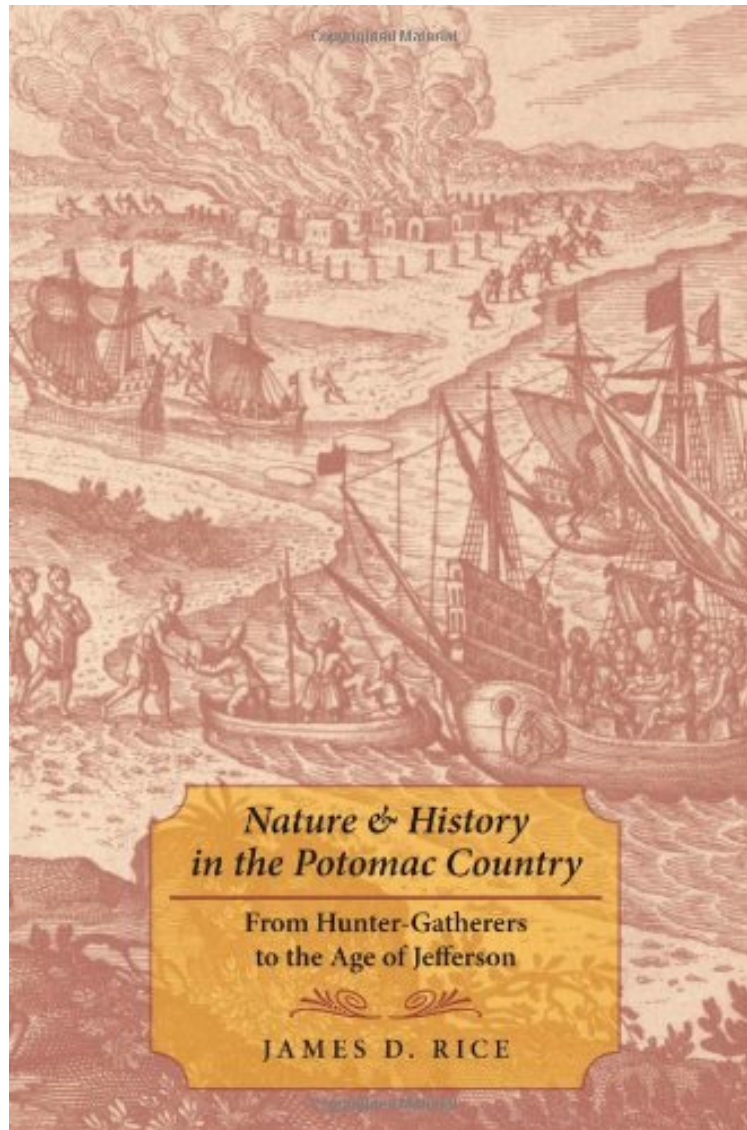


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James D. Rice

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James D. Rice's fresh study of the Potomac River basin begins with a mystery. Why, when the whole of the region offered fertile soil and excellent fishing and hunting, was nearly three-quarters of the land uninhabited on the eve of colonization? Rice wonders how the existence of this no man's land influenced nearby Native American and, later, colonial settlements. Did it function as a commons, as a place where all were free to hunt and fish? Or was it perceived as a strange and hostile wilderness? Rice discovers environmental factors at the center of the story. Making use of extensive archaeological and anthropological research, as well as the vast scholarship on farming practices in the colonial period, he traces the region's history from its earliest known habitation. With exceptionally vivid prose, Rice makes clear the implications of unbridled economic development for the forests, streams, and wetlands of the Potomac River basin. With what effects, Rice asks, did humankind exploit and then alter the landscape and the quality of the river's waters? Equal parts environmental, Native American, and colonial history, *Nature and History in the Potomac Country* is a useful and innovative study of the Potomac River, its valley, and its people.

"A well-executed regional history that serves as a powerful example of the necessity of environmental history focused on the intimate details of both natural and cultural landscapes." (*Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*) "James Rice successfully combines all three endeavors in an impressive study of the interplay of Indians, Europeans, and the environment in the Potomac Valley... Scholars of Indian history, environmental history, early American history, and anyone who wants to take a fresh look at this area of the country will appreciate this fine book." (*Maryland Historical Magazine*) "This refreshing book should serve as a model for future studies of colonial America examining particular places and the peoples who lived there." (*Journal of American History*) "This well-written important new book persuasively argued and firmly rooted in the evidence deserves a wide readership among students of early America, and it might just help to push the field in a welcome new direction." (*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*) "Rice's contribution provides a successful model for future studies of the region's colonial history and should prove indispensable for anyone interested in the social, economic, and environmental history of the southern colonies." (*Mikko Saikku Journal of Southern History*) "Innovative and vividly written, this important book provides a fine example of a new, more comprehensive approach to the study of the colonial experience... Rice's contribution provides a successful model for future studies of the region's colonial history and should prove indispensable for anyone interested in the social, economic, and environmental histories of the southern colonies." (*Journal of Southern History*) "Rice's account is an absorbing history, elegantly told." (*Choice*) "A valuable contribution to environmental history." (*Agricultural History*)

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