

## BOOKS OF INTEREST

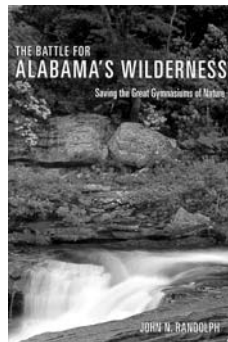
By Elizabeth Hull



Personal stories can be one of the most engaging ways to explore history. Several recently published biographies and memoirs provide unique windows into the evolution of forest industry, politics, conservation, and wilderness protection in North America. Mike Apsey's memoir, *What's All This Got to Do with the Price of 2x4's?* (University of Calgary Press, 2006) offers a perspective on forest policy from the viewpoints of both industry and government. With a career of nearly fifty years including stints as Deputy Minister of Forests in British Columbia, Canada (1978–1984) and President and CEO of the Council of Forest Industries (1994–1998), Apsey has seen first-hand the complexities of forest management. His memoir is an insider's account that provides fresh background on the competing interests of the environment, economics, and social and cultural values in forest policy, and offers timely recommendations for new approaches towards forest governance.

For the last few decades, John N. Randolph, former director of the Alabama Conservancy and founder and first chairman of the Alabama Wilderness Coalition, has been one of the foremost conservation advocates in a state known for its leadership role in the national movement for protecting America's remaining wilderness. In his new book, *The Battle for Alabama's Wilderness: Saving the Great Gymnasiums of Nature* (University of Alabama Press, 2005; paper \$26.95), Randolph relates the political history of grassroots efforts between 1967 and 1999 to establish the

state's three National Forest Wilderness areas: the Sipsey Wilderness Area in the Bankhead National Forest, and the Cheaha and Dugger Mountain Wilderness Areas in the Talledega National Forest. Providing an expert's perspective, the book contains more than just personal stories; using interviews, Congressional testimony, and news clippings, Randolph allows the various



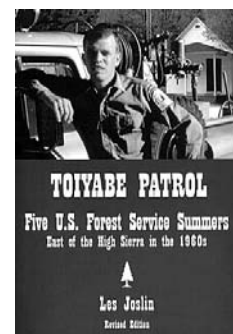
stakeholders to speak in their own voices. Photographs, maps, notes, and an index supplement the story, told in a compellingly personal yet journalistic fashion.

A new biography sheds light on the business, social, and political climate of turn-of-the-century Wisconsin as well as the personal travails and triumphs of a member of one of the state's most influential families. Helen L. Laird's *A Mind of Her Own: Helen Connor Laird and Family, 1888–1982* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2006; \$34.95) tells the story of Helen Connor Laird (1888–1982), daughter of William Duncan Connor, a major figure in Wisconsin's early hardwood lumber industry and in the state's turn-of-the-



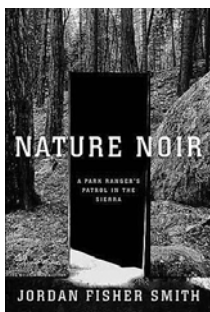
century political scene as an instrumental backer of governor, senator, and 1924 presidential candidate Robert La Follette. Authored by Laird's daughter-in-law, the book offers an intimate and sometimes painful perspective on her life in early frontier communities, her extensive education, and her experiences as a shrewd and accomplished woman in a competitive family of prominent men. Far more than a "homemaker," Laird was a leader in her community, district, and state, serving on the board of regents for the University of Wisconsin in the 1950s. Laird's and her family's story offers invaluable perspective on the well-known events and people of their time, while expanding the scope of Wisconsin history far beyond its traditional associations.

Two accounts by men who served as rangers in the Sierra region provide an interesting contrast in experience, style, and worldview. *Toiyabe Patrol: Five U.S. Forest Service Summers East of the High Sierra in the 1960s* (Wilderness Associates, 1993, 2006), was written by Les Joslin, a retired U.S. Navy commander and former U.S. Forest Service firefighter, wilderness ranger, and staff officer. Joslin recounts his



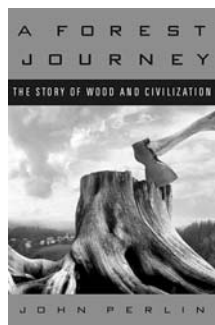
experiences as a fire control aide on Nevada's Toiyabe National Forest working out of the Bridgeport Ranger Station in the 1960s. He details his daily work on fire patrol and fire prevention outreach, especially his dealings with the public, illustrating his personal belief in the Forest Service slogan, "Caring for the land and

serving people.” Originally published in 1993, this edition of the book is revised and expanded, with a new epilogue that reflects on developments in fire management policy and public service in the Forest Service in the late 20th century. Jordan Fisher Smith offers a different take in *Nature Noir: A Park Ranger's Patrol in the Sierra* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005; \$24.00 cloth), his highly entertaining memoir of the fourteen years he spent as a park ranger on the land along the Sierra Nevada's American River in the 1980s and 1990s. Fisher Smith recounts in dramatic detail his sometimes disturbing encounters with wildness, and especially with the people who made use of the land for recreational and other purposes. While his primary job was to protect park visitors from nature, reality more often required the reverse. Tying his experience in with land use and natural history



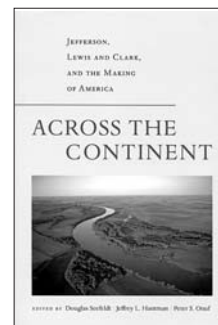
of the Sierra Nevada region, Fisher Smith offers something far beyond a memoir—a compelling and thought-provoking meditation on the age-old clash between nature and civilization.

Re-issues have brought two important works of forest history back to the forefront: first, John Perlin's classic *A Forest Journey: The Story of Wood and Civilization* (Countryman Press, 2006; \$19.95 paper), originally published in 1989, has been re-released with a new prologue and epilogue to reflect recent developments. This remarkable treatise on the effects of wood utilization and deforestation on the development of civilization (beginning in the Fertile Crescent and ending with the 1880 U.S. census), has earned numerous honors since its first publication, including being named one of Harvard's "One Hundred Greatest Books." Perlin's central arguments become increasingly relevant as the world's forest resources become more and more depleted. Wood supply, says Perlin, has shaped the culture, demographics, economy, politics, and technology of successive

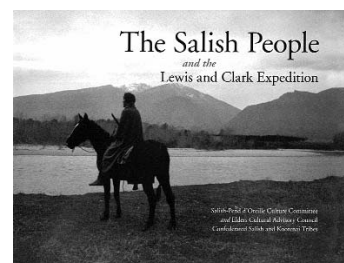


societies over millennia; forest availability is central to the survival of humanity. The new edition of Perlin's landmark work again brings needed attention to one of the primary concerns of the modern era. Fellow Californian John Nicoles's fascination and experience with steam donkeys has led him to rediscover a fascinating but little-known 1917 USDA bulletin entitled *Lumbering in the Sugar and Yellow Pine Region of California*, written by Forest Examiner Swift Berry (USDA Bulletin No. 440, originally published by the Government Printing Office; reprints available from Nicoles for \$20.00). Recognizing the usefulness of the text, maps, tables, and photographs to historians, archaeologists, economists, and others, Nicoles decided to reproduce the bulletin on his own and provide copies to interested parties. He tracked down William Swift Berry (grandson of the author) in Durham, North Carolina, who agreed to provide his original copy for reproduction as well as write a brief biography of his grandfather to serve as a new introduction. The bulletin covers such topics as logging operations, labor, camps, equipment, and procedures; lumber manufacture; and cost factors in the Yellow Pine region. Nicoles is using his sales proceeds to support the maintenance and operation of a publicly owned Dolbeer steam donkey engine.

Two centuries have passed since Meriwether Lewis and William Clark completed their legendary 1804–1806 expedition. The bicentennial anniversary has spawned a number of publications revisiting their journey from a variety of new and enlightening perspectives. One example is *Across the Continent: Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and the Making of America*, edited by Douglas Seefeldt, Jeffrey Hantman, and Peter Onuf (University of Virginia Press, 2005; \$29.50 cloth). This collection of essays examines the geopolitical and cultural contexts of the expedi-



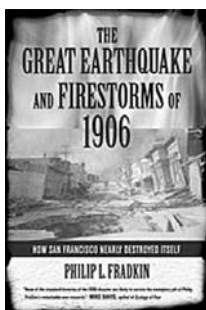
tion and linking them with the wider scope of North American history. The authors emphasize Thomas Jefferson's key organizational role as well as his plans for the American West on the international stage. This book stands out from other bicentennial works largely due to the insightful connections it makes between the world of Lewis and Clark and our own, exploring the role of mythology surrounding their journey in early twenty-first century society, and in the collective American historical imagination. In a somewhat different take, *The Salish People and the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (University of Nebraska Press, 2005; \$29.95 cloth) represents the first in-depth examination of the events and significance of the Lewis and Clark expedition from the perspective of a Native American community. Written by the Salish-Pend d'Oreille Culture Committee and Elders Cultural Advisory Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, this book contributes a new understanding of the expedition, interpreting it not as a starting point, but as another chapter in a long and continuing tribal and Native history. Using tribal recollections, oral history interviews,



and other rich illustrative materials, the book focuses largely on the ancient cultural landscape and ways of life that had already shaped the region for thousands of years prior to the arrival of the expedition. The authors take readers on an insiders' tour of the Native trails through the Bitterroot Valley followed by Lewis and Clark, revealing the ancient cultural land-

scape that was invisible to them, and highlighting their journey essentially as one of invasion rather than “discovery.” The book also details the history that followed the expedition, including the opening of Salish territory to the fur trade, the establishment of reservations, and more recently, the revival and strengthening of tribal sovereignty and culture in their Bitterroot homeland.

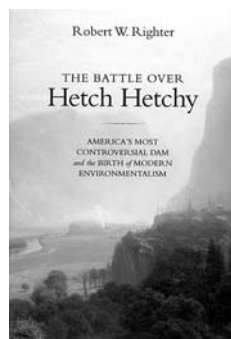
The year 2006 also marks the anniversary of one of the worst natural disasters in American history, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fires (see the three articles on the same topic in this issue). Environmental journalist Philip Fradkin commemorates the event with *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906: How San Francisco Nearly Destroyed Itself* (University of California Press, 2005; \$15.95 paper), a definitive account and analysis of the disaster and the city’s subsequent reconstruction. Fradkin’s central assertion is that humans—not nature—nearly destroyed the city through their general ineptitude and absorption in power politics. He introduces readers to the central players in the events of 1906, people both famous and ordinary, highlighting citizens’ heroic efforts and the failures of the city’s elite. Fradkin also explores the long-lasting psychological effects of the calamity and the period of unprecedented civic upheaval that followed in its wake. Scrupulously researched and richly detailed, Fradkin’s work places



these events within the cultural framework of the early twentieth century, and goes on to analyze more recent history, concluding that San Francisco is in almost as much danger now as it was then.

Dovetailing nicely with Fradkin’s is Robert W. Rightner’s new book, *The Battle Over Hetch Hetchy: America’s Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* (Oxford University Press, 2005;

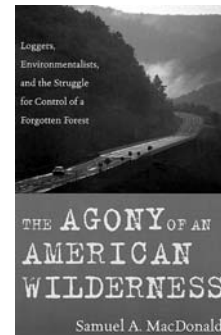
\$19.95 paper), an epic account of the first major environmental battle of the twentieth century. In the wake of the devastating 1906 earthquake and fire, San Francisco’s mayor pressed for the damming of the Tuolumne River in the newly created Yosemite National Park to meet the city’s need for reliable supplies of water and electricity. This action set off a storm of protest, arousing a significant national opposition led by John Muir and the Sierra Club. Yet those who opposed the creation of a dam and reservoir did not intend for it to be maintained as wilderness; instead, they advocated the building of roads, hotels, and an infrastructure to support recreational tourism. Using publicity materials like articles, pamphlets, and broadsides, they successfully aligned popular opinion against the dam, stirring the public into action on behalf of national parks.



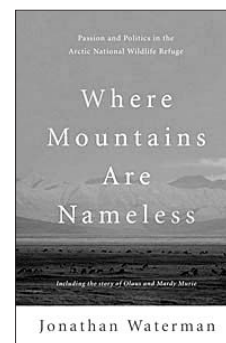
Rightner offers a compelling narrative from a variety of perspectives: that of politicians and business leaders, engineers and laborers, preservationists, and ordinary citizens. His book captures and reinterprets this defining moment in the history of the American environmental movement, and insightfully addresses debates surrounding water resources and humanity’s passion for nature that still reverberate in today’s society.

More recent environmental debates serve as fodder for authors Samuel A. MacDonald and Jonathan Waterman. With *The Agony of an American Wilderness: Loggers, Environmentalists, and the Struggle for Control of a Forgotten Forest* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005; \$65.00 cloth; \$21.95 paper), MacDonald enters the current debate over national forest management and the limits of American environmentalism. MacDonald addresses questions of who should rightfully control and decide the future of America’s forests through the hotly contested case of the

Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania. An environmental success story from the early 1990s, activists are now using the Allegheny as a proving ground for a campaign to end logging altogether. Supplemented by notes and an index, this book attempts to explain the early twenty-first century goals of environmentalists in the



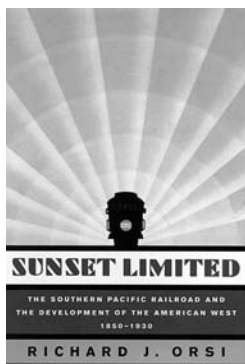
region and examines the local communities caught in the crossfire. Meanwhile, on April 22, 2005, a large group of activists descended on Capitol Hill bearing an unusual offering—an enormous helping of the dessert Baked Alaska. The protesters were commenting on the U.S. House of Representatives’ vote to approve an energy bill that includes a provision to allow drilling in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. A timely publication, Jonathan Waterman’s *Where Mountains are Nameless: Passion and Politics in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge* (W. W. Norton & Co., 2005; \$24.95 cloth) offers context for the current debate and a powerful statement of support in defense of the refuge. Waterman, an adventurer who has trekked and paddled the refuge for the past 20 years, combines historical narrative with vivid tales of his own journeys into the Arctic to explore how oil prospecting has affected Alaska’s pristine wilderness. Intertwined with the personal accounts is a compelling biography of the pioneering conservationist couple Olaus and Mardy Murie, renowned figures in the fight for



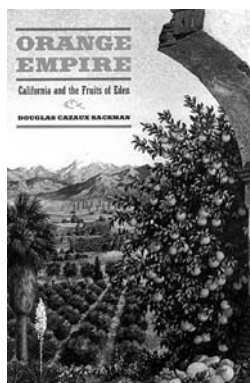


the preservation of Alaskan wilderness. Olaus Murie first explored Alaska in 1914. He and Mardy first championed a wildlife refuge in the Eisenhower era, and continued their fight up until Mardy's death in 2003. Waterman's engaging and evocative writing, supplemented by maps, illustrations, a bibliography, and an index, brings to life the history and beauty of one of the world's most extraordinary—and most threatened—places.

For those intrigued by the history of American railroading, Richard J. Orsi's *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850–1930* (University of California Press, 2005; \$29.95 cloth) offers a thorough, fascinating, and in some ways surprising scholarly study of the Southern



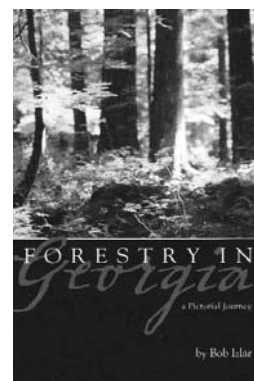
Pacific from the founding of its earliest predecessor railroads in Texas and California to its final amalgamation in the 1920s. Deftly combining corporate and social history, Orsi shows the impact of the railroad on land settlement, agriculture, water policy, urban development, and the environment. He defends the often-demonized Southern, using it as a case study to question the myth of monopolistic, land-greedy railroads. Documenting the railroad's little-known promotion of land distribution, small-scale farming, scientific agriculture, water conservation and wilderness, and recreational parklands preservation, Orsi instead reveals a benevolent capitalist monolith—the only major U.S. railroad organized and operated by westerners—focused on making money by fostering development and creating mutually beneficial commercial opportunities. Based on extensive research into the company's historical archives, Orsi's book presents a new view of the American West in a decisive phase of its history.



Also in the vein of corporate/industrial history is Douglas Cazaux Sackman's *Orange Empire: California and the Fruits of Eden* (University of California Press, 2005; \$45.00 cloth). Beginning in the 1870s, packages of California oranges bore pictures of the lush, sunny, Edenic California landscape in which they were supposedly grown. In his innovative history of California, Sackman demythologizes this image, compiling the full story of the orange industry—how growers, scientists, and workers transformed the natural and social landscape of California, turning it into a factory for mass production. That industry tried to portray oranges as embodiments of pure nature and as charms for good health; Sackman explores how Depression-era figures like Upton Sinclair, Carey McWilliams, Dorothea Lange, and John Steinbeck turned that image on its ear by making the Orange Empire into a symbol of what was wrong with America's relationship to nature. His book opens new avenues in studying the interrelationship between society, nature, and culture.

Mark Matthews' *Smoke Jumping on the Western Fire Line: Conscientious Objectors During World War II* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2006; \$29.95 cloth) brings to light a fascinating chapter in American history that has been largely overlooked—that of the group of World War II conscientious objectors, mostly pacifist Quakers and Mennonites, who volunteered for a different type of warfare as U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers. Matthews, a former Forest Service firefighter himself, draws on interviews and primary sources to document and recreate the exciting, difficult, and dangerous lives of the 250 Civilian Public Service jumpers in Montana and other western states. Smokejumping had only been invented in 1939, when the Forest Service

trained the first jumpers to parachute near woodland blazes in order to keep the fires from spreading. As Matthews writes, the CPD smokejumpers were pioneers, working with primitive equipment and hurtling themselves into the most precarious of circumstances. They were also men who stayed true to their beliefs and made a contribution in spite of being ostracized by public wartime sentiment. With a forward by former U.S. Senator and decorated World War II veteran George McGovern, Matthews's detailed work provides a needed supplement to standard World War II history.



Last but not least is an attractive new coffee table book published by the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources and the Georgia Forestry Association. *The Centennial History of Forestry in Georgia: A Pictorial Journey* (Donning Company Publishers, 2006; \$49.95 cloth), written by Bob Izlar, is a richly illustrated history of forestry in Georgia in the 20th century, focusing on the influence of the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry (founded in 1906) and the Georgia Forestry Association, which grew out of the Warnell School in 1907, on the occasion of the centennial anniversaries of both organizations. Izlar details the evolution of the vision and important individuals behind the GFA and the Warnell school, the relationship between the two organizations, and their mutual accomplishments and positive effects on forestry and natural resource conservation. He also examines the difficulties they faced over the years, including financial troubles, the hardships of the Great Depression, and the unresponsiveness of political leaders. Complemented by more than 200 historic and modern photographs and documents, the Centennial History is a fitting tribute to 100 years of forest stewardship. □