Fertile Ground

The Upper Midwest and leaders of the conservation movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries
The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there…

L.P. Hartley – 1953
Zebulon Pike Expedition

September 5, 1805
First Steamboat on the Upper Mississippi

The Virginia – 1823
Wanted-thirty seven thousand farmers

Let the news be scattered. Let the home hunting immigrant be informed that a free home awaits him in Iowa.
Major John F. Lacey

- Lacey was born in New Martinsville, Virginia (now West Virginia) on May 30, 1841.
- In 1855 at the age of 14, he moved to Iowa with his parents.
- They arrived in Keokuk and travelled across the unbroken prairie of Mahaska County to settle in Oskaloosa.
Ellison Orr

- Orr was born in McGregor, Iowa on June 14, 1857.
- Lived his entire life in northeast Iowa.
- Worked in a variety of jobs (farmer, surveyor, telephone company manager).
- His interest in cultural and natural history was a “hobby”.

The Reminiscences of a Pioneer Boy

The Boyhood Experiences of Ellison Orr (1857 - 1951)
Edited by R.L. Palmer
Aldo Leopold

- Leopold was born in Burlington, Iowa on January 11, 1887.
- Grew up and attended school in Burlington.
- Leopold’s family vacationed regularly in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.
Aldo Leopold

- Author
- Environmental Ethics
- Wildlife Management

A Sand County Almanac
And Sketches Here and There
By Aldo Leopold
Major John F. Lacey

- In 1861, Lacey enlisted in Company H, 3rd Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment.
- Was admitted to the bar in 1865, and began to practice law in Oskaloosa.
- United States House of Representatives – March 4, 1890 – March 3, 1891; March 4, 1893 – March 3-1907
Lacy Act of 1894

KEY ELEMENT:

- Gave the Department of Interior authority arrest and prosecute wildlife poachers in Yellowstone National Park.
Lacy Act of 1900

KEY ELEMENTS:

- Protects both plants and wildlife
- Civil and criminal penalties
- Prohibits trade in wildlife, fish, and plants that have been illegally taken, transported or sold.
The Act was intended to allow the President to set aside certain valuable public natural areas as park and conservation land.

The 1906 act stated that it was intended for: "... the protection of objects of historic and scientific interest."

These areas are given the title of "National Monuments."

It also allows the President to reserve or accept private lands for that purpose.

The aim is to protect all historic and prehistoric sites on United States federal lands and to prohibit excavation or destruction of these antiquities.
Antiquities Act of 1906

Current Status:

- At present, there are 108 National Monuments in 28 states as does the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands.
- Devil’s Tower National Monument – 1,347 acres (September 24, 1906).
- Marianas Trench Marine National Monument – 95,216 square miles (60,938,240 acres) - (January 6, 2009),
Lacey's Warning...
Speech to the Iowa General Assembly April 6, 1909
1915: United States Congress

- U.S. Senator William S. Kenyon of Fort Dodge, Iowa introduced a bill in the 64th Congress to establish a national park, and U.S. Representative Gilbert Haugen submitted a similar bill to the House.

- Throughout the next several decades, proposed bills to establish a national park in Iowa would fail to make it through Congress.
Ellison Orr

- A 1917 speech as President of the Iowa Forestry and Conservation Association (formerly the Iowa Park and Forestry Association), moved Orr to the forefront of the national park movement in Iowa.
Mrs. C. H. McNider of Mason City, Iowa penned an article entitled “What the Mississippi Valley National Park Would Mean to Iowa” in support of the national park movement in 1917.

“Neither Iowa nor Iowa and Wisconsin together should presume to claim our greatest river at its most scenic point. This is something the whole nation should have a share in.”
Ellison Orr

The Reminiscences of a Pioneer Boy

The Boyhood Experiences of Ellison Orr (1857 - 1951)
Edited by R.L. Palmer
June 1919: 1,000 people attended a three-day meeting held at McGregor Heights and formed The American School of Wildlife Protection, later named The American Institute of Nature Studies.

The “Wildlife School” would become one of the most influential groups in the national park movement.
1924: Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge

- The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Act established a refuge that eventually would encompass more than 200,000 acres of wildlife habitat along the upper Mississippi River.

- The creation of the Refuge renewed hope that a national park could also be established.
June 1930: A National Park Study

- Representative Haugen’s Upper Mississippi National Park study bill was finally passed through Congress and signed by President Herbert Hoover.

- The bill called for a survey of the area to be conducted in hopes of convincing federal officials of the desirability of creating a national park.
April - May 1931: The Study

- The superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, Roger Toll, toured the area by both automobile and boat, covering the Mississippi River from Bellevue, Iowa to Winona, Minnesota.
Toll’s “Endorsement” of a “National Park”
What to do??
Fish Farm Mound Group

Flat of area surrounding the Fish Farm Mound Group.
(Copy of survey of Apr. 18th, 1910.)
Highway, now (1960) hard-surfaced, parallels the railroad,
the Upper Iowa river flows south in the
greatly enlarged slough, and
the spring is
buried deep un-
der Iowa river
sediment.

Scale, 1 inch 480 feet.
Fish Farm
Mound Group

J. P. Conway, Charles P. Pye and others taking it easy on Mound No. 2 of the Fish Farm Mound Group.

Three of same party on Mound No. 9. Both of above photos looking south-east.

Oct. 31st, 1915.
Mound Group

Mound No. 12 in foreground, mound No. 17 in middle background. Mound No. 14 in front and to south of Prof. Charles F. Pye taking notes. Brush was cut off winter of 1913-14.

High bluff north of Fish Farm Mound Group of Mounds, from the Mound Group.

Both above photographs taken Oct. 31, 1915.
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Above figures taken from Wenke's records - 6-14-39
# TRACTOR PRODUCTION FOR 1934

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Total 2804 1271 167 2836 82 7160
October 1936: A Plan for a National Monument

- The Iowa Conservation Commission submitted a plan for establishing a national monument to preserve the Indian mounds in the northeastern part of the state to the Department of the Interior and to the National Park Service.

- By this time, the state owned about 400 acres of land in the region. The NPS insisted upon 1,000 acres as the minimum for the national monument.
1936 Proposal Maps
After inspection of the proposed mound groups, National Park Service investigators Neal Butterfield, Edward A. Hummel, and Howard Baker recommended the inclusion of the Yellow River Mound Group, the Jennings-Liebhardt Group, and Sny Magill.
April 1941: Gift of 1, 000 Acres

- The General Assembly of Iowa passed an act authorizing the gift of up to 1,000 acres to the United States government for national monument purposes.
- But once again, a world war would put the national park project on hold.
August 21, 1949: Land Title to the NPS

On behalf of the United States, the National Park Service accepted the title to the 1,000 acres of land.
October 25, 1949: Birth of a Monument

- President Harry Truman, using the powers of the 1906 Antiquities Act, signed a proclamation declaring the site a national monument.
Why Iowa? Why then?
That foreign country called Iowa’s past was made up of tall grass prairies, wet sloughs, forests and marshes. Over 85 percent of Iowa was once covered by prairies. Today less than one-tenth of one percent of that prairie remains.

The people we have been visiting about were the children of the pioneers. In their lifetimes, they observed the total transformation of the Iowa landscape and the elimination and loss of over 99 percent of what was once wild. The impact on the environment and their world view was profound.

They knew what had been lost in their lifetimes. They wanted a better world for future generations. And they believed a better world included room for wild places.
Pioneer: A person or group that originates or helps open up a new line of thought or activity or a new method or technical development.
And there are still pioneers...
The immensity of man’s power to destroy imposes a responsibility to preserve.

John F. Lacey, 1901