

There’s gold in them thar’ forests

Clarke County’s own Scotch Lumber Co. of Fulton detailed in publication

ALABAMA FORESTRY FOUNDATION

Forestry and the forest products business is important to Alabama and it is a big part of the state’s heritage, affecting not only its economy but its cultural and social sides.

The book “Green Gold: Alabama’s Forests and Forest Industries” acknowledges all these influences and impacts on the state.

Author James E. Fickle, a visiting professor of forest and environmental history at Yale University and a history professor at the University of Memphis, details the state’s vast geography and forestlands. He reviews how Native Americans used the forests followed by the earliest settlers who felled trees with hand tools to create log cabins and clear land for agricultural use.

The history of several of the earliest lumber companies are detailed, including Clarke County’s own Scotch Lumber Co. of Fulton. The influence of the Harrigan family — and the family’s subsequent purchase of the company from a partner in 1928 — gave the Harrigans full ownership and control of Scotch.

The family provided jobs but also more to their workers and the Fulton commu-

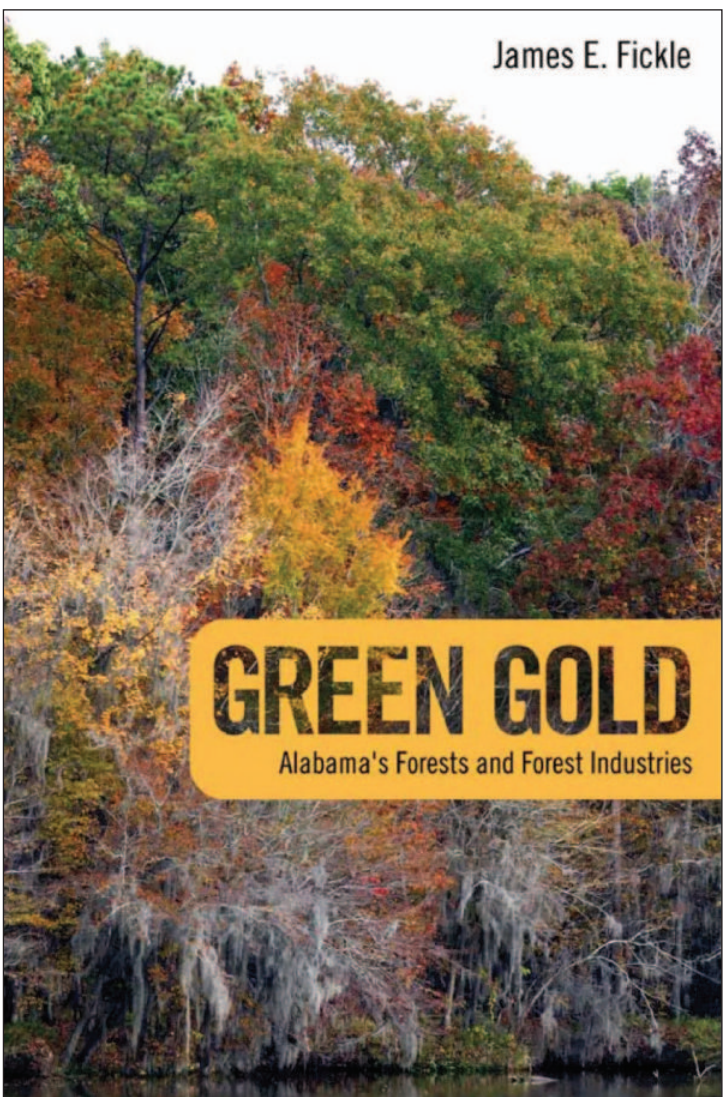
nity. For instance, a swimming hole, or pool, was built as well as a community center, the Woodman Hall, completed with a hired instructor to teach dancing. Scotch and the Harrigans built Clarke County’s first golf course and the first motion-picture theater, the Airdome.

Billy Harrigan was remembered as a hard-working and no-nonsense boss but one famous for touring company work sites in his automobile and taking a personal interest in the workers.

Scotch followed the innovations of the day but was also a trend-setter. The company, like others, utilized its own railroad in the early 20th century and steam-powered equipment to haul logs from the woods to the Fulton mill. As roads improved and gasoline-powered trucks and equipment became more powerful, those replaced the rail lines and steam operations.

Scotch wanted to utilize every part of a tree. A flooring mill was an early venture and in the 1960s, Scotch Plywood was created and the first sheet of plywood made east of the Mississippi River was turned out in Fulton.

In his book, Fickle details the earliest crude wa-



Green Gold is a thorough and valuable compilation of information on Alabama’s timber and forest products industry, the largest manufacturing industry in the state.

ter-powered sawmills and, in the latter 19th century, the larger steam-powered mills brought in by out-of-state lumbermen as logging

there was an attitude of “cut out and get out” as vast virgin forests were clear cut.

It would be years before timber and lumbermen realized the harm and began to take steps to better manage their cutting operations and to replant what had been taken.

Fickle also detailed how the earliest cutting efforts almost wiped out the forests. A study commissioned by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 documented how bad it was.

Clarke County, “once covered with the very finest of longleaf pine on the uplands,” had been “rapidly stripped of its timber through the big mills at Jackson and other points on the Southern Railroad and along the rivers.”

Washington County was no different and “presents a great expanse of cut-over land ... The recent extensive lumbering and turpentine have given the country a desolate appearance.”

Efforts to promote better management and logging practices started as early as 1907 when the state created its first forestry commission. By the 1930s, various federal programs were also encouraging better efforts, including through the U.S. Forest Service.

Smart timber and lumbermen realized if they wanted their businesses to continue, they had to be better stewards of the land and better prepared for the future. Rotating cuttings and replanting became more common.


The arrival of the pulp and paper industry in the late 1920s and 1930s gave another reason for the industry to work together better. Pulp and paper needed smaller timber for its operations and the sawmills needed larger timber for theirs. The competition for product became a tug of war that still exists today but it also forced the realization that there had to be a vast and diverse forest for both sides to endure.


Being innovative and adaptable has all been a key to the sustainability of Alabama’s forests and its related industries. Alabama’s forests of “green gold,” as Fickle termed it, is still just that.

“Green Gold: Alabama’s Forests and Forest Industries” is a 360-page book co-published by the Alabama Forestry Foundation and the University of Alabama Press in 2014.

WE SUPPORT & APPRECIATE
THE AREA’S FORESTRY INDUSTRY

SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES’
PREMIER HEAVY EQUIPMENT COMPANY






TIDEWATER
EQUIPMENT COMPANY

Your Dealer For Tigercat®


2 Locations In The Area To Serve You For
New & Used Forestry Equipment, Parts and Service

— EVERGREEN — 251-578-1812
Hwy 31 S • 704 West Front Street



Bruce Hutcheson • Branch Manager
Cell: 251-230-0521 • bhutcheson@tidewaterequip.com


— THOMASVILLE — (334) 637-0939
2350 Joe Davis Industrial Blvd.



Jonathan Booth • Cell: 334-804-4555
John West, Parts Manager


HARVEY’S
HOME FURNISHINGS

4545 N. College Avenue Jackson, Alabama 251-246-2398
www.harveyshomefurnishings.com




Fall Savings!


Ashley 2 pc. Sectional
\$989




Franklin Recliner
\$595




Ashley 5 pc. Sectional \$2699




Franklin Recliner
\$559

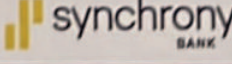


Ashley Sofa & Loveseat \$899



Ashley Queen 12” Pillow Top Mattress
only \$489



12 Mos. No Interest. With approval.  synchrony BANK