

Robert D. Lifset. *Power on the Hudson: Storm King Mountain and the Emergence of Modern American Environmentalism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014). Pp. xvi + 309. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. Paperback, \$25.95.

Appropriately and wittily titled, Lifset's book presents a well-researched and lively account of the political and environmental power struggles surrounding Consolidated Edison's plan to construct a pumped-storage hydroelectric power plant at Storm King Mountain located in the Hudson River Highlands, fifty miles north of New York City. The debate over the potential consequences of the proposed plant did much to shape the early history of the broader, modern environmental movement in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. During the course of nearly two decades, the struggle over electric power generation at Storm King led to "a new balance" of power regarding "the relationship between the need for energy production and the desire for environmental quality" (xiii).

In late 1962 Con Ed, then the nation's largest utility, faced exponentially increasing electricity demand while simultaneously having to deal with conventional power plant siting issues and calls for cleaner air in New York City. Here E. B. White is appropriately quoted as having quipped in 1954 that "soot is the topsoil of New York" (13). Thus, it is no surprise that the utility should reveal plans for a pumped-storage facility slated for a site near Cornwall, New York, on the west bank of the Hudson. The rationale for a pumped-storage plant, despite inherent inefficiencies, is that it utilizes steam-powered generation, which is neither technically easy nor economically efficient to shut down during underutilized (e.g., early morning) hours, to pump water uphill to a storage reservoir, from which it can then be drawn off to meet "peak" (read: more expensive) electricity demand during the late afternoon/early evening hours.

Con Ed readily convinced local, state, and federal, most notably the Federal Power Commission (FPC), political officials of the project's energy and economic values, while downplaying aesthetic issues. Indeed, they agreed to place the necessary high-tension power lines under the Hudson, and then underground them, at least in places, as they worked their way down the east side of the river to the city where most of the power would be consumed. Con Ed also agreed to design the plant itself to minimize aesthetic visual impacts, in effect promising a park-like setting along the river side. These concessions mollified most traditional aesthetic preservationists. A handful

of environmental activists not so convinced created a new, cross-sectional environmental group, the Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference, which would ultimately take a lead role among many other anti-pumped storage organizations.

The town of Cornwall largely bought into the project for economic reasons—increased employment opportunities and enhanced tax revenues—combined with a promise of an adequate water supply. The FPC, although the product of Progressive era conservation legislation (the Federal Power Act of 1920) designed to better manage the nation's water-power resources, generally viewed itself in the role of energy development promoter. Con Ed would seemingly have its way when in March 1965 the FPC, following hearings held the previous year, granted the utility its requested plant license. Yet, two things happened during the hearings that would prove crucial in the long run, contributing to significant delays and ultimately failure of plant construction.

At this time, citizen groups, unless they could prove direct economic impact, seldom received legal standing to intervene in federal hearings; however, given increasing *New York Times* publicity, the FPC granted Scenic Hudson intervener status, which proved crucial for this case, but also set a broader national precedent. Although the FPC in granting Con Ed its license dismissed Scenic Hudson's aesthetic arguments as largely immaterial, they turned back the question of transmission-line siting to the company and for further hearings. They also left open for further research and discussion what would prove to be a controversial environmental issue, the health of the Hudson River fishery, especially that of the striped bass. Following articles by *Sports Illustrated* journalist Robert Boyle on a massive fish kill tied to Con Ed's Indian Point nuclear plant, Scenic Hudson's opposition to Storm King increasingly, and more effectively, focused on ecological rather than aesthetic issues.

Here the story gets more complicated than can be detailed in a short review, but suffice it to say that the politics were fractious, the debates spirited, and at times the language salty. Mike Kitzmiller, a lawyer working for Scenic Hudson, remembers believing "we could win, but only if we played rough and dirty," and further reminisced that it was his job "to piss in Con Ed's soup. And I liked it" (47–48). A major "breakthrough" occurred late in 1965, when upon what was actually considered a "hopeless" appeal by Scenic Hudson, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the FPC ruling, setting aside the Con Ed license. Lifset views this decision as "usher[ing] in the modern era of environmental litigation" (101), as it moved the question of who had legal standing beyond solely one of economic interest.

The debate would rage on for a number of years, including over a second license granted by the FPC in 1970. In the face of a proliferation of environmental lawsuits up and down the Hudson River Valley by a growing number of environmental organizations, especially over the 1972 Clean Water Act-related issues, as well as the fishery, Con Ed, which was also facing serious financial difficulties, finally dropped its plans for Storm King. Although by then Storm King had effectively become but a bargaining chip in a larger debate over EPA-mandated cooling towers and water discharges from its Indian Point nuclear plant, Con Ed did not officially surrender its license until 1980. Russell Train, a former head of the EPA, served as mediator and believed that the ultimate settlement demonstrated that “environmental and energy needs can effectively be balanced” (184), an assessment with which Lifset agrees.

Lifset’s epilogue outlines the legacies of Storm King in terms of environmentalism, energy provision, and Hudson River Valley life, all of which are in a healthier balance as a result of the controversy. In his view, the most important political legacy was the redefinition of legal standing in matters of environmental law, which helped democratize land-use decisions. At the same time he recognizes we must pay closer “attention to how we produce and consume energy” (206). For environmental historians seeking to understand Storm King as an essential turning point, or for citizens and politicians seeking tools for current decision making, *Power on the Hudson* is highly recommended reading.

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Terry Alford. *Fortune’s Fool: The Life of John Wilkes Booth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). Pp. 454. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$29.95.

Terry Alford considers John Wilkes Booth as “one of the most remarkable personalities of his era” (6). Consequently, *Fortune’s Fool* presents an always interesting but often contradictory Booth, part affable gentleman and part moody murderer.

Accordingly, the book has several components. One segment describes Booth’s theatrical career, another tracks his politics and path to the balcony in Ford’s Theater, and the final page-turning portion recounts Booth’s frantic