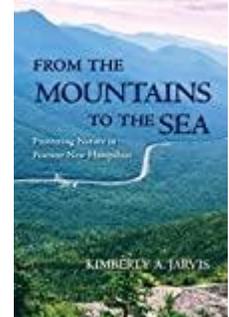


**Kimberly A. Jarvis.** *From the Mountains to the Sea: Protecting Nature in Postwar New Hampshire.* Environmental History of the Northeast. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020. 200 pp. \$27.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-62534-501-1.



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**Published on** H-Environment (July, 2021)

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Attempts by the Greek tycoon Aristotle Onassis to construct an oil refinery along the New Hampshire seacoast—a project of dubious economic value that posed danger to the local environment—met a resounding defeat at the hands of Durham voters on Town Meeting Day in March 1974. The following day, lawmakers in Concord, the New Hampshire capital, rejected a proposal that, if adopted, would have allowed the state to override the authority of local voters in matters concerning economic development. Though he had favored the Onassis project, New Hampshire’s Democratic senator, Thomas McIntyre, applauded the outcomes in Durham and Concord because “the integrity of public decisions publicly made at the community level” was “infinitely more precious to New Englanders than fuel oil” (p. 133). McIntyre’s brief comment captures the essence of Kimberly Jarvis’s new book; namely, that without the often-uneasy alliances forged among local residents, state leaders, and federal officials, unchecked economic development might have

ruined New Hampshire’s picturesque landscape in the decades after World War II.

Analyzing debates surrounding proposals to build a four-lane interstate highway through Franconia Notch, a colony of vacation homes and condominiums in Sandwich Notch, and an oil refinery and pipeline in Durham, Jarvis shows how residents organized to protect environments whose unique features and complex history were pivotal to their sense of place and belonging. However, as Jarvis points out, New Hampshire residents and their allies were not reflexively anti-development. The author demonstrates how local efforts to preserve particular environments drew on a conservation ethic first articulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that did not preclude environmental change in the interest of economic gain. Jarvis writes, “Yet while all of the campaigns under study focused on protecting fragile places, none was ‘green’ in the sense that it was a clear advocate for reduced resource use or sustainability beyond existing methods of managed forestry” (p. 7). Richly researched, the book

deftly utilizes periodicals, poetry, memoirs, government documents, personal correspondence, and a variety of other printed matter to sketch a picture of environmental politics in late-twentieth-century New Hampshire that reflects the seemingly unresolvable tension between economic development and environmental protection. Jarvis adds a new chapter to a robust body of scholarship exploring this phenomenon in communities across the United States. *From the Mountains to the Sea* will attract scholars with an interest in environmental history, policy formation, and historical memory. The book's accessible prose and interesting anecdotes should also prove appealing to readers outside academia, especially residents of New Hampshire and visitors to the state.

*From the Mountains to the Sea* investigates how residents of Franconia Notch, Sandwich Notch, and the New Hampshire seacoast leveraged a shared sense of local history and place—often inflected with a healthy dose of nostalgia—to challenge development schemes whose potential environmental risks far outweighed any possible benefit to area economies. Reaching back to the era before European colonization, Jarvis traces how generations of New Hampshirites both shaped and applied meaning to the nonhuman world around them. In each community, Jarvis demonstrates how residents living in the late twentieth century drew on these multilayered historical memories and environmental meanings to defend the integrity of locales pivotal to their sense of place. At the same time, however, Jarvis repeatedly underscores an uncomfortable reality all too familiar to New Hampshire residents of the postwar era: namely, that the growth of a tourism-based economy necessitated the construction of modern infrastructure that could imperil the very vistas and landscapes that drew visitors in the first place. More often than not, balancing the necessary evil of modernization against the desire to preserve particular environments brought residents into conflict with state and federal officials bent on transforming these places for economic gain. Each

episode, however, ended with compromise, reflecting both the pragmatism of local conservationists and political leaders' sensitivity to long-established traditions of home rule. Sustained pressure from residents, environmental groups, and local and state leaders led to the abandonment of plans to build a massive interstate highway through Franconia Notch in favor of a less intrusive, two-lane parkway. In Sandwich Notch, meanwhile, homeowners and environmentalists successfully prevented modernization of the primitive Notch Road and, through a coordinated program of land transfers to the nearby White Mountain National Forest, stopped the region from being overrun with second homes and vacation developments, guaranteeing that residents and visitors could continue to enjoy the area's untrammelled forests and mountain peaks. Finally, in Durham, plans to build an oil refinery, pipeline, and complex network of support facilities along the seacoast—supported by New Hampshire's Republican governor and the influential, conservative editor of the *Manchester Union-Leader*—crumbled in the face of overwhelming opposition from residents, environmental groups, and politicians at the local and federal levels. However, members of Save Our Shores (SOS), the group formed to resist the Onassis plan, were not uniformly opposed to economic development. Adhering to the same conservation ethic that informed opposition forces in Franconia and Sandwich, "SOS activists were not against all refineries. They were simply against the one that they believed would significantly damage their community while offering few counterbalancing benefits" (p. 113).

Battles over development in postwar New Hampshire were neither isolated nor self-contained. In each case study, Jarvis underscores how larger societal shifts and changes at the national level influenced the course of events in the Granite State. At key moments in each chapter, Jarvis pauses to remind readers of the broader historical significance of conflicts and controversies that

might otherwise appear limited in scope or insignificant beyond the confines of New England. Discussions of debates surrounding the construction of Interstate 93 through Franconia Notch, for instance, are framed as part of broader Cold War-era efforts to modernize US transportation infrastructure in the interest of national security. In Sandwich Notch, meanwhile, Jarvis introduces readers to the proliferation of second homeownership, a late-twentieth-century phenomenon whose environmental implications were not limited to the Northeast. Finally, Jarvis analyzes controversies around the planned construction of an oil refinery along the New Hampshire seacoast within the context of increasing fuel consumption and the energy crises of the early 1970s. By situating each case study in its broader historical perspective, Jarvis shows how New Hampshire served as a microcosm for larger national developments and demonstrates the real-world impacts of those changes in people's everyday lives. In addition to its contribution to environmental historiography, *From the Mountains to the Sea* thus also provides valuable commentary on the promise and perils of modernization in late-twentieth-century America.

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**Citation:** Clarence Jefferson Hall, Jr.. Review of Jarvis, Kimberly A. *From the Mountains to the Sea: Protecting Nature in Postwar New Hampshire*. H-Environment, H-Net Reviews. July, 2021.

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