



Americans and their Forests: A Historical Geography (Studies in Environment and History)

By Michael Williams

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Americans and their Forests: A Historical Geography (Studies in Environment and History) By Michael Williams

When Europeans first reached the land that would become the United States they were staggered by the breadth and density of the forest they found. The existence of that forest, and the effort either to use or subdue it, have been constant themes in American history, literature, economics, and geography up to the meaning of the forest in American history and culture, he describes and analyzes the clearing and use of the forest from pre-European times to the present, and he traces the subsequent regrowth of the forest since the middle of the twentieth century. Dr Williams begins by exploring the role of the forest in American culture: the symbols, themes, and concepts - for example, pioneer woodsman, lumberjack, wilderness - generated by contact with the vast land of trees. He considers the Indian use of the forest, describing the ways in which native tribes altered it, primarily through fire, to promote a subsistence economy. Early European settlers, he shows, extracted many products from the forest, and also began the extensive clearance of trees that would continue for almost three hundred years. Succeeding chapters, organized by topic and region, cover agricultural and industrial effects upon and uses of the forest. Dr Williams explores the rise (and often fall) of industries based upon forest products: naval stores, timber for building, charcoal and the iron industry, the railroads. Attention is devoted to the forests of the Middle West, the South, and the Pacific Northwest. By the late nineteenth century Americans began to realize that the forest was not boundless and moved to preserve those portions, still extensive, that remained. In the wake of the movement for preservation, Dr Williams describes how the forest began to regrow, especially after 1950, in areas where it had originally been vigorous and healthy, a development that continues today.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Williams (history, Oxford) examines in this scholarly, well-written account the effects of settlement and industrial development on the Appalachian forest--a woodland which once spread almost without a break from the Atlantic seaboard to the Western plains. The process of deforestation was begun by the pioneers and continued by the ruthless logging operations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries; it was halted only by the forest conservation movement of the 1900s. Both a valuable resource and reference work in its field and a very readable overview of the American conservation movement. Highly recommended.

- *Eleanor Maass Assocs . , New Milford, Pa.*

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Review

'Rare indeed is the privilege of reviewing a book that is destined to become a classic, but Michael Williams's *Americans and Their Forests* gives me just such an opportunity. Williams has written the definitive historical geography of the importance of forests in the life, livelihood, and landscape of the United States and the way in which our thinking about and our use of our forests have changed through time in response to our changing needs and ideals.' John Fraser Hart, *Forest and Conservation History*

'This magisterial work, ten years in the making, addresses the question, what happened to the forest that once covered so much of the United States? ... Scholars, ranging from geographers to agricultural and literary historians, will applaud Williams's reach of analysis and attention to detail.' John R. Stilgoe, *The Geographical Review*

'While there are a number of solid studies that chronicle the significance of the forest in American history, this meticulously researched, elaborately documented, and carefully written volume provides the most detailed assessment of the evolving economic, political, and cultural relationship between Americans and their timber resources ... The comprehensive nature of this study will establish it as a base point for further examination of the role of the forest in the growth and development of the United States.' Phillip Drennon Thomas, *Journal of American History*

'Michael Williams's *Americans and Their Forests* is rich in insights. Much more than a historical geography, as proclaimed by its subtitle, it explores the role of forests in American history, economics, literature and culture.' Norman Myers, *The Times Literary Supplement*

From the Back Cover

When Europeans first reached the land that would become the United States they were staggered by the breadth and density of the forest they found. The existence of that forest, and the effort either to use or subdue it, have been constant themes in American history, literature, economics, and geography up to the present day. In *Americans and Their Forests*, Michael Williams tells us of the meaning of the forest in American history and culture, he describes and analyzes the clearing and use of the forest from pre-European times to the present, and he traces the subsequent regrowth of the forest since the middle of the twentieth century.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sharon Doyle:

What do you regarding book? It is not important together with you? Or just adding material when you want something to explain what you problem? How about your time? Or are you busy person? If you don't have spare time to try and do others business, it is make one feel bored faster. And you have spare time? What did you do? Every person has many questions above. The doctor has to answer that question simply because just their can do that will. It said that about e-book. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is suitable. Because start from on guardería until university need that Americans and their Forests: A Historical Geography (Studies in Environment and History) to read.

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