Visualizing Urban Nature in Fairmount Park:  
Economic Diversity, History, and Photography in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia

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Introduction

The establishment of Fairmount Park occurred in fits and starts in the years that straddled the Civil War. For decades Philadelphians sought out and enjoyed park-like spaces in the city in graveyards, private pleasure grounds, and a few small urban squares, but Fairmount Park was the largest piece of property--approximately three thousand acres--ever to be set aside for public use in any city in the world. Philadelphia obviously was not alone in its desire for such an expansive, accessible space. In the middle of the nineteenth century, numerous other American cities established large parks of their own, including New York (Central Park), Chicago (Lincoln Park), and San Francisco (Golden Gate Park). Previous scholars have primarily understood the foundation of these parks as a response to popular unrest and demand for spaces of recreation and regeneration that accompanied changing urban conditions. Elizabeth Milroy, for example, explains how concerns for declining water quality resulting from industrialization along Philadelphia’s waterways, as well as the need for leisure space for a growing industrial working class, enabled the appropriation of lands for this project.¹ Indeed, even a cursory reading of popular period writing in newspapers and magazines underscores a connection between industrialization and park-building.² As early as 1843, for example, the College of Physicians of Philadelphia issued recommendations that “the city of Philadelphia should possess so much of the shores of [the Shuylkill River…] as may be necessary to protect the purity of the water [from industrial development].”³ Inter...
scholarship on nineteenth-century urban parks at least since Roy Rosenzweig’s classic 1983 study *Eight Hours for What We Will.* Yet, these interpretations take for granted a teleological economic development narrative that ignores the contingent nature of industrialization during this period, and the material and discursive work that was required to produce this vision of industrializing cities and their parks in the minds of city dwellers.

In this essay, I argue that such interpretations of the period of park formation in the mid-nineteenth century oversimplifies a more complicated set of historical and material conditions that attended it. After all, the lands that would eventually become parks were in many cases already in use for a number of purposes. Shanty-towns of the poor, for example, occupied what would become New York’s Central Park. Intensive urban development in Philadelphia only began to extend beyond the Schuylkill River when public sentiment was sufficient to authorize the purchase or seizure of three thousand acres for use as a public park in 1868, even though numerous nearby settlements, like Germantown had been officially incorporated in 1854. At the time of this expansion, the city’s populace was still coming to grips with the notion of a vast industrial metropolis; Philadelphia had not yet extensively reoriented itself to the demands of large-scale manufacturing. Like Central Park in New York City, residents used the lands that eventually became Fairmount Park for a variety of economic activities, but city leaders largely ignored these pursuits as they reframed the area in question as a zone of “nature” that, though proximate to the city, was defined by the supposed absence of humans and therefore could serve as a therapeutic counterweight to the industrial space of the growing city. Even as Fairmount Park thus became understood in environmental terms as an effort to protect public water quality and to preserve, rather than to create, a large expanse of “wilderness” near at hand, it required the removal of numerous factories and dwellings that dotted the banks of the Schuylkill River. The formation of
the park also erased economic exploitation of already existing forests, farms, fields, and streams. I return to the various uses to which these lands were put in the final section of this essay, but historical evidence suggests that local residents relied upon Fairmount Park as a source of food, cellar ice in winter, wood for fires, and timber. Finally, perhaps it goes without saying that the institution of Fairmount Park influenced the biophysical make-up of the landscape as well, from the types of trees and plants to the relationships among predators and prey that were allowed to persist in the park. In order to recast the park and urban space in the bifurcated terms of “nature” and “city,” then, a great deal of work was necessary in order to reeducate the public, and to re-shape the landscape.

Park and city officials and their representatives achieved this reeducation through the mobilization of new technologies of representation to construct a conceptual boundary between the human social/cultural space of the city and the “natural” space of the park. These shifts became visible in three moments, which I relate in the following pages. I open with a vignette about Lemon Hill, one of the earliest spaces devoted to leisure activities in a park-like environment. As such, it led the way in facilitating the articulation of a perceived (and growing) division between economics and nature while also sparking controversy on this account. Following a brief discussion of Lemon Hill, I turn to a collection of photographs that did important work to stabilize and codify the discursive naturalization of Fairmount Park within the broader context of the city. Despite the power of these photographs to communicate a new vision of the urban park as a foil to, and retreat from, the city, such conceptual framing continued to face challenges by Philadelphians into the late nineteenth century (and beyond). Drawing on thirty years of annual reports submitted by the Captain of the Fairmount Park Guard, I conclude with an examination of the ways in which the park remained a site of contestation between authorities and the every-
day citizen-users of urban public green spaces. In this final section, I focus especially on the ways that unsanctioned consumption of parks threatened to upset the conceptual arrangement of the urban space and park space within a new economic imaginary. In sum, I argue that a range of practices—from the use of photographs as part of a didactic practice of public education, the physical policing of park spaces, and the transgressive activities of park users—suggests that these sites have always been occupied, and cared for, by a wider range of constituents than typical histories would suggest. Further, by paying close attention to the contested meanings and uses of urban “nature” in the nineteenth century helps to restore this sense of complex negotiation among individuals and groups (including non-humans) whose aims and desires did not always conform to dominant narratives of industrial economic development.

*Lemon Hill*

The Lemon Hill estate, built in 1800 by a wealthy merchant named Henry Pratt, held and still holds special significance in narratives about the formation of urban parks in Philadelphia.\(^6\) The estate’s importance derives in large part from the way it symbolized the juxtaposition of unspoiled urban nature against the modern capitalist city. Those seeking to create a new park highly valued the Lemon Hill estate because of the views it offered of the city and of the Schuylkill River, which led to its purchase by the city in 1844, the first such purchase in the city’s twenty-five-year campaign to protect its water supply through such acquisitions.\(^7\) According to an anonymous antebellum journalist writing in 1854, “It only requires a glance at the map or a visit to the ground to convince any one how important it is to secure this piece of land, to make Lemon Hill as it should be—a most eligible and beautiful tract with boundaries free from objectionable features.”\(^8\) In the 1850s, however, to the dismay of many, the German tenants of the
Lemon Hill property operated a popular beer-garden, a purpose that park enthusiasts saw as an affront to the grace and natural beauty of the site. Another antebellum commentator noted that respectable citizens “had for many years watched with great solicitude the destruction of ... a spot incomparably well adapted to the purposes” of an urban park.⁹ Recalling this destruction three decades later, local historian Charles Keyser wrote that “the tenants settled like incubi upon the spot ... the shrubbery [was] destroyed ... they erected great ice houses of stone and when these fell into ruin, they left the ruins and erected others in their places.”¹⁰

Such framings of the Lemon Hill beer-garden proved effective and soon the sentiment prevailed. The city declined to renew the tenants’ lease on the Lemon Hill property, expelled the proprietors of the beer-garden, and eventually incorporated the site into the first iteration of Fairmount Park. Officials declared the land public property, leading Keyser to proclaim triumphantly that, “nature [was] restored. ... its verdure grows for the eyes of the little child ignorant of the means of [private] property, and for the old man who has long outlived the hope of acquiring it.”¹¹ Thus, for Keyser and other like-minded citizens of Philadelphia, establishing a park at the Lemon Hill estate set it out of bounds for economic uses of any kind, ostensibly producing a nonhuman--and non-economic--realm while simultaneously maligning commerce in places of refuge. This struggle continued elsewhere during the first decades of the park’s existence, as activity from taverns operating near park boundaries spilled onto park lands. The land occupied by the Lemon Hill estate became the keystone of the larger park founded in 1868 and it remains, not incidentally, central to the history of the park as it is told today, a reminder of the binary at the heart of the meaning of Fairmount Park.¹²

In some respects, reestablishing this division between sites of preservation and sites of economic activity via Fairmount Park was a local iteration of a growing national habit. As
William Cronon argues, the nineteenth-century environmental movement’s romanticization of wilderness as pristine simultaneously distracts attention from “the homes we actually inhabit.” So it was in Philadelphia: the park became a symbol of “pristine” nature, leaving the rest of the city open to all comers, especially for industrial development, even as a number of historical estates were left standing as reminders of a pre-industrial past. However, the point is not that the establishment of Fairmount Park was a cynical ploy that helped to usher in unbridled capitalist development in urban lands. Rather, it is that the park played a key role in institutionalizing the notion of the industrial city altogether. That is, instead of challenging industrial capitalism, the park accommodated that economic system by affirming its direct claim to all areas of the city not defined as “nature.” Meanwhile, as we will in more detail see shortly, even non-capitalist forms of economic activity were prohibited within the park itself. Thus the creation of Fairmount Park arguably put modern industrial capitalism on an even firmer footing than before by reinforcing a developmental narrative of linear progress, though not without facing resistance.

In 1868, the Pennsylvania State Assembly authorized the purchase or seizure of thousands of acres from wealthy suburban estates and industrial operators along the Schuylkill River. Newspaper commentary of the time clearly frames a social and economic division between the park and the city. For example, in parks, Philadelphians could “get a breath of God’s pure air, or enjoy the grateful shade and sweet aroma of woods ... [where urban people] can be transported in a few minutes from the heat, and dust, and noise of a great city—its disagreeable sights, and smells, and sounds--into a rural scene of surprising loveliness, amid green fields, and purling brooks, and the waving forest, and flowering shrubbery.” Another writer expressed the urgent need for a park as an urban refuge: “[Philadelphia] must have some rest of business and labor ... [Fairmount Park is] a place not surpassed anywhere for this object.” While citizens frequently
communicated these sentiments in daily and weekly newspapers and magazines throughout the mid-nineteenth century, these sources are silent about the specific, everyday acts that constituted the park. That is, such publications tell us little about how, or by what means, this framing took hold and acted on urban people. Much of that inculcating work was done through photography, spurred on by new technological improvements that allowed for the mass-production and wide dissemination of images.

_Parks and Photography_

Much has been made of the power of photographs to fix meaning and lend the illusion of objective truth and permanence to the subjects they depict.\textsuperscript{17} This view goes back at least to William Henry Fox Talbot, who invented a technique for photographic reproduction using negatives. In his book, the _Pencil of Nature_ (1844), Talbot celebrated the potential uses of photography for inventorying, since it allowed the photographer to make quick and reproducible records of items stored, for example, on a bookshelf. The photograph, he wrote, was advantageous “both for completeness of detail and correctness of perspective.”\textsuperscript{18} But Talbot was also enamored of the ability of photographs to record nature’s “artistry,” enabling the photographer to reproduce natural wonders that he or she could only approximate by other means, like painting or drawing. For Talbot, the photographer was a documentarian, or perhaps a scientist, but never an artist.

Of course, the notion of objectivity on the part of the photographer ignores the decisions that photographers must make in doing their work. Such considerations include the positioning of the camera, the framing of the shot, the composition of scenes, and so on. In addition, both the photographer and the photograph itself are part of larger social assemblages, embedded in social webs, not working independently, but constrained (as well as enabled) in what they can do,
and in what can be said meaningfully.\textsuperscript{19} Thus, the photograph is not a simple medium for recording visual information any more than the photographer acts independently of social context. In this sense, photography is a political practice, and works to produce some forms of knowledge while destroying or eliding others. To the extent that photography is directed at depicting human activities in space, it helps produce particular kinds of subjects that are capable of some forms of behavior and incapable of others. According to the visual culture scholar Suren Valvani, “photography operates in disciplinary discourses to arrest, isolate, and instantiate the body in relation to the axes of time and space; it enables the decipherment, delineation, and analysis of the body’s surface.”\textsuperscript{20} In the words of art historian Thomas Patin, “the use of the natural world as a constituent material component of visual rhetoric helps to create extraordinarily powerful, ‘naturalized,’ and almost undeniable arguments and rationales for what are ultimately […] political positions.”\textsuperscript{21}

The era of large park construction coincided with an era of rapid innovation in photography. New developments in photographic technology occurred during the mid- to late-1800s, but perhaps the most significant, at least for the purposes of this essay, were improvements in the collodion process, which improved on Talbot’s earlier success in reproducing images from paper negatives. While techniques of copying images from negatives had been demonstrated some time before, the collodion process used glass slides rather than paper ones and enabled photographers to create durable negatives that could be stored and reused almost indefinitely, increasing reproduction quality, efficiency, and distribution.

James Cremer (1821-1893), a British-born photographer and inventor who moved to Philadelphia at the age of twenty-two, became the city’s most prolific producer of stereoviews and published a set of photographs of Fairmount Park that earned him a bronze medal at the
Franklin Institute Industrial Exhibition of 1874.\textsuperscript{22} While many details of his life and work are elusive, we know that his Fairmount Park collection was highly regarded and widely available, both in the city of Philadelphia and beyond. The images were sold at his “photographic emporium” and as souvenirs during the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, which was held in Fairmount Park. Cremer’s Fairmount Park photographs extended an artistic tradition established earlier by nineteenth-century landscape painters of the Hudson River School. According to the art historian Barbara Novak, that tradition “carried with it not only an esthetic view, but a powerful self-image, a moral and social energy that could be translated into action.”\textsuperscript{23} Many of Cremer’s photographs borrow pictorial conventions from landscape painting, such as the motif of the human spectator placed in the foreground to provide a sense of scale while also marking selected “views” and modeling proper habits of aesthetic “nature” observation. Compare, for example, Cremer’s use of this familiar motif in one of his Fairmount Park scenes (Figure 1) with that in Asher B. Durand’s famous \textit{Kindred Spirits} (Figure 2), suggesting the photographer’s thorough awareness of prevailing aesthetic frameworks. We have no independent documentary evidence of Cremer’s direct communication with Durand or other landscape painters, but his photograph provides visual confirmation that artistic ideas had become the lingua franca among park advocates, including William Cullen Bryant, a proponent of Central Park in New York City, shown standing with the artist Thomas Cole—founder of the Hudson River School—in \textit{Kindred Spirits}.\textsuperscript{24}

On the other hand, Cremer’s work played a very different didactic role from that of the Hudson River School. While some of the sites depicted by landscape painters were accessible to wealthy and middle-class tourists, most urban residents had neither the leisure nor the economic wherewithal to visit such locations (indeed, this was one of the strongest arguments in favor of
large urban parks). Moreover, many landscape paintings, including Durand’s *Kindred Spirits*, depict idealized scenes, cobbled together from views of multiple sites. By contrast, Cremer’s photographs were intended for local consumption, and the scenes depicted were actual places (albeit constructed to look “natural”) that could be visited. Indeed, attracting visitors to the park was the central purpose of the collection.

Cremer’s photographs of Fairmount Park fall into three categories. The first consists of various types of scenery within the park—forests, rivers, streams, and open fields—mostly taken at a distance, sometimes featuring a lone individual, usually a man (see Figure 1). The second category features buildings in the park, most notably homes, but situates them within particular rural, and historically distant, frame, as in the case of Cremer’s “West from North Laurel Hill” (Figure 3), showing a cluster of picturesque old buildings at the Schuylkill river’s edge surrounded by neatly tilled fields and a distant forest. A third category emphasizes genteel park visitors, alone or in groups, relaxing leisurely in quiet contemplation of rustic “natural” surroundings (Figure 4). These scenes also feature paths, benches, or bridges—components of the park that facilitated the rest and therapeutic retreat from urban society that city residents were supposed to seek in the park.

Looking more closely at the first of these image categories, we see that Cremer’s photographs, in depicting human beings as small in relation to the park’s majestic landscapes, produce a domesticated version of the romantic sublime for tourists. In many pictures, anonymous visitors appear diminutive and at a distance, creating a perspective that emphasizes the grandeur of their surroundings (see Figure 1). As a result, humans—both depicted visitors and viewers of the photographs—seem to be outside the park even as they apparently stand within it; for Cremer, as
for other artists using similar motifs at the time, people are temporary visitors to the holy temples of nature's beauty.26

A short, three-paragraph essay affixed to the back all of Cremer’s Fairmount Park published pictures, presumably written by the photographer himself, helps illuminate the significance of such scenes: “The city has purchased the ground of either side of the Schuylkill River ... and have [sic] dedicated it as a Public Park and Pleasure Ground… For natural beauty, it is unsurpassed, and has every variety of scenery—cascades, green wooded islands, meadows, uplands, lawns, rocky ravines, hill-summits and open fields.” Like the photographs themselves, the essay constructs the park as a space defined by these “natural” constituents, not by the people who visit them.

Cremer’s pictures deserve attention as much for what they omit as for what they include. When he took the photographs, Fairmount Park was very much a work in progress; in many places roadways, homes, mills, and manufacturing works interrupted its forests and pastures. Barely a decade before, such structures had been mainstays in framing Philadelphia as an emerging industrial city, but Cremer’s photographic survey of the park largely erases them. By bracketing out these buildings or consigning them to the past, Cremer portrayed the park as a preserve—a space of exception set apart from the expanding city. The omission of evidence that waterways like the Schuylkill River were important power sources, for example, obscured the conditions of industrial production. Inclusion of modern factories and mills was unimaginable for aesthetic reasons, for it would have required framing the park as something other than a pristine, natural, pre-industrial space. At the same time, by aestheticizing “rural” scenes, Cremer’s photographs helped reinforce an emerging understanding of urban space that took for granted the re-orientation of economic activity toward industrial production. His Fairmount Park scenes also
modeled a related shift away from forms of social organization in which rural economies were more closely integrated with their urban counterparts.

In Figure 3, for example, a few buildings rest on the western bank of the Schuylkill River, amid agricultural fields or pastures. This notion of *rus-in-urbe* famously informed Olmsted's planning of Central Park in New York City as well; park historian Terrence Young argues that the same notion was central to early planning and design in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Photographs like Cremer's, then, guided park visitors toward a particular understanding of the park within the larger context of the city and its history.

Finally, Cremer's photographs established a set of ethical guidelines for their intended audience that maintained a distance between the park and economic activity. They invited city dwellers into the park, encouraging them to sit, read, explore, and be inspired by the park's natural surroundings. Many of his photographs show people engaged in direct enjoyment of the park, sitting for picnics, relaxing on benches, reading newspapers or books, or simply reclining on lawns. The men and women in Figure 4 have come dressed for a day of relaxation in the grass. Even the title, "Lover's Walk – Landsdowne Valley," suggests a leisurely, romantic, stroll through the park's winding pathways. Images like this one confirm that the park existed for leisure, not work. In doing so, Cremer's images placed the park within a teleological narrative of urban change, in which economic development rendered pre-industrial modes of production obsolete as industrial ones came to dominate. Constructing the park as an environment distinct from—and opposed to—the modern urban workplace, the photographs also asserted an ethical framing that circumscribed the bounds of behavior in and out of the park, providing a coherent set of guidelines for prospective visitors at a moment when clearly defined tourist itineraries had not yet been established.
As previously discussed, factories found no place in Cremer’s narrative, but neither did the kinds of forest-based economic activities that many people living in Philadelphia engaged in regularly, including the harvesting of fruits, nuts, firewood, river ice, or timber. With these activities in mind, I shift my discussion to the Fairmount Park Guard, an appendage of the park commission that was charged with maintaining civil order in the park. Specifically, I turn toward the Guard’s record of criminal activity in the park, one of the few documented instances of the use of park lands for economic means.

*Erasing Economic Difference in the Park*

“The matter of clubbing trees [to obtain fruits and nuts] has become a serious one....Many of the best as well as the lowest class of citizens seem to be of the opinion that they have a right to club trees [in the park] and take any fruit they can obtain....There are many fruit trees in isolated places that are of no benefit and had better be cut down.”29

When the Pennsylvania State Assembly passed the bill that authorized the formation of Fairmount Park, it also approved the creation of the Fairmount Park Guard. In 1872, just four years after the official founding of the park, the captain of the guard, Louis Chasteau, began submitting annual reports of the Guard’s activities to his superiors. Chasteau’s reports span a twenty-seven year period and document, among other things, the Guard’s efforts to shift park users’ activity away from the practices oriented toward extractive uses of forest resources, and to replace them with a new set of leisure activities. As a corollary to Cremer’s photographs, the reports framed the park as place of non-industrial leisure as well as an object of knowledge that
could be known through the use of statistics, detailed record-keeping, and surveillance. In monitoring and policing the park, the guard also maintained its perceived moral integrity through efforts to shape the activities of both human visitors and nonhuman constituents with which they interacted. Not surprisingly, Chasteau and his officers faced a great deal of public resistance in this regard. Such resistance, and his reporting of it, offers a counter-view of the constructed division between the park and the city, as propagated by the newspaper accounts and photographs discussed above. As the Park Guard reports demonstrate, the policing practices of the park guard did substantial work in bringing the division of park and city into being.

The Park Guard surveyed the park by stationing officers at newly-constructed guard houses at regular intervals throughout the park. Guards were encouraged to move about the park within a prescribed territory, so that visitors became familiar with individual guards. In this way, the potential presence of a park officer served as a deterrent for criminal activity and more minor violations of park rules, including trespassing beyond specific park entrances and trails where visitors could walk, ride, and drive. Chasteau’s reports demonstrate that the role of the park guard was not simply to provide for the safety of visitors. The guards also enforced adherence to the moral code that undergirded the set of rules instituted for humans’ use of the park. The behavior of adults and the care of children, including the enforcement of gender roles and sexual norms, as well as the bounds of appropriate forms of recreation, fell within the purview of the park guard.

Among his many duties, Chasteau maintained “The Statistics”, a yearly report that communicated to park commissioners a series of data points related to the use and abuse of park lands. “The Statistics” included a list of “nuisances” confronted by park guards (“bands of gypsies,” “dead dogs”) and a list of the rules that had been violated (“insulting women,” “throwing
stones,” “females swimming”), as well as the number of visitors entering and picnics occurring in the park. It is important to note, however, that Chasteau’s reports do not consistently document offenses that occurred in the park every year. Indeed, the categories of incidents reported (offenses, nuisances, etc.) changed from year to year. This fact suggests that the key function of such reporting was not simply to record human activity but to establish the park’s spatial and behavioral boundaries, thereby distinguishing it from the city. By posting a list of rules at all entrances, and attempting to prevent entry into the park except at these spots, the guard achieved some success in that regard. These posted rules introduced the visitor to the ethical landscape of the park and included a set of criteria that restricted economic activity in the park. According to the guidelines, “no person shall carry fire-arms or shoot birds in the Park ... disturb the fish or water-fowl in the pool or pond, or birds in any part of the Park ... cut, break, or in any wise injure or deface the trees, shrubs, plants, [or] turf...[or] take ice from the Schuylkill within the Park.” Such rules regulated activities familiar to many working-class people who previously had subsisted upon them. In other words, day-to-day interactions among the park’s human and nonhuman inhabitants did not always conform to the new regime of bourgeois aesthetic leisure governing the modern industrial city, whose authorities sought to prohibit them. Nevertheless, many park users continued to pursue these proscribed alternative activities.

For the purposes of this essay, key components of Chasteau’s reports are his narrative descriptions of violations, which highlight a set of economic practices that continued to be performed long after the establishment of new park guidelines. The offenses Chasteau documents run the gamut of “pre-industrial” subsistence practices, including the collection of fruits and nuts (involving “tree-clubbing”), "shooting at game,” “killing rabbits,” and even pasturing cows in the park. Other prohibited activities included cutting ice from the river during the winter, fishing,
felling trees, and gathering fallen limbs for firewood. The guard was also preoccupied with preventing the collection of ferns, leaves, and medicinal plants from the park. Chasteau’s frequent remarks on these forbidden practices suggest that they were commonplace. In an especially telling episode described in an 1878 report, containing the text of this section’s epigraph, two brothers were arrested for collecting nuts from trees found in the park. The next day, the boys’ father visited Chasteau’s office to argue that the boys had a right to collect nuts from public land. Indeed, he stated that he moved to a house adjacent to the park so that his sons could “have the advantages of all that might be obtained” from it. This, and other events reported throughout the 1870s, 80s, and 90s, suggest that the division between the leisure-space of the park and the work-space of the city imposed by the park guard and the Fairmount Park Commission more broadly was by no means universally accepted. In response to these conflicts, Chasteau requested in his 1878 report, and again in 1891, that the park commission destroy fruit trees in the park to prevent their use.

Much of this activity might seem to suggest that the park and its nonhuman inhabitants were passive servants of conflicting human endeavors. Yet, a new materialist perspective prompts us to pay attention to the nonhuman “labor” or agency that facilitated various human activities and thwarted others. To begin with, one could argue that tree clubbing, berry-picking, or collecting ice from frozen rivers was only possible because plants grew and ice froze in particular ways that were useful to people. There were other, even more dynamic roles that plants and animals played in fueling this conflict between park users and the park guard. One example from Chasteau’s reports tells the story of “young lovers” who took advantage of the park’s overgrown areas to escape the prying eyes of adults. Sexual activity in the park, facilitated by untended plants that impeded the guard’s surveillance of park lands, was especially vexing for
Chasteau. The guard captain also complained about the abundance of predatory animals, like hawks and feral cats, which he feared would decimate non-predatory songbird populations preferred for their picturesque beauty and auditory appeal. His repeated requests for more frequent maintenance of overgrown areas and his desire to rid the park of hawks and other predatory birds parallel his efforts to remove nut-bearing trees from the park. For Chasteau, Fairmount was a park whose primary purpose was to provide bourgeois aesthetic space for picnics, contemplative walks, and leisurely drives, not working-class human subsistence or animal predation (activities perhaps better suited, in the minds of park authorities, to Philadelphia’s tenement neighborhoods and zoological garden, founded in 1874).

Ironically, park restrictions seem to contradict a yearly event instituted in the first years of the park’s existence. On “Nutting Day,” school children were invited by the thousands to collect chestnuts, walnuts, and hazelnuts found in the park. Three years after the park’s founding, in 1871, it was estimated that one in six individuals living in Philadelphia participated in the event, including the adult guardians of the schoolchildren for whom the event was ostensibly created. At first glance, the park commission’s endorsement of the event would seem to embrace the very economic uses that Chasteau vehemently opposed. However, it is important to note that the collection of nuts on Nutting Day was meant as a form of recreation, a leisure activity for children, not subsistence labor for working adults. To that effect, one participant described Nutting Day as a time for remembering “the old times when Fair-Mount was nothing more than a wildwood.” Another explained, “To the children, [Nutting Day] was something which, in after years, would appear a big bright slice of their childhood. It was a new song in the dusty marketplace which they would learn by heart and we fancy will never forget. ... Contact with God’s world outside of a town is as necessary for the development of the soul of a boy as fresh air is for
Unlike the activities of the boys described in the epigraph above, nut collection on Nutting Day was a form of historicist re-enactment that subdued and domesticated older, more aggressive tactics, like tree-clubbing. Thus Nutting Day—like Cremer’s visual and textual re-framing of the historical homes and estates encompassed by the park—reinforced the hegemony of the industrial city by defining other forms of economic behavior as obsolete, the domain of the past, more akin to the play of children than to the work of adults. Just as Chasteau proved unsuccessful in his campaign to remove fruit- and nut-bearing trees from the park (plenty of which remain today), Nutting Day ended only a few years after it began.}

**Conclusion**

The establishment of large urban parks in the mid-1800s was part of a broader effort to establish a set of modern economic relations oriented around industrial production. Places like Fairmount Park served a discursive function by ostensibly situating urban nature within the geography of a city, but conceptually beyond its economic space. The establishment and maintenance of urban parks helped to do some of the work required to render another set of practices unviable. Yet, the practices supposedly erased by the imposition of this new framing were more tenacious than expected, as the narrowed vision of the industrial city proved inadequate for the desires of urban populations living near forested lands. Annual reports of the Fairmount Park Guard demonstrate that some human and nonhuman inhabitants of Philadelphia did not adhere to this new vision, for they continued to pursue a different mode of urban material subsistence despite its official prohibition, its elision from Cremer’s photographs, and its active opposition by the Fairmount Park Guard.
Official techniques for the conceptual partition, regulation, and surveillance of “nature” in Fairmount Park failed to contain the resistant energy of human and nonhuman agents who rejected their modern bourgeois industrial logic. However dominant and powerful that particular framing logic had become, its artificial division between nature and the city—whatever qualities might be attributed to them—needed to be continually reinforced. Moreover, in order to be successful, human endeavors required the integration of a range of non-human actors in the production of these urban and natural spaces. In the case of James Cremer, his work in projecting a particular image the park required him to bring together two as-yet unintegrated assemblages—the emerging technological ensemble of Talbot’s collodion process (glass slides, albumen, cardstock, and chemical baths) and the raw material that served as the subjects of his photographs (the plants, trees, houses, and people who variously occupied the newly-classified space of Fairmount Park). From one perspective, it is easy to imagine Cremer as the central actor in this assemblage, directing the actions of other human and non-human participants in producing this new cultural landscape. We must remember that Cremer’s role in this process was not uncontested by the techno-environmental assemblage he wished to direct; instead, we might think of Cremer as one of many participants in this project, enabled through the capacities of the various human and non-human allies with which he engaged.

This point is made clearer in the case of the Fairmount Park Guard, in which the park was constituted not only through the influence of Cremer, the Fairmount Park Commission, and the Park Guard, but also by a host of unruly participants who, to Chasteau’s continual frustration, threatened to disrupt the new vision of the city that park discourse was gradually bringing into view. Conceptualizing chemical baths or birds of prey as “mediators” of social interactions, rather than as mere “intermediaries”, to use Bruno Latour’s terms, sensitizes us to the ensembles
that came together during the construction of urban parks in the mind-19th century, highlighting the diverse and contested roles that parks (and their varied constituents) played during this period. It forces us to acknowledge that the stories usually told about parks have too often overlooked the work that was necessary to bring these new worlds into being. Finally, it reminds us that struggles such as these continue to shape present-day contests over the city, its nature, and the interplay of humans and non-humans in their reproduction.


6. Prior to Pratt’s purchase of it, the Lemon Hill estate was part of a larger estate owned by Robert Morris, signatory to the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, who was in debtor's prison at the time of the purchase.


11. Ibid, 11.

12. In its 1999 Master Plan, for example, the Fairmount Park Commission recommended beginning “viewshed” restoration efforts in Lemon Hill in part “because of its historical importance” to the development of the park system. See Fairmount Park Commission, *Fairmount Park System Natural Lands Restoration Master Plan, Volume II* (1999), 346.


22. Cremer's photographic work extended beyond documenting the park. During the same period, he was commissioned by the City of Philadelphia to produce a different collection of stereographs that documented the construction of City Hall from 1873-75. For documentation of Cremer's bronze medal, see this source: https://archive.org/stream/journalfranklini99fran/journalfranklini99fran_djvu.txt


27. It isn't clear, from the title of the image, to whom the building depicted belonged. The section of the park shown in the image (the west bank of the Schuylkill, across from the northern section of Laurel Hill Cemetery) was the site of a cluster of small lots about which little is now known.


30ibid.

31ibid.

32ibid.

33See the essays by Ott and Braddock in this volume.


38. Recent scholarly attention has demonstrated that the collection of plant materials for food, medicine, and active recreation remains important to many urban people in the twenty-first century. The popularity of such activities, as well as their illegal status, suggests that the urban environmental imaginary laid out here remains relevant today. For further discussion, see Nathaniel Gabriel, “Urban Non-Timber Products in Philadelphia” (M.A. thesis, Temple University, 2006); Rebecca J. McLain, Patrick T. Hurley, Marla R. Emery, and Melissa R. Poe “Gathering ‘wild’ food in the city: rethinking the role of foraging in urban ecosystem planning and management,” *Local Environment* 19 (2014): 220-240.
The Horticultural Center in Philadelphia contains an arboretum, greenhouse, demonstration gardens, and a Japanese house and garden. It is located within Fairmount Park at the southeast corner of Belmont and Montgomery Drives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The grounds are open daily except holidays, without charge. An admission fee is charged for the Japanese house.