

**From nuisance to nostalgia: nature tourism in Southern California,
1890-1940**

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From nuisance to nostalgia: nature tourism in Southern California, 1890-1930

Between the comparatively brief period of 1890 to 1930, Southern California tourism resorts and tourists visiting the region expressed conflicting feelings toward the region's wildlife and natural resources. On the one hand, nature was seen as a popular leisurely attraction from 1910 to 1930, yet on the other, it was perceived as an impediment to the industrialization and imperial expansion efforts that were underway in the Western United States from the 1880s to early 1900s. How is it that Southern California tourists and tourist attractions went from seeing "nature" as a nuisance to expressing nostalgia for it over only a 40-year span of time? Drawing upon data from railway stops at the most popular tourist attractions in late 19th and early 20th century Southern California, this article seeks to theorize and historically contextualize this quick and contradictory shift in tourist longing - one that continues to have serious implications for the way in which wildlife and the region's native peoples are treated in contemporary regional politics.

Keywords: Southern California; nature tourism; imperialist nostalgia; railway travel

Introduction

Rummaging through the souvenir and photo albums held at the Pasadena Museum of History of long forgotten tourists, a striking, unusual photograph caught my eye, an image so uncanny that it demanded explanation and interpretation. Dated 1901, the photograph depicts two young children sat riding two large, presumably dead fish as if they were horses, reins in their seemingly indifferent and reluctant hands (Fig. 1). The image was taken at the regionally renowned tourist destination, California's Santa Catalina Island, and was brought home and caringly placed in a souvenir photo album

owned by tourist W. W. Nash, an album that was then curated and held at Pasadena Museum of History for the author to find over one hundred years later.

Ubiquitous, the fish and the children could be easily cast aside, written off as an eccentricity empty of significant cultural meaning. But when considered within the context of late 19th and early 20th century imperial desires of the United States government, the image is less exotic and carnivalesque. A period marked by the development and settlement of the Western United States, the extension and growth of the American empire into California was read as Manifest Destiny writ large. At this time, nature stood in the way of the expansion of the frontier and was posited as inherently vile and elusive, something completely separate from the human species. Mounting these fish, the child were partaking in one of many attractions that allowed Southern California tourists to reenact the conquering of the Western frontier's wildlife and native peoples.

Turning to Southern California tourist ephemera produced ten years later, we see an entirely different form of rhetoric appear in relationship to nature. Nearly overnight, nature is rewritten as something worth nostalgically gazing upon and preserving. This is evidenced in marketing materials collected from Los Angeles' Mount Lowe Resort and Railway, a tourist destination that attracted over three million tourists from 1892 to 1938 and that was on the same railway line as Santa Catalina Island. A Mount Lowe Resort and Railway brochure dating to 1913 (Fig. 2) shows tourists longingly observing deer that frolic in the forefront of the image and engaging in nature hikes in the forest that embraces the resort. The resort's hotel, Ye Alpine Tavern, is displaced, relegated to the background of the brochure and taking up a small percentage of the brochure's overall

image. How do we explain this dramatic, seemingly contradictory shift in tourist desires for and relationships to nature?

This article aims to conceptualize and situate changes in tourist practices within the broader historical context of the late 19th and early 20th century Western United States. Rather than seeing tourism as an innocuous practice, this article frames it as a politicized act, one that both enables and reifies the imperial goals of a nation-state. This argument follows Shaffer's (2001) work that positions the act of touring the Western United States to the expression of patriotism and affirmation of American citizenship in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Boarding the transcontinental railway was "understood as an extension of Manifest Destiny" (Shaffer, 2001, p. 20) and celebration of America that renewed middle- and upper-class Anglo Americans' faith in a post-Civil War nation. The West was marketed as a place of hope, possibility, and a place to begin anew far away from the historical baggage of the East Coast.

Settling the illustrious West was no minor feat for the United States government, with the West's native cultures and arduous terrain both posing substantial challenges to the United States' Westward expansion and imperialist goals. Because they were seen as standing in the way of America's God-ordained mission to expand to the furthest point West on the North American continent (an ideology also known as "Manifest Destiny"), nature and native peoples were posited as inherently vile and elusive. Yet when the Western United States mushroomed into populated cities and metropolises, a rhetoric of nostalgia and longing for nature suddenly emerged. The focus of this article is on how these shifts in perceiving nature manifested themselves at tourist attractions throughout Southern California. Tourist sites served as mnemonic devices, reinforcing narratives

that suited the nation's imperialist desires. This assertion dovetails off of work that positions tourism and leisure as intertwined with nationalist imperatives, ones, in the case of the late 19th and early 20th century West, that anchored tourism to the "act of virtuous consumption capable of preserving the Republic" (Shaffer, 2001, 39). Framed in this manner, tourism is upended as a practice void of substantial meaning and instead viewed as a meaningful act in which one engages to assert their patriotism and loyalty to a nation. It is from the latter theoretical framework that this piece begins.

Theorizing nature tourism

Nature tourism in turn-of-the-century Southern California has yet to be the subject of intense scholarly analysis despite its apparent resonance with thousands of Anglo American travelers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (McWilliams [1946] 1973; Pomeroy [1957] 1990). Even Kropp, who has interrogated representations of race and gender at California's missions, fairs, and scenic routes during the same time period, has remarked, "If asked, most tourists would have said they had come to Southern California for the climate rather than the history – to see exotic plants, not people" (2006, p. 49). In the same vein, McClung has commented that the "selling of region to newcomers (both settlers and tourists)" relied upon a "preponderance of natural over manufactured attractions" (2000, p. 109). And regardless of the fact that early 1900s tourist sites promoted as "nature" wonderlands outnumbered historic sites by the hundreds, the latter continue to be the object of numerous academic publications.

Many of the former works have deconstructed the racialized, nationalist narratives embedded in California and the West's historic tourist sites; they address the display of Native Americans and Mexican Americans at tourist sites (Dilworth, 2001; Kropp, 2006;

Shaffer, 2001) and the commodification and reinscription of California's Spanish-Colonial and Mexican periods at the San Gabriel Mission (Kropp, 2006; McClung, 2000), El Pueblo de los Angeles (McClung, 2000), Panama-Pacific International Exhibition (Benedict, 1983), Panama California Exposition (Kropp, 2006), the Mission Play (Davis, 1990; Deverell, 1997, 2004; Wrobel, 2002), the Ramona Pageant (McWilliams [1946] 1973; Pomeroy [1957] 1990) and other Ramona related sites (DeLyser, 2003, 2005), and La Fiesta de los Angeles (Deverell, 1997, 2004; Wrobel, 2002). Nonetheless, an explicit study of Anglo Americans' exuberant fascination with Southern California's environments is absent from academic literature.

One exception to the rule is Davis' *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (1998). According to Davis, "class or ethnic conflict" in Los Angeles is "refracted through the symbolic role of wildlife...Los Angeles' wild edge, in other words, is the place where natural history and social history can sometimes be read as inverted images of each other" (1998, p. 208). In other words, nature becomes a mirror through which society's cultural values can be garnered. Another critical assessment of nature tourism in California is Norkunas' *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History, and Ethnicity in Monterey, California* (1993). Set in present day Monterey, Norkunas shows how nature iconography used to market Monterey's world famous Fisherman's Wharf obscures the complex history of ethnic and economic strife amongst immigrant fisherman. Representations of Monterey's wildlife – such as trained sea lions who bark for food on command and gift shops that sell "carved, molded, stuffed, and painted" versions of otters, fish, and other Monterey marine life – mask a tale that touches upon many of the important themes (for example: labor disputes, racism,

immigration), ones that have come to characterize the Californian experience (Norkunas, 1993, p. 81).

Additional research on nature tourism, though geographically distant from Southern California, provides useful comparisons and show how cultural beliefs undergird nature tourism. For example, Jasen (1995) documents how representations of nature at tourist sites legitimized government ordered colonial expansion in Canada. Select Native peoples were presented as relics of the past and bearers of all that is “wild” while at the same time they were systematically removed from their homelands in the name of so-called “wilderness preservation” initiatives. Jane Desmond’s (1999) study of Hawaiian culture and island wildlife similarly provides a model for understanding how touring “nature” is not an innocent endeavor, but rather can be employed to support racist discourses. By simultaneously looking at the display of both human (hula dancers) and animal (orcas and other marine life) bodies in Hawaiian tourism, she artfully illustrates that the appeal in these corporeal performances lies in their iterations of primitivism. That is, the development of regional tourism in Hawaii has long depended on an iconography of bodily difference between the consumers (Anglo Americans) and the consumed (either the state’s diverse and rich underwater habitats and fishlife or its “natives” bodies dancing at luaus put on for Anglo American tourists). This brand of tourism – the promotion of “primitivism” and cultural/species difference, Desmond explains, is dangerous because it “replaces talk of race with talk of culture but retains the earlier notions of particular races giving rise to particular cultures” (1999, p. xxiii).

The origins, desires, and motivations behind the tourism enterprise have likewise been probed on a number of interdisciplinary fronts (Chambers, 2000; Graburn, 1983;

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Smith, 1977; Lofgren 1999). The perspective that resonates the most with this article's approach to interpreting nature tourism is elaborated in Urry (1990). Urry diverges from earlier works that either reduce the practice of tourism as an offshoot of a new, flourishing consumer economy or naturalize leisure as human "ritual" impulse found within all human communities. MacCannell, for example, claims people travel in search for stability in an increasingly postmodern fragmented world, as a "collective striving for a transcendence of the modern totality, a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuity of modernity, of incorporating its fragments into unified experiences" ([1976] 1999, p. 13). Urry takes issue with this claim that tourists share similar values and expectations while touring, instead commanding that scholars examine the socio-historical factors and processes involved in constructing different types and forms of tourism, what he terms "gazes." He urges scholars to anchor and interpret tourism practices within their proper temporal and geographical contexts and to acknowledge that tourism practices vary across time and cultures, arguing "There is no single tourist gaze...It varies by society, by social group and by historical period" (1990, p. 1). Urry's insistence on historicizing tourist practices informs what the following interpretation of changes taking place within Southern California's tourism industry between the 1870s to the late 1930s. It does so by connecting micro-shifts in tourist perceptions of Southern California's wildlife and nature to macro-shifts in American politics.

Taming the frontier and its peoples: nature tourism between 1870 and 1910

Americans perceived the late 19th century Western frontier as a uniquely "American" landscape. It stood as an emblem of the nation, a point noted frontier historian

Frederick Jackson Turner alluded to in 1893, explaining, “The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West” ([1992] 1893). The West was thus construed as the epicenter of a new, distinctly Anglo American culture imbued with an infinite amount of possibilities. Rothman elaborates on this ideology: “When Americans paid homage to their national and nationalistic roots, they did not look to Independence Hall; they went West, like their forefathers, to find self and to create society, to build anew from the detritus of the old” (1998, p. 15). This social imagination of the West failed to include the diverse groups of people who previously and concurrently inhabited it. Travel in this era therefore served to “validate” Anglo Americans’ “beliefs in America’s (white) future” (Aron, 1999, p. 132), and non-white groups did not appear to have a place in this future.

Mountain resorts and nature attractions provided the perfect opportunity to rewrite and downplay the racial diversity of Southern California's landscapes. And this was exactly what tourists coming to the West wished to do, since transcontinental travel was “understood as an extension” of the racist doctrine of “Manifest Destiny” (Rothman, 1998, p. 23; Shaffer, 2001, p. 20). In traveling to the West, an expensive luxury affordable to few, tourists were enacting an identity that equated whiteness with nationality and American citizenship. As Horsman summarizes, Anglo Americans saw themselves

as a separate, innately superior people who were destined to bring good government, commercial prosperity, and Christianity to the American continents and to the world. This was a superior race, and inferior races were doomed to subordinate status or extinction. (1981, pp. 1-2)

Bringing such “refinement” to the West was easier said than done, however. Anglo Americans feared that which pioneers and adventurers had spent decades trying to tame: the frontier and its Native groups. Southern California boosters knew that certain aspects of the city’s wildlife would not be popular amongst tourists, especially species who had been eliminated to allow colonists to safely occupy the Western frontier.

Promoters actively hunted down animals in the San Gabriels, a mountain range surrounding Mount Lowe Resort and Railway, that posed a threat to visitors and to pave the way for tourism in Los Angeles. In the 1860s and 1870s, “one group of local cowboys killed half a dozen bears in a single two-week trip to Prairie Fork in the San Gabriels” (Davis, 1998, p. 218). Grizzly bears, whose image adorns the California state flag, were pursued and trapped in Angeles National Forest and the San Bernardino National Forest, so much so that in the summer of 1922 “the final member of the distinctive California subspecies was killed in the southern Sierra” (Davis, 1998, p. 218). Other species were plundered from the San Gabriels, including deer, lizards, and tarantulas (which were sold to tourists as souvenirs) (Davis, 1998, pp. 220-221). Commercial fishermen eager to feed the influx of tourists frequenting Los Angeles' restaurants and resorts dynamited trout by the ton in San Gabriel Canyon’s rivers (Davis, 1998, pp. 220-221). This rampant exploitation of game also displaced the few remaining Native Californians still living in the San Gabriel Mountains, depriving them of the resources and nutrients their ancestors had relied upon for thousands of years.

Some Southern California tourist sites encouraged visitors to partake in and reenact animal removal campaigns. Visitors sought out locations where they could perform the “taming” of the frontier. As historian Vernon describes, “the San Gabriels

were regarded as a local frontier” in which such fantasies could be acted out (1952, p. 116). Santa Catalina Island, while touting its “dozens of beautiful canyons abounding with wild goats, doves, and quail,” also advertised sport fishing and “wild goat shooting.” These activities allowed tourists to role-play and enact the mythical heroism of the frontier’s earliest settlers in a safe, leisurely setting.

A few miles away from Santa Catalina Island, Mount Lowe Resort and Railway’s owners captured and caged animals that might compromise their visitors’ well being. Mount Lowe’s famed “Menagerie of Native Animals” (James, 1894), which included a bear, civet cats, raccoons, and other “animals typically found in the San Gabriel Mountains” (Seims, 1992, p. 7), reassured tourists that the forest was no longer “wild” but instead captive to human desires and scientific interests (Fig. 3). Man’s ability to harness and manipulate nature for entertainment and consumption, themes that would be denounced in later forms of nature tourism, remained the resort’s key selling point through the early 20th century. Two additional attractions at Mount Lowe Resort and Railway promoted this ideology: the resort's bear pit and a fox farm built next to one of the resort's four hotels, the latter of which was owned independent of the resort but still catered to its tourists.

At Mount Lowe, visitors could choose from over 200 foxes. Once they made their selection, the fox would be skinned and turned into a fur coat or boa, popular fashion statements of wealthy women. The safety of this process was assured by promoters who wrote, “the foxes grown on farms are not like wild animals any more. For many generations they have been reared in captivity and so they are tame enough and look for their victuals regularly served instead of prowling around somebody’s hen roost.” Inside

the nearby bear pit, Mount Lowe's employees, including public relations manager George Wharton James, play-wrestled a bear captured by the resort's owners: a display that reenacted man's victory over and ownership of the Western frontier. A bear pit, like Mount Lowe's, tended to be a "deeply excavated circular hole about fifteen to twenty feet in diameter with a high tree trunk sunk in the center" (Rothfels, 2002, p. 22). Enclosing the bear in a pit, an animal that "had long been associated with fear, the woods, and aristocratic hunting privileges," acted as a visual symbol of human command over nature (Rothfels, 2002, p. 22).

Praising Technology

While Southern California's wilderness was actively being destroyed, the technologies that took its place or eradicated it were simultaneously being praised. For Americans, technology symbolized progress and America's succession as a nation superior to all other superpowers. Mirroring and projecting this ideology, Mount Lowe Resort and Railway, the premier "mountain resort" of Los Angeles, was first made famous not by its location in the forest but by its technological demonstrations of America's power over it. To get to one of the resort's four hotels in the San Gabriel Mountains, tourists boarded Mount Lowe's "Incline Railway" at the base of Echo Mountain in Altadena, California, or at one of the many nodes along the Pacific Electric Railway's interurban line (Fig. 4). The Incline Railway's steep 59% grade set a world record and its supporting cable, which was "one and one-half inches thick" and weighed "more than six tons," was powered by electricity, "the first event of its kind in history" (Will H. Thrall Collection). This line was made accessible from nearly all of the Pacific Electric Railway's stops in Los Angeles.

Up until the early 20th century, the Incline Railway and its seeming mastery over the laws of physics and gravity was a focal point in the resort's marketing materials, postcards, and weekly newsletters (Fig. 5) (Pacific Electric Railway, 1903a, 1903b, 1910a, 1910b). Brochures, postcards, advertisements, and other literature never failed to mention the resort's elevation, "3500 feet above sea level," a height made attainable by the world renowned Incline Railway and its human inventors. Mount Lowe's railway conductor also reiterated what would today seem mundane and unnecessary details regarding the Incline Railway. Winthrop H. Owen, a railway conductor employed by Mount Lowe Resort and Railway, recalled narrating the mechanical aspects of the trip, telling tourists "Now we approach Horse Shoe Curve. It is a 120 degree curve, which means that for each 100 feet of the curve, we pass around 120 degrees or 1/3 of a circle" (1961). Brochures additionally praised the Incline Railway as one of the most powerful displays of man's triumph over the natural world; as a 1903 brochure exclaimed,

"This [Incline Railway] great product of science and genius, seems at first an impossible fact, but as we ascend and seemingly leave the earth a broader and better view of the valley, the cities, and the achievements of science and the glorious scenes about us" (Pacific Electric Railway, 1903b).

Tourists readily adopted this language, describing the railway in the same terms on the backs of postcards. For instance, on a 1909 postcard illustrating Mt. Lowe's Circular Bridge, "Mother" writes, "I am up here in the clouds. We came up this afternoon going back at 4:30. It is 3,000 ft high...I wasn't scared."

Of similar prominence was Mount Lowe's World's Fair Searchlight purchased by the resort's first owner, Thaddeus Lowe, after he saw it on exhibit at the 1893 World's

Columbian Exposition in Chicago (Seims, 1976, p. 80).¹⁴ Made famous for its “3,000,000 candle power” that made its “beam of light...so powerful that a newspaper” could be read from 35 miles away (James, 1904, p. 47), the World’s Fair Searchlight was used by tourists and resort workers to spy on the community below Mount Lowe as well as on the activities of Santa Catalina Island’s guests.

As if having the “greatest mountain railway enterprise in existence” (James, 1904, p. 29) and the “largest searchlight in the world” was not enough (James, 1894), Mount Lowe Resort and Railway was also home to the “Lowe Observatory” and noted astronomers, Dr. Lewis Swift (James, 1894) and Dr. Edgar Larkin (James, 1904, p. 35). Costing over \$50,000 in parts alone, the Lowe Observatory was used by tourists and scientists alike to see stars and nebulae invisible at other observatories due to Lowe’s unique “16-inch refractor” lens and access to a clear, calm sky and temperate climate (James, 1904, p. 35). In helping visitors gaze upon the urbanizing valley below the resort rather than the mountains’ “natural” scenery, the World’s Fair Searchlight, the Lowe Observatory, and the Incline Railway advanced the idea it was only by man’s hand that the world could be known and properly interpreted. The directing and framing of vision through the use of new ocular technologies (such as films, telescopes, photography, stereoscopes, searchlights, etc.) in the 19th century required Anglo American users to “effectively cancel out or exclude from consciousness much of” their “immediate environment” (Crary, 1999, p. 1). To Americans, ownership of these technologies was proof that they were at the “apex of an evolutionary framework,” since “only the most advanced societies had electrified machines and lighting” (Nye, 1990, pp. 35-36).

And since technology was presented as the pathway to enlightenment and national belonging, Mount Lowe tourists were asked to view all but that which they had supposedly traveled to see: “nature.” Instead, postcards, brochures, advertisements, and railway conductors instructed tourists to marvel in awe of the nation’s advancements in engineering and city planning. Just before the official opening of Mount Lowe Resort and Railway on July 4, 1893, for instance, the Street Railway Review described the railway trip up to the resort as follows; “Turning and looking toward the summit is presented the wildest mountain scenery, in strange and striking contrast to the peaceful picture of the valley below” (Street Railway Review, 1893, p. 685). Here, the “peaceful” urbanized valley is an example of nature subdued, while negative connotations are attached to the forest as it stands in opposition to regional and national expansion projects of the time.

Santa Catalina Island also promoted their technological feats, such as their “glass bottom boats” that were used to view the island’s underwater resources. Other Santa Catalina Island attractions that were praised as technological advances included a small mountain railway and sailboats, but the glass bottom vessels “proved to be among the most popular attractions on the island and perhaps the best-known beyond Southern California” (Culver, 2004, p. 112). Taken together, these surveillance and industrial technologies aimed to order what earlier Anglo American settlers perceived as disorderly, “natural” spaces. Tourist landscapes were hence choreographed to tell a story of national progress and ascendancy through these ocular devices’ lenses.

Building the American empire one animal at a time

As a wide variety of native Californian animals, insects, and plantlife were being exterminated, Anglo Americans were simultaneously importing wildlife to be placed on

display along the Pacific Electric Railway's stops. One of these stops, Cawston's Ostrich Farm, was a tourist favorite. Mentioned in nearly every publication related to Mount Lowe Resort and Railway and in several brochures from Santa Catalina Island, Cawston's Ostrich Farm opened for business in 1886. According to newspaper accounts, the owner, Edwin Cawston, traveled all the way to Cape Town, South Africa, to select the "finest ostriches" to be plucked, ridden, and placed on exhibit at his South Pasadena farm (Pacific Electric Railway, 1908). Cawston's farm furnished feather goods for the fashion industry (for women's hats), and tourists visiting the farm could take home a feather as a souvenir. The growth of Cawston's business was phenomenal, so much so that within a few years of the farm's opening, it became the "most successful mail order business in Western America" (Pacific Electric Railway 1908). Several other businessmen joined in on the ostrich business, with farms appearing across the Southern Californian landscape and at tourist resorts in Anaheim, San Diego, Los Feliz, Washington Gardens, Santa Monica (Land of Sunshine, 1894), and Coronado Beach.

The popularity of ostrich farming in Southern California reached epic proportions in the late 1880s and early 1890s. The success of the enterprise even garnered national attention, culminating in the exhibition of "California-African" ostriches at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Anglo Americans' interest in this specific breed of bird originated in the era's fascination with the cataloging and taxonomical ordering of people and animals. The bird's unfamiliarity, foreignness, and "Otherness" made it a curiosity. As one article stated, tourists saw ostriches as "strange birds which have very little resemblance to any other living animal" (Pacific Electric Railway, 1908). The popularity of the ostrich also stemmed from an imperialist impulse to collect specimens from

foreign countries as a demonstration of national power: a long-standing practice of colonial regimes. This connection was made explicit when five baby ostriches were born at Cawston's farm and given the following patriotic names: Liberty Bond, Red Cross, General Haig, General Foch, and General Pershing.

Exhibiting bodily difference also served to reaffirm the scientific racism of the time that asserted innate differences between human "species." Such "species" were categorized based on an often-contradictory set of traits, such as nationality, ethnic heritage, physiological characteristics, and geographic locations. This partially explains why the birth of five ostriches was newsworthy in 1918. The naming of Cawston's baby birds supported the idea that it was appropriate for the nation to capture foreign bodies and reappropriate them as they saw fit. Local zoos contributed to this colonial project by emphasizing differences between nations and their (animal) citizens' bodies. At Los Angeles' Eastlake Zoo, animals were organized, named, and caged based on their national affiliation and origins (Japan, Russia, Mexico, etc.). This organizational structure drew upon writings that made connections between an individual's biology, nation, and geography. In this framework, foreign animals served as "symbolic marker[s] of the human other with which it supposedly shared its home terrain" (Desmond, 1999, p. 161). Indeed, newspaper accounts of Eastlake Zoo personified and humanized its animals. Take "Miss Lina Jabalina," for example. Shipped from "the jungles of the Yaqui River" in Mexico in a "biscuit box" by an American traveler, this small wild boar was given a human name. A few days after the zoo acquired Miss Lina Jabalina, however, she began to exhibit conduct unbecoming to a human. As a result, she was forced to undergo a

surgical operation to remove her “musk sack” that expelled an odor unpleasant to the human nose, a behavior that zookeepers “deemed unfit for civilized society.”

An intimate connection between humans, animals, and their environment was seen as an indicator of the success of a nation as described by Charles Dudley Warner in the influential booster magazine, *The Land of Sunshine*. In his article “Climate and Race,” Warner insisted that “white races thrive best, produce the best results of civilizations, in temperate and even in rough climates” (1896, 103). In Warner’s eyes, the advancement of the “white race” was dependent on its environment and corresponding wildlife. The removal of one of these ecological elements, such as animals, from a country would therefore lessen the vitality of its citizenship. In this context, then, the acquiring, presenting, and caging of non-native animals in turn-of-the-century Southern California tourist sites can be interpreted as a move to both build the strength of the American nation-state and subdue the power of the animal’s homeland.

Conserving what is left: nature tourism between 1910 and 1940

By the late 1910s, Americans were losing interest in older forms of nature tourism. Experiencing nature via a horse, mule, or railway was replaced with a new development in transportation: the automobile, a faster method of getting around Southern California. The automobile changed the way in which Americans encountered nature (Bottles, 1987; Louter, 2006). Now, they could drive to sights that once took hours or days to reach by foot, rail, or trail. Attributing the decline and ultimate demise of Southern California’s nature attractions and mountain resorts to the automobile alone, however, replicates previous theoretical tendencies that write this phenomenon off as a byproduct of industrialization and technological developments. These analyses tend to overlook the

social movements and political events of this era, such as World War I and regional conflicts amongst ethnic groups in Southern California.

The nature conservancy movement, which started roughly around the 1910s, makes sense when linked to the larger cultural projects at work. The codification and inventorying of Western landscapes intensified after the passing of the millennium. Places that were once mountain resorts, such as Mount Lowe Resort and Railway, were suddenly re-evaluated and deemed national “resources.” This came at a time when the West was rapidly losing that which had been so dear to the Anglo American imagination: the Western frontier’s abundance of open space and unsettled land. The Western frontier remained a powerful and resonate icon of the nation’s (read Anglo Americans’) ability to endure and overcome adversity (in this case, the wilderness and its Native American inhabitants) in the early 20th century as evidenced by the innumerable ways it materialized in American media – films, novels, travelogues, and comic books. In this context, the heavy-handed management of the West’s shrinking frontier makes ideological sense as it offered a way for Anglo Americans to maintain some semblance of superiority over and ownership of the West.

In Southern California, a nostalgia for wide open spaces absent of human presence began when a large portion of the San Gabriel mountain range was declared a “Reserve” in July of 1892 (Robinson, 1946, p. 24), a time when technology was overtaking "natural" landscapes. As a close reading of documents discussing the “Reserve” demonstrates, the motivations behind this action were not so much about preserving nature for nature’s sake or to prevent the extinction of wildlife, but instead concerned saving the urbanizing valley below the San Gabriel Mountains from nature.

Cordoning off the San Gabriel Mountains would rescue “the valleys below...from drought in the irrigation season” and prevent “disastrous floods” in the winter months, argued Los Angeles residents in 1891 (Robinson, 1946, p. 24). The reserve underwent a number of name changes, from the “San Gabriel Timberland Reserve” to “San Gabriel National Forest” in 1907, and finally to “Angeles National Forest” on July 1, 1908 (Robinson, 1946, p. 25).

What was previously designated a “reserve” to protect outlying communities from fires and floods became a “national” resource and cultural treasure. In this role, Angeles National Forest set the standard for how other wilderness areas were to be handled in the United States. The history of Angeles National Forest was part of a broader national movement to regulate Western landscapes and antiquities by transferring them into the government’s hands. California’s first national parks – Sequoia, Yosemite, and General Grant – were inaugurated in 1890, the same year Congress declared that the frontier was closed. The logistics of operating and maintaining national parks were not hammered out in any definitive manner until government bodies stepped in and formed the National Park Service in 1916. Each park presented its own challenges and issues, but in general, the guidelines were the same: keep unwanted peoples out and protect the nature within. At Yellowstone National Park, for instance, the United States Army tired of chasing poachers and the park’s former Native American inhabitants off the now governmental-owned property. So between 1900 and 1903, the army dispatched “surveyors from the Corps of Engineers, who mapped the park’s borders and erected stone boundary markers every half mile along Yellowstone’s perimeter” (Jacoby, 2001, p. 107). After 1900, Yosemite’s Native American residents were also seen as nuisances. Their presence, park

officials argued, undermined and comprised the image of Yosemite as a nature preserve (Spence, 1999). These issues came to a head as the government created more and more reserves. In 1902, “there were fifty-four forest reserves in all,” and by 1911, this number “more than tripled, reaching 190 million acres” (Jacoby, 2001, p. 166).

Designating “nature only” zones had a domino effect on the public perception of touring the outdoors. Becoming slowly accustomed to the conservation ethos of the time, Americans began calling into question sites that placed nature second to technology. Public outcry regarding the treatment of animals held at Los Angeles’ Eastlake Zoo, for example, was expressed right after the establishment of the San Gabriel National Forest in 1907. Once revered for its diverse and well-kept wildlife, Eastlake Zoo was suddenly ostracized for its “penned up” animals, who, according to the city’s park commissioner, needed to be “given natural surroundings where better opportunities may be enjoyed by citizens of seeing them in practically a wild state.”

Projecting nature as an authentic, untouched space, rather than as a place that had to be under control by technology and humankind, was the product of early 20th century discourses regarding societal ills and moral ineptitudes. During this “Progressive Era,” social reformers, politicians, and religious leaders lambasted industrialization, attributing all of the country’s problems to it. Nature was seen as a place devoid of all these issues. Millions of Americans headed out to campsites and hiking trails in the hope that they could somehow reclaim their “nature,” “essence,” or health that had been compromised by long work hours and polluted industrialized cities.

Mount Lowe immediately diminished in appeal during this phase of nature tourism. As a symbol of man’s ability to tame the frontier and manipulate nature, Mount

Lowe Resort and Railway and Cawston's Ostrich Farm lost most of their business. Standing in opposition to the current nature tourism craze, Mount Lowe Resort and Railway scrambled to come up with new marketing strategies that would make the attraction a successful financial venture. Since promoters knew that the resort could no longer be marketed solely as a "nature" destination, they designed new brochures in the 1910s, 1920s, and early 1930s that focused on everything that nature was not and could not offer: the resort's long distance telephones, electric lighting, Edison Diamond Disc talking machine and piano player, tennis courts, billiards, ventilation systems, hot and cold running water, and a grocery store. All the modern conveniences of the city, brochures declared, could be found at the resort.

Once a modern marvel, Mount Lowe's Incline Railway no longer graced the cover of the resort's brochures and weekly newspaper. Now, man's involvement with technology was either ignored or downplayed. In a 1913 brochure, tourists curiously observe frolicking native deer, animals that had once been hunted down and served for dinner at the resort. The brochure's title, "Mt. Lowe Trail Trips – Mountain Trail Trips," details dozens of hiking trails where tourists could see "magnificent views of rugged" landscapes and witness the untouched "grandeur" of nature. The phrase "To the Portals of Hiker's-Land via Pacific Electric Railway," plastered on a March 5, 1922 edition of the Mount Lowe Daily News alongside an image of a woman hiking near Mount Lowe, similarly minimized the railway's importance. Now, the railway was merely a vehicle used to access nature, not conquer it.³⁰ Exacting details of the railway's grade and resort's elevation were replaced by minute details of the many concessions visitors would find at the resort. As one brochure from 1919 stated,

“These cottages have private piazzas, electric lights, comfortable beds, dressers, rocking chairs, air-tight heaters, blue flame oil stoves, dishes, cooking utensils, silverware, etc” (Pacific Electric Railway 1919). Advertisements in local newspapers now used the moniker “Mount Lowe Resort: Ye Alpine Tavern and Cottages,” highlighting everything (“Hiking – Dancing – Tennis – Riding”) but the resort’s mechanical feats (the World’s Fair Searchlight, Observatory, and Incline Railway). Work order requests placed during Mount Lowe’s later years reveal a fantastic amount of completed and uncompleted proposals and construction blueprints. Such copious documentation illustrates the resort's owners' desire to keep up with changing tourism practices and expectations that were shaped by nature conservation discourses. Horse and burro rides, which had been a favorite among tourists, were now seen as inhumane and were discontinued on March 1, 1935. Trash that visitors and employees had once casually thrown off the side of the railway cars was now systematically collected. Tourists, familiar with the environmentalist movement sweeping across the nation, were quick to point out rubbish that had somehow missed the regular pick-up.

By the late 1910s, Mount Lowe Resort and Railway was no longer considered a “nature” resort but rather an extension of urban Los Angeles. As such, visitors expected to find the luxury and comfort they experienced in the city. To meet their sometimes outlandish needs, trails around “Ye Alpine Tavern,” the only hotel remaining at the resort by 1905, were oiled for guests wishing to avoid dirt and dust, a billiard room and dance hall was built in August 1916, tennis courts were constructed in September 1917, a shelter and picnic area were placed at Inspiration Point in March 1925, the children’s playground at Ye Alpine Tavern was extended in July 1925, Ye Alpine Tavern was

completely remodeled in May 1926, a phonograph was purchased in October 1926, and a miniature golf course was installed in December 1930.

Environmentalist campaigns also put Santa Catalina Island in a precarious situation. Gone were the “energetic outdoor adventures such as sport fishing” and in their place activities that emphasized “pastoral Southern California and its natural resources” (Culver, 2004, p. 143). A 1922 Santa Catalina Island full-page advertisement, for instance, only mentions one familiar aspect of the island’s amenities: its “Glass-Bottom Boats” that allowed tourists to see “strange under-sea life in all the charm of its natural state.” Later, an “Aviary” featuring seven and a half acres of “hundreds of rare birds” became a fixture in Santa Catalina Island advertisements. Yet by the late 1930s and early 1940s, tourism at both Santa Catalina Island and Mount Lowe Resort and Railway was becoming a fading memory.

Their heydays as icons of national power were over. A fire in 1936 devastated most of Mount Lowe Resort and Railway’s Ye Alpine Tavern hotel and guest cabins, while Santa Catalina Island lost the majority of its tourism with the 1956 opening of another, even newer form of tourism: Disneyland. Presenting an array of simulated, hyper-real “natural” settings – such as “Frontierland” or “Adventureland,” Disneyland promoted yet another strain of idealized colonial landscapes that claimed to be “authentic” replications of nature and culture (Avila, 2006; Findlay, 1992).

Conclusion: politicizing tourist practices

Traditionally, changes in tourist desires such as the ones discussed in this article have been attributed to technological innovations or economic developments. A nostalgic longing for nature that emerged in early 20th century Western literature, for instance, has

been blamed on the two things that had a hand in destroying it: the advent of the automobile and the urbanization of the "frontier." These theories hold that nature took on a special "aura" when it was replaced with highways and housing tracts. Yet such an assessment fails to acknowledge the nation-state's investment in the tourism industry. The interrelated tourist emotions of nostalgia, longing, and desire must therefore be refracted through the political motivations and intentions of a nation.

This is point that Rosaldo (1989, pp. 107-108) as well as scholars interested in the social history of emotions (Lewis and Stearns, 1998) have made. Rosaldo has explicitly sought to understand nostalgia expressed in colonial settings, arguing that it functions to negate and minimize the terror, violence, and fear involved in the process and aftermath of colonization. Seeking to conceptualize why places like the Western United States exterminate nature and then ironically seek to preserve nature, Rosaldo coined the term "imperialist nostalgia" (1989, p. 107). Imperialist nostalgia, he explains, emerges when "people destroy their environment and then worship nature" (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 107). Despite outwardly appearances, this nostalgia is not innocuous by any means. Though individuals who are culpable appear to be expressing "innocent yearning," this innocence involves "brutal domination" over and destruction of nature and, in colonial settings, native peoples (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 107). Nostalgia therefore masquerades as a guise to detract from the violence. This concept provides a framework through which we can append tourist actions, attractions, and motivations to national and political imperatives arising in the late 19th and early 20th century Western United States.

This is precisely what took place in late 19th and early 20th century Southern California; by first destroying and then later memorializing "nature," tourist sites wiped

the region's landscape clean of its complex biodiversity and native cultures. Tourism thus acted in the interests of imperialist goals of the American nation. By analyzing and deconstructing the archival and marketing history of California's most popular tourist site between 1893 to 1936 (Robinson, 1977; Seims, 1976) as well as other tourist stops along the resort's Pacific Electric Railway line (Fig. 4) and in the region, one is therefore able to understand how national imperatives played out in region-specific ways under the guise of tourism.

As tourist sites visited and consumed by over 3 million visitors over its 43 year period of operation and a railway line accessed by millions of tourists and residents of the region, Santa Catalina Island, Mount Lowe Resort and Railway, and Cawston's Ostrich farm represent a microcosm of the macro-cultural and geopolitical struggles taking place not only within the region of Southern California, but also across the entire Western United States. By highlighting a limited suite of orchestrated natural attractions, tourist destinations played a starring role in the reinscription of the history of Southern California's landscapes and native peoples. In the process, much of the region's multilayered and multiethnic past was erased from historical memory, thereby serving imperial and capitalist interests. Stripped of historical and cultural contexts, Anglo-American political leaders and businessmen could now stake claims to, occupy, and eventually inhabit landscapes. The promotion and visitation of these tourist landscapes only helped to further erase the history of these landscapes, solidifying the historical amnesia that the region's tourists and residents would develop in relationship to the land, its wildlife, and its native cultures.

As this article has demonstrated, it is essential that scholars integrate the socially constructed nature of tourism - how it serves specific political, economic, and cultural functions, which, in the case of late 19th and early 20th century Southern California, was as a way to colonize the region and strategically downplay its non-Anglo-American past, one that today, on the whole, remains invisible.

Acknowledgements

Notes on contributors

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Figures

Figure 1. Children "riding" fish at Santa Catalina in 1901. Photograph courtesy of the W. W. Nash Photo Album, the Archives at the Pasadena Museum of History.

Figure 2. A 1913 Mount Lowe Resort and Railway brochure, with deer in the foreground. The Incline Railway and Lowe Observatory are nowhere to be found. Image courtesy of the Archives at the Pasadena Museum of History.

Figure 3. Mount Lowe's menagerie of animals (James 1904). Photograph courtesy of Brian Marcroft.

Figure 4. Map of Pacific Electric Railway Corporation Stops in Southern California, with notations showing the locations of Cawston's Ostrich Farm, Mount Lowe Resort and Railway, and the pier to Santa Catalina Island. Map courtesy of the University of California, Berkeley's Bancroft Library.

Figure 5. Photograph of the top of Mount Lowe's Incline Railway. Note the signage that states the elevations of Ye Alpine Tavern and Mount Lowe. Photograph courtesy of an anonymous 1905 photograph album, the Archives at the Pasadena Museum of History.