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THE BLACK FOREST
OF
PENNSYLVANIA

AN ADDRESS

BY

HON. ALBERT S. HECK

President Judge, 55th Judicial District of Pennsylvania,
to the Sportsmen of the Wild Life League, at
Conneaut Lake, September 6, 1916

Compiled by JOHN P. REIFF, Secretary
Montgomery County Fish, Game, and Forestry Association
Norristown, Pa.

By Transfer
APR 11 1911

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Fifteen hundred copies printed
of which this is No. 947

E. G. B. May 15-19.

PLATE I

THE FOREST PRIMEVAL—THE
BLACK FOREST

The lumbermen cut down the trees but intelligent
forest practice will restore their successors,
of equal size and quality

FOREWORD

WHY do men of wealth and prominence, involved in the affairs of city, state, and nation, as well as those of more modest accomplishment and surroundings, filled with the exaltation born of boyhood memories, come together in congenial groups where each is the equal of his fellows, there to rehearse their experiences with camera, rod, and gun? Why are they glad to leave the rush and turmoil of business behind for a few sweet days of quiet in the woods, eating the plainest food, sleeping next to the ground, and with boats, dogs, and comfortable apparel, devote the limited time at their disposal to a re-creation of the spirit of the wild, build their fires, cook their food, and eat it with a relish nowhere found except under similar circumstances?

The impulse which drives a man to enjoy this kind of a vacation must be something of great value. Is it the lure of the camp, or the glare of the fire, or the frenzy of the hunt, or the thrill of the trout at the end of a line, or the coming together of kindred spirits, or is it something deeper seated in the nature of man which periodically impels him to seek a surcease from what we call civilization, and return to a state of primitive quiet?

So numerous are they with limited opportunity to visit the choicest haunts, and so unsatisfied has been their longing in the past for a larger chance near at hand, that in our kind of community life we feel it a necessity that legislative authority be not only urged but appealed to for the establishment of better recreation areas; places where men may play, enjoy their favorite sport, rest at evening, and then return to the daily task filled with memories of pleasant days and with hope for an early return.

Before the Legislature of Pennsylvania there lies at this time an opportunity to acquire at small expense that unusual region formerly and literally The Black Forest of Pennsylvania, but today only partially perpetuated by the name. Nowhere in the State is there another region so accessible and so amenable to quick development as the land hereinafter described by his Honor, Judge Heck.

Legislators of Pennsylvania, the citizens of this Commonwealth confidently look to you to support them in their hopes and their ambitions. They earnestly urge your hearty assistance and co-operation in procuring for them while it is still procurable that great tract of forest land to be devoted primarily to the restoration of proper forest cover, where our people, regardless of station, may find that joy in recreation and that pleasure in the out-of-doors which acts as a tonic for tired nerves, and blesses the present-day people as well as the generations to come.

Members of the Legislature, the eyes of the people are turned in your direction.

The compiler of the address by Judge Heck believes that it contains so much of value and is of such an informing nature that it should be placed prominently before our people. He feels that they ought to be advised of the opportunities at hand, and that there should be provided a recreation ground of ample proportions such as we nowhere now have in the State, and which few other Commonwealths on the Atlantic seaboard will ever be able to establish. For this reason the compiler believes that he is performing a real duty in procuring the assent of Judge Heck to the publication of the following address, and the placing of it before the people of Pennsylvania.

JOHN P. REIFF

PLATE II

PENNSYLVANIA STATE FORESTS.

THE STATE FORESTS OF PENNSYLVANIA

The relative position and size of The Black Forest are indicated by the irregular line in McKean, Potter, Tioga, Cameron, Clinton, and Lycoming counties.
Present area of all State Forests, 1,012,000 acres

The Black Forest of Pennsylvania

MOST persons have in a general way heard of The Black Forest of Pennsylvania. It has features peculiar to itself and a history and composition with which, I believe, not many men are familiar, but which have a large meaning for the work of the Wild Life League, and to every man who is concerned with the present day welfare and the ancient glory of Pennsylvania.

The Black Forest is not an area clearly defined as we understand the boundaries of private property. Speaking of it as a whole, it comprises an irregular tract of land lying in a generally north-westerly and southeasterly direction, in parts of the counties of Clinton, Lycoming, Tioga, Potter, Cameron, McKean, Elk, and Warren. Its greatest length in its northerly and southerly extension is about 100 miles, and from east to west it varies from 20 to 50 miles. Its area is greater than the historical Black Forest of Germany, the famous Schwartzwald.

Before the lumberman did his work, this tract of land was clothed with a remarkable growth of timber. In certain parts of it much white pine of the best quality was found. On the ridges and some of the side hills there was a luxuriant growth of hardwoods, but everywhere the predominating timber

was hemlock. So dense and thick was this virgin woody cover that the whole region had the appearance of a great black mass with scarcely an open spot to break the wonderful panorama of duskiness. From this fact it received its name, The Black Forest.

Speaking of the region as it is today, it is not my purpose to refer to the whole of that area originally known as The Black Forest. That portion of it lying within McKean, Elk, and a part of Cameron and Warren counties, bears valuable minerals, natural gas, and oil. In this portion of the region the State has been enabled to acquire little if any land for forestry purposes. While wild and mountainous and well adapted for forestry, sport, and recreation, by reason of its commercial mineral value it does not possess the same interest for us as the region lying to the southeast and southward.

In calling this territory to your attention, it is not my present purpose to advocate slighting in any respect any other portion of the State which should receive the attention of the Wild Life League or the State forestry officials; but, as already said, it is my purpose to remind you of certain peculiarities inherent in this region which should be the means of commending it strongly to your favor, and which peculiarities and marks of excellence are not found in the same degree nor to the same extent elsewhere within the State.

Referring to the map in Plate II, this detail is furnished for the purpose of conveying an adequate idea of the extent and nature of the region, and, by

PLATE III

THE BLACK FOREST OUTLINED, SHOWING DRAINAGE AREAS AND THE NUMEROUS STREAMS

PLATE IV

THE BLACK FOREST OUTLINED, SHOWING PRESENT
STATE FORESTS LOCATED WITHIN THE AREA

comparison, it shows the relation of The Black Forest to other and adjacent parts of the State. The Black Forest area, included within the heavy dark line as shown in Plate III, and for a short distance around it, is approximately 725,000 acres, of which the State now owns about 230,000 acres. The State lands are indicated by the black areas in the map as shown in Plate IV. The greatest length of the area of State land as the crow flies is 45 miles, and its greatest width 41 miles. These and other figures used in this address are intended to be only approximate, but by reason of personal verification I can vouch for their substantial accuracy. The maps herein exhibited have been furnished by the Pennsylvania Department of Forestry, and to the Department for this courtesy I desire to acknowledge my great indebtedness.

Of the 700,000 acres of Black Forest land herein exhibited, not over 12,000 acres are improved. By that I mean land under tillage or used for pasturage. The remainder is woods, wild forest, and brush land. The tract is bounded on the east by Pine Creek and on the west and southwest by the Susquehanna and its tributaries. On the north the line is drawn so as to exclude any thickly settled regions. Within the lines there are but two settlements of any moment. One is the borough of Austin, with a large paper mill, the other the village of Costello, three miles southeast of Austin, where a large tannery is located. Both are on tributaries of the Sinnemahoning Creek. These settlements are situate in the

valleys and their presence has but small relation to the wild lands immediately adjoining them.

Again consulting the map in Plate III, you will at once see that this tract is a great watershed. A ridge runs from the southern to the northern limit through the midst of it. On the easterly side are the tributaries of Pine Creek and on the westerly side the tributaries of the Susquehanna.

It is not my purpose to enumerate all of these tributaries but to make mention of a few of considerable size. The first stream on the Susquehanna side of any importance is Young Woman's Creek, 17 miles long. The next is Kettle Creek, the largest tributary in this region. With its source at the westerly edge of Tioga county, it flows through Potter and Clinton counties into the Susquehanna at Westport, and is about 40 miles in length. The next tributary to the west, Sinnemahoning Creek, is about 34 miles long.

On the Pine Creek side there is Slate Run, a stream 13 miles long, and the headwaters of Pine Creek with its numerous branches. All the larger streams have important branches, taking their rise on the dividing ridge. The highest point of the ridge is about 2250 feet above sea level. When the great fall of these waters from source to mouth is considered, you will gather a more convincing idea of the character of the streams under consideration. All are fed by cold springs running over rock or gravel bottom in their dashing flight to the main river.

PLATE V

THE BLACK FOREST AS NATURE BUILT IT
Fragments of the original cover are scattered here and there

Generally all these splendid streams are without pollution. The worst blot in the whole region is that which lies upon Sinnemahoning Creek, because of the drainage from the paper mill and tannery just referred to. Those who knew this wonderful and picturesque stream prior to its becoming a victim of industry, cannot avoid a vigorous protest at the sacrifice. On the Pine Creek side there is one acid factory and one tannery. The acid factory and tannery are now using filter plants and we believe that the proprietors of these works are making an honest effort to avoid contaminating the streams. However, there is still more pollution going into Pine Creek than there should be, and with a little more care we believe this stream may be saved in its purity. The wonderful Tiadaghton, as the Indians called it, may thus be preserved sweet and clean for the benefit of all the people.

As is the case in all of northern Pennsylvania, this region is favored by a large annual rainfall. So far as known, the mineral deposits are of small extent. To my knowledge the only mineral operations at this time are some coal mines in Cooks Run along the Susquehanna River and the clay mines near Lock Haven. It is not believed that the region contains much valuable mineral which may be operated profitably.

I wish to call your attention to one fact particularly. The soil of this territory is unusually good for mountain land. In Potter county we find the best farms on the plateaus, and although too steep

for agricultural purposes, the side hills are covered with splendid soil. To the southward these good conditions are not so marked, the soil being thinner, rougher, and more sandy in character.

It is entirely unnecessary to state that this region was, and until a very late day has been, the scene of a great lumbering industry. At this time, with one or two unimportant exceptions, lumbering has ceased and has been at an end for a number of years. The white pine was removed first, as has always been the case in this State. Determined regular commercial cutting of the balance of the timber did not commence until about thirty years ago. Then the large lumber companies appeared on the scene and in a remarkably short space of time left the hills stripped of their wonderful forest growth, a wilderness of slash, a panorama of ugliness, a land of desolation. I do not suppose that we ought to nourish a grievance because of the removal of this timber for commercial purposes. The wood was ripe and it was proper to take it away; but we of today who know of the destruction, the devastation, and the sinful waste in the method of lumbering, feel that we have a serious right to complain. I believe you know this history. Only the very choicest was taken. The timber was slashed, the tops and debris left on the ground. A careless match, a defective screen in a locomotive, or a denizen of the woods nursing a grievance, both singly and in combination, meant a forest fire which covered thousands upon thousands of acres before it could be brought under control. Much of

PLATE VI

THE BLACK FOREST AFTER THE
LUMBERMAN WRECKED IT

Shall it be permitted to remain as it now
is, "a wilderness of slash, a panorama
of ugliness, a land of desolation"?

the land was burned over several times. The beech, birch, and maple, the hardwoods generally, were regarded of little value. Nothing but the best was wanted. Nearly all the remaining standing timber was killed. I do not know of a more desolate scene than the black ruins left by a forest fire, after it has wrought its destruction in a well grown, dense mature forest. A large percentage of this land, so large in fact that I can say almost all of it, has at one time or another been the scene of a forest fire. It was the common belief and understanding among our people from fifteen to twenty years ago that the fires in this region had so destroyed the humus and the seeds remaining therein, that reforestation could be done only by the actual planting of trees. But one fact I desire to impress upon you, and the most important statement I have to make today is, that the greater part of this land is again being covered by wonderful young forest, and this is being accomplished by means of natural regeneration. True it is that at places the fire fiend did its work so thoroughly and viciously that trees cannot grow again until the land is planted. But our forestry experts estimate that in Potter county alone, if fires are kept from the land from now on, 90% of the ground will be reforested naturally with a fine young hardwood forest. In the southern portion natural reforestation will likewise occur, but the growth will not be so dense nor will the area be so fully covered. Many barren spots will need the assistance of the forester before they are again clothed with timber.

It is a remarkable and edifying sight to go into some parts of this region, where fires have been kept from the ground for fifteen or twenty years, see the wonderful second growth that is now thriftily going toward maturity, and note how good to us Mother Nature is, after all the abuse she has received at our hands.

The young timber we now see coming on is birch, beech, maple, basswood, ash, black cherry, and chestnut. You may be interested to know that thousands of acres today contain splendid growth of young chestnut timber, and unless invaded by the chestnut bark disease will become one of the finest young chestnut stands to be found anywhere in the State. I am glad to say to you that this destructive pest, the chestnut blight, has not yet made any serious invasion into our northern forests. In this whole region the Chestnut Blight Commission reported only twenty widely scattered cases of blight, and at present there does not seem to be any marked tendency toward spreading. We live in hope that in Pennsylvania there may be regions where we may continue to have this useful tree as one of our forest denizens. The value of the chestnut tree to Pennsylvania is enormous, and that we must sit idly by and calmly watch its destruction, apparently helpless to stay the devastation, seems too sad to be true.

The reason for the natural reforestation now going on over the greater part of The Black Forest is its deep, rich soil well adapted for tree growing and the large rainfall which is reasonably constant and

well distributed. In spite of the destruction by forest fire, we have a nucleus of a forest, and if we would preserve it to its maturity it becomes the duty of all of us to throw such a protective shelter about it that it may continue to thrive unchecked in the vigor of its youth and be preserved as a heritage of priceless value.

From the foregoing facts it must clearly appear that the region of The Black Forest is strictly a forestry proposition. I am authorized by our Commissioner of Forestry, to say that in his opinion The Black Forest offers the finest extended forest promise in the State. But one thing is required to maintain it as such,—protection from forest fires. If this be secured, as it may be, you may see for yourselves by going upon the ground that nature is now at work and will in the near future clothe this region again with valuable forest such as will be no mean successor to that which has preceded it.

The State protects its own forests. It protects the land of adjoining owners as far as it possibly can, having in view preventing the spread of fires to its own lands. It wants to protect all the forest lands in the State, public or private. But the private owner in this region cannot afford to expend sums of money in protecting his woodland from fire; for, to most of them, the land is of little or no commercial value and years must elapse before it may become so again.

It seems to me there is but one thing to do. I am able to arrive at no other conclusion, and that is that these lands must be possessed by the State and

that the State shall exercise all adequate measures for protection, restoration, and administration. This land may be purchased for a price not in excess of \$2.00 per acre, and much of it for less than that because it is worth less. Being so splendidly adapted for the practice of scientific forestry, this whole subject may well be given the immediate attention of the Legislature. Most of the land may be bought now and the balance of it must come into the market within the next few years.

It is hardly necessary for me to discuss before this audience the great and moving necessity resting upon the people of this State to give more serious attention to the subject of reforesting its wild lands. The condition of these lands affects not only the people who live in their vicinity, but directly or indirectly every citizen in the State. As the years go by this effect will not only continue but appear in exaggerated form. It is astonishing how indifferent those of our people are who are not in immediate contact with these facts. The lack of information bearing upon the relation between forested hillsides, stream flow, lumber products, employed labor, good wages, and contented communities is so great that we wonder how it becomes possible for an intelligent people so to close their eyes to facts which are not only self evident but obtrude themselves upon our gaze whether we direct our attention to them or not.

The Pennsylvania Department of Forestry has for years recognized the great value of this land for forestry purposes, and so far as their means and the

PLATE VII

NATURAL FOREST REGENERATION

In the more open places even the hemlock shows substantial reproduction. Along with the herbaceous plants, this forms the finest possible ground cover for wild birds and game animals

opportunity to purchase have permitted, have acquired them as rapidly as possible. It is indeed a fact that nowhere else in the State is there such a continuous solid body of adaptable land which furnishes opportunity for easy reforestation and which will eventually repay the State so well, as these lands. And I wish further to emphasize the fact that repayment will not only consist of money, dollar for dollar, covering the outlay for purchase and development, but parallel therewith will be the unusual opportunity to adapt this new forest to become the great wild life, sporting, and recreation centre of the State.

In the past this region was the scene of many stirring events, and today the traditions of its former glories still hover over it in an endless variety of forms. A discussion of this feature of The Black Forest would unquestionably be of interest. But time forbids, and besides it has been done so well by another that I may simply refer you to Mr. Henry W. Shoemaker's "Black Forest Souvenirs." Most of the scenes and incidents so well portrayed in that book are laid in this region, and as the author himself states, they comprise but a fraction of what it is possible to glean in relation to almost every part of the region under discussion.

Could this land be purchased and administered by the State, there would follow certain results which should be of great interest to the Wild Life League. Before the lumberman came, here was an unobstructed range for game of many kinds. In the early part of the last century great herds of elk and

mountain buffalo made their homes here. Deer were found in abundance. There was no limit to the trout in the mountain streams, and it has always been a favorite resort for the black bear. Here also there were panthers, wolves, and innumerable thousands of the wild passenger pigeon, all of which have now passed away. The forest itself, composed mostly of evergreens, contained trees of enormous size, and the stumps which remain as the only reminders of the real character of the primeval forest, mutely testify to the size and quality of the trees which this land is capable of producing. Here the Indians lived and their trails were the first roads followed by the white man, and here the legends still attach to all that which went to make up that rough frontier civilization, by means of which there was later hewn out of the wilderness a way for that culture and civilization which we esteem to be of better quality but not one whit more sturdy or honest in character.

Today all this is changed. The elk and bison have gone. A few deer remain, and by reason of the protection given them, are increasing from year to year. The bear is still found. The brushland is now a retreat for the ruffed grouse. Rabbits and mountain hare are in great abundance and those who love to follow the dog over the mountain and down the valley may enjoy this sport in tracking the numerous foxes and wild cats which still infest the neighborhood. Trout are still to be found in the streams, but nothing to compare with the former stock nor with what, at slight cost to the State the

PLATE VIII

A TYPICAL TROUT STREAM

The flow will be augmented and stabilized
by better forest conditions

streams are capable of being made to support. Pine Creek with its sixty miles and Kettle Creek with its twenty-five miles of main stream furnish excellent bass fishing for those who enjoy this sport.

Could this region be reforested, protected, and developed, sport for the hunter and fisherman, and recreation for whomsoever will, would be without limit. The Game Commission recognizes these facts by placing within the borders of The Black Forest three game preserves, one of which was stocked with deer and elk in 1915. The remaining two will be similarly stocked this coming winter. Here the food and cover furnished by the young growth of trees and demanded for the protection of game birds and game animals is unlimited, and the thick undergrowth furnishes a character of protection which amounts to almost absolute insurance against extermination.

I have already spoken of the grouse. I know of no locality where they exist in such abundance today as here. The trout streams are ideal in character, and I state conservatively that there are from 300 to 400 miles of such streams, all capable of being stocked and furnishing such a riot of sport as is now unknown to any other portion of the State, and probably has been so for a generation.

To accomplish what is here suggested requires State ownership and State administration. The trees, the game, and the fish must be protected by State officials. The distances are too great and the population too small to expect this work to be done locally or to have it done with that degree of pre-

cision which is essential to work of this character. State ownership of The Black Forest would stamp this region as the public playground for all the people. The extent of land, the diversity of hill and valley, of river and rill, of forest cover, of density and age, would be equal to anything furnished by the Adirondacks and superior to the Maine woods for an outing. Our people need not, at great expense, go to some other and distant locality. They would use that which is for all, almost immediately at hand, and to be reached within a few hours at moderate expense. Thousands of dollars would be saved to the sportsmen of the State and to those who come for the simple purpose of enjoying the great out-of-doors.

The Black Forest is so located that we find a railroad upon both sides of it, and almost through the centre runs the Coudersport and Jersey Shore turnpike. This old road, built in the early part of the last century, gave an outlet to the early settlers in Potter county. It took from five to six days to make the round trip from Coudersport to Jersey Shore. The people would take their potash, maple sugar, and skins to the nearest store, which was at Jersey Shore, where these products would be exchanged for cornmeal, cloth, and a few other simple necessities of life which they required. With the coming of the railroads the pike was practically abandoned for this kind of traffic, and remained so for over half a century.

PLATE IX

THEIR FAVORITE PASTIME
Trout-fishing at Hull, in The Black Forest

Recently the State of Pennsylvania has taken this road over as a part of its reconstructed highway system and is now building it anew. Already completed some distance beyond the Potter county line, work is now being done on the southern end. It is expected that it will be finished early next year. With this pike in good travelable condition, there will be furnished to the people of Pennsylvania one of the finest scenic drives to be found anywhere. The road lies principally on the dividing ridge between Pine Creek's waters and the Susquehanna waters. The distant views obtained from the height of ground are beyond comparison. There is no doubt that our people will fully appreciate it and use it gladly when the State has finished its work of reconstruction. The chap who works for a small salary and looks forward to his week's outing in the woods as almost his whole stimulus for a year's service, can reach this district and enter all parts of it, with small expense. In considering this question, this is the type of man we should have in mind; and above all we must not forget that the Pennsylvania woman who works for her living, is equally entitled to receive the stimulus of an inexpensive outing. With meager salary she is unable to take recreation at the expensive seashore and mountain resorts. The modest cottages and tidy cabins in the woods where visitors may be received and entertained, hold special allurements to the employe of store and shop, the person of small means. And since this class of people, the

workers of the Commonwealth, constitute the backbone of the population, can there be any civic experiment or economic venture which will in greater degree promote the virility and stability of our best people than an opportunity given by the State to enjoy such a play ground as that we are now urging?

I have not attempted to discuss the question of practical or scientific forestry, but it must seem plain to everyone that the State should not only acquire this land but that immediate steps should be taken to get it. There are two reasons why this should be done and done at once. First, to organize and co-ordinate all effort to prevent forest fires. Second, to prevent the best of the remaining land from being acquired in large area by individuals and erected into private shooting and hunting preserves to the exclusion of the public. Should such a condition as this result from tardiness of State action, it would be most unfortunate. We have before us the experience of the people of the State of New York in the Adirondacks, where the finest tracts of land for sporting and recreation are now owned by private persons. This ownership has been and now is the source of friction and difficulty between the owners and the public, just as has been the case always where private owners of large means have sequestered great tracts of land throughout civilized Europe during the centuries, resulting in constant friction between poachers on the one hand and game keepers on the other. I am advised that in the eastern part of Penn-

PLATE X

THE BLACK FOREST AS THE SETTLER SAW IT

The interlocking crowns and tall mast-like stems
made the Forest dusky at midday

sylvania this very thing has gone on to a considerable extent; that there are now in Pike and Monroe counties private preserves covering over 30,000 acres of land, from which the public, the summer recreationist, and the sportsmen of the State are excluded. In The Black Forest we have but little of it yet. There is one preserve of about 3500 acres, another of about 1000 acres, from which the public is excluded. The danger is constantly ahead of us that ever larger and larger areas in this superb region will be withdrawn from the use of the public.

I have now tried to state to you the simple facts in a plain manner. The Black Forest is purely and simply a forestry proposition, and is by all odds, I believe, better than that which is offered in any other part of the State. It will furnish sport and recreation for a large proportion of our people, and there is no reason why any of us should be compelled to go beyond the borders of Pennsylvania for that which we may obtain, figuratively speaking, at our own very back doors. The accessibility of The Black Forest makes it convenient to the greater part of our population and State ownership should especially interest the people of the western part of the Commonwealth. If this be true, as I believe it is, then the Wild Life League should make it a part of its purpose to urge upon the coming Legislature the high and immediate necessity for the purchase of this land.

Whether or not the League has other and graver questions to the exclusion of this, is for you to

determine; but it seems to me that we have here an opportunity to acquire this property at slight expense. To the State of Pennsylvania this would be a burden of almost inappreciable moment, and would, at the same time, make for it one of the finest State Forests to be found anywhere. Collateral to State ownership, it would furnish that great play ground for health and recreation, sport and outdoor life, to which newly revived spirit of in-the-open living, all well informed men are irrevocably committed.

PLATE XI

REBUILDING THE BLACK FOREST

Elk Lick plantation at Cross Fork. Planted in the spring of 1910 using three-year-old white pine. Photographed 1914, trees $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high. In 1916, 5.9 feet high. Note dense, thrifty *natural regeneration* on the mountain side, in the background

Since the delivery of the foregoing address by Judge Heck, the people of New York at the recent election, by a referendum vote, decided to tax themselves \$10,000,000 for the purchase of land for State forests. Of this amount \$7,500,000 will be applied to buy land in the Adirondacks and Catskills, and \$2,500,000 in the preserve known as the Highlands of the Hudson. A private subscription of \$2,500,000 is also available now for the latter preserve. Twelve million, five hundred thousand dollars for the purchase of State forests, and approved by popular vote of the people! Pennsylvania has, to date, spent only a little over \$2,000,000 for all of her land purchases. When New York does things, she does them big.

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