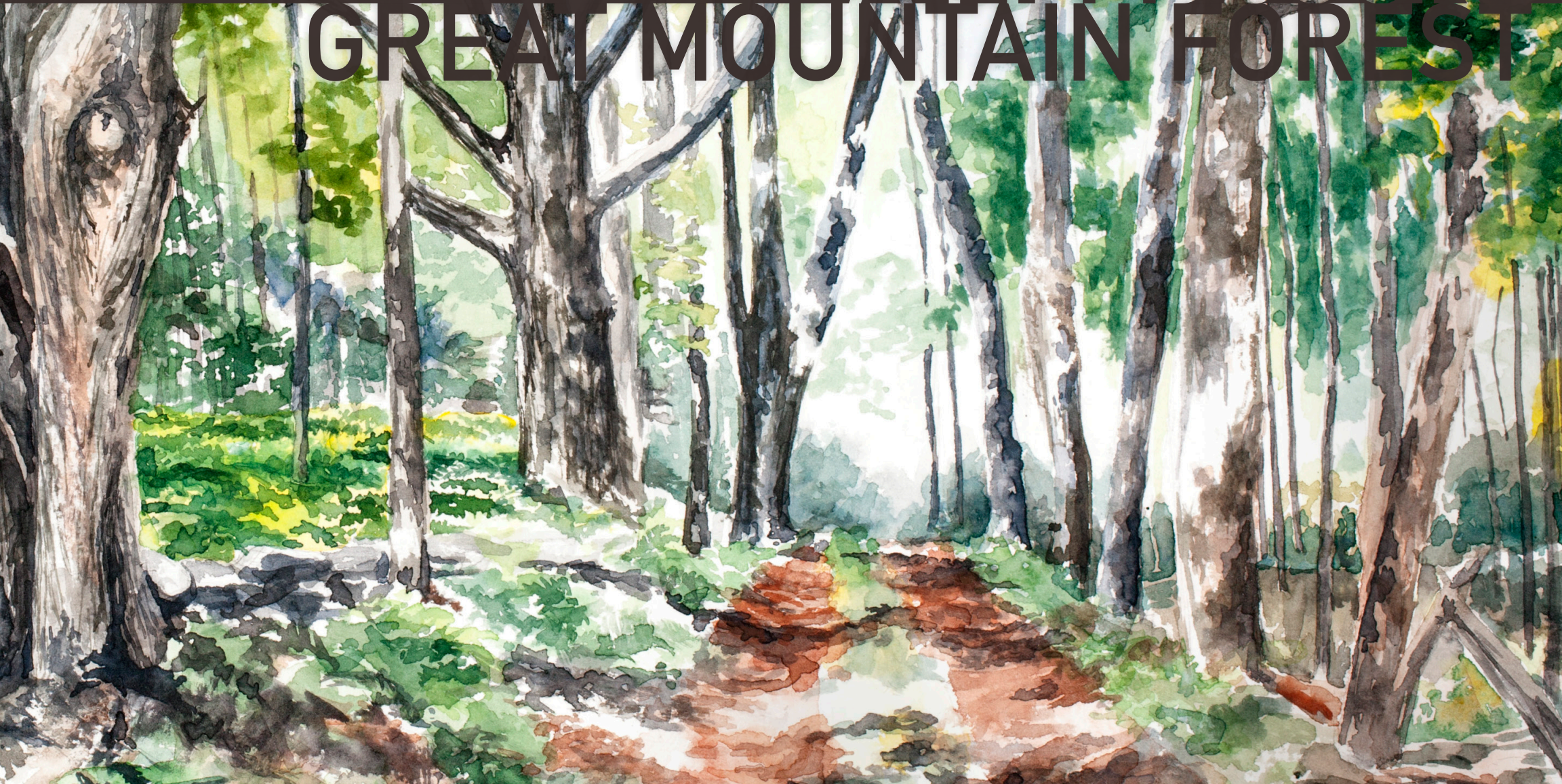


A FIELD BOOK GREAT MOUNTAIN FOREST



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Photographs by Michael Gaige, Yonatan Glogower, and GMF

Watercolors and Design by Autumn Von Plinsky

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FOREWORD I

PROFESSOR SIR PETER CRANE

Generations of students from all over the world have had their formative introduction to the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and in many cases their first encounter with the landscape of North America, through the time they have spent at Great Mountain Forest. Invariably, that experience, in the company of remarkable peers in a unique place, has made a deep impression. Very often it has changed lives: and it has come to be pivotal in helping create the special community that is “F&ES”- our School. None of this would have been possible without the foresight of the Walcott and Childs families, more than a century ago, to acquire a large tract of seemingly unpromising land, and then to engage actively in its management. Great Mountain Forest is testament to the value of enlightened and purposeful multigenerational stewardship working with the inherent resilience and beauty of nature.

The Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies is just one of the many beneficiaries of the vision that Great Mountain Forest represents. This book illuminates the full riches of this unique palimpsest with empathy for all its treasures. And it encourages us to look carefully and deeply to understand how this landscape has been produced by contingent and complicated processes operating at multiple geographic and temporal scales. This book places Great Mountain Forest in context: as part of the ever changing green mantle of northwestern Connecticut formed by climatic succession over millennia on an ancient landscape that has been influenced pervasively by people. Geology, geomorphology, ecology, land use history and forest management are all integrated to bring to the surface how much there is to see, once our eyes have been opened. There is much to be learnt from Great Mountain Forest, not just about the particularities

of a spectacular tract of Eastern Deciduous Forest, but about the general principles of how landscapes are born and the forces by which they are created.

This project was seeded by Dan Jones—a distinguished graduate and longtime friend of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. He had already pioneered the “special places” approach at Yale Myers Forest, and then applied it more extensively in his remarkable project at The Parklands of Floyds Fork. During a visit there in 2014 I had the opportunity to understand how that approach could transform the pedagogical value of Great Mountain Forest and to realize immediately that Michael Gaige was the right person to take on this task. We are truly fortunate that Michael agreed, and his unique talents are visible on every page of this landmark work. I also must thank Yoni Glogower for committing himself so wholeheartedly as Michael’s apprentice in this project, and also Mary Tyrrell and Hans Carlson for being the primary Yale and Great Mountain Forest contacts for the Gaige-Glogower team. Without the help of Mary and Hans, as well as the assistance and support of many others, this project would never have seen the light of day.

For me, in my last few months at Yale F&ES, this project has special personal resonance. Great Mountain Forest is one of the most beautiful places in Connecticut I have encountered. But almost half a century later, this project completes one arc of my own career by connecting the future of field experiences at F&ES to my early introduction to fieldwork in the UK. Well before college, I was fortunate to learn about the “Making of the English Landscape” not just from W. G. Hoskins classic book, but by walking the muddy fields and village lanes of Northamptonshire in the company of John Steane, a thoughtful and inspirational observer. I hope that the resources so carefully and brilliantly documented in this book are just as effective in opening the minds of future generations of faculty and students to the extraordinary resource that Great Mountain Forest represents.

Finally, I want to place on record the great indebtedness and sincere thanks of all of us at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies for the kindness and generosity of the Childs family over multiple generations. We have all been the beneficiaries of their continuing vision, as well as their welcoming and inquisitive spirit.

— Professor Sir Peter Crane FRS
Carl W. Knobloch Jr., Dean
School of Forestry and Environmental Studies