



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1895-12-25

**Letter from Catharine H. Hittell to John Muir, 1895 Dec 25.**

Catharine H. Hittell

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San Francisco.

[1]

December 25<sup>th</sup> 1895.

Dear friend Mr. Miner

My love for

California's beautiful forests compells me to write to you my fears about the new Committee on Public Lands appointed in the present House of Representatives.

I write to you because I know that you are the best friend of our forests and of the other natural beauties of California.

My fear for the forests arises from the fact that Speaker Reed of the House has appointed on ~~his~~ Committee on Public Lands Mr Bowers of Southern California.

Enclosed please find what Mr Bowers

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says in the Examiner of last Sunday, also what he said in Congress last year.

If possible, I would like Mr Bowers' speech returned unless it will be of use to you.

Please consider what the present Committee on Public Lands may do, through the influence of a member, who will utter such exaggerations as Mr Bowers did on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1894. Please notice the statement that "had Harrison's Administration continued four years longer it is probable that most of the State would have been declared forest reservation" also the statement that "the people of California were largely reconciled to the passing of Harrison and Allen, because of their evident determination" I suppose that means the evident determination of making most of the State into

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a forest reservation.

The Committee ought to know fully that the forest reservations were made in California partly to preserve the snow reservoirs for irrigating the dry plains in summer and for preventing floods in spring, also to preserve the timber from the present very wanton and wasteful methods of cutting it down and destroying it by fire, etc. If it is shown that a large number of the best Californians are opposed to the diminishing of the forest reserves, I should think it would have weight with the Committee, especially as the forests are reserved for the public in the East just as well as for the public here and that the giving of it to private entry would benefit only the lumber men.

Prof. Lisen and others of the Academy

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of Sciences, who know the forest reservations told me last year that the last part of Mr Bowers speech was entirely false.

According to what I know of the methods in Congress, nearly all the work is done in Committees and as this is to be a long Congress, the bills favored by the Public Lands Committee will very likely pass.

Therefore I should think it would be a good idea for the Sierra Club to send as soon as possible to Mr Lacey, the Chairman of the Committee, its ideas on the absolute necessity of our forest reservations.

I feel rather certain that the Academy of Sciences would unite with the Sierra Club in protesting against any decrease in the size of the reservations. We might also

get some expression on this subject from the two Universities, especially from Stanford as Prof Dudley is so much interested in our forests.

Enclosed, please find a list of the members of the Committee on Public Lands just appointed by Mr Reed of the House.

Mr Mc Rae is I believe in favor of forest reservations but I am doubtful of Mr Ellis of Oregon, Mr Shafroth of Colorado and Mr Wilson of Idaho. The members from the middle West or prairie states, where so much tree planting has been done may possibly favor the forest reservations. Of course we could get no help from Mr Bowers as he is evidently working in the interests

of some few of his constituents who desire to take up the forest lands for lumbering purposes, etc. I do not at all object to what Mr Bowers wants to do with the railroad grants, ~~if he will~~ only keep his hands off the forest reservations.

Congressman Loud of California spoke strongly in Congress last year in favor of the forest reserves, and it was through his efforts I think that the bill of 1894 with its objectionable features ~~was~~ not passed. Mr Loud is the Congressman of our district and we might possibly reach him if you thought it would do any good.

Do you think it would help to get an expression of opinion

from the big land owners of the San Joaquin Valley in favor of the forest reservations? Mrs W. C. Carr might help in this work as her husband is a very large land owner in the San Joaquin.

The San Francisco Examiner might also be made interested in this subject, because last year it published an editorial in favor of the forest Parks.

I have been deliberating whether it would do any good to <sup>try to</sup> enlist the interest of Ex President Harrison Mr Noble and Mr Johnson of the Century Magazine in the forest reservations as it was partly through their efforts that the largest reservations were made.

But possibly election matters may very likely make them here

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little interest in whether or not Mr Powers succeeds in decreasing the area of those reservations.

But more than all else will be the value of your words to the Committee on Public Lands and to Congress on this subject. I hope they will hear from you.

Before closing I want to speak a word about the larks. I hear that the slaughtered innocents are being daily brought into the City. In San Jose, a society for the acclimatization of song and game birds has been formed and it might possibly be influenced to help us protect our native meadow larks. I intend to write to them and become a member of the society.

Hoping that you will pardon me for troubling you and wishing

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you a very happy New Year I remain

Your sincere friend  
Catherine H. Hittell  
808 Turk Street.

P.S. I never in my life enjoyed anything more than your lecture last month before the Scerrew Club on California's forests and I must thank you for giving me some of the happiest moments of my life. I love California so much that my greatest happiness comes when I see its beauties or hear anyone praising and describing them, especially a Californian like Mr Miner whose descriptions rival in beauty the scenes described and through whose influence most of all, some of our glorious trees have been preserved.

C. H. H.

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