



Ducktown Smoke: The Fight over One of the South's Greatest Environmental Disasters

Duncan Maysilles

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It is hard to make a desert in a place that receives sixty inches of rain each year. But after decades of copper mining, all that remained of the old hardwood forests in the Ducktown Mining District of the Southern Appalachian Mountains was a fifty-square mile barren expanse of heavily gullied red hills--a landscape created by sulfur dioxide smoke from copper smelting and destructive logging practices. In *Ducktown Smoke*, Duncan Maysilles examines this environmental disaster, one of the worst the South has experienced, and its impact on environmental law and Appalachian conservation.

Beginning in 1896, the widening destruction wrought in Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina by Ducktown copper mining spawned hundreds of private lawsuits, culminating in *Georgia v. Tennessee Copper Co.*, the U.S. Supreme Court's first air pollution case. In its 1907 decision, the Court recognized for the first time the sovereign right of individual states to protect their natural resources from transborder pollution, a foundational opinion in the formation of American environmental law. Maysilles reveals how the Supreme Court case brought together the disparate forces of agrarian populism, industrial logging, and the forest conservation movement to set a legal precedent that remains relevant in environmental law today.

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