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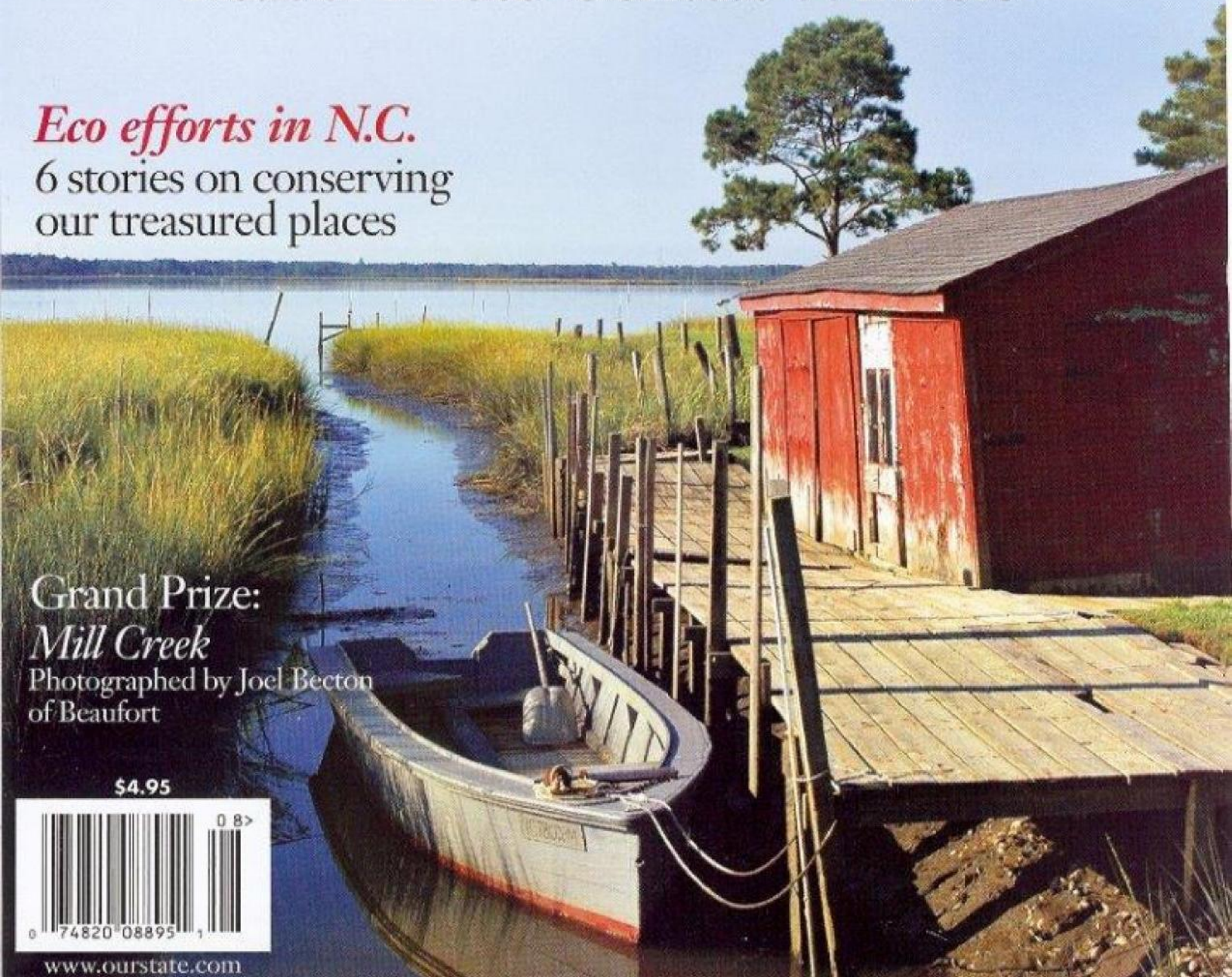
Mill Creek

Photographed by Joel Becton
of Beaufort

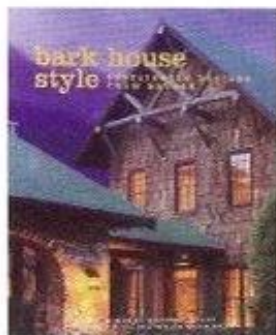
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How To



***Bark House Style:
Sustainable Designs
from Nature* by
Chris McCurry and
Nan Chase.**

Gibbs Smith, Publisher,
2008, 152 pages,
hardcover, \$30. Available
through the publisher at
www.gibbs-smith.com.

The use of tree bark to protect structures in western North Carolina is nothing new; the idea dates back to the first Americans who inhabited the mountains. As authors Chris McCurry and Nan Chase note in this book, however, it was architect Henry Bacon (designer of the Lincoln Memorial) who in 1895 melded the primitive covering with modern buildings. Using flat, squared shingles of bark as siding, Bacon designed homes, churches, and inns in the Linville area, and soon this new style with an old look was being used in other towns in the North Carolina mountains and beyond.

A number of the old bark-siding structures are still standing today, but the same can't be said for the source of the bark. Due to its resistance to rot, the bark of the American chestnut was the choice for making shingles. But a blight that was accidentally introduced from Asia in the early 1900s eradicated these great trees of the Eastern forest.

This book, however, is not a lament over what was but rather a positive view of what is again. The bark of yellow poplar, an abundant species in North Carolina, has been found to have the same resilient qualities as chestnut. With this information, Chris McCurry and her husband, Marty, founded Highland Craftsmen, which manufactures and installs poplar bark shingles to build on the tradition started by Henry Bacon more than 100 years ago.

While McCurry and Chase's book notes the unfortunate passing of the great chestnut trees, it's an encouraging tale of the bark-house style that has endured and evolved to once again become a viable, beautiful part of rustic architecture in the mountains of North Carolina.

— *L.A. Jackson*