CHAPTER 1

The Re-creation of Nature

When the New York City minister Joel Headley collapsed in 1849 from a nervous breakdown, he was ordered by his doctor to try what was, for a mid-nineteenth-century American, a most unusual undertaking: a vacation. As a destination for this peculiar endeavor, Headley selected the little-known Adirondack Mountains, a series of heavily forested peaks that crowned New York's northernmost counties. The Adirondacks' clean air, tranquil scenery, and remoteness from urban centers, Headley reasoned, would provide a tonic for his shattered nerves. Although at the time upstate New York was better known for its hardscrabble farms and lumber camps than for its recreational opportunities, the frazzled minister had made a wise decision. A few weeks in the "vast wilderness" of the Adirondacks rejuvenated Headley's constitution, leading him to pronounce the region's "glorious woods" the perfect antidote to the stresses of urban life. "I could hardly believe," he exulted, "I was in the same State of which New York was the emporium, whose myriad spires pierced the heavens."[1]

These cries of amazement were echoed by several other nineteenth-century observers, all of whom, like Headley, puzzled over the existence of extensive forestlands only two hundred miles from New York City. As one anonymous author put it in 1865, "One might expect to find it [the Adirondacks], or its fellow, somewhere in the far-off West, that mythical land which is every day drawing nearer to us,—but not on the Eastern side of the continent,—not in the Northern States, and assuredly not in the great State of New York, where its existence to-day is little short of a miracle." Many of those who sought to explain this "miracle" could only conclude that nature must have set forth unalterable laws preventing the development of the region. Following a visit to the Adirondacks in 1880, for example, A. Judd Northrop posited that "the law—not of New York but of Nature—has set apart this wilderness irrevocably to purposes which find little recognition in the marts of trade and the necessities of a population struggling for subsistence." According to such logic, the Adirondacks' harsh topography and sandy soils represented nature's way of enforcing its rule over the area. "This region has always been and will always be under the dominion of Nature," remarked Nathaniel Sylvester in 1877. "Its altitude renders its climate cold and forbidding, while its rugged surface and light soil render it in a great measure unfit for cultivation."[2]

Headley, Northrup, and Sylvester were just a few of the many voices joining in a debate that had by the mid-nineteenth century assumed an increasingly prominent place in American culture. The discussion's core questions were deceptively simple: What is nature? And how does it shape human affairs? But at perhaps no time in United States history were the answers the source of so much intellectual ferment. The Anglo-American world of the nineteenth century witnessed an efflorescence of works seeking to plumb nature's inner workings: the transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau; the American school of landscape painting, developed by artists such as Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and Thomas Moran; the rise of natural history, heralded by the founding of journals such as *Nature* and the *American Naturalist* in the 1860s; the eugenics movement led by Herbert Spencer and Francis Galton; even the popular books of Henry William Herbert, who in the 1830s immigrated to the United States, renamed himself Frank Forester, and introduced the American elite to the upper-class European tradition of sports hunting. Nature, as the historian David Arnold has aptly observed, was "one of the principal metaphors of the age, the prism through which all manner of ideas and ideals were brilliantly refracted."[3]

Yet in spite of this shared subject matter, the era's nature studies did not always cohere in any clear or consistent manner. At the same time that A. Judd Northrup might reason that the law of nature protected the Adirondacks from development, a far more pessimistic—and influential—series of natural laws was being promulgated by a onetime schoolteacher, newspaper editor, and diplomat from Vermont named

George Perkins Marsh, in a work entitled *Man and Nature*. The American minister to Turkey during the Crimean War and later to the Kingdom of Italy from 1861 to 1882, Marsh had long been puzzled by the environmental conditions he encountered during his postings abroad. How was it, he wondered, that the Mediterranean basin—a landscape that at the time of the Roman Empire had been lush and fertile—was now so barren? The connection between the region's current aridity and the decline of its preeminent civilization, Marsh concluded, was not coincidental. In *Man and Nature,* published in 1864 and "the most extensive work on land management to appear in the English-speaking world up to that date," Marsh ventured a compelling new explanation of the region's past: the Romans and the other peoples of the Mediterranean basin had doomed themselves by recklessly cutting the forests surrounding their settlements. Deprived of the leaves that had once regulated temperatures and of the roots that had once anchored topsoil, the region's deforested lands had experienced erosion, desertification, and ultimately, ecological collapse. Human folly had, in short, "changed millions of square miles, in the fairest and most fertile regions of the Old World, into the barrenest deserts."[4]

Marsh's grim scenario both explained the past (making Marsh arguably the first environmental historian) and predicted the future. The same environmental catastrophe that had devastated the Old World, Marsh asserted, now threatened to spread to the United States and the rest of the globe, with potentially apocalyptic consequences: "The earth is fast becoming an unfit home for its noblest inhabitant, and another era of equal human crime and human improvidence . . . would reduce it to such a condition of impoverished productiveness, of shattered surface, of climatic excess, as to threaten the depravation, barbarism, and perhaps even extinction of the species."[5]

One spot that Marsh singled out as being in urgent need of protection was Headley's beloved Adirondack Mountains, which contained the headwaters of several of New York's most important rivers, including the Hudson. While the region's remoteness had so far prevented its development, Marsh feared that with each passing year settlers and lumber companies were whittling away more of the Adirondacks woodlands. Left unchecked, Marsh maintained, such actions would place New York in grave danger: "Nature threw up those mountains and clothed them with lofty woods, that they might serve as a reservoir to supply with perennial waters the thousand rivers and rills that are fed by the rains and snows of the Adirondacks, and as a screen for the fertile plains of the central counties against the chilling blasts of the north wind." Deforestation in the Adirondacks would dry up New York's principal rivers, causing "irreparable injury" to the mills and transportation networks that depended upon them.[6]

To prevent such disaster, Marsh proposed a novel solution: New York should "declare the remaining forest [of the Adirondacks] the inalienable property of the commonwealth" and become the forest's administrator and protector. The current land policy in the United States—converting the public domain into private property—was, in Marsh's opinion, a grave mistake. "It is a great misfortune to the American Union that the State Governments have so generally disposed of their original domain to private citizens," he wrote. "It is vain to expect that legislation can do anything effectual to arrest the progress of the evil [of the destruction of woodlands] . . . except so far as the state is still the proprietor of extensive forests."[7]

Marsh advocated this radical shift in policy for two reasons. The first was a distrust of the inhabitants of the countryside, particularly the small-scale farmers who made up the bulk of the residents in places like the Adirondacks. In keeping with his Whig political beliefs, Marsh viewed these members of the lower classes as lacking the foresight and expertise necessary to be wise stewards of the natural world. *Man and Nature* thus included pointed critiques of "the improvident habits of the backwoodsman" and "the slovenly husbandry of the border settler." Second, Marsh believed that in a world dominated by the search for short-term private gain, only the state had the long-term public interest at heart. Marsh pointed approvingly to Europe, where coalescing national bureaucracies had established state forest academies, carefully regulated forests, and the new science of silviculture. "The literature of the forest, which in England and America has not yet become sufficiently extensive to be known as a special branch of authorship, counts its thousands of volumes in Germany, Italy, and France," he noted. If the Old World's ecological disasters had something to teach the United States, then so did its recent successes in uniting science and the state.[8]

Undergirding *Man and Nature*'s critique of backwoodsmen and its appeals to the lessons of European forestry lay a powerful new vision of nature. In Marsh's view, the natural world existed in a state of balance and stability. "Nature, left undisturbed, so fashions her territory as to give it almost unchanging permanence of form, outline, and proportion," he wrote in a passage anticipating twentieth-century ecology's concept of the self-perpetuating climax community. Within this static model, environmental decline came about almost exclusively from human intrusions. "Man is everywhere a disturbing agent," declared Marsh. "Wherever he plants his foot, the harmonies of nature are turned to discords." (So strongly did Marsh embrace this point, in fact, that he originally proposed titling his work *Man the Disturber of Nature's Harmonies.*)[9]

Man and Nature's unique perspective on the natural world not only made the book a best-seller, it established the text as, in Lewis Mumford's words, the "fountainhead of the conservation movement." Indeed, Marsh's work originated the degradation discourse that would dominate conservationist narratives about landscape change for the next century. The discourse's essential ingredients were a natural world that was stable, predictable, and manageable; a rural populace engaged in "unwise" environmental practices that would have potentially catastrophic ecological consequences if left unchecked; and an interventionist state armed with technical and administrative expertise. Combined with one another, these narrative elements formed the central story of conservation—a tale that prophesied imminent ecological doom, unless natural resources were removed from local control and placed in the hands of scientifically trained governmental managers.[10]

With its dire predictions of what deforestation in the Adirondacks would mean for the state's waterways, *Man and Nature* attracted immediate attention in New York. As early as 1872, the state legislature, prodded by an unlikely alliance of sports hunters who wanted to preserve New York's northern counties as a permanent hunting and camping ground, and industrialists concerned about maintaining an adequate flow of water for the region's mills and canals, formed a committee to look into the feasibility of adopting Marsh's recommendation to establish a park in the Adirondacks. The following year, the committee issued a report concluding "that the protection of a great portion of that forest from wanton destruction is absolutely and immediately required" and calling for the creation of a "timber reserve and preserve" in the Adirondacks. While the committee members drew much of their discussion directly from Marsh, they appended to his argument an additional point of their own: "[Besides] these weighty considerations of political economy, there are social and moral reasons which render the preservation of the forest advisable. . . . The boating, tramping, hunting and fishing expedition afford that physical training which modern Americans—of the Eastern

States—stand sadly in need of, and which we must hope will, with the fashionable young men of the period, yet replace the vicious, enervating, debasing pleasures of the cities. . . . To foster and promote these natural and healthful exercises among the young men of the State, it is necessary in some measure to preserve the game, and the forest which affords it shelter."[11]

This linkage of an environmental crisis (deforestation and water loss) and a social crisis (urbanism and the undermining of traditional models of masculinity) captures the modern and antimodern impulses that, in uneasy combination, lay at the core of the nascent conservation movement. On the one hand, conservation, with its emphasis on using the power of science and the state to rationally manage natural resources, represented a quintessentially modern approach toward the environment. On the other, conservation frequently invoked the Romantic search for authentic experience, in which nature was offered as the antidote to an increasingly industrial, "overcivilized" existence. These two positions did not necessarily contradict one another; it was possible to be an industrialist during the week and a sports hunter on the weekend (as many of the leading proponents of conservation in fact were). But tensions between the two perspectives would, at times, prove difficult to reconcile. As a result, conservation never traveled a simple trajectory. Although its central beliefs remained remarkably consistent—an emphasis on professionalization, on governmental ownership and management of the environment, and on the inherently stable and predictable character of the natural world—conservation charted an irregular orbit around these positions, as first one force than another exerted its gravitational pull on the movement.[12]

In the case of the Adirondacks, recommendations for state action languished until 1883, when a severe drought gripped New York and the water level in its principal rivers, the Hudson, the Mohawk, and the Black, dipped to alarmingly low levels. Concerned with the effect this decline could have on the Erie Canal and downstream mills, the New York Chamber of Commerce and the New York Board of Trade added their weight to calls for state management of the Adirondacks. In response, the New York legislature passed a measure in 1883 forbidding any further sales of state lands in the Adirondacks. Over the next few years, state control over the region ratcheted steadily upward. In 1885, the legislature reorganized its holdings in the Adirondacks into a forest preserve, overseen by a forest commission. In 1892, lawmakers consolidated these efforts into the three-million-acre Adirondack Park, made up of both the Forest Preserve and adjoining private lands. An 1894 constitutional amendment stating that the Forest Preserve was to be "forever kept as wild forest lands" helped ensure the permanence of the state's experiment in conservation. The legislature also took steps to tighten the region's game laws during this period. In 1886, hunters were limited to three deer per year, a number that in 1895 dropped to two per year. Other legislation restricted such traditional hunting practices as jacking (hunting at night using a bright light to blind deer) and hounding (hunting with dogs). In fishing, the use of nets was outlawed in favor of the rod and reel. To enforce this new array of rules, the state created a "forest police," empowered "without warrant, [to] arrest any person found upon the forest preserve violating any provisions of the act creating the commission."[13]

The ultimate result of these actions was to turn the Adirondacks of the mid-1880s into the most advanced experiment in conservation in the United States. Many of the people who would later lead the national conservation movement—Franklin Hough, Bernhard Fernow, Teddy Roosevelt, and Gifford Pinchot among them—gained their first insights into the challenges of American forestry in the woods of northern New York.[14] Moreover, for conservationists, New York's Forest Preserve established a viable new role for the state: active supervisor of the environment. Inspired by the example of the Adirondacks, several prominent conservationist organizations, including both the American Forestry Congress and the federal Division of Forestry (which at the time possessed only an educational function, since there were no national forests to administer), held up New York's Forest Preserve—"this first attempt at making a reality of forest preservation"—as a model to be emulated nationwide.[15] Congress eventually accepted such suggestions in 1891 when it passed the Forest Reserve Act. But during conservation's early years, it was New York's unprecedented undertaking in the Adirondacks that set the pace for the rest of the nation.[16] "Here [in the Adirondacks], then, for the first time on the American continent, had the idea of State forestry, management of State lands on forestry principles, taken shape," observed Fernow in his 1911 textbook, *A Brief History of Forestry.* "A new doctrine of State functions had gained the day."[17]

One point, however, was frequently obscured amid such celebrations: the consequences that the coming of conservation would have for the approximately 16,000 people already living in the Adirondacks.[18] On those rare occasions when New York authorities pondered the impact that their new policies would have on these people, they generally believed that the residents of the Adirondacks—a “scanty population which . . . struggles to compel the inhospitable soil to yield it a miserable existence”—would welcome the benefits that were sure to follow increased state supervision of the environment.[19] The region, after all, was not a flourishing one. It had already experienced considerable out-migration, as many families, tiring of trying to wrest a living from the Adirondacks’ cold climate and poor soils, headed for more fertile lands elsewhere. As early as 1825, the town of Lake Pleasant in Hamilton County had experienced a 30 percent decline in population, and by 1860 the town of Morehouse, also in Hamilton County, had dwindled from 250 people to just four families. This widespread depopulation had turned the Adirondacks landscape into an artifact of what might be termed the “de-frontier” process. Noted the Forest Commission in 1885, “The traveler through this region is struck by a certain peculiarity, and that is, the constant recurrence of deserted homesteads; in many cases he will encounter whole villages, abandoned and going rapidly to decay as if struck by a blight.”[20]

Given such conditions, officials assumed that the region’s residents would readily embrace conservation. “The little settlements already existing in the region are not incompatible with the project [of a park],” concluded the 1873 report of the Commissioners of State Parks. Recognizing the money to be made from the increased tourism that an Adirondacks park would attract, the inhabitants of the region would, the commissioners predicted, “take a direct interest in the welfare of the park” and “would voluntarily protect the game and timber from unlawful destruction.”[21]

There was a grain of truth to this hypothesis. When the Forest Commission dispatched agents in 1885 to interview local inhabitants about their reactions to the newly created Forest Preserve, it found many residents ignorant of the specifics of the reserve but in agreement with the larger project of protecting the Adirondacks’ forests. “I have lived here forty-five years, being a hunter and passing a large portion of my time in the woods,” declared one local. “The woods must be taken care of if they want any left worth calling a forest. I am in favor of the best plan.” Offered another: “We depend on the woods and the attractions of the place for our living, and don’t want to see either destroyed or marred.” “People through this valley are very much in favor of the work of the Forest Commission,” added a resident of Keene Valley in Essex County. “We need the protection, as the woods are our one source of income.”[22]

Despite this promising start, however, relations between conservationists and Adirondackers quickly soured. Following their first patrols, the Forest Commission's newly appointed foresters reported "gross infractions" of the state's new game, timber, and fire laws. Noting the frequent hostility the foresters encountered whenever they tried to arrest those responsible for such crimes, the New York Fisheries Commission concluded that "in the whole Adirondack region…the utmost lawlessness prevail[s]." Contemporary newspaper accounts added to the sense of crisis. In 1889, for example, the *New York Times* published a string of articles bearing such lurid headlines as "Pirates of the Forest," "Stealing Is Their Trade," and "Useless Forestry Laws" that depicted violations of the state's conservation code as common throughout the Adirondacks. As such accounts multiplied, many conservationists began to fear that their celebrated new plans for the region were on the verge of being swept away by a wave of inexplicable popular disorder.[23]

Perhaps in no nation are agrarian fantasies as complex and contradictory as in the United States. Nineteenth-century discussions of the Adirondacks, for instance, pivoted on two countervailing agrarian tropes. The first, which might be called the pastoral, stressed the simplicity and abundance of rural life. "An easy life is theirs," remarked Headley upon encountering some settlers at Raquette Lake: "No taxes to pay—no purchases to make—and during most of the year, fish and deer and moose ready to come almost at their call." William Murray—whose popular 1869 book, *Adventures in the Wilderness: or, Camp-Life in the Adirondacks,* brought a stream of tourists to the region—offered a similar vision: "A more honest, cheerful, and patient class of men cannot be found the world over. Born and bred, as many of them were, in this wilderness, skilled in all the lore of woodcraft, handy with the [fishing] rod, superb at the paddle, modest in demeanor and speech, honest to a proverb, they deserve and receive the admiration of all who make their acquaintance.…Uncontaminated with the vicious habits of civilized life, they are not unworthy of the magnificent surroundings amid which they dwell."

A second trope, which might be called the primitive, focused on the backwardness and privations of rural life. J.P. Lundy, who visited the Adirondacks in the 1870s, saw only the region's "hard and grinding poverty." The typical Adirondacker, Lundy reported, "looked upon all physical and mental superiority with aversion or disdain.…He trapped a little, and too often sold the pelts for whiskey and tobacco instead of procuring food for his hungry wife and children." "The present population [of the Adirondacks] is a sort of immovable sediment, a weedy sort of folk attached to the soil in a blind way," agreed Elizabeth Seelye. "[They] seem to strive only to solve the problem of how to exist with the least possible amount of bodily exertion." In the South, a similar set of images would coalesce during this time into the figure of the shiftless hillbilly. While rural Northeasterners were never subjected to a stereotype as well-defined as this one, the parallel nonetheless existed. "There is in the backwoods of New England an element as untamed and brutal as in any of the new counties of the West and Southwest," proclaimed *Forest and Stream* in 1892. "It is these fellows . . . who are continually poaching on the lakes of northern New York."[24]

Of course, neither pole—the pastoral nor the primitive—offered more than a crude approximation of a place like the Adirondacks. Both interpretations, by seeking to capture the unchanging essence of rural life, missed the dynamism that had long marked the region and its shifting human populations. For much of the 1600s and 1700s, the Adirondacks had been a lightly inhabited border zone fought over by the Iroquois to the south and Huron and Algonquin to the north. Bands from these nations sometimes hunted for moose and beaver in the Adirondacks, but because of the risk of attack and the short growing season, they rarely established permanent villages. Warfare under these circumstances functioned as a sort of crude conservation policy, limiting the ability of native peoples to exploit the region's resources for any extended period of time.[25]

Once the power of the Iroquois was broken in the aftermath of the American Revolution, a variety of newcomers drifted into the area: Yankees from Vermont and the more southerly parts of New York, and French Canadians from the north. Preceding these pioneers were Indian settlers, many of them refugees from tribes such as the Penobscot (an eastern Abenaki people originally from Maine) and the St. Francis (a western Abenaki group originally from Vermont and southern Canada) displaced from homelands farther east. As the settler Harvey Moody recalled in 1860, a number of Native American families were already well established in the Adirondacks when he arrived in the region as a young boy: "When I fust come to the S'nac [Lake Saranac] with father, there was nobody else about there but Injins. I used to meet 'm on the lakes fishin' in their bark canoes, and trappin' about the streams, and huntin' everywheres."[26]

TABLE 1. OCCUPATIONS OF MALE AND FEMALE RESIDENTS OF HAMILTON COUNTY, AGE 18 AND OLDER, 1880

Male		
Agriculture (farmer, hired hand)	564	(48.6%)
Timber industry ("worker in lumberwoods," shingle maker)	228	(19.6%)
Crafts (mason, boatbuilder, blacksmith, carpenter)	56	(4.8%)
Laborer (unspecified)	180	(15.5%)
Professions (minister, teacher, surveyor, clerk)	40	(3.4%)
Services (hotel keeper, guide, gamekeeper)	86	(7.4%)
Miscellaneous (pauper, hermit)	8	(.7%)
TOTAL	1,162	(100%)
Female		
Homemaker ("keeping house," "keeping shanty")	731	(94.7%)
Professions (teacher, nurse)	14	(1.8%)
Domestic service (servant, hotel maid)	19	(2.5%)
Trades (glove maker, dressmaker)	8	(1.0%)
TOTAL	772	(100%)

SOURCE: 1880 Population Census, Manuscript Schedules, Hamilton County, New York, Roll 837, T9, Records of the Bureau of the Census, RG 29, National Archives.

Encroaching white settlers both feuded and intermarried with the Indian peoples they encountered in the Adirondacks.[27] By the time federal census takers arrived in the region in the mid-nineteenth century, New York–born whites had become the predominant group in the region, but there remained Indian families, wives, and husbands scattered throughout the communities of the central Adirondacks. The 1880 census, for example, records that Hamilton County—the only one of New York's northern counties located completely within the Adirondack Park—was home to eleven Indians, eight living at Indian Lake and three at Long Lake.[28] For whites and Indians alike, the most common occupation for men listed in the federal censuses of the 1800s was "farmer," while the activities of women were typically classified as "keeping house." (See Tables 1 and 2.) Neither category illuminated the diversity of economic life in the Adirondacks with much precision. The region's women undertook countless domestic chores, from gardening to gathering medicinal herbs to maintaining the networks of mutuality and

TABLE 2. BIRTHPLACES OF RESIDENTS OF HAMILTON COUNTY, 1880

New York		3,449	(87.8%)
Northeastern United States		129	(3.3%)
Connecticut	11		
Maine	4		
Massachusetts	16		
New Hampshire	9		
New Jersey	4		
Pennsylvania	12		
Rhode Island	3		
Vermont	70		
Southern/Western United States		5	(.1%)
Illinois	3		
South Carolina	1		
Virginia	1		
Canada		144	(3.7%)
Europe		200	(5.1%)
England	36		
France	12		
German States	44		
Holland	3		
Ireland	87		
Scotland	16		
Switzerland	2		
TOTAL		3,927	(100.0%)

SOURCE: 1880 Population Census, Manuscript Schedules, Hamilton County, New York, Roll 837, T9, Records of the Bureau of the Census, RG 29, National Archives

borrowing so vital to rural life at the time. Similarly, Adirondacks men relied on a number of activities to support their families, of which farming was, ironically, one of the less important, as the region's harsh climate and lack of transportation made the production of crops for market a risky undertaking. "There is no inducement for the settler to clear up more land than will furnish him with grass and vegetables for his two or three cattle and his family," explained Headley in 1875. "He can raise nothing for market, for the transportation out costs more than the article is worth." Because neither corn nor wheat grew well in the Adirondacks, the favored crop was potatoes ("Our food was mostly fish and potatoes then for a change we would have potatoes and fish," recalled one early inhabitant), occasionally supplemented by peas, rye, buckwheat, or oats. Crops were planted in late spring—the exact timing often determined by the phases of the moon—and fenced in to prevent the incursions of deer or the settlers' own livestock, which were allowed to roam loose in the surrounding forest.[29]

These same forests provided Adirondackers with much of their annual support. In spring and summer, men collected wild ginseng *(Panax trifolius)* for resale to outside traders, while their wives and children gathered medicinal herbs such as sweet fern *(Comptonia peregrina)* and the wild leeks *(Allium tricoccum),* cowslips *(Caltha palustris),* adder tongues *(Botrychium virginianum),* and berries that Adirondacks families used to supplement their diets. "When the berries came it was nothing but pick berries with mother and the children that were old enough to go," recalled Henry Conklin, an early resident of Herkimer County. In the fall, men—and, upon rare occasion, women—went into the woods in pursuit of deer, bear, or partridges. Younger boys occupied themselves closer to home by setting snares for smaller game like rabbits or woodchucks. All caught fish for their families' tables in the multitude of streams and ponds throughout the Adirondacks. In the winter months, local males ventured into the woods yet again, lacing on their snowshoes to collect valuable forest products such as spruce gum or wild furs. It was not unusual for Adirondacks men to be gone for a week or more on such expeditions, during which they usually camped in bark shanties that they erected wherever they happened to be at the time.[30]

The far-flung character of these undertakings reflected themselves in turn in local property rights. Although state officials in the 1880s charged Adirondackers with looking upon the forests as "a piece of 'commons,' or as a public crib where all may feed who choose," matters were more complex than this assessment implied. In keeping with the common-rights ideologies prevailing elsewhere in the rural United States at this time, locals did regard undeveloped lands, whether state or private, as open to hunting and foraging. Engaging in such activities on another's property "we would not call a trespass," admitted the Adirondacks resident Freeman Tyrrell in 1895. "I know I don't when they go on my lands."[31] These "rights in the woods," however, were hedged by numerous constraints. Inhabitants often considered certain features of the woods, such as game blinds, fish weirs, or traplines, to be—like homesteads or other "improved" areas—exclusive property. Interference with these could prompt violent confrontations, as happened in the late 1800s, when H. Dwight Grant and his friends had an armed standoff with two brothers named Johnson over the right to hunt on Fifth Lake.[32] More important, even those resources theoretically open to all were governed by certain conventions. Adirondacks local David Merrill recalled some of the hunting traditions that prevailed in Franklin County during the late nineteenth century: "In the good old days we went deer hunting, primarily, to get food for the household, and like the Indians we did not pay much attention to the game laws of which there were not very many at that time. However there was a universal code that deer should not be disturbed while 'yarding,' or in the breeding season, and this applied to game birds as well." Ellsworth Hayes of Lake Placid recollected learning a similar "law of the woods" from his grandfather, who told him, "Never kill anything that you do not need." In the absence of laws governing such behavior, these customs sustained themselves through informal norms, enforced through community sanction.[33] Fellow residents might subject those perceived to be violating local practices to everything from ostracization and ridicule—acts which in the region's small, tight-knit villages could have serious consequences—to wrecked boats, killed dogs, and physical assaults. Inhabitants also took measures to exclude those seen as nonmembers of the community from gaining access to local resources, a phenomenon reflected in Adirondacks folklore, which abounds with tales of chasing tourists, Indians, "half-breed" French Canadians, and other interlopers off local forestlands.[34]

This common-rights ideology persisted in the Adirondacks despite the changes that, in the years following the Civil War, pulled the region with increasing force into the expanding national economy. Unlike much of the rest of the American countryside, the economic modernization of the Adirondacks did not center on agriculture—the region remained too remote and its soil too thin to support intensive farming—but rather on the forests themselves. By the 1860s, northern New York had become home to an extensive forest industry composed of tanneries (which used bark from the area's abundant hemlocks to cure hides) and lumber operations (which regularly hired crews of local men to cut and skid logs during the winter months). Although these companies purchased vast portions of the Adirondacks landscape after the Civil War, they seldom tried to close their property to local hunting and foraging, as such activities posed little threat to the spruce, pine, and hemlock that the lumber companies sought. Moreover, these corporations seldom sought to exercise their property rights for very long. Typically, they would cut the marketable timber; then, rather than holding the lands for the decade or two required for a fresh crop of lumber to appear, they would abandon the property, which would eventually be claimed by the state for nonpayment of taxes. Although this practice would leave the region with a legacy of confusing land titles that would take years for the Forest Commission to sort out, the lumber companies' narrow exercise of their property rights also meant that their operations seldom encroached on the uses that Adirondackers had long made of the forest.[35]

Technological limitations posed an additional barrier to the Adirondacks timber industry in the immediate post–Civil War years. Today, the term "lumbering" may conjure up images of vast clear-cuts, but up until the late 1880s most timber operations in the Adirondacks logged on a selective basis. Because companies transported logs to saw mills via streams, only those trees located within a few miles of a waterway could be cut—and then only those species that floated well. Softwoods such as black spruce *(Abies nigra)* and white pine *(Pinus strobus)* were the lumberman's favorites, while hardwoods such as the sugar maple *(Acer saccharinum),* red oak *(Quercus rubra),* red beech *(Fagus ferruginea),* and white birch *(Betula populifolia),* all of which floated poorly, were rarely cut, except for local consumption. These circumstances ensured that only a limited number of the region's trees were felled. "The lumberman did not take more than eight trees to the acre, on an average," explained the Forest Commission in 1891.[36] "The phrase 'lumbered land' is a somewhat misleading one. It does not imply that such land is cleared, devastated, or even stripped of timber. The term is used, locally, to describe lands from which the 'soft wood' (spruce, hemlock, pine and tamarack—one or all) has been taken, leaving the hard wood (birch, cherry, maple, beech, etc.) standing. Generally there is so much of this hard wood left on a 'lumbered' tract that an inexperienced eye glancing over it would scarcely detect the work of an axe. The woodsmen expect to see such land covered with spruce again, large enough to be marketable, in about fifteen years."[37] In fact, Forest Commission records from 1897 indicate that for all the dire accounts of deforestation circulating at the time of the Forest Reserve's creation, most lands in the Adirondacks retained their tree cover, and many never felt the woodsman's ax.[38] (See Table 3.)

Lumbering nonetheless set in motion profound ecological changes in the Adirondacks. The opening up of the forest canopy that accompanied timber operations promoted what ecologists have come to term the edge effect: a transition zone between open land and woodland,

TABLE 3. CLASSIFICATION OF LANDS WITHIN ADIRONDACK PARK, 1897 (IN ACRES)

Cleared for agriculture		75,819	(2.5%)
Wild meadow		724	(>.1%)
Water		59,111	(2.0%)
"Wastelands"		22,424	(.7%)
Burned areas		18,220	(.6%)
"Denuded lands"		61,009	(2.0%)
Forested, soft timber removed		1,627,955	(54.2%)
Untouched forestlands		1,139,593	(37.9%)
	TOTAL	3,004,855	(100.0%)

SOURCE: New York Fisheries, Game, and Forest Commission, *Third Annual Report, 1897,* 269.

rich in grasses and young plants. Such conditions were ideal for deer, which thrive on disturbed habitats, and their numbers rose sharply in the Adirondacks during the nineteenth century. This increase led, in turn, to a decline in the moose. The dominant ungulate in the Adirondacks throughout the 1700s, the moose had all but disappeared by the 1860s. While many contemporary observers attributed the moose's demise to overhunting by local residents, this was not the only factor contributing to the plummeting moose population. Deer carry brain worm, a parasite that, while relatively benign to them, is fatal to moose. Thus, an increase in the deer population usually has negative repercussions for their larger cousins. As the numbers of moose declined—and as newly arriving settlers began to kill predator species such as wolves and mountain lions—the deer population in the Adirondacks continued to climb, transforming the whitetail into the region's leading game animal.[39]

This growth in the whitetail population had a significant impact on another forest industry taking shape in the Adirondacks in the 1860s: the tourist trade. Headley had been an anomaly when he visited the region in the 1849, but following the Civil War, members of a growing urban elite began to flock to the Adirondacks. Many of these visitors were what local residents called "sports"—well-to-do professional men who hoped to indulge in the masculine pastimes of hunting and fishing in one of the largest extant forests in the Northeast. These sports rarely ventured into the Adirondacks' woods without hiring local guides, whose job it was to conduct hunters to likely hunting spots, set up camp, and track deer and other game. Much to their delight, Adirondacks men discovered that at a time when laboring in a lumber camp usually earned only a dollar a day, tourists would pay a guide two or three times that much for a workday that was considerably shorter and less dangerous. Since sports often took meals at, or spent the night at, Adirondacks homes, tourism also gave local women an opportunity to bring their domestic skills as cooks and housekeepers into the marketplace. Indeed, some popular Adirondacks stopping places, such as "Mother Johnson's" and "Aunt Polly's," came to be identified with the female figures who ran them.[40]

For all its monetary benefits, however, tourism unleashed new pressures as well. The arrival of large numbers of sports placed increased demands on the Adirondacks' limited supply of fish and game, while the rise of the tourist industry created fresh class divisions in the region, with a few locals capitalizing on the trade to become large landowners and employers. Perhaps the most successful of these entrepreneurs was Apollos "Paul" Smith, a onetime trapper and guide. In 1852, at the suggestion of one of his clients, Smith built a small "hunter's retreat," where he and his wife could take in eight or ten sports as boarders. Bit by bit, Smith added to his holdings, until by the time of his death in 1912 he owned some thirty-five thousand acres and a four-story hotel overlooking lower St. Regis Lake that could accommodate a hundred guests. Smith's clientele included such members of the eastern upper classes as Gifford Pinchot, who as a child summered in the Adirondacks with his family in 1879, and a young Theodore Roosevelt, who stayed at Smith's when he made his first visit to the Adirondacks in 1871. Besides running a hotel and employing many of his neighbors to wait on his guests, Smith sold lots to wealthy vacationers who wanted to construct summer homes nearby. Although these homes were euphemistically called "camps" after the rough cabins occupied by the region's inhabitants, many became luxurious and exclusive estates. "The guide told me that in some of these 'camps' there was hot and cold water, and in one electric lights," remarked one visitor in 1898. "It all seemed to me like playing at roughing it." Even Smith, in his more candid moments, admitted his bewilderment at the odd business in which he found himself: "I tell you if there's a spot on the face of the earth where millionaires go to play at housekeeping in log cabins and tents as they do here, I have it yet to hear about."[41]

Such developments made the Adirondacks of the late nineteenth century a region that defied easy categorization. It was a place of abandoned farms and of grand new estates, where daily rhythms were set by commercial timber operations and by subsistence agriculture, by wage labor and by household chores, by summer tourism and by winter trapping, foraging, and lumber camps. Asked to state their occupations, many residents thought it best to respond by naming a variety of undertakings. Some, such as guiding, linked them to the emerging tourist economy; others, such as hunting and fishing, were holdovers from previous practices. William Helms of Long Lake, for example, described his occupation as "guiding, hunting and fishing, and anything that a man could turn his hand to in the woods." Seth Pierce phrased it much the same way: "My occupation is guiding, fishing and hunting, and once in a while I take my tools and go at carpenter work." These varied roles testify to the hybridity and unevenness that governed the capitalist transformation of the nineteenth-century American countryside. Seasonal work patterns in a place like the Adirondacks both directed the region's residents inward toward family subsistence and outward toward market production, generating a lifestyle that was neither completely subsistence- nor market-oriented but rather an improvised combination of the two. Already precarious, this arrangement would be subjected to new and profound stresses in the Adirondacks as state officials took their first steps in turning their conservation plans for the region into a reality.[42]