



January 2021

## Virtual Talk on Isolation and Wilderness on Jan. 29



To kick off the Forest History Society's virtual lecture series "Unprecedented Seasons," acclaimed author and historian DJ Lee will deliver a virtual talk on January 29, 2021. The talk, "Isolation and Wilderness: The Surprising Ways American Wilderness Intersects with the COVID-19 Pandemic," is FREE but registration for this Zoom event is required. For more information about this event and to register, visit [our website](#).

DJ Lee spent significant portions of the last 15 years in the secluded mountains of Idaho and Montana conducting the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness History Project. Drawing on that and other wilderness experiences and research and wilderness-themed art work, Lee will discuss the surprising ways American wilderness, as a concept and a physical place, intersects with some of the causes and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. She is the author of the award-winning book *Remote: Finding Home in the Bitterroots*.

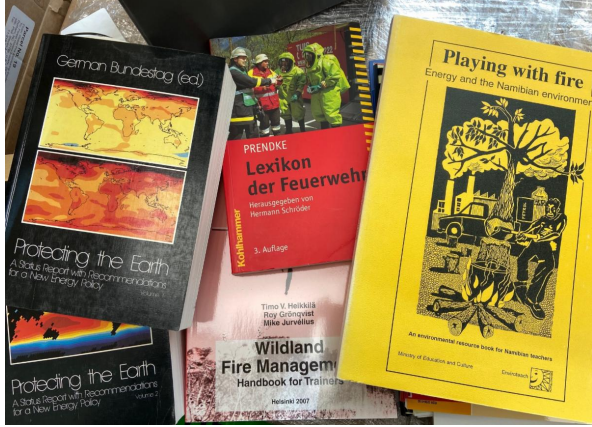
This presentation is made possible by funding from the Lynn W. Day Endowment.

[Register today!](#)

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## Global Fire Monitoring Center Records Arrive

FHS recently received the first of several shipments of records from the [Global Fire Monitoring Center](#) (GFMC) in Freiburg, Germany. GFMC is currently moving its headquarters from Germany to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and downsizing their library and archival holdings in the



process. FHS agreed to take on those materials for permanent safekeeping. The first shipment which recently arrived was one pallet of 24 cartons. Materials included were books, reports, files, and other publications on fire policy, remote sensing technology, and global fire issues in North America, South America, Africa, and Europe. These items are a significant addition to our own fire history

holdings and will be an excellent resource for future researchers.

The GFMC is a UN-related center that since 2001 has served as Coordinator and Secretariat for the Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN), the UNISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group (UNISDR-WFAG), the International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism (IWPM), and the International Fire Aviation Working Group (IFAWG). According [to its website](#), the center is part of a global voluntary network "that is providing policy advice, and science and technology transfer to enable nations to reduce the negative impacts of landscape fires; and to advance the knowledge and application of the ecologically and environmentally benign role natural fire in fire-dependent ecosystems, and sustainable application of fire in land-use systems."

Special thanks to FHS member Jameson Karns for bringing this collection to our attention, and to Johann Goldhammer at the GFMC for making this transfer possible. And thanks to Andrea Anderson at FHS to navigate the international shipping protocols, which are substantial.

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## Got Milk Carton? This New Digital Exhibit Documents The Company Behind Its Development

We are proud to announce a new digital exhibit on the [Kieckhefer Container Company](#). In the 20th century, Kieckhefer became one of the leading manufacturers in the container industry, known for their shipping containers, paperboard, and milk cartons. This digital exhibit was curated from the Kieckhefer-Eddy files within the [Weyerhaeuser Company records](#) and other sources to tell the stories of the Kieckhefer Company, the Kieckhefer family, and this important segment of the packaging industry. Funding for this project was made possible with grant money from the Kieckhefer Foundation.

The result of nearly a year-long effort, the first phase of this project was digitizing all Kieckhefer Container-related photographs and documents in the Weyerhaeuser Collection and making them accessible online. Over 200 photographs can be accessed [here](#). Other documents and oral histories from the Kieckhefer records can be found in the [Weyerhaeuser Company Records Finding Aid](#).

After digitizing, our librarian, Lauren Bissonette, then researched and conceptualized the digital exhibit, starting from the company's formation up until just after their merger with Weyerhaeuser in the late 1950s. This exhibit uses historical photographs, newspaper clippings, trade publications, oral histories, and

## Rosenberry Fellowship Deadline Announced

The Forest History Society is pleased to offer the Walter S. Rosenberry Graduate Fellowship for the 2021-2022 academic year. The fellowship provides a \$15,000 stipend to support the doctoral research of a graduate student attending a university in North America and whose research contributes to forest and conservation history regardless of geographic focus. *Research focus on the historic relationships between humans, forests, and related resources is required.* Among the diverse topics that fall under the umbrella of the fellowship are forest landscape change and history, invasive species, forest and ecosystem management, forest policy and institutions, resource-dependent communities, private land ownership, science and technology developments, and sustainability. Professors are encouraged to share this information with their students.



**The deadline is March 15, 2021.** The recipient is selected on the basis of merit: proposals are judged in terms of overall significance, achievability, quality of presentation, academic record, and relevance to forest history. For submission guidelines and additional information, visit the Rosenberry Fellowship page [on our website](#). The winner will be announced in mid-May 2021.

Walter Rosenberry (above) was a long-time supporter and Forest History Society Board member. He provided the Society's first endowment in support of its awards program.

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## Winter Reading Suggestions from the Library Staff!



New year, new books at the Library! Click on the links to find out more about each volume and grab a copy at your local library or buy it today.

[\*\*Indigenous Empowerment Through Co-Management: Land Claims Boards, Wildlife Management, and Environmental Regulation\*\*](#) by Graham White:

“Have co-management boards been successful in ensuring substantial Indigenous involvement in policies affecting the land and wildlife in their traditional territories? Graham White tackles this question, drawing on decades of research and writing about the politics of Northern Canada.”

[\*\*Wanderers: A History of Women Walking\*\*](#) by Kerri Andrews: “This is a book about



ten women over the past three hundred years who have found walking essential to their sense of themselves, as people and as writers. *Wanderers* traces their footsteps, from eighteenth-century parson's daughter Elizabeth Carter, to modern walker-writers such as Nan Shepherd and Cheryl Strayed."

**[The Grizzly in the Driveway: The Return of Bears to a Crowded American West](#)** by Robert Chaney: "Mixing fast-paced storytelling with rich details about the hidden lives of grizzly bears, Montana journalist Robert Chaney chronicles the resurgence of this charismatic species against the backdrop of the country's long history with the bear."

**[The Extraction State: A History of Natural Gas in America](#)** by Charles Blanchard "Unlike crude oil, there are surprisingly few books devoted to the history of natural gas. Charles Blanchard offers a timely business history of an important industry."

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## **FROM THE BLOG** **"How Forest History Can Be Like A Beethoven Symphony"**

In the middle of a global pandemic and relentlessly dark news about the environmental future of the planet, some turn to music for solace and hope. But what if we turn to forest history instead? Forest history is comparable to an inspirational symphony by Beethoven and can similarly uplift readers. This unusual connection is the focus of a new blog post from FHS historian James Lewis. [Read the full blog post here.](#)



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## **MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

### **"When Our Trails Were Railroads" by Tom Dillon**



*Fairwood, a long-gone logging town, was west of Troutdale on the route of today's VA 603.*

You won't be awakened by the train traffic while sleeping in the Forest Service pods at Sugar Grove, Virginia, today, but there once was a time it could have happened. As a matter of fact, a railroad line went right past the work camp, log trains steaming up into the mountains to find timber for the Sugar Grove

Lumber Company. And that line wasn't the only one in the area. They were all over

the place.

The main line, the Marion & Rye Valley, connected Sugar Grove with Marion, Va., by way of a switch-backed route over Brushy Mountain. A mile or so of the Appalachian Trail follows that right-of-way today. And yet another railroad, the Virginia Southern, ran south to the metropolis of Troutdale, Va., following today's VA Rte. 16. That line took logs from the forests and brought merchandise for Troutdale's stores, customers for its three hotels and even movies for its theater, which opened about 120 years ago.

Not many of us think about the railroad history of the mountains where the Appalachian Trail runs, but it was real. Gary Price of Marion documented the history of the Marion & Rye Valley for a small booklet, "The Switchback Scenic Route," now out of print. Thomas Fetters included it in his survey of Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountain logging railroads, published in 2007. And Tom Blevins, an employee of the U.S. Forest Service in Sugar Grove, has made it part of his work to find the routes of those old roads. He's tramped all over the mountains locating them, and he's added them to the topographic maps he keeps on file. He put some of it into a history of Norfolk and Western's "Virginia Creeper" branch line, and he says it's all a good story. It was the logging that in reality cleared off so much of the crest zone on Pine Mountain and some of the other peaks in the region, Blevins says. He admits the turn of the 20th century was a less environmentally sensitive time than today is, but he says, "You can't judge 100 years ago by today. This wouldn't be a National Recreation Area had it not been for this railroad. It wouldn't be so open."

The Marion & Rye Valley Railroad is mentioned in the Appalachian Trail guidebook only where the trail follows its route just north of the South Fork of the Holston River. But there were many more crossings. Blevins said he wouldn't be surprised if the trail doesn't cross an abandoned railroad Route 25 times between Damascus, Va., and Interstate 81.

If you're a trail maintainer and suspect your part of the trail may include an old railroad route or crossing, there are several ways to find out. First, Blevins advises looking for long, straight stretches of trail, with no sharp turns and no steep climbs. Even narrow-gauge trains couldn't handle those. (The Marion & Rye Valley was standard gauge, for the record.) Next, take a metal detector and go see if you can find some spikes. If you hit a place that's good and wet, Blevins says, the old railroad ties may still be there. Beyond that, you might go to the public library in Marion and read Price's booklet, the name of which came from the old railroad route up Pine Mountain. Before it closed down during the Great Depression, the railroad tried to lure people onto its weekend excursion trains.

At any rate, next time you bed down at Sugar Grove, think a little bit about the past. You won't hear trains today, but boy, will you hear echoes.

*Tom Dillon is a volunteer for the U.S. Forest Service and the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers (PATH). He wrote this piece for a trail newsletter he publishes.*

DO YOU HAVE A FOREST HISTORY CONNECTION YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OTHER MEMBERS? EMAIL YOUR MEMBER SPOTLIGHT [TO OUR EDITOR](#).

