

BOOKS AND FILMS OF INTEREST

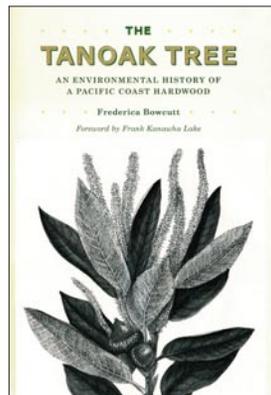
by Jason Howard, Eben Lehman, and James G. Lewis



In January 1900, Frederick Weyerhaeuser purchased 900,000 acres of forestland in western Washington. This transaction announced to the world that the epicenter of the American lumber industry had shifted from the Midwest to the Pacific Northwest, where economic opportunity awaited in the form of vast forest landscapes and one particular tree: the Douglas-fir. The importance of this tree species over the first half of the twentieth century is detailed by Emily Brock in *Money Trees: The Douglas Fir and American Forestry, 1900–1944* (Oregon State University Press, 2015). Although Weyerhaeuser and other lumbermen fully understood the economic potential of the Douglas-fir forests, ecological knowledge about these forests was extremely limited. Brock discusses how the industrial development of the Pacific Northwest spurred the evolution of a scientific understanding of the Douglas-fir forest and how this ecological understanding further affected forest policy. The book's narrative also traces the U.S. Forest Service's parallel development of forest research, an effort initiated by Raphael Zon, which eventually contributed to ecological approaches to forest management. The new approaches also changed relationships between professional foresters and lumber companies during this time, as the sustained-yield management strategies advocated by foresters began to be widely adopted by industry. Research and strategy came together in 1941 with the creation of the tree farm system, which Weyerhaeuser

and other companies used as public relations tools. The combination of tree farms and state-of-the-art laboratories helped build public confidence in the forest products industry. By documenting the important and evolving relationship between foresters and lumber companies, Brock reveals how foresters ultimately helped industry derive not just economic value but also long-term ecological value from the Douglas-fir forests. (EL)

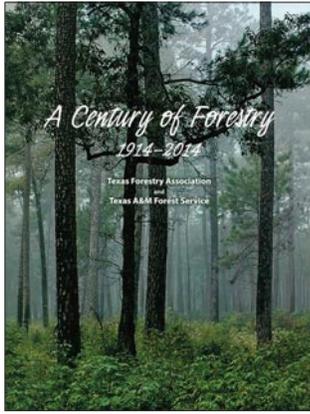
An underappreciated tree species is the subject of a new work by Frederica Bowcutt. *The Tanoak Tree: An Environmental History of a Pacific Hardwood* (University of Washington Press, 2015) examines the economic, ecological, and cultural importance of tanoak. Bowcutt argues that tanoak is intertwined with the human history of



California over thousands of years. Tanoak acorns were an abundant food source for Native Americans and formed the basis of an indigenous food economy—salmon was the only food consumed in larger quantities by early populations in northern California—and acorns continued to be an important food source well into the nineteenth century as settlers began to use them as livestock feed. Tanoak's value further increased after its bark was found to have high concentrations of tannins. Used to produce durable leathers, tanoak bark help build a massive tanning industry in California. Extensive harvesting of the bark over the second half of nineteenth century took an immense toll on the tanoak forests before

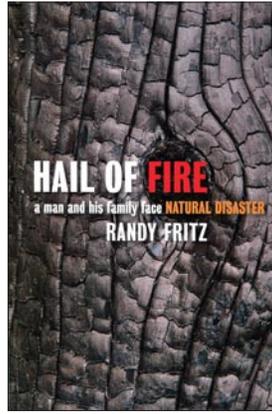
cheaper, nonbark tanning agents became widely adopted. The standing of the tanoak was further undone by lumber companies in the twentieth century. The importance of redwood and Douglas-fir to the California lumber industry ultimately caused a shift in perception: tanoak became viewed as a pest and a competitor for softwood, rather than a cash crop, and foresters began using herbicide treatments to eradicate it. The adverse effects of herbicides led to opposition to their use by the 1970s. Since then, natural diseases have taken their toll, Bowcutt uses such events to mirror larger themes from California's environmental history. The book concludes with an examination of modern collaborative efforts with indigenous tribes (who still value the tanoak as a food source) to conserve the tree in northern California. Throughout this well-researched narrative, Bowcutt brings a clear passion to her subject matter. (EL)

By the turn of the twentieth century, the natural landscape of Texas had been drastically changed. The expansive stands of virgin longleaf pine had largely disappeared because of lumber industry practices, along with unsuppressed wildfires. Deforestation had also led to widespread soil erosion that was affecting the state's streams and rivers. To avoid long-term damage to the natural landscape, leadership and direction in forest management and forest conservation would be needed. Into this vacuum entered the Texas Forestry Association (TFA), which was established in 1914 to promote forest conservation in the state. TFA members, led by William Goodrich Jones, a banker turned conservationist, continued a decade-old quest to create the Department of Forestry, now called the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS). With that, Texas became the first state in the nation to establish its state forestry agency as part of a land-grant college. Since their creation, TFA and TFS have worked to establish pine seedling nurseries, fire control projects, and state-administered forest



areas. The history of both organizations is examined in *A Century of Forestry, 1914–2014: Texas Forestry Association and Texas A&M Forest Service* (Donning Company Publishers, 2014), by Ronald F. Billings. The illustrated book recounts a century of Texas’s forest history, detailing important events such as the founding of state and national forests, the establishment of a state tree farm system, developments in forest research, urban forestry initiatives, and the founding of the Texas Forestry Museum. It also examines a century of work by both organizations in forest management, fire control, reforestation, entomology, and other areas. Sidebars highlight individuals—including every state forester—involved in the state’s forestry efforts. With its large format and attractive presentation, the book would make an excellent gift for anyone interested in Texas history or forestry history in general. (EL)

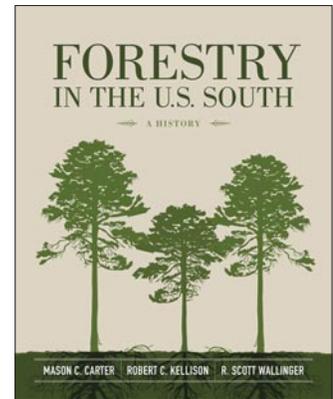
In early September 2011, three separate wildfires burning in eastern Texas merged into one large one, creating the most destructive wildfire in state history. The fire consumed more than 32,000 acres and 1,660 homes, as well as 90 percent of the pine forest in Bastrop State Park, home to the Lost Pines forest. The emotional toll of this historic wildfire on an individual is the subject of Randy Fritz’s deeply moving memoir of what he went through when the natural disaster claimed the dream home he had built and displaced his family for months. The fire forever changed their lives and the landscape they loved. In *Hail of Fire: A Man and His Family Face Natural Disaster* (Trinity University Press, 2015), Fritz, who was an administrator for the Texas Department of State Health Services, relives the fire and the grieving and recovery that followed. Readers are at his elbow as his family learns that everything they owned was vaporized. Weeks



of self-doubt and second-guessing followed. The author shares the journey that unfolds as he and his wife and daughters learned about themselves and what mattered most to them. Fritz is at turns revelatory, poignant, and heart wrenching—but always honest and engaging. (JL)

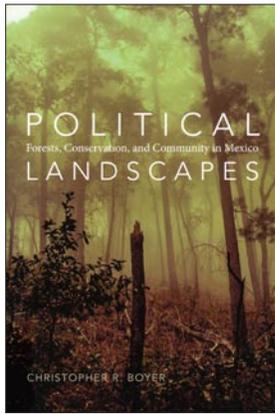
In 1984 Thomas Clark published *The Greening of the South: The Recovery of Land and Forest*. His “attempt to give some degree of historical perspective to a tremendously important phase of changing resource management in the [U.S.] South” was not, however, in his words, “intended to be a history of the southern lumber industry or of any wood-using industry.” Yet one cannot talk about the history of scientific forest management in the region without discussing why it became necessary in the first place or its impact on either industry. *Forestry in the U.S. South: A History* (Louisiana State University Press and the Forest History Society, 2015) succeeds in doing so, and from a perspective not often taken by historians. Most often historians either tell it from a top-down perspective, usually how outsiders, typically in the guise of the U.S. Forest Service or Soil Conservation Service or state agencies, “rescued” the South, or how locals used their knowledge and helped the land heal itself. What has long been overlooked is the role that corporations and industrial forestry, as well as large private landowners, have had in successfully regenerating the forest through intensive management and extensive research to the point that in the last couple of decades the forest is perceived as a “wall of wood.” Now concerns about that wall coming down have emerged following the creation of timber investment management corporations and real estate investment trusts in 1996. Between then and 2009, the two entities made more than 90 percent of all forestland purchases in the

United States. Forests became commodities to be traded, not managed. Consequently, research in forest productivity has dropped off and the dynamic of private forestry and ownership has changed. To understand what these recent changes may mean for the future of the “wall of wood,” who better to tell the story of the impact of scientific forest management on the region than three people who have worked in all the major areas of forest management throughout the region, including the private sector, education, and research? Foresters Mason Carter, Robert Kellison, and Scott Wallinger have 154 years of combined experience in southern forestry. They mix their insiders’ knowledge with new interviews and extensive research to comprehensively tell the story of why and how forest management enabled the standing volume of commercial timber in the South to become 80 percent greater and the annual net growth 72 percent higher in 2001 than in 1953. This book, which includes plentiful graphs and



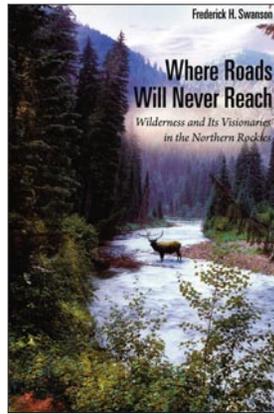
charts and sidebars explaining terms or offering biographical sketches, would be ideal for use in numerous courses, from forest history to history of science classes. (JL)

Moving south of the border, we turn now to Christopher R. Boyer’s *Political Landscapes: Forests, Conservation, and Community in Mexico* (Duke University Press, 2015), which provides an excellent overview of a century of environmental and political history in Mexico. “Political landscapes” are defined by Boyer, a leading scholar in Latin American environmental history, as “places where contention over resources has provoked official intervention and forced historical actors to negotiate with the bureaucrats who ultimately determine which social groups will gain access to the land and its fruits.” This unique take reveals the profound environmental impacts of not just natural processes but of Mexico’s



political history as well. Boyer begins with the late-nineteenth-century presidency of Porfirio Diaz, documenting the changes in forest policy and their consequences for local communities through the Mexican revolution and postwar period and into the late twentieth century. He details how Mexico's forests have been shaped by political currents like the revolutionary ideals of Lazaro Cardenas, under whom forest policy emphasized the integration of rural populations in forest use and management. In the postwar era, national development was given precedence over rural autonomy, and logging companies began to wield greater influence. In the latter part of the twentieth century, projects ceded control back to local communities. At different times, *campesinos*, politicians, and conservationists have exerted a dominant influence on forest landscapes and policies. The book offers case studies of two states—Chihuahua and Michoacan—selected because of their large indigenous populations and the historical role that forest industries have played there. Throughout, Boyer places this environmental history in the broader context of Mexico's history. His work is always an excellent addition to the literature, and this book is no exception. (EL)

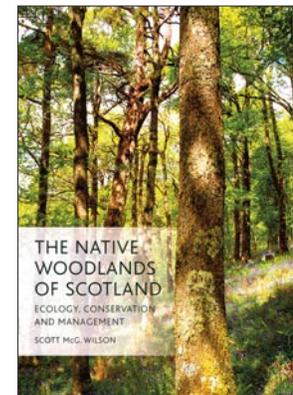
Following World War II, the abundance of pine, spruce, and fir in remote areas of Idaho and Montana represented a vast untapped natural resource to the U.S. Forest Service. But to extract the timber, an extensive network of roads needed to be constructed. What the agency did not anticipate was a coordinated local opposition to its plans. The resulting fight over these wilderness areas is the subject of *Where Roads Will Never Reach: Wilderness and Its Visionaries in the Northern Rockies* (University of Utah Press, 2015), by Frederick H. Swanson. The biographer of Montana-based forester and conservation



leader Guy M. Brandborg, one of the road-building opponents, Swanson covers the battles over wilderness access on federal lands in northern Idaho and western Montana from the 1950s through the 1980s. This area had been described by an early wilderness advocate as “the greatest forest wilderness still left in the country,” and many of those living in its shadows were willing to fight for its permanent preservation. This is a story of unexpected alliances between hunters, fishermen, outdoor enthusiasts, scientists, and concerned local citizens who banded together to advocate for protected wilderness areas. Largely a grass-roots effort, without direct assistance from national environmental organizations, this local fight eventually engaged powerful allies, such as Montana senator Lee Metcalf and Idaho senator Frank Church. The wilderness advocates who objected to construction of logging roads in backcountry areas emphasized the protection of forest habitats for game and the protection of streams and rivers for fish. Their coordinated effort worked: the federal government set aside many important wilderness areas in the northern Rockies. Their effort also led to new legislation and policy decisions, including the Forest Service's Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) policy of the 1970s. Through it all, both sides sought to balance a need for natural resources extracted from forests with the importance of preserving wilderness areas for outdoor recreation pursuits. Ultimately, Swanson shows how grass-roots efforts can alter national environmental policy. (EL)

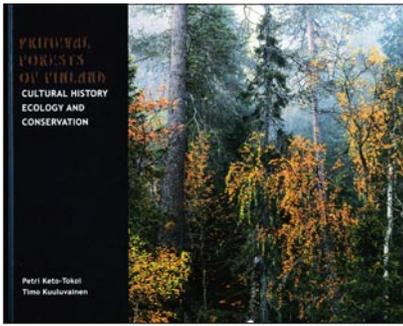
Native woodlands once covered nearly 60 percent of Scotland's land area but now are found on only 4 percent of the landscape. Their relative scarcity only highlights their importance as areas of biodiversity, as well as their value for soil protection,

flood prevention, carbon sequestration, natural scenery, and outdoor recreation. The history, ecology, and management of these areas are the subject of *The Native Woodlands of Scotland: Ecology, Conservation, and Management* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), by Scott McG. Wilson. He takes the reader on a tour of native woodland habitats throughout Scotland, emphasizing their immense value. Wilson places the habitats in both ecological and historical contexts within the greater Scottish landscape, as well as within an international forest context, detailing the ecological development of Scotland's native woodlands from the last ice age to the twenty-first century. Wilson also discusses the conservation and management of existing woodlands, including the relationships between plantation forests and native woodlands. Another chapter covers the history of conservation efforts, with an overview of relevant policy and law and detailed information on issues relating to wildlife management, regeneration efforts, invasive plant species, and silvicultural techniques. The book concludes with information on visiting forest sites throughout the country. A textbook intended for students in forestry and the environmental sciences, *The Native*



Woodlands of Scotland is also for those with a general interest in Scotland's land management, woodlands, wildlife, and natural history. (EL)

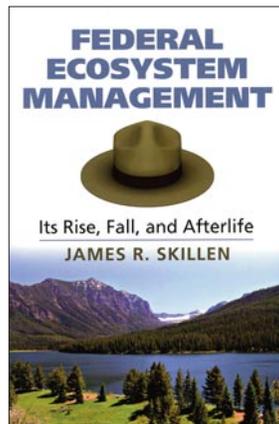
From Scandinavia comes *Primeval Forests of Finland: Cultural History, Ecology and Conservation* (Maahenki, 2014), by Petri Keto-Tokoi and Timo Kuuluvainen. The book celebrates the cultural and ecological importance of Finland's natural boreal forests. Keto-Tokoi and Kuuluvainen open with a discussion of how we define a “natural” forest and how such forests cannot be viewed in absolute terms: environmental factors mean that forests have different



and changing states of naturalness. The authors then delve into the role of the forest in Finland's art and folklore and how it has served for centuries as a national symbol. In fights over forest conservation in Finland throughout the twentieth century, nature conservationists have proven to be effective even in periods of economic growth and development. The natural forests are treasured and widely considered too valuable to sacrifice for short-term economic gain. Nevertheless, conservationists and forest industry tussled over the protection of the North Lapland wilderness areas in the latter part of the twentieth century. The book's visuals—the large, full-color photos, maps, and illustrations—are beautiful and engaging. (EL)

By the 1990s, the U.S. federal land management agencies faced a series of mounting ecological, legal, and political challenges. Rigid standards of preservation and multiple-use conservation were no longer meeting the needs of land managers and policymakers. The agencies turned to ecosystem management, a new, complex, and flexible approach that was supposed to be a better match for modern ecological and political systems. The history, implementation, and legacy of ecosystem management are the subject of James R. Skillen in *Federal Ecosystem Management: Its Rise, Fall, and Afterlife* (University Press of Kansas, 2015). Skillen discusses the events that precipitated this controversial shift in management strategy, as an old framework was adapted to a changing legal landscape. The change came largely out of the environmental movement: new ecological perspectives produced new legal and political mandates for land management. Tension between federal agencies and the new environmental protection requirements forced the shift to the ecosystem management approach. The book follows debates over ecosystem management through the presidencies of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton and contrasts their different

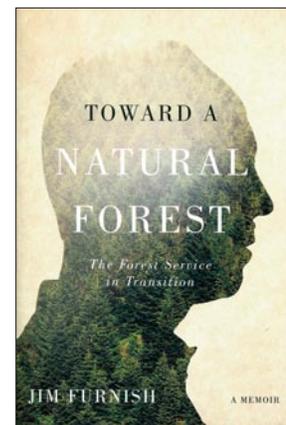
approaches. The 1990s saw both support for and opposition to ecosystem management as environmental and economic interests vied for predominance. Case studies illustrate the author's thesis. A chapter on Yellowstone National Park reveals how the National Park Service shifted to a more ecologically informed model of wildlife management over the course of the late twentieth century, creating problems as grizzly bears moved far beyond park boundaries. Chapters on the Northwest Forest Plan and the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project further demonstrate the challenges of implementing ambitious ecosystem management projects. Skillen, whose previous book is *The Nation's Largest Landlord: The Bureau of Land Management in the American West*, brings a high level of expertise to the subject of federal land management. Both works present



much-needed histories of the challenges of federal natural resources management. Although ecosystem management ultimately fell out of favor in the early twenty-first century, at least in political circles, many of its principles continue to play a role in land management decisionmaking. (EL)

There is a saying that only Nixon could go to China. When it comes to the U.S. Forest Service, it may take a former employee to tell the truth about how the agency went from hero to villain in the eyes of the environmental community and how it can return to its former position as a leader in land management. Perhaps Jim Furnish, who started with the U.S. Forest Service as a seasonal employee in Oregon in 1965 and finished his career 37 years later in Washington, D.C., as the deputy chief of the National Forest System, can serve as the agency's Nixon. At the start of his career, he unquestioningly accepted the agency's timber-first policies. But as he

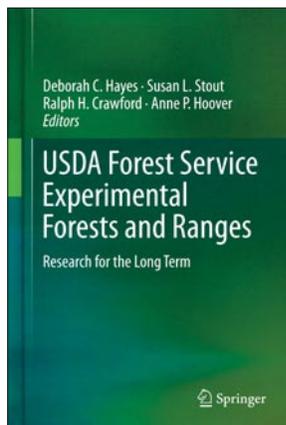
changed jobs and began to ascend the agency's organizational chart, Furnish's land ethic evolved faster than that of the agency he still loves. Both Furnish and the Forest Service shifted their management goals from timber production to ecosystem management, but Furnish did so willingly after he saw the harm clearcutting was having; the agency did so only under court order in the wake of the northern spotted owl controversy of the late 1980s. While assistant forest supervisor and then supervisor of the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon from 1991 to 1999, Furnish guided a timber-producing forest into the new era of ecosystem management, with controversial management goals that included a smaller timber harvest, closing of forest roads, and fish habitat restoration. His accomplishments caught the attention of Washington leadership, and Chief Mike



Dombeck named him deputy chief of the National Forest System, an unusual promotion several rungs up the organizational ladder. As deputy chief (1999–2002), Furnish helped carry out Dombeck's agenda, which focused on watershed restoration and setting aside roadless areas for protection, the latter a contentious issue that would not be settled by the courts until 2012. Furnish concludes his bare-knuckled memoir *Toward a Natural Forest: The Forest Service in Transition* (Oregon State University Press, 2015) with his "green manifesto" and a discussion of the challenges the Forest Service faces in the coming years. Well written and clear eyed, the book is a good complement to Skillen's book because of its insider's account of how the Forest Service struggled to implement ecosystem management on the national forest level. (JL)

The U.S. Forest Service's experimental forests and ranges have served as important

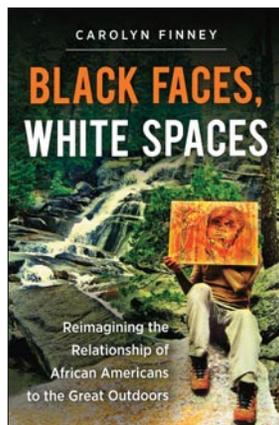
forestry research and education sites for more than one hundred years. During this time critical long-term ecological research projects have been completed, and important questions involving natural resources have been addressed, producing extensive information about America's forests. The history of these sites and the legacy of the research performed at them are the subject of *USDA Forest Service Experimental Forests and Ranges: Research for the Long Term* (Springer, 2014). Edited by Deborah C. Hayes, Susan L. Stout, Ralph H. Crawford, and Anne P. Hoover, this mammoth work (nearly 700 pages) offers 30 essays on experimental forests and ranges and their influence on science, policy, and natural resources management. Former U.S. Forest Service national historian Aaron Shapiro opens the book with a summary history of federal forest research and experimental



ranges, the concept of which dates to the late nineteenth century but was first implemented by Raphael Zon, who established the Fort Valley Experiment Station in Arizona in 1907. The history of other research sites is explored in subsequent chapters on influential projects in forest ecology, wildlife, fire, and hydrology. Chapters describe research on longleaf pine ecosystems, clearcutting, termite control, watershed management, acid rain, and fire management. The book concludes with an essay by Peter Stine of the agency's Pacific Southwest Research Station on the future of Forest Service experimental forests and ranges, looking at threats to forests and the future of data collection and sharing. This book serves as a reference for students and researchers on meeting environmental challenges through applied scientific study. (EL)

Stories of land, forests, and the environment are deeply rooted in American his-

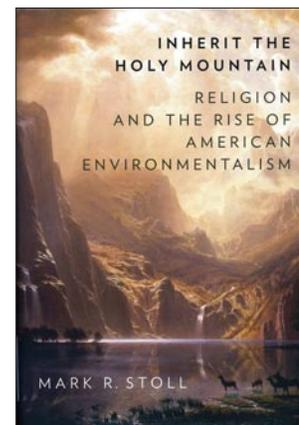
tory. When it comes to African Americans, though, many of these stories have been marginalized and reinterpreted. In *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014), Carolyn Finney examines the African American experience in nature. Finney's motivation for this book stems from her travels as a student and her own family history. For 50 years Finney's family lived on and maintained a wealthy couple's country estate outside New York City. Her family's experience prompted her to ask how individuals connect to landscapes and environment. She examines movies, literature, pop culture, and historical resources to uncover how African Americans have perceived the environment. Memories of slavery and segregation, she finds, still affect human-environmental



relationships within the African American community. The opening chapter borrows an idea from filmmaker Spike Lee, arguing that African Americans have been "bamboozled" into accepting a false narrative about their collective relationships with the land and environment—namely, that the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and racial violence have shaped cultural beliefs and understandings. Finney's observations also led her to ask many questions about ownership and who has the economic power to make environmental decisions. Finney looks at the difficulties of discussing race and diversity and challenges environmental practitioners and policymakers not to overlook race when making environmental decisions. *Black Faces, White Spaces* brings a new and important perspective to environmentalism and conservation. (JH)

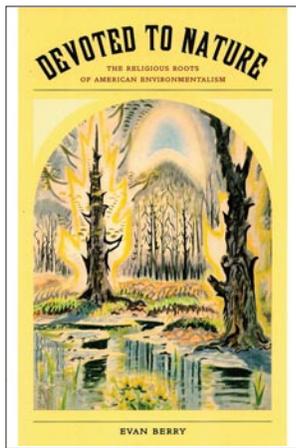
How do faith and religion relate to American environmentalism? Environmental historian Mark R. Stoll looks at this

question in *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Oxford University Press, 2015). Stoll finds that the American environmental movement had religious foundations that gave environmentalists moral and cultural perspectives on the world and direction and tone for their actions. He explores how specific denominational origins corresponded with sets of ideas about nature and environment, looking at early Calvinism and modern Presbyterianism—a large proportion of mid-twentieth-century environmental leaders were raised Presbyterian—and discusses how adherents interpreted nature as a spiritual resource. *Inherit the Holy Mountain* also considers how landscape artists from different religious backgrounds interpreted nature through a visual medium. The book concludes with a discussion of current religious implications



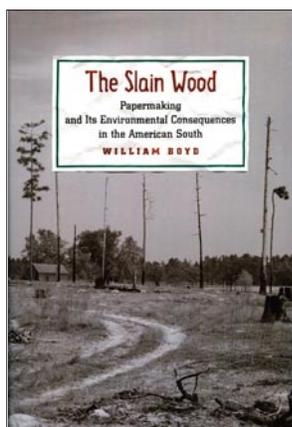
for the future of American environmentalism, and how the past may influence future environmental decisionmaking. Stoll weaves together early American religious and environmental history in his examination of an often overlooked piece of the historical puzzle. An excerpt from this book, on the Congregationalists of the Connecticut River valley, appears on page 37 of this issue. (JH)

Readers interested in the connection between Christianity and environmentalism will want to check out Evan Berry's *Devoted to Nature: The Religious Roots of American Environmentalism* (University of California Press, 2015). Berry, who teaches philosophy and religion, found that historians of environmentalism typically split the chronology into two eras and, thus, two frameworks. The first framework typically begins in the nineteenth century and emphasizes theological roots. Then after World War II, histories focus on science and legislation and



disregard or ignore the theological roots, even though there is a moral aspect to the postwar environmental movement that has religious roots. Salvation, redemption, and spiritual progress, Berry argues, form the basic context of the American passion for nature and are found throughout the history of American environmentalism. Though the book is primarily concerned with the period between 1914 (when John Muir died) and 1949 (the publication of Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*), religion and the environment have a very long relationship in the United States. Whereas Mark Stoll's book (above) goes deeply into religious denominations and theology, Berry presents a broader view of Christianity as it relates to human ecology and spiritual experiences. (JH)

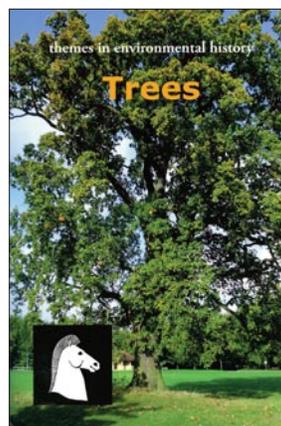
During the 1930s, when the paper industry moved to the South, pine trees became a cash crop. But labor markets, cutover lands,



and soil erosion were just a few of the problems that slowed paper production. In *The Slain Wood: Papermaking and Its Environmental Consequences in the American South* (John Hopkins University Press, 2015), William Boyd chronicles the pulp and paper industries in the American South

during the twentieth century. The book draws on interviews and rich histories to tell the story of this industry and the social and environmental changes that came with it. Boyd has organized the book around problems the companies faced during southern expansion: the making of the "industrial forest" in the South, the social organization of logging and wood procurement, the management of race and class in the context of mill labor, the distinctive capital requirements in the industry, and the politics of environmental pollution associated with pulp and paper production. Boyd concludes this important study with a discussion of the state of today's southern lumber industry. (JH)

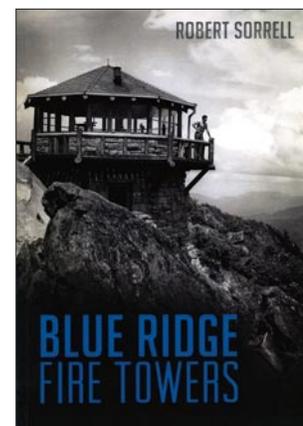
Trees, a new entry in the *Themes in Environmental History Series* (White Horse Press,



2015), is a collection of essays selected from the academic journals *Environment and History* and *Environmental Values*. Each volume in the series mixes theoretical work with case studies. Compiled by Sarah Johnson, *Trees* contains four sections that address the disciplinary roots of environmental and forest history on a global scale. The first section focuses on the power derived from having possession of a forest, in Prussian Germany and in ancient India. The second section offers two longitudinal studies of forest change, including Mikko Saikku's "Down by the Riverside: The Disappearing Bottomland Hardwood Forest of Southeastern North America," which explores human-induced environmental change and the drastic changes in ecosystems there. In the "Planting" section, which looks at tree planting and forestry in four places and time periods around the world, Paul Star's "Tree Planting in Canterbury, New Zealand, 1850–1910" describes that country's exotic tree plantations and summarizes the early environmental history of

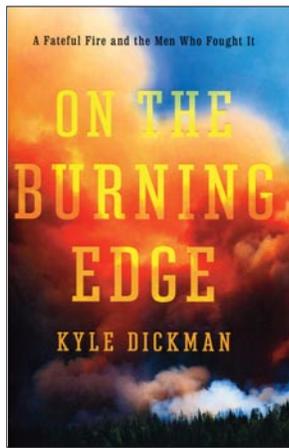
Canterbury and its European settlers. The final section, "Forestry," is subdivided into three: "Practice," "Constructedness and Uncertainty," and "Power, Negotiation and Conflict." Readers will appreciate the global perspectives on forestry and the environment. (JH)

Fire towers in the Blue Ridge Mountains evolved from tents, "makeshifts," and temporary structures to a network of permanent towers. Beginning in the 1930s, government engineers designed the fire towers so that lookouts could more comfortably, effectively, and safely search for fires. Robert Sorrell's *Blue Ridge Fire Towers* (History Press, 2015) details the history of lookout towers in the Blue Ridge forests, from the days of simple platforms in trees to multistoried steel-and-glass buildings



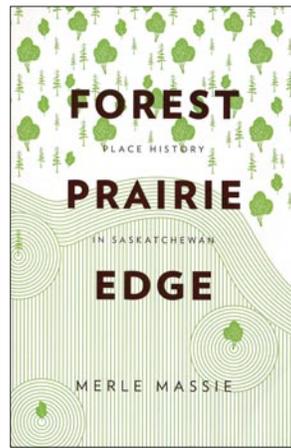
constructed to withstand high winds on ridgetops. He has filled his book with historical photos of towers and the men and women who worked in these structures. Today's technology has enabled forest officials to observe mountains and search for fires from different vantage points, eventually leading to abandonment of towers. Harsh weather conditions and vandalism have contributed to their destruction, but government agencies and private groups are seeking to restore and protect the remaining towers. Sorrell's final chapter deals with the preservation of fire towers and the environmental, economic, and historical benefits of the work. (JH)

If journalism is "the first rough draft of history," journalist Kyle Dickman provides just that in his book about the Yarnell Hill Fire, which killed 19 wildland firefighters in 2013. In *On the Burning Edge: A Fateful Fire and the Men Who Fought It* (Ballantine Books, 2015), Dickman, himself a former professional firefighter, brings a deeper



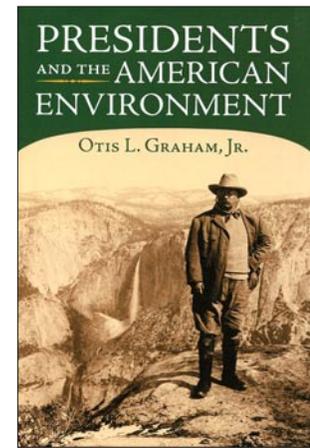
understanding of what the Granite Mountain Hotshots faced while battling the Yarnell Hill Fire, which consumed more than 8,000 acres in northern Arizona’s wildland-urban interface. He takes us inside the culture of firefighting, introducing us to the members of the crew who perished and those they left behind, and reminds us of the dangers and challenges they faced in training and on the job. The book is more than just an account of this one tragic incident. The author places the story in the broader context of wildland fire history and a changing American West, one that is experiencing growing populations and contracting water supplies. The death of firefighters is a story that has been told before in places like Colorado and Montana, and until there is a substantial change in wildland fire policy, it is one that will probably be told again and again. (JL)

Environmental historian and third-generation resident Merle Massie takes her readers to the “prairie province” of Saskatchewan, Canada, a place that few people outside the immediate area associate with trees, even though more than half of it is covered by boreal forest. Massie examines the ecotone where the prairie and forest meet in *Forest Prairie Edge: Place History in Saskatchewan* (University of Manitoba Press, 2015). In particular, she focuses on her native Prince Albert region and its long history of varied use by Aboriginal peoples, and the farmers and natural resource extractors who followed and further transformed the landscape. Massie challenges the long-standing stereotypes and assumptions Canadian historians have held of Saskatchewan as merely a farming, wheat-growing province by focusing on the ecotone. Farming has long been an economic activity there, of course. But



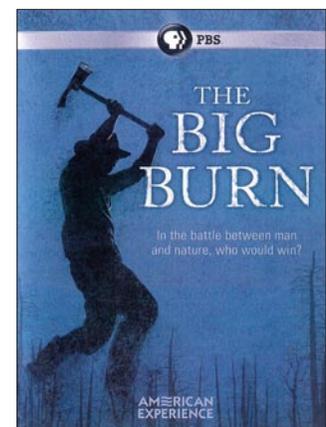
from 1890 until the Great Fire of 1919 swept through (see page 22), many residents of the border country made their living from logging and lumbering; after World War II the region became known mostly for tourism and recreation—all activities not commonly associated with Saskatchewan. Massie’s command of her sources and intimate knowledge of the place and people allow her to weave together a story that is both personal and universal, and always enlightening. (JL)

In 1891, with no fanfare, President Benjamin Harrison signed a bill that gave the president the power to set aside public lands as forest reserves. The Forest Reserve Act, Gifford Pinchot later declared, represented the “beginning and basis of our whole National Forest system.” It also represents the beginning of American presidents’ involvement in managing federal public lands, says Otis L. Graham Jr. in *Presidents and the American Environment* (University of Kansas Press, 2015). Graham opens the book with a summary history of federal land management policies to 1891—in short, give away public land and settle the country. Graham’s synthetic work examines the policies and consequences for the environment of every president from Harrison to Obama, and how each man has related to the natural world. Both Presidents Roosevelt, great conservationists in their private lives and as chief executives, are covered in separate chapters; the rest are grouped by era. Thus Graham provides a useful survey of American environmental history vis-à-vis those 22 occupants of the White House. The book may be of great use in college environmental or American political history classes, in part because the author discusses the secondary literature about each president in the main text and not in the endnotes. It should be used with some caution, however, as the



author gets some basic facts wrong, such as Gifford Pinchot’s age when he was appointed chief of the Division of Forestry in 1898 (he was 32, not 38), and calling Theodore Roosevelt’s creation of the “midnight reserves” in 1907 his “crowded hour”—a phrase Roosevelt used to describe his combat experience in Cuba a decade before—in 1908. (JL)

Produced for the PBS series *American Experience*, “**The Big Burn**” (2014, 52 minutes, www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/burn) tells the dramatic story



of the 1910 fires that swept over the Northern Rockies and consumed 3 million acres in 36 hours, and nearly consumed the fledgling U.S. Forest Service with it. Despite devastating losses of land and men, after the fires the Forest Service fully embraced the policy of fire suppression, a decision the nation is still dealing with. The film is based on Timothy Egan’s book by the same name. Like Egan’s book, the film provides an entertaining story but is not the best take on this seminal event. Rather, the film *Ordeal By Fire* and Stephen Pyne’s book *Year of the Fires* are more balanced, nuanced, and informative takes. (JL) □