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Scenes of Destruction and Beauty

Sponsored Film, Women Reformers, and the Save-the-Redwoods League

ABSTRACT This essay addresses a surprising convergence of women, cinema, and forest conservation in the 1910s and '20s. I tell the story of a short nonfiction "woman's redwood film" produced in 1919 to anchor a larger analysis of women's shifting roles in the public sphere. Women's clubs played a prominent role in the early American conservation movement; women were also influential in the silent-era film culture of Humboldt County, California. I show how these two roles came together briefly in the sponsorship of an educational film by the Women's Save-the-Redwoods League. While the league continued to use nontheatrical film in the 1920s, its women's auxiliary receded into the background. The marginalization of women in conservation thus bears similarities to the marginalization of women in the film industry as both enterprises became more powerful. Additionally, both cinema and conservation were shaped by the era's virulent white supremacism, though in different ways. KEYWORDS conservation, eugenics, film exhibition, forestry, sponsored film, Save-the-Redwoods League, women's clubs

On November 19, 1924, the president of the Humboldt Women's Save-the-Redwoods League, Laura Perrott Mahan, saved a grove of old-growth redwood trees by standing in front of a Pacific Lumber Company foreman and his crew with their double-bit axes as they tried to illegally log the grove. This action was not photographed or filmed, but it lives on in the lore of the redwoods. The excellent amateur history *Who Saved the Redwoods?* calls Mahan's action "a profound act of civil disobedience," and quotes from a 1953 newspaper recollection of the confrontation: "In desperation, Mrs. Mahan climbed to the flat surface of a freshly cut stump. There she stood and defied the men to proceed. Only then did the work cease for she stood in the path of certain death had work continued. Her husband hastened to Eureka and was granted a temporary restraining order."[1] In 1939, this confrontation between reform woman and logging company was marked by a plaque in Humboldt Redwoods State Park dedicated to the conservation work of Laura

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and her husband James. More recently, Mahan's action has been compared to the redwood tree-sitting of Julia Butterfly Hill in the 1990s.[2] It is certainly tempting to celebrate Mahan and her sister conservationists through the lens of contemporary environmentalism, but of course, Mahan and the Women's Redwood League operated in a world far apart from today's intersectional feminist politics. These white, upper-class, conservationist clubwomen have much to tell us about the gender, race, and class dimensions of the conservation movement one hundred years ago.

Five years before her logging blockade, Mahan made a film—collaborating with others, as was the clubwoman's practice. Along with two other members of the Women's Redwood League, Mahan accompanied Kenneth Kilburn, projectionist for the city of Eureka's newly built Rialto Theater, on a film shoot at the South Fork of the Eel River and the Bull Creek Flats.[3] The Women's Redwood League had hired Kilburn to promote their cause in a short film to be shown alongside the newly released 1919 Hollywood feature *The Valley of the Giants*, starring Wallace Reid. The nonfiction film that resulted was "A 50-foot trailer of the Redwoods, showing scenes of destruction and ones of the great beauty."[4] The Women's League was more than successful in meeting its exhibition goal: the short film was soon purchased by Gaumont News, which showed it as part of its News Weekly in theaters nationwide.[5] It was also exhibited widely in nontheatrical exhibition spaces. This essay tells the story of this 1919 "woman's redwood film," what led to its making, and how its appearance at this specific moment denotes a high-water mark for women's early contributions to forest conservation (see figure 1). The confluence of women's conservation advocacy and early film culture created the conditions of possibility for this film in the late 1910s, a time in which, as Shelley Stamp has shown, women filmmakers such as Lois Weber "asserted cinema's claim to participate in national debates on an equal footing with newspapers, magazines, and other forms of political commentary."[6] But as the early environmental movement became institutionalized in government policies and national organizations in the 1920s, women's environmental activism was sidelined, much as women's filmmaking was sidelined by Hollywood in a process described by Karen Ward Mahar as "remasculinization."[7] This microhistory of the 1919 "woman's redwood film" thus opens out to wider significance, for to understand the importance of women reformers such as Mahan and the role of sponsored film in early conservation, we must locate this short film in the context of its day, which means unraveling some of the contradictions of the early conservation

FIGURE 1. *Humboldt Times* headline, March 6, 1920, p. 2.

movement, its relationship to women's clubs, and the cultural role of cinema in the 1910s and '20s.

Much has been written about the early American conservation movement, but little has been written about its use of motion pictures. The national Save-the-Redwoods League, a prominent environmental organization founded in California in 1918 by several influential men from the East, used film in its publicity campaigns of the 1920s and '30s to raise awareness about the plight of redwood forests. The Save-the-Redwoods League was the first environmental nonprofit to make use of motion pictures, which it employed along with photography, radio, magazines, newspapers, and direct mail in its innovative publicity campaigns of the 1920s. The league's experimentation with motion pictures was limited but significant. The league made and acquired educational/promotional films about redwoods and screened them in nontheatrical venues such as schools, churches, public halls, and club meetings held in private homes. The league also reached out to the Hollywood film industry in efforts to publicize its cause. The league was ahead of its time when compared with the two other major environmental organizations of the day, the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society, which did not make use of motion pictures for publicity until the post–World War II era. The US government was developing its own environmental uses of film in the 1910s and '20s in the Department of Agriculture's extension service, and those state-sponsored practices were much larger than the league's small-scale, ad hoc use of film. But for an environmental nonprofit in the 1920s, the

league's use of motion pictures was technologically forward-looking, in keeping with its other up-to-date public relations efforts. As this article will show, it was the women's branch that initiated the league's use of motion pictures in 1919.

The early Save-the-Redwoods League employed the most modern public relations tools. But alongside its progressive approach to media, the league's vision of conservation emerged from explicitly hierarchical principles that justified saving redwoods as "the greatest" and "most noble" tree species. This logic of exceptionalism in decline was rooted in a curious identification with redwood trees as the "remnant of a great race."[8] In using this logic, the league was not an outlier but in step with the conservation movement of its day, whose vision of biological evolution was shaped by the white supremacist politics of the Progressive Era, particularly the racist pseudoscience of eugenics. Two of the league's three cofounders, Madison Grant and Henry Fairfield Osborn, were cofounders of the American Eugenics Society. Grant also published *The Passing of the Great Race* in 1916, a book that articulates a theory of "race suicide," an early version of the so-called great replacement theory that has resurfaced among neofascist groups today. Based in New York City, Grant was also a cofounder of the Bronx Zoo and a trustee of the American Museum of Natural History. The connection between the league and eugenics is clear. As historian Susan Schrepfer has shown, "at least eleven of the leading men in the league" were proponents of eugenics.[9]

The Save-the-Redwoods League is a particularly important and vexing case study in the history of environmental conservation, for it crystallizes the contradictions of Progressive Era thinking and political action. On the one hand, the league was (and is) an environmental organization that has successfully saved more than 200,000 acres of redwood forest from logging since its founding just over a century ago. At the same time, the league emerged from a particularly potent node of elite, racist white culture. To make the ideological picture even more complicated, the league featured a relatively high degree of participation by women reformers, whose allegiance to the eugenics movement is less easily traced. It is difficult to separate the interlocking threads of progressive and regressive thinking in early conservation, but the history of the league provides an opportunity to take a closer look. In recent years, the league has denounced its eugenics origins and taken concrete steps to work for environmental justice, a point I return to in my conclusion.

Today, thirty-nine silent 16 mm films made by the Save-the-Redwoods League between 1927 and 1941 survive. These films have been digitized by the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, which also holds the league's extensive paper archive. As it turns out, this group of films does not include the 1919 "woman's redwood film." But these extant thirty-nine films provide evidence of 1920s conservation ideology, including gendered and racialized ideas about nature. And though these surviving films were made by men, they were often *exhibited by* women's clubs to raise money in support of the league. One larger story here is about the prominence of women's clubs in the early conservation movement, particularly forestry. Women's clubs from across the country were instrumental in helping to preserve several redwood groves that became part of Humboldt Redwoods State Park, Redwood National Park, Redwood State Park, and Big Basin Redwoods State Park. Another part of this story concerns the role of film in the early conservation movement. Mahan and the Humboldt Women's Save-the-Redwoods League were among the first conservationists to use motion pictures to promote their cause. While there has been some attention to the role of women in early conservation, and there has been some work on the history of the league, there has been no scholarly work on these films. Consigned to their gendered role as "amateurs" working as volunteer activists, women nonetheless achieved prominence in the early conservation movement, before they were sidelined as the movement professionalized in the 1920s. Moreover, white clubwomen across the United States missed (or rather, rejected) the opportunity to join forces with Black clubwomen who were also working on environmental issues. As for the local example of the Humboldt Women's Save-the-Redwoods League, in making a "woman's redwood film," Mahan and her sister conservationists innovated a new form of media advocacy for the environment.

WOMEN'S CLUBS AND FOREST CONSERVATION

Redwood trees grow only along the coast of Northern California and Southern Oregon. They are among the oldest living things on earth; some are over two thousand years old. Only about 5 percent of old-growth redwood forest remains today. Before the 1840s, almost none of the redwood forest had been cut. Indigenous Yurok, Wiyot, Hupa, Karuk, Whilkut, and Sinkyone people, among other tribal groups, have lived among the redwoods for thousands of years, developing sustainable relationships with the land in which redwood

trees played a sacred role. Indeed, it is now recognized that Indigenous land stewardship "significantly influenced the biological diversity and abundance" of these forests.[10] Spanish settlers arriving in the late 1700s cut some trees for building materials, but large-scale logging did not begin until Mexico lost Alta California early in 1848. The discovery of gold one week before California was annexed by the United States led to the influx of waves of white colonial settlers. Already weakened by European diseases and the violence of the California Mission system, Native American tribes after US annexation were systematically attacked, murdered, and displaced in deliberate, yet ultimately unsuccessful, attempts to annihilate the region's Indigenous population.[11]

Logging continued unabated for decades, destroying the redwood forests while providing raw materials for building the cities, ships, and railroads of the quickly modernizing United States. The railroad tie is an apt symbol of this extractive modernization, since redwood was used for most railroad ties. By the early twentieth century, there was a public fascination with the logging industry, evidenced by a growing number of articles, novels, and images of logging, but also a growing outcry to save the remaining redwood forests. The argument for saving these trees was multifaceted: partly a reaction against the previous wholesale destruction of US forests east of the Mississippi, and partly a genuine love for the trees inspired by the magical quality specific to redwood forests, which can only be understood by visiting them in person.[12] There was also the fear of declining exceptionalism that haunted elite American culture in the Progressive Era.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a small number of men wielded the power of the state to establish a new relation to the land, in a movement then called "conservation." This word, popularized by Gifford Pinchot, the first head of the US Forest Service, joined together principles of efficient resource management (especially the idea of avoiding waste) with a goal of balancing development interests with public (settler) interests.[13] Most famously, the national parks system (established in 1916) preserved large swaths of monumental land for recreational use. Less famously but with more acreage under their dominion, the US Forest Service (established in 1906), the Bureau of Land Management (established 1946, previously known as the General Land Office, established 1812), and other federal agencies were put in place to establish the distribution and management principles for land outside cities and small towns. This complex system of public land management, established in the Progressive Era and further

bureaucratized in the subsequent century, underpins American ideas of nature and wilderness that still dominate today.

Historians reassessing the early conservation movement have challenged an oversimplified, virtuous history of environmentalism, exploring the ways in which conservation was shaped by racism, sexism, classism, and settler colonialism.[14] The national parks, celebrated by Ken Burns's 2009 documentary TV series as *America's Best Idea*, were produced out of colonial practices of Indigenous removal in order to fabricate an idea of wilderness as unsettled land, thus transforming undeveloped land into recreation landscapes.[15] While the ideal of preserving forests is more important than ever today, in the age of climate change and mass extinction, the early conservationists preserved keystone species through what can be characterized as an iteration of eugenics logic. Concerned only with charismatic megaflora and fauna, and working before the scientific concept of ecosystems had been developed, their achievements in habitat conservation were accomplished almost by accident. As Thomas C. Leonard puts it in his book *Illiberal Reformers*, "The progressives offered uplift to some but exclusion for others, and did both in the name of progress. . . . Progressivism's legacy is this strange and unstable compound of compassion and contempt."[16]

Women were involved with the American conservation movement from the start, but their role was highly constrained. In keeping with the patriarchal doctrine of gendered "separate spheres," wealthy and middle-class women of means, consigned to the domestic sphere, had few opportunities to make an impact outside the home; the primary outlet for such ladies was to join a woman's club.[17] While some groups were explicitly political, many women's clubs strove to remain deferential, innocuous, and to avoid controversy. Indeed, examining early women's clubs through the lens of conservation history illuminates some of the fault lines of what was then called the "woman movement," which was by no means homogenous. As Nancy Cott has written, "By the close of the [nineteenth] century the spectrum of ideology in the woman movement had a see-saw quality: at one end, the intention to eliminate sex-specific limitations; at the other, the desire to recognize rather than quash the qualities and habits called female, to protect the interests women had already defined as theirs and give those much greater public scope."[18] Social problems connected to reproductive labor such as child welfare and education were readily legible as "women's issues," and women's clubs took them up not so much to champion women's rights but to lay claim to them as a kind of woman's territory. Late nineteenth-century

women's clubs first concentrated on literature and education, but by the early twentieth century many had added a set of conservation issues to their agenda.

Predicated on the malleability of the concept "nature," whose long history as a gendered and gendering term has been analyzed by pioneering ecological feminists such as Carolyn Merchant and Val Plumwood, women could most readily participate in those aspects of the early conservation movement that were gendered feminine.[19] Rapid urbanization was contributing to a new set of beliefs about the importance of play and outdoor recreation, giving rise to the playground movement, the urban parks movement, and the Fresh Air Movement, all of which featured significant involvement from women's groups. Organizations such as New York City's Fresh Air Fund, founded in 1877, contributed to the idea of "the redemptive countryside."[20] The belief in nature's magical healing powers was rooted in a fast-growing antiurban sentiment that began to take shape in this era. Proudly calling themselves "municipal housekeepers," many women's groups launched civic cleanliness and public health initiatives, which were viewed as extensions of the domestic realm.[21] Women were central to the early Audubon Society, and many women joined garden clubs. The all-women Garden Club of America, formed in 1913, became an important supporter of the Save-the-Redwoods League, raising funds to preserve a grove in its name for the league in 1931. African American women also had a strong tradition of mutual associations, some predating the Progressive Era, including societies for planting and agriculture, along with garden clubs.[22] Indeed, both white and Black reformers were strong advocates of the nature study movement, another important conservationist cause of the Progressive Era.[23] But the powerful General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), founded in 1890 to unite thousands of women's clubs nationwide, voted in 1902 to exclude Black women from their all-white federation of clubs.

While municipal housekeeping and gardening can be understood as extensions of the domestic sphere, Progressive-Era women were, perhaps surprisingly, deeply invested in forestry. In fact, forestry was briefly considered a "women's issue" in this historical moment. The GFWC, for example, maintained a department of forestry alongside its department of public health. Pinchot praised the forest advocacy of women reformers, writing in his 1910 book that, "Few people realize what women have already done for conservation, and what they may do." He singled out women's groups in Philadelphia, Minnesota, and California for their accomplishments in forest

conservation.[24] Women were involved with the American Forestry Association (AFA), welcomed as members, as attendees at the organization's annual meetings, and as contributors to its journal, *American Forestry*. In an article published in the 1908 issue of the AFA's journal, reformer Lydia Adams-Williams wrote: "One has but to attend any gathering of representative women . . . to learn that there is an overwhelming sentiment and a consensus of opinion in favor of preserving forests and conserving natural resources."[25] According to Williams, by 1910 there were hundreds of women's clubs in the United States devoted to nature conservation, with a membership totaling one million.[26] Indeed, as Adam Rome has argued, the AFA "saw women as a kind of grassroots auxiliary to the professional conservation movement, especially when club members made 'utilitarian' rather than aesthetic arguments for forest conservation."[27]

In Humboldt County, California, in the 1910s, clubwomen were already active in nature conservation before the creation of the Save-the-Redwoods League. As historian Cameron Binkley explains, Humboldt women worked on "the creation of children's playgrounds, support for city parks, and the beautification of towns and cemeteries by planting trees and flowers, cleaning up refuse, and regulating the use of billboards. Moreover, club women frequently organized social outings for themselves and their families amid the redwoods. On these occasions, women could combine their interests in promoting children's welfare, family life and health, and aesthetic appreciation."[28] Laura Mahan was already hosting meetings at her home in 1914 to unite clubwomen in support of a redwood park.[29] When the national Save-the-Redwoods League was launched in 1918 by influential men visiting from outside the region, the cause gained national attention because of these men's social prestige. In effect, with the founding of the league, women's forest conservation advocacy in Humboldt became professionalized.

NORTH COAST WOMEN AND SILENT-ERA FILM

Alongside the twin poles of redwood logging and conservation, motion pictures played an outsized role in California's north coast communities in the 1910s and '20s. The women of Humboldt County seem to have understood early on that the movies could be an important source of publicity for their remote area. The region's movie theaters cultivated a sizeable number of female film spectators. Not only were there plentiful female heroines in the serial queen films of the era, but local women probably appreciated the

surprising number of films that dramatized stories about lumbering, the industry that defined their region and employed so many of their husbands and sons. Many films of the 1910s were shot on location amid the redwood trees of Santa Cruz, California (about 450 miles south of Humboldt), including *A Girl of the Timber Claims* (Paul Powell, 1917), starring Constance Talmadge and *A Romance of the Redwoods* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1917), starring Mary Pickford. *A Lass of the Lumberlands*, a serial vehicle for Helen Holmes, was filmed on location in Humboldt County in August and September 1916. This fifteen-reel serial was produced by Signal Pictures, the newly formed independent production company of Holmes and her husband, J. P. McGowan, who also directed the series (see figure 2). Signal was short-lived; it went out of business when its distributor, Mutual, dissolved in 1918, after Holmes had completed three serials.[30] *A Lass of the Lumberlands* is no longer extant, but its nationwide distribution helped shape a popular image of California's redwood forests and the lumber industry. The serial was successful, with exhibitors proclaiming that it broke box-office records; Homes was praised for her trademark stunt-filled performances, and the

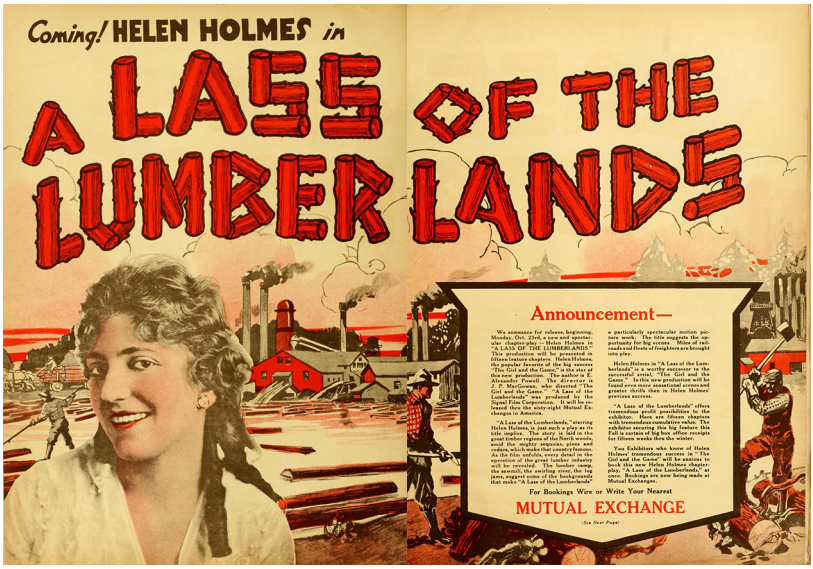

FIGURE 2. Advertisement for *A Lass of the Lumberlands* (Signal Pictures, 1916–17), *Moving Picture World*, October 7, 1916. This and other two-color advertisements for the fifteen-reel serial (which is no longer extant) were published widely in the motion picture trade press.

series' scenery and portrayal of the logging industry were particularly singled out: "It shows for the first time . . . the felling of huge trees, how they are dragged to streamside, how they are floated to mill, how log jams form and are dislodged by dynamite exploded under the water, how the logs are ripped into lumber at the mills, and the transportation of the commercial product to market to help make the houses we live in."[31]

For the local community, this high-profile series shot on location in their region signaled a chance to bring attention to the logging industry and redwood conservation. Though it seems counterintuitive now, industry and conservation were not typically opposed in this era. Conservation-minded people might distinguish between "good" and "bad" lumbermen, but they did not reject the logging industry outright.[32] The local press widely covered the presence of the film's cast and crew. They stayed at the Hotel Arcata, and the Arcata Chamber of Commerce donated a "temporary studio" for them to work in, when not shooting outside among the trees.[33] The local Chamber of Commerce felt that the production was "an opportunity to present to the world a conception of the magnitude of the wonderful redwood forests found only in this state and, in addition to being a great boost for all northern California and Humboldt in particular, will have not a little weight in creating sentiment in favor of their conservation."[34] After shooting only the first three of fifteen episodes, the production company had to leave early due to fog and cloudy weather. As they left, director McGowan declared, "never before have I met with such a hearty welcome and such sincere co-operation as that accorded my company during our stay here. The donation of a lot and studio equipment came as an unexpected and decidedly pleasant surprise. . . . The scenic effects possible in the surrounding country are, I believe, unsurpassed for picture purposes anywhere on this coast."[35] *A Lass of the Lumberlands* was exhibited worldwide; locally it was shown at the Colonial Theater in Eureka beginning in November 1916, and a novelization of the serial was published weekly in the *Humboldt Times*.

Despite the ballyhoo, *A Lass of the Lumberlands* was not actually the first time redwood logging had been shown in motion pictures. A number of films about logging different tree varieties in other parts of the country had already been made, but one previous logging film brought global attention to Humboldt's redwoods: *Cutting California Redwoods* by the Essanay Company. Released in 1912, Essanay distributed the film nationwide and internationally, and it was reviewed in *Moving Picture World*:

> There is something about these great giants of the forest that impresses one with a feeling of awe and veneration; and when it is recollected that they had raised their lofty heads hundreds of years before Israel toiled in Egypt, we cannot forbear to view their felling as an act of sacrilege. The U.S. government, however, has provided against the extinction of the great redwood forests and the scenes shown in this film are on private property and not on the reservation.[36]

The forest "reservation" spoken of in this review (and likely in the nonextant film's intertitles) was not yet established (see figure 3). But this language in the review indicates that the idea of forest conservation was widely understood by the public in 1912.

As it turns out, the production of this Essanay film was instigated by a woman in Humboldt County. Here we come to one of the most intriguing figures in this story, a well-known local exhibitor and sometime film producer known as Mrs. Pettengill. As one-half of the husband-and-wife cinema exhibition team known as Pettengill and Pettengill, Mrs. Pettengill appears frequently in the local press in the 1910s. She was clearly the more active of the two in the film business (her husband's doings are rarely described), though she is always referred to by her last name (or as Mrs. Bert Pettengill).[37] An article announcing her as the purchaser of the Pastime Theatre in Eureka explains that "Mrs. Pettengill [has] gained an enviable reputation as a theatrical manager" (see figure 4).[38] In addition to the Pastime Theatre, the Pettengills managed the Minor Theatre in Arcata and several other movie houses in the region.[39]

In 1912, the Pettengills invited Jesse Robbins of the Essanay Film Company to make "Films showing the pictures of the redwoods and the logging industry of this county."[40] The press reported that Mrs. Pettengill had conceived the plan and made two trips on her own to Essanay's office in Niles to persuade the company to send a filmmaker 300 miles north to Humboldt.[41] Mrs. Pettengill's tenacity is impressive. Passenger travel from Eureka to San Francisco could best be undertaken by steamer ship at this time; the San Francisco to Trinidad line of the San Francisco and Northwestern Railway was not completed until 1914, and Highway 101 construction, begun in 1917, was not completed until 1926. Upon the arrival of cameraman Robbins in Eureka on July 22, Mr. and Mrs. Pettengill personally escorted him to the lumber camps and around the area as he filmed. According to one news story, many prominent society women made requests "to appear in the pictures in some capacity," though reviews of the film give no indication that this

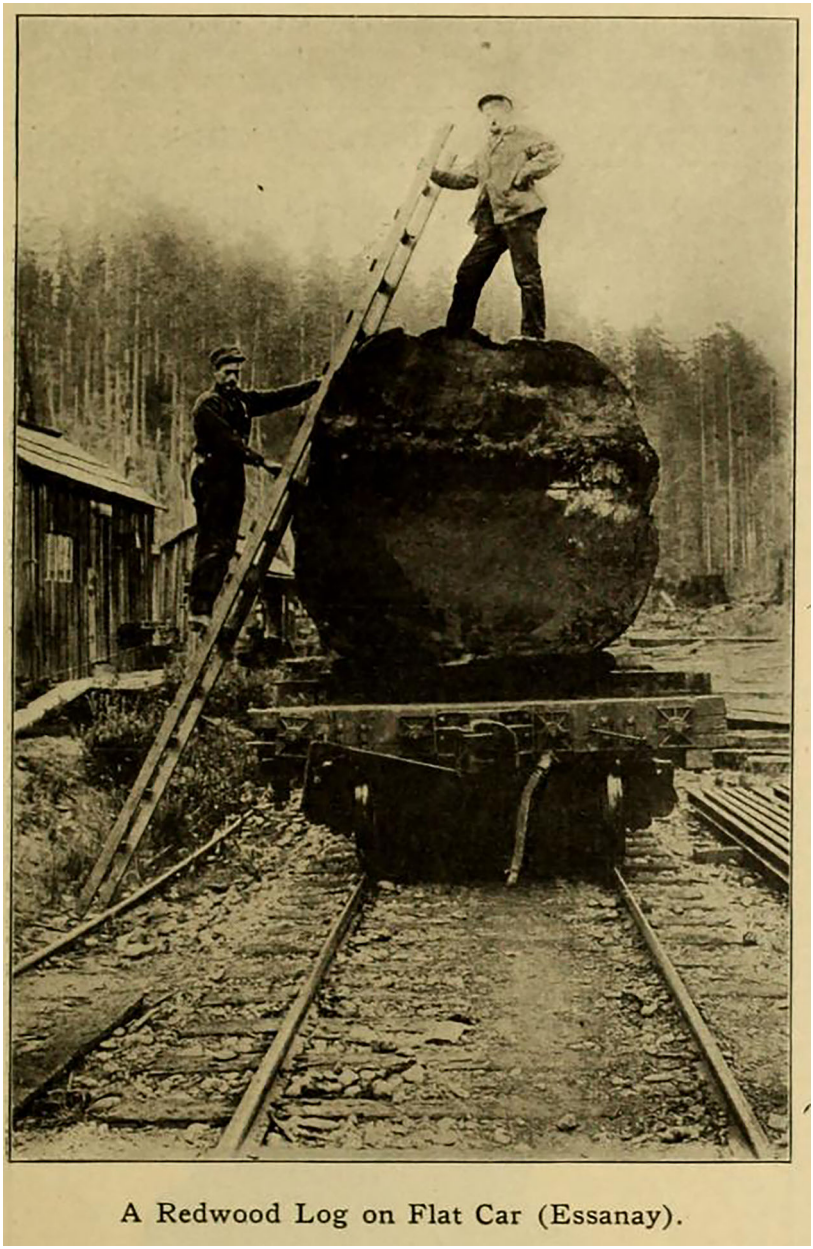

FIGURE 3. Frame from *Cutting California Redwoods* (Essanay, 1912). From a review in *Moving Picture World*, November 16, 1912, p. 667.

FIGURE 4. Pastime Theatre, Eureka, California, circa July 1910. Proprietress Mrs. Pettingill stands in the center, flanked by ushers Louis Merryman on the left and Everett Francis on the right. (Louis was Mrs. Pettingill's son from a previous marriage.) Note the two costumed children standing in front. Depicted on the posters are, from left to right: *Rebellious Betty* (Pathé, July 1, 1910, comedy, 397 feet), Vitagraph stock company poster, *A Darling Confusion* (Essanay, July 6, 1910, comedy, 484 feet), *The Fire Chief's Daughter* (Selig, June 30, 1910, drama, 1,000 feet). Humboldt County Historical Society.

happened.[42] After a few months' delay, Mrs. Pettengill took another solo steamer trip to San Francisco in November, "to superintend the putting together of the film made from these pictures. The film company has held the matter in abeyance pending the time she or Mr. Pettingill could come to Niles to say just what should be put in and what left out."[43]

Locally, *Cutting California Redwoods* was exhibited to great fanfare at the Pastime from November 30 to December 10, 1912, and it was praised in the local newspaper for bringing much free publicity to the region. Mrs. Pettengill's actions to get this film made—acting much like a film producer, as well as editing and exhibiting the film—foreshadow the actions of the women reformers of the Save-the-Redwoods League in the same community seven years later.[44] Mrs. Pettengill was clearly an exhibitor with a reformist bent: she supported a local tin can collection day as part of a campaign to clean up Eureka, and her Pastime Theater was designed to be "a place where parents can take their children and rest assured that they will be both

instructed and entertained."[45] It seems, then, that in addition to the numerous movie fans among the women of Humboldt County, there was at least one woman involved with the business side of the film industry as an exhibitor and occasional producer/editor of films. This gendered engagement with film is further demonstrated by the Women's League's foray into motion pictures in 1919. Before turning to the film, I provide context with a brief account of the league's formation.

THE SAVE-THE-REDWOODS LEAGUE AND MODERN MEDIA

The Save-the-Redwoods League pioneered a new form of environmental preservation: the purchase of private land. Since all the best redwood forest acreage was already owned by private interests, which were mostly logging companies, a national park could not be established out of public land, as had been done elsewhere. Instead, the league was launched to raise money to purchase land for conservation. This ingenious strategy of fundraising from private donors was enabled by new tax laws passed in 1917 that enabled tax-free charitable donations. Early nongovernment environmental groups such as the league grew out of the era's vast network of voluntary clubs; groups such as the Audubon Society (founded 1905) and the Sierra Club (founded 1892) also began as clubs before they became nonprofit organizations. The league was exceptionally forward-looking, building its network of members on the top of existing voluntary clubs while making use of the most current financial models and media technologies available. Moreover, the league was allied with the leading edge of science in the 1920s; its early membership included a core group of scientists and professors as well as businessmen and professionals.[46] The league's third cofounder, John C. Merriam, was a paleontologist at the University of California, Berkeley, and the league's first offices were located on the UC Berkeley campus. In the 1920s, the leading edge of science and eugenics were not incompatible.

The league embraced modern media largely because of Newton Drury, an important figure in American conservation. Drury began as a public relations man working for the league and quickly became its executive secretary. He later worked in several key roles for the California State Parks, and in 1940 he became the fourth director of the US National Park Service. In late 1919, the league hired the Drury Brothers Advertising Company to promote its cause. Graduates of UC Berkeley, Newton and his brother Aubrey had formed their advertising agency on returning from military service in World

War I. Newton had taught English and argumentation at Berkeley before the war and was well known by the University of California figures who formed the core of the early league. In working for the league, Drury was tasked with the job of devising "a concerted program to get more and more support for [redwood] preservation, to establish an organization with membership to solicit funds and have some influence upon legislation."[47] Thanks to Drury's leadership, the league's fight to save the redwoods became one of the most galvanizing environmental issues of the 1920s. The Drury Company used all manner of modern public relations media to promote the cause of the redwoods, such as distributing a color windshield map to league members (see figure 5) and pioneering direct mail solicitation with a shrewd sense of photography and graphic design in their mailings (see figure 6). By 1927, the league was making use of films shot by nontheatrical film companies and

FIGURE 5. Windshield emblem for league members, 1924, front and back. Save-the-Redwoods League Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

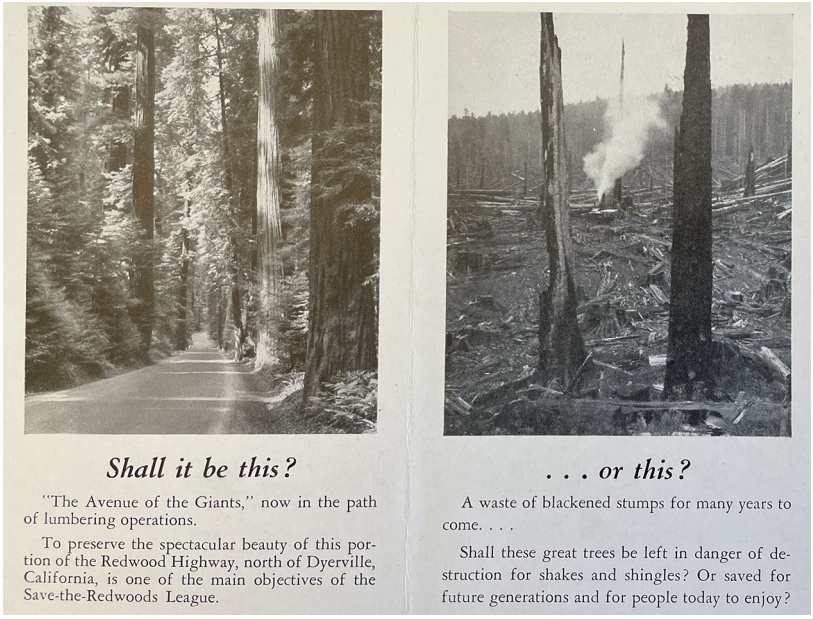

FIGURE 6. Direct mail brochure, early 1920s. Save-the-Redwoods League Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

amateurs, and Newton Drury himself even shot and edited some footage that survives today in the Bancroft archive. But it was the clubwomen of Humboldt who made the first redwood films, and who took motion pictures seriously in the 1910s.

Though it had been founded a year earlier, the national Save-the-Redwoods League held its first board meeting in San Francisco on August 2, 1919, in response to new logging operations that had sprung up along the highway as it was being constructed.[48] Stephen T. Mather, director of the three-year-old National Park Service, was at this meeting, as was Madison Grant, John C. Merriam, Robert Gordon Sproul, and Benjamin Ide Wheeler of UC Berkeley, and businessman J. D. Grant. That same week, clubwomen up in Humboldt met with Ben Blow, manager of the Good Roads bureau of the California State Automobile Association, who spoke about the importance of high-quality roads for tourism and the parks movement. A feasibility study for a redwood national park had just been ordered by the US Congress that summer; because of private land ownership, that plan was scrapped (the Redwood National Park that exists today was not established until 1968).

This August 5 meeting with clubwomen took place at the Rialto Theater, where Mr. Blow showed the audience a reel of "good roads pictures." A *Humboldt Times* article notes that "a large crowd viewed the pictures and listened to Blow," after which the women passed a resolution to take action on behalf of redwood conservation.[49]

That weekend, city officials and clubwomen met with Mather, Grant, and others who had traveled to Humboldt from San Francisco after their board meeting.[50] The next day, on August 9, the clubwomen founded the Humboldt Women's Save-the-Redwood League.[51] This was a local women's club, organized independently from the national, male-dominated league. The group's stated intention was to reach every woman in Humboldt County, and the price of membership was set intentionally low at 50 cents ($8.60 in 2023 dollars). While these membership fees would have been too expensive for many women, the democratic impulse here is worth noting. In towns around the county, league members set up tables to recruit new members in locations such as Mathews Piano House in Eureka and the Citizens'

FIGURE 7. Members of the Humboldt Women's Save-the-Redwoods League in 1919. From left, Mrs. A. J. Monroe, Mrs. Kate Harpst, driver Frank Silence, Mrs. T. Atkinson, and Mrs. Fred Georgeson. Cal Poly Humboldt Special Collections.

Furniture Store in Ferndale.[52] By December, several newspapers picked up an Associated Press story announcing, "800 Women to Save Redwoods of North."[53] According to US census data the 1920 population of Humboldt County was 37,413, which means (according to a very rough estimate) that

FIGURE 8. Laura Perrott Mahan in 1890. Humboldt County Historical Society.

the Women's League could count nearly 5 percent of female residents of the county among its members. Each town in Humboldt County was represented by a vice president. As historian Binkely notes, "at its core were about thirty-five women who met on a regular basis in a member's home. The size of the core group was typical of a traditional women's club. Its officer-heavy structure, however, allowed the group to mobilize a much larger membership."[54] The group's nucleus was composed of prestigious society women, many of whom were wives of prominent local businessmen or lumber magnates (see figure 7). While it is unclear how many of these women patronized the cinema, Women's League president Laura Mahan was clearly interested in film (see figure 8).

THE "WOMAN'S REDWOOD FILM"

The Women's League began its film activism right away. President Mahan and secretary Amy Hunter wrote to film studios Vitagraph and Paramount to ask if a promotional redwoods slide could be shown before the commercial films *The Little Boss* (1919) and *The Valley of the Giants*, both of which featured stories set in the redwoods.[55] Local newspapers had covered the production of *Valley of the Giants* when it was shot on location earlier that year, noting its "attractive cast," which included Wallace Reid and Grace Darmond. Director James Cruze praised the "the progressive and virile men" of the area and their "friendly interest" in the shoot (see figure 9).[56] Mahan and Hunter's letter-writing campaign was presumably the start of negotiations that led them to make their film, "assurance having been previously given by the Lasky company that if the film were furnished, the producers of 'The Valley of the Giants' would run it as a trailer."[57] On October 15, 1919, they shot their film. Cameraman Kilburn was accompanied by three members of the Women's League: Mahan, Hunter, and a Mrs. E. T. Williams. They filmed on the South Fork of the Eel River and the Bull Creek Flats. The resulting short was likely edited by Kilburn.

While I have yet to find hard evidence that the "women's redwood film" was shown as a short with *Valley of the Giants*, the league was ultimately more successful in reaching viewers than originally imagined. The short screened at the huge California Auto Show in San Francisco in February 1920, at the California Federation of Women's Clubs annual meeting, which convened in Ukiah in April 1920, and "has been used in a number of lectures given in various cities of the state. It is now being used to illustrate a series of lectures

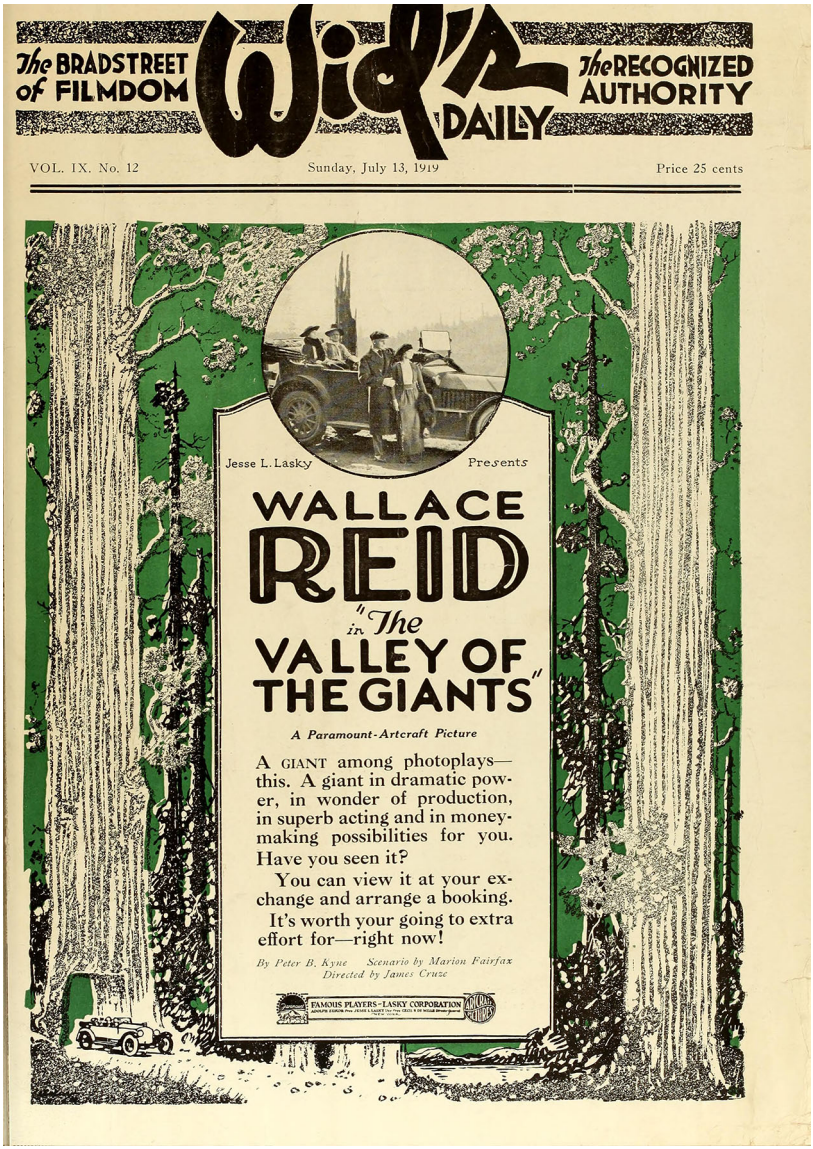

FIGURE 9. Advertisement for *The Valley of the Giants* (James Cruze, 1919), *Wid's Daily*, July 13, 1919.

given under the extension department of the University of California, where it will continue to plead the cause of the redwoods."[58] Members of the Women's League praised the short film for being "worth thousands of dollars in advertising value."[59] Not only was it screened in nontheatrical venues; it

also was purchased by Gaumont News. The Women's League retained a single circulation print, which it loaned out for nontheatrical screenings. As explained in the *Humboldt Times*, "The copy of the film was sent back to the woman's league by the purchasing company [Gaumont News] for its own use."[60] Likely due to the success of this film in the *Gaumont News Weekly*, Kilburn was hired by the Fox News Company to make a similar film for its own news weekly in March 1920.[61]

The Women's League's use of film stands in contrast to the male-dominated national Redwoods League, which was unaware that *Valley of the Giants* had even been filmed. Newton Drury wrote to Paramount Pictures in 1921, "We are interested in knowing whether your company has ever filmed . . . *Valley of the Giants*. . . . We have been informed that the book was filmed and released by you at one time," he explained.[62] Drury expressed interest in making a promotional film, but he lacked funding for this purpose in the early 1920s. In a letter exchange with Miles Brothers, an industrial and educational film producing company based in San Francisco, Drury stated that "the League is still in the position of not having funds for this purpose."[63]

Women played an important role bringing public attention to the cause of redwood conservation, but it ultimately took the combined efforts of many different forces to save the first stands of redwood forest. The national Save-the-Redwoods League's membership drive gained speed quickly, and by December 10, 1920, there were 4,082 members.[64] Stephen Mather, director of the new National Park Service, and California congressman William Kent each personally contributed $15,000 to the league, and Humboldt County appropriated $30,000 for the cause; most importantly, the state of California passed an appropriation bill in 1921 to contribute $300,000 additional funding to purchase redwood forest land. This land was donated to the state, to be managed by the State Board of Forestry. As Newton Drury recalled in his oral history, "There was a great deal of effort involved, of course, and it comprised the combined efforts of a great many people. The initial holdings were acquired in 1920 along what is now U.S. Highway 101, the Redwood Highway, in Humboldt County. Our program was not dissimilar to putting together a jigsaw puzzle. There were many, many relatively small private holdings along this new highway, and we raised money and purchased them usually, as the saying is, just a jump ahead of the sheriff, or really just a jump ahead of the sawmills."[65]

But then, after the Humboldt clubwomen had completed their flurry of collective action, they chose to affiliate with the men and their more powerful, national League. As recounted in 1932, "The local league decided to affiliate with the national Save-the-Redwoods League, yet still retain its identity."[66] League membership rolls show that all the Humboldt redwood clubwomen paid their dues to join the national league in 1920.[67] After this, their filmmaking ceased, and their conservation efforts became less public-facing. It seems likely that the league's clubwomen realized the limits of their power and chose to ally with a group of more powerful and affluent white men. The Humboldt women's group continued in some form, however, as clarified in a 1927 letter from Mahan to Drury expressing the Women's Redwood League's endorsement of Senate bills no. 439, 440, and 441—the bills establishing the California State Parks.[68]

SAVING THE REDWOODS WITH SPONSORED FILM

The local Women's Redwood League had used film to promote the cause in 1919; it would be another eight years before the men running the national Redwoods League began making use of it. In 1926, the California state bonds campaign began heating up, and the league began turning its attention to film, this time on the initiative of Drury. The league worked for two years to generate voter support for the $6 million State Park Bond vote in November 1928, and to raise private funds to fulfill California's fiscal requirement that "half the purchase price of each [state park] project must be furnished by private gift or from sources other than the State."[69] For this campaign, radio and motion pictures were used, along with many other kinds of publicity proposed or created by the Drury company. The league also began courting women's clubs in earnest. "Mr. Grant" (it is unclear if this is Madison Grant or J. D. Grant) spoke at an unspecified woman's club meeting in 1926, trying to gain support by using fawning words: "Much of this progress (and much of the accomplishment expected in the future) could not have been brought about except through the constant support and co-operation of the women's clubs of California. It was their support that made possible the passage of the first appropriation bill by the California State Legislature in 1921. . . . Now, with its big program before it, the League relies upon the continued co-operation and support of the Women's Clubs not only in California but throughout the nation."[70] In fact, the women's clubs had been working to

raise funds to purchase a grove since 1923, and in 1932 this goal was realized with the dedication of the California Federation of Women's Clubs Grove.

In 1927, a second Hollywood production of *Valley of the Giants* was shot on location in Humboldt again, this time directed by Charles Brabin and starring Milton Sills and Doris Kenyon. This time, the men running the league understood that commercial film was a useful source of publicity. In 1927, Drury wrote to First National Studios, which was producing this version, urging them to "give in your [inter]titles some recognition of the fact that the redwoods are unique among trees and are one of the natural wonders of the world. We know, of course, that nothing bordering on propaganda can be expected in a picture of the type which you are making. However, you would be doing a great service to California and to the nation if your reference to the redwoods were made in such a way as to accentuate the beauty and interest of these forests, and thus help in the general cause of saving them."[71] Upon the film's release, the league wrote a letter to its Bay Area members encouraging them to see the film. The letter explained that local exhibitors had agreed to run a "brief statement, urging the public to vote for the State Park bonds on November 5th" at the movie theaters.[72] The league also wrote to Mary Pickford to solicit her appearance in a proposed publicity film to support the bond vote. She declined, however, replying that while "I am keenly interested in the preservation of our redwood forests and historical landmarks and will be only too happy to co-operate with you in any way possible," her contract prohibited her from appearing in any kind of promotional film.[73]

The league's thirty-nine surviving films are all 16 mm, silent, nontheatrical shorts, most running between two and six minutes in length.[74] The films have a decidedly amateur, home-movie-like feel, in contrast to the highly polished direct mail brochures sent out by the Drury Company, which indicates that film was an important if not fully professionalized avenue of promotion for the league. In his oral history much later in life, Drury admitted as much. In describing the league's use of motion pictures, he explained: "We had films that were distributed pretty widely—in which we took representative views in the forests and the mountains and the seacoast and the desert. These were distributed to the clubs. Most of them I've turned over to the Bancroft Library. The campaign was distinctly grass roots."[75] Archival records corroborate that these films were frequently shown for women's clubs and other nontheatrical venues. It is notoriously difficult to determine the gendered makeup of historical film audiences, but here we have a set of films that were

viewed by many all-female audiences either in the private homes of women holding club meetings or in public halls where many club meetings also took place. While my research on silent-era nonfiction has long led me to believe that educational films, particularly scenic and nature films, were especially popular with women audiences, the league's papers provide concrete evidence of this.

The films feature a collection of standard images: shots of redwood trees, of course, along with beaches, roads, and other natural points of interest. They are black-and-white, with the exception of one Kodachrome print: *Mill Creek Redwoods* (1941). A few of the more polished films have head titles, production credits, and intertitles, but many prints lack titles of any sort. The films' descriptive titles may have come from the film cans: *Wildflowers of the redwood region* (1929), *Bull Creek dedication* (1931), *Redwoods (reel 2)*. The films show many state park locations around California, including *Palm Springs* (1928), *Malibu Coast [prior to Mar. 1929]*, *Torrey Pines [prior to Aug. 1930]*, *Crater Lake* (1929), and more.[76] It is unclear who shot most of this footage: archival records indicate that Drury shot some films himself and obtained other footage from amateur filmmakers and small nontheatrical producers. When archival records indicate authorship for these films, that authorship is exclusively male. The films appear to have been made to target specific, self-selecting groups: league members or potential members, as well as citizens interested in nature conservation. Two, however, are clear advertisement films made for more general audiences: *Join the Save-the-Redwoods League Vote for the CA State Park Bonds Nov 8th* and *[Save-the-Redwoods film supporting state parks bond]*. The first of these two films is apparently the title shown in local movie theaters alongside the 1927 *Valley of the Giants*, as indicated in the letter from Drury quoted above.

One reel in the collection is particularly interesting because of its explicit visualization of settler colonial tropes. On July 28, 1928, President Herbert Hoover visited the Humboldt redwoods, and a 16 mm film was shot by E. N. Fairchild, an amateur filmmaker based in Riverside, California. Drury wrote to Fairchild to obtain a copy of the film, and proceeded to show it as much as possible in support of the bond vote in November.[77] This film, *Among the Big Trees on the Redwood Highway*, shows footage of the 1928 "Indian Marathon," a publicity stunt race involving Native American runners alongside white runners who dressed up to "play Indian."[78] The film also features a sequence in which a white toddler walks along the top of a fallen redwood tree, an iconic settler colonial image of whiteness populating the wilderness

FIGURE 10. Blond, white toddler walking on redwood tree, a visual trope signifying ancient trees and settler futurity. Frame enlargement from *Among the Big Trees on the Redwood Highway* (1928). Save-the-Redwoods Collection, Bancroft Library.

(see figure 10). Later in the film, we see President Hoover visiting the redwood forest. Although this amateur footage is of poor quality and the images are underexposed, the reel testifies to the centrality of racializing discourse in the early conservation movement as well as the league's social connection to the center of American financial and state power located in the East.[79]

CONCLUSION: WHITENESS AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF EARLY CONSERVATION

Unlike the league's founders, the women of the league were not professional eugenics proponents. But they clearly tolerated, if not endorsed, the league's hegemonic whiteness. As mentioned, the GFWC, one of the league's most important supporters, had notoriously voted in 1902 to exclude Black women's clubs from their nationwide federation.[80] That act attests to the power of white supremacy among Progressive Era women reformers at the dawn of the twentieth century. Even after the GFWC changed its bylaws in

1922 to effectively allow Black women's clubs to join the national federation, the racism of many members of the GFWC certainly did not disappear.[81] In fact, the eugenics movement added a "scientific" veneer to white supremacy, transforming the public conversation about race into newly sedimented, institutionalized racial hierarchies.[82] Lacking evidence to match the voluminous screeds published by league cofounders Grant and Osborn, we can only speculate about the ideological motivations of Mahan and her sister clubwomen. From today's perspective, we can observe that these white clubwomen chose to affiliate along racial lines rather than gender lines, choosing to work with white men (to whom most of them were married) rather than women of color, who were working on nature conservation in their own social groups, such as the Black women's garden clubs mentioned above. The racially segregated, highly stratified social spheres of the time certainly did not make an intersectional affiliation among clubwomen likely. But it is nonetheless disappointing, if not surprising, for environmentalists today to learn of the conservation movement's roots in white supremacism. Echoing visual culture scholar Nicholas Mirzoeff, to understand what has led us to our current era of climate crisis, we need to understand and act on "not the Anthropocene," but "the White Supremacy scene."[83] Until recently, the league's eugenics connections were downplayed. But while it is true that the league did not officially recognize eugenics or explicitly articulate white supremacism in its articles and publicity materials—choosing to present instead a more measured, academic rhetoric—the eugenics beliefs of the league's founders were a central tenet of conservation ideology in this moment. As such, the league's idea of environmental conservation embodied the contradictory ideologies of its day.

Forest conservation is now recognized as essential for combating global warming and mass extinction, but the Save-the-Redwoods League could not have predicted this when it worked to preserve sections of old-growth redwood forest in the 1920s. Early conservation's single-minded focus on keystone species must be contextualized within the history of biology, for the science of ecosystem ecology was not developed until the 1930s. But using film to provoke sentiment for the environment was an innovation in the 1910s and 20s, and the "woman's redwood film" of 1919 showed how cinema could function as a champion for nature. Today, the Save-the-Redwoods League remains an important organization, and it has taken steps to redress its origins in the racist thought of the early twentieth century. In 2020, the league publicly acknowledged and denounced its founders' eugenics principles

and pledged to work toward "strengthen[ing] the connection between conservation, civil rights, and social and environmental justice."[84] In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, and in solidarity with the activism of Black Lives Matter and other antiracist groups, the league was one of several prominent environmental organizations, along with the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society, to issue such statements in 2020. More concretely, as of this writing, the league has demonstrated a commitment to rematriating some forest land to Indigenous tribes of Northern California, donating 523 acres to the InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council in January 2022.[85] It remains to be seen how radically and how quickly environmentalism will remake itself to embrace new forms of collective thought and action. But as this essay has shown, the seeds of both the democratic and antidemocratic forces we are contending with today were planted one hundred years ago. The Save-the-Redwoods League's films show us that moving pictures played a role in the early history of the environmental movement, revealing some of the fault lines of environmentalism that have yet to be overcome. ■

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NOTES

I would like to thank Marjorie Bryer, Archivist at the Bancroft Library, for her valuable help with the research materials on this project.

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2. Wasserman and Wasserman, *Who Saved the Redwoods?*, 94.

3. "Save Redwoods Picture Filmed for Travel Today," *Humboldt Times*, October 15, 1919, 1.

4. Lillian Ross, "Woman's Save the Redwood League Organized in 1919; Aided In Numerous Projects," *Humboldt Standard*, January 15, 1932, [n.p.; clipping], Carton 99, Folder 14, Save-the-Redwoods League Papers, Bancroft Library. Hereafter: SRL Papers.

5. "Save Redwoods Film Showing at Rialto," *Humboldt Times*, February 21, 1920, 5.

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8. J. D. Grant, "After the Dedication of Bolling Memorial Grove," in *Saving California's Redwoods* (Berkeley, CA: Save-the-Redwoods League, 1922), 4.

9. Susan R. Schrepfer, *The Fight to Save the Redwoods: A History of Environmental Reform, 1917–1978* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 43.

10. Hawk Rosales, "The InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness," *International Journal of Wilderness* 16, no. 1 (April 2010): 8.

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13. Gifford Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1910).

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16. Thomas C. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 189.

17. Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868–1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1980).

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19. Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980); Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993).

20. Julia Guarneri, "Changing Strategies for Child Welfare, Enduring Beliefs about Childhood: The Fresh Air Fund, 1877–1926," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 11, no. 1 (2012): 27:70.

21. Nancy Unger, *Beyond Nature's Housekeepers: American Women in Environmental History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter 4.

22. Stephanie J. Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women," *Journal of Women's History* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 13. See also Abra Lee, "Following the Path of the 'Invincible Garden Ladies,'" *New York Times*, October 26, 2021. www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/special-series/black-gardeners-pandemic.html. Lee's highly anticipated book will be published in 2024; see Abra Lee, *Conquer the Soil: Black America and the Untold Stories of Our Country's Gardeners, Farmers, and Growers* (Portland, OR: Timber Press, forthcoming).

23. Kevin C. Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America's Conservation Ethic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

24. Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation*, 105–6.

25. Lydia Adams-Williams, "Conservation—Woman's Work," *Conservation* 14 (June 1908): 351. The AFA's journal was called *Conservation* until 1910, when it was renamed *American Forestry*.

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27. Adam Rome, "'Political Hermaphrodites': Gender and Environmental Reform in Progressive America," *Environmental History* 11 (July 2006): 450.

28. Cameron Binkley, "'No Better Heritage Than Living Trees': Women's Clubs and Early Conservation in Humboldt County," *Western Historical Quarterly* 33 (Summer 2002): 188.

29. "Society News," *Humboldt Times*, November 18, 1914, 5.

30. Fredrick James Smith, "Unwept, Unhonored, and Unfilmed," *Photoplay*, July 1924, 104.

31. "Serials Pay—New Signal-Mutual," *Motography*, July 21, 1917, 142; "Managers Praise 'Lass of Lumberlands,'" *Motion Picture News*, January 6, 1917, 84; "'Lass of the Lumberlands' Opens," *Motography*, November 11, 1916, 1079.

32. I analyze this dynamic further in my forthcoming book, which includes a chapter on the lumber industry as portrayed in different versions of *Valley of the Giants* shot on location in Humboldt County.

33. "Serial Will Be Produced by Signal Co. In Redwoods," *Humboldt Times*, August 14, 1916, 6.

34. "Advertising Redwoods in Movies, Miss Holmes' Task," *Humboldt Times*, August 27, 1916, 16.

35. "Miss Holmes and Company Start South in Morning," *Humboldt Times*, September 18, 1916, 3.

36. Jas. S. McQuade, "*Cutting California Redwoods* Essanay," *Moving Picture World*, November 16, 1912, 667.

37. Her obituary reveals that her first name was May. *Times*, August 20, 1966, newspaper clipping at Humboldt Historical Society.

38. "Pastime Theatre Changes Hands," *Humboldt Times*, January 12, 1910, 5.

39. "Mrs. Pettengill Hailed on 83rd Birthday by Eureka Soroptimist Club She Founded," *Times*, May 27, 1965, newspaper clipping at Humboldt Historical Society.

40. "Pettengills Receive Logging Pictures," *Humboldt Times*, November 25, 1912, 6.

41. "Moving Picture Publicity," *Humboldt Times*, November 26, 1912, 6; "Society Women Would Pose in Film Pictures," *Humboldt Times*, July 22, 1912, 1.

42. "Society Women Would Pose," 1.

43. "New Theatre Building to Occupy Pastime Site," *Humboldt Times*, November 4, 1912, 8.

44. The Pettengills were also involved in making a 1914 nonfiction film called *Driving the Golden Spike*, about the completion of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad in

Humboldt County, and I have found one (as yet uncorroborated) piece of evidence that they had an earlier deal with the Biograph Company to make films in Humboldt, which never came to fruition. Clipping files, Eureka Historical Society.

45. "It Is Today! Tin Cans Go at Movie Show," *Humboldt Times*, May 2, 1914, 1; "Pastime Theatre Changes Hands," *Humboldt Times*, January 12, 1910, 5.

46. Schrepfer, *Fight to Save the Redwoods,* 13–17, 175.

47. Newton Bishop Drury Oral History, 1972, University of California Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, 105. To my knowledge there is no evidence that Drury was involved with eugenics.

48. Schrepfer, *Fight to Save the Redwoods*, 13.

49. "Ladies Back of Redwood Park Plan," *Humboldt Times*, August 6, 1919, 3. Blow had also attended a meeting of clubwomen at a private home four days earlier, though there is no mention of moving pictures in the newspaper story about that meeting. "Club Women Hear Blow on Redwoods," *Humboldt Times*, August 2, 1919, 2.

50. Binkley, "No Better Heritage," 193.

51. "Women Take First Step to Save Trees," *Humboldt Times*, August 10, 1919, 9.

52. "Campaign to Unite Women Is on Monday," *Humboldt Times*, September 21, 1919, 9; "Women Asked to Help Save the Redwoods," *Ferndale Enterprise*, October 3, 1919, 1.

53. *Chico Record*, December 28, 1919, 8.

54. Binkley, "No Better Heritage," 195.

55. "Movie Fans Will Aid in Saving Trees," *Humboldt Times*, August 14, 1919, 2.

56. "Famous Players Who Come to Film Kyne's Giants of the Redwoods," *Humboldt Times*, February 18, 1919, 6.

57. "Save Redwoods Picture Filmed for Travel Today," *Humboldt Times*, October 15, 1919, 1.

58. "Forum Talks on Redwoods Enlighten, What Women Have Accomplished Told," *Humboldt Times*, December 18, 1920, 6.

59. "Woman's Redwood Film Creates Big Interest in Trees," *Humboldt Times*, March 6, 1920, 2.

60. "Save Redwoods Film Showing at Rialto," *Humboldt Times*, February 21, 1920, 5.

61. "Woman's Redwood Film Creates Big Interest in Trees." In his article, Binkley mentions the "woman's redwood film" but erroneously states it was shot by the Fox News Company. Binkley conflates the film Kilburn shot for the Women's League (purchased by Gaumont News), and the film shot by Kilburn for Fox the next year. Competing newsreels often featured the same stories, so this repetition is in keeping with the film industry of the time. While there are some newsreels extant from this period, I cannot conclusively track down the 1920 redwood film shot by Kilburn for Fox. There is a 38-second *Gaumont Graphic* fragment online titled "California Trees Being Lumbered" from 1919 that might possibly be a fragment of the "woman's redwood film," but I have been unable to verify this. See www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVA9FKDS0DC0YKNDP1ADB6MDB7IU-CALIORNIA-TREES-BEING-LUMBERED/.

62. Newton B. Drury to Paramount Pictures Corporation, November 8, 1921. SRL Papers, Carton 126, Folder 16.

63. Newton Drury to Philip W. Alexander, November 17, 1920, SRL Papers, Carton 126, Folder 16.

64. Newton Drury to J. C. Merriam, December 8, 1920, SRL Papers, Carton 1, Folder 2.

65. Drury Oral History, 133.

66. Ross, "Women's Save the Redwood League Organized in 1919."

67. "Complete Results on Membership Campaign, SAVE THE REDWOODS LEAGUE, June 10–December 10, 1920," SRL Papers, Carton 4, Folder 33.

68. Laura Mahan to Newton Drury, February 15, 1927, SRL Papers, Carton 99, Folder 14.

69. "Preliminary Outline of Publicity Plan, California State Park Bond Issue of November 6, 1928," January 31, 1928, SRL Papers, Carton 138, Folder 24.

70. "Rough Outline for Mr. Grant, Suggesting Course of Remarks at Women's Club Meeting," March 19, 1926, 1–2, SLR Papers, Carton 138, Folder 4.

71. Newton Drury to First National Studios, September 20, 1927, SRL Papers, Carton 126, Folder 16. When *Valley of the Giants* was made a third time, once again shot on location in Humboldt County, but this time with sync sound and Technicolor, Drury wrote again to the production company to ask, "is it possible that in the preliminary statement there might be a word to the effect that the State of California is saving the finest of these trees?" Newton Drury to Warner Brothers, June 6, 1938, SRL Papers, Carton 126, Folder 18.

72. Chairman, Board of Directors (unsigned), Suggested letter to members of the League in the Bay region, April, 1928, SRL Papers, Carton 126, Folder 16.

73. Mary Pickford to Duncan McDuffie, September 17, 1928, SRL Papers, Carton 126, Folder 17.

74. This brief discussion of the league's thirty-nine extant films will be longer in the expanded version of this essay in my book.

75. Drury Oral History, 178.

76. Titles in brackets are not on the print, and were either written on the film can or added by an archivist.

77. Newton Drury to E. N. Fairchild, August 14, 1929, SRL Papers, Carton 126, Folder 16.

78. See Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999). On the fascinating story of the 1927 "Redwood Highway Indian Marathon," see Tara Keegan, "Runners of a Different Race: North American Indigenous Athletes and National Identities in the Early Twentieth Century," master's thesis, Department of History, University of Oregon, 2016.

79. The film can be accessed online here: https://californiarevealed.org/islandora/object/cavpp%3A11494.

80. See Jan Doolittle Wilson, "Disunity in Diversity: The Controversy Over the Admission of Black Women to the General Federation of Women's Clubs, 1900–1902," *Journal of Women's History* 23, no. 2 (2011): 39–63.

81. For Wilson, a key aspect of this once-heated public debate is its repression after 1902. See Wilson, "Disunity in Diversity," 58.

82. On the role of eugenics in early conservation, see Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2009).

83. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "It's Not the Anthropocene, It's the White Supremacy Scene; or, The Geological Color Line," in *After Extinction*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 123–49.

84. For the full text of the resolution and public statement, see www.savetheredwoods.org/about-us/diversity-equity-inclusion/board-of-directors-resolution/ and www.savetheredwoods.org/blog/reckoning-with-the-league-founders-eugenics-past/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=convio&utm_campaign=redwoodmatters&utm_content=rm__091520&utm_term=1_091520&s_src=email&s_subsrc=redwoodmatters_091520.

85. See www.forbes.com/sites/priyashukla/2022/01/28/california-redwood-forest-returned-to-tribal-group-and-renamed-tcih-lh-d-fish-run-place/?sh=6e49cfbce792. In addition, between 2000 and 2019, the city of Eureka returned approximately 95 percent of Tuluwat Island to the Wiyot Tribe. For an account of this land return, see Damon B. Akins and William J. Bauer Jr., *We Are the Land: A History of Native California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 327–31. While there are no redwoods on Tuluwat Island, it is an important tribal cultural site and wildlife sanctuary.