

## Amos Pinchot: Rebel Prince

Nancy Pittman Pinchot  
*Guilford, Connecticut*

A rebel is the kind of person who feels his rebellion not as a plea for this or that reform, but as an unbearable tension in his viscera. [He has] to break down the cause of his frustration or jump out of his skin. —Walter Lippmann<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Amos Richards Eno Pinchot, if remembered at all, is usually thought of only as the younger, some might say lesser, brother of Gifford Pinchot, who founded the Forest Service and then became two-time governor of Pennsylvania. Yet Amos Pinchot, who never held an important position either in or out of government and was almost always on the losing side, was at the center of most of the great progressive fights of the first half of this century. His life and



*Amos and Gifford Pinchot*

career encompassed two distinct progressive eras, anchored by the two Roosevelt presidencies, during which these ideals achieved their greatest gains. During the twenty years in between, many more battles were lost than won, creating a discouraging climate. Nevertheless, as a progressive thinker, Amos Pinchot held onto his ideals tenaciously. Along with many others, he helped to form an ideological bridge which safeguarded many of the ideas that might have perished altogether in the hostile climate of the '20s.

Pinchot seemed to thrive on adversity. Already out of step by 1914, he considered himself a liberal of the Jeffersonian stamp, dedicated to the fight against monopoly. In this, he was opposed to Teddy Roosevelt, who, was captivated by Herbert Croly's "New Nationalism," extolled big business controlled by even bigger government. But Pinchot saw nothing but danger in such large concentrations of power. For this reason he was as much against socialism, and later communism, as he was against monopoly. His work for the Progressive Party, for labor, for civil liberties, and against war all embody one overriding principle which he held with remarkable consistency throughout his life. That principle was the supremacy of the individual against overwhelming aggregations of power.

Depending on the decade, Amos Pinchot was variously called a "radical," a "liberal," a "pacifist," a "conservative," and a "traitor." Generally none of these was meant as praise. Over the years he was the target of often vicious attacks. He did not hesitate to fight back, even against the sensibilities of his own rich and conservative class, especially during wartime hysteria, when hostility towards his actions reached a fever pitch, Pinchot refused to back down from his commitment to individual liberty. What kind of man would undertake a life of almost certain punishment and isolation from the prevailing climate? Indeed, why would a man brought up to be a patrician and an aristocrat distort the natural pattern of his life for such elusive goals? Those are only some of the questions which make it worthwhile to understand Amos Pinchot.

### The Young Amos

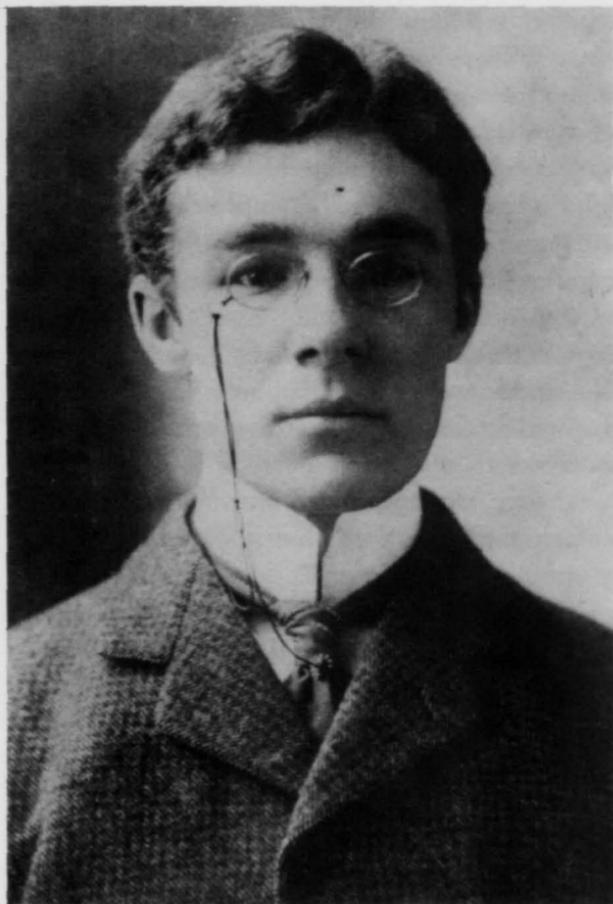
Amos Richards Eno Pinchot, born December 6, 1872, was the third and youngest child of James and Mary Eno Pinchot. Named for his maternal grandfather, a real estate magnate on the order of Donald Trump, Amos was born into the insulated, upper-class life of wealthy New York. Educated at Westminster Academy, Yale University, and Columbia Law School, nothing in the outward appearance of his early life suggested the fierce radicalism which overtook him in his early thirties.

Amos's father, James, imbued his son with an unusual, and in some ways contradictory, constellation of values. James Pinchot came of age during the rise of the great American fortunes made in railroads, steel, and oil. He made his own fortune in the wallpaper business. Yet James never allowed his capac-

ity to make money to submerge his sense of responsibility to the common man. The lynchpin of his social philosophy was John Stuart Mill's materialistic Utilitarianism, which defined social good as "the greatest good for the greatest number." Taking an even longer view, James was one of a still-minuscule group of people who also grasped the danger that wholesale destruction of natural resources posed to the future of America—in an era when resource exploitation was thought to be every American's birthright. This realization was to have important repercussions for his eldest son, Gifford, who at his father's suggestion, became the nation's first practicing forester. James Pinchot's most unusual characteristic, however, was his deep aesthetic sensibility. He developed a passion for collecting American paintings, notably those of the Hudson River School. Many of these artists became his friends, which enabled James to move easily between social circles that ordinarily rarely touched each other. His oldest son was named for the painter Sanford Gifford, and all of his children imbibed the atmosphere of artistic freedom which the group carried with them. Although not in the least radical himself, James Pinchot displayed an independent spirit, informed by a subtle and unusual set of values, which planted the seeds of radicalism in both his sons.

While Gifford's career seemed pre-ordained, Amos grew up unsure how to express the value system he had absorbed from his parents. Six years younger than his sister Nettie and nine years younger than Gifford, he was something of a fifth wheel in a family that already had the required boy and girl, especially a boy like Gifford, who early on had been singled out as the family star. James and Mary quite clearly were awestruck by their eldest son, a handsome, charming boy who fulfilled his parents' ambitions for him without question. Amos, on the other hand, was often either ignored or admonished. "One word about your hand writing," wrote his father, in a typical exchange, "It is so scrawling in part . . . so backhanded and characterless that I think you should make an effort to improve it. If you would only be a little less careless and *try* you could easily make it better, at any rate clear and not disgraceful altogether."<sup>2</sup> This kind of criticism made for a complicated and uneasy relationship with his father. Possibly because of this, the two brothers became extremely close, with Gifford in some measure taking his father's place.

Both brothers matured into handsome young men, tall, slender, and athletic. While both sported mustaches in the custom of the day, Amos possessed an aristocratic grace of carriage that distinguished him. Brushing crinkly light brown hair straight back, he revealed a strong forehead over a rather narrow face. Spectacles could not hide the keenness of his blue-grey eyes. Like other less favored sons, Amos compensated by developing an incisive and probing intellect, leavened with a subtle wit that was extremely funny, although sometimes cruel. Gifford, on the other hand, wielded a heavy, rather moralistic hand which would eventually inspire rather than entertain. Both brothers were



*Amos Pinchot as a young student at Yale University*

forestry to the strikingly different conditions and expectations of America. It was an awesome performance, which confirmed the family's expectations of Gifford's potential, including the notion that Gifford might well be presidential timber. \*

When he followed his brother to Yale in 1893, Amos already had a great deal to live up to. His mother wrote to him soon after he arrived:

You are indeed most happy to have been introduced by your Brother—and such a one—who has the warm respect and regard of all who know him. You will have his reputation to live up to and also your own—for we all have such confidence in you that we feel that your own standard will keep you up, let alone his.<sup>3</sup>

But at this age, Amos's social conscience was less interesting to him than his social standing. Amos got himself elected, like Gifford and several Eno uncles before him, to the exclusive Skull and Bones Society. He joined the best

superlative trout fishermen, but Amos was by far the better rider and also a tennis player of exquisite form, winning state tennis championships over a number of years. All this amounted to very little, however, compared to Gifford, whose alliance with Theodore Roosevelt turned out to be one of the most effective conservation teams in the nation's history. With Roosevelt as President and Gifford Pinchot as the head of the newly-revitalized Forest Service, the two men set about transforming the national landscape. Gifford's genius was to adapt European-style

eating clubs and fell in with the “smooth” crowd, where he reveled in shouting down the great populist orator William Jennings Bryan, who had come to Yale to prod the young aristocrats into an awareness of the real world. As boys, both Amos and Gifford had admired the business skills of their father and grandfather, adopting, at college, a conservative, individualistic economic view that favored the interests of the business owner. For example, as a sophomore at Yale, Gifford had been indignant over government regulation of railroad fares: “The railroads own the tracks and the cars don’t they? Then why shouldn’t they charge what they please?”<sup>4</sup>

Amos was exposed to a gentleman’s education at Yale, including American and European history, Bertrand Russell, Tolstoi, Gibbon, Walt Whitman, Emerson, and Euripides. He adored Shakespeare sonnets and occasionally tried his hand at poetry. He read economics and sociology but with no particular career goal in mind, since by the time Amos graduated from Yale in 1897, the whole family was expected to help further Gifford’s career. Towards that end, Mary and James had already moved to Washington D.C. to provide a household for their bachelor son. Their sister Nettie, a tall, angular beauty, married a short, English diplomat and moved to England rather than stay and subordinate her life to Gifford. But Amos was not so lucky. Reminding him once again that “Gifford is destined for higher responsibilities,”<sup>5</sup> James and Mary set about preparing Amos for the thankless task of managing the family’s large and complicated estate, which included land, houses, stocks, furniture, art, and other inherited assets. Although he was saddled with one of life’s drearier housekeeping jobs, especially for a man of his temperament and intellectual potential, Amos accepted this familial injunction without protest, partly out of love for Gifford, and partly because he had nothing better to do in his early years.

Amos dutifully enrolled at Columbia Law School as the training ground for estate management coupled with a little gentlemanly law practice on the side. But law school, he wrote miserably to Gifford, was as “uninteresting as the deuce.”<sup>6</sup> Life seemed to stall for Amos. Bored and envious, he hungered for the kind of real world challenges his brother was facing. Suddenly, after slogging through the first year of law school, Amos enlisted as a private in the Spanish-American War, explaining to Gifford that he felt that “Spain was exploiting Cuba.”<sup>7</sup> Some righteous chord had been struck, but it didn’t fit in anywhere. Most likely Amos was looking for an escape from the excruciating boredom of law school. He never actually saw combat, and the short-lived episode earned him nothing more glorious than a permanently incapacitated hip after he and his mule fell off a cliff and the mule landed on him. To highlight the burlesque quality of the whole adventure, Amos contracted typhoid and was fetched home by Gifford, who promptly re-enrolled him in law school. The entire experience has a ludicrous ring to it and may well have

contributed to his later intense dislike of war. Compare this to Theodore Roosevelt's glorious charge up San Juan hill, a thrill he spent a lifetime re-enacting in one form or another, and the basis for their later enmity over pacifism can be duly charted.

Slightly chastened, Amos graduated from New York Law School in 1899 and began his career as a lawyer and family money manager. He became a deputy assistant district attorney in New York but discovered almost instantly that he detested law practice almost as much as law school itself. A nose-to-the-grindstone job on dull subjects held no appeal for Amos at all. Years later, in his pamphlet "What's the Matter With America?," he hinted at another reason why, without understanding it at the time, he had resisted law practice. "Throughout the ages," he wrote, "law has been the expression of the will of the privileged class."<sup>8</sup> Again, a latent chord was struck, and again, it fit no pattern that he could act upon with certainty.

In 1900, at the age of 27, still without a compass and unconscious of the passions, both personal and political, seething in him, Amos married his childhood friend and Gramercy Park neighbor, Gertrude Minturn. Gertrude was the youngest daughter of a respectable old New York shipping and merchant family, whose bloodlines, like the lines of their merchant ship, the *Flying Cloud*, were impeccable. Amos's family was thrilled. "I think that Amos's engagement will do the whole family good," Nettie wrote to her father. "I am perfectly delighted, and I know you are, too. It must be nice for Gertrude to come into a family where everyone is fond of her."<sup>9</sup>



Gertrude Minturn

After their marriage, the couple embraced the conventional life they had been born to, including a brilliant round of parties and social outings. Amos dabbled in real estate, family investments, philanthropic pursuits, joined all the best clubs, and dutifully played the unremarkable part assigned to him, that of a fairly aimless, upper-class dandy. But even after they had a small son in 1902 (named Gifford, of course), Amos was still unable to quell his dissatisfactions. Gifford was at the peak of his influence with President Roosevelt, who authorized him that summer to travel to the Philippines on a fact-finding mission. Amos longed to go with him and wrote wistfully to Gifford, "I would give an awful lot to go, too, but of course it is out of the question." The letter is signed, "Your loving brother, Gifford."<sup>10</sup> One should not make too much of these Freudian slips, but in this case it seems entirely plausible that Amos really did yearn to be Gifford and to live his much more exciting life. Later that year, the dissatisfaction intensified, and Amos wrote again to Gifford. "I am feeling terribly restless and anxious to get into some active work. The idea of pottering around anymore is terrible and I wish I could talk things over with you."<sup>11</sup> In this pre-psychoanalytic age, it is unlikely that Amos would have acknowledged his feelings of jealousy. But the explosive combination of hero worship and inner anger was already setting the stage for a later rebellion that would shape Amos's political views and his actions for the rest of his life.

In late 1903, Amos began to be plagued by a nervous disorder that sapped his energy and sank him into a severe depression. The cause of the breakdown was never exactly ascertained, but it seems likely that he had succumbed to the classic, underutilized female's complaint, then known as neurasthenia. Gifford was terribly worried about Amos and undoubtedly feeling guilty that his brother had been so easily sacrificed to his own career. In a somewhat misguided, even self-serving attempt to help Amos, he wrote the following letter:

Dear Amos: What is running in my mind is this. Why could you not take up this conservation campaign also? You would not have to change your present plans in any way, but you could very soon post yourself on the facts and policies and begin to make talks from time to time . . . I would be so glad to have a chance to turn over to you as many talks as you would want to make, for I have many times more invitations to speak than I can accept. And so you would gradually work into the game, confining your field to the East if you liked, while I would more naturally cover the Miss. Valley and the West . . . You might specialize on the economic, political, or sociological sides, the human sides, and I could keep more in touch with the natural resources end. It would be a great chance for team work. . . . Think it over. It looks good to me.<sup>12</sup>

Gifford had been trying for over seven years to convince Congress to transfer the Forestry Reserves to the Agriculture Department, a lobbying job of huge proportions, and one which could easily absorb his brother's energies. Although Amos was reluctant to start a career as a pale imitation of his brother, he realized on balance that he had better accept the offer. In January 1905, he took his family to Washington, moving into the house on Rhode Island Avenue next door to his brother and his parents. It turned out to be a surprisingly good move. Washington was a stimulating tonic to Amos, helping to propel him fully out of his depression. This was Amos's first exposure to the intoxication of "Potomac fever." In the heady atmosphere of his older brother's success, life became interesting and exciting again. TR was naturally inclined to be friendly to the younger brother of his good friend, Gifford, and Amos found himself essentially receiving his political apprenticeship at the President's knee. Like Gifford, Amos reveled in his access to the inner circle, and admired TR unreservedly, at least at first. Although he lived in Washington for only a year, it was a good year for Amos, helping him restore his badly eroded confidence. He returned to New York more or less reconciled to the life he had been allotted. It was not until four years later that Amos finally found the inner direction he had been seeking, ironically, by working with Gifford again.

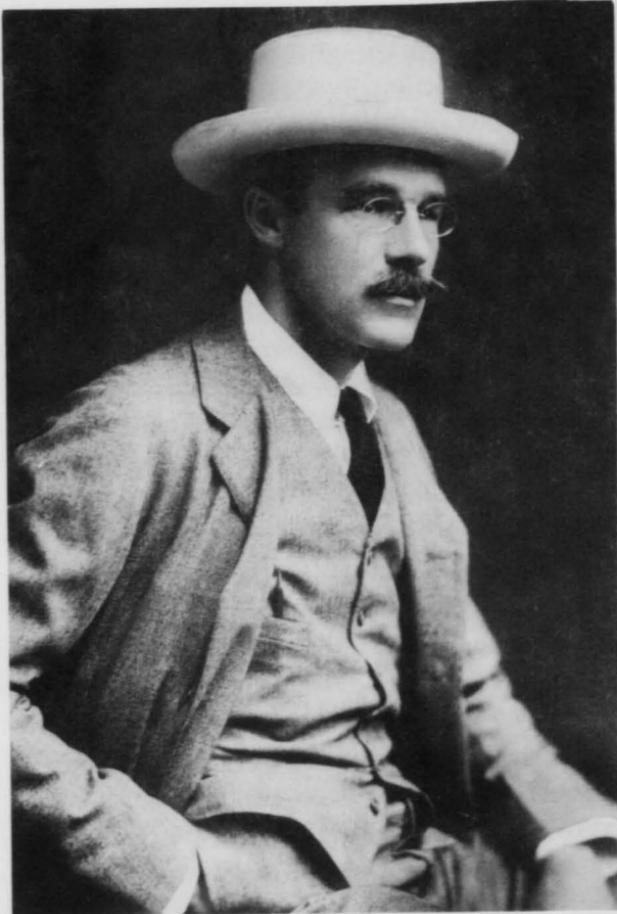
### **An Unexpected Apprenticeship: The Pinchot-Ballinger Controversy**

In 1909, with Roosevelt out of office, Gifford struggled for over a year to maintain the conservation gains he and TR had made. But Gifford was more and more convinced that the Taft administration was systematically ceding back to corporations the special privileges they had enjoyed in the past. The Pinchot-Ballinger controversy was Gifford's way of striking back at an inert government that no longer seemed willing to protect public lands from the corporate reach. Not entirely by accident, he found himself embroiled in a complicated and acrimonious fight to discredit the current Secretary of the Interior, Richard Ballinger, whom he had reason to believe was in collusion with the Guggenheim-Morgan Corporation over Alaskan coal claims. President Taft, after only a cursory glance at the assembled evidence, dismissed the case and exonerated Ballinger. This was the opening salvo that Gifford needed. In a letter which was read on the floor of the Senate, Pinchot publicly defied Taft's conclusion and took his case to the press. Taft had no choice but to fire Pinchot for insubordination, knowing full well that the popular Forest Service Chief would use his dismissal as a symbolic martyrdom to further the cause of conservation at Taft's expense. The firing of so important and well-known a government official, coupled with a blistering expose written by Louis Glavis, Ballinger's accuser, and published by *Collier's*, precipitated a congressional investigation by a joint committee.<sup>13</sup> Gifford rubbed his hands with glee! This was the public relations fight he had been waiting for. He immediately called on Amos for help. As he wrote in *Breaking New Ground*,

The man to whom I naturally turned was my brother. . . . He could not, of course, appear as my formal representative. Nevertheless, his advice and his help were invaluable. . . . He was indispensable, and was especially useful in getting the facts to the public before and after the hearings were over and the verdict rendered.<sup>14</sup>

It was here that Amos Pinchot finally found his political voice. For the first time in his adult life, he was engaged in work that could make a real difference. As he had done intermittently for the last three years, he left his wife and children in his elegant marble house at 1021 Park Avenue, New York, and moved in with his brother. He spent most of the winter and spring of 1909 and 1910 in Washington immersed in the fight. What he saw came as a profound revelation to him. For the first time, Amos began to grasp the power of "big business" and its corollary power to influence the federal government in its favor. Suddenly, in one year, his conception of the universe was

dramatically altered. Before Pinchot-Ballinger, Amos's political philosophy was still very much in the liberal tradition. "I thought I was a sincere reformer," he wrote of himself, "and took lots of trouble to establish myself in that belief. Then I came a little into the light, or perhaps we should call it the darkness, when, in the winter of 1909 and 1910, in a great congressional investigation, I saw the inside of the American cup."<sup>15</sup> Both disillusioned and greatly exhilarated, Amos Pinchot began to ponder, for the first time in his life, the relationship between economic power and human rights.



*Amos Pinchot*

It was during the Pinchot-Ballinger controversy that Amos Pinchot met Louis Brandeis, who was to become a formative influence on the newly-minted young radical. Brandeis, who had been retained as Glavis's lawyer in the fight, asked Amos Pinchot to draft a bill that would "ensure the development of the resources of Alaska while protecting the territory from exploitation." Here Pinchot could use his legal skills in the service of something that really mattered. Submerged in the draft's 127 pages were statements of principle on three problems that would henceforth be his lifelong interests: monopoly, the conservation of natural resources, and the question of how far corporations should be allowed to control these resources. The interrelation of politics, economic forces, and government became his passion.<sup>16</sup>

Pinchot learned a great deal from Brandeis, whose own distaste for the notion of "bigness" formed one of the lynchpins of Pinchot's thinking about large corporations and monopoly. Both Pinchot and Brandeis saw the dangers of allowing large corporations to claim monopolistic ownership of natural resources such as water power, electricity, forests, coal, oil, or railroads. Like many others in the pre-Bolshevik, pre-big government era, Pinchot espoused the vaguely socialistic idea that government should own and lease these resources out to private businesses.<sup>17</sup> However, he made it clear that he did not consider this a socialist stance. His vision of small, competitive business as the basis for the American economy bore no relationship to socialist ideas about redistributing wealth, which he dismissed as sentimental, unrealistic, and inefficient. Pinchot did not hold with either monopolists or socialists, for he believed that both advanced the elimination of healthy competition in industry.

Amos's excitement about these new ideas and activities was contagious. To a friend, he wrote, "I wish you would get your active intelligence to work on the political situation today. It seems to me it is vitally and almost thrillingly interesting." He was deeply puzzled over "why people who belong to what Galsworthy calls 'the glossy class' . . . [those] well-to-do people sheltered from the real storms of life," refused to get involved with the big questions of the day. "They are just the people," he wrote to a friend, "who should therefore be independent and who should allow themselves the luxury of thinking and speaking the truth and of daring to seek the realities of life."<sup>18</sup> This, of course, was exactly how he saw himself, a man free to speak the truth.

In order to consolidate his new ideas and communicate his excitement to others, Pinchot wrote an article for *McClure's Magazine* in September, 1911, entitled "Two Revolts Against Oligarchy." Seeking to provide an historical perspective to the present insurgent spirit, he drew a parallel between the pre-Civil War imbalance of power—skewed towards the South because of the "three-fifths clause" which counted each slave as three-fifths of a person, thus increasing Southern voting power—and the current imbalance of power, skewed towards business interests because they could afford to pour vast amounts of

money and influence into the political system. Both of these unfair practices, according to Amos, gave rise to “insurgent” parties—the Republican party in 1860 and what was soon to be the Progressive Party.<sup>19</sup> *McClure’s Magazine* was so impressed with the article, received a few days before press time, that the entire September issue was reset at considerable expense in order to publish it immediately. The article was also syndicated by the Scripps-owned Newspaper Enterprise Association, bringing it to millions of readers. This success was tremendously gratifying to Amos, who had, heretofore, never had an impact without the corollary force of his brother, Gifford.

Reaction to the article was extremely favorable. “You ought to hear people talk about Amos’s article,” Gifford wrote delightedly to his mother. “Men like Governor Pardee tell me they have read it two or three times, and everyone is agreed that it is beyond question the article of the month. It has given Amos an important position at one stroke.”<sup>20</sup> Suddenly, Amos had a point of view that was unquestionably his own. It was exhilarating enough to make him lighthearted about any disapproval. An elderly cousin complained of Amos’s “fatal tendency to put the bottom on the top.” But as Amos quipped to Gifford. “Not more than half the people in New York who read it seem to think I am sane, and even the ones who class me as *non compos* feel more sorrow than anger.”<sup>21</sup> With publication of this article, Amos Pinchot discovered he could write with vigor and power. Words became his *métier*. Never as comfortable as Gifford in backroom politics, Amos preferred to amass information, form his opinions, and put them on paper. Over the years, he wrote hundreds of pamphlets, speeches, letters, columns, memos, and articles that were published in a wide variety of publications such as *The Nation*, *Pearson’s*, *The Masses*, *Harper’s Weekly*, *The New Republic*, and, of course, *The New York Times*, to which he wrote long, open letters to the editor. This became his often controversial but highly effective *modus operandi*, which he continued for the rest of his life.

### The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Party

The awakening of Amos Pinchot did not take place in a vacuum. The decade beginning in 1910 was a highly fermentive, questing time, with many of the injustices that had percolated during the rise of the great corporations beginning to boil over. The questions of women’s suffrage, corporate responsibility, monopoly, the rights of the working classes, and economic justice were hot issues everywhere. Pinchot was certainly correct in his article that after the Civil War, the Republican party had been the party of “good government,” benevolently, if somewhat paternalistically, seeking to abolish slavery and reconstruct the war-ravaged country. But as the industrial revolution gradually insinuated itself into every fiber of American life, the Republican party became more and more the party of corporate favors, the “stand-patters” who benefited by protecting the growing monopolies of steel, oil, railroads, and

natural resources. Nevertheless, within the Republican Party there was a strong and growing band of progressives, headed by Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin, who were determined to change its course.

In December 1910, La Follette and others drafted a set of principles and a constitution which became the National Progressive Republican League. Nine senators, six governors, sixteen congressmen, and nineteen private individuals, including Louis Brandeis, Gifford Pinchot, William Allen White, and Amos Pinchot were among the League's initial supporters. Amos became a particular admirer of La Follette, in part because the two men were temperamentally very similar. Both were essentially uncompromising and rigid, both men of principles and ideas. La Follette seemed to Pinchot to be a truly great man, disinterested, intellectually sound, and morally unblemished. He often compared him to Napoleon, an ancient family hero. That La Follette's progressive views were often not given the serious consideration that they deserved was, in Pinchot's eyes, further proof of his purity of vision. A man of unquestioned honor, La Follette, epitomized the attitude that "defeat was of no consequence,"<sup>22</sup> which became, by necessity, Pinchot's own credo in the future.

Many other people besides Amos identified progressivism with Senator La Follette, thus marking him as the obvious candidate for a Republican progressive campaign. Although he was almost single-handedly responsible for whipping the progressive wing of the Republican party into a cohesive force, most people believed that La Follette could not win the nomination, and that the only person with the stature to win was Teddy Roosevelt. Roosevelt, meanwhile, sensed the strong, progressive current, kept his nose to the wind, and waited for the right moment to act. La Follette, understandably reluctant to serve as a stalking horse for an undecided TR, was nevertheless persuaded to run against Taft for the Republican nomination. The story of how Roosevelt jumped into the race at the last minute, displacing La Follette, is too well-known to repeat here. Suffice it to say that Amos Pinchot did everything he could to shore up support for his mentor, but he was finally persuaded, after a rambling, ranting speech given by an exhausted and worried La Follette, to shift his loyalties to Roosevelt. Gifford, who yearned to see his chief back in power, was thrilled with the new candidate. Amos had many more reservations.

Essentially a man of ideas and not a politician, Amos Pinchot tended to look for and find an economic or philosophical blueprint for his beliefs. Politics, he believed, was a necessary evil consisting largely of hand-shaking, influence-building, and compromise-seeking. Since these were an enormous part of Teddy Roosevelt's signature style, Pinchot was able to feel a degree of skepticism that greater men than he could not muster in the brio and contagious excitement of TR's presence. Nevertheless, still unaware in 1911 of the pro-



*Amos Pinchot, reformer*

needed dramatic presentation. It was only as the campaign progressed that the differences between the two men came fully into focus.

Some historians have said that in the Progressive Party, the philosophies of Jefferson and Hamilton met head on. The battle between Amos Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt was virtually a textbook example of these basic philosophical differences. The surprising thing is that both men fervently believed themselves to be progressives. In 1910, Roosevelt was very much under the influence of Herbert Croly's *The Promise of American Life*, published a year earlier. Croly was an outspoken critic of Jeffersonianism, declaring it inadequate to deal with the exigencies of modern life. Large corporations were a fact of life, he wrote, a new kind of "manifest destiny" to which America as a whole subscribed. Naturally they required regulation, and Croly's book outlined a sweeping program to regulate corporations, unions, small business, and agriculture in "the national interest." Croly's ideas for a "New Nationalism," which required a strong central government in order to achieve it, became the underpinnings of the Progressive party platform, in which Roosevelt advocated such strong governmental functions as the graduated in-

found differences in temperament and philosophy between them, Amos stood ready to back his brother's mentor. He understood that the very qualities of TR's which most put him off were the ones that might get him elected president. During the campaign, Amos was very much part of TR's inner circle. Valued for his well-ordered mind, his clear, yet colorful writing, and his ability to synthesize all sorts of useful facts and opinions, he was often called upon to write speeches, press releases, pamphlets, and editorials for whatever issue

come tax, inheritance taxes, a revision of the tariff, regulation of child and female labor, a strengthening of the Bureau of Corporations and the Interstate Commerce Commission, and conservation of natural resources. Roosevelt, who was essentially a Hamiltonian, believed that the growth of trusts was inevitable, and that regulation, not elimination, was the only way to control them. In this he was not so different from J. P. Morgan, who said, "I like a little competition, but I like combination better. . . . Without control you cannot do a thing."<sup>23</sup> Pinchot, on the other hand, a Jeffersonian like his friend Brandeis, vehemently opposed the growth of large combinations and pushed for businesses to be regulated in the direction of smallness, with a stricter anti-trust bias. Pinchot believed that the attempt to strengthen the alliance between government and business would in time lead to a plutocracy at the expense of democracy. He feared central authority and preferred to relocate power back into the hands of the individual, with the exception of certain "natural monopolies like utilities and railroads,"<sup>24</sup> which should be owned and operated by the government.

The disagreement over the proper role of trusts and monopolies came to a head in the person of George Walbridge Perkins, a J. P. Morgan partner and a director of the United States Steel Corporation. In return for financial support of the Party, Roosevelt appointed him Chairman of the National Executive Board of the Progressive Party, a position which did not begin to suggest the centrality of his actual role within the Party. Roosevelt included him in virtually every meeting, asked his advice on every conceivable matter, and gave him almost absolute control of the purse-strings. Both Gifford and Amos Pinchot, along with many other party regulars, were appalled and embarrassed by Perkins' association with U.S. Steel, which they considered one of the most venal of corporate entities.<sup>25</sup> They felt, with some justice, that Perkins' presence signaled an unseemly dependence on the very business interests that their platform had vowed to control. Over the next few months, both Gifford and Amos tried unsuccessfully to sever the bond between the TR and Perkins. Gifford, who knew his leader very well, took a somewhat more conciliatory line and eventually backed down. But Amos saw only that the heart and soul of the Party was hanging in the balance, and he relentlessly hammered away at the issue. Roosevelt, increasingly irritated by Amos's incessant and inflexible demands, wrote to him with carefully controlled avuncular fondness:

My dear Amos: . . . remember that the ability to think and act independently is no more essential than the ability to get on with others in work for a common cause. . . . You know how fond I am of Gifford and you. I believe I am advising you for your own good when I say that you impair your power of future usefulness if you give the impression that you never can work with any people for an achievable end.<sup>26</sup>

Not bad advice. Nevertheless, after Roosevelt and the Bull Moose Party lost the election in 1912, disappointment salted Amos's wounds. No longer able to endure the logical inconsistency that Perkins exemplified, he decided that the moment had come to take a public stand. He issued a denunciation of Perkins to several newspapers in the mistaken belief that his views were the unspoken majority within the Party and simply needed a chance to be heard. What he had not realized was his own relative unimportance and the necessity for the Party to maintain a unified front to the public. Amos was roundly castigated by leaders of the party, leaving both Pinchot brothers embarrassed. Although Gifford had essentially agreed with Amos on this issue, his own political sense had warned him against so drastic a measure. But he was beginning to find out that Amos was no longer the admiring younger brother of the past. Naturally, Roosevelt completely lost patience. With acid formality, he aimed a bitter thrust at Amos: "Sir: When I spoke about the Progressive Party as having a lunatic fringe, I specifically had you in mind."<sup>27</sup> Amos Pinchot had burned his last bridge with Roosevelt. Public reaction to the incident was summed up by *The New York Times* which wrote: "While Amos Pinchot is not important in himself, he may give the Bull Moose considerable trouble."<sup>28</sup> *The World* followed up by saying, correctly, that Pinchot "belongs with Woodrow Wilson and the Democrats, not with Theodore Roosevelt and the regulated monopolists." And then declared "Pinchot can keep on battling for the Lord, and Perkins can keep on signing the checks."<sup>29</sup>

In the meantime, Amos was a man without a party, but not for long. Although Gifford was disillusioned by the Perkins affair, he was determined to stay with the Progressives. But Amos did the unthinkable. Taking the advice of *The World*, he switched to the Democratic Party—the rough and tumble party of immigrants, lower classes, and bosses—the party, at least according to Republicans, of corruption and collusion. But Woodrow Wilson was changing all that. His "New Freedom" platform was a nostalgic reversion to the nineteenth century, which placed its emphasis on trust-busting, individualism, limited government, and a glorification of the small entrepreneur. These were Pinchot's sentiments exactly. No wonder he found it easy to leave the "New Nationalism" of the Progressives.

Amos Pinchot came of age with this decision. By challenging Roosevelt and then leaving the Progressive Party, he set in motion a lifelong pattern of incurring the wrath of family members, authority figures, and political heroes. This was also the consolidation of a radical awakening that would thrust him into a lifelong conflict with his upper-class attitudes and background. Unfortunately, it also signaled a seismic crack in the foundations of yet another institution, his marriage.

## Love and Labor Lost

By 1913, Amos had been married for twelve years and had two children, Gifford born in 1902, and a little girl named Rosamond, born two years later, who was to become the passion of his life, partly because his marriage to Gertrude Minturn was an unhappy one. What had brought Amos and Gertrude together was a shared sense of being aliens in their own families. Neither was the most beloved of either parent. Both were overshadowed by more powerful, older siblings, and both had lost siblings at a very young age, thereby bearing the brunt of an extended period of sadness and retrenchment by their mothers. On the deepest level, they were emotional orphans looking for a secure attachment. Even so, Gertrude was an unlikely choice for Amos. Although she was an intelligent and devoted wife, she was also rather wooden, graceless, and humorless, with a sanctimonious streak that often irritated her husband. Soon after they sailed for Europe on their honeymoon, Amos began experiencing symptoms of depression, probably realizing he had chosen the wrong woman. The young couple, unable to confront the real cause of Amos's problems, chased all over Europe looking for a "cure." But the core problem was sexual incompatibility. "She and my father never got along sexually because of the inhibitions of that Victorian family of hers," their son Gifford recalled.<sup>30</sup> Sex was still a vast, unexplored, subterranean continent at the turn of the century. Women were not expected to have any knowledge of or desire for sex, and consequently, many of them did not. Marriage was built on so many more important ties, such as family background, financial partnership, and children, that a deficient sex life, if considered at all, was thought to be only a minor defect—certainly unthinkable as a motive for divorce.

The years from 1913 to 1918 were particularly trying for Gertrude and Amos. New York City was being rocked by social change as the couple struggled to hold onto a marriage that had been born in another era altogether. Despite his problematic marriage, however, Pinchot was having the time of his life. He returned to New York after his political debacle in Washington and immersed himself in the radical life of Greenwich Village, the focal point for free-thinking, free-loving writers, political theorists, and socialists seeking to break down not just political but social mores as well. Pinchot naturally gravitated to that restless, searching group of intelligentsia for whom, as the enigmatic salon keeper, Mabel Dodge Luhan wrote:

Life was ready to take a new form of some kind and many people felt a common urge to shape it. Everyone seemed to fumble and feel uncertain a good deal of the time, blind and unable to look ahead. The most anyone knew was that the old ways were about over, and the new ways all to create.<sup>31</sup>

Much like the turbulent decades of the 1960s and '70s, the energy that was coursing through the city's veins was causing institutional mayhem. It was fashionable to be against everything old and traditional. People marched in a veritable parade of new ideas: free love, socialism, cubism, psychoanalysis, women's suffrage, and birth control. Each attracted its own contingent of supporters, who examined and discarded traditional values almost overnight. The relationship between the sexes, the classes, and the races were all undergoing radical shifts, just as they were to do half a century later. Caught up in the spirit of the times, Pinchot found himself defending the civil liberties of striking workers, making speeches on street corners, and consorting with avowed socialists like Max Eastman, editor of *The Masses*, and writer John Reed. Max Eastman remembers his first encounter with Amos Pinchot:

Our subsidy from Mrs. Belmont and John Fox was just running out, when one morning Amos Pinchot telephoned: "I just called to tell you fellows you're getting out a swell paper." John Reed and I were in his office on Wall Street before the day passed, and we came away charmed by his sagacious humor, and richer by two thousand dollars.

Eastman mused:

He became a kind of royal patron of *The Masses* crowd, defending and helping us in private as well as public ways. In particular, he became my silent partner in the task of raising funds, a crucifixion which his amused, friendly-humorous counsel made easier to bear.<sup>32</sup>

But it was the question of striking workers, with its implications of class war, that fascinated, even gnawed at Pinchot, challenging every class assumption he thought he was prepared to discard. In 1912 and 1913, workers across the nation were battling over such issues as job cutbacks, insufferable working conditions, required kickbacks to foremen, twelve-hour working days, and crackdowns on unions. Most progressives were caught off guard, having not yet formulated their own theoretical framework on the issue of striking workers and labor unions. But they felt instinctively the justice of the workers' claims. Working with progressives like Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, Mary K. Simkhovitch, and his old mentor, Louis D. Brandeis, Pinchot put pressure on the Taft administration to address these problems. The president responded by creating the United States Commission on Industrial Relations, authorized to "seek to discover the underlying causes of dissatisfaction in the industrial situation and report its conclusions."<sup>33</sup>

Pinchot was naturally inclined to see labor problems from the perspective that a huge monopolistic structure was bleeding wealth from the many into the hands of the few. The only antidote to this imbalance, according to Pinchot, was to build up a corresponding workers' power through collective bargaining, which could only be achieved by a full-scale labor movement. He made several speeches to this new audience in which he outlined his economic theories and prescriptions, believing rather naively, along with many other progressives, that workers would recognize their common enemy, be grateful for the support, and link arms in an attempt to end illegitimate monopoly. This of course did not happen. Nevertheless, he declared, were he a member of the working class he would devote all his energies to strengthening his union, and forcing its recognition upon his employer. "The wealth and power in the community is all passing into the control of a few men," he shouted into a bullhorn, "and none of our great political leaders dares to act in any but a narrow, proscribed manner."<sup>34</sup> To a crowd in Ludlow, Colorado, where a bloody coal strike was underway, he outlined his deeply entrenched belief that government ownership of vital necessities would break the back of monopoly. Drawing a parallel to slavery, he told the strikers that today, "we enslave the [workers] by possession or control of the things men must have in order to live—the soil, natural resources, the mines, the minerals, and the transportation system."<sup>35</sup> Once again, Pinchot found himself on the left side of the question. This time, in addition to being accused of having "a fatal tendency to put the bottom on the top,"<sup>36</sup> he was accused of helping to incite rioting and discontent. With characteristic certitude, Pinchot responded to this charge in a letter to a friend:

You blame me for spreading dissatisfaction among laboring people. Frankly, I want to spread dissatisfaction with present economic conditions. . . . I think that the besetting social sin of Americans is an easy tolerance of injustice suffered by somebody else. . . . You and I and all intelligent people know that mere political democracy does not result in a real democracy at all. Economic power is the real power in the world.<sup>37</sup>

But it was the silk workers' strike in Paterson, New Jersey that captured the imaginative sympathy of many intellectuals and radicals. As the strike dragged on, International Workers of the World leaders Bill Haywood, Patrick Quinlan, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Carlo Tresca ignited the situation with inflammatory rhetoric, to the point where city officials overreacted with suppression of civil liberties, violent police behavior, and wholesale arrests. The radical community was outraged. Most of the arrests were quickly overturned, but IWW leader Patrick Quinlan was indicted, convicted, and sentenced to

two to seven years in prison. The press smugly acknowledged that Quinlan was probably only guilty on “general principles,”<sup>38</sup> which infuriated Pinchot. Yet even at his angriest, Pinchot made a point of disclaiming any sympathy with the theories of the IWW. Concentrating instead on the narrower issue of suppression of free speech. “I am not a socialist myself,” he wrote to a fellow progressive, “but I do not believe in sending socialists to prison for speaking the truth.”<sup>39</sup> He attended a Free Press Protest Meeting along with such prominent, progressive New Yorkers as John Dewey, Charles and Mary Beard, Walter Lippmann, and Morris Hillquit. He also became a member of the National Defense Council, whose purpose was to defend unorganized workers arrested during strikes. One of Pinchot’s lifelong concerns, the safeguarding of individual civil liberties, had its origins in his defense of striking workers. Over the next few years, his concern with civil liberties would enlarge to include the pacifist and conscientious objector during war, and still later to anyone whose freedom of speech or action was unfairly abridged.

Although it was easy for Pinchot and other liberal intellectuals to sympathize with the working man’s condition, an equal partnership with labor was harder to achieve. Instinctive suspicions on both sides were difficult to overcome. There are compelling reasons why Pinchot was never able to fully understand the labor movement, even though from 1913 to 1917 he was probably at his most receptive in regard to class differences, education, style, and attitudes. But some values could not be shed overnight. Violence, for example, was completely alien to him. Strikes were acceptable, but riots and barbaric behavior made him deeply uncomfortable. How far did radical labor intend to go? Was he helping to overthrow the capitalistic system in which he still deeply believed? Steeped in patrician “*noblesse oblige*” and trained to think of the “greater good,” Pinchot was also disturbed that labor’s concerns were all for itself: higher wages, better working conditions, and more decision-making power. Less admissible was his unspoken desire, shared among many progressives, to be the bestower of largesse. In 1913, progressives had not yet been seriously bruised by history. They therefore had little incentive to share their power, and it came as a rude shock to find that labor radicals were not waiting around to be given anything. Instead, they began demanding a place at the table.

The process of disillusionment took many years and contained both tragic and comic elements as both sides struggled unsuccessfully to abandon old class assumptions and deeply buried hostilities. To their credit, the progressives were the first generation of educated, middle and upper class men and women to seek a genuine working relationship with the labor movement. But misunderstanding, naiveté, and a certain degree of patronizing were rampant on both sides. Workers tended to use wealthy progressives for their money and their prestigious names in exchange for an exciting place to go “slumming” on

Sunday afternoons. For example, Patrick Quinlan, in thanking Pinchot for his contribution of \$500, pointedly observed, "Your letter was worth a hundred thousand dollars from a propaganda standpoint"<sup>40</sup> But Pinchot was well aware of the currency of his own name as a "letterhead liberal" and was not offended by anyone using it to fight the righteous fight. Conversely, wealthy, liberal intellectuals brought labor leaders and socialists into their homes hoping to be titillated by outrageous statements and demands. There is a striking similarity to the "radical chic" liberals of the 1960's, who championed the Black Power movement and, in return, demanded enlightenment and expiation from guilt.

The high priestess of radical chic then was Mabel Dodge Luhan, at whose Fifth Avenue salon the most daring and radical personages of the day expounded upon politics, art, religion, mysticism, and even drugs. Bathed in Luhan's almost magical tonic, "people became polarized and pulled in, and made to behave very queerly," said Max Eastman. "Their passions become exacerbated, they grow argumentative; they have quarrels, difficulties, entanglements, abrupt and violent detachments. And they like it—they come back for more."<sup>41</sup> One Monday evening, Bill Haywood, Emma Goldman, and her lover Alexander Berkman came to enlarge on the controversial subject of Direct Action, advocating killing when possible and certainly sabotage of machinery. Amos and Gertrude were there that night, along with Lincoln Steffens, Walter Lippmann, Hapgood Hutchins, Ida Rauh, Max Eastman, and many others. Some wore evening dress, some workclothes, in unspoken solidarity with the speakers' cause. Luhan recounts:

We were all ready for the Conversation to begin. Bill Haywood, like a large soft, overripe Buddha with one eye, and the smile of an Eminent Man, reclining in the yellow chaise lounge with two or three maidens reclining at his feet . . . Amos Pinchot sat, with his usual kind look of unknowing, next [to] his lovely pink satin wife who smoked a cigarette and smiled a tolerant smile.<sup>42</sup>

### Divorce and Remarriage

The "lovely, pink satin wife," however, was experiencing more emotions than simple tolerance. Their marriage was in deep trouble. Gertrude had lived through Amos's conversion to radicalism, his ouster by the Progressive Party, and his immersion in social upheavals and labor unrest. Her stance had been one of quiet, wifely support, coupled with a deep belief in Amos's intellectual abilities. But her own conservative upbringing made it difficult for her to embrace fully the causes that Amos was espousing, which only exacerbated their basic incompatibility. Nevertheless, in an attempt to bridge the widening gap between them, Gertrude involved herself in radical causes of her own and by 1916, began to discover a side of herself that no one had suspected.

Fascinated by the human aspect of striking workers, she decided to make a "sociological investigation" of the situation. She traveled alone to a strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where her experiences were recorded and published in a *New York Sun* article entitled "Mrs. Amos Pinchot's 8 Days in Lawrence." Up at 5 A.M. with picketers, attending strikers' meeting, and visiting the families of strikers at home, Gertrude was deeply impressed by their sense of cohesiveness and commitment. She experienced first-hand the prejudice and brutality of the police as they shoved her off the sidewalk and shouted insults at her, thinking she was one of the picketers. Fluent in both French and Italian, Gertrude was able to penetrate the theoretical veil her husband lived behind by speaking directly to the women and children. Many of them spoke no English, and Gertrude saw at close range the suffering and poverty that workers and their families faced with such dignity. It was very likely that this deeply moving experience stimulated her involvement in Margaret Sanger's fight to disseminate birth control information, a cause she would espouse over many years. In 1916, as America prepared for war, Gertrude became Chair of the Committee of One Hundred, a group organized for the defense of Margaret Sanger and her sister, Ethel Byrne, who had been indicted and convicted for illegally distributing material considered pornographic by the Comstock laws. In her autobiography, *My Fight for Birth Control*, Sanger tells the story of how Ethel, on a hunger strike, fainted in prison and was hauled roughly to her feet by prison guards. Gertrude, who was there to lend support and protection,

imperiously clapped her hands, and in a voice of command insisted that they lay her down on the floor and bring a stretcher. The result was like magic. The word of command from this quarter was not to be ignored. A stretcher was brought, Mrs. Pinchot took her own warm fur coat and wrapped it round Mrs. Byrne, and she was carried from the prison. . . .<sup>43</sup>

Disseminating birth control information was in many ways as daring and difficult as speaking out against the war effort, which Amos and many of their progressive friends were now doing. Mabel Dodge Luhan vividly describes the embarrassment and even danger that upper-class women like Gertrude endured as the two activities became linked in a hostile public's mind:

These women stood on street corners and handed out birth control literature. They helped organize strike committees and were occasionally arrested. They were rude to authority and careless about adverse publicity. Booming and hissing . . . became a regular feature of their public meetings. . . . [T]heir meetings were broken up by violent patriots, frequently in uniform. . . .<sup>44</sup>

Despite their shared radical activities, it was clear to both Gertrude and Amos that by early 1917 their fifteen-year marriage could no longer be revived. Responding to the lure of loosened sexual mores, Amos had begun to satisfy sexual needs kept long in abeyance with a young writer named Ruth Pickering, who was twenty years his junior. Not only was Ruth deliciously lithe, strong, and beautifully proportioned, she was also, as an infatuated Max Eastman put it, "a girl who concealed under a good deal of silence, a rare and individual gift of speech."<sup>45</sup> With her broad brow, mysterious, deep eyes, and heart-shaped face, Ruth Pickering was unlike any woman Amos had ever met in his own social circle. But "society," at least for the moment, was a discredited virtue in his eyes.

Ruth Pickering, born in 1893, came from a middle-class, Quaker family in Elmira, New York. Her parents ran Peerless Dyes, a small family company which had been mired in debt for many years. In spite of their debt, or maybe because of it, the Pickerings were determined to send all three daughters to college. Ruth graduated from Vassar and moved to New York City in 1916 to fulfill her ambition to be a writer. Calling on her childhood friendship with Max Eastman and his sister Crystal, with whom she shared summers in upstate New York, she got a job as an editor at *The Survey* and moved into Crystal's communal house on Washington Square. Amos was a frequent visitor to the lively, intellectually invigorating Washington Square house, so different from the tension-filled atmosphere of his own Park Avenue mansion. Laughter and



*Ruth Pickering*

conversation ranged widely among its inhabitants, which included Ruth Pickering, Edna St. Vincent Millay and her new husband, Eugen Boissevain, Max Eastman, Crystal and her husband Walter Fuller, and a steady stream of writers, artists, poets, radicals, and thinkers.

Years of relative poverty had given Ruth a taste for luxury, combined with a slight disdain for those who had it. Lacking social credentials herself, she was both fascinated and infuriated by the whole idea of social classes. After college, seeking to experience the life of the laboring classes, she had gone to work in a factory. But the romance of factory work wore off quickly, and her politics never hardened into communism or even socialism, unlike her sister, Hannah, who became a card-carrying Communist. Amos, naturally, found this piquant and contradictory combination of attitudes utterly charming. And Ruth, sensing the sea change about to occur in her life, wrote to her mother soon after she met Amos:

On the strength of the future I have drawn all the money I had in the savings bank out to buy me a new coat and a new dress. . . . I am beginning to get a fatal desire to dress like a princess. I seem suddenly to have acquired something of a face and since it stole upon me late in life and in the middle of the night, I have the feeling that it may go away as suddenly, hence I feel I ought to give it the decoration which is its due while it lasts.<sup>46</sup>

In the free-spirited atmosphere of the Village, Amos was reaching down from the stultifying formalities of his class, while Ruth was reaching up to the promise of ease, access, money, leisure, and fun. The timing of their meeting was fortuitous. By the end of 1917, the affair was well underway, and it was an open secret that Amos and Ruth had fallen in love. Max Eastman, who had once been in love with Ruth himself, was delighted that two of his favorite people had become a couple. He described Ruth as “emitting a soft cool radiance because she was loved and in love.”<sup>47</sup>

Many other people, however were deeply offended by Amos’s infidelity. Gifford, in particular, for whom strands of loyalty and constancy were woven into the deepest strata of his moral fiber, was appalled by Amos’s affair. He had spent twenty years grieving for his lost love, Laura Houghtaling, and had finally married at the age of 49. This was not a man who took relationships lightly. With both parents dead, the only family member who offered Amos any real support was his sister Nettie, whose own unhappy marriage gave her a more realistic grasp on the exquisite suffering of the mismatched. She wrote from London, where her diplomat husband was stationed:

Now about G— honestly, I don't see how you can patch it up. She, poor dear, expects happiness, good solid, legal happiness in this world. Jolly little of it going about, and if one misses it one can only admire the few who have got it. I hate the idea of separating, but people ought not, if they are sensitive, live in an atmosphere of strain. I'm sure you are always kind, but what a life when people are [merely] patient.<sup>48</sup>

Although desperate not to lose his children and deeply embarrassed by New York society's disapproving eye, Amos decided to go through with the divorce, thus taking a further step away from the safety and acceptance of his own comfortable class.

### The Anti-War Years

The timing could not have been worse. In the midst of the scandal, Amos was already challenging yet another cherished ideal, this time, patriotism. When World War I broke out in Europe on August 4, 1914, Wilson issued a proclamation of neutrality and publicly appealed to Americans to remain impartial. Most Americans had no desire to enter the war, although Teddy Roosevelt, itching for another San Juan Hill, was already agitating for greater military preparedness. He made no secret of his militaristic attitudes, fulminating against "visionaries" and "mollycoddles" who refused to see America's role in the new international landscape. But Wilson, with his strong isolationist tendencies (he had campaigned in 1916 on the slogan "He kept us out of war"), steadfastly refused to allow Congress to appropriate money for a build-up, a stance that appealed not only to Pinchot, who had left the Republican Party to vote for him, but to a great many progressives of all stripes, including three extraordinary women, Jane Addams, Crystal Eastman, and Lillian Wald.

In 1915, these three women gathered together a small group of people, including such preeminent liberals as Oswald Garrison Villard, Rabbi Stephen Wise, Paul Kellogg, Max Eastman, and Randolph Bourne, to organize resistance to a military build-up which they believed would precipitate the United States' entry into war. Calling themselves the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM), these men and women not only hated the idea of war itself, they were also convinced that war would destroy many of the liberal gains made in the last decade. The AUAM, which eventually grew to claim 1,000 dues-paying members, 5,000 sponsors and volunteers, and 60,000 "friends," was by no means the only peace organization or even the best known.<sup>49</sup> The Carnegie Endowment for World Peace and the American Peace Society concentrated their efforts on promoting disarmament and finding peaceful means to resolve international disputes. But because the leaders of the AUAM had worked so hard to get Wilson into office, they believed, not entirely wrongly

at first, that they had more influence than their small size would indicate. Over time, however, it became clear that their influence was considerably overshadowed, especially by the young journalist, Walter Lippmann, a regular contributor to Herbert Croly's new and influential magazine, *The New Republic*.

It is of some interest to compare the attitudes of Amos Pinchot and Walter Lippmann, who were once friendly as progressives but whose careers had diverged sharply over the years.<sup>50</sup> As early as 1910, Lippmann had identified himself as a Croly/TR Progressive, looking to regulate and harness big business rather than destroy it. Pinchot, on the other hand, held onto a distrust of "bigness" that eventually filled his entire landscape. These basic predilections, combined with the encroaching war, forced the two men to arrive at vastly different conclusions about the economic and international future of the United States, and in particular, the role of nationalism in government. Lippmann believed that the United States government should take on a role of great international responsibility, even when it included war, to advance the "national interests." Pinchot, however, disdained this national interest, believing it to be a cover for economic self-interest. He believed that the majority of wars were fought to advance a country's economic aims, and then were papered over with flowery-sounding, high-flown ideals. The current war in Europe, expressing as it did centuries of economic rivalries, fit the mold particularly well, according to Pinchot. He and many others could see no reason to involve American troops in a struggle that was centered on the economic rivalry between Germany and England. "I think I am putting it mildly," he wrote to President Wilson, "that the American public will never be interested in the redistribution [of borders] according to nationality; that it has no wish to see England own more of Africa than she now possesses; and I do not think the average American cares whether the Turk is driven out of Europe or not. All of these things do not appear . . . germane to the general proposition of making the world safe for democracy."<sup>51</sup>

But quite apart from reinforcing old beliefs about the evils of economic aggression, Pinchot was discovering a new layer to his distrust of state power, the outlines of which were only dimly forming in his own mind. War, he began to see, was not only the most conspicuous manifestation of a growing tendency towards nationalism, it also provided exactly the kind of unifying national purpose which heretofore had been lacking. Pinchot saw this as a dangerous precedent which would concentrate great power in the executive and legislative branches of the government. Lippmann, on the other hand, saw this as a positive development. He unabashedly believed in nationalism as the primitive element that "defines us against the background of the world." Just as baseball fans weep as the "second baseman fumbles the ball, so [strong men] will go into tantrums because corporations of their own nationality are thwarted in a commercial ambition."<sup>52</sup> This was exactly Pinchot's nightmare.

Linking war to his oft-expressed fear of monopoly, he warned, with frighteningly prophetic accuracy, against the increasing proliferation of multi-national corporations. Pinchot predicted that such corporations would “find new worlds to conquer” and impose upon them “the same system of exploitation they have so successfully brought to perfection here,”<sup>53</sup> thus providing an excuse for war. Pinchot’s economic worldview now included military aggression. He must have experienced something of an “aha” sensation as these two pieces merged in his mind into one gigantic military-industrial complex.

After the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, national sentiment for entry into the war began to build. Capitalizing on the wave of revulsion, Wilson set out on a speaking tour to garner support for a military build-up. But the little group of antiwar intellectuals known as the AUAM dogged the President’s heels. They launched their own speaking tour against preparedness, cleverly garnering a disproportionate amount of attention through the use of a gigantic papier-mâché dinosaur, appropriately named “Jingo.” But the tide was against them, and by the end of 1916, the battle against preparedness was over as Congress approved the largest-ever naval appropriation in peacetime.

Like a tiny rowboat trying to hold back a tanker, the little band of peaceniks next took up the banner for “armed neutrality,” a desperate position at best, especially when Germany sank the *Housatonic* and the United States broke off relations with Germany. The danger edged unacceptably close to home when in March, 1917, a code message from Germany to Mexico was intercepted which urged Mexico to join the Central Powers and “reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas and Arizona.” Support for the war had now crested within Congress, and on April 4, 1917, Wilson declared war, with his now-famous statement that “the world must be made safe for democracy,” one of those flowery sentiments which Pinchot believed had nothing whatever to do with democracy. In fact, AUAM’s view that “war . . . destroys democracy wherever it thrives”<sup>54</sup> was amply borne out once war was declared. The atmosphere became permeated with a kind of anti-German hysteria, orchestrated by George Creel’s Committee on Public Information. Designed to whip up support for the war, it led, inevitably, to exactly the kinds of abuses that Pinchot and the AUAM had predicted. Freedom of speech was sharply curtailed, “treasonous” acts were broadly defined to include simply uttering negative words about the government. Witch hunts were common, and individuals were denounced in what, under normal circumstances, would clearly be libelous attacks. The AUAM was roundly castigated for its positions against conscription and anti-preparedness. “We are in the unfortunate position,” one AUAM leader remarked, “of having fought preparedness, and that it is manifestly due to us . . . that our boys are going up against the ‘Huns’ armed with popguns.”<sup>55</sup> Probably because of his vivid, inflammatory prose, Amos Pinchot was singled out

for vilification, becoming something of a lightning rod for the AUAM. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote:

There is an organization calling itself the AUAM. It is composed of a handful of half-baked Americans of the Amos Pinchot variety—peace-at-any-price persons who would rather see men and women murdered on the high seas than lift a hand to defend them.<sup>56</sup>

It was one thing to oppose the war itself, but when Pinchot began to call for a war tax on the rich, and publicly named names of those people and corporations whom he felt were profiting from the war, then the anti-Pinchot campaign began in earnest. Old friends and family were upset enough to write and beg him to reconsider his actions. But Pinchot was unrepentant. “You feel that [it] is indefensible, worse—ungentlemanly—of me to have attacked people personally,” he wrote to one distressed friend. “Perhaps I do not know what being a gentleman is, but I do not think it consists in shouting for the war and then making money out of it.”<sup>57</sup> Pinchot’s American Committee on War Finance (ACWF), established on March 30, 1917, demanded that the war be “paid as it proceeds, in dollars as in lives, urging Congress to make this “a cash war, a pay-as-you-enter war.” He felt that it was deeply unfair to the middle class to load them up with the double burden of sending their sons to die and then taxing them with war bonds. “Conscription of men,” he testified, “[could] not be defended if unaccompanied by conscription of income.”<sup>58</sup> TR, usually apoplectic over Amos, was never more so than now. “Amos Pinchot must be a good deal of a maniac,” he wrote to George W. Perkins, Amos’s old nemesis. “Of course, he is a skunk, too; but only a lunatic skunk could talk as he has been recently.”<sup>59</sup> And yet TR was sensitive to the charge of war profiteering and supported Congressional measures to eliminate it. In fact, Congress passed a bill, whether due to Amos’s testimony or not, that established a graduated profits tax of approximately 31 per cent, far less than the 80 per cent that Amos had called for, but a respectable figure nonetheless.

But Pinchot’s reputation was now in tatters. A new film just released called “In Again, Out Again,” took a vicious swipe at him. With Douglas Fairbanks as the heroic Teddy Rutherford (an obvious reference to TR), Amos Pinchot was clearly the model for the evil pacifist “Pinchit,” who turns out to be a German spy responsible for the destruction of industrial plants. Although distressed by the bitterness of the attacks, Pinchot managed to keep his sense of humor. He was wryly amused to overhear two men in the washroom of the University Club piously exclaim, “By God, it’s come to a pretty pass when a man has to be in the same club with Amos Pinchot and Oswald Villard.”<sup>60</sup>

On a personal level, Pinchot sold his house on Park Avenue and divested his portfolio of war profiteering stocks. He spent enormous sums of his own

money towards his most enduring cause, the protection of civil liberties, especially the AUAM's Civil Liberties Bureau, which had been formed to defend conscientious objectors. The little bureau now began focusing on war-related civil liberties abuses taking place across the country. After the war, it graduated to the broader-based National Civil Liberties Bureau, and eventually became what we now know as the American Civil Liberties Union. Amos Pinchot played an important role in the formation of the ACLU, and if remembered for nothing else, should be credited for his lifelong battle to protect civil liberties.

Unfortunately, the war years took a serious toll on Amos's relationships, especially with his brother, Gifford. A joke making the rounds in Washington darkly illustrated the depths of strain and discomfort between them.

"I wish Roosevelt were President."

"Why?"

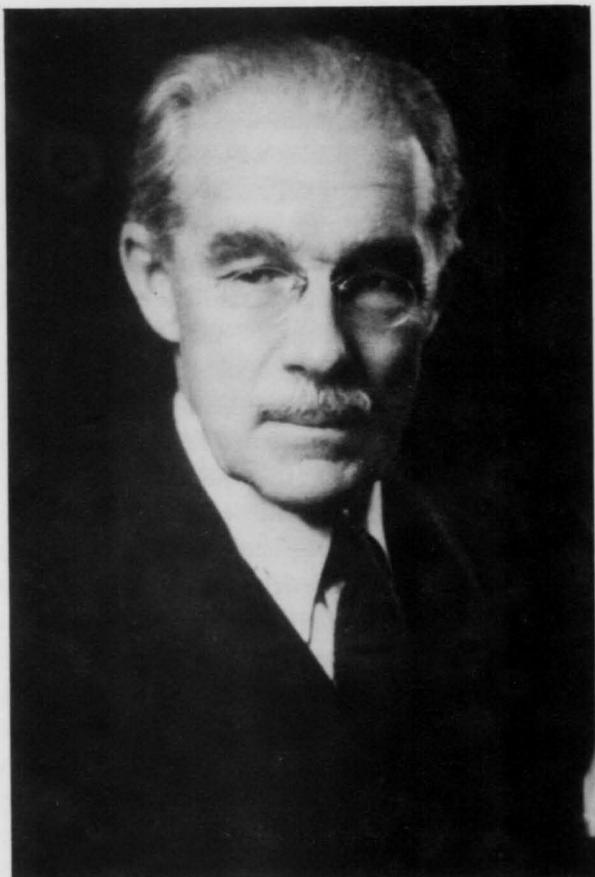
"Because if he were, he would order Gifford to shoot Amos and Gifford would do it."

Gifford Pinchot, still under the influence of Teddy Roosevelt, had supported military preparedness, conscription, and entry into the war. But this was just the latest difference between the brothers. Over the last five years, the split had become a chasm. Unlike Amos, after the election fiasco of 1912, Gifford had chosen to stick with the moribund Progressive Party. He had also resisted involvement in radical labor issues and instead began grooming himself for a career in politics, learning to play the very game of compromise that Amos despised. In 1914, Gifford had married the wealthy and politically savvy Cornelia ("Leila") Bryce, who functioned almost as a campaign manager for Gifford when he ran for the United States Senate in Pennsylvania that year. Leila, whose political differences with Amos were seldom hidden, was particularly anxious that the two brothers, with their similar looks, not be confused in the public mind, a stance that helped to magnify their differences. Finally, in 1917, with tensions at their highest, it was decided that Gifford and Leila should occupy the large family mansion in Pennsylvania, called Grey Towers, where Amos and Gertrude had reigned for the last ten years. Amos and Ruth, his new bride-to-be, were demoted to the "gardener's cottage." Soon after, the two brothers, contrary to their father's explicit instructions, decided to split the estate between them, dividing even the walled garden in two, an action rich in symbolic significance. Although Gifford and Amos recovered from this difficult time and went on to maintain close and cordial relations for the rest of their lives, the tense and complicated relationship between Leila and Ruth permanently reflected the unspoken differences between the two brothers.

## The Final Years

Amos Pinchot changed after the war. In 1924, he made one final and disastrous attempt to knit together the liberal and labor factions by supporting La Follette in a bid for President on the Progressive Party ticket. But the momentum was no longer there. Organized labor refused the progressive label and became a powerful voice in mainstream politics on its own, something which the progressives had never been able to accomplish. Furthermore, just as Pinchot had predicted, many of the progressive gains that had been made before the war were being rolled back. Frustrated and depressed, Pinchot now stood back from the fray and poured his energies into writing books, articles, lengthy memos to political leaders, and letters to the editors. He began writing *The History of the Progressive Party*, a colorful, personal account of the glory days of the Party.<sup>61</sup> He also began a second book on the history of Big Business in America but was distracted from the task by the Depression and by his growing outrage at Franklin D. Roosevelt.

When Franklin Roosevelt became President in 1932, many, including Pinchot, were delighted that a progressive was finally coming back into power. But he quickly concluded that FDR intended to centralize government and increase the power of the presidency to an unprecedented degree. Adding weight to his fears was the growing power of Stalinism in Russia, a frightening echo of the centralizing process going on in the United States. Pinchot feared tyranny in both governments, especially as FDR began to edge the country towards entry into World War



Amos Richards Eno Pinchot

II. Once again, Amos found himself working against intervention in another world war. This time, however, the menace of Hitler made his anti-war stance less credible. But Pinchot was an old and beaten man, unable to see distinctions between the two wars. He became part of the isolationist America First movement. Combined with his now rabid anti-communism, this was a clearly conservative stand, a far cry from the hopeful radicalism of his youth.

And yet the internal consistency and logic of Pinchot's thinking compels respect. Pinchot would sound the clarion call of alarm whenever power threatened to accumulate to dangerous proportions in any one area, including but not limited to the presidency, corporations, the military, the press, the judiciary, and even labor. From a psychological standpoint, one could argue that Pinchot seemed to deeply fear being subsumed by a larger entity, which indeed he was—overshadowed throughout his life by his older brother, Gifford. Given the emotional intensity with which he made political enemies, it is likely that defining himself against the mainstream was a primary and psychologically necessary way of maintaining his identity. But it would be a mistake to see Amos Pinchot only in that light. Within the small sphere of power that he carved out for himself between 1910 and 1940, he achieved a surprising amount of influence. Something of an enigma even in his own day, one wonders why this was so. After all, even by his own estimation he had failed at virtually every attempt to institute permanent, progressive changes. Max Eastman, pondering the same question, offered his own explanation. "Amos Pinchot was a prince," he wrote,

a subtle thing to be in America. It requires hereditary wealth, but many who have it do not attain the princely bearing or prerogative. Amos never had a political appointment, and ran only once for Congress in a district where his Progressive ticket was sure to lose; his chief job throughout his life was to manage a relatively small estate. And yet if he wanted to make a statement on some public question, he had only to call up *The New York Times* and they would give him a top headline and a double column. As his statements usually supported labor and attacked the industrial and financial hierarchy, there can be no explanation of this except hereditary nobility.<sup>62</sup>

Amos Pinchot never held a responsible position in or out of government, preferring instead to mount a look-out position from the crow's nest of the vast, groaning ship of state and shout down warnings to the captain below. Ultimately, he was happiest alone in his office, studying the great problems of the day and committing his ideas to paper. His writing was sometimes brilliant, often prophetic, although occasionally marred by an indignant invective that exasperated his readers. Pinchot's great strength was his need to be a truthseeker, invariably an uncomfortable role to play, and one that almost

demands a certain degree of separation from institutional loyalties. His inherited wealth made this peripatetic career possible but also kept him insulated from the real world. Because of this, he found himself increasingly marginalized and his ideas left untested.

In 1942, isolated and discouraged, Amos Pinchot tried to commit suicide. He was depressed by the suicide of his daughter Rosamond in 1938, by his failure to stem the seemingly limitless centralization of government power, and by his vilification over opposition to World War II. But most of all, Pinchot believed his life had been a failure. "Nothing could be more obvious," he wrote to a friend, "than the fact that I have had little if any success at all."<sup>63</sup>

It would be easy to take Pinchot at his own valuation, especially when compared to the greater accomplishments of his older and more famous brother. But Amos Pinchot left several lasting legacies, specifically, in the form of the ACLU, the organization which he helped to found, and whose ongoing insistence on protecting the rights of the individual has deeply influenced twentieth century legal and moral structures. But more generally, Amos Pinchot refused to be overawed by the seductive power of the state. He consistently framed the argument in favor of individual liberty, doing so throughout some of the most difficult years of our history. Unbowed by criticism, Pinchot possessed a kind of moral fiber that is unusual in any age, taking strength from the words of his hero, La Follette, who said, "Defeat is of no consequence." Amos Pinchot finally succumbed to his self-inflicted wounds on February 18, 1944.

## Notes

I am particularly indebted to the scholarly research and writing of two historians, who have been most generous with their time and material. Helene Maxwell Brewer, who wrote the definitive biographical introduction to Amos Pinchot's *History of the Progressive Party*, has been of utmost value to my thinking about Amos Pinchot. And Eugene Tobin, whose 1986 book *Organize or Perish: America's Independent Progressives 1913-1933*, helped me to synthesize vast amounts of material I might otherwise never have digested. I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of both these historians to this article. All photos courtesy of Nancy Pinchot.

1. Steel, Ronald, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, New York, Vintage Books, 1980.
2. Pinchot family letters (private collection).
3. *Ibid.*
4. Pinchot, Gifford, *Breaking New Ground*, Washington D.C., Island Press, 1988.
5. Pinchot family letters (private collection).
6. Library of Congress - Amos Pinchot Collection, Boxes 1-6, family papers.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Library of Congress - Amos Pinchot Collection, "What's the Matter with America."
9. Library of Congress - Amos Pinchot Collection, Boxes 1-6, family papers.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. McGeary, Nelson, *Gifford Pinchot: Forester-Politician*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1960.
14. Pinchot, Gifford, *Breaking New Ground*, Washington D.C., Island Press, 1988.
15. Library of Congress - Amos Pinchot Collection, Notebook entitled, "Words and Phrases."
16. Brewer, Helene M., biographical introduction to Amos Pinchot's *History of the Progressive Party*, New York, New York University Press, 1958.
17. Mason, Thomas Alpheus, *Brandeis: A Free Man's Life*, New York, Viking Press, 1946.
18. Library of Congress - Amos Pinchot Collection, Letter from AP to W. Kirkpatrick Brice, September 1, 1910.
19. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Collection, *Two Revolts Against Oligarchy*.
20. Library of Congress - Amos Pinchot Collection, letter from Gifford Pinchot to Mary Pinchot, September 6, 1910.
21. Library of Congress - Amos Pinchot Collection, letter from AP to GP, September 1, 1910.
22. *New York Times*, November 7, 1924, quoted from Belle and Fola La Follette's *Robert M. La Follette, Vol. 2*.
23. Pinchot, Amos R. E., quoted in *History of the Progressive Party*, New York, New York University Press, 1958.
24. Pinchot believed that certain natural resources, such as water power, coal, forests, oil, railroads, and utilities should be owned by the government and leased out to good corporate citizens.
25. Amos had a particular dislike of the United States Steel Corporation, and in one of his typically acid commentaries, described the huge company as "retain[ing] a resourceful and ever active publicity machine to convince the public that overworking and underpaying men and denying them the ordinary rights of freedom are the necessary and human accompaniments of economic progress." Pinchot dug up a little background information which yielded further evidence of U.S. Steel's corrupting influence on TR. A year earlier, the House of Representatives had conducted an investigation into an allegation against U.S. Steel on the issue of restraint of trade. To everyone's surprise, the huge corporation was indicted. According to Pinchot, "This unexpected shaft aimed at the heart of the Morgan metal monopoly had ruined [Judge] Gary's confidence in the Republican Party." (Judge Gary was seen by many as a political spokesman for the Morgan interests.) With no party left that it could trust, U.S. Steel put its faith in Roosevelt's benign belief in "good trusts" and essentially 'bought' the Progressive Party both in hard cash and through the influence of George Perkins. (cf. Pinchot's *History of the Progressive Party*).
26. Pinchot, Amos R.E., letter from TR to AP, December 5, 1912, quoted in Pinchot's *History of the Progressive Party*.
27. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, Letter from TR to AREP, Nov. 3, 1912.
28. *New York Times*, June 11, 1914.
29. *New York World*, June 11, 1914.
30. Interview with Gifford Pinchot II, November, 1985.
31. Luhan, Mabel Dodge, *Movers and Shakers*, New York, Harcourt, 1936.

32. Eastman, Max, *Enjoyment of Living*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1948.
33. Adams, Graham, Jr., *Age of Industrial Violence, 1910-1915: The Activities and Findings of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1966.
34. *New York Times*, December 13, 1913, 22:1
35. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, "Labor and the Future," address before the Justice League at the Lawson Protest Meeting, Denver, July 3, 1915.
36. Pinchot family letters.
37. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, letter from AP to William Ingersoll, March 14, 1916.
38. *Newark Evening News*, editorial, May 15, 1913.
39. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, Letter from AP to Mrs. Morris W. Kellogg, December 29, 1913.
40. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, Letter from Patrick Quinlan to AP, June, 1913.
41. Eastman, Max, *Enjoyment of Living*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1948.
42. Luhan, Mabel Dodge, *Movers and Shakers*, New York, Harcourt, 1936.
43. Sanger, Margaret, *My Fight for Birth Control*.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Eastman, Max, *Enjoyment of Living*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1948.
46. Pinchot family letters.
47. Eastman, Max, *Love and Revolution*, New York, Random House, 1964.
48. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, letter from Nettie Johnstone to AP, April 1918.
49. Cook, Blanche Weisen, unpublished Ph.D. thesis - 1964.
50. Ironically, Lippmann, born Jewish in a still anti-Semitic world, aspired to be the quintessential insider. He believed not so much in democracy as in the manipulation of power by the knowledgeable for the benefit of the people. Amos Pinchot, a rich, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant, who was born to power yet rejected any position of responsibility, seemed to have a far deeper commitment to real democracy than Lippmann, whose disdain for the thinking capability of the average person was palpable.
51. Tobin, Eugene M., *Organize or Perish*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1986.
52. Steel, Ronald, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, New York, Vintage Books, 1980.
53. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, letter from AP to Rabbi Stephen Wise, April 26, 1916.
54. Cook, Blanche Weisen, unpublished Ph.D. thesis - 1964.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 12, 1917.
57. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, Letter from AP to Rev. William S. Rainsford, September 29, 1917.
58. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, *New York Times*, April 1, 1917.
59. Tobin, Eugene, *Organize or Perish*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1986.
60. Villard, Oswald, *Fighting Years: Memoirs of a Liberal Editor*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1939.
61. Published posthumously in 1958, its greatest value lies in its dissident viewpoint and in its colorful and highly personal recreation of the events surrounding the founding of the Progressive Party, of which Amos Pinchot played a part.
62. Eastman, Max, *Enjoyment of Living*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1948.
63. Library of Congress, Amos Pinchot Papers, letter from AP to Burhans Newcombe, October 29, 1931.