

GREAT WOMEN OF THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK:  
DEFINING NATURE AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

A Thesis  
by  
RACHEL LANIER ROBERTS

Submitted to the Graduate School  
Appalachian State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

May 2012  
Department of History

GREAT WOMEN OF THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK:  
DEFINING NATURE AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

A Thesis  
by  
RACHEL LANIER ROBERTS  
May 2012

APPROVED BY:

---

Timothy H. Silver  
Chairperson, Thesis Committee

---

Lucinda M. McCray  
Member, Thesis Committee

---

Bruce E. Stewart  
Member, Thesis Committee

---

Lucinda M. McCray  
Chairperson, Department of History

---

Edelma D. Huntley  
Dean, Research and Graduate Studies

Copyright by Rachel Lanier Roberts 2012  
All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

### GREAT WOMEN OF THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK: DEFINING NATURE AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (May 2012)

Rachel Lanier Roberts, B.A. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

M.A. Appalachian State University

Chairperson: Timothy Silver

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park, located in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina, epitomized a new type of national park. When the federal government established it as a national park in 1934, it was only the second in the eastern United States, and the first to be created through the purchase of private land. The creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park represented a change in the purpose behind park creation. The federal government created previous western parks, like Yosemite and Yellowstone, based on their unique, natural scenery; a need to monumentalize the greatness of the United States in the face of European criticisms; and the desire to shape and define American culture. However, following the flooding of Hetch Hetchy Valley and more fervent, economic arguments to use rather than preserve the natural resources out West, a new argument for national parks emerged. Dollars from tourism rather than scenic nationalism drove park creation.

Utilizing the cases of three previously overlooked women—Anne May Davis, Laura Thornburgh, and the Walker Sisters—who participated in the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park this thesis argues that the GSMNP was representative of this change in the National Park system. The women’s personal letters, notes for speeches, novels, guide books, poems, and interviews along with records from the Tennessee House of Representatives, newspapers, and interviews with family members reveal three very different cases that support a move away from the scenic nationalism that inspired previous park promotion. This thesis addresses how these women shaped their definitions of nature and actions towards it, looking closely at class, broader developments in American and Appalachian cultures, and gender. Understanding how each of these women defined nature—whether as a commodity, a moral authority, a means of extraction, or a combination of these—allows one to understand not only how, but why the movement to create the Great Smoky Mountains National Park succeeded. The women’s definitions of and actions towards nature reveal a park movement based heavily—though not entirely—on its potential economic worth through tourism. The case of Great Smoky Mountains National Park reveals that the National Park system was not born in a complete and final form. Rather, it has evolved and continues to evolve with changing American definitions of nature.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my grandmother, Hilda Palmer, a great woman of the  
Great Smoky Mountains

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Several people deserve recognition for their assistance with this thesis project. Dr. Anne Whisnant inspired my research of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park during a public history class at the University of North Carolina. Dr. Bruce Stewart's seminar on Appalachian history encouraged me to continue my research on the region, and Dr. Sheila Phipps suggested the lens of women's history to narrow the topic. As I was unfamiliar with this specific lens of history, Dr. Lucinda McCray was eager to offer any assistance on the topic.

I must give special thanks to Dr. Timothy Silver who served as chairperson for the thesis and introduced me to the fascinating field of environmental history, a field I intend to continue researching. He provided me with the introduction to environmental and National Park history that I needed to conduct my research and provide a clear argument in my thesis. His thoughtful questions and suggestions helped me shape my ultimate argument and led to a much improved project overall.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, especially my grandmother who took special interest in my research and reminded me of my own ties to the Great Smoky Mountains. Thank you too to my fiancé, Marcus, who often acted as a sounding board for the arguments I wished to make and graciously helped me through the more stressful phases of researching, writing, and defending. I am truly grateful for all the help I received throughout this thesis project.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Introduction	
Defining Nature in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.....	1
Historiography.....	3
Methodology.....	17
Chapter Outlines.....	19
Chapter One	
Anne May Davis: The Economic Meets the Scenic.....	24
Chapter Two	
Laura Thornburgh: Escaping Civilization.....	51
Chapter Three	
The Walker Sisters: The Cultural in the Natural.....	75
Conclusion	
Survival of the “Dollarable”.....	100
Bibliography.....	107
Vita.....	114

## INTRODUCTION

### Defining Nature in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park

There were many great men who came together to create America's National Parks and make them successful. Names associated with the creation and promotion of National Parks include John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, and Stephen T. Mather, but what about women? Feminist movements tend to go hand in hand with environmental ones. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* published in 1962 offers evidence of this connection.<sup>1</sup> Historically women have been considered closer to nature than men. Recall images of mother earth, Gaia, and Grecian nature spirits.<sup>2</sup> All are female personifications of nature. Why then is the National Park movement so defined by masculinity? Were women absent from the movement, or has their story simply been overlooked? What role did women play in the creation of national parks? What influenced their definitions of nature and actions towards it regarding park creation? Were women united in their opinions towards the creation of national parks, if not, what accounts for differing attitudes? Broadly, how do class, culture, and gender shape human interaction with nature? Is one more influential than others? Finally, what do women's perceptions of nature reveal about the National Park Service more broadly?

---

<sup>1</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (Boston, MA: A Mariner Book Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002; originally published 1962).

<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1990; originally published 1980).

This thesis will address these issues, using the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park as a case study. The park was established in 1934, though controversy over its creation filled the previous decade. Women as well as men were integral to the creation of the park in the East. The park straddles the Tennessee-North Carolina border, which the ridgeline of the Smokies follows closely. The Great Smoky Mountains run northeast to southwest and are part of the larger Appalachian Mountain Chain ranging from Canada in the North to Alabama in the southern United States.

Three women—or groups of women—played particularly important roles in the establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park: Anne M. Davis, Tennessee legislator; Laura Thornburgh (Thornborough), photographer, adventurer, and author; and the Walker Sisters, residents of the proposed park area. Each of these women defined nature in their own way. A number of factors influenced their individual definitions of the term. These factors include, their social status, broader trends in American and Appalachian culture, and defined gender roles. By addressing these very different park promoters, one may assess how class, culture, and gender contributed to the women’s understanding of nature as well as their actions regarding the park. Does one factor predict actions towards the environment more than the others, or do they play equal roles shaping the women’s actions?

Understanding these women’s ideas of nature allows for greater understanding of how and, more importantly, why national parks are created. This thesis will illuminate how class, culture, and gender inform human interaction with

nature. It will add to an ongoing historical debate surrounding how nature is defined and, in effect, treated. Discussing the importance of issues such as class, culture, and gender with regards to nature leads to clearer awareness of changes in the National Park system. These women's definitions of nature parallel broader changes in American culture and reveal a National Park system that has been forced to evolve in order to maintain relevance and grow.

### Historiography

There is a veritable trove of primary sources regarding the Great Smoky Mountains. The information contained within these sources has provided an array of options for study and analysis. Historians have produced numerous works on the area based on archaeological evidence left by the Cherokee and early white settlers as well as personal remembrances of the mountains. Horace Kephart and George Masa, for example, left behind accounts of their experiences in the Great Smoky Mountains.<sup>3</sup> Horace Kephart was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Iowa. He graduated from Cornell University and worked as a librarian and writer. After years of unhappy marriage and drinking, Kephart suffered a breakdown and moved to a small cabin in the Smoky Mountains. He spent years tramping around the mountains writing of their beauty and healing powers. He authored *Camping and Woodcraft* and *Our Southern Highlanders*, a book on Smoky Mountain people, as well as several influential articles. His articles along with the photography of his friend, George

---

<sup>3</sup> Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders: A Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life Among the Mountaineers* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984) and Horace Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft: A Handbook for Vacation Campers and for Travelers in the Wilderness* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

Masa, a Japanese immigrant, served to aid in the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.<sup>4</sup>

Further sources consist of interviews with mountaineers who lived in the mountains before their designation as a national park, store records, and local newspapers avid in their coverage of the Smokies, especially when discussion of the national park arose. Records from mining and timber companies still exist as well as papers from the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association and Land Acquisition Records. However, each writer adds his own interpretation to these primary sources, revealing a variety of historiographical slants.<sup>5</sup>

Each scholar has a particular goal in mind while writing his or her account of the Smokies. However, the scholarly works on the Great Smoky Mountains seem to fall within four main categories: natural histories, cultural histories, park histories, and area or subject specific histories. Few of these secondary accounts devote any discussion to women's roles in the Smokies.

Naturalist Connie Toops' *Great Smoky Mountains* provides an excellent example of natural history of the area.<sup>6</sup> She offers an overall description of geological, climatic, floral, and faunal aspects of the Great Smoky Mountains. Her account begins a billion years ago with her explanation of the formation of the mountains' basement granite rocks. She follows the creation of the Smokies to their uplift through the clashing of the North American and African continental plates.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ken Burns, "Episode Four: 1920-1933, Going Home," *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, DVD, (2009; Arlington, VA: PBS, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> The Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association Papers, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archives, Gatlinburg, TN (hereafter GSMNP Archives); Champion Fibre Company Papers, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>6</sup> Connie Toops, *Great Smoky Mountains* (New York: Voyageur Press, Incorporated, 1995).

Toops further outlines the effects of four glaciations, which occurred following the split of Pangaea. The freeze and thaw cycle served to create crevices in the rock that eventually broke down into boulders and pebbles. This breakdown morphed the “rocky crags” of the Smokies into the “fertile coves” of the present era.<sup>7</sup>

In her later chapters, Toops outlines the types of vegetation and animal life of the Great Smoky Mountains. She compares walking in mature, virgin hardwood forest to entering a Cathedral.<sup>8</sup> Microclimates typify the Great Smoky Mountains in Toops’ volume. Because of these microclimates different elevations often held differing species of both plants and animals and had different blooming dates. In the spring, one can watch the blooms and green creep slowly up the sides of the Smokies. The highest elevations of the Smokies resemble forests in Canada. After Toops discusses floral aspects of the area, she switches to describe its faunal inhabitants. Boomers, black bears, bobcats, and salamanders alike appear in her descriptions of the mountain region. Toops offers a laudatory and sentimental description of the Great Smoky Mountains. She spends little time discussing human interaction with the land, choosing instead to focus on what many perceive as more “natural” aspects of the mountains.

George Ellison, on the other hand offers a more human and cultural history of the Smokies in his book, *Mountain Passages: Natural and Cultural History of Western North Carolina and the Great Smoky Mountains*.<sup>9</sup> The subtitle suggests the book will address both natural and cultural histories, but the emphasis is largely placed on

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>9</sup> George Ellison, *Mountain Passages: Natural and Cultural History of Western North Carolina and the Great Smoky Mountains* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2005).

cultural aspects. The first section of the book addresses the natural history of the Smokies as it influenced human history. The book then quickly changes subjects and focuses on the Cherokee and later the mountaineers. Chapters regarding the cultural aspects of the Cherokee and mountaineers are brief and specific. For example, a chapter on the Cherokee entitled “Booger Masks: Cherokee Mirrors” recounts the use of humorous masks in Cherokee tradition. Ellison refers to them as mirrors because they often depicted exaggerated features of white men. He suggests they were a way to acculturation.<sup>10</sup> A chapter from the mountaineer section describes the importance of nicknames in the Great Smoky Mountain culture. It focuses on the epithet “Turkey George.”<sup>11</sup> George Palmer earned this nickname following an unfortunate run-in with a flock of trapped, wild Turkeys. The name referred to this humorous event, but also suggested the prowess with which George hunted the fowl. While Ellison’s work is very specific in nature, volumes addressing Smoky Mountain cultural history more generally also exist.

*Memories of Old Smoky: Early Experiences in the Great Smoky Mountains* by Carlos C. Campbell provides a more wide-ranging cultural account of the Smokies, while still including the natural landscape as a guiding background.<sup>12</sup> Campbell’s book is particularly interesting because it recounts his own personal experiences hiking the Smokies and promoting the park. Through his memories he traces the culture associated with hiking society as well as those who lived in the Great Smoky Mountains. The section entitled “People of the Mountains” is particularly revealing.

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>12</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Memories of Old Smoky: Early Experiences in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005).

He discusses the Walker Sisters, perceptions of ignorance, and whiskey making, outlining cultural aspects of the mountains in which he explored.<sup>13</sup> Campbell ascribed Appalachian backwardness to its relative geographical isolation. He suggested that the enduring pioneer state of Appalachians was due in part to their natural surroundings.

Both natural and cultural histories of the Smoky Mountains define the region. This definition allows for a comparison of the human and non-human nature of the Smokies with that of Western parks like Yosemite and Yellowstone. Understanding how the parks differ physically and how their inhabitants varied, creates an opportunity to compare how the women serving as the topic of this thesis interpreted nature—and parks—differently in the eastern United States.

While these books focus primarily on either natural or cultural history, they all in some way address the creation or existence of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. However, there are several books that revolve primarily around the formation and continuance of the park.

For example, another book by Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains*, provides an excellent example of a volume focused entirely on the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. His positive account of the creation of the park is best summed up through his addition to the title page, which reads, “Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains: an unprecedented crusade which created, as a gift of the people, the nation’s most

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 131-141.

popular park.”<sup>14</sup> Campbell outlines the creation of the park as a harrowing tale of community and perseverance. He hoped that Tennesseans, North Carolinians, and other visitors of the park would read this book and appreciate the park and not take it for granted. His treatment of the park’s creation was almost religious. He states the park “is today a happy reality resulting from an almost unbelievable amount of work by hundreds of faithful persons.”<sup>15</sup> His language is at times sycophantic. For example, he asserts “the obstacles [to the park’s creation were] like the thorns and the completed park like the beautiful rose.”<sup>16</sup>

Of course, not all accounts of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park are quite so rosy. Lee Roberson’s self-published *Sins of the National Park Service in the Great Smokies* provides an extremely contradictory account of the park.<sup>17</sup> Though not a scholarly work, the book raises interesting questions and poses as a counterbalance to other complimentary accounts of park history. Roberson, a descendant of one of the families forced off their land for the park, focuses on the mismanagement of the park, citing bear attacks and poor media relations as negative aspects resulting from the foundation of the park. A descendant of those that lived in Cataloochee, Hattie Caldwell Davis, addresses the disregard with which those forced to leave the Smokies were treated. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt did not address their sacrifice in his speech dedicating the park.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1960).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Lee Roberson, *Sins of the National Park Service in the Great Smokies* (Townsend, TN: Lee Roberson, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Hattie Caldwell Davis, *Reflections of Cataloochee Valley and Its Vanished People from the Great Smoky Mountains* (Philadelphia, PA: Hattie Caldwell Davis, 1999).

Unlike Campbell's and Roberson's books, most volumes that discuss park creation and history are much more objective in tone, though still positive and promoting in nature. They provide information for tourists rather than endorse a particular political agenda or address park controversies. Rose Houk's *Exploring the Smokies: Things to See and Do in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park* provides an excellent example of an informative book that supplies general information on the national park.<sup>19</sup> The book presents travel information on hiking, photography, fishing, hiking, historic buildings, and waterfalls. It also outlines popular places to visit and includes a brief history of each site. Houk spends the most time describing Cades Cove and Cataloochee. She focuses on the positive, human historical aspects of the areas, relating stories of reunions, Cherokee hunting, and the pioneers' displacement by the park.<sup>20</sup>

Though Houk's book presents the histories of a variety of areas within the Smokies, other tomes focus on one community or aspect of the Smokies specifically. Hattie Caldwell Davis, for example, discusses solely Cataloochee in *Cataloochee Valley: Vanished Settlements of the Great Smoky Mountains*.<sup>21</sup> Caldwell's history begins with the Cherokee who called the valley "Gadalutsi," which means "standing in a row" and most likely refers to the trees lining the ridges on either side of the valley. Her coverage of the Cherokee, however, is brief. The majority of her book follows the lives of white settlers, her ancestors. She covers the first white settlers,

---

<sup>19</sup> Rose Houk, *Exploring the Smokies: Things to See and Do In the Great Smoky Mountains National Park* (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Davis.

the Civil War, the turn of the century, schooling, the Cataloochee Turnpike, the Depression, and the national park up through the present-day reunions. Her history is mainly cultural in nature and has a very specific focus. She does not draw connections from her case study to the larger area of the Great Smoky Mountains or Appalachia more generally. *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* by Durwood Dunn, however, makes this leap.<sup>22</sup> He uses the Cades Cove community as a microcosm to better understand the Southern Appalachian region as a whole.

In *Our Southern Highlanders*, Horace Kephart suggests little society or guidance existed among southern mountaineer communities. Kephart based his conclusions about mountain culture on his own observations of Hazel Creek in the early 1900s. He tended to focus on the exceptional aspects of the culture, dangerous outlaws and the most impoverished families, for example.<sup>23</sup> One of Dunn's major goals is to disprove this thesis through his study of Cades Cove. Dunn refutes the myth of Appalachian otherness. He states,

They [mountaineers] were in the final analysis representative of the broad mainstream of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American culture and society from whence they came: ordinary, decent citizens who often reacted collectively—and within their limitations, courageously and responsibly—to the enormous economic fluctuation, social change, and political disruption surrounding their lives in the last two centuries within the American commonwealth.<sup>24</sup>

He further argues that though the passage of time left many aspects of the community forgotten, the descendants of Cades Cove attempted to carry on the bits

---

<sup>22</sup> Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> Kephart.

<sup>24</sup> Dunn, 256.

of their culture that remained. While Dunn and Caldwell focus on specific areas communities within the Smokies, others choose to focus on a particular theme or subject.

An excellent example of a subject-specific work is Bob Plott's *A History of Hunting in the Great Smoky Mountains*.<sup>25</sup> Plott's volume follows the history of hunting from the Cherokee perspective through the twentieth century. It tells the stories of several great hunters, including bear hunters, of the area. The book provides the reader with reasons for the hunt, including Cherokee religious understandings. It discusses methods of the hunt, following the development of bear hunting, and reveals what the bear was used for once killed. It reveals the relationship between the Cherokee and mountaineer with their natural environment. However, it focuses more prominently on the human aspects of the hunt. Though the implications of bear hunting to human life are present, Plott does not explicitly address them.

All these works contributed to the overall history of the Great Smoky Mountains. However, the most scholarly works that offer the deepest analysis of the mountains and park, and the most scholastic debate have yet to be discussed. These recent works include Margaret Lynn Brown's *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, Daniel S. Pierce's *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat*

---

<sup>25</sup> Bob Plott, *A History of Hunting in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2008).

to *National Park*, and *Strangers in High Places: The Story of the Great Smoky Mountains* by Michael Frome.<sup>26</sup>

*The Wild East* by Margaret Lynn Brown and *The Great Smokies* by Daniel S. Pierce discuss how human interaction with nature shaped the current landscape of the Smokies. Theirs are the accounts that have dominated recent histories of the Great Smoky Mountains and the park's creation. Their works are the most inclusive; however, neither attends closely to women in relation to the mountains and park.

Brown's book focuses on issues brought on by the environmental movement in the 1970s. Unlike national parks in the West, white humans—who greatly altered the land through agriculture, livestock, the timber industry, and mining—once inhabited the Great Smoky Mountains.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Brown argues, the forests of the Great Smokies are actually a re-created natural landscape, different from their original, natural state. The decision to re-create the wilderness of the Smokies in turn led to crises within the faunal level of the mountains. Brook trout and black bears are only two examples of animals that struggled with human introduction of this new natural world. These issues, Brown suggests, led to the goal of another re-creation of nature based on what the forest looked like before human interaction. The question then raised is which human interaction—white settlers, Cherokee, or early nomadic Native Americans?

---

<sup>26</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2000); Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies : From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000); Michael Frome, *Strangers in High Places: The Story of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> The national parks in the West were not uninhabited. In fact, Native Americans lived there for years. Some accounts disregard their impact on the land out West and argues that they were a part of nature. However, this assumption of an "ecological Indian" is incorrect. For more regarding this see Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

Pierce takes a broader approach to the natural aspects of the Great Smoky Mountains in his work. Though *The Great Smokies* does not reach as far into the past as Toops' natural history, it does go back about eight thousand years to the first human interaction on the land. The purpose of his volume is to address the myth of undisturbed wilderness often associated with the Smokies. He asserts that, with close inspection, "a trip into the Smokies is a voyage not 'away from the works of man,' but rather into a very human place."<sup>28</sup> The creation of the national park serves as Pierce's main focus, but he also includes information on Native American and early pioneer interaction with the land. His overall thesis claims humans greatly affected the shape and condition of the Great Smoky Mountains, which ties his book somewhat to cultural history. However, he overlooks almost entirely how the environment of the Smokies affected its inhabitants. The relationship was reciprocal, not one-sided as Pierce suggests.

Frome's work emphasizes the reciprocity between nature and humans, but only with regards to certain humans i.e. the Cherokee, early white settlers, and later mountaineer-types.<sup>29</sup> Frome worked as an environmental journalist for several years before becoming a professor at Western Washington University. Furthermore, opposing Pierce's suggestion that the Smokies are largely influenced by human interaction, Frome asserts men—some more so than others—are strangers to the high places in the Smokies. Flora and fauna have populated the mountains for eons and humans are outsiders. Though Frome's work is considerably less scholarly than Brown's and Pierce's, often lacking proper citations, it contributes to the mountain

---

<sup>28</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, xiv.

<sup>29</sup> Frome.

and park history as well as scholarly debate. Frome writes long, flowery passages of his own experiences in the Smokies and ranges broadly in subject. He focuses on well-known park promoters and other less prevalent contributors. However, despite the wide subject range and length of his work, he fails to address women in the Smokies generally and largely ignores the women that serve as the focus of this thesis.

It seems only one author tackled the issue of gender in the Smokies. Theda Perdue does so in *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, addressing women of the Eastern Band of Cherokees.<sup>30</sup> She outlines the matrilineal traditions of the Cherokee and describes the importance of balance associated with male and female in Cherokee culture. Women often played an important role in religious ceremonies. However, as the fur trade rose and Cherokee men became occupied with hunting, Cherokee women began to lose some of their power. Men became the primary providers, taking power from the women and changing the societal balance.<sup>31</sup>

Perdue's work is refreshing because it addresses minorities within the Smokies. Her illumination of women in one area of Smoky Mountain history encourages research of later women. However, her work is one of the only ones focusing on the topic. Women, in general, are often overlooked completely in scholarship concerning the Great Smoky Mountains. Even in the most respected works on the Smoky Mountains Davis, Thornburgh, and the Walker Sisters warrant

---

<sup>30</sup> Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

little more than fleeting, romanticized coverage. Other histories do however provide a starting point. Their broader arguments allow this thesis to fit Davis, Thornburgh, and the Walker Sisters within existing scholarship while also expanding on it. This phenomenon of exclusion is not limited to the park in the Smokies. More broadly, women's understanding and interaction with "natural" areas represents an unwarrantedly small part of the history of America's national parks.

Though women are often overlooked in national park histories, several works do address the role of gender in understanding nature more generally. The topic crosses several fields in academia. Sociological as well as historical works have covered the topic. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills takes the sociological standpoint in her *Woman, Nature, and Psyche*. Her book offers a critical analysis of the connection between man's power over nature and man's power over woman. This feminist work is based on the critical theory of the first generation of the Frankfurt school. Mills looks specifically at the studies of Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Theodor W. Adorno in her analysis.<sup>32</sup> Her work discusses why women and men understand nature differently, but it offers little in response to how this affects human actions.

Feminist environmental historian Carolyn Merchant is more concerned with the answer to that question. She takes Mills' argument and applies it to human actions in the past. Though she has written several books on the topic, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* is perhaps the best example of her application of the gendered consideration of nature. Her work covers the

---

<sup>32</sup> Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, *Woman, Nature, and Psyche* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).

sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, and is concerned largely with the changing depiction of nature as organism to nature as machine that accompanied the Scientific Revolution. To begin she describes how women have historically been associated with nature, from ancient Greece through the Renaissance. She then addresses the changing landscape of the time, as agriculture became more prominent and populations grew. The Scientific Revolution led to disenchantment, replacing superstition and religion with mechanical domination and subjugation of both women and nature.<sup>33</sup> She makes several references to contemporary problems throughout her work—especially regarding ecology and conservation. Science no longer directed how one *should* act. Instead it allowed new avenues into how one *could* act.<sup>34</sup>

Though the theory behind gendered interpretations of nature exists, it has not been widely applied to United States or national park histories. Vera Norwood attempts to apply the theory to the United States in *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature*, but her focus centers mainly on “well-educated, urban, middle-class, Euro-American” women. “Poorer residents of urban areas,” she claims, “have had little access to the parks and wilderness areas that figure so heavily in both nature study and conservation circles, while rural farming communities have often been dismissed as blights on an otherwise beautiful view.”<sup>35</sup> Norwood understands

---

<sup>33</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature*.

<sup>34</sup> See views of science in Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity* ed. and trans. Stephen Kalberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 321-328.

<sup>35</sup> Vera Norwood, *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), xvii.

that women hold a variety of views on nature, but does not attempt to address their variety in her work.

Finally, Polly Welts Kaufman's book, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History*, would seem from its title to discuss the role of gender in the formation of America's National Parks. However, Kaufman's primary goal is to simply acknowledge that women played a role in the parks. Much of her research comes from interviews of women involved with the Park Service. The book is divided in two parts, the first focusing on early female adventurers, climbers, and park wives. The second half, "Modern Sisters," covers women who were actually hired by the Park Service. While Kaufman points out that there were many women involved in the creation and continuance of national parks, she says little of how their gendered interpretations of nature may have affected their interactions. She does, however, note that women either attempted to act like the men in their fields or forced men to accept their different method.<sup>36</sup> This thesis will discuss how women's actions compared to men's, but it will focus more on women's roles in their own right. It will further illuminate the driving forces behind human definition of nature and therefore interaction with it.

## Methodology

As evidenced, little secondary research exists concerning Anne M. Davis (1875-1957) and Laura Thornburgh (1885-1973) though primary literature concerning them is considerable. One may find Thornburgh's papers, as well as

---

<sup>36</sup> Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History*, Updated Edition (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

those of the Tennessee Legislature from 1925, in Special Collections at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.<sup>37</sup> Thornburgh kept a scrapbook and wrote prolifically on her experiences in the Smokies. She donated her writings and clippings to the university in the 1950s. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archive also houses primary papers from the early 1920s through the late 1940s attributed to Davis and notes from meetings of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, the Knoxville League of Women Voters, and the Knoxville Auto Club and Chamber of Commerce.<sup>38</sup> Information on Laura Thornburgh is additionally housed in the archives. Sources concerning the Walker Sisters include newspaper articles, published and unpublished interviews, and a collection of poems the sisters authored.<sup>39</sup> Louisa Walker, the last Walker Sister, died in 1964.

Sources at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archives in Gatlinburg allowed analysis of the relationship each woman (or group of women) had with the Smoky Mountains. Some questions applied to each woman (or group of women). For example, how did class, culture, and gender shape their understanding of nature? The answers to this question served as a point of comparison in the final chapter of this thesis, which also covers broader developments in the creation of national parks.

These sources also provided answers to questions specific to each woman's experience. Laura Thornburgh's papers, for example, revealed her emotional

---

<sup>37</sup> The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Special Collections, Hodges Library, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN (hereafter UT Special Collections).

<sup>38</sup> The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>39</sup> Robert R. Madden and T. Russell Jones, "Walker Sisters Home: Historic Structures Report, Part II and Furnishing Study Great Smoky Mountains National Park" (Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service), 1969, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/grsm/walker\\_sisters\\_hsr/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/grsm/walker_sisters_hsr/index.htm).

attachment to the Smokies and mountain residents. Her regard for the mountains is obvious in her passionate descriptions of their beauty, and her friendship with mountain people is clear in the letters they wrote her. Additionally, the letters W. P. Davis, Anne May Davis' husband, wrote her support that Davis was aware of the monetary gains a park in the Smokies would bring to Knoxville. Poems written by Louisa Walker support the sisters' disregard for the park, and interviews with their family reveal their interdependent approach to the natural world of the Smokies.

Each source was explored for bias, making sure to account for the type of source, whether newspaper, journal, National Parks System records, or government proceedings. Addressing the bias of the author of each source, as well as what motivations their audience may have supplied served to strengthen the argument of this thesis. Sources that focus specifically on the women's relationship with the natural world and their thoughts on the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park provided particularly pertinent information. They allowed further exploration into how the women formed their own definitions of nature and how these definitions fit with changing perceptions of national parks.

## Chapter Outlines

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the main questions addressed in the research. It provides an account of the secondary literature concerning women and their relationship to nature, as well as an account of histories of the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains. After presenting popular arguments and themes within the secondary literature, the argument of this thesis is fit within the scholarly

account of the Smokies. Methodology and background information on the park serve as the second half of the introductory chapter. The body of the thesis consists of three chapters. Each chapter focuses on one woman (or group) specifically.

Chapter One is devoted entirely to Anne May Davis. As mentioned above, a few main and overarching questions unite the thesis. Nevertheless, each chapter addresses questions specific to each woman. Davis, described as the “Mother of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park,” resided in Kentucky and Tennessee. Her family was wealthy, and she and her husband made a powerful team. Republicans elected Davis to serve in the Tennessee State Legislature in 1925. She became only the third woman in the state’s history to earn this representative position.

Her rather unique position in politics and the industrialist class raised several questions. For example, what was her political platform? How involved was she in women’s rights movements? Did working with environmental issues allow her more political power? Were environmental issues—more than ones concerning race or economics, for example—more acceptable for women to address? Also, what was Davis’ particular connection to the land in the Smokies? How did her and her husband’s wealth, connections, and political drive influence her experience and interaction with the Smoky Mountains? How do her actions fit within prevailing trends in women’s movements in the 1920s? Finally, to what degree does Davis’ social position as well as broader developments in American culture shape her definition of nature? These questions serve as the basis of Chapter One.

The life and experiences of author and adventurer, Laura Thornburgh, allow for exploration of different questions in Chapter Two. Though a native of eastern

Tennessee, she did not associate herself with the mountaineer stereotypes popular in Appalachia at the time. She lived in Knoxville, not a small mountain community. She grew up exploring the mountains and received her education at the feet of the mountains. Many of her works concerning the Smoky Mountains, which were often used to popularize the park idea, are deeply descriptive and romantic. Chapter Two addresses whether this was typical of writers particularly during the 1920s and 1930s. In addition, it asks what stereotypes were present in Thornburgh's writing. Could her writing be characterized as local color? Were stereotypes—greatly shaped by authors—responsible in some way for the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park?

The last substantive chapter of this thesis, Chapter Three, is devoted to the Walker Sisters. The sisters—Margaret, Louisa, Polly, Hettie, Martha, Nancy, and Sarah Caroline—were seven of eleven children born to Margaret and John N. Walker. They lived up Little Greenbrier Creek in eastern Tennessee. They farmed, hunted, gathered herbs and berries, and had an impressive apple orchard.

Chapter Three asserts the sisters did represent the pioneer lifestyle described by many local color and travel writers. However, it addresses how uncommon it was for so many women in their condition to choose not to marry. This raised several questions also addressed in Chapter Three. Why, for example, did they choose a life without the support of men? Were they truly on their own? How much of a rarity was this in the 1920s? Does this action of choosing spinsterhood represent feminist actions?

Furthermore and more importantly, the sisters lived in the area that was eventually taken for the national park. How much does location have to do with their actions? How does their interaction with the land differ from other women (those addressed in the previous chapters as well as contemporary women generally)? Their livelihood depended *directly* on what they could glean from the Smokies. Does this provide them a different environmental perspective? Each chapter argues that differing lifestyles and social statuses do, in fact, lead to different understandings of nature.

Following these three chapters, a concluding chapter addresses the differences of each woman's idea of nature, as well as how these ideas shaped their respective actions regarding the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Each of these women defined nature in different terms. Class, broader trends in American culture, and gender all influenced these women's definitions of nature. No single category served to unify or define how these women perceived nature. Their gender did not provide a shared sense of the natural world.

Outside providing a more complete and accurate account of park creation in the Smokies, this case study may be applied to more general themes in women's and environmental history. The women's ideas about nature, more so than what shaped them, prove valuable here. Each of their ideas, despite their differences, fit within the changing purpose behind and American perception of national parks. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park was not created in the same vein as its predecessors in the West. The women's perceptions of nature and their actions towards it support this argument. The creation of national parks in the eastern

United States was not a matter of scenic nationalism. Finally, the concluding chapter illuminates women's current roles in the National Park system, and offers insights into contemporary reasons behind national park creation and promotion.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Anne May Davis: The Economic meets the Scenic

*"I have been recognized as the person who originated the idea for the creation of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains, as the birth of the idea occurred while my late husband, W.P. Davis and myself were on a visit to Yellowstone National Park in June of 1923. Why can't we have a national park in the Great Smoky Mountains? They are just as beautiful as these mountains."*

*-Anne May Davis<sup>1</sup>*

These words, or similar ones, are found in nearly every historical account of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.<sup>2</sup> Generally Anne May Davis, the "Mother of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park" is one of the few women mentioned regarding the creation of the first national park in the eastern United States.<sup>3</sup> However, romanticized histories focus on her *idea* for a park in the east rather than the *actions* she took to make her idea a reality. Her description as a mother evokes warm, loving memories that then spread to the park's creation narrative; but the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was more than an easy, Edenic walk in the woods. It was a fight, and Davis was more than a mother for the park.

---

<sup>1</sup> Anne M. Davis to Russell W. Hanlon, letter, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, "Mrs. Davis Correspondence," Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Anne M. Davis' recollection of her idea for a park in the Smokies is quoted in Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 13; Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 61; and Frome; as well as in several newspaper articles. She recalled them in a letter to Russell W. Hanlon after her husband's death in The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, "Mrs. Davis Correspondence," Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives. One may also find her words in "Excerpts of Directors' Meetings of the Knoxville Automobile Club: History of the Creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association Papers, Box 12, Folder 12, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>3</sup> Several histories describe Anne M. Davis as the mother of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park including, Brown, *The Wild East*, 6; Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 18; and Frome, 182.

She was a campaigner, a champion, who stepped outside gender roles of her time. “At a time when women were viewed as ornaments, dressed in long, cumbersome dresses, hats with large feathers and elbow-length gloves, Anne Davis was a rebel,” noted Fred Brown of the *Knoxville News Sentinel*.<sup>1</sup> In 1925 Knox County Republicans elected her to the Tennessee House of Representatives. Davis was only the third woman to achieve this office.<sup>2</sup> There she worked to hurry along land acquisition by Tennessee and the city of Knoxville.

What inspired Davis to become such a park proponent? The natural beauty of the Smokies, no doubt, played a part, but it was far from her only motivation. She was born into and later married into wealthy, business-minded families. Her husband’s ties to tourism certainly informed her actions in the Tennessee House. Their wealth and business, furthermore, coincided with a changing nation set on defining its own national identity often through grand, natural landscapes.<sup>3</sup> Cultural aspects of upper class women who used benevolent societies to “mother” the nation also played an influential role in Davis’ park promotion.<sup>4</sup> Although her election in Knox County was unique for women of the time—despite the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920—her service in the Tennessee House focused largely on women’s issues.<sup>5</sup> She defied some concurrent gender roles, but her

---

<sup>1</sup> Fred Brown, “Knoxville’s Legacy to Smokies: City’s money, mayor, residents paved way for Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” *Knoxville News Sentinel*, January 25, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Alice L. Howell, “Prominent Knoxvillians,” in *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee*, ed. Lucile Deaderick (Knoxville, TN: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1976), 514-515.

<sup>3</sup> Marguerite Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Vera Norwood, *Made From this Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Anne M. Davis’ successful election was somewhat unique. Achieving suffrage did not necessarily lead to women’s successful entry into the political sphere. After gaining the right to vote, women

gender still influenced her actions in political and social spheres, and therefore her work for the Smokies. Her presence in politics was unique, but the issues she focused on—education and conservation—were considered within the realm of women’s issues. Davis’ social position, larger trends in American culture, and gender all contributed—though not equally—to her understanding of nature. All these, along with the beauty of the mountains, shaped her park-promoting actions.

Despite her significant role in the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Davis is largely overlooked in historical literature. In most accounts she is simply described as the park’s “mother.” Authors briefly mention her conversation with her husband, Willis P. Davis, concerning the beauty of the Smokies and the need for a national park in the east. For example, in *Strangers in High Places*, Frome quickly introduces the Davises and then changes his focus to Colonel David Chapman.<sup>6</sup> Chapman served as chairman of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association (GSMCA) and successfully led the campaign for the park in Tennessee. The only other mention of Davis appears when Frome discusses who was present at President Roosevelt’s dedication of the park in 1940.<sup>7</sup> Davis is similarly presented in Margaret Brown’s *The Wild East*. She warranted only a brief mention in Brown’s introduction and a recounting of Davis’ park idea story.<sup>8</sup>

Campbell discusses Davis’ contribution beyond the recounting of her idea with her husband in 1923. He notes her involvement in the lower house of the

---

required time to change their actions to pursue a wider political agenda argues Anna L. Harvey, *Votes Without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics, 1920-1970* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 155-208.

<sup>6</sup> Frome, 182.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, *The Wild East*, 6, 88.

Tennessee Legislature. However, he undervalues the importance of her work, noting she “was given the privilege of introducing the bill providing for the purchase of the Little River tract.”<sup>9</sup> Tennessee and Knoxville purchased over 70,000 acres of land from Colonel W. B. Townsend who logged the land with his Little River Lumber Company. Campbell removes Davis’ volition. His statement makes it seem that she did little to influence the bill, and that rather Governor Peay simply allowed Davis to introduce the bill because of her celebrated role as park “mother.” Pierce gives Davis more credit in *The Great Smokies* (though he misspells her name in most cases). He notes not only her role as park “mother” but discusses her actions in the Tennessee legislature and local women’s clubs.<sup>10</sup> Still, he downplays her actions in comparison to those of male park boosters.

Davis’ role in park promotion is likely overlooked, in some part, due to her husband’s modest nature. He shied away from publicity, preferring other men—Colonel Campbell, for example—to take credit in newspapers and journals of the time. Russell W. Hanlon recognized W. P. Davis’ shyness, mentioning it in a letter to Davis.<sup>11</sup> There was also some controversy over credit concerning Campbell and W. P. Davis. For example, F. H. Sparks the Knoxville Iron Co. Sales Manager wrote Mrs. Davis intimating,

I do not know as I should put it in a letter, but reading between the lines in my conversation with Carlos [Campbell] last night I am not so sure that he is absolutely free to express himself. It is my sincere hope

---

<sup>9</sup> Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 61-62, 79-80.

<sup>11</sup> Russell W. Hanlon, Great Smoky Mountains Development Corporation, to Anne M. Davis, letter, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, “Mrs. Davis Correspondence,” Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives.

that Willis [P. Davis] will not be overlooked or his participation minimized in the Journal's centennial edition.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, editors for Laura Thornburgh's Smoky Mountains history cut W. P. Davis' role altogether in the book's first edition.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the lack of coverage of Davis is in some way related to journalists' and authors' tendencies to overlook her husband's contributions to park promotion.

Born Anne Lovella Patrick May on December 27, 1875; Davis grew up in Louisville, Kentucky. Her mother was Annie May and her father, William Huntington, was a local manufacturer. Davis' childhood was privileged, though less propitious than that of others. She attended Louisville public schools and received her degree from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania.<sup>14</sup> Already Davis was a unique woman for her time, having graduated from a university.

Soon after graduating from Bryn Mawr College Davis met and married Willis Perkins Davis, also from Louisville and 16 years her senior.<sup>15</sup> Like William Huntington, W. P. Davis was an industrialist. In 1915 W. P. Davis became the manager for the Knoxville Iron Works Company. The Davises moved to a home off Kingston Pike, near Knoxville, in the same year. The couple shared, among other things, a love for the outdoors. They made a habit of frequenting the nearby Appalachian Mountains, taking mule-back camping trips in the forests that would eventually become part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. An article in

---

<sup>12</sup> F.H. Sparks, Knoxville Iron Co. Sales Manager, to Anne M. Davis, letter, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, "Mrs. Davis Correspondence," Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>13</sup> Laura Thornburgh to Anne M. Davis, letter, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, "Mrs. Davis Correspondence," Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>14</sup> Mike Gibson, "Gender Politics: Seventy-six years after Knox County elected its first female legislator, women are still scarce in local public offices. In an age of changing roles, why are there so few women in the running," *Metro Pulse*, May 3, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

*The New York Times* claimed the Davises were particularly fond of the ranges near Elk Mountain.<sup>16</sup>

In 1923 the couple, along with their daughters, Jane and Barbara, visited western parks, Yellowstone and Yosemite among them. Upon returning from their vacation, Davis reportedly proclaimed: "Why can't we have a national park in the Great Smoky Mountains? They are just as beautiful as these mountains."<sup>17</sup> Many tout this as the beginning of the eastern park's development. It is therefore a popular story among Smoky Mountain historians. However, ideas for preservation, or at least conservation, in the area had been around since the 1890s.<sup>18</sup>

A better account of the Davises' connections reveals the importance of Anne May Davis' words. They were not a typical family by any means. They were wealthy, influential, and driven. Pierce notes in *The Great Smokies* that, "No two individuals better exemplified the community spirit prevalent in Knoxville and Asheville that helped make the park a reality."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, it was not simply the natural beauty that the Davises noticed in the western parks. The couple was also intrigued by the numerous and booming small businesses that surrounded the entrances to Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks.<sup>20</sup>

W. P. Davis was the manager of the Knoxville Iron Works Company. In addition, he was on the Board of Directors of the Knoxville Automobile Club and the

---

<sup>16</sup> "States Still to Acquire Land," *The New York Times* (1923-Current file), February 7, 1930.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Campbell mentioned other early ideas and discussions of an eastern park in *Birth of a National Park*, 15. See also information on the Appalachian National Park Association in George A. McCoy, *A Brief History of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Movement in North Carolina* (Asheville, NC: Inland Press, 1940), 19-23.

<sup>19</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 61.

<sup>20</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, GSMNP Archives in Brown, *The Wild East*, 88.

Knoxville Chamber of Commerce. Business proved a major impetus for the park's establishment. Like Stephen Mather, first director of the National Park system, the Davises understood that a "strong economic rationale in the form of tourism development could be used to gain much wider support for national parks." National Parks made up for the loss of lucrative timber profits associated with National Forests through tourism and recreation.<sup>21</sup>

W. P. Davis along with members from his auto club, merchants privy to lucrative tourism possibilities, the chamber of commerce, and real estate companies later founded the Great Smoky Mountain Conservation Association, which would play a major role in the park's creation.<sup>22</sup> Anne May Davis was aware of the significant ties between commerce and parks as well. In a letter addressed to Davis, her husband passionately exclaimed,

Millions of people motoring to and from the South will pass through Tennessee in all directions and will stop not only in the park where there will be hotels and camp sites, but they will stop in every hamlet and city where they have other hotels and these people must be fed and clothed and they must have automobile supplies and everyone that has anything to sell will be able to sell more and more on account of these visitors and the vast sums of money that will come into Tennessee on account of this park will make the State more wealthy than from any other single thing.<sup>23</sup>

Davis clearly understood that with a park came tourists and tourists' money.

---

<sup>21</sup> Brown, 87. For more in-depth coverage of Mather's tactics for park promotion see Marguerite S. Shaffer, "Seeing the Nature of America: The National Parks as National Assets, 1914-1929," in *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, eds. Shelley Osmun Baranowski and Ellen Furlough (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 155-184.

<sup>22</sup> Perhaps at the urging of their New York publicity firm, the Smoky Mountains Conservation Association added the word "Great" shortly after the association's inception.

<sup>23</sup> W. P. Davis to Anne May Davis, letter, March 28, 1925, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, "Mrs. Davis Correspondence," Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives.

In addition to his wealth, W. P. Davis had several ties to influential men in the federal government. Acting as president of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association—a non-profit organization formed in 1923 to aid in the creation of a park in the Smokies—W. P. Davis addressed a personal letter to President Calvin Coolidge urging him to vacation in the Tennessee Smokies. He wrote: “For the officers and directors of the association, I beg that you will consider this area in your Summer plans and, if possible, spend a few weeks in a country that admires you and contributed strongly to your election.”<sup>24</sup> He also had ties to Hubert Work, acting Secretary of the Interior.<sup>25</sup>

Even with W. P. Davis’ money and influence the park idea foundered in the Tennessee State Legislature. Without his wife’s prowess as a politician the appropriation of park lands would have been severely delayed if it had occurred at all. Pierce undervalues Anne May Davis’ contribution to the cause stating she was “*almost* as adept as her husband in promoting the park,” (emphasis mine).<sup>26</sup> It is not that W. P. Davis was more successful; they were simply working in different—though related—realms. One could not have been triumphant without the other, and on several occasions the boundaries between W. P.’s business advocacy and Davis’ political actions overlapped.

For example, W. P. Davis encouraged Mrs. Davis to shore up the economic benefits of the potential park in the Tennessee House. He wrote to her,

I hope you will do all you can in your position as a member of the Legislature to back up Governor Peay’s proposition to buy the Little

---

<sup>24</sup> “Invites Coolidge to South,” *The New York Times* (1923-Current file), March 26, 1926, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 62.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-2.

River Lumber Co. property for a state [national] park... It is a National Park that is going to bring about the wonderful development of all of Tennessee.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly both business and political advocacy were necessary to the success of land appropriations in Tennessee. According to one journalist, "Conservation projects require the partnership of men and women. You cannot, need not, go it alone."<sup>28</sup> Business, politics, and media all had their roles to play just as Mr. and Mrs. Davis did.

Davis combined her husband's economic arguments with her own political actions, when his efforts alone failed to persuade the Tennessee and Federal Governments. Timber companies headed the powerful opposition to park creation in the area. The Little River Lumber Company was the main company with which Davis interacted. Knoxville Lawyer, James B. Wright, represented the timber companies. He pushed both Nashville and Washington towards the creation of a national forest in the Smokies rather than a national park.<sup>29</sup> Following failed lobbying attempts by her husband, Anne May Davis "shocked her husband in 1924 when she declared her intention to run for office, so as better to promote the park idea she first had proposed to him the previous year."<sup>30</sup> In 1925 she won the Republican House seat from Knox County. She used her position to sponsor the legislation for the purchase of 78,131 acres of mountain land owned by Colonel W. B. Townsend of the Little River Lumber Company. When the bill encountered opposition, Davis invited the legislature to view the mountainous area. The beauty

---

<sup>27</sup> W. P. Davis to Anne May Davis, letter, January 28, 1925, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, "Mrs. Davis Correspondence," Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>28</sup> "Great Smoky Park Story Was 'woman's dream' come true," The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, Box 2, Folder 15, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>29</sup> Brown, "Knoxville's Legacy to Smokies."

<sup>30</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 79.

of the place they had previously referred to as “stump land” enthralled them.<sup>31</sup> Still the bill had troubles.

Anne May Davis worked to convince her fellow legislators to support the bill. Her husband again suggested she use economic benefits to persuade them. He urged her to advise that, “every member of the Legislature who votes for the small appropriation needed to purchase the land called for will be blessed by prosperity forever, and he who has sufficient vision to see the need and meets it now will never regret it.”<sup>32</sup> In April, 1925 the bill came before the Tennessee legislature. The Tennessee Senate approved the purchase bill, which also established a state park and forestry commission to obtain land and turn it over to the federal government should the creation of a national park in the Smokies come to fruition. Unfortunately, the bill failed in the house with a vote of 47-45. Representatives from middle and western Tennessee were hesitant to spend so much on the eastern region in one session, and timber companies were busy in their lobbying efforts.

Davis then worked tirelessly with Governor Peay to come up with a solution. The City of Knoxville rescued the bill, agreeing to pay one-third of the purchase price of the land.<sup>33</sup> With this addendum, the bill—Chapter 57, Public Acts of 1925—passed 58-36 on April 9, 1925.<sup>34</sup> Townsend eventually sold his land for \$273,557 (\$3.57/acre).<sup>35</sup> For recognition of her significant efforts in the passage of the bill,

---

<sup>31</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, “Anne M. Davis,” in *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> W. P. Davis to Anne M. Davis, letter, March 28, 1925, in W. P. Davis Papers, GSMNP Archives in Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 79.

<sup>33</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 79-80.

<sup>34</sup> *Tennessee House Journal*, 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, House Bill No. 524, April 9, 1925, 1246-1247.

<sup>35</sup> Brown, “Knoxville’s Legacy to Smokies.”

Governor Peay presented Davis with the pen he used to sign the bill into law and thanked her for all her interest and cooperation.<sup>36</sup>

Through Davis' actions in politics and commerce it is clear that her social class shaped her understanding of nature and by extension her park-promoting actions. Without her family's prominent position and wealth, she would not have had the means—both monetary and social—to gain a position in the Tennessee House of Representatives, a very difficult task for a woman in the 1920s.

Also, Davis' wealth and social position were directly related to the tourism and commercial success of Knoxville. While she viewed the mountains as beautiful, often encouraging influential boosters to visit numerous peaks and valleys of the Smokies, Davis more frequently argued that nature should be preserved due to the economic benefits it would entail. Nature in Davis' mind was a commodity, something to be sold more so than something to protect.<sup>37</sup> She did not depend on direct extraction from it as did the timber companies. There was little reference in her arguments to the destruction of forests due to timber businesses or local farmers. In the political sphere her husband and other park boosters encouraged Davis to focus her arguments on the financial benefits to Knoxville and the state of Tennessee rather than the perceived natural or aesthetic benefits of preservation. To them, nature was something that could be sold to attain more wealth and social prominence. W. P. Davis presents this understanding of nature as commodity

---

<sup>36</sup> Governor Austin Peay to Anne M. Davis, letter, December 21, 1925, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, "Mrs. Davis Correspondence," Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives; *Tennessee House Journal*, 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Personal Privilege, April 10, 1925, 1287.

<sup>37</sup> For more on nature as a commodity see William Cronon, "Introduction: In Search of Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 23-68.

writing to Governor Peay, “the comparatively small amount of expense involved in securing this property, would be infinitesimal in the actual results obtained by the State of Tennessee through this purchase, for there is absolutely no way of estimating the amount money that would be spent by tourists in the many years to come.”<sup>38</sup>

Davis was clearly aware of the financial benefits a national park would bring Tennessee. However, a commodified view of nature does not necessarily define Davis’ interpretation of the term. For example, her participation in the Knoxville Garden Club and role in organizing the Gatlinburg Garden Club following the death of W. P. Davis suggests Davis was cognizant of the value of beauty in the natural world. Davis’ club was a regional branch of the Garden Club of America (GCA). The club’s purpose is to:

Stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening; to share the advantages of association by means of educational meetings, conferences, correspondence, and publications; and to restore, improve, and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement.<sup>39</sup>

The GCA advocated preservationist thought, evident in their support of John Muir during the Hetch Hetchy debacle and their efforts to defend the California Redwoods.<sup>40</sup> Regional groups, like Davis’ in Gatlinburg, were fairly autonomous and set their own agendas. Southern and Appalachian women’s clubs, influenced in part by regional stereotyping, focused more heavily on education and teaching methods

---

<sup>38</sup> W. P. Davis to Governor Austin Peay, letter, December 31, 1924, in Peay Papers, Box 13, File 11, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>39</sup> The Garden Club of America, “What We Do” (New York: Garden Club of America, 2012), <http://www2.gcamerica.org>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., “History.”

in order to help mountaineers who they deemed “uniquely worthy of relief.”<sup>41</sup> However, according to Sandra Lee Barney, historian of Appalachian Women and Medicine, ambitions of regional clubs “reflected trends shaped by the actions of the national association with which they were affiliated.”<sup>42</sup> Perhaps the values of the GCA and their perception of nature influenced Davis following her distancing from park politics and male boosters’ proclamations of monetary gain.

Still these issues of commerce and tourism were prevalent in the Tennessee House. Even if Davis did not hold the same views as her male counterparts, she worked in an organization that clearly touted the economic gains inherent in the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This understanding of the link between national parks and economic gain was largely affected by major changes in the American cultural landscape. Tennessee boosters and legislators were certainly not the first or the only ones to link economic gain and preservation. Frome captured the irony of this type of park promotion noting, “Thus, in the strange ways of democracy, the cause of wilderness preservation was led... not by botanists and bird lovers but by energetic civic boosters and businessmen.”<sup>43</sup> Through understanding broader occurrences in the United States in the 1910s and 1920s one gains a deeper awareness of Davis’ perceptions of the natural world and by extension her actions in the preservation efforts associated with park promotion.

The Davises used tactics similar to those of Stephen T. Mather to promote national parks. The first director of the National Park system understood that for the

---

<sup>41</sup> Sandra Lee Barney, *Authorized to Heal: Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Medicine in Appalachia, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 72.

<sup>42</sup> Barney, 73.

<sup>43</sup> Frome, 182.

parks in the West to succeed the federal government required an economic argument that stated preservation would prove more lucrative than the raw products that could be extracted from park areas. Tourism and travel provided this economic argument. Luckily, in the 1910s and 1920s American culture was changing allowing the tourism argument to become a valid one. What was it about American culture in the 1910s and 1920s made this argument valid?

First, there was a growing awareness for the need of a national identity. Many believed that tourism associated with the national parks would instill patriotism and a proud national consciousness. Mark Daniels, the general superintendent and landscape engineer of the national parks, commented on the link between the parks and patriotism in a letter to the secretary of the Department of the Interior in 1915. He wrote, “We as a people, have been accused of lacking in that love of country which our neighbors in Europe are so plentifully blessed,” calling attention to American concerns over creating a separate identity from Europe while rivaling its greatness. Daniels went on, “To love a thing one must know it...” asking, “What more noble purpose could our national parks serve than to become the instrument by which the people shall be lured into the far corners of their land that they may learn to love it?” He summed up the relationship between the parks and patriotism asserting anyone making a circuit of the parks would, “surely return with a burning determination to love and work for, and if necessary

to fight for and die for the glorious land which is his.”<sup>44</sup> Scenic nationalism encouraged travel and, in effect, tourism.

This new phenomenon of patriotic travel did not overlook the potential monetary gains the parks could provide. In fact, following the Hetch Hetchy debacle in 1913, some argue the commercialization of the parks became necessary. In 1906 San Francisco suffered a major earthquake, which led to significant fire damage to the city. Following the disaster, San Francisco requested the water rights to Hetch Hetchy Valley, where they would create an artificial lake that would serve as the city’s reservoir. John Muir and the Sierra Club were unable to stop the passage of the Rake Act that allowed for the construction of O’Shaughnessy Dam and the flooding of Hetch Hetchy. Scenic preservationists like John Muir were no longer able to defend the wildness of the West based solely on natural beauty.<sup>45</sup> Again drawing comparisons to Europe, Allen Chamberlain, a parks advocate from New England declared, “let it not be forgotten that Switzerland regards its scenery as a money-producing asset to the extent of some two hundred million dollars annually.”<sup>46</sup> To this, Daniels replied, “War with Switzerland!”<sup>47</sup>

This mentality of instilling an American national identity both separate from and greater than that of European nations coincided with technological advances i.e.

---

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, *Report of the General Superintendent and Landscape Engineer of National Parks to the Secretary of the Interior, 1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), 6 in Shaffer, “Seeing the Nature of America,” 155.

<sup>45</sup> For further information on the Hetch Hetchy Dam and its impact on environmentalism see Robert W. Righter, *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America’s most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>46</sup> Allen Chamberlain, “Scenery as a National Asset,” *Outlook* 95, May 28, 1910, 169 in Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, Second Edition, Revised (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 83.

<sup>47</sup> Runte, *National Parks*, 82.

the expansion of railways across the United States. In the 1910s American Railroad companies saw their chance to profit from the national parks. Alfred Runte, national park historian, noted that the better historians understood “the social, cultural, and intellectual origins of the National Park system, the more they have discovered the great debt owed to the railroads of the American West for both the existence and promotion of all the original park areas.”<sup>48</sup> The railroads were responsible for a flood of national park promotion in the late teens and early twenties. Brochures, guidebooks, and colorful magazine advertisements spread throughout the country. Although the lines’ motives were avaricious, their ad campaigns effectively promoted the parks, gaining the travel interests of bourgeois families like the Davises.<sup>49</sup>

Scenic nationalism combined with the commercial ambitions of the western railroads came together in the “See America First” campaign. The slogan was plastered on every Great Northern Railway brochure and billboard. It was aimed specifically at upper-middle-class white Americans that lived on the East Coast that spent hundreds of millions of dollars every year visiting Europe.<sup>50</sup> The Davises fit comfortably into this category, and it is likely that the “See America First” campaign inspired their 1923 trip to the western parks. This combination of scenic nationalism and railroad propaganda provided a template for Davis’ promotion of a park in the Great Smoky Mountains. Carlos Campbell noted that the strangeness of

---

<sup>48</sup> Alfred Runte, *Trains of Discovery: Western Railroads and the National Parks* (Niwot, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1994), 1.

<sup>49</sup> Runte, *National Parks*, 92-93.

<sup>50</sup> Ken Burns, “Episode Three: 1915-1919, The Empire of Grandeur,” *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*, DVD (2009; Arlington, VA: PBS, 2009).

Yellowstone was not the only thing that caught Anne and W. P. Davis' attention during their trip. They also noted the booming small businesses around the park.<sup>51</sup> According to Margaret Lynn Brown, the couple returned from their trip, "full of enthusiasm for getting a national park in Tennessee, and quickly won the support of friends and colleagues," who were "aware of the tourism possibilities," of the park.<sup>52</sup>

Growing patriotism focusing on great natural landscapes in the United States influenced Davis' perception of nature. She felt that the natural beauty of the east should be preserved as that in the west had, leading to a more complete collection of American wonders or monuments. Her feelings of patriotism influenced her fight for land appropriation in the Tennessee legislature. Also, like the railroads, Davis was privy to the potential economic benefits of park creation and promotion. Ironically, however, a large part of the commercial gains of park promotion in the east resulted in the disassociation of parks and rail. Other changes in American culture, the automobile and rise of middle class travel, provided Davis the consumers necessary for a profitable park in the east.

The Good Roads Movement played a particularly significant role in Davis' park promotion considering her husband's membership in the Knoxville Automobile Club. Peter J. Hugill argued that the movement and the widespread use of the automobile by the 1920s originated in the combination of the advancement of "a major technical and socioeconomic complex during the late nineteenth century."<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Carlos Campbell, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, GSMNP Archives in Brown, *The Wild East*, 88.

<sup>52</sup> Brown, *The Wild East*, 88.

<sup>53</sup> Peter J. Hugill, "Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States, 1880-1929," *Geographical Review*, 72, No. 3, (July 1982): 327.

Hugill cites advancements in gasoline, bicycle mechanics, and the assembly line as important technological innovations at the turn of the century. According to him, coupled with a growing middle class, these technological developments revolutionized American Society.

The South was particularly interested in the creation of good roads. Along with education and industrial projects, Francis B. Simkins named good roads the “third god in the trinity of Southern progress.”<sup>54</sup> Boosters in the South saw good roads as a way to shore up economic development in the region and get it on track with the rest of the nation. Tourism served as the main advantage good roads would bring to the South. Like elsewhere in the United States, more and more people were buying cars. Demand for good roads as well as places to visit rose. Road construction became a poignant political issue in North Carolina and Tennessee under Highway Commissioner Frank Page.<sup>55</sup>

Most notably, with respect to Davis and her park promotion, the widespread use of the automobile completely altered the leisure activities of the working class.<sup>56</sup> They were able to travel further, and recreation became a larger part of their lives. Middle and working class travelers altered elitist understandings of leisure. For example, camping became much more popular due to affordability.<sup>57</sup> This, in turn, served to further popularize national parks where campsites and nature were

---

<sup>54</sup> Francis B. Simkins, *The South, Old and New: A History, 1820-1947* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 347.

<sup>55</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 63.

<sup>56</sup> Hugill, 347.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

plentiful. Cars provided a way for tourists to travel to and spend money in Knoxville. However, one must not forget the importance of good roads for new automobiles.

There is a substantial link between roads and national parks. In 1916 Mather began promoting the Park to Park Highway, which would connect the parks of the West and allow for more automobile and tourist traffic.<sup>58</sup> Like in the West, the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was significantly tied to the development of good roads in the area. Tourists required a way to reach the park.

Before the Smoky Mountains park campaign got underway, local boosters portrayed the peaks in a negative light. Businessmen viewed them “as a despised barrier between Knoxville and western North Carolina.”<sup>59</sup> Campbell notes that businessmen so despised the Smokies that “If they had possessed the power to do so, they would have wished these rugged mountains out of existence.” Businessmen were constantly discussing ways to get a road to connect economic hubs of Knoxville and Asheville.<sup>60</sup> Ironically, it was the despised mountains that eventually provided an avenue for attaining good roads in the region connecting the two cities.

The movements for good roads and the national park were inseparable in the Smokies. An article in the *Knoxville Sentinel* captured the relation of the two claiming, “With the establishment of a national park in the Appalachian region, roads would be built and maintained by the government, thus eliminating drawbacks offered motoring tourists.”<sup>61</sup> Road boosters realized that good roads,

---

<sup>58</sup> Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

<sup>59</sup> Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Knoxville Sentinel*, October 10, 1923.

possibly even financed by the federal government, would accompany the establishment of a Smoky Mountains park. Therefore, leaders of the “Good Roads” movement were often involved with park promotion as well. For example, W. P. Davis, prominent member of the Knoxville Automobile Club (later the East Tennessee Automobile Club) helped create the Great Smoky Mountain Conservation Association, which would lead the fight for the eastern park. Members and leadership of these two groups were nearly identical. The secretary-manager of the Auto Club and later secretary of the GSMCA, Russell W. Hanlon, quipped he rarely knew which club was meeting.<sup>62</sup> In 1925 the *Knoxville Sentinel* stated, “All indications would point to the fact that... East Tennessee will within a short time be one of the tourist centers of the Nation, and the Knoxville Automobile Club will take a leading part in advertising this territory to the world,” reinforcing the connection between road and park boosters.<sup>63</sup> It turned out that road boosters were correct in assuming a park would lead to better transportation. Eastern parks were later connected through the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Foothills Parkway.

Anne May Davis and her husband were members of the GSMCA. Although she was not a member of the Auto Club, she was knowledgeable concerning Knoxville traffic patterns and significantly active in promoting the club’s goals. Hanlon asked for Davis support in rezoning his land for commercial use, illustrating her involvement in road and auto issues. “You are considered an authority, on the Park area, and the purposes of the arteries of travel leading thereto,” he proclaimed, “and

---

<sup>62</sup> Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 17.

<sup>63</sup> “Knoxville Auto Club plans new roads in proposed Smoky Park,” *Knoxville Sunday Journal*, February 8, 1925, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, Box 2, Folder 3, GSMNP Archives.

a word from you will carry considerable weight, and would be most helpful to me in this matter.” Hanlon, a member of the Knoxville Auto Club, correctly noted that Davis had the power to pass bills concerning eastern Tennessee roads, especially as they related to park progress and tourism. For example, Howell J. Davis and Carlos C. Campbell, representing the General Broadway Viaduct Committee of the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, wrote to Davis, “You have the sincere thanks of the entire Broadway Viaduct Committee for the fine work that you did in helping put over the bond election Saturday... members of the City Council also greatly appreciate your efforts,” after she successfully helped pass a bill for the construction of the viaduct.<sup>64</sup> Davis furthermore voted “aye” to several road bills in the Tennessee House of Representatives, including House Bill No. 52, which created new road laws for certain counties.<sup>65</sup> House Bill No. 921, which allowed for the opening and extending of highways in Knox County, also passed during Davis’ period in office.<sup>66</sup>

The promise of roads in eastern Tennessee served as a big carrot when discussing the possibility of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Though Davis may not have made the direct link between good roads and park tourism in her promotion of the park, she was well aware of their connection. W. P. Davis made the connection clear in a letter to Davis in March 1925, the month before the Tennessee legislature passed the Little River tract purchase bill. He wrote that the millions of visitors that the park would attract, would most assuredly be “motoring”

---

<sup>64</sup> Howell J. Davis, Chairman, and Carlos C. Campbell, Secretary of the General Broadway Viaduct Committee, Knoxville Chamber of Commerce to Anne M. Davis, letter, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, “Mrs. Davis Correspondence,” Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>65</sup> *Tennessee House Journal*, 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, House Bill No. 52, January 12, 1925, 75-76.

<sup>66</sup> *Tennessee House Journal*, 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, House Bill No. 921, March 30, 1925, 902.

and in need of automobile supplies, stopping along the way dropping their dollars at various Tennessee businesses.<sup>67</sup>

Broader developments in American culture significantly shaped Davis' understanding of nature and actions regarding roads, tourism, and the park. A growing sense of national identity inspired her to visit the western parks where she noted the relationship between commerce and nature. Nature could be successfully commodified. Additionally, a growing middle class with vacation time and automobiles provided customers and validity to the economic argument in which Davis found herself immersed. Yet, she did not fully ascribe to the idea of nature as commodity. One must not forget that Davis used the natural beauty of the Smokies to aid in park promotion. Still, these broad cultural changes aligned with Davis' social position and shaped how she viewed nature and how she promoted the eastern park. However, there is one other alteration of American society and aspect of Davis' life that shaped her views of the natural world, and in effect, her actions in park promotion.

The Tennessee legislature and GSMCA, however, were not the only arenas in which Davis advocated for the park. She also used her ties to the League of Women Voters and the Knoxville Garden Club in her park promotion.<sup>68</sup> After her husband died, she moved to Gatlinburg to be closer to the mountains she so adored. She lived there until she died of cancer in 1957.<sup>69</sup> Davis and her husband were honored posthumously for their important roles in the creation of the Great Smoky

---

<sup>67</sup> W. P. Davis to Anne May Davis, letter, March 28, 1925, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, "Mrs. Davis Correspondence," Box 1, Folder 23, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>68</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 62.

<sup>69</sup> "Mrs. Willis Davis Dies," *The New York Times* (1923-Current file), October 5, 1957.

Mountains National Park. W. P. Davis was honored with the naming of “Mt. Davis”, an imposing 5,000 foot plus peak between Silers Bald and Thunderhead.<sup>70</sup> Anne May Davis, however, was not honored until later when her name was affixed to the considerably less impressive “Davis Ridge” that runs from her husband’s “Mt. Davis” to the North Carolina border.<sup>71</sup>

Davis stepped out of conventional female roles when she was elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives, but her gender still proved influential in many cases. For example, her conservation efforts and role in the Knoxville Garden Club were typical of upper-class women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Norwood notes that members of such clubs “emphasized the importance of planting native flowers and attracting local birds into suburban gardens; they also worked to preserve public spaces for wildflowers and wildlife.”<sup>72</sup> Merchant has described an array of women’s clubs that aimed to protect forests, water, and animals in the Progressive Era. Their efforts fit well with women’s roles in society of their time. Their drive to conserve and preserve was derived from their image as conservators at home.<sup>73</sup>

As conservation grew more mechanical and scientific in the 1930s, ushering in new technical professionals whose goal it was to resourcefully manage nature, women’s roles in the movement dwindled. Male engineers and foresters took over the effort, and “women came to be viewed as amateur enthusiasts and

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> “New Davis Honor Marked in Naming of Smokies Ridge,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Current file), April 1, 1958.

<sup>72</sup> Norwood, 143.

<sup>73</sup> Carolyn Merchant, “Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement: 1900-1916,” *Environmental Review*, 8, 57-83.

propagandists while men carried on the work of wilderness and wildlife administration.”<sup>74</sup> Women found themselves at odds with the new and narrow goals of conservation. They preferred to align with more romantic, old-style naturalists like John Muir.<sup>75</sup> Davis’ convictions aligned with this view for at least some part of her fight to found a park in the Smokies, but as previously evidenced, preservation was not her only—or even her main—motivation.

Acting in a time of change for women in the conservation movement, Anne May Davis stood out and challenged the ties between women and nature. She may have been a member of the Knoxville and Gatlinburg Garden Clubs, but she was also a politician and businessperson. Davis was a leader in the Knoxville League of Women Voters; and, she was a rebel, certainly, to run for office in Tennessee. She ran against nine men in Knox County. When she won the Knox County seat, she became one of only two women representing Tennessee’s 95 counties.<sup>76</sup> Amusingly, Major J. Ross Eakin, first superintendent of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, addressed a letter to all important park boosters inviting them to the park’s dedication. The one he addressed to Davis, like all the others, began, “Dear Sir.”<sup>77</sup> This illustrates that Eakin, along with others, believed men to be the prominent and more or less the only leaders in the park movement. Davis utilized typically male approaches to park promotion. She used politics and business to support her cause. However, she did not completely model herself on her fellow male boosters. The

---

<sup>74</sup> Norwood, 144.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Anne M. Davis, notes for a speech to the Knoxville League of Women Voters 1926, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, Box 1, Folder 21, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>77</sup> Major J. Ross Eakin, superintendent of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to Anne M. Davis, letter, August 28, 1940, The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection, GRSM 12202, Box 1, Folder 9, GSMNP Archives.

issues she addressed in the Tennessee House tended to fall within the ascribed realm of womanhood. For example, in her notes for a speech to the Knoxville League of Women Voters, Davis emphasized that in the Tennessee House she focused on the issues of education and nature, both considered appropriately feminine issues.<sup>78</sup> This is supported in the Bills she authored, which included legislation on the prohibition of prostitution, allowing women to be eligible to serve as jurors, amending juvenile court laws, and marital issues.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, her drive to create a national park in the Smokies was based on more than her concern for flowers and how many types of birds might be hurt by timber companies. She understood the tourism investments that would flow into Knoxville and areas surrounding the park, and used this to convince her fellow legislators to buy into the park idea. This is not to say that economic reasons were her only inspiration. Her concern for scenic beauty, bolstered by the women's clubs she led, also influenced Davis' actions. She loved the mountains and the outdoors more generally. When she first commented on the possibility of a park in the Smokies, she spoke of their natural beauty and compared them to the natural wonders out West.<sup>80</sup>

Anne May Davis was the proverbial "mother" of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; but she was more than just a romantic park icon. She fought for the park through her position in the Tennessee House of Representatives, the GSMCA, and the Knoxville League of Women Voters. Davis' wealth or social class; broader

---

<sup>78</sup> Anne M. Davis, notes for a speech to the Knoxville League of Women Voters 1926.

<sup>79</sup> *Tennessee House Journal*, 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, House Bill No. 32, 45, 69, and 75.

<sup>80</sup> Anne M. Davis to Russell W. Hanlon, letter.

trends in American society i.e. scenic nationalism, the popularity of the automobile, and a growing middle class; her gender; and the beauty of the mountains all contributed to her perception of nature, which shaped her park-promoting actions. While Davis defied some gender roles, especially seeking office in the Tennessee House, her gender guided which issues in politics she addressed. During the 1920s women had a voice in preservation efforts. Davis gender influenced her view of nature, but it did not define it. In fact, her social status was greatly linked to her participation in women's clubs, a pastime associated with the upper class. In Davis case, social position and broader trends in American culture contributed more to her definition of and actions towards nature than an assumed connection between women and nature.

Davis was surrounded by those that viewed nature as a commodity, and she represented a legislative body that required an economic argument to ensure the passage of land appropriation bills. Certainly, Davis admired the natural beauty of the Smokies. This is what led her to ask "why not" when first considering the possibility of a park in the region; but she was also aware of the economic benefits the park would bring her state and her family. The popularity and increasing economic benefits of the national parks in the West reinforced a perception of nature commodified, and the expanding availability of the automobile and good roads provided consumers of nature for the East.

Understanding Davis' role in park promotion provides a fuller and clearer history of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Moreover, understanding what shaped Davis' actions in the Smokies sheds light on changing motivating factors

behind park creation. In the West, parks were created to protect their scenic splendor, or in some cases because park proponents had proved the land worthless in other aspects. In the Smokies, scenic value was of course argued. However, Davis' understanding of nature and actions concerning the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park suggest parks in the East were created not because of their worthlessness otherwise—an impossible argument to make considering the booming timber industry—but because of the value they would extract through tourism.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Laura Thornburgh: Escaping Civilization

*“And it came to her then that this was no battle of gigantic forces against the everlasting hills; that it was not terrible, not savage, but only seemed so to her because it was so overwhelmingly vast and she herself so small. She sensed vaguely that this was part of the beneficent work of Nature, the union of earth and sky, of storm cloud and mountain peak, bringing forth as its fruit new life to brook and river, invigoration to growing things, purification to the air. Young though she was, she was aware of an understanding, of a oneness with Nature, a swift comprehension of her own life’s dependence upon these works of the common mother that went deep into her consciousness and remained with her always.”*

**-Laura Thornburgh<sup>1</sup>**

In 1937 the Thomas Y. Crowell Company of New York City published Laura Thornburgh’s (pseudonym Thornborough) *The Great Smoky Mountains*. The first printing of the history and guidebook sold out within a month. A revised and enlarged edition was reprinted in 1942 and again in 1956 by the University of Tennessee Press. The book went through nine printings, the most recent in 1967. Reviews of her book claimed Thornburgh answered 90 percent of all questions related to the Smokies. According to *The Washington Post*, Thornburgh answered visitors’ questions about “roads and trails, camp sites, side trips, the fauna and flora, and something of the history of the park and the mountain people and the Cherokee

---

<sup>1</sup> Laura Thornburgh, *Tales and Trails of the Tennessee Smokies*, 18, The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series II, Box 1, Folder 14, UT Special Collections.

Indians.”<sup>2</sup> In 1938 the National Board of the National League of American Pen Women awarded her the Class II Non-Fiction prize. Few realize, however, that the original manuscript of *The Great Smoky Mountains* was a fictional account of a group of vacationers from New York and Chicago that came to visit the Smokies. Thornburgh wrote and attempted to publish the novel, *Tales and Trails of the Tennessee Smokies*, in 1926.

Thornburgh’s unique publishing experience parallels her understanding of nature and, by extension, her distinctive approach to national park promotion in the Great Smoky Mountains. Environmental historian, William Cronon, outlines several different understandings of nature. These include viewing nature as a naïve reality; as a moral imperative; as Eden; as an artifice, or a self-conscious cultural construct; as a virtual reality; as a commodity; as a demonic other, avenging angel, or return of the repressed; and as a contested terrain.<sup>3</sup> Few have a clear-cut understanding of nature that fits seamlessly within one of these definitions.

Writing was Thornburgh’s main means of park promotion; though she also led tours and sold some land to the cause. Thornburgh was avid in her promotion of the park. Though she participated in some activities considered more masculine than feminine, the actions she took to ensure a national park in the Smokies differed significantly from male park proponents. Thornburgh did not try to model herself

---

<sup>2</sup> Paul H. Oehser, “Travel Books: ‘The Heart of the Gaspé: Sketches in the Gulf of St. Lawrence,’ by John Mason Clarke. (Macmillan Co., \$2.50) ‘The Great Smoky Mountains,’ by Laura Thonborough. (Thomas Y. Crowell Co., \$2),” *Washington Post*, June 9, 1937, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Cronon, 23-68. In this introductory chapter Cronon noted humans hold varying understandings of nature, which influences how they react to it. He stated humans understand nature as a naïve reality; as a moral imperative; as Eden; as an artifice, or a self-conscious cultural construct; as a virtual reality; as a commodity; as a demonic other, avenging angel, or return of the repressed; and as a contested terrain.

after her male contemporaries as Anne May Davis sometimes did. Rather, she fought for park creation in her own way. Her unique conception of “nature” led to a correspondingly distinctive approach to park promotion. Her concern with the loss of Smoky Mountain culture and the removal of natives from their homeland, for example, particularly differed from concerns and tactics of her male colleagues.

Laura Thornburgh’s understanding of nature was far more complex than any single definition that Cronon delineates. Her writing reveals she understood nature as a moral counterpart to corrupt civilization, an Edenic, religious escape. However, her work also led her to understand nature as a commodity, and not entirely devoid of human interaction. In the excerpt from her novel quoted above, for example, she describes nature as both maleficent and beneficent, further enforcing her contradictory understanding of nature. She capitalizes “Nature” and depicts her character’s experience in religious terms. Thornburgh furthermore portrays humans as both a part of and apart from nature.

Various aspects of Thornburgh’s life contributed to her intricate and multifaceted understanding of nature. Her class and employers, her cultural and religious views, as well as her gender were all important factors influencing her views on the natural world. These views helped shape how she promoted the park and her later reactions to its creation. Following its creation, Thornburgh continued to promote the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. However, through her writing, and again her complex understanding of nature, one notices some apprehension concerning new developments within the park.

Born in February 1885, Thornburgh grew up in Knoxville in the shadows of the Smokies. She was an avid reader and prolific writer. Before she received her literary arts degree from the University of Tennessee she worked as a journalist, and the *Knoxville News Sentinel* asked her to cover the Summer School of the South.<sup>4</sup> Typically associated with women's work, the Summer School of the South focused on the improvement of teaching methods, something that particularly interested Thornburgh. She graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1904 and soon after moved to New York to study at Columbia University. There the use of photography and motion picture film in education gained her attention. After graduating from Columbia, Thornburgh worked for National Non-Theatrical Motion Pictures, Inc. and the United States Department of Agriculture's educational film service. In 1923 her first book, *Motion Pictures in Education*, was published. She used the pen name, "Laura Thornborough," for most of the books she authored.<sup>5</sup>

After the success of her first book the University of Tennessee offered her a teaching position during the summers. "This return to her birthplace, so close to the Smoky Mountains, after living in two of America's major cities" Lix, proposes, "seems to have reawakened Thornburgh to the fresh beauty of East Tennessee."<sup>6</sup> Her summers spent near and in the mountains were transformative. She spent much of her time hiking the mountains and writing of their beauty. She later used these experiences and her lyrical writing to promote a national park in the Smokies. The popular *Travel* magazine published her articles about the mountains, and she later

---

<sup>4</sup> Courtney Lix, "Laura Thornburgh: Smoky Mountain Writer, Photographer, and Interior Decorator," *Smokies Life Magazine*, 3, no. 2, (2009): 41.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

authored *The Great Smoky Mountains*, a book lauded as “invaluable” by *The Atlanta Constitution* and “a genuine treasure trove” by *The Hartford Courant*.<sup>7</sup>

Laura Thornburgh made a living teaching and writing. Both aspects of her livelihood relied heavily on her knowledge of the Great Smoky Mountains. A journalist from *The Chatanooga News* noted, “There is no phase of nature or of people, of sight-seeing or of exploring that she does not know about these great majestic mountains and that she will not tell eagerly. Both in her book and in her lectures she brings to the listener the very breath of the wilderness.”<sup>8</sup> In this quote, the author of this article suggests Thornburgh’s income did indeed depend upon her intimate knowledge of the Smokies. Again and again her lyrical, as well as more scientific writing, presented and depended on the beauty of the Smokies. For example, in *The Great Smoky Mountains* she proclaims,

The very name suggests the vast, the mysterious, the unknown. What other mountains have the name, Great, thus given them? The haze hangs over them changes from smoke gray to heaven’s blue, more rarely to a mystic purple... or on a clear day in winter, the concealing haze may vanish for a fleeting moment... Then again the haze enveloping, softening, concealing, veiling, mystifying. In the pages that follow we shall try to lift the veil, at least in part.<sup>9</sup>

Her earlier works in travel magazines and even the unpublished, first version of *The Great Smoky Mountains*, depended on the natural aspects of the Smokies. In addition, her later works and the possibility of publishing her book on the region were subject to the success of park more so than the scenic beauty of the mountains.

---

<sup>7</sup> “Guide to a Park,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1881-2001)* August 1, 1937; “A Guide to Great Smoky Mountains,” *The Hartford Courant (1923-present)* May 23, 1937.

<sup>8</sup> “The Voice of the Great Smokies” *The Chatanooga News*, April 6, 1938, in The Laura Thornburgh Collection 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1, UT Special Collections.

<sup>9</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1967), 7.

Frank Maloney, a publisher, wrote a letter to Thornburgh in 1928 emphasizing the relationship between the success of the park and Thornburgh's book. Maloney wrote, "We are making very good progress in Park work and I feel that in a very short time there will be no trouble in securing very desirable publishers for your book."<sup>10</sup> This brief excerpt from their correspondence reveals the dependent relationship between the success of the park—the goal of which being to preserve nature—and Thornburgh's writing and work. The relationship between the two is further established in J. Walker McSpadden's letter to Thornburgh. He addresses the business side of promoting *The Great Smoky Mountains*:

I don't know whether the firm has done anything about cards or posters. Something of the sort displayed in the Knoxville and Asheville shops, as well as in Gatlinburg, would undoubtedly help. If they haven't given you anything of the sort, you yourself might get a few hand-lettered ones right there in Gatlinburg, by an artist friend, for such display locally.<sup>11</sup>

Thornburgh's manner of making a living significantly influenced her view and understanding of nature as well as her support of park creation in the Smokies. Like Anne May Davis and the Walker Sisters of Little Greenbrier, Thornburgh's livelihood depended on nature. However, her dependence was based more in the ideal than the more material realms of tourism and farming. Like Davis, she did not physically extract goods from the mountains in order to make a living. Rather, her writing relied on the stirring beauty and romantic perception of an unspoiled, mountainous

---

<sup>10</sup> Frank Maloney, Vice President of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, to Laura Thornburgh, letter, Feb 14, 1928, The Laura Thornburgh Collection 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series I, Box 1, Folder 4, UT Special Collections.

<sup>11</sup> J. Walker McSpadden to Laura Thornburgh, letter, July 25, 1942, The Laura Thornburgh Collection 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series I, Box 1, Folder 4, UT Special Collections.

region in the eastern United States. Therefore, she was economically motivated to ensure the protection of the natural beauties in the Great Smoky Mountains. However, she did not commodify them so much as those surrounding Davis did in politics and commerce.

Thornburgh's livelihood also depended on a deep experiential and academic understanding of the mountains. Though her research motives were not entirely defined by economic factors, her income and occupation did play some role in her exploration and study of the region. She gained inspiration for her writing from actual examination of the mountains—of the flora, fauna, and terrain. Her most inspiring passages came from notes and journals written in the mountains. For example, she recalled a hike to Siler's Bald noting, "Here was unbelievable wildness and grandeur; here were a hundred thousand acres of virgin forests, the largest hardwood forests left in eastern America... Their wild and untamed beauty enchants and allures."<sup>12</sup> These lyrical excerpts helped sell Thornburgh's writing, but audiences were also interested in more scientific information about the area. The demands of her readers and editors encouraged Thornburgh's interest in the region and furthered her research of the Smokies, both in the field and in the library. Thornburgh felt "an intense desire to share" what she knew. Finding that people were interested in her work motivated Thornburgh to supplement her personal observations with authorities from the fields of geology, botany, zoology, and anthropology.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Laura Thornburgh, *American Forests and Forest Life*, (Aug 1927) 463-466, 512, in The Laura Thornburgh Collection 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series III, Box 2, Folder 9, UT Special Collections.

<sup>13</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, preface.

Further investigation of the Smokies led Thornburgh to encounters with timber operations. In a passage from her unpublished work, she used a speech from a mountain woman to convey her negative views towards the blue collar work of timbermen. The woman lamented,

“It fair hurts my eyes to look at that bare slope, once all covered with the grandest trees you ever beheld... I most cried my eyes out when I saw those chestnuts gone. The steam skidders—inhuman cruel, they are—tuk young saplins and all, leaving ruin and desolation behind...”<sup>14</sup>

Thornburgh’s choice to let a mountain woman describe the negative effects of the timber industry on the Great Smoky Mountains is revelatory. It indicates that Thornburgh both scorned the blue collar, lower class work of the timber industry and romanticized the work associated with mountain people.<sup>15</sup> Her understanding of work was influenced by her upper-middle class background. This background inclined Thornburgh to argue for the creation of a park that would halt the denudation of the mountains that so inspired and provided for her.

Thornburgh’s work predisposed her to venerate and explore nature in the Smokies. Her class, furthermore, shaped her attitude towards the relationship between work and nature. She failed to make the connection between the work of the timber industry, that of the mountain people, and her own writing and teaching career. All three depended on the physical, natural aspects of the Smokies, though certainly in a conflicting manner. Thornburgh despised the timber industry’s work

---

<sup>14</sup> Laura Thornburgh, “People of the Mountains” in Laura Thornburgh, *Tales and Trails of the Tennessee Smokies*, The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series II, Box 1, Folder 14, UT Special Collections.

<sup>15</sup> For more on the relationship between class, work, and the environment see Richard White, “Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), 171-185.

because of the clear visual affects it had on the land. Without the beauty of the mountain landscape, she would lose the topic of her writing. However, her fascination with and romantic interpretation of mountain people led her to venerate rather than scorn their work. Thornburgh was amazed by their “versatility and ingenuity,” and praised their simple and contented lives with “fresh food from [their] garden, cool water from [their] spring, and milk from [their] cow.”<sup>16</sup> Her writing was able to include mountain culture, and benefitted from it. Work and class differences spill into broader American cultural aspects, which further illuminate Thornburgh’s understanding of nature and actions in park creation and promotion.

Laura Thornburgh grew up in Knoxville. She was raised in a city, not the country. The foothills of the Smokies, not the mountains, were her home.<sup>17</sup> Her interest in exploring the mountains did not develop in her childhood, but was piqued later during her studies at the University of Tennessee. She was not as wealthy as Anne May Davis and her husband, but she had enough money to pursue an education, travel, and own a summer home in the Smokies.<sup>18</sup> Thornburgh was part of a new and growing middle class culture, which influenced her perceptions of nature in addition to her actions concerning the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

She was distanced from the products she bought that came from nature i.e. timber for her house, paper for her books, food, and clothing. Therefore,

---

<sup>16</sup> Thornburgh, *Great Smoky Mountains*, 155, 163.

<sup>17</sup> Laura Thornburgh, “Nature Finds Full Range in the Great Smokies,” The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series IV, Box 2, Folder 3, UT Special Collections.

<sup>18</sup> Letter regarding the original manuscript of *The Great Smoky Mountains*, 1956, The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series II, Box 1, Folder 14, UT Special Collections.

Thornburgh, and other middle and upper class Americans saw nature as an escape from the work associated with cities and civilization. The Smoky Mountain Hiking Club of Knoxville after all was not made up of farmers, coal miners, or timber workers, but of “business men and women, professional men, students, artists, scientists, photographers.”<sup>19</sup> Excerpts from *The Great Smoky Mountains* offer proof of her understanding that nature offers a respite from the dark and dirty city.<sup>20</sup> When she related one trek up Mt. Le Conte, Thornburgh reflected, “The petty annoyances of life seemed far away as I gazed at the nearby peaks... I sat awed, spellbound, lost in the beauty unfolded before me...”<sup>21</sup> She sensed a clear division between civilization and nature. This perception of division influenced her actions in support of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Her need to maintain the separation between the sullyng effects of civilization and the purity of nature compelled Thornburgh to act as a park proponent. It is important to note, however, that Thornburgh did not view mountain culture in the same vein as city or civilized culture. To her mountain people were a part of the natural realm of the Smokies rather than apart from it.

Thornburgh’s park advocacy also stemmed from larger American insecurity about the developing national identity and culture. Between 1880 and 1940 the United States experienced an expansion of national rail and transportation systems and magazines and newspapers, in addition to a growing middle class willing to

---

<sup>19</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, 85.

<sup>20</sup> Carolyn Merchant offers more on the growing distaste with cities and preference for pristine nature in “Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History,” *Environmental History*, 8, No. 3 (July 2003): 380-394.

<sup>21</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, 131.

devote part of their income to leisure.<sup>22</sup> The National Park system and the “See America First” program promoted and encouraged citizens to visit the natural wonders of America through parks like Yosemite and Yellowstone in the West.<sup>23</sup> The United States worked to create a national identity separate from but also as grand as or grander than its European origins.

The National Park system learned from previous national embarrassments such as Niagara Falls. It turned the vast, unique expanses of western wilderness into an American version of the great, ancient cathedrals, castles, and other structures in Europe. The “See America First” program encouraged tourists to stay in the United States and see their own country, thus creating a sense of national unity and patriotism. This mentality is shared with advocates, like Thornburgh, for eastern national parks. As Glenn S. Smith noted in a letter to Thornburgh,

The public generally has the impression that it is necessary to go to the national parks of the West to view lofty peaks. Few realize that the peaks in the proposed Great Smoky Mountains National Park... compare favorably with the peaks of the western parks in height and beauty.<sup>24</sup>

Like Davis’ actions, broader trends concerning American identity shaped how Thornburgh promoted the park.

As revealed through her writing, these changes in national culture significantly influenced Laura Thornburgh. Like many that wrote of the parks in the West, Thornburgh was fond of using cathedrals as a metaphor for the greatness of

---

<sup>22</sup> Marguerite Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Runte, *National Parks*, 82-105.

<sup>24</sup> Glenn S. Smith, of the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission to Laura Thornburgh, February 21, 1928, letter, The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series I, Box 1, Folder 4, UT Special Collections.

the natural, American landscape. This imagery is indicative of the American wish to prove its equivalent greatness to Europe. Theodore Roosevelt said, “A grove of giant redwood or sequoias should be kept just as we keep a great and beautiful cathedral.” After camping in Yosemite National Park the former President proclaimed, “It was like lying in a great solemn cathedral, far vaster and more beautiful than any built by the hand of man.”<sup>25</sup> Laura Thornburgh used this imagery as well. In *The Great Smoky Mountains* she wrote, “The air is rarer, purer here. The cathedral-like peace stills our tongues...” referring to a trip down Roarin’ Fork.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the most blatant indication that the rising national identity and American park movement influenced Thornburgh is present in the last paragraph of *The Great Smoky Mountains*. Thornburgh writes:

In times of war and stress such havens as the state and national forests and parks are indeed a boon to troubled humanity, a place of refreshment for mind and body. The trails into wilderness areas, through cathedral-cool mountain top forests, encourage prayer and meditation. Here one may temporarily forget the woes of a war-torn world, or think things through, get a better perspective, a truer sense of values, gain inner peace and fortitude to meet tomorrow’s problems and the tasks ahead.<sup>27</sup>

This excerpt also revealed a sense of religiosity that Thornburgh associated with the natural world. Though she was no transcendentalist—but rather Catholic—Thornburgh saw nature as a place to reflect on morality and other religious matters. Nature, according to Thornburgh encouraged prayer and meditation that would lead to a sense of peace and moral understanding. Transcendental writers like Ralph

---

<sup>25</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “Theodore Roosevelt Quotes,” *The National Park System*, <http://www.nps.gov/thro/historyculture/theodore-roosevelt-quotes.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, 103.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 173 .

Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau likely held some influence over Thornburgh's writing and understanding of nature. These larger trends in American history had a significant effect on Thornburgh's views of nature. She saw it as a great and holy place worthy of protection. Her descriptions of the mountain scenery were inspired and poetic. In one passage she recalls a hike along Brushy Mountain:

On the hottest day in summer it is cool and shady at midday in this hemlock forest. Beneath the tall, graceful mother trees we find a large family of young sons and daughters. There is a stillness that descends upon us like a benediction...<sup>28</sup>

Thornburgh's likening of natural objects to mothers and families is telling. She saw nature as nurturing and religious, not wild or unruly. This mirrored her calm approach to national park preservation, which stood in stark contrast to Kephart's belligerent calls for protection of the Smoky Mountains.

However, it was not just the mountain scenery that enthralled Thornburgh. Her senior thesis topic was Scotland's famous poet, Robert Burns. In the Smokies the speech of the people reminded her of his poetry. She often recorded and wrote down the voices and words of her hiking companions and guides.<sup>29</sup> The people as well as the nature of the Smoky Mountains fascinated her.

Yet another aspect of American cultural development that influenced Thornburgh's views of nature was the closing of the American Frontier.<sup>30</sup> This is most evident in her understanding and description of Appalachian people and culture. Following the closure of the western frontier, the Appalachian region was

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>29</sup> Lix, 43.

<sup>30</sup> For more on the importance of the American frontier consider Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

romanticized for its supposed frontier-like qualities. Mountain residents gained descriptions such as “our contemporary ancestors,” and scholars viewed them as pioneers living in an isolated region that remained frontier-like despite advancement in broader American society.<sup>31</sup> A quote from Thornburgh’s article in *Outdoor Recreation* provides proof of the frontier’s effect on her. She stated, “There’s a thrill about climbing unclimbed mountains, scaling unscaled [sic] peaks, exploring unexplored country, which still holds its appeal in this twentieth century.”<sup>32</sup> Thornburgh refers to and romanticizes the Smokies as new, as a frontier. Furthermore, from this lamentation of frontier closure, Travel and Local Color writing gained popularity; and as mentioned before, significant advancement in print magazines occurred.<sup>33</sup>

Laura Thornburgh admitted that these Local Color writers influenced her significantly. In an interview with the *Knoxville News Sentinel* she shared that, “*Uncle Remus* by Joel Chandler Harris and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* by John fox Jr. also left their influence” and she often found herself wondering, “If they can write books about what they see and hear around them, why can’t I?”<sup>34</sup> She romanticizes Smoky Mountain residents’ way of life in *Travel* asking: “Is the new better than the old? Am

---

<sup>31</sup> William Goodell Frost, *Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains* reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1899, Special Collections, Belk Library, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC.

<sup>32</sup> Laura Thornburgh, “The Tennessee Smokies : Mountain climbing in the New National Park,” *Outdoor Recreation: The Magazine that Brings the Outdoors In*, July 1927, The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series III, Box 2, Folder 9, UT Special Collections.

<sup>33</sup> For more on Local Color Writing in Appalachia see Henry D. Shapiro, “The Local Color Movement and the ‘Discovery’ of Appalachia” in *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 3-31.

<sup>34</sup> “Laura Thornburgh Places the Catechism First,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, April 21, 1940, The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1, UT Special Collections.

I happier than they? For the most part their wants are few and Nature is kind.”<sup>35</sup> According to these writers and scholarly works of the time, the perceived uniqueness of this Appalachian culture was due in large part to their physical separation from the rest of the United States, a theory largely disputed in later research.<sup>36</sup> This perception led Thornburgh, along with her contemporaries, to idealize not only Appalachian culture, but Appalachian space. Primitivist thought is present in Thornburgh’s preference for what she deemed anachronistic mountain culture.

However, as time passed, these two entities clashed. Enthusiasm over a growing middle class replaced American admiration of pioneer-types. For many, preservation of Appalachian space took precedence over the maintenance of Appalachian culture. Most Smoky Mountain park proponents consequently did not hesitate to use forceful measures against residents wishing to remain on their land located within the proposed park boundaries. Laura Thornburgh did not number among these.

Early park histories gloss over this debacle of family removal, dismissing it quickly. Campbell notes signs in Cades Cove that warned against those associated with the park—David Chapman, for example—coming too close to the area. However, he quickly dismisses the threats, promoting the importance of the good of

---

<sup>35</sup> Laura Thornburgh, “Americans The Twentieth Century Forgot: A Visit to Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Great Smokies—Customs Surviving from the Elizabethan Age—The Results of Centuries of Isolation,” *Travel* (April 1928), 25-28, 42, The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series III, Box 2, Folder 9, UT Special Collections.

<sup>36</sup> Frost.

the many as opposed to the sacrifices of the few.<sup>37</sup> Frome similarly downplays the disruption family removal caused during park creation.

Laura Thornburgh is not guilty of this oversight. According to Thornburgh, “The cultural and human aspects of the Great Smokies are as outstanding as its scenery and vegetation and no history of this park [GSMNP] would be complete without a word about the mountain people.”<sup>38</sup> According to Pierce, Thornburgh was one of the first writers to account for the removal of communities and families from the area that would become the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.<sup>39</sup> However, as was typical of the time, Thornburgh at times portrays the people of the Smokies as backwards and endearing pioneer-types.<sup>40</sup> In *The Great Smoky Mountains* she describes an encounter with a weaver and her son:

I recall the mountain weaver who invited us to “come in and set a while,” calling to her son to “fotch a pail of water,” turning back to us to remark, “hit’s good water; we’ve got a fine, bold spring.” And I remember how satisfying it was to drink that clear, cold water, “fotched” from the spring by a sturdy little boy in blue overalls and to hear my hostess use those homely, highly descriptive Anglo-Saxon words and expressions.”<sup>41</sup>

Here Thornburgh’s fascination with mountain speech as well as her misconstrued Appalachian stereotyping is evident. The culture that Thornburgh believed in and wished to preserve was little more than a romanticized, deeply American view of frontiers and pioneers. Though she lived in the Smokies in the summers, they were

---

<sup>37</sup> Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 99-100.

<sup>38</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, 153.

<sup>39</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 157.

<sup>40</sup> For more on Appalachian stereotypes see: Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*.

<sup>41</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, 156.

never really her home. Her misunderstanding of Appalachian culture and its uniqueness played a role in defining the manner in which she supported the park.

Though based on her stereotypes, Thornburgh's interest in and concern for the regional culture was sincere. She did not see the mountain people in a pejorative light, but noted that, "They come of a fine old stock which gives them the right to feel that they are the equal of anyone."<sup>42</sup> Thornburgh often defended them against those who would "make a brief stay in the mountains and return to their desks to write stupid things about them."<sup>43</sup> In her writing, she attempted to dissuade some myths of the culture—though she too was guilty of stereotyping. For example she passionately proclaims,

Writers of fiction and the purveyors of 'feature' articles for the magazines have so long made a specialty of picturing the Southern mountaineer as a grizzly old bewhiskered moonshiner and feudist, living in constant defiance of law and civilization, that the average American who knows no better is accustomed to thinking of him as a menace to society!<sup>44</sup>

She further attempted to remedy some stereotyping asserting, "Children go to school here, too. Contrary to opinion in some sources, ignorance does not abound among the people of the Great Smoky Mountains."<sup>45</sup> Though guilty of her own misconceptions about the mountain residents, Thornburgh saw them as more than just a fascinating oddity. She wished to protect them and what she perceived as their culture.

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Laura Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains National Park Tennessee and North Carolina: "Land of the Everlasting Hills,"* The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series II, Box 1, Folder 13, UT Special Collections.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Thornburgh's more pronounced interest in the cultural aspects of the park unequivocally affected her approach to park promotion. While she agreed that the scenery was certainly reason enough to create a park, she also advocated that the people of the area could benefit from its arrival. Some others used this approach, but their motives tended to be their own greed. Thornburgh, on the other hand, thought the park could improve the lives of affected locals. In her book, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, she recounts an interview with a local that was forced to move due to the park. "Land poor mountain farmers who sold and bought valley farms nearer the larger cities have been heard to say, "The Park sure helped me. I've got a farm now that I can plow and raise more and get better prices.""<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, she also lamented the loss of mountain culture that accompanied the arrival of the park. In *The Great Smoky Mountains* she noted, "With the coming of the Park, the mountain people are dispersing, their characteristics are changing until it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish natives from visitors," clearly exhibiting the sadness she feels at the potential loss of mountaineer culture.<sup>47</sup>

An intriguing insight into the relationship between gender, nature, and history is present in Thornburgh's emphasis on the *people* of the Smokies. Male proponents of the Blue Ridge Parkway were more likely to cite the locals' benefit as a reason to create the park; though some also did this in regards to the Smokies.<sup>48</sup> However, local mountain people were nearly always treated as a side issue. Nature and not culture seemed to be the focus of most male preservationists and park

---

<sup>46</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, 155.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>48</sup> Anne Whisnant, *Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

supporters. This was not the case for Thornburgh. She worked with the people; and after the park was created she attempted to “plan for a pioneer culture museum with its purpose of keeping alive for visitors the interesting features of these mountain people’s old, deep-rooted lives.”<sup>49</sup> Culture was just as important as nature to Thornburgh.

This suggests that women are more likely to see humans as a part of nature rather than separate from it. They are more likely to value the human in nature because they have historically played the role of “carrier” of the social, human experience.<sup>50</sup> According to Olivia M. Espín, professor of Women’s Studies, cultures survive through the actions of women.<sup>51</sup> Polly Welts Kaufman, author of *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice*, supports this, arguing that women’s “socialization as nurturers and carriers of culture,” predisposed them to value cultural aspects of nature in the National Park system.<sup>52</sup> Women have played significant roles in the maintenance of cultural, human spaces and artifacts in the National Park system. Thornburgh was not alone in her desire to save cultural history in the Great Smoky Mountains.

Mary Roberts Rinehart fought for the representation of Native Americans in national parks. She illustrated her frustration with the male-dominated system writing, “The white man came, and not content with eliminating the Indians he went

---

<sup>49</sup> “Miscellaneous Brief Reviews,” *The New York Times (1923-Current file)* April 18, 1937.

<sup>50</sup> Further analysis of the psychological and societal roots of women’s role as cultural carrier may be found in Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976), 22-24.

<sup>51</sup> Olivia M. Espín, *Women Crossing Boundaries: A Psychology of Immigration and Transformations of Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 7.

<sup>52</sup> Kaufman, xxxvii.

further and wiped out their history.”<sup>53</sup> Thornburgh was similarly concerned with cultural loss, lamenting “the vanishing mountaineer.”<sup>54</sup> Additionally, Virginia Donaghe McClurg, with help from the Colorado Federation of Women’s Clubs, was the first to protect the Indian Cliff Dwellings at Mesa Verde. With the help of Lucy Peabody the area became a national park.<sup>55</sup> These dwellings were manmade remnants of an ancient culture. Before this, the National Park system focused entirely on the pristine, devoid of human influence, perception of nature. Women pioneered cultural aspects of the National Park system, and Laura Thornburgh followed her predecessors’ examples in the Smoky Mountains. As an advocate for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Thornburgh took a rather different approach from her male contemporaries.

The friendships that Thornburgh cemented with locals aided her in her fight for a park in the Smokies. “Unlike Horace Kephart, she did not pen fiery passionate pleas to save the wilderness, but she was quietly, persistently involved in the cause, using her friendship with the local people to help ease tensions.”<sup>56</sup> She also used her inviting personality and knowledge of the mountains to persuade politicians to support the park movement. For example, she was a member of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club. Started before the creation of the park, the club was an organization that aimed to assist the park movement.<sup>57</sup> She was present when the club took Assistant Director of the National Park Service, Arno B. Cammerer, to

---

<sup>53</sup> Mary Roberts Rinehart, *My Story: A New Edition and Seventeen New Years* (New York: Rinehart, 1948), 202-205 in Kaufman, 24.

<sup>54</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, 163.

<sup>55</sup> Kaufman, 29.

<sup>56</sup> Lix, 44.

<sup>57</sup> Anne Bridges, Russ Clement, and Kenneth Wise, eds. “The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club: The Early Years,” *Great Smoky Mountains Colloquy*, 4, no. 1 (Spring 2003).

survey the area for a potential park. “That hike to Gregory Bald was one of the first trips Cammerer took to the Smokies, during which he realized that these Eastern mountains had a unique place in the American landscape and were worthy of protection.”<sup>58</sup> Thornburgh was present during pivotal moments during the park’s creation.

In addition to her writing skills, Thornburgh was an excellent photographer. She and famous Smokies photographer, Jim Thompson, worked together, trying to convince politicians that the Great Smoky Mountains would be an excellent venue for a national park. They hiked together sharing trade secrets and complaining about the added weight of the camera equipment. In Thornburgh’s photography, her fascination with cultural aspects of the Smokies is again evident. While Thompson and George Masa, another famed photographer of the Smokies, focused on shots of the mountain landscape, Thornburgh photographed people.<sup>59</sup> Thornburgh’s photography received less attention than that of Thompson or Masa. However, one of her photos made the cover of *American Forests and Forest Life* in 1927.<sup>60</sup> Thornburgh furthermore sold a piece of her land for inclusion within the park.<sup>61</sup> She had previously sold the land to C. P. Biddle with the stipulation that “if the land should be desired in one year for park purposes, the purchaser should yield it, for the original cash payment.”<sup>62</sup> The owner, however, attempted to fight this

---

<sup>58</sup> Lix, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>61</sup> “Suit is filed to force sale of park tract,” The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946, MS.0195, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1, UT Special Collections.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

stipulation; though eventually losing the case.<sup>63</sup> Thornburgh's park promotion tactics were numerous and varied, incorporating both the artistic—her writing and photography—and the practical—her acquisition of land and mediation between mountain people and park boosters. Her descriptive writing and practiced photography promoted the natural beauty of the mountains and her relationship with locals smoothed conflicts with other park promoters.

Laura Thornburgh, like Anne May Davis, played a pivotal role in the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Thornburgh may have used the familiar avenues of park promoters, magazines and books for example; but her writing always took a unique slant, one that often echoed broader trends in American history. Like Kephart and other male writers of the Smokies, Thornburgh published several articles in travel magazines. Like them she marveled at the Smokies' natural views. However, her pleas were not as adamant as male writers, neither were they as technical. A critic from *The Washington Post* commented that in Thornburgh's writing there were "a number of departures from orthographic and rhetorical standards... (it is, for example, the pleated woodpecker, not 'piliated,' and Bewick's wren, not 'Bevick's')..."<sup>64</sup> This critique offers an insight into the move away from women's involvement in conservation as it became more scientific and technical, and in effect more male-dominated.

Laura Thornburgh contributed significantly to the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park as well as its promotion after 1934. She sold land to the government, popularized the idea through her photography and tramps in the

---

<sup>63</sup> Lix, 46.

<sup>64</sup> Raul H. Oehser, "Travel Books," *The Washington Post* (1923-1954), June 9, 1937.

Smokies, and she used her relationship with locals to cool disagreements between them and more strident park advocates. Most importantly, she argued for the park in her writing. Everything about the mountains, both natural and cultural aspects, fascinated Laura Thornburgh. Through sharing her experiences in the mountains, she was able to gain support of would-be park donors. Her continued writing on the Smokies, *The Great Smoky Mountains* for example further popularized the region once the federal government allocated it as a national park.

A variety of factors influenced the unique manner in which Thornburgh fought for and promoted the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Like Davis and the Walker Sisters, she had something economic to gain from the preservation of the area. Broader cultural aspects, such as the closing of the frontier led her to romanticize Appalachian people and take up—what she deemed—their cause. Thornburgh's class and cultural surroundings contributed to her unique understanding of nature. She saw nature in some ways as a commodity. However, she also understood it as a place of respite and escape from civilization, though not devoid of humans.

These specific understandings of nature influenced her to fight for the creation of the park in the Smokies. They also parallel the attitudes necessary for park creation and promotion in the changing National Park system. An eastern park, like the Smokies, needed to provide a respite for growing middle class motorists from eastern cities. It also required if not inclusion of cultural history, then at least diplomacy when interacting with those living on park lands. Thornburgh's contribution to the park movement was significant and representative of a new type

of national park. However, her romantic characterization of the mountains reveals that the Great Smoky Mountains National Park maintained some the scenic argument that led to the creation of Yosemite and Yellowstone.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### The Walker Sisters: The Cultural in the Natural

*“There is an old weather bettion house  
That stands near a wood  
With an orchard near by it  
For all most one hundred years it has stood.*

*It was my home from infancy  
It sheltered me in youth  
When I tell you I love it  
I tell you the truth.*

*For years it has sheltered  
By day and by night  
From the summer sun’s heat  
And the cold winter blight.*

*But now the park commesser  
Comes all dressed up so gay  
Saying this old house of yours  
We must now take away.*

*They coax and they weedle  
They fret and they bark  
Saying we have to have this place  
For a national park.*

*For us poor mountain people  
They don’t have a care  
But must a home for  
The wolf the lion and the bear*

*But many of us have a title  
That is sure and will hold  
To the City of peace  
Where the streets are pure gold.*

*There no lion in its fury*

*Those pathes ever trod  
It is the house of the soul  
In the presence of God.*

*When we reach the portles  
Of glory so fair'  
The wolf cannot enter  
Neither the lion or bear.*

*And no park commissioner  
Will ever dar  
To desturbe or molest  
Or take our home from us there.”  
-Louisa Walker<sup>1</sup>*

Not all women saw the Great Smoky Mountains National Park as a way to protect a fictionalized, Appalachian way of life, or as a way to maintain a piece of natural beauty in a changing American landscape. How, for example, did Smoky Mountain women that lived in the area that would become the park feel about the creation of The Great Smoky Mountains National Park? What role did they play in the road to its creation?

The Walker Sisters were one of the most well-known families in the proposed park area. The five Walker women lived in the Little Greenbrier section of the Great Smoky Mountains, and continued to reside in the area following the creation and dedication of the park. Their views on the park are best represented in Louisa Walker's poem written in the early 1930s, *Mountain Home*, quoted above. As evidenced by the poem, the Walker Sisters were not advocates of the park. They wished to remember—and in their case, live—the life of their ancestors on their family's land. The coming of the park changed their livelihoods significantly. Though

---

<sup>1</sup> Louisa Walker, *My Mountain Home*, in Bonnie Trentham Myers with Lynda Myers Boywer *The Walker Sisters: Spirited women of the Smokies* (Maryville, TN: Myers & Myers Publishers, 2004).

the federal government provided the sisters with lifetime leases, stipulations severely limited the interaction they had with the land. Farming required approval, and they could fell no more trees to use for heat through the winter. Fortunately, the sisters were able to remain on their land with help from tourists who visited them and bought their food, handicrafts, and poems. In fact, though originally opposed to the change, the sisters served as a tourist attraction, somewhat inadvertently drawing visitors to the new park in the East.

Though the sisters eventually served to promote the park, at first, it was the goal of the federal and state governments of Tennessee and North Carolina to revert the Smokies to a pure, natural state. Many saw farming, felling trees, and other work activities of inhabitants of the Smokies as destructive. Work was devastating to nature.<sup>2</sup> However, this view was based on an understanding that separated the realm of humans from the natural world. This was and continues to be a popular perception; both Anne May Davis and Laura Thornburgh ascribed to an understanding of nature that held little space for humans. Clearly, the Walker Sisters of Little Greenbrier held differing perceptions of nature. This, in turn, shaped their actions regarding the park.

In her poem, *My Mountain Home* Louisa mocks the National Park Service for suggesting that wild animals, more than humans, deserve a place in the Smokies, claiming, “For us poor mountain people/They don’t have a care/But must a home for/The wolf the lion and the bear.”<sup>3</sup> Every day of the sisters’ lives reinforced a perception of nature that did not exclude but depended on human interaction. They

---

<sup>2</sup> White.

<sup>3</sup> Louisa Walker, *My Mountain Home*.

gardened, cut trees, burned brush, hunted, and collected wild herbs. Just because they interacted with the natural world and extracted goods from it does not mean they destroyed it. Their relationship with nature was reciprocal. Therefore, their definition of the term was more inclusive of what others would separate into a human, or cultural, realm. The sisters put work into the land and received sustenance in return. They did not understand the natural world to be separate, Edenic, morally imperative, or commodified—at least, before the creation of the park.<sup>4</sup> They simply saw it as their home.

Why, though, does their perception of nature and the Great Smoky Mountains differ from Anne May Davis' and Laura Thornburgh's, and so many contemporary others'? Their unique position as a group of women allows one to investigate gendered aspects of the way they interacted with nature both before and after the coming of the park. Of course, their position as women helped at times to shape their attitudes towards their home, but their class, position on the land, and broader Appalachian culture and history more significantly influenced their perceptions of the natural world, perceptions that shaped their actions towards park promotion. In fact their physical closeness to and dependence on the Smokies played the most defining role in their understanding of nature.

Like other women important to the creation and success of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Walker Sisters are largely overlooked in academic, historical literature. The sisters are often used when the author comments on Appalachian culture or tourism. Carlos C. Campbell mentions them briefly,

---

<sup>4</sup> Cronon, "Introduction: In Search of Nature."

commenting on their shyness of cameras, noting, “that it doesn’t pay to try to rush mountain people into doing anything, especially something about which they are already a bit skeptical.”<sup>5</sup> Wilma Dykeman describes them in heroic terms, when she discusses their self-sufficient lifestyle in *Highland Homeland: The People of the Great Smokies*.<sup>6</sup> The few published works devoted entirely to the sisters are not particularly scholarly in nature. They are brief, uncritical accounts of the family’s history. *The Walker Sisters of Little Greenbrier* by Rose Houck, for example, consists of multicolored pages, photographs of items from the sisters’ home, and very basic coverage of the family’s history and way of life.<sup>7</sup> Books like Houck’s are aimed at tourists of the Great Smoky Mountains with an interest in “old-timey” ways of life.

Bonnie Trentham Myers and Lynda Myers Boyer offer more in-depth coverage of the Walker family in *The Walker Sisters: Spirited Women of the Smokies*.<sup>8</sup> While more in-depth than Houck’s work this book is still little more than an intriguing story marketed for the family’s descendants and park visitors. The story of the Walker Sisters is integral to understanding the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. They were more than just stereotypical mountain people. One may gain understanding of how the park functions through exploration of the sisters’ background and interpretation of nature, something that other authors have failed to explore. Their case serves as an excellent venture into researching women’s differing relationships with nature.

---

<sup>5</sup> Campbell, *Memories of Old Smoky*, 136.

<sup>6</sup> Wilma Dykeman, *Highland Home: The People of the Great Smokies* (Washington, D.C.: Division of Publications, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Rose Houck, *The Walker Sisters of Little Greenbrier*, eds. Steve Kemp and Kent Cave (Gatlinburg, TN: The Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Myers, *The Walker Sisters*.

The sisters—Margaret, Louisa, Polly, Hettie, Martha, Nancy, and Sarah Caroline—were seven of eleven children born to Margaret and John N. Walker between 1867 and 1891. Their four brothers all married and moved away. Sarah Caroline was the only sister to marry and Nancy died in 1931 before the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The remaining five women lived out their lives in the 20- by 22-foot cabin up Little Greenbrier.<sup>9</sup> Margaret Jane, the eldest, decided on a life as an old maid early on. She was the leader of the sisters, the one in charge, and the one that made decisions. Martha Ann acted as the family accountant. Nancy was the best seamstress and needle-worker. The sisters made their own clothes from start to finish. They sheared their sheep, washed the wool, carded and spun it, and dyed it with walnut bark. They also grew cotton on their farm, which they used to make the high-necked, long-skirted dresses they wore.<sup>10</sup> The artist in the family, Louisa, spent her free time writing poems about her beloved home. Later in life she sold her hand-written poems to tourists in the park for \$.25 to \$1.00. Hettie, the youngest was an excellent cook and prolific knitter.<sup>11</sup>

They lived in a three-room, L-shaped log house in the small community of Little Greenbrier in Tennessee. A porch provided an intermediary space between home and nature, a large, rock chimney and fireplace heated the cabin, and wood shingles on shingle laths and roll roofing protected the house from leaks. Most of the walls in the living bedroom were covered with magazine and newspaper clippings, a

---

<sup>9</sup> Houck, 7.

<sup>10</sup> A. W. Ogden, "Walker Sisters in Tennessee Mountains Manage All Farm Chores Alone," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 30, 1946.

<sup>11</sup> Houck, 7-11.

popular form of decoration and insulation of the time.<sup>12</sup> The Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon flowed through their property and provided an excellent environment for crops, gardening, and grazing.

The Walker Sisters led very different lives from the wealthy and educated Anne May Davis and Laura Thornburgh. Though not separate from the American economic system, they certainly represented a different class than most park boosters. Their livelihood was much more closely related to basic production than either Davis' or Thornburgh's. As was common of the time, the Walker Sisters practiced a variety of livelihoods, relying on themselves for nearly everything they required. According to Dykeman, the sisters were largely self-sufficient, just as their ancestors had been. The sisters supported Dykeman's assessment stating, "our land produces everything we need except sugar, soda, coffee, and salt." Dykeman summarizes their independence stating:

Their supplies came from the grape arbor, the orchard, the herb and vegetable garden; the sheep, hogs, fowls and milch cows; the springhouse crocks of pickled beets and sauerkraut; the dried food and seed bags and the spice racks that hung from the nails hammered into the newspaper-covered walls...<sup>13</sup>

The sisters owned 122.8 acres of land in Little Greenbrier, and those acres provided plentifully.

Making a living from their land required creativity and hard work, work that connected them deeply to the land and nature. They sang hymns while they dug with a mattock, sowing seeds that would grow into the food they would need. "Hairy" John Walker, their father, made their wooden plows with metal plow

---

<sup>12</sup> Madden and Jones, "Walker Sisters Home."

<sup>13</sup> Dykeman, *Highland Home*, 155.

points.<sup>14</sup> In preparation for planting, to clear the earth of debris and enrich the soil, the sisters set controlled brush fires. It is likely that they began to use commercial fertilizers in the 1920s, but for the most part they used chicken droppings and manure from their own animals to ready the soil. The women planted a kitchen garden behind the house encircled by a paling fence. Crops from the garden included corn, okra, cabbage, green beans, lettuce, peas, onions, radishes, and tomatoes. They made room for larger crops, like wheat, further from the house, and behind the apple house they grew both sweet and Irish potatoes.<sup>15</sup> Because of their economic position and manner of making a living, the sisters directly witnessed the way the land provided. Their inclusive vision of nature and culture stems from this interaction. Unlike city dwellers, they did not buy groceries from the market, which created a divide between higher classes and nature's goods.

Though their gardens and fields created a bond between the sisters and nature, their apple orchard most impressively represented their understanding of and ties to the land. A nephew of the sisters', Fred Walker, explained, "they had over 100 apple trees and every meal included applesauce, apple jelly, apple butter, apple pies, or apple dumplings."<sup>16</sup> The orchard contained over twenty varieties of apples including Ben Davis, Rambo, Limber-twig, Red Milam, Red June, Sour John, Abraham, Shockley, and Buckingham.<sup>17</sup> The diversity and success of the sisters' apple orchard reveals their deep understanding of the importance of varying crops and natural

---

<sup>14</sup> Madden and Jones, "Walker Sisters Home."

<sup>15</sup> Myers 37-38.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Dan Walker, interview by Robert R. Madden, Wear's Cove, TN, January 13, 1969 in "Walker Sisters Home: Historic Structures Report."

cycles. They realized monoculture was incredibly dangerous for their position and their soil. With a variety of crops, if one type suffered, others made up for it. Furthermore, the differing varieties of apples, which grew so well in the Appalachian Mountains, ripened and became ready for harvest at varying times throughout the year. This allowed for a continual flow of apples in Little Greenbrier, providing the Walkers nourishment year round. It furthermore reduced the amount of apples that would go to waste if the fruits all ripened at the same time.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to their orchard and crops, the Walker Sisters gathered nuts and herbs from the forest around their home to support themselves. This required considerable knowledge of the natural world they called home, a knowledge that deepened their connection to place and nature. At a young age they learned to gather all types of herbs, roots, berries, and nuts. They walked trails in the Smokies not only for recreation but sustenance. This further explains why the Walker Sisters held different views of nature than Davis and Thornburgh, who experienced the mountains through recreation not work.

Rampions (ramps), a type of wild onion that grew wild in the area around their home, supplemented the sisters' diet. They also gathered chestnuts, hickory nuts, walnuts, and hazelnuts among others. What they did not eat or store, they sold as cash crops. In addition to selling nuts and berries, they sold extra apples and grapes to buy what they needed from the store. In a small way the sisters commodified nature as Davis did. They made money from it, but in a much more direct and physical manner. Even following the park's arrival, which limited what

---

<sup>18</sup> Myers, 39

the sisters could make from the land, they made up for it in cash by selling—in some cases illegally acquired—ginseng, possum grapes, hickory nuts, molasses, and honey as well as woven place mats, towels, doilies, and coverlets.<sup>19</sup>

The Walker Sisters' way of making a living considerably influenced their relationship with their land and their perception of nature. Being so directly dependent upon nature, through gardening, farming, and gathering led them to consider themselves as part of the natural world of the Smokies. To the sisters' their work was not destructive. How could they perceive it in that light when they saw nature as their home? To them humans and nature were enmeshed in a reciprocal relationship. Their class and economic position certainly shaped their understanding of nature and, in effect, their treatment of it. However, their livelihood and social class were not the only factors that contributed to their interaction with and understanding of the natural world. Appalachian culture—both how they perceived it and how others forced it upon them—similarly shaped the Walker Sisters' definition of nature.

Social life in the Walker family was restricted. They participated in outside activities only after all the work around the house and farm was completed. Typical social outings for the family included corn-shuckings, bean-breakings, and pea-shellings.<sup>20</sup> Even their social outings focused on work and gleaning a living from the land. Besides these few outings, the sisters' social activities were mainly church-related.<sup>21</sup> Their father was extremely strict concerning social outings not linked to

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>21</sup> Madden and Jones, "Walker Sisters Home."

religion. His influence over the sisters' continued after his death. "When invited to parties, the sisters said they had 'not much mind to such follies.'"<sup>22</sup>

The sisters were deeply religious. Their mother was originally Methodist, but when she married she joined the church her husband attended, the Primitive Baptist Church. Primitive Baptists, often referred to as Hardshell Baptists, were often considered extremely strict in their religious beliefs. They practiced foot-washing, total immersion for baptism, used grape juice at Communion, and in some cases snake handling.<sup>23</sup> Their deeply religious upbringing substantially influenced the sisters' understanding of the natural world. They passed time in their fields singing hymns and quoting Bible passages. They closely followed a literal understanding of the verses they quoted. Their idea of wilderness, for example, aligned with a negative interpretation based on Genesis' description of the realm outside Eden, a place where man was sent to toil and work. Wilderness, untamed land, would have been a negative concept to the sisters, unlike park proponents who envisioned a romantic natural area "free" of human influence.

Their religion also guided their work. Following ideas encompassed in the Protestant Work Ethic influenced by Calvinist thought and described by social theorist Max Weber, the sisters understood hard work as a sign of religious salvation.<sup>24</sup> They believed that, "dependence on any strength other than God's or their own was less than wholesome."<sup>25</sup> Work, therefore, was necessary and right. In

---

<sup>22</sup> Myers, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>24</sup> See Max Weber's, "*The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*," in *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity*, ed. and trans. Stephen Kalberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 75-107.

<sup>25</sup> Houck, 41.

fact, work was the foundation of the Walker Sisters' lives. Choosing to follow the influence of their religious father and other ancestors, the sisters "made their labors slow and arduous," according to the National Park system.<sup>26</sup> In the process of their work, the sisters inevitably altered the natural world, in their minds, for the better. However, in their alteration they gained a deeper knowledge of nature. Environmental historian, Richard White, expertly describes the relationship between work and nature stating,

Work that has changed nature has simultaneously produced much of our knowledge of nature. Humans have known nature by digging in the earth, planting seeds and harvesting plants. They have known nature by feeling heat and cold, sweating as they went up hills, sinking into mud. They have known nature by shaping wood and stone, by living with animals, nurturing them, and killing them... They have achieved a bodily knowledge of the natural world.<sup>27</sup>

The Walker sisters experienced first-hand the uncoupling of work and nature combined with the rise of leisure and nature that the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park represented. For the sisters, work was religious and productive not destructive. They viewed leisure in a negative light, perhaps reflecting their adverse views of the establishment of a park on their lands. However, American ideas of work were changing, becoming distant from nature. With the rise of the middle class, arduous physical labor came to be seen as destructive. Many proponents saw the park as a way to halt the devastation inherent in this type of work—both more benign forms, like farming, and the more obviously sinister forms like timber.

---

<sup>26</sup> Madden and Jones, "Walker Sisters Home."

<sup>27</sup> White.

The sisters' culture, especially their religious culture, greatly affected their understanding of human-nature interaction as well as their perceptions of the proposed Smoky Mountains park. However, outsiders' views of the sisters' Appalachian culture also greatly influenced their actions. Misperceptions of Appalachian culture furthermore, to some extent, influenced park officials. Scholars and aid workers forced definitions of Appalachia upon mountain for a variety of reasons. According to Henry D. Shapiro Appalachia existed only as an idea, one that may only be understood "by asking what problem it solves and whose interests—intellectual as well as practical—it thereby serves."<sup>28</sup> An exaggerated Appalachian "otherness" was often ascribed to the sisters—best represented in the April 1946 *Saturday Evening Post* article—which influenced their power in park politics and their actions following the arrival of the park.<sup>29</sup>

The *Saturday Evening Post Article*, "Time Stood Still in the Smokies," written after the creation of the park, presented an excellent example of how outsiders forced a cultural definition on the sisters. It held that the women were a unique group living in a strange land. It described them, as William Goodell Frost would have, as contemporary American ancestors. Author, John Maloney espoused the description writing, "The Walker Sisters are definitely out of this century... they have kept any touch of these modern times away from their hearth."<sup>30</sup> Maloney described the women as quaint, independent but not headstrong, and hospitable though a bit eccentric.

---

<sup>28</sup> Shapiro, 265.

<sup>29</sup> James Maloney, "Time Stood Still in the Smokies," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 1946.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

The women did live a unique life, though many would suggest that all inhabitants of the Smokies followed their example. The sisters did to a certain extent represent the pioneer lifestyle described by many Local Color and travel writers like James Maloney in the *Saturday Evening Post*. For example, they lived in “a weather-beaten, graying, mud-chunked log cabin, more than a century old, back in the forested Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee.” Nearby at an old log barn “sheep graze[d] contentedly, penned in by a sagging rail fence which zigzag[ed] around an open field and up into the woods carpeted by red, brown, green, and golden leaves.” They completed all the chores on the farm, many of them normally considered men’s work.<sup>31</sup>

However, despite the power and independence journalists bestowed upon the women, they did have considerable help from male relatives. They were largely self-sufficient, but one must be careful not to lump them in with the stereotypes associated with Appalachia. Bonnie Trentham Myers makes sure to point out that the Walker Sisters “were not eccentric or illiterate.” Though they lived life differently than their neighbors and rural Americans more generally, life outside their Smoky Mountain home influenced them despite Maloney’s claims that no trace of modernity touched the women and their home. According to Myers, “Ideas, inventions, and people affected them even if only to consider and refuse to accept them.”<sup>32</sup> They accepted rides in cars and used modern farming methods. However, the myth surrounding their lifestyle eventually proved their saving grace as the coming of the Great Smoky National Park threatened to separate them from their

---

<sup>31</sup> Ogden, “Walker Sisters in Tennessee.”

<sup>32</sup> Myers, 2.

home. The myth surrounding the sisters intrigued visitors, and park officials realized the potential support they could gain by allowing the sisters a lifetime lease on the land.

The mythic description of Appalachian culture also influenced the sisters' actions, and in turn interactions with their land and nature. The park, of course, altered how the women were allowed to interact with the land. The federal government outlawed much of what they did before to make a living. However, the park provided tourists to accompany the myth of Appalachian otherness, and tourists provided a new way of making a living. The sisters turned more of their efforts to handicrafts that they could sell to visitors that hiked by their home. Rose Houck wrote, "The newcomers [tourists] brought with them a source of income that was hard to resist: Louisa sold her illustrated hand-written poems for 25 cents to a dollar, and the other sisters sold miniature toys and brooms, crocheted doilies, and their famed apple stack cakes."<sup>33</sup>

To maintain authenticity of their goods, the sisters emphasized their connection to place and nature. Because tourists believed the sisters should follow certain cultural conceptions, they did so in order to maintain independence. For example, tourists expected the sisters to wear rough, homemade clothes. The sisters adhered to this, excepting a few indulgences when it came to Sunday hats. Both the sisters' actual cultural experiences and those forced upon them by outsiders influenced their views of nature and accordingly their feelings towards the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

---

<sup>33</sup> Houck, 51.

Evidence suggests various issues that defined the Walker sisters' views of nature and therefore their stance towards the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Their class, culture, religion, and the cultural definition forced upon them by outsiders all guided their interaction with the natural world. But what does their gender reveal about their interactions with nature? Does it trump the aforementioned factors or is it simply another aspect of a multitude of causalities defining the women's understanding of nature?

Their position as six unmarried women living together was certainly unique for the place and time.<sup>34</sup> Only one of the Walker sisters, Sarah Caroline, married.<sup>35</sup> She married Jim Shelton who suggested his own reason why the sisters never married. He joked, "Reckon I'm about the only man that had courage to bust into that family,' he sa[id], 'or else the rest of them gals got discouraged when they couldn't git me and jus' quit.'"<sup>36</sup> However, much to the chagrin of Mr. Shelton, this was most certainly not the reason the sisters remained unmarried. Two, in fact, were engaged to be married. John Daniels intended to marry Martha Ann, and Polly was engaged to a man named Cotter. Unfortunately, both died in logging accidents before they married. Polly was so upset she walked all night in the rain and developed a high fever, which affected her mind.<sup>37</sup>

Evidence, however, suggested that the reasons behind the sisters' choice to remain unmarried stemmed largely from their strict upbringing and religious

---

<sup>34</sup> Madden and Jones, "Walker Sisters Home."

<sup>35</sup> Carroll McMahan, "Walker Sisters, Smokies Forever Linked in History," *The Mountain Press* (April 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Maloney.

<sup>37</sup> Myers, 3; Brittney Moore, "Six Unmarried 'Smoky Mountain Women' Preserved in Homestead," *KnoxNews.com* (Knoxville, TN), December 21, 2008, <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/dec/21/122108smokiesprofile/>

background. It is unlikely that their choice stemmed from feminist perceptions or a wish to remain independent. Their father was very strict about his courting rules, for example. Martha shared that her, “Pa always went to bed when dark come... Then we had to quit courtin’ and come to bed too.”<sup>38</sup> John Walker certainly influenced the sisters remaining unmarried, but more significant was the leading role that Margaret Jane, the eldest sister, played.

She was hardnosed and realistic and made most of the decisions around the homeplace. She was also uncompromisingly devout, constantly singing hymns and quoting scripture.<sup>39</sup> According to her brother-in-law she courted no man and decided on a life of spinsterhood early on.<sup>40</sup> Margaret Jane’s sisters looked up to her and her influence over them was significant. Myers noted that, “Through reasoning and ridicule, it appear[ed] she attempted to influence the other girls to accept her decision [to be an ‘Old Maid’] as their own.”<sup>41</sup> Maloney illustrates an instance of her stern nature in the *Saturday Evening Post*. When Louisa giggled and asserted, “We keep hopin,’” referencing the red and white bachelor buttons in their flower garden, Margaret shook her head in “disapproval at such levity.”<sup>42</sup> Religion and unfortunate circumstances kept the sisters from marrying. Despite their reasons, their position as six women living alone in the Great Smoky Mountains shaped, to a small extent, their interactions and understandings of the land.

---

<sup>38</sup> Maloney.

<sup>39</sup> McMahan.

<sup>40</sup> Jim Shelton, interview by Robert R. Madden, Townsend, TN, November 26, 1968 in “Walker Sisters Home: Historic Structures Report.”

<sup>41</sup> Myers, 3.

<sup>42</sup> Maloney.

Before the park came, three of the sisters' brothers lived within one mile of the Walker homestead. Despite what some histories proclaimed, the sisters had help from male relatives. They did not plow their own fields. Margaret explained that none of the women could handle their mule, "When we want land plowed or logs dragged down from the mountain for firewood, one of our relatives has to come and work him for us. A Tennessee mule has got to be handled special, and none of us can cuss!"<sup>43</sup> However, they did plant and hoe, tend the sheep, gather berries and herbs, cook, make their own clothes and handicrafts, and if fuel was low, the sisters thought nothing of chopping some wood.<sup>44</sup> At times their gender influenced their work. One interesting example of this involved their sheep and a photographer from the *Saturday Evening Post*, David Robbins. Robbins requested the sisters catch a sheep to shear it for a photograph. Maloney recalled,

Margaret got feed, called, "Here, sheepie, sheepie, sheepie!" and got them almost within noosing range. Then they saw Robbins and bolted back up the mountain. No amount of calling would tempt them down again, nor would they follow a trail of grain we laid for them. "They won't come down again as long as there's anybody around with pants on," Margaret said.<sup>45</sup>

She meant that the sheep would not come when men were around, imparting a unique closeness between the women and animals that, despite domestication, act as a link to the natural world under the sisters' interpretation of "nature."

Furthermore, women during this time period were more likely to practice folk medicine. Granny women were responsible for gathering berries and herbs from the surrounding forests to treat all sorts of ailments. The sisters were all herb

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Myers.

<sup>45</sup> Maloney.

doctors, and with plantain, horseradish, catnip, boneset, Indian turnips, peppermint, and ginseng they treated snakebites, upset stomach, fever, measles, and stings among other issues.<sup>46</sup> The Walker sisters' intimate knowledge of the woods surrounding their home and farm—an area perhaps holding more strongly with American understandings of the “natural” world—connected them more closely to their land. Men were tied more to farming.

The sisters experienced *both* the ties that farming and an intimate knowledge of silviculture created between humans and nature. Perhaps in this way a group of women were more likely to stand up for their home than a more typical family of the time. Although their gender influenced their interaction with nature in some ways, their religious upbringing and closeness to the land played more significant roles in shaping their definition of nature. Others, of course, chose to stay on the land they once owned in the Smokies, but they tended to be loners. Rarely did families choose to lease back their land from the federal government.

Some argue that the sisters chose to remain in the Great Smoky Mountains because they feared a way of life that differed from that of their father and grandfather. Maloney voiced this opinion stating that the sisters kept traces of modernity out of their home,

not through the slightest trace of eccentricity or any dislike for progress, but simply because, as women without menfolk around, they have continued doing things in the ways and with the implements they know best how to use—which is to say, their father's and grandfather's methods and tools.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Myers, 54-55.

<sup>47</sup> Maloney.

This may certainly have played a role in their decision, but it is more likely that they were influenced by the deep ties they felt to their farm and the forest surrounding it.

Several factors shaped the sisters' understanding of nature and their place within it. Their class, the way they made a living, forced a reciprocal relationship between the sisters and the land. They were dependent on the land and worked close enough with it to witness their connection to it. They were not disconnected from the goods their land provided—a separation that was growing during this time for many people in the United States. The Walker Sisters saw their food grow. They did not purchase it from a store, or further still have a servant purchase and prepare it for them, as wealthier classes were used to doing at the time. Their culture and religion further influenced their understanding of the human-nature relationship. Wilderness was not a place for leisure, but a place to be worked. And social gatherings, when not focused on religion, centered on crops raised from the land. Further still, though to a lesser extent, the sisters' gender and the roles that came with it strengthened their ties to the land through providing a deep knowledge not only of farming, but of local plant and herbal knowledge.

All these things together served to provide the sisters with an understanding of the natural world that included rather than scorned human involvement. From this standpoint the sisters fought the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; and, when they lost, it was this stance that influenced them to lease their land and remain in their homeplace despite the changes that the park demanded.

In 1939 Mr. Myers, representing the National Park Service in Washington, D.C., began negotiations to buy the Walker Sisters' home. Mr. Myers advised the sisters not to rely on their own judgment, but to consult with their neighbors and attorneys. The sisters reportedly first demanded \$15,000 for their farm.<sup>48</sup> There was considerable haggling between the women and the government. The sisters did not sell their land until 1941 because the Park Service worried that taking them to court would cause negative publicity or lead to a high jury award.<sup>49</sup> Eventually, facing the threat of condemnation, the sisters accepted \$4,750 for their land along with the provision that they were "allowed to reserve a life estate and the use of the land for and during the life of the five sisters."<sup>50</sup> Thornburgh notes that the sisters were "in the enviable position of selling their land and having it too, rent and tax free."<sup>51</sup>

However, there were considerable constraints added once the land changed hands. The sisters, for example, were no longer allowed to hunt or collect herbs and plants from the surrounding woods. Still the sisters were able to continue some of these practices, more so than other families and loners that remained on park lands, because they acted as an educational tourist center. They brought visitors and dollars to the park by demonstrating their "pioneer" lifestyle.

Clearly, the Department of the Interior was not selfless in their decision to allow the Walker Sisters a lifetime lease on the land. *The Christian Science Monitor* reported the sisters' "model of mountain resourcefulness and independence" won

---

<sup>48</sup> Myers, 88.

<sup>49</sup> Newton Drury, "Memorandum for the First Assistant Secretary," November 23, 1940, Box 1128, File 610, RG79, NA in Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 168.

<sup>50</sup> Madden, 33-34.

<sup>51</sup> Thornburgh, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, 154.

them their right to stay.<sup>52</sup> Pierce supports this supposition stating the Park Service did not wish to pressure the women, fearing bad press.<sup>53</sup>

The Walker farmstead later came to be a sort of tourist attraction for the park. Visitors stopped by to talk with the women, buy their crafts, and experience the quaint life of early-America. With time passing, Americans no longer felt the need to define themselves through the greatness of American nature. The frontier was gone, and a need to connect with the past replaced the scenic nationalism of the previous decades. A previous resident of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park area and Gatlinburg denizen, Lucinda Oakley Ogle, noted, “They are one of the park’s greatest assets now,” in 1938.<sup>54</sup>

Interestingly, in some ways the sisters’ gender influenced the National Park Service to allow them to stay on the land. The roles associated with their gender i.e. cooking, crafting, also allowed the women to remain on their land despite park regulations. They sold the goods from their crafting and cooking. Tourism replaced some of their livelihoods. Loners, usually men, that remained on park land were much less approachable and were unable to adapt to new livelihoods. Ironically, the Walker Sisters continued to make a living from nature despite park’s prohibitions on farming, hunting, livestock, and gathering wild plants. Their livelihood continued to depend on nature though in a less concrete manner. Instead of benefiting from

---

<sup>52</sup> “Cabin Home of Five Sisters Still Theirs as Part of Park,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (1908-Currentfile) December 27, 1939.

<sup>53</sup> Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 168.

<sup>54</sup> Lucinda Oakley Ogle, interview by Paul Sagan, 1990, Oral History Collection; *Superintendent’s Report*, November 1938, GSMNP Archives; *Knoxville Journal*, September 21, 1939.

extraction from nature they benefitted from it as an escape from civilization, representing a slight change in their understanding of the term.

The case of the Walker sisters proves that women held differing views on the creation of a national park in the Great Smoky Mountains. Gender did not serve to unite women in their park efforts. The sisters fought against the park's creation because it meant separation from the land they loved, or at least a very different relationship with it. However, their basic wishes were somewhat in line with women park promoters. The Walker Sisters and Laura Thornburgh, for example, both wanted to preserve Smoky Mountain culture; and the sisters realized the monetary benefits that Anne May Davis wished would accompany the park. Furthermore, the sisters' adamant wish to stay on the land despite federal restrictions said something of their fortitude and more importantly their love of the Smokies—something all three women (or groups of women) agreed on. Their understanding of nature and therefore actions differed because their lifestyles and class differed; suggesting these two aspects more than gender helped the women define their individual "natures." Though Thornburgh and Davis both spent much time in the mountains, they did not make their living directly from its land. Also, the sisters wished their culture to be continued because it was their own, not some emblematic American lifestyle.

However, compared to the women discussed in the previous two chapters, the Walker Sisters held a considerably more negative view of the creation of a national park in the Great Smoky Mountains. They realized they would be separated from the land they knew and loved and that had provided for them their entire lives.

Unlike Davis and Thornburgh, the Walker Sisters saw a much deeper connection between humans and the natural world. They understood humans to be a part of not apart from nature. Transforming the land into a “wilderness” devoid of human interference—an impossible task—made no sense to the sisters. Martha Walker revealed her confusion and frustration with the park when she asserted, “This park may be savin' a lot of trees and rhododendron and laurel for city folks to look at, but it sure is lettin' them bear and foxes and hawks git mighty pesky.”<sup>55</sup>

The sisters’ class, culture, religion, and gender all contributed to their interpretation of the natural world. Most importantly, the Walker Sisters were far more directly involved with the natural world of the Smokies. Unlike Davis and Thornburgh, the sisters interacted with nature every day. Because of these influences and ties to the land, the sisters attempted to stand against the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Unfortunately, it was these same factors that inhibited their ability to do so.

Including the Walker Sisters in a discussion of the park’s creation allows for a broader understanding and interpretation of women’s actions in park promotion. Analysis of their understanding of nature also reinforces that differing perceptions of nature lead to different actions regarding it. Understanding the reasons behind one’s perception of the environment can inform how one will treat the natural world. Their case also reinforces the novelty of creating a park in the eastern United States. Unlike earlier, western parks, private owners, not the federal government owned the land. Because of this, the National Park Service was forced to consider

---

<sup>55</sup> Maloney.

more cultural aspects of national parks. The success of the Walker Sisters reveals an interesting change in park promotion. Cultural aspects proved beneficial rather than harmful to park promotion and interpretation.

## CONCLUSION

### Survival of the “Dollarable”

In 2010 over 9 million visitors traveled to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee and North Carolina, again making it the most visited national park in the nation. Great Smoky Mountains visitors represented more than double the number of guests that traveled to the Grand Canyon National Park, the second most visited park.<sup>1</sup> The Great Smoky Mountains National Park has been wildly popular since its establishment in 1934. However, few tourists realize the difficulty park proponents faced when fighting for its creation. Unlike western parks, which were formed through the transfer of land between different departments within the federal government, land for the park had to be purchased from private businesses and landowners. In this manner, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was the first of its kind.

The park in the Smokies is representative of change in the National Park system. Reasons behind park creation in the eastern United States varied significantly from those in the West. Western parks were concerned with monumental, natural beauty, scenic nationalism, and the preservation of nature for the sake of democracy and American identity. They wished to provide the United States with monuments like Europe and redeem the previous destruction and

---

<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, “10 Most Visited Parks,” *National Parks Conservation Association*, <http://www.npca.org/exploring-our-parks/visitation.html?gclid=COG12KSDxK4CFS5j7Aodg2mtYQ>

commercialization of Niagara Falls.<sup>2</sup> According to national park historian, Alfred Runte, “In the West, scenery alone was justification for having parks, even if their recreational value would not be realized for years or decades.” However, preservation for the sake of scenery did not last long.

Following the Hetch Hetchy debacle, national parks required more than a scenic argument to gain support from the federal government. Park proponents had to argue for the lack of economic value associated with proposed park areas. They had to prove the areas worthlessness. If development of the lands could lead to economic benefits, then support for preservation dwindled. In John Muir’s words, “Nothing dollarable is safe...”<sup>3</sup>

At nearly the same time proponents began proving the economic benefits of the natural scenery preserved in national parks. A preservationist from New England, Allen Chamberlain, noted if “we must consider [the national parks] from the commercial standpoint, let it not be forgotten that Switzerland regards its scenery as a money-producing asset to the extent of some two hundred million dollars annually.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, the “See America First” campaign was born, encouraging wealthy Americans to see their own country instead of travelling to the Alps. The

---

<sup>2</sup> The commercialization of Niagara Falls in the eastern United States nearly destroyed its natural beauty. Europeans derided the country for not taking better care of the falls. This encouraged careful protection of grand, natural landscapes in the West.

<sup>3</sup> The entire quotation reads, “Nothing dollarable is safe, however guarded. Thus the Yosemite Park, the beauty glory of California and the Nation, Nature's own mountain wonderland, has been attacked by spoilers ever since it was established, and this strife I suppose, must go on as part of the eternal battle between right and wrong.” John Muir, message to the 1908 Governors Conference on Conservation, in The Sierra Club, “Timeline of the Ongoing Battle over Hetch Hetchy,” <http://www.sierraclub.org/ca/hetchhetchy/timeline.asp>

<sup>4</sup> Runte, *National Parks*, 75-76.

lucrative campaign proved park lands were not, in fact, worthless, and insured the survival of the National Park system.

With the economic value of national parks proven, a growing middle class, and more widespread use of the automobile, boosters jumped at the opportunity to create national parks in the East. Preservation mixed with recreation and the National Park system grew stronger. Histories of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park point out that the park was unique in its land acquisition policy as well as its eastern location. Acadia in Maine was the only park preceding it in the East. However, none note the uniqueness of the Smoky Mountains park in evolving national park history.

This thesis supports the notion of changing park functions through investigating previously overlooked female park proponents' perceptions of nature. Anne May Davis', Laura Thornburgh's, and the Walker Sisters' definitions of nature and actions towards it all suggest a changing *raison d'être* for the National Park system. Davis' definition of nature was constantly influenced by her husband's discussion of the economic benefits inherent in park creation, revealing the rising importance of tourism. Thornburgh maintained some of Muir's approach to parks. She wrote of the mountains' romantic beauty and cleansing nature. Scenic qualities of nature were not totally replaced by tourism dollars. Finally, the Walker Sisters represent the necessity of incorporating human history in national parks. Many park promoters scorned this inclusion at first, but, as the sisters proved, tourists were eager to experience both natural and cultural aspects of national parks. These women's definitions of nature, though different, all supported a new type of park

that provided both public access to “natural” beauty and cultural history as well as economic gain for individuals and state and federal governments.

Understanding what influenced these women’s definitions of nature allows parallel interpretation of the changing functions of the United States’ national parks. Class played a significant role in their individual perceptions of nature. Broader trends in American culture and physical closeness to the Smoky Mountains also influenced the women’s definition of the term. Their gender did not define their interpretation of nature. However, it did—along with more influential factors, namely class—help shape the women’s perceptions of nature in addition to their actions towards it.

W. P. Davis, for example, frequently reminded Anne May Davis of the economic benefits a park in the Smokies would bring, many of which would benefit her family directly. Her husband worked for the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce and served as a leader of the Knoxville Auto Club. Davis also represented the Tennessee State Government, a body that required economic incentives—roads, for example—to begin purchasing land for the proposed park area. However, Davis’ gender did not allow her to entirely embrace a commodified nature. She also sought park support through admiring the beauty of the mountains and leading the Knoxville Women’s Gardening Club. The economic arguments surrounding Davis suggest the National Park Service was moving away from a model that focused on scenic monumentalism or that emphasized the worthlessness of park lands—an argument that would be difficult to make considering the booming timber industry in the area.

Thornburgh was also aware that nature could be commodified, but this awareness shaped her understanding of nature to a lesser degree than Davis. Thornburgh's interpretation is revelatory in a different manner. Her descriptive and romantic portrayals of the mountain landscape reveal that scenic beauty still played a role in park creation. However, according to Thornburgh, the scenic beauty of the Smokies offered tired city dwellers in the East an opportunity to escape the dark and sullyng effects of civilization. Here is where the Great Smoky Mountains National Park again differs from its predecessors. Western parks promoted scenic beauty instead as American monuments on par with Europe's great castles and cathedrals, not as an escape from the drudgery of city life. Thornburgh was also happy to point out another difference between the Smokies and other parks. Private citizens owned the proposed park land.

The National Park system had to figure out a way to deal with the human past of the Great Smoky Mountains. Some suggested all cultural evidence should be wiped from the mountains. Much of it was in the end. Yet, the popularity of the Walker Sisters of Little Greenbrier proved that both cultural and natural aspects of the Smokies were worth preserving. The sisters brought visitors to the park who in turn brought their dollars to Tennessee and North Carolina. Guidebooks sold in and around the park area featured the Sisters and their home.<sup>5</sup> Even the sisters embraced a somewhat commodified interpretation of nature. They sold poems, handicrafts, baked goods, and illegally acquired herbs to tourists that stopped by their home.

---

<sup>5</sup> Michael Strutin, Steve Kemp, and Kent Cave, eds. *History Hikes of the Smokies*, (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, 2003).

Combined, these women's interpretations of nature and actions regarding the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park reveal an evolving National Park system. The American idea of national parks has shifted, changing in order to survive. Following the creation of the park in the Smokies, the purpose of the NPS shifted again. In 1947, for example, the federal government added Everglades National Park in Florida to the system. It served as the first park created to defend a delicate ecosystem and protect wildlife rather than preserve a particularly beautiful natural area. This new aspect of protecting biodiversity, however, did not entirely replace economic or scenic motives in park creation. It simply served as an added consideration.

The NPS continues to evolve today. For over a decade private individuals and the state of Maine have been discussing the creation of another national park in the state's northern woods. Co-Founder of Burt's Bees Company, Roxanne Quimby is leading the campaign for the park. She used the money she gained from selling the company to buy up land in north Maine from downsizing paper companies. However, similar to the proposal of a park in the Smoky Mountains, Quimby has been met with considerable opposition from locals worried about their homes and their jobs with paper companies. However, the economy is changing and jobs with the paper mills or the timber companies in the proposed park area are no longer guaranteed.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Susan Sharon, "In Wood Pulp Country, A New Plan for Conservation," *National Public Radio*, September 30, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/09/30/140632021/in-wood-pulp-country-a-new-plan-for-conservation>.

The case of the proposed park in Maine’s woods is strikingly similar to that of the Smokies. Even the opposition from timber and paper companies is reminiscent of the fight for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Like boosters from Tennessee and North Carolina, Quimby is attempting to sell the park idea based on the amount of revenue tourism would bring to the area. Nevertheless, her argument has been unsuccessful. Quimby’s failure paired with a distressed NPS budget—down \$4 million in the past decade, with the potential for further cuts—suggests it is time for yet another evolution in the national park idea.<sup>7</sup>

An economic argument again seems relevant. However, instead of focusing on the economic benefits of recreation and tourism, park supporters may find it beneficial to make biodiversity, and ecology “dollarable,” to borrow from John Muir. Park supporters are beginning to emphasize the economic benefits of the survival of species, and the maintenance of fresh water sources and forests that act as large air filters. Edward B. Barbier captures this new park argument in *Capitalizing On Nature: Ecosystems as Natural Assets*, stating “if ecosystems and the goods and services they generate can be associated with the ecological landscape [national parks] defining these systems, then we have a way of depicting these ecosystems as natural assets that are amenable to economic analysis.”<sup>8</sup> For better or worse, it seems the National Park system is changing again.

---

<sup>7</sup> National Park Conservation Association, *Made in America: Investing in National Parks for Our Heritage and Our Economy*, Washington, D.C., November 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Edward B. Barbier, *Capitalizing On Nature: Ecosystems as Natural Assets* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

#### Government Records

House Archives. *Tennessee House Journal*. 64<sup>th</sup> Tennessee General Assembly, 1925.

#### Interviews

Shelton, Jim. "Walker Sisters Home: Historic Structures Report." By Robert R. Madden. November 26, 1968.

Walker, Dan. "Walker Sisters Home: Historic Structures Report." By Robert R. Madden. January 13, 1969.

#### Manuscript Collections

Champion Fibre Company Papers. Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archives. Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

The Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association Papers. Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archives. Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

The Laura Thornburgh Collection, 1926-1946. Hodges Library. The University of Tennessee. Knoxville, Tennessee.

The Austin Peay Papers. Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archives. Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

The Willis P. and Anne Davis Collection. Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archives. Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection. Carol Grotnes Belk Library. Appalachian State University. Boone, North Carolina.

## Media

*American Forests and Forest Life*

*The Asheville Citizen Times*

*The Atlanta Constitution*

*The Christian Science Monitor*

*The Hartford Curreant*

*The Knoxville Journal*

*Knoxville News Sentinel*

*Metro Pulse*

*The Mountain Press*

*National Public Radio*

*The New York Times*

*The Saturday Evening Post*

*The Washington Post*

*Travel*

## Secondary Sources

Barbier, Edward B. *Capitalizing On Nature: Ecosystems as Natural Assets*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Barney, Sandra Lee. *Authorized to Heal: Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Medicine in Appalachia, 1880-1930*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Bridges, Anne, Russ Clement, and Kenneth Wise, eds. "The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club: The Early Years," *Great Smoky Mountains Colloquy*, 4, no.1 (Spring 2003).

- Brown, Margaret. *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000.
- Bryson, Bill. *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*. New York: Broadway, 1998.
- Burns, Ken (Director). *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, 2009.
- Campbell, Carlos C. *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960.
- Campbell, Carlos C. *Memories of Old Smoky: Early Experiences in the Great Smoky Mountains*. Ed. Rebecca Campbell Arrants. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005.
- Carr, Ethan. *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring* 40th Anniversary Edition. Boston, MA: A Mariner Book Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002; originally published 1962.
- Cornwell, Ilene. *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly. Vol. 3 1901-1931*. Nashville: The Tennessee Historical Commission, 1988.
- Cotham, Steve. *The Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. Grand Rapids, MI: Arcadia, 2006.
- Cronon, William. "Introduction: In Search of Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996.
- Davis, Hattie Caldwell. *Reflections of Cataloochee Valley and Its Vanished People from the Great Smoky Mountains*. Philadelphia, PA: Hattie Caldwell Davis, 1999.
- Deadrick, Lucile, ed. *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee*. Knoxville: The East Tennessee Historical Society, 1976.
- Dunn, Durwood. *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1988.
- Dykeman, Wilma. *Highland Home: The People of the Great Smokies*. Washington, D.C.: Division of Publications, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1978.
- Dykeman, Wilma, and Jim Stokely. *At Home in the Smokies*. Minneapolis, MN: National Park Service Division of Publications, 1985.

- Eller, Ronald. *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982.
- Ellison, George. *Mountain Passages: Natural and Cultural History of Western North Carolina and the Great Smoky Mountains*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2005.
- Espín, Olivia M. *Women Crossing Boundaries: A Psychology of Immigration and Transformations of Sexuality*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Faragher, John Mack, editor. *Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," and other Essays*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Frome, Michael. *Strangers in High Places: The Story of the Great Smoky Mountains*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994.
- Harvey, Anna L. *Votes Without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics, 1920-1970*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Houck, Rose. *The Walker Sisters of Little Greenbrier*, eds. Steve Kemp and Kent Cave. Gatlinburg, TN: The Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2005.
- Houk, Rose. *Exploring the Smokies: Things to See and Do in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, 1989.
- Howell, Alice L. "Prominent Knoxvilleians." *In Heart the of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee*, ed. Lucile Deaderick. Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1976.
- Hugill, Peter J. "Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States, 1880-1929," *Geographical Review*, 72, no. 3 (July 1982): 327.
- Kaufman, Polly Welts. *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History*, Updated Edition. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2006.
- Kephart, Horace. *Camping and Woodcraft: A Handbook for Vacation Campers and for Travelers in the Wilderness*. New York: Macmillan, 1916.
- Kephart, Horace. *Our Southern Highlanders: A Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life Among the Mountaineers*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984.

- Krech, Shepard. *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1999.
- Lix, Courtney. "Laura Thornburgh: Smoky Mountain Writer, Photographer, and Interior Decorator," *Smokies Life Magazine*, 3, no. 2, (2009): 41-49.
- Madden, Robert R. and T. Russell Jones. *Mountain Home: The Walker Family Farmstead, Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1977.
- Madden, Robert R. and T. Russell Jones. "Walker Sisters Home: Historic Structures Report, Part II and Furnishing Study Great Smoky Mountains National Park." Washington, D.C.: Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1969.
- Made in America: Investing in National Parks for Our Heritage and Our Economy*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Conservation Association, 2011.
- McCoy, George A. *A Brief History of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Movement in North Carolina*. Asheville, NC: Inland Press, 1940.
- Maher, Neil M. *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2007.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1990; originally published 1980.
- Merchant, Carolyn. "Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History," *Environmental History*, 8, No. 3 (July 2003): 380-394.
- Merchant, Carolyn. "Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement: 1900-1916," *Environmental Review*, 8 (1984): 57-83.
- Middleton, T. Walter. *Qualla: home of the Middle Cherokee Settlement : tales of the Great Smoky Mountains' Native Americans*. Alexander, NC: WorldComm, 1999.
- Miller, Jean Baker. *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976.
- Mills, Patricia Jagentowicz. *Woman, Nature, and Psyche*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987.

- Muir, John. "The Philosophy of John Muir" in *The Wilderness World of John Muir: A Selection from his Collected Work* ed. Edwin Way Teale. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001.
- Myers, Bonnie Trentham with Lynda Myers Boyer. *The Walker Sisters: Spirited Women of the Smokies*. Maryville, TN: Myers & Myers Publishers, 2004.
- "The Mystery of George Masa." Director, Paul Bonesteel and Trent Bouts. Producer Paul Bonesteel. DVD. 2002.
- National Park Service Staff. *At Home in the Smokies : A History Handbook for Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. New York: United States Government Printing Office, 1985.
- Norwood, Vera. *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- Perdue, Theda. *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998.
- Pierce, Daniel S. "Anne M. Davis," in *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2009.
- Pierce, Daniel S. "The Barbarism of the Huns: Family and Community Removal in the Establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 57.1 (1998): 62-79.
- Pierce, Daniel S. *Boosters, Bureaucrats, Politicians and Philanthropists: Coalition Building in the Establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Dissertation, 1995.
- Pierce, Daniel S. *The Great Smokies : From Natural Habitat to National Park*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000.
- Plott, Bob. *A History of Hunting in the Great Smoky Mountains*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2008.
- Plott, Bob. *Legendary Hunters of the Southern Highlands: A Century of Sport and Survival in the Great Smoky Mountains (Narrative Histories)*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2009.
- Powers, Elizabeth D., and Mark E. Hannah. *Cataloochee: Lost Settlement of the Smokies*. Charleston, SC: Powers-Hannah, 1982.

- Righter, Robert W. *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America's Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Roberson, Lee. *Sins of the National Park Service in the Great Smokies*. Townsend, TN: Lee Roberson, 2007.
- Runte, Alfred. *National Parks: The American Experience*, Second Edition, Revised. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.
- Runte, Alfred. *Trains of Discovery: Western Railroads and the National Parks*. Niwot, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1994.
- Schmidt, Ronald G., William S. Hooks, and Barbara Archer. *Whistle over the Mountain: Timber, Track and Trails in the Tennessee Smokies*. New York: Graphicom Press, Inc., 1994.
- Shaffer, Marguerite. *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2001.
- Shaffer, Marguerite. "Seeing the Nature of America: The National Parks as National Assets, 1914-1929." In *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*. Eds. Shelley Osmun Baranowski and Ellen Furlough. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.
- Shapiro, Henry D. *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*. Chapel Hill, : The University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
- Simkins, Francis B. *The South, Old and New: A History, 1820-1947*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947.
- Silver, Timothy. *Mount Mitchell and the Black Mountains: an Environmental History of the Highest Peaks in Eastern America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Strutin, Michael, Kent Cave, and Steve Kemp. *History Hikes of the Smokies*. Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2003.
- Thornburgh, Laura. *The Great Smoky Mountains* Revised and Enlarged Edition. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1967.
- Toops, Connie. *Great Smoky Mountains*. New York: Voyageur Press, Incorporated, 1995.

Trout, Ed, and Margaret Lynn Brown. *Historic Buildings of the Smokies*. Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, c1995.

Weber, Max. "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism." In *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity*, edited by and translated by Stephen Kalberg, 75-107. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005.

Weber, Max "Science as a Vocation." In *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity*, edited by and translated by Stephen Kalberg, 321-328. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005.

"What We Do." The Garden Club of America. <http://www2.gcamerica.org>.

Whisnant, Anne. *Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

White, Richard. "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?" in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995..

Williams, Michael A. *Great Smoky Mountains Folklife*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995.

## VITA

Rachel Lanier Roberts was born on February 24, 1987 in Asheville, North Carolina. She graduated with highest honors from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill earning a B.A. in International Studies with a double major in History. At Appalachian State University Ms. Roberts studied environmental and Appalachian history under the guidance of Dr. Timothy Silver. In May 2012, after completing her thesis, "Great Women of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park: Defining Nature and the National Park Service," she earned a M.A. in History and a graduate minor in Appalachian Studies from Appalachian State University.

Ms. Roberts is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the Cratis D. Williams Society. She served as Chair of the History Day Committee and was a member of the Graduate History Student Association from 2010 to 2012. Her parents are Mr. Richard Roberts of Asheville, North Carolina and Mrs. Wanda Burgess of Waynesville, North Carolina.