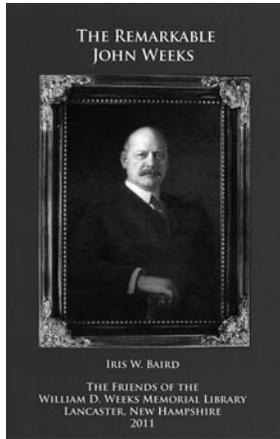


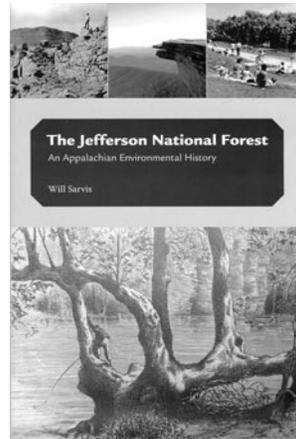
BOOKS AND FILMS OF INTEREST

by Eben Lehman and James G. Lewis



To commemorate the centennial of the Weeks Act, Iris Baird prepared a new biographical portrait of John Weeks, *The Remarkable John Weeks* (The Friends of the William D. Weeks Memorial Library, 2011). Born and raised in New Hampshire's White Mountains and a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Weeks went on to become a successful Boston businessman and an influential public servant. He served in the House and Senate for 15 years and as secretary of War for four years, and was a serious contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 1916. At just 60 pages, Baird's work is a limited but useful overview of the life and accomplishments of John Weeks. Her book, though, is a reminder that no thorough study of Weeks has been published. *The Life of John W. Weeks*, written in 1928 by Weeks's good friend and congressional colleague Charles G. Washburn, is little more than a collection of the man's writings and speeches. Benjamin Arthur Spence's 1971 doctoral dissertation, "The National Career of John Wingate Weeks (1904–1925)," is an exhaustive but dated political biography. Given the importance of conservation, defense, and fiscal policies—topics of great interest to Weeks during his time in Washington—still today, a full biography is long overdue for this pivotal figure in those three areas.

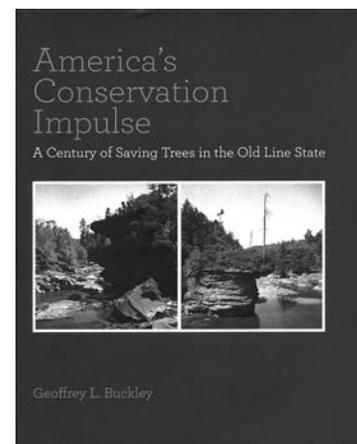
In *The Jefferson National Forest: An Appalachian Environmental History* (University



of Tennessee Press, 2011), Will Sarvis offers a history of one of the eastern forests created under the Weeks Act. The author served as the historian on the Jefferson from 1991 to 1993 and now teaches history in Oregon. Formally established in 1936, the Jefferson National Forest, located in southwestern Virginia, combined the typical mix of heavily logged forestlands and exhausted agricultural lands found on many New Deal-era Weeks Act forests. But Sarvis provides an environmental history of the region beginning with prehistoric times, and then in turn its use by Native Americans for hunting, European and American settlers for agriculture, and American loggers for timber. He also captures the land's spiritual significance and cultural importance to the various groups. Revered though the land might have been, it was poor agricultural practices and destructive logging at the dawn of the twentieth century that led to federal intervention under the Weeks Act. Most of the book is given over to the history of the land under the U.S. Forest Service, which Sarvis says came in three phases: restoration in the late Progressive and New Deal eras, timber primacy from the 1940s through the 1960s, and the environmental movement era from the 1960s to today. Over that time, management of the Jefferson evolved from a narrow emphasis on timber to a broad one on ecosystems. Sarvis discusses the impact of these changes before presenting his own

ideas for future forest management in the region.

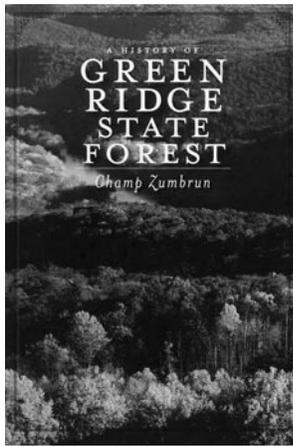
For private land to be purchased under the Weeks Act, individual states had to first pass enabling legislation to allow such action. One state that did that but later rescinded its consent was Maryland. In *America's Conservation Impulse: A Century of Saving Trees in the Old Line State* (The Center for American Places at Columbia College Chicago, 2010), Geoffrey L. Buckley tells why this happened as part of the broader story of the first hundred years of professional forestry in Maryland, which began with the Maryland Forestry Conservation Act of 1906. The central figure in Buckley's narrative is Fred W. Besley, a protégé of Gifford Pinchot and Maryland's first and longest-serving state forester (1906–1942). Besley's rejection of a national forest in Maryland in 1926 left him and Pinchot on opposing sides of the critical



debate over the federal government's role in forest management. At first in favor of federal intervention, Besley grew to prefer having only the state government in control of public forests within the state. His effect on state forest policy is such that his tenure takes up most of the book; at times the book is more like a biography of Besley. What the book does well is seamlessly tie together issues of rural and urban forestry in Maryland, using the city street trees

movement in Baltimore during the early twentieth century as a case study for the national movement. A concise and enjoyable read, the book is well illustrated with numerous historic photos.

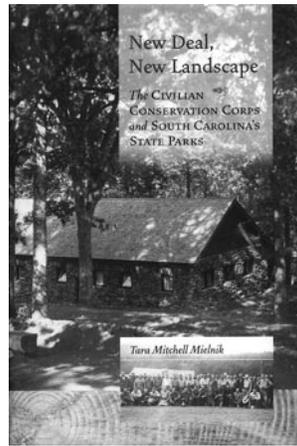
Another recent book on Maryland forestry looks at a specific location in the western part of the state. In *A History of Green Ridge State Forest* (The History Press, 2010), Champ Zumbrun traces the story of how a 43,560-acre plot of land in eastern



Allegany County became the Green Ridge State Forest. Beginning in the eighteenth century with the area's first permanent European settler, Thomas Cresap, the book follows the history of the land through family and commercial ownership. As with any study of Maryland forest history, pioneering state forester Fred Besley is a central figure. The book examines Besley's efforts to secure the permanent conservation of the Green Ridge land, leading directly to the founding of the Green Ridge State Forest in 1931. Zumbrun also discusses the Civilian Conservation Corps camps built on the forest in the 1930s and the lasting work of the corps in the area, especially in the construction of recreational facilities. Also examined is a German prisoner-of-war camp on the forest during World War II, followed by the important wildlife biology and scientific forestry work performed on Green Ridge over the rest of the twentieth century. The book includes impressive historic photos, illustrating what is an interesting story of the preservation of a local landscape.

Tara Mitchell Mielnik uses the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as her lens to view the establishment of the state park system in South Carolina in *New Deal, New*

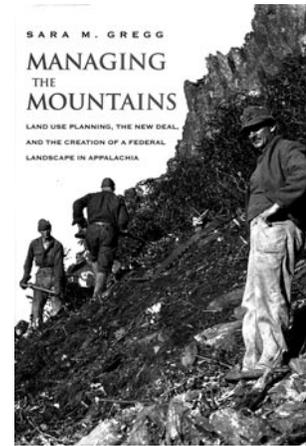
Landscape: The Civilian Conservation Corps and South Carolina's State Parks (University of South Carolina Press, 2011). The CCC built the state park system literally from the ground up during the New Deal era. The New Deal transformed the South Carolina landscape and redefined the state's commitment to conservation and public outdoor recreation. By 1942, 16 state parks built by the CCC were open to the public in South Carolina. The author details the CCC's construction of segre-



gated recreational facilities and structures, manmade lakes, and park buildings, as well as the corps' work in soil conservation, reforestation, and fire prevention. Mielnik looks at the day-to-day life of the corpsmen, both white and African American, around the camps and job sites. As the parks were being built, state forestry officials presented them as places to enjoy recreational activities while also gaining an appreciation for plants, animals, and the natural world. The officials had an easy time selling the recreational aspects; several parks were so popular that the public began using them before they had officially opened. The book is bolstered by a large number of historic photos and includes an appendix listing all the CCC camps in the state.

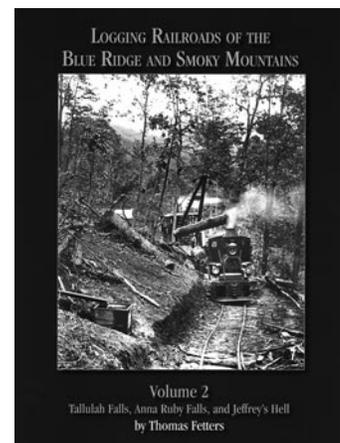
Another recent work looking at the New Deal and the eastern U.S. landscape is also the winner of the Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Book Award for 2010. *Managing the Mountains: Land Use Planning, the New Deal, and the Creation of a Federal Landscape in Appalachia* (Yale University Press, 2010), by Sara M. Gregg, examines regional land-use planning throughout the Appalachian Mountains. Federal land policy changed from the 1910s through the New Deal era because of the 1911 Weeks Act

and the 1924 Clarke-McNary Act. Federal protection of the Appalachians expanded during that time as small farms and private lands were turned into national parks and national forests and as the visions of local populations, land use planners, and government policymakers competed with one another. Gregg's engaging narrative explores these conflicts and compromises by using the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont as case studies for land-



use planning on a national scale. Gregg clearly demonstrates how land-use planning during this era profoundly and permanently altered the history and appearance of the Appalachian landscape.

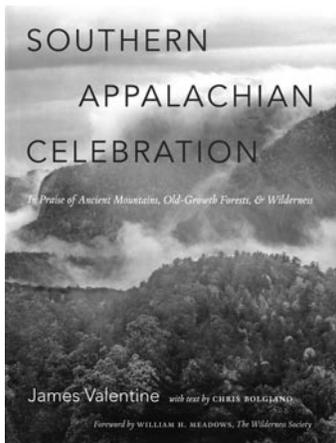
Thomas Feters brings us an industrial perspective on landscape history in the South in *Logging Railroads of the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains: Volume 2, Tallulah Falls, Anna Ruby Falls, and Jeffrey's Hell* (TimberTimes, 2010). Part of



Feters's logging railroad history series, *Logging Railroads* takes the reader through the mountains of northern Georgia, southern Tennessee, and southwestern

North Carolina to demonstrate the importance of railroads to early-twentieth-century logging operations in the remote areas of the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains. In addition to logging, the book also details the role of railroads in mining operations, hydroelectric projects, and dam construction. One of the many companies examined is the Gennett Lumber Company, whose land, sold to the U.S. Forest Service under the Weeks Act, eventually became the site of the Coweeta Hydrological Laboratory. Railroad history enthusiasts in particular will enjoy the hundreds of striking historical railroad photographs, maps, and locomotive rosters.

For a visual tour of the modern Appalachians, check out the work of photographer James Valentine in *Southern*



Appalachian Celebration: In Praise of Ancient Mountains, Old-Growth Forests, and Wilderness (University of North Carolina Press, 2011), with accompanying text by Chris Bolgiano. This large coffee table-style book features 136 stunning

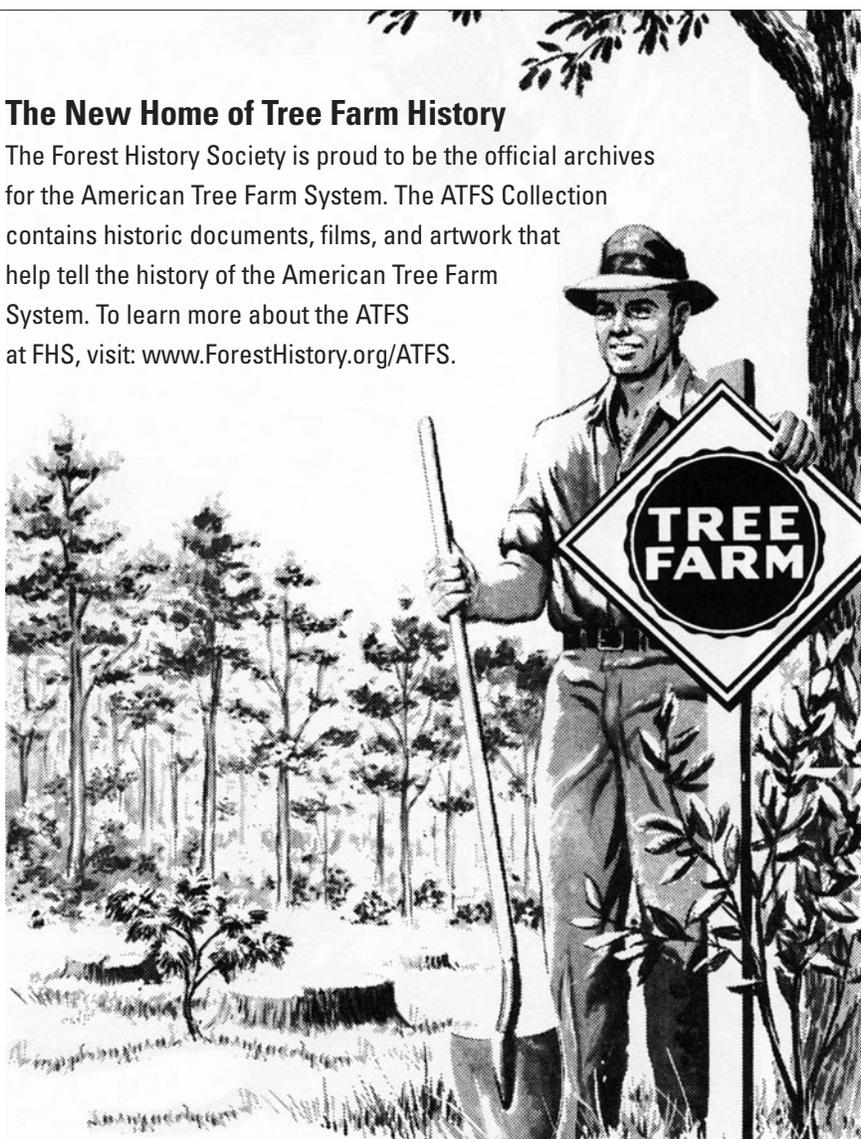


color photographs of old-growth forests, mountain ranges, and wild landscapes throughout the southern Appalachians taken over the past few decades. Valentine drew inspiration for his work from Aldo Leopold's essay "Thinking Like a Mountain," and the book is broken up into seven chapters along this theme. In the chapter "Thinking Like a Forest," Valentine points his camera at magnificent large old-growth trees. "Thinking Like a Waterway" captures spectacular waterfalls as well as the region's serene lakes. The book concludes with "Thinking Like a Sacred Place," a visual testament to the enduring beauty and emotional and spiritual power of the Appalachian landscape.

Although there are no recent books or documentary films on the history and legacy of the Weeks Act, those looking for a video primer on the topic can order the DVD *Legacy of the Weeks Act: 100 Years of Restoring America's Forests* from the U.S. Forest Service (2011). The DVD consists of two presentations made by Char Miller, the noted environmental historian and biographer of Gifford Pinchot. "The Short Story" is an eight-and-a-half-minute overview of the history and legacy of the law, presented by Miller as a narrated slideshow. The same material receives fuller treatment in the "Feature Presentation," an hour-long taped lecture that Miller gave before a live audience. The questions he takes from the audience during the last third of the presentation give Miller opportunity to tie the Weeks Act to current issues facing the Forest Service. Miller's enthusiasm for the topic and mastery of subject matter, combined with spare production values that keep the focus on the information, make both films effective teaching tools for students, land managers, and policymakers. □

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