *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside: Railroads, Deforestation, and Social Change in West Virginia, 1880-1920*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) and Thomas R. Cox, Robert S. Maxwell, Phillip Drennon Thomas, and Joseph

indiscriminate cutting was the result of several timber companies competing for increasingly scarce resources. This development was further exacerbated by the nation's insatiable demands for timber. For many communities in Appalachia, a devastating domino effect resulted. Denuded lands led to increased sediment runoff, clouding stream and river water and simultaneously killing the fish and destroying valuable sources of drinking water (in many areas, the runoff mixed with poison waste from strip mines). The sediment runoff then proceeded to back up mill dams and clog drainage channels. With less water absorbing into the ground—a valuable function provided by trees—there was a rise in the frequency of both flooded (during wet seasons) and dry (during dry seasons) streams and rivers. Increased runoff also lowered the water table and cut further into drinking water supply. Add to this mix a growing human population capable of producing more sources of waste, organic and non-organic, and the result in many areas were literal cesspools of disease and poverty.

By 1905, local newspapers such as the *Oakland Republican* began to articulate the need to protect the county's environment—particularly its timber, game and fish reserves. In response, Garrett County voters that year sent William McCulloh Brown to the State Senate with a bill providing for the creation of a State Board of Forestry. According to the *Baltimore Sun*, “Mr. Brown lives in Garrett County, where the lumber interests are large and where the fountain head of many streams are situated. He finds that the forests of his county are the finest and most extensive in the State, are rapidly disappearing before the sawmill.” Expressing confidence in his legislation, the *Sun* reported that Brown “is satisfied that the State should own large forest preserves which

J. Malone, *This Well-Wooded Land: Americans and Their Forests from Colonial Times to the Present*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

would not only be a source of profit to the State in the future, but would also preserve game birds and animals from extermination.”¹²

Introduced in February 1906, Browns’ forestry bill was passed virtually unaltered on March 31. The forestry bill stipulated the creation of a Board of Forestry that consisted of the Governor, Comptroller, President of Johns Hopkins University, President of Maryland Agricultural College, State Geologist, “one citizen of the State known to be interested in the advancement of forestry,” and “one practical lumberman engaged in the manufacture of lumber within this State.”¹³ Though the legislation gave the Board of Forestry the legal power to purchase private property, the bill was nevertheless conservative. To ameliorate elements who may have harbored concerns about the State purchasing land, the bill empowered the state to *indirectly* conserve, manage and control Maryland’s timber supply. Therefore, during its early years, all State Forest Reserves would consist of philanthropic donations—and beyond a 2,000 acre tract in Garrett County and a 43 acre tract in Baltimore County, few donations were forthcoming.¹⁴ With a miniscule \$3,500 annual appropriation, the Forestry Board lacked the financial muscle necessary to purchase land. In fact, its appropriation was barely large enough to hire one professional forester and a small supporting staff. Accordingly, the Board of Forestry’s two primary functions involved fighting forest fires and acting as a scientific forestry information clearing house until 1912.

¹² *Baltimore Sun*, April 1, 1906.

¹³ The Maryland Agricultural College later became the University of Maryland College Park.

¹⁴ These two tracts consisted of a 1,917 acre tract donated by Robert and John W. Garrett, and a 43 acre tract donated by John M. Glenn. The Garrett deed stipulated that “if within the period of next twenty five years from this date hereof, the said State of Maryland should neglect or fail to carry out the provisions of said Forestry Act, or abandon the property hereby donated, then the title to the said several tracts and parcels of land shall revert to the said donors.” *Summary of Deed, Garrett Bequest to State of Maryland*, Maryland Hall of Records.

The legislation empowered the Board of Forestry to hire a professional State Forester to “have direction of all forests, and all matters pertaining of forestry” in Maryland. The State Forester was to direct all forest wardens, initially consisting of unpaid volunteers, and “aid and direct them in their work.” Foremost among the forester warden’s duties included putting out and preventing forest fires and apprehending and prosecuting those responsible for starting fires. “When any forest warden shall see or have any reported to him a forest fire, it shall be his duty to immediately repair to the scene of the fire and employ such persons and means as in his judgment seem expedient and necessary to extinguish said fire.”¹⁵

The Forester’s advisory role reflected the faith that scientific forestry was, indeed, profitable. According to the legislation, the State Forester was to “co-operate with counties, town, corporations and individuals in preparing plans for the protection, management and replacement of trees, woodlots, and timber tracts, under an agreement that the parties obtaining such assistance pay at least the field expenses of the men employed in preparing said plans.”¹⁶ A few altruistic people aside, it was unlikely that corporations and individual landowners would have been compelled to seek and pay for state assistance unless there was the potential for profit. In selling his forestry bill to the Senate, Brown argued, “the forester studies the soil and climatic conditions, finds out what species of trees are best adapted to a particular locality, and will make the most rapid and *profitable* growth on any particular tract. . . .He is thus of practical value to the lumberman and to private owners of the forest lands” (my italics).¹⁷

¹⁵ *Laws of Maryland*, Chapter 294, Section 6, 534.

¹⁶ *Laws of Maryland*, Chapter 294, Section 4, 533-534.

¹⁷ *Oakland Republican*, March 1, 1906.

Though the legislation failed to explicitly reference the forests' value in protecting streams and rivers, Brown encouraged his colleagues to consider that benefit when weighing the decision. Brown argued that "the forest, with its dense foliage and carpet of moss and ferns, acts as a reservoir to store up and regulate the moisture, which comes in the form of rain." To drive his point home, Brown romantically analogized that "springs are the children of the forest, and as they unite into brooks, streams and rivers those are the most regular in their flow and volume, and these conditions are directly influenced by the forest."¹⁸

Pleased with the legislative session, the *Sun* opined that "the Forestry bill is designed to promote the scientific study of the forest resources of Maryland and their bearing on the water supply. It should produce good results."¹⁹

SPREADING the GOSPEL of SCIENTIFIC FORESTRY:

The Forestry Board's decision to hire Frederick Wilson Besley was perhaps as significant as the creation of the Forestry Board itself. Besley would serve as Maryland State Forester for 36 years—providing the Board (and later the Department) of Forestry with a stabilizing force. Described by his descendents as humorless and strict, with a penchant for noting meticulous detail, Besley's personality was perfectly suited for the rigors of the forestry profession.²⁰

¹⁸ *Oakland Republican*, March 1, 1906.

¹⁹ *Baltimore Sun*, April 4, 1906.

²⁰ Kirk Rogers, Besley's grandson, noted Besley's humorless demeanor in an interview on January 20, 2004. Besley was also described as a staunch Presbyterian and a strict disciplinarian. Few photos of Besley, if any, feature him cracking a smile. Besley graduated with an engineering degree from the Maryland Agricultural College in 1892, but the mid-1890s depression limited his options. For six years he worked as a school teacher and deputy treasurer in Virginia. Then, in 1898 a chance meeting with Gifford Pinchot convinced him to pursue a career in scientific forestry. "Pinchot was so boiling over with enthusiasm about forestry," Besley remembered years later, "that then and there I adopted forestry as my

The *Sun*, impressed by Besley's resume, reported that "he did practical field work in nearly all branches of service, embracing a field extending from Maine to Texas as far west as Colorado." His experience in the west "gave him a wide acquaintance with the problems of city water supplies by means of treeplanting on denuded mountain watersheds."²¹ Offered the State Forester position in May 1906, Besley recalled fifty years later that "My first reaction to the offer was no. . . . I knew something about politics in Maryland and I didn't want a political appointment. State forestry was so new, however, it was a challenge. When I was assured it was independent of politics, I accepted."²²

Despite not being a political appointee, his task was nevertheless challenging. Hired to protect and manage existing forest reserves and to spread the gospel of scientific management, Besley soon found himself confronted with a limited operating budget, a small support staff dominated by volunteers, and an apathetic legislature.

Besley was charged with the task of slowing and/or preventing a timber "famine," but he had no power to control land-owners' cutting habits, nor a subsidy available to dissuade owners from cutting. He was entirely dependent upon his ability to educate the general public about the benefits of scientific forestry. In the 1908/09 biannual report, Besley wrote, "our forest area is so large so generally distributed that the average person has the idea that timber is so abundant that there can never be a scarcity. It is only by

career." Besley's subsequent indoctrination into forestry consisted both of field work and college. Pinchot included Besley among his select group of 61 students that assisted the National Forest Bureau in surveying and collecting data throughout the nation. During winters in Washington D. C., Besley attended the famed "Baked Apple and Gingerbread Club" lectures at Pinchot's home. After several years of field work, Besley formalized his educational credentials at the recently endowed Yale University School of Forestry in 1903-04, and then polished his skills by doing field work for the National Forest Service in Nebraska and Colorado. For more on Besley's biographical sketch, see *American Forests Magazine*, 38, 77-84 and the *Baltimore Sun*, September 9, 1907.

²¹ *Baltimore Sun*, September 9, 1907.

acquainting the public generally with the actual facts showing the amount of timber we have, the rate that it is being used and the present rate of growth of the forests, that the increasing scarcity is sufficiently emphasized.” To educate the public, a concerted public relations campaign was necessary.

Fortunately, the forestry legislation directed that Besley develop a forestry education program at the Maryland Agricultural College. The curriculum at College Park included lectures, classroom work and field demonstration work, all designed “for better the prospective farmer to manage his woodlot successfully, and the mechanical engineer to understand more fully the properties and uses of the different woods.” The curriculum was, however, supplemental. “It is in no sense designed to train the student as a professional forester, for which several years of special work would be required.”²³

The college level lectures provided a natural springboard for public lectures—and there appeared to be a waiting audience. “In addition to the regular lecture work,” the Board noted, “the State Forester has responded to the calls of various societies and organizations for lectures and addresses on forestry.”²⁴ Besley took full advantage of this education provision and made it a central element in the Forestry Board’s public relations campaign. Within a few years, Besley and staff were giving dozens of lectures annually to “improvement societies, scientific bodies, trade organizations, colleges, high schools, academies and church organizations.”²⁵ These lectures usually culminated in an exhibit and display table at the Maryland Week Exhibition in Baltimore. According to the Board, “the exhibit attracted much attention and led to numerous inquiries. It has

²² *American Forests Magazine*, 82.

²³ *Report for 1906 and 1907*, 4.

²⁴ *Report for 1906 and 1907*, 4.

²⁵ *Report for 1910 and 1911*, 7.

undoubtedly been the means of bringing many people in touch with the work [of scientific forestry].”²⁶

Echoing the philosophy of Gifford Pinchot’s National Forest Service, Besley’s propaganda campaign was grounded in the idea that scientific forestry was not only responsible, but profitable.²⁷ Beginning in 1906, Besley began issuing leaflets advertising “Practical Assistance to Owners of Woodlands.” For a nominal fee, the State Forester and his assistants would survey private property and provide advice on the best trees to remove and the best trees to plant. “The owner is consulted as to the object of the management, whether for fuel, fence posts, poles, ties, saw-logs, wind-breaks, soil protection, etc., or a combination of these, and then the forester draws up a plan that will not only meet the requirements of the owner, but also meet the needs of forest improvement.” Furthermore, Besley argued in the leaflet that “It will be seen that forestry is intensely practical, and that it should have a recognized place in farm management.” To better illustrate Besley’s educational initiative, he concluded that “The best way to introduce better forest management throughout the State is to have object lessons in every neighborhood, to show what can be accomplished.”²⁸

Economic profitability remained a cornerstone of the Maryland Forestry Board’s agenda for over a decade. In a feature published in the *Baltimore Sun* on May 16, 1916, assistant State Forester J. Gordon Dorrance articulated “The Romance of Forestry Science in Maryland.” The *romance* in this instance was, of course, *profit*. In the article,

²⁶ *Report for 1910 and 1911*, 7.

²⁷ For more on Pinchot and the profitability of scientific forestry, see Robert E. Wolf, “National Forest Timber Sales and the Legacy of Gifford Pinchot: Managing Forest and Making it Pay,” in Char Miller, ed., *American Forests: Nature, Culture, and Politics*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1997), 87-105.

²⁸ *Report for 1906 and 1907*, 13-14.

Dorrance set up an imaginary scenario whereby an ordinary, but contentious, farmer was faced with a dilemma. A timber company offered the man a tempting \$1,000 to clear-cut his land. However, after allowing the Forestry Board to survey his property for a mere \$30 service fee, the farmer found that he could selectively cut the mature and “defective” trees and turn a \$3,000 profit (romance indeed!). Later that same year, on June 26, the morning *Sun* reported on a concrete example in which Miss Esther L. Cox of Union Bridge, for only \$8.13, benefited from the Forestry Board’s services. The *Sun* enthusiastically reported that “the full amount of the estimated value [of the timber] was secured, and, the best of all, a future stand of the right character of timber and the maximum production is assured.” Driving the point home, the *Sun* wrote, “this give a very fair idea of what this work accomplishes and what it costs.” By emphasizing that forestry was profitable, Besley and Forestry Board were hoping to cultivate responsible conservationist habits.

Among the key components of the Board’s legislative directives was a detailed survey throughout the state of every tree stand five acres or larger. The work took Besley and his small team to every county in Maryland, and by 1912 they had surveyed all but two counties. “I’d hire a horse and buggy at a livery stable and jolt out along the dirt roads as far as possible and then on foot follow the cow paths up through the woods until I tramped over every woodlot above five acres in every county,” Besley later recalled.²⁹ The resulting survey maps provided a wealth of detailed knowledge.

Yet, while Besley and his assistants were surveying and collecting data, it had become apparent that the State had provided no fiscal means with which to publish their findings. Frustration over the State’s limited funding appropriations was evident by

1909. “There never was a greater need,” according to the Board’s *Report for 1908 and 1909*, “for the dissemination of information through publications and public addresses. The people are ready for it. The Board of Forestry has the information at hand, gained through its extensive studies of forest conditions, but through a lack of funds it has been unable to publish it in a complete and proper form.”³⁰ Two years later, the Board’s biannual report remarked that “The demands made [by], and opportunities presented [for the Board of Forestry] are much larger than can be properly handled by the small appropriation allotted, which have averaged only \$4,000 annually for the past five years.” The report concluded that at least a \$10,000 appropriation was necessary for the Board to continue its scientific forestry efforts.³¹

To address this conundrum, Besley focused his efforts on cultivating key political allies. Despite this stern character and his self-proclaimed unwillingness to deal with political intricacies, Besley’s ability to further the scientific forestry cause would have been limited without appealing to those with other agendas—in particular urban progressives in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. By exploiting the growing demand for recreational resources while simultaneously appealing to urban romantic sentiments about nature, Besley was able to craft an effective political alliance that furthered his scientific forestry agenda.

²⁹ *American Forests Magazine*, 38.

³⁰ *Report for 1908 and 1909*, 4.

MOLDING the LANDSCAPE and PEOPLE—URBAN PROGRESSIVISM and BALTIMORE’S CITY PARKS:

Meanwhile, as Brown, Besley and others were establishing the Board of Forestry; a different kind of forest preservation effort was taking place in Baltimore City and County. As several scholars, including James B. Crooks, Sherry Olson and W. Edward Orser, have argued, during the turn of the 20th-century, Baltimore’s social and business elite, working through the Municipal Arts Society, combined conservationist initiatives with real estate speculation to form a comprehensive plan for city development. This plan, articulated by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and endorsed by the Municipal Arts Society, encouraged suburban development through protecting watersheds, finding new sources of drinking water, providing for sewage treatment, and offering new sources of recreation.

Founded in 1899 by several of Baltimore’s social and business elites, the Municipal Arts Society of Baltimore City initially sought to “beautify the city” with decorations such as sculptures and shade trees.³² As its membership increased, however, its agenda became more substantive. Soon the Society’s membership was badgering the local and state governments into providing for a modern sewer system.³³ Then in January 1902, the Society hired the Olmsted Brothers architect firm to draw up a development

³¹ *Report for 1910 and 1911*, 31.

³² Crooks, 129-130. To get a sense of the Society’s membership, Crooks reports that a survey of the Society’s 122 organizers revealed 28 lawyers, 23 financiers (11 bankers), 40 businessmen, 12 artists and architects, and seven professors from Johns Hopkins University.

³³ During this period the turn of the century, Baltimore was the last American city of comparable size without an improved sanitary sewer system. Several members of the Society, including Society director Mendes Cohen, played a key role during these critical years in badgering the City Council and the State legislature for a substantive plan. Initially stymied by partisan bickering, the sewer supporters eventually won over the city’s voters in a referendum in 1906. Crooks, 136-137.

scheme for the City's 1888 Annex.³⁴ During this period, much of Baltimore's middle and upper classes were moving away from the city's center and into the rolling hills closer to Baltimore County—and in some cases, were spilling into Baltimore County. The Society hoped that a development plan would help the annex retain its rural-like ambiance. Also, learning from the congestion and infrastructure problems that plagued the city's older districts, the Society hoped that a planned approach would result in a community that would not need rebuilding in later generations.³⁵

Founded by the renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, by the early 20th century, control of the Olmsted firm had been passed on to his son Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. The plan, according to Crooks, “was a masterpiece that served as a basis for park development for two generations.” Consisting of 120 pages, “the report, illustrated with maps, gave substance to the Municipal Arts society's ambitious vision: to create numerous small parks and playgrounds, expand the larger city parks, develop parkways and stream valley parks in the suburbs, and select and set aside large reservations beyond the metropolitan area for future use.”³⁶ According to Orser, “even though the charge of the plan was to concentrate on the suburban zone, its recommendations took account of the needs of the complete city.”³⁷

In more detail, the Olmsted, Jr. divided the city's parks into five broad categories: reservations, country parks, urban parks, district playgrounds and neighborhood

³⁴ To recapture disappearing tax base that was settling in suburban belt in Baltimore County, Baltimore City twice annexed land from the County—in 1888 and 1918. For more on Baltimore's political annexations, see Joseph L. Arnold, “Suburban Growth and Municipal Annexation in Baltimore, 1745-1918,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 73(2), (June 1978), 109-128.

³⁵ Crooks, 136-137. Arnold, 112-114.

³⁶ Zucker, 82.

³⁷ Orser, 478.

playgrounds. Tree-lined parkways and other “special facilities” such as zoos and golf courses were included.

Reservations consisted of the lands lying beyond the city’s borders that Olmsted recommended the City purchase in advance of suburban development. These future parks would be accessed by roads, but would initially not be developed for intensive recreation. Until suburban expansion, the reservations would retain their rural character and serve the city’s water-supply needs. According to Orser, “new park areas should be chosen in such a way as not to interfere with development, but rather to enhance it. . . . If land along streams could be purchased in advance of development, not only would acquisition costs be low, but bringing them under public control would prevent unwise private uses and save the city expensive infrastructure costs.”³⁸ In short, *less cost* equaled more potential for *profit*. The Patapsco and Gunpowder valleys received this designation.

The Olmsted plan stood on the cusp of when park use began to shift from being primarily a place of contemplation to a place of active physical recreation. The other four types of parks reflected, in varying degrees, this mixed agenda. Located in stream valleys such as the Gwynns Falls, the country parks were designed to give the visitor a sense of being isolated from civilization. “The Baltimore report,” according to Orser, “stressed the ‘enjoyment of outdoor beauty’ as a principal purpose of parks and a value that should govern the design of large parks whose ‘essential value lies in the contrast which they afford to urban conditions.’”³⁹ Among Olmsted’s recommendations was that city buildings be hidden from park vistas. The other three park types outlined by Olmsted were also to provide city residents with temporary respites from the urban

³⁸ Orser, 476-477.

³⁹ Orser, 475.

environment (borrowing from country parks), but they would also offer playing fields for both men and children. Indeed, playgrounds consisted of a third of the acres designated in the plan.⁴⁰

Despite Olmsted's efforts to address the city as a whole, the later four park types effectively reinforced the city's growing class (and racial) segregation. According to Orser, "There is no doubt that the 1903 Olmsted reports did provide a framework for suburbanization at a moment when the trend toward out-migration of the more affluent was accelerating . . . leading to higher degrees of spatial separation along lines of socioeconomic class."⁴¹ Therefore, despite Olmsted's attempt to build parks throughout the city, the larger outlying parks clearly favored white middle-class residents seeking to simultaneously escape the congesting central city and embrace the benefits that stream valley parks afforded. The advent of automobiles, which initially benefited the middle and upper classes, only served to strengthen the middle-class orientation to outlying suburban parks. This trend was naturally extended to the Patapsco Valley.

The country parks, especially the ones on the city's periphery, served a growing middle-class desire to assert their autonomy and independence, while demonstrating that they were physically tough and rugged.⁴² Employed in white collar jobs, the growing middle class, despite being more financially secure than their working-class counterparts, nevertheless had to grapple with the reality that they were just as subject to the elite's whims. At the same time, however, because their jobs were less physically demanding, there were concerns that their physical conditioning might decline. Caught in-between

⁴⁰ Orser, 470.

⁴¹ Orser, 477-478.

the elites and working classes, the middle class saw the country park as a place to demonstrate—at least symbolically—that they were as physically tough as the working class, while being as independent and intellectually refined as the elite.⁴³ A park in this sense, therefore, was every bit the refuge that Olmsted intended—a place for both intellectual contemplation and exercise. Unlike the elite’s Victorian Era retreats, where rugged physical activity was largely confined to men, the country park experience, though segregated by gender, was shared relatively equally. The Patapsco camping experience, for example, was, by and large, a family affair.

The elite probably had a strong interest in feeding this middle-class ambition. Some stood to profit from the suburban development that was anticipated to crop up around the country parks, but it is also plausible that the elite viewed this as a means in which to maintain the social order. Olmsted’s parks, regardless of intention, in practice served both the elite’s philanthropic, ideological and practical needs.

⁴² Defining class structures can be a complex task. In this article, the middle class is defined as white men (and their families) who relied on the elite for income, but made respectable wages working in jobs that did not require demanding physical labor. Sales clerks, book-keepers and lower level managers are examples.

⁴³ Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 141-160. Though Nash’s interpretation is not based on class divisions, he does articulate that there was a burgeoning interest among city-dwellers to become reacquainted with outdoor living. Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*, (Seattle: University Washington Press, 2002), 19-48. Sutter makes a stronger connection between class and the growing interest in the wilderness by linking it to the popularization of the automobile and efforts to market the wilderness as part of America’s growing consumer culture.

EXPANDING the FORESTRY BOARD through URBAN PROGRESSIVISM:

Maryland's scientific forestry efforts and Baltimore's progressivism came together in the Patapsco Valley. In November of 1910, William M. Ellicott, an architect and member of the Municipal Arts Society, voiced concerns that unless immediate efforts were made, the Patapsco Valley's trees would fall to the lumberman's axe. Extolling the Patapsco's romantic appeal, Ellicott stated that "it offers an alluring opportunity for a ramble in the woods or a walk by the river, and has become a favorite sylvan resort of large numbers of our people." Unfortunately, "no steps have been taken to purchase it and within a few months a sawmill has been erected and already terrible devastation has been wrought." However, according to Ellicott, "the owner of the sawmill is thoroughly in sympathy with the desire to save the remainder of the forest and has volunteered to delay the work."⁴⁴

Two years earlier, in January 1908, Besley had also expressed concerns about Baltimore's surrounding forestland. He told the *Sun*, "It might be possible for the city to enter into an agreement with the landowners by which they would agree to maintain under a forest cover the steep hillsides adjacent the streams and reservoirs connected with the water system."⁴⁵ In keeping with his scientific forestry agenda, Besley added, "the revenue from the woodlands properly managed, should more than pay for their care and it might be possible to include such lands in a system of parks for the city." The morning *Sun*'s editor also shared in Besley's concerns. "Baltimore," the editor wrote, "is threatened again with a short water supply, due in part, at least, to the decreasing flow of the streams which feed our reservoirs." Noting the importance of tree cover, the *Sun*

⁴⁴ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, November 15, 1910.

bemoaned, “Everybody knows it [that tree cover is important], and yet the portable sawmill is going from woodland to woodland doing its work of destruction.”⁴⁶

Whatever reservations Besley may have harbored about immersing his Forestry Board into the complexities of Maryland politics, by 1912 he clearly had no choice. Besley had to widen the Forestry Board’s appeal, or risk being appropriated into ineffectual obscurity. The concerns that Ellicott and the *Sun* raised provided Besley with an opportunity to put together a coalition of Baltimore urban interests and state forestry interests that could coax the State Legislature into action.

In order to bring the sense of urgency to a fever pitch, however, Besley first alerted Legislators about the growing chestnut blight crisis. By doing this, he simultaneously pushed for funds to further his existing initiatives: in particular, to establish a forest nursery at the Maryland Agricultural School, and to formally publish his detailed forest surveys. The second approach, however, was more significant. Besley opted to break away from the Board’s initial emphasis on scientific forestry and begin a process in which the Forestry Board would appeal to suburban real estate interests and urban progressives in Baltimore City and County.

Realizing that the chestnut blight could destroy a valuable timber source (but, not yet recognizing that the battle was a lost cause), the Maryland Board of Forestry used the crisis to alert the state legislature of its financial handicaps in meeting the crisis.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, January 2, 1908. Though this particular quote was in reference to the Gunpowder Valley, its line of reasoning was very much applicable to the Patapsco Valley.

⁴⁶ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, May 22, 1911. There was evidently a drought that spring.

⁴⁷ The chestnut blight has received considerable scholarly and popular attention and basic information can be found in both naturalists’ tree guides and scholarly works. When the New York Bronx Zoo officials accepted and planted a gift of Asian chestnuts from Japan in 1904, they unwittingly introduced a debilitating fungus that had coexisted with Asian trees for centuries. Over previous generations, the Asian trees had developed a genetic resistance against the pestilence, but the American chestnuts, having never been exposed, were vulnerable. The result was catastrophic. Within thirty years, virtually every mature

Cobbling together a group of key allies, including the now ex-State Senator W. McCulloh Brown, Robert Garrett, and William Bullock Clark, Besley and his cadre backed in person a \$6,000 appropriation measure to fight the blight's spread. Though this appropriation paled in comparison to the \$275,000 let by Pennsylvania the year before, the \$6,000 appropriation was 50% more than the Maryland Board of Forestry's entire operation budget from the previous year.⁴⁸ Besley appealed to the legislators' financial sensibilities by pointing out that the Maryland chestnut timber was worth over \$2,000,000 and that the blight was destroying \$50,000 worth annually. The *Baltimore Sun*'s editor stated, "With \$6,000 . . . Mr. Besley is hopeful of being able to check the epidemic and save one of the most useful, valuable and beautiful of all our trees. The question for the Legislature to decide is whether it is worth it."⁴⁹

The second major aspect of Besley's 1912 legislative campaign involved expanding the function of the Board's smallest, yet conveniently placed holding—the John M. Glenn gift in the Patapsco Valley. Located on the Baltimore County side of the Patapsco River, the 43-acre plot was originally set up as a demonstration forest in 1907.⁵⁰ The *Baltimore Sun* reported that the land was "intended to be of considerable benefit to the timber interests of Maryland." Originally, there was "no attempt at parking or

American chestnut east of the Mississippi River was dead. In 1912, however, many foresters still hoped that the blight could be slowed and possibly stopped. Immediate and decisive action, however, was imperative. For basic information on chestnuts, see Rebecca Rupp, *Red Oaks & Black Birches: The Science and Lore of Trees*, (Pownal, Vermont: Garden Way Publishing, 1990), chapter 2, and Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), 189-190.

⁴⁸ *Report for 1910 and 1911*, 21. *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, February 19 and 21, 1912. According to the biannual report of 1910 and 1911, the Forestry Board believed that the establishment of extensive "quarantine zones" would stop the blight's spread. However, it also qualified this assessment by stating "No remedy has been found for the bark disease, and apparently the only thing practicable is to check its spread as much as possible by cutting out the diseased trees and burning the bark."

⁴⁹ *The Baltimore Sun*, Morning, March 3, 1912. Later Board of Forestry Reports indicates that this aspect of Besley's legislative effort was unsuccessful.

⁵⁰ John M. Glenn was also a member of the Baltimore Municipal Arts Society. Crooks, 227.

terracing the tract to show the beautiful possibilities of landscape architecture.”⁵¹ In 1911, “the work at the Patapsco Reserve was strictly an improvement cutting.”⁵² However, because the land was only a dozen miles from Baltimore City, the Forestry Board (like Olmsted a decade earlier) recognized its potential as a public park. In 1911, Besley noted that the Board of Forestry’s mission had a “threefold purpose”: to provide timber, to protect timber, and *to provide for scenic beauty*. In the 1910 and 1911 report, the Board wrote: “The Patapsco Reserve is located only *a few miles from Baltimore* in a *picturesque region*, where it can best serve as a *State park for recreation and pleasure*. It is the desire of the Board to increase the area of the reserve and to develop it along park lines, provided the needed *appropriation* to purchase additional lands may be secured” (my italics).⁵³ Though previous reports had suggested that the forest reserves could be opened to recreational uses, this was its first substantive manifestation.

Besley and the Forestry Board used the Patapsco Forest Reserve’s suburban Baltimore County location and its proximity to Baltimore City to increase the Board’s utility in the eyes of the region’s urban elite. Foremost among these was the influential State Senator Carville D. Benson, a Baltimore County Democrat who maintained real estate interests in Halethorpe, Lansdowne and Arbutus—communities near the Patapsco Reserve.⁵⁴ In February 1912, Senator Benson urged the Maryland legislature to appropriate \$25,000 to the Board “for the purchase of land between Relay and Hollofield, a distance of 10 miles, on both sides of the Patapsco river to add to the present forest

⁵¹ *Baltimore Sun*, May 31, 1907.

⁵² *Report for 1910 and 1911*, 22.

⁵³ *Report for 1910 and 1911*, 26.

⁵⁴ Neal A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, *A History of Baltimore County*, (Towson, Maryland: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc.), 315, 349. *The Baltimore Sun*, Morning, February 29, 1929. According to Brooks and Rockel, Benson in the late 1920s briefly inherited the reigns to the state’s Democratic machine.

reserve.” Though Benson had a personal financial stake in the bill, the appropriation was explicitly to “protect the watershed from denudation and to prevent the contamination of the water supply.”⁵⁵

Despite the bill’s ostensibly pure conservationist selling point, the City legislators quickly recognized the Patapsco Valley’s potential appeal to suburban developers.

According to the *Sun*, “The city Senators also entered heartedly into the plan, the more so because it is thought that in years to come the forests will be needed for the city parks.”⁵⁶

Moreover, the *Sun*’s editor wrote, “When the city of Baltimore stretches out beyond its present suburbs, as it is rapidly doing, the Patapsco Valley will be needed in its park system. . . . It would be a shame for the State to permit the beautiful forests in the Patapsco Valley to be destroyed.”⁵⁷ The *Sun* and the Baltimore City Senators appreciated that Benson’s bill represented a logical extension of trends in Baltimore City set in motion during the previous decade. In the end, Besley’s efforts were successful. The Board of Forestry’s annual appropriation rose to \$10,000 in 1913, it received a special \$6,000 appropriation to publish its surveys, and a budget for purchasing Patapsco Valley property was set at \$50,000.

SCIENTIFIC FORESTRY and URBAN PROGRESSIVISM CONVERGE in the PATAPSCO VALLEY:

The Patapsco Forest Reserve’s recreational amenities provided middle-class suburbanites with an opportunity to blend rugged outdoor living with intellectual contemplation—or, at the very least, a chance for greater aesthetic appreciation.

⁵⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, February 19, 1912.

⁵⁶ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, March 31, 1912.

⁵⁷ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, March 3, 1912.

Campsites, in particular, were a blend of the primitive and the modern. In some cases, the influence of Baltimore's elite progressivism was obvious—such as Victor Bloede's philanthropic efforts and the Hutzler campsites, but in other cases the elite influence was more subtle—such as in the experiences of many other summer campers and visitors to the park. Either way, the new park provided the Forestry Board with a place to illustrate the benefits of scientific forestry to people who, for the most part, did not own large tracts of land, while simultaneously providing the white middle class with a chance to, as Besley put it, “rough it pleasantly.” Though many of Besley's elite allies usually abstained from camping in the Patapsco—Robert Garrett, for example, typically vacationed in the Adirondacks—the State Forester himself often camped in the new park to personally spread the gospel of scientific forestry.⁵⁸

In the years following the Benson bill's passage, the Patapsco Forest Reserve rapidly took on characteristics of a public park. Land procurement proceeded quickly. Through a combination of philanthropic donations, direct purchases and negotiated easements, the Board controlled 1,665 acres by the end of 1913—a dramatic rise from the mere 43 acres it had inherited from John Glenn seven years earlier.⁵⁹

As in Western Maryland, there was considerable concern over potential forests. Despite their value in fostering wildlife habitat, dead and “defective” trees were vigorously removed.⁶⁰ The B&O Railroad, with the forest wardens' assistance, cut a 100 foot-wide swath along its right-of-way, clearing out underbrush and other “inflammable

⁵⁸ Personal letters written by Robert Garrett to his brother John W. reveal a preference for the Adirondack Mountains and Europe. Garrett's personal letters can be found in Special Collections at Johns Hopkins University. The Maryland Hall of Records possesses a large number of lanternslides taken at Patapsco by Besley during the early 1920s.

⁵⁹ *Report for 1912 and 1913*, 37.

⁶⁰ *Report for 1912 and 1913*, 37.

material.” To “make the area thoroughly accessible,” several miles of trails were constructed and maintained. Though initially designed to fight fires, these trails quickly doubled as recreational hiking trails. In order to get a better sense of the valley’s topography “a field party was employed . . . for the purpose of preparing an accurate, large-scale . . . map to be used as a base for locating property lines and all topographical features.”⁶¹

Though the Forestry Board continued to emphasize its scientific forestry agenda, the Patapsco Reserve’s purpose now reflected the influence of Baltimore’s progressives. Rather than simply protect the forest’s timber value, the Forestry Board was now “to preserve the scenic beauty of this region.” It declared that the “lands will be maintained perpetually as a *natural* forest” (my italics). This definition of “natural” was of course limited: the Forestry Board continued to practice scientific forest management in the Patapsco, but the appeal of that management now broadened. “The large number of native tree species found in this region,” the Board wrote in 1913, “together with the species that will be introduced by planting, will make a forest arboretum not only of interest to the botanist but of great educational value to the general public.” This was quite a departure from 1908 when Besley had stated that the Glenn gift would simply serve Maryland’s “timber interests.”⁶² Now, the Patapsco Reserve would serve the general public’s interests—especially those in the general public with the means necessary to visit the park. Though tree species at the Patapsco were in part artificially selected, just as they were in Western Maryland, trees were now evaluated for their scenic as well as economic value.

⁶¹ *Report for 1912 and 1913*, 37.

⁶² *Report for 1912 and 1913*, 36.

To address Baltimore City's water-quality concerns, the Forestry Board placed protecting the Patapsco's watershed high on its agenda. "The Patapsco area," the Board reported, "is not only one of great natural attractiveness, being so near Baltimore that its use as a recreation grounds is certain to be more fully appreciated, but it is also important to protect the watershed of the Patapsco River, which plays such an important part in furnishing water power for several industrial enterprises."⁶³ These industries, which included several textile mills, a flourmill, a hydroelectric plant and a water filtration plant, directly felt the impact of sediment runoff. As the 1914/15 biannual report noted, "the steep slopes along the river that have been cultivated in years past have largely contributed to the accumulation of silt which has collected behind the dams built for storage purposes" and has forced the operators to expend "large sums of money for dredging."⁶⁴

Though all dams suffered sediment build up from increased runoff, it was Victor G. Bloede's dams that suffered the most. A Catonsville banker with philanthropic motivations, Bloede had organized the Patapsco Electric & Manufacturing and the Baltimore County Water & Electric companies a decade earlier to supplement the region's water and electric resources. Because his hydroelectric dam's intakes were submerged, sediment build up was a persistent problem. The Board reported that, "this mass of sediment extending for a quarter of a mile along the river bed represents but a small part of the erosion from cultivated lands along the steep banks of the Patapsco."⁶⁵ Considering that the dam was built in 1906 illustrates the magnitude of the sediment-runoff problem. The new trees, it was hoped, would reduce the amount of silt clogging

⁶³ *Report for 1914 and 1915*, 25.

⁶⁴ *Report for 1914 and 1915*, 26.

the electric plant's turbines, plus cut the amount of energy needed to filter drinking water at Bloede's other plant at Avalon.

With trees planted and trails blazed, efforts to open to the park up to campers moved quickly. The Board wrote, "it is proposed to offer camping sites to those who wish to take an outing here, and who probably could not afford a vacation trip to more distant places."⁶⁶ The sites were open to anyone in the state, provided that they respected the "reasonable regulations."⁶⁷ By 1916, there were 200 campsites available "for the use of the visitors who cared to use the park's advantages."⁶⁸ "It is scenically beautiful," wrote *The Methodist*. "Under the management of the Board its attractions are being protected and so far as possible enhanced"⁶⁹ According to a local paper, "the State reservation is kept clean and free from forms of annoyance. The wardens, too, are alert to protect the property of campers. The reservations are not subject to prowlers, as everybody must show a permit, which in itself makes him part of the system of preserving order."⁷⁰

Like its city counterparts, the new park on the Patapsco was a means in which the middle class could enjoy the benefits of a natural environment. As a local paper put it, "Mr. Besley pictures the reserve as a real place to 'rough it pleasantly.'"⁷¹ In 1916, Assistant Forester Dorrance reported to the *Sun* the benefits available at the Patapsco Reserve. He wrote that a workingman's "vacation weeks are the most important of his year." Dorrance recounted that "muscles softened by disuse must be rebuilt by

⁶⁵ *Report for 1914 and 1915*, 26.

⁶⁶ *Report for 1912 and 1913*, 37.

⁶⁷ *Report for 1914 and 1915*, 25.

⁶⁸ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, July 16, 1916.

⁶⁹ *Baltimore Methodist*, July 15, 1920.

⁷⁰ Quote was taken from unidentified newspaper clipping in F. W. Besley's scrapbook at the Maryland Hall of Records.

exercise and unaccustomed ‘stunts’ to which man has grown a stranger.” Admonishing his readers to camp at the park for extended periods, he wrote that “the vacation is not alone a let-down from the usual. To be of the greatest good, it must entail a change, and a complete one.”⁷²

Camping in the Patapsco, therefore, offered a perfect opportunity for both physical and contemplative recreation. A group that spent the fall camping a Patapsco wrote in the *Sun*, “we are now located there [Patapsco Forest Reserve], and any weekend will find from 20 to 25 of our faithful band of Gypsies enjoying nature to its fullest extent.” The participants exulted that they were “enjoying watching the change of foliage from week to week, taking dips in the old Patapsco river in spite of the frost, getting up at 4 A. M. to watch the daybreak, walking eight miles to church in the morning and chopping wood, preparing meals, washing dishes and taking trips through the reserve during the day.”⁷³ The *Methodist* recounted that “individuals by scores, have already proved the Patapsco much of their liking. Community camps of families brought together by residential, religious, or social ties afford good opportunity for profitable association in a way that makes finer and better friends.”⁷⁴ According to the *Sun*, all the visitors “liked its fishing, swimming and canoeing, their campsites, and the supply of drinking water from the springs.”⁷⁵ Campers were even permitted to plant vegetable gardens. “In fact,” wrote the *Methodist*, “there is every disposition to encourage the deeper, broader application of “rusticating and vacation camping practice.”⁷⁶

⁷¹ F. W. Besley scrapbook.

⁷² *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, July 16, 1916.

⁷³ *Baltimore Sun*, Sunday, October 29, 1916.

⁷⁴ *Baltimore Methodist*, July 15, 1920.

⁷⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, July 16, 1916,

⁷⁶ *Baltimore Methodist*, July 15, 1920.

Elaine Hamilton O’Neal, an artist born in Catonsville, spent a portion of her childhood growing up in the Patapsco Reserve. During the 1920s, her parents and two brothers spent five months out of the year living in an army-style wall tent near Orange Grove. “We had what we needed,” she later recalled. Her experience at the park was a blend of rugged outdoor living complemented with the trappings of the modern middle-class lifestyle. Her family, on the one hand, was forced to dig a privy, sleep on straw mattress cots, and make several trips a day down to the local spring for fresh water; however, on the other hand, they cooked on a modern oil stove, owned a piano, and had electric power wired in from Bloede’s Dam for lighting and a radio. Groceries and supplies were acquired by walking over a mile once a week to a nearby mill town. By carving out a place to live in the wilderness, O’Neal asserted that she was able to develop self confidence and a sense of adventure, and she “learned to be creative and inventive.” At the park, she discovered how to paint and swim, and she developed an acute hearing ability and “a strong sense of smell.” O’Neal learned to identify sounds made by owls, song birds and wild turkeys, and how to avoid copperhead snakes. With few other children around, O’Neal developed a stronger relationship with her brothers. Her experiences at the park, she believes, played a critical role in her eventual status as a Fulbright Scholar and career as an artist. In this sense, O’Neal’s experience at the Patapsco exemplified the white middle-class desire to identify with the rugged experience of the working classes while attaining the intellectual and cultural standards typified by the upper classes. O’Neal’s experience at the Patapsco was simultaneously rugged and refined.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Interview with Elaine Hamilton O’Neal, August, 2002.

Perhaps the most explicit example of elite philanthropy playing a role in shaping middle-class values, however, were the Hutzler campsites. During the summer months, the Hutzler Department Store Company reserved dozens of sites for their male employees, primarily sales clerks, and their families. While the men commuted daily to work in Baltimore, their families were left behind to enjoy the park. To foster camaraderie and loyalty, Hutzler's reserved sites in close proximity to one another, operated a nearby commissary, and had ice cream delivered once a week.

In one measure success by park visitation numbers, the Forestry Board and urban progressive efforts to expand the Patapsco Reserve into a park were successful. By 1925, nearly 250 camping permits were issued annually, providing camping privileges to approximately 2,500 people a year. "In addition to campers," the Board wrote, "there were not less than 20,000 who visited the forest for a day's outing" in 1924 and 1925.⁷⁸ How successful they were at molding human behavior is, of course, more difficult to measure.

CONCLUSION and EPILOGUE:

After struggling for several years to protect Maryland's shrinking lumber reserves, the Forestry Board's operating budget more than doubled in 1913. Besley's willingness to accommodate the Baltimore region's progressive impulses was critical to this development. By believing in the ultimate financial as well as environmental profitability of their endeavors, seeking government assistance, and trying to shape human behavior, the Forestry Board and urban progressives shared in an effort to expand the Patapsco Forest Reserve to further extant scientific forestry efforts, while meeting the

city's need for clean water resources, and by providing its citizens—especially middle-class whites—with an additional outlet for recreation. Because it took on the role of managing an important suburban park, the Forestry Board's role in the life of the City, the State and the people of Maryland provided it with a foundation to become a lasting State institution.

As the middle class embraced the automobile during the 1910s, the State government increasingly accommodated this shift. From 1908 to 1915, the State purchased and took control of the 19th-century turnpikes and began to fund efforts to rebuild them to suit autos. To appeal to the drivers' aesthetic tastes (or perhaps to mold them), in 1914, the General Assembly passed a Roadside Tree Law to promote tree planting along Maryland's public highways. In addition to planting trees, the law forbade the "unauthorized placing of advertisements and other notices."⁷⁹ The government commission appointed to enforce the provisions of the Roadside Tree Law was the State Board of Forestry.

It is ironic, however, that one of the primary motivations behind the Patapsco Reserve's expansion centered on its potential contribution to suburbanization, the initial returns were modest. Catonsville, already Baltimore County's largest suburb by 1900, would retain its exclusive character for several more decades—resisting a major expansion until the Post-World War II period. Moreover, the smaller community developments that Benson and others hoped would piggyback the Reserve's expansion, remained modest-real estate ventures throughout this period. Indeed, Arbutus, Lansdowne and Halethorpe would retain their rural character for several more decades.

⁷⁸ *Report for 1924 and 1925*, 12.

Undaunted by the slow pace of suburban development, the Board of Forestry in the 1920s solidified the Patapsco Valley's connection with city park system by purchasing most of the private property east to the city line. As noted in this essay's introduction, the *Evening Sun* noted April 17, "a continuous automobile drive through a State forest reserve of surpassing beauty will be the ultimate result if plans considered yesterday by Robert Garrett, member of the State Board of Forestry; State Forester F. W. Besley and other persons interested are completed."⁸⁰ Within a few years, automobilists from Baltimore City were driving down stretches of windy tree-lined roads to the park.

⁷⁹ Buckley and Grove, 314. The law also included a provision for regularly spaced horse troughs, but with the advent of automobiles, the troughs were never put into place. *Oakland Republican*, April 8, 1920.

⁸⁰ *Baltimore Sun*, Morning, April 17, 1921.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Primary Sources:

Maryland State Board of Forestry Publications:

Besley, F. W. *The Forests of Garrett County*. Baltimore, 1914.

Besley, F. W. *The Forests of Maryland*. Baltimore: 1916.

Maxwell, Hu. *Wood-Using Industries of Maryland*. Baltimore, 1910.

Report of the State Board of Forestry for 1906 and 1907. Baltimore, 1907.

Report of the State Board of Forestry for 1908 and 1909. Baltimore, 1909.

Report of the State Board of Forestry for 1910 and 1911. Baltimore, 1912.

Report of the State Board of Forestry for 1912 and 1913. Baltimore, 1913.

Report of the State Board of Forestry for 1914 and 1915. Baltimore, 1915.

Report of the State Board of Forestry for 1916 and 1917. Baltimore, 1917.

Report of the State Board of Forestry for 1920 and 1921. Baltimore, 1921.

Maryland State Department of Forestry Publications:

Besley, F. W. *Facts About Maryland Forests*. Baltimore, 1928.

Besley, F. W. *Forest Trees of Maryland: How to Know Them*. Baltimore, 1938.

Report of the State Department of Forestry, University of Maryland for Fiscal Years 1922 and 1923. Baltimore, 1923.

Report of the State Department of Forestry, University of Maryland for Fiscal Years 1924 and 1925. Baltimore, 1925.

Report of the State Department of Forestry, University of Maryland for Fiscal Year 1926. Baltimore, 1926.

Report of the State Department of Forestry, University of Maryland for Fiscal Year 1927. Baltimore, 1927.

Report of the State Department of Forestry, University of Maryland for Fiscal Year 1928.
Baltimore, 1928.

Report of the State Department of Forestry, University of Maryland for Fiscal Year 1929.
Baltimore, 1929.

Report of the State Department of Forestry, University of Maryland for Fiscal Year 1930.
Baltimore, 1930.

*Report of the State Department of Forestry, University of Maryland for Fiscal Years
1931 and 1932.* Baltimore, 1932.

Newspapers:

Baltimore American, 1905-1921.

Evening Sun, Baltimore, 1910-1926.

Republican, Oakland, Maryland, 1903-1920.

Sun, Baltimore, 1905-1926.

Personal Letters:

Robert Garrett to John Work Garrett, 1904-1920. Special Collections, Johns Hopkins
University.

Other Publications:

Besley, F. W. "State Forests and Parks," in W. S. Hamill's, *The Forests Resources and
Industries of Maryland*. Baltimore: Maryland Development Bureau of the
Baltimore Association of Commerce, 1937.

Besley, F. W. "State Forests in Relation to the National Forest Program." Paper
presented at the *Annual Meeting of the Society of American Foresters*, Madison,
Wisconsin, December 17, 1925.

Oral interviews:

O'Neal, Elaine Hamilton, Catonsville Resident, August 2002.

Rodgers, Kirk P., President of Besley and Rodgers INC. and Besley's grandson, January
20, 2004.

Secondary Sources:

- Arnold, Joseph L. ““Suburban Growth and Municipal Annexation in Baltimore, 1745-1918.” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 73(2), June 1978, 109-128.
- Association of American Forests. “Solute to Maryland,” *American Forests Magazine*, October, 1956.
- Brooks, Neil A. and Eric G. Rockel. *A History of Baltimore County*. Towson, Maryland: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.
- Brugger, Robert J. *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1636-1980*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.
- Buckley, Geoffrey L. and J. Morgan Grove. “Sowing the Seeds of Forest Conservation: Fred Besley and the Maryland Story, 1906-1923.” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 96(3), Fall 2001, 303-327.
- Clepper, Henry. *Origins of American Conservation*. New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1966.
- Cox, Thomas R., Robert S. Maxwell, Phillip Drennon Thomas, and Joseph J. Malone. *This Well-Wooded Land: Americans and Their Forests from Colonial Times to the Present*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.
- Crooks, James B. *Politics and Progress: The Rise of Urban Progressivism in Baltimore, 1895-1911*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968.
- Graham, Jr. Frank. *The Adirondack Park: A Political History*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.
- Hayes, Samuel P. *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959.
- Kessler, Barry and David Zang. *The Playlife of a City: Baltimore’s Recreation and Parks, 1900-1955*. Baltimore: Baltimore City Life Museums and the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, 1989.
- Landrum, Ney C. ed. *Histories of the Southeastern State Park Systems*. Washington D. C.: Association of Southeastern State Park Directors, October 1992.
- Lewis, Ronald L. *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside: Railroads, Deforestation, and Social Change in West Virginia, 1880-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

- Miller, Char, ed. *American Forests: Nature, Culture, and Politics*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1997.
- Nash, Roderick Frazier. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.
- Olson, Sherry H. *Baltimore: The Building of an American City*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Orser, W. Edward. "A Tale of Two Park Plans: The Olmsted Vision for Baltimore and Seattle, 1903." *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 98(4), Winter 2003.
- Sutter, Paul S. *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002.
- Tilden, Freeman. *The State Parks: Their Meaning in American Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970.
- Walker, Laurence C. *The Southern Forest: A Chronicle*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.
- Walsh, Richard and William Lloyd Fox, eds. *Maryland: A History*. Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1983.
- White, Jr., Frank F. *The Governors of Maryland, 1777-1970*. Annapolis: Maryland Hall of Records, 1970.
- Widner, Ralph R., ed. *Forests and Forestry in the American States: A Reference Anthology*. Washington: The National Association of State Foresters, 1968.
- Zucker, Kevin. "Falls and Stream Valleys: Frederick Law Olmsted and the Parks of Baltimore." *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 90(1), Spring 1995, 73-96.