

Who Are Democratic Ecological Citizens?

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When the bank where my husband and I have our mortgage changed its name from "Citizens Bank" to "Horizon Bank" it was obvious to me that citizen no longer enjoys positive ratings. It's a word that's been hijacked and marooned, caught between outmoded respectability and no respectability at all, between junk mail demanding the right to carry assault weapons and portraits of bewigged Founding Fathers whose horizons, it seems, fell short of the Information Highway. Yet here we are, participants in Nature, Polis, Ethics: Chicago Regional Planning, pinning our hopes for a better world on Democratic ecological citizens. Why? Why dress a tattered term in green bunting and throw in the ubiquitous "democratic" to boot? What, if anything, distinguishes these citizens from previous conceptions of the term? More importantly, are these new polysyllabic role models real human possibilities? Or are they virtual reality figures we are spinning in our discussions?

As I mulled over these thoughts, reading again my notes from several years of symposia, thinking of the different presentations I had listened to and taken part in with such excitement, I began to see that there were indeed a few distinguishing marks—attitudes asked approaches held in common, enthusiasms and concerns, qualities of character for the most part not spelled out but simply assumed—that one could call the traits of democratic ecological citizens.

At first my list was long, but I boiled it down to three of the most basic traits: (1) Democratic ecological citizens are persons who are fundamentally concerned that nature continue to flourish and that it be an integral, valued part of human experience; (2) they are persons who think in regional terms, meaning that they understand that their neighborhoods, locales, and cities, and any and all aspects of them, are nested in a larger reality of meaningful exchange; and (3) they are persons who, recognizing existing inequalities of wealth and power, work to extend more fully and more equitably both the opportunities to experience nature and the opportunities to shape the way humans exist in nature.

These are the most prominent traits. They animated the discussions of transportation access, canal corridors, growth boundaries, and clustered housing. They sat quietly in the darkness of slide presentations and talked throughout lunch. They were in the room with us and in other rooms also, and at the same time they were outside in Will County collecting seed from prairie dock and in Mexico discussing bioregionalism. Seldom far from controversy, they were at their brightest when up against one or more of the many obstacles that our industrial urban society places in the way of free, equal, and sustainable self-government.

These traits are not new. In the history of the Chicago region, Citizens have exhibited them again and again.

Important as these traits are, however, beneath them runs another trait even more fundamental, one that motivates, evaluates, and links the others. This fourth trait is sense of place. Although I make no attempt to analyze how democratic ecological citizens come by their defining characteristics, this one seems widely enough distributed to be considered innate. Perhaps it constitutes an innate biophilia, as E. O. Wilson claims. At least it is not in danger, yet, of extinction. But then, neither were passenger pigeons. And if sense of place is of basic importance to the formation of citizens, it's well to look with alarm at what we are doing in the Chicago region to modify or extinguish it.

Because all the evidence of our city's history and our own personal experience points to the fact that whenever progress has been made in the direction of a fuller life for people and nature together it has been because persons—singly and together—took seriously their roles and responsibilities as citizens. It is easy, and all too common, to talk in abstract terms about the need for a more just and sustainable future. But without citizens who act on these ideas, talk is empty.

Awakening to Citizenship through Sense of Place

Asked their housing projects greatest need, children lividly in Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes named flower gardens. We learned this at one of the early Nature, Polis, Ethics forums from Ronne Hartfield, executive director of educational programs at the Art Institute of Chicago. She had initiated a program that brought urban children together with practicing architects, and it was the architects who had posed the question, expecting, no doubt, to be told something like "burglar-proof doors" or "elevators that work." Taylor Homes, the nation's largest public housing project when it opened in 1962, was also the poorest community in the United States, and its murder and assault rates were out of all proportion to crime in the rest of the city.¹ Yet the children named flowers. Some native sense of place told them that nature was unnaturally missing from their community, that their stark sixteen-story buildings rising out of treeless blacktop needed flowers above all else.

Participants in our seminars shared the view that having evolved in natural settings humans retain a need for them. Sense of place involves an intuition that certain natural and artifactual forms "belong" to a place, that they participate in its value for humans and for the whole.

Sense of place draws emotional power from love of place. But it surpasses it, for it is an awakening to the world that involves an elementary aesthetic and moral sense of what is appropriate and inappropriate to a particular setting, what belongs and what diminishes it. We may cite the fact that Steve Packard, leader of Chicago's prairie restoration movement, felt that wild hemlocks belonged in his childhood garden, not greenhouse ones. Or Strachan Donnelley's memories of growing up on a farm in Libertyville, the bicycle rides on dirt roads, the prairie

baseball fields. These are the living sources of their lifelong interest in natural philosophy and the ultimate source of their commitment to a freer life for others.

Most of us get our first intuition of the meaning of place within a neighborhood. In an ideal neighborhood citizens are in intimate daily touch with one another and with the natural diversity on which their lives depend. There are many ways of designing neighborhoods to accomplish this. The typical tract home, requiring auto transportation to get to work and to stores, designed without public or natural areas, is not one of them. In such developments, the only contact with natural diversity is provided by the lots waiting to be built upon. As a teacher, I learned how important these so-called vacant lots are to children when I asked my freshmen college students to write about their childhood neighborhoods. A good half of the essays I received focused on the weedy lots the students had played on and their feelings of outrage when these were developed. Perhaps it takes such experiences of loss to kick sense of place out into the open.

In Chicago landscape architect Jens Jensen (1860-1951), one sees sense of place taking on the nature of a self-conscious principle. Jensen related design and materials to the surrounding topography by using native plants and by accentuating the horizontal lines of land and sky that characterized Midwestern scenery. His work, along with that of John Wellborn Root, Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and others, became known as the "Prairie School" of architecture and landscape gardening. Yet for Jensen the goal was not developing a particular style but producing something that was fitting to the region and the climatic conditions of the country. He tended to focus on designing wildflower gardens and quiet shady nooks for contemplation and was contemptuous of big splashes, of tree-lined boulevards, statuary, and other diversions.

He treated not only plants but architecture in the same way, insisting that certain forms, by virtue of their cultural or natural history, belong in the Midwestern landscape while others do not. Of the conservatories he designed for Garfield Park and elsewhere he wrote, "We did not want our greenhouses to look like a palace, a chateau, or a Renaissance villa . . . In order to fit them into the prairie landscape I thought they might well take the outlines of the great haystacks which are so eloquent of the richness of the prairie soil."² In another place, after criticizing those who cut down and replace their native trees with exotic ones, he said, "I want to tell you, friends, that there is nothing that fits us better than the beauty that nature has bestowed upon us. The originality, the characteristic beauty, of the American landscape we should keep as a sacred treasure."³

Jensen was influenced in his thinking by the pioneering ecological botanist Henry C. Cowles, with whom he formed a friendship soon after arriving as a Danish immigrant in the Midwest, accompanying him on excursions throughout the region.⁴ Both men's work exhibits a profound interest in the idea of landscapes being constituted by associations of plants rather than as a collection of individuals that happen to reside next to each other.

As a landscape designer, Jensen's concern for place was focused primarily on rather spacious gardens, but citizens' sense of place operates in all the settings in which they find themselves. As the Hartfield story shows us, sense of place does not require a sylvan setting for its genesis, but may blossom even in children who live in urban "projects," in "hoods" that are physically deteriorating and have few natural amenities. Yet these conditions also lead to the fear of nature and to ignorance of its processes. Jensen stressed the importance of natural surroundings to the development of intelligence and character. He said of "factory?like" school buildings that they create "a feeling of indifference in the mind of the child" while gardens "appeal to the finer feelings of mankind and elevate the depressed in soul and mind to a higher place in the human family and to a greater appreciation of the responsibilities of free-born men and women."⁵ This way of talking about human?nature interactions is no longer in style, but the principle remains.

In the history of the growth of Chicago, sense of place is repeatedly threatened by the persistence of the myth of rebirth on the ashes of destruction. The city's gutsy refusal to cave in to the tragedy of The Great Fire of 1871 left a fondness for the clean sweep, a fondness not conducive to building a rich tapestry of place. Perhaps the most flagrant disregard for place occurred in the building of the "White City" of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Its planners constructed a totally artificial and glittering world, in the midst of an economic depression, out of materials that could not last and were torn down as soon as the exhibition ended.

Architect Louis Sullivan was among the small minority of democratic ecological citizens who objected to the fair's buildings emulating Eastern classicism rather than expressing the Prairie School's democratic and place?centered ideas, such as Dankmar Adler's maxim, "function and environment determine form."⁶ In his Autobiography of an Idea Sullivan reflects on the tragic history of the fair. Referring to Chicago as the Garden City (the official motto of the city, although Sandburg's "Hog Butcher" or "Player with Railroads" would have been more apt), Sullivan says that it had been his hope that:

within the Garden City might be built another city to remain and endure as a memorial, within the parkland by the blue waters, oriented toward the rising sun, a token of a covenant of things to be, a symbol of the city's basic significance as offspring of the prairie, the lake and the portage.⁷

Other examples of the mentality of the clean sweep include the displacement of draftspersons and poor residents and substitution of sterile high-rise buildings for small shops and artists' studios that accompanied the Hyde Park-Kenwood renewal program, and the near?total destruction of Hull House and its community to build the University of Illinois at Chicago. What these negative examples have in common is the breaking of connections, or more to the point, the denial that

connections exist—connections between past and future, rich and poor, creators and consumers, nature and culture.

From Sense of Place to Concern for Place

In the democratic ecological citizen, sense of place matures as a moral concern that makes connections between personal experience and the needs of the larger community of life, present and future. The pleasure of place is accompanied by a felt need to correct misplaced forms, attitudes, and practices that mar the beauty of place or prevent its flowering, and by a desire to extend nature universally and more equitably the good to which one has been awakened. The democratic ecological citizen responds to felt injustices, denials, or violations of nature—to the concentration of toxic waste in minority neighborhoods, the grabbing of fertile farmland for housing development, and the disappearance of frogs, warblers, or lake trout.

Land use issues were the primary focus of our discussions of sense of place in Nature, Polio, Ethics, particularly those that raised issues of urban regional planning. Our panelists were concerned for urban sprawl, for the deterioration of inner-ring suburbs and the increasing disparity of wealth between inner and outer population centers, for the dislocation of jobs and housing, for over-consumption, for the flight of churches from city to suburb, for the depletion and pollution of aquifers, for access to environmental education and natural areas, and so on.

Each of these responses implies a positive moral valuing of a particular place and its human and nonhuman constituents. Often, as in the battle to save the Dunes landscape of northeastern Indiana from industrialization, a multitude of perceived losses of significant values come together as motivating forces—loss of beauty, of biological diversity, of recreational space, of the meaning of existence itself, as in Carl Sandburg's characterization of the Dunes as a signature of time and eternity.

This evolution, from sense of place to moral stance on behalf of place, is illustrated in the life of Marian Byrnes, well known in Chicago for her work in the southwest suburbs of the city, particularly the working class neighborhood of Hegewisch. A veteran of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, she is admired for her democratic inclusiveness, her dogged pro-environmentalist stances, and her refusal to bow to such corporate giants as Chemical Waste Management.

Byrnes became involved in environmental issues when the Chicago Housing Authority proposed to develop a strip of remnant prairie on a railroad right-of-way behind her house. She had moved to the house many years earlier because of the prairie, and her three sons grew up playing on it. Threatened with its loss, Byrnes went door to door drumming up support to stop the development.

The story of how the Van Vlissingen Prairie was saved could be told from an

opposite perspective, as a defeat for civil rights. Ironically, it is more than likely that at least some of the allies Byrnes solicited were motivated not by positive feelings toward the prairie, but by negative ones toward their fellow human beings who would occupy the proposed housing project.

For the past several years Byrnes has led the campaign on behalf of the proposed Calumet Ecological Park, a new kind of urban protected area for the national park system. Within a smelly industrial wasteland cut up bit landfills, paint plants, brownfields, and the truck-congested I-94 lie Lake Calumet, the Calumet River, and a smattering of marshlands that together provide habitat for egrets, herons, warblers, bass, walleye, beaver, anti prickly pear cactus. Pride of place is often an accompaniment to sense of place. It was nascent in the children in Robert Taylor Homes who wanted their surroundings to reflect all the positive values that "home" elicits, and it is prominent in Byrnes's story also. When Byrnes leads field trips through the area she points out each neighborhood landmark—a tavern, churches, the location of the Sportsmen's Club, an old saw mill still in existence, the site of the carnival that brings emigrants back to the area for home-cooking, community-style.

Acting on behalf of a moral concern for place almost inevitably involves dissent on tile part of citizens. Sullivan expressed his objection to the White City lay designing a strikingly different building using color and the bold motifs of the Prairie School. Jensen fought almost single-handedly against graft in the parks system of Chicago and suffered dismissal as a parks superintendent as a result. But dissent is often difficult for citizens whose education has typically stressed service and teamwork. It is doubly difficult when one's motives for dissent become the focus of issues that should be decided on the basis of their merit. The accusations, "You got yours, didn't you?" dissuade persons from joining with others to limit growth. Civic deliberations about development and land use tend to be acrimonious to the point of requiring legal protections for the antagonists.

As the Van Vlissengen Prairie versus public housing for tile poor example indicates, different groups desire the same space for different ends. Because of the contested nature of space, because of the necessity for debate and a full understanding of the issues involved in all their particularity, if decisions are to be made in a democratic fashion, active moral concern for place requires what is essential to all democratic decision-making: enabling constitutions and covenants—Mayflower compacts, Declarations of Independence, Constitutions, Bills of Rights, Earth Charters.

Democratic ecological citizens are the ones who develop them. One such proposal came from Illinois landscape architect Wilhelm Miller in 1915: The idea of a citizens' covenant to express the community's moral aims with regard to the values of place. Miller conceived of "The Illinois Citizen's Oath" as a dramatic outdoor ceremony that pledged the citizen to such actions as voting for the good of the whole community rather than for selfish interest, cooperating with

neighboring communities, extending the state and local park systems, and surrounding the home with native plants. It also contained pledges intended to facilitate civility in the discussion of contentious matters such as the pledge "to cooperate with public servants before criticizing them adversely" and "to practice moderation in speech." Miller's covenant is still well worth considering today.⁸

Seeking Regional Connections

Away out of the morally dubious "not in my backyard" approach to contested issues of place is to look beyond one's own backyard, or perhaps more accurately, to perceive how one's own backyard connects with larger natural and cultural spaces. Democratic ecological citizens think, feel, and act regionally. They do so, first of all, because regions express the way things are—ecologically, historically, and culturally.

The Chicago region is a tapestry of names—of persons, animals, and plants; of places and events; buildings and builders; boosters and boogiewoogies—Potawatomi, bison, Marquette, Burnham, showy lady's slipper, Back of the Yards, Hull House, white pine, Louis Sullivan, Mount Tom, Louis Armstrong, Des Plaines, John Deere, big bluestem, Marshall Field, Fox River, Paddy Baulcr, Cowles Bog, Haymarket Square, Starved Rock, sturgeon, United States Steel, Olmsted, Little Calumet, Stock Exchange, sandhill crane, George Pullman, Fort Dearborn—each resonant phrase bearing a portion of the region's truth, of its potential, its mistakes, and its miraculous accomplishments. The chroniclers of the city's history have kept these names alive. It is a trait of democratic ecological citizens to seek out their connections.

In part, regional thinking is a reality check. The regional maps we carry in our heads more often than not are out of date or otherwise distorted. William Cronon illustrates in *Nature's Metropolis* how the pine forests of Wisconsin were felled to timber Chicago's successive building booms by persons living in Wisconsin and Michigan—persons who understood themselves as dwelling someplace else, wholly apart from Chicago.⁹ "For many suburbanites, the St. Valentine's Day shoot-em-up Massacre is Chicago's idea of a good time. Children are thought to be woefully uneducated for not knowing that eggs come from chickens, but how many adults still hold to the outmoded conception of chickens strutting about a barnyard? Or realize that the average pound of food in America does not come from nearby farms but travels 1,200 miles before it reaches the kitchen table?"¹⁰ Regional thinking involves a truthful understanding of the places we inhabit.

Primarily, however, regional thinking and feeling is a moral activity, a move to greater inclusiveness, in which particular places are valued not only for themselves but for their position within the whole. Being both a spatial and a conceptual term, the boundaries of region shift with the aspect under consideration—geography, history, transportation, jobs, *Carex* species. Without the notion of region, some aspects of life are left out in the cold—migrating

monarch butterflies, weather, the spread of infectious diseases. No matter what the category, regional thinking is a way to morally ascertain the real needs of each member of the interdependent whole that is life.

To think regionally of the metropolitan area centered on the Chicago glacial plain involves knowing this area in its many dimensions and relationships: locally, as a matter of this people and this land in this place (itself a congeries of more local neighborhoods and sites); continentally, as a matter of the people and land throughout North America that our life here affects and draws sustenance from; and globally, as a matter of ever-expanding relationships to people, places, and evolutionarily embedded ecosystems throughout the world, and to planet Earth as well. Misapplied, this global contextualization could conceivably lead to a dilution of regional thinking; understood correctly, it enriches and complicates it in keeping with the actual character of natural and historical evolution and interdependence. The region in which we effective citizenship remains for US the primary focus, but our idea of citizenship is expanded to include considerations of how our life and choices affect other regions. The concept is one of regions nesting within regions—an alternative to our typical ideas of the world either as divided between unrelated localities or as an amorphous, undifferentiated whole. It might be conceptualized as "thinking like a region," which is the principle Aldo Leopold had in mind when he coined the phrase "thinking like a mountain" to suggest what it meant to shift from prioritizing the needs of hunters and deer to considering the needs of a whole ecosystem, inclusive of predator and prey.

When citizens engage in regional activities, they find the going rough. Missing are the easy familiarity of streets and names, and in their place, half-drawn maps, poor information, and the lack of urgency brought on by the distance from home base with its welter of immediate concerns. Phil Peters, executive director of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, speaks of the experiences of newly appointed members of his board. Officers in their own local governments, elected to keep taxes down or to protect property values, they come to the board without a mandate to care for regional issues, but as they discuss together they become more comfortable with the idea of working outside their immediate jurisdictions. They see the need and value of it. "And," Peters said, "it builds."

I know what he means. For the past several years, as trustee for a land trust in northwest Indiana, I have found myself astounded at what my fellow citizens actually do for a regional cause, at their willingness to learn the location of every remaining bit and piece of dune and swale, to drive great distances to trudge around in rain and mosquitoes evaluating possible land donations, to sit for hours at a county tax sale or at a booth at a local festival. How they keep at it I haven't figured out. Such persons are magnetic, their example worth countless soliciting letters.

Beatrice Briggs saw the value of bioregionalism before most of the rest of Chicago heard of it, and for years she has campaigned for it in imaginative ways,

exhibiting a creativity that must also be considered a trait of citizenship. She defines bioregionalism as "the ecological art of living in place, with joy and justice for all," and in her public presentations she highlights the joy. Beneath it, though, lies the sober realism of living in a civilization unprepared to bequeath a joyful future to its descendants. Briggs's Wild Onion Alliance puts out a calendar with a chronology that includes such lighthearted entries as "skunks mate" and "the great gray tree frog heard in evenings" but also "homeless shelters close" and "homeless shelters reopen." Like her antecedents, Chicago artists and dramatists who wrote and performed outdoor masques with the aim of reconnecting humans and the rest of the natural world, Briggs creates eco-rituals—for the same purpose but with a sensitivity to the awkwardness twentieth century urbanites feel when asked to participate in ritual. At one of our Nature, Polis, Ethics symposia she suggested we begin, not with the customary professional resume, but by identifying the watershed in which we were raised. This simple act was startling in its ability to focus the group's attention on its mission.

Regional differences can no longer be easily read on the landscape. At one time, the shape and color of crops planted in the fields, flowers growing by the wayside, differing types of barn construction, the placement of window mullions—signs such as these, rather than a governor's welcoming placard, let travelers know that they had arrived in a new place. Today, agribusiness, the tract home business, and the fast food business make a monoculture of our land and of ourselves. Yet even before such developments, we immigrants to mid-America had made haste to erase the outlines of our evolutionary history.

But regional thinking encounters its most frustrating roadblocks in the rules and rituals based on political divisions. The mayors with whom Phil Peters works experience the constraints not only of local expectations, but also of statutes drawn up in such a way as to prevent lawmakers from "interfering" in the affairs of constituencies outside their own. A classic example of such balkanization occurred during the sixties in the battle to establish the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. When virtually every elected official from both parties of Indiana—local, state, and federal, including Senators Capehart and Hartke and Representative Charles Halleck, whose congressional district included most of the Dunes—refused to support the effort to preserve the Indiana Dunes, Illinois Senator Paul Douglas introduced a bill into Congress to do just that. It was a flagrant violation of the established codes of congressional etiquette. Opponents described Douglas as "Indiana's third Senator" and signs "Should an Illinois Senator Shape Indiana?" greeted his visits to the Dunes. But Douglas knew the importance of the Dunes to the ecology and people of the Chicago region and dared to be an ecological citizen.

The Shaping and Sharing of Place

In his campaigns, Douglas was fond of quoting an old English quatrain:

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But lets the greater felon loose
Who steals the common from the goose.

Democratic ecological citizens understand this to be more than metaphor. They know that they live and flourish by virtue of their participation in the great common that comprises their city and their region. They know that they share this place, and they work to find ways to preserve and improve that sharing. They know that the wealth each enjoys is the result of the labors of the whole of society and the whole of nature, and that only a small part can be attributed to individual exertions. This overwhelming fact of existence precludes a moral claim on the part of any group or individual to an inequitable share of earthly goods, and lays a responsibility on society to see that the common of economic, cultural, and natural wealth is shared in such a way that everyone has a chance to partake of and contribute to it.

Thus democratic ecological citizens refrain from monopolistic behavior. They assert the right and the need for each member of the biosphere to have the space and freedom of self-expression and to be included as one of a company of equals. Jensen, for instance, included circular stone benches, "council rings," in his gardens so that persons could sit in the presence of nature in such a way that no one was more than the other, and where each was aware of "the brotherhood of all living things."¹¹

Democratic ecological citizens work to reshape political and economic structures so as to extend the power of ownership to all persons and to remove the obstacles keeping others from full engagement in civic life. "You can never make moon poems for people who never see the moon," nor "a sun poem for those having soot on the window sill," Carl Sandburg wrote in *The People, Yes*.¹² Nor can the people take part in creating the city as a place of succor and opportunity for all when concentrations of wealth and power reserve that prerogative for a few. The experiences that Jacky Grimshaw, staff member of the Center for Neighborhood Technology, recounts about her work with the Chicagoland Transportation and Air Quality Commission are illustrative here. They show citizens learning how to shape place in more inclusive ways.

The commission, a coalition of such off-the-beaten-track groups as the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation and Metro Seniors in Action, was formed to influence transportation legislation in the Chicago region. Its Citizen Transportation Plan came into being only after a series of focus groups had educated the public on the idea that transportation was not something to be taken for granted but had a bearing on jobs and health issues. Accomplishing this goal was only half the battle. Getting the commission's ideas considered by the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), the official body designated to

come up with a regional transportation plan, was more difficult. National legislation made public involvement mandatory, but, as Grimshaw put it, "Growing up in this region we knew what public involvement meant, it meant an ad in the Sun Times and Tribune saying to 'come and talk about what we have done for you.?' True to form, meetings of CATS were scheduled to be held in an outlying suburb without public transit access at a time when working persons could not attend. Grimshaw was nevertheless able to get two busloads of inner-city residents to the initial meeting and to have subsequent meeting sites changed. What made these citizens take time out from their daily activities? A number of them came from church-based groups, Grimshaw explained. They felt that acting as citizens out of stewardship, fairness, and equity was an extension of their faith.

Democratic ecological citizens also work to share power with nature. They know that despite bulldozers, gene splicers, and indoor plumbing, humans do not hold all the cards. Chicagoans are well known for reshaping the landscape in drastic nonecological ways—turning the Chicago River around, draining the great Calumet marshes. Democratic ecological citizens find ways to work with nature, seeking to restore and repair, to contain and diminish, to limit their further impact on the biosphere. They share with nature itself the power to shape and be shaped by place.

Chicago's lakefront stands as one of the most dramatic conceptions of the ideal of the common and of the activity of democratic ecological citizens in Chicago civic history. In 1836 three men, charged by the State of Illinois with selling unsettled land to pay for a shipping canal—Gordon Saltonstall Hubbard, William F. Thornton, and William B. Archer—wrote on the lakefront of their map these words: "Public Ground—A Common to Remain Forever Open, Clear and Free of any Buildings, or Other Obstruction whatever."¹³ Chicago has a lakefront that is the envy of other cities equally well endowed by nature but without such farsighted men at their foundings. But the words of the three men were by no means sufficient to protect the lakefront common from private usurpation. Persons familiar with Chicago's lakefront today would not recognize it from the 1890 photos of an ugly expanse of railroad yards crowding to the waterline. Only because of the active dissent of wealthy and influential citizens, including real estate investor and Chicago mayor Walter S. Gurnee, who voted against powerful South Shore Railroad interests, and Aaron Montgomery Ward, founder of the nation's first mail order house, who fought for years to keep the lakeshore open, was the lakefront preserved and rebuilt as a great public common. Ward, in particular, was vilified for his stand, and in 1909 he wrote:

In the district bounded by 22nd Street, Chicago Avenue and Halsted live more than 250,000 persons, mostly poor. The city has a magnificent park and boulevard system of some fifty miles, but the poor man's auto is a shank's mare or at best the streetcars. Here is park frontage on the lake, comparing favorably with the Bay of Naples, which city officials would crowd with buildings,

transforming the breathing spot for the poor into a showground of the educated rich. I do not think it right. (p. 80)

A few years after I moved to Chicago many of my Hyde Park neighbors protested the extension of Lakefront Drive into Jackson Park. They tied themselves to trees that were slated to be felled for the project, temporarily holding up the chainsaws as city police dragged them off to jail. Those Hyde Parkers were among the first persons I knew whose sense of place demanded their active involvement, even their sacrifice, for the common.

One of the characters in Henry Fuller's 1895 novel, *With the Procession*, says of Chicago, "In this Garden City of ours every man cultivates his own little bed and his neighbor his, but who looks after the paths between??14

Notes

1. Gregory D. Squires, Larry Bennett, Kathleen McCourt, and Philip Nijden, *Chicago, Race, Class, and the Response to Urban Decline* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), pp. 94, 103, 113-14.

2. Thomas McAdam, "Landscape Gardening Under Glass," *Country Life in America* 21, no. 4 (1911): 10-13, 50-51, at 12.

3. "Discussion Following Address by Enos A. Mills, 'Conservation of Natural Scenery,'" *City Club Bulletin*, 14 February 1912, p. 41.

4. Malcolm Collier, "Jens Jensen and the Midwest Landscape," *Morton Arboretum Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1977): 49-55, at 51.

5. Quoted in Robert E. Grese, *Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 91.

6. See Hugh Dalziel Duncan, *Core and Democracy* (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1965).

7. Louis H. Sullivan, *Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: American Institute of Architects, 1926), p. 319.

8. Wilhelm Miller, "The Illinois Citizen's Oath," in *The Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening*, Circular # 184, Agriculture Experimental Station, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois (1915).

9. William Cronon, *Natures Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991).

10. Helena Norberg-Hodge, "Think Global—Eat Local!" *Ecologist* 28, no. 4 (1998): 208-14.
11. Quoted in J. Ronald Engel, *Sacred Sands: The Struggle for Community in the Indiana Dunes* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), p. 201.
12. Carl Sandburg, *The People, Yes* (574), in *Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970), p. 559.
13. See Lois Wille, *Forever Open, Clear and Free: The Historic Struggle for Chicago's Lakefront* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1972), p. xi.
14. Quoted in Bernard Duffey, *The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press), p. 45.