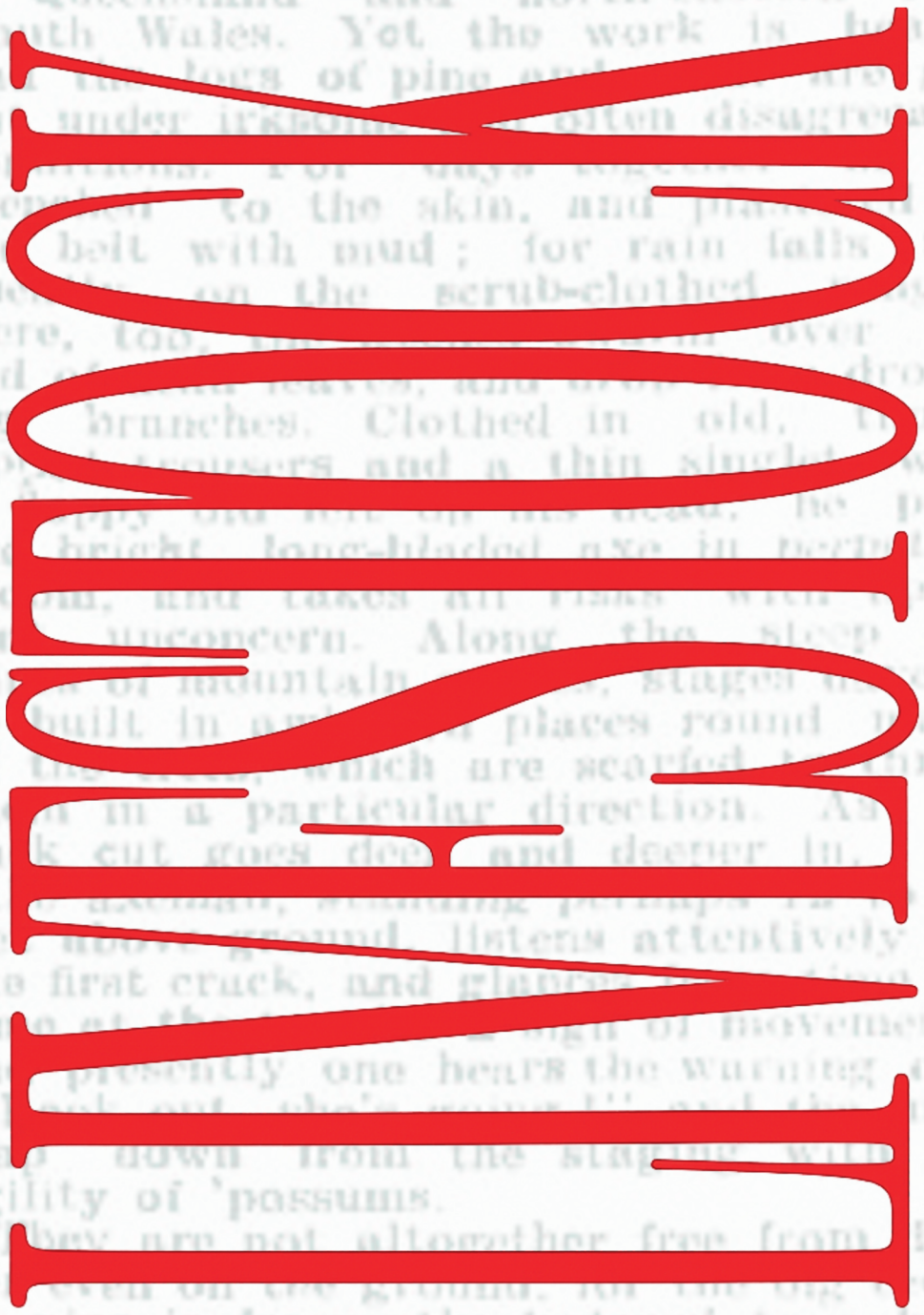
02 NEGATIVE PEACE

by



"The logs drawn out of the scrub were strewn along a low spot on the bank of the river. There they remained, sometimes for months, until heavy rains caused a flood. The higher logs were levered into the frothing stream and sent spinning and whirling after their fellows. The strong current carried the buoyant logs away at great speed. When all had been launched, a couple of men put off in a flat-bottomed boat and followed them down to tidal waters, where a cordon of logs stretched from bank to bank put finis to the long race. Their work was to release all that became stranded or fast against snags and trees. The stream was narrow, twisting sharply to left and right, and screened for the most part with overhanging scrub." E. S. Sorenson, published in The Australasian 23 July 1910, page 52.

Negative Peace asks how we remember a landscape transformed by industry, and whether the passage of time can reconcile us with its destruction. Drawing on the philosophy of negative peace, the work questions the assumption that peace exists simply because open conflict has ceased. As the Big Scrub disappeared, the consequences of its destruction became part of the landscape. What was celebrated as progress might instead be understood as the Big Mistake. The work reframes this history as an indictment of the industry that enabled prosperity at the expense of ecology, asking whether a landscape can ever be considered at peace when the structures and consequences of its destruction remain.

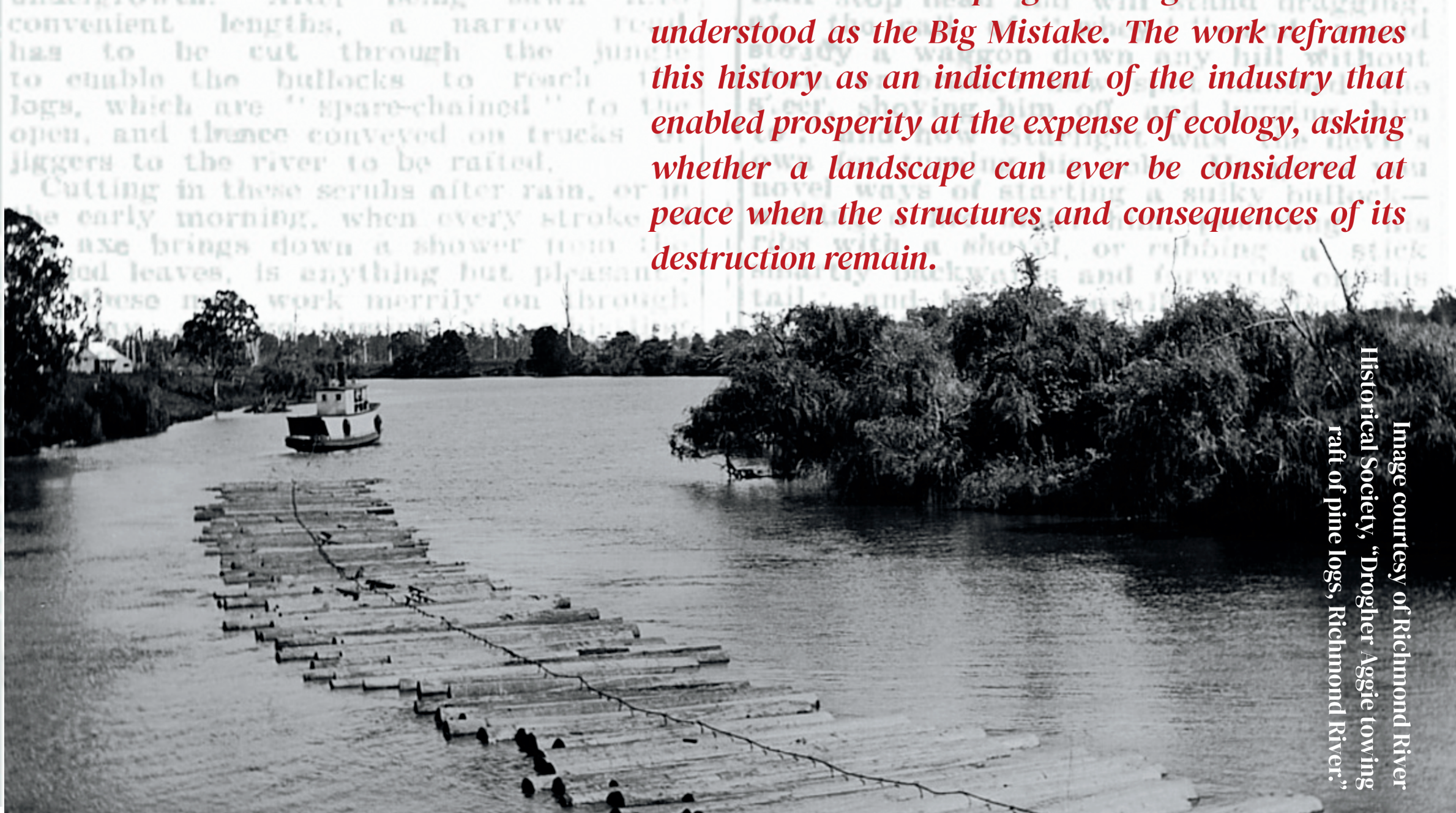


Image courtesy of Richmond River Historical Society, "Drogher Aggie towing raft of pine logs, Richmond River."