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BOOK NEWS

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A Forgotten Figure in Agricultural History *LSU Press to Publish Writings of Horticulturalist and Reformer Thomas Affleck*

Baton Rouge—In the first collection of published writings of Thomas Affleck (1812–1868), **Lake Douglas** reestablishes the reputation of a tireless agricultural reformer, entrepreneur, and horticulturist. Affleck’s wide range of interests—animal husbandry, agriculture, scientific farming, ornamental horticulture, insects, and hydrology, among others—should afford him a celebrated status in several disciplines; yet until now his immense contributions have remained largely unheralded. ***Steward of the Land***, to be published by LSU Press in October, remedies this oversight with a broad, annotated selection of Affleck’s works, rightfully placing him alongside his better-known contemporaries Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted.

After immigrating to the United States from Scotland in 1832, Affleck witnessed the burgeoning American expansion and its major advances in agriculture and technology. He worked as a journalist for the influential *Western Farmer and Gardener*, covering Ohio, Kentucky, and the Mississippi River Valley. Affleck moved to Mississippi in 1842 to manage his new wife’s failing plantation; there, he created one of the first commercial nurseries of the South while writing prolifically on numerous agrarian topics for regional periodicals and newspapers. From 1845 to 1865 he edited *Affleck’s Southern Rural Almanac and Plantation and Garden Calendar*, published in New Orleans. Following a postwar move to Brenham, Texas, he published letters and essays about rebuilding that state’s livestock herds and rejuvenating its agricultural labor forces.

Steward of the Land includes excerpts from dozens of Affleck’s articles on subjects ranging from bee keeping to gardening to orchard tending. This valuable single-volume resource reveals Affleck’s astonishing breadth of horticultural knowledge and entrepreneurial sagacity, and his role in educating mid-nineteenth-century readers about agricultural products and practices, plant usage, and environmental stewardship. Never before collected or contextualized, Affleck’s writings provide a firsthand account of the advancement of agricultural techniques and practices that created a new environmental awareness in America.

Lake Douglas is Associate Dean of Research & Development at Louisiana State University’s College of Art and Design and associate professor in the Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture. He is the author of *Public Spaces, Private Gardens: A History of Designed Landscapes in New Orleans*.

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Environmental History / Landscape Architecture

To request a review copy, please contact Jenny Keegan at jenniferkeegan@lsu.edu.

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