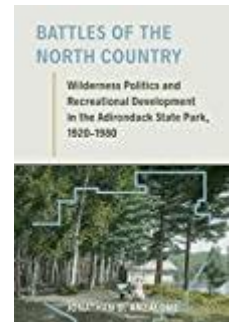


Jonathan D. Anzalone. *Battles of the North Country: Wilderness Politics and Recreational Development in the Adirondack State Park, 1920-1980.* Environmental History of the Northeast Series. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018. Illustrations. x + 279 pp. \$32.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-62534-364-2.



Reviewed by Kim Jarvis (Doane University)

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Commissioned by Daniella McCahey (Texas Tech University)

Jonathan D. Anzalone's *Battles of the North Country: Wilderness Politics and Recreational Development in the Adirondack State Park, 1920-1980* is a volume in the University of Massachusetts Press series Environmental History of the Northeast. Anzalone's work expands the series's focus on New York, focusing on the tension that developed in the Adirondack region between those who wished to preserve the region's public lands as "forever wild" and those who wanted to develop the private lands in the region for recreational use, to improve the economy. Anzalone's use of news accounts about the events in the Adirondacks, in particular, is exceptional. These accounts, and his analysis of them, gives voice to the concerns of year-round residents and outside interests alike, showing the pressures and interests that shaped how humans used the Adirondacks' natural resources in the twentieth century.

It is this tension between preservation and development that is, along with the history of the Adirondacks during this time, an important contribution of Anzalone's work. The ideas of the nine-

teenth-century conservation movement, which led to the 1892 creation of Adirondack Park and, in 1894, the designation of state-owned lands as "forever wild," are evident in Anzalone's definition of the Adirondacks, where there is "the presence of wilderness" as well as "mixed landscape featuring woodlands and communities that correspond to almost every stage on the spectrum of environments" (p. 4). He explains the twentieth-century challenges faced by local residents, environmentalists, and developers through case studies of two Winter Olympic Games (1932 and 1980), the development of ski slopes, and the building of an interstate highway, which brought sprawl to the "forever wild" Adirondacks.

Anzalone's analysis is informed by numerous secondary works focusing on Adirondack history, "hybrid" landscapes," and "deindustrialization and the urban crisis" (p. 210). His discussion of this period is shaped as well by Karl Jacoby's *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (2001). Anzalone continues Jacoby's in-

terpretation of an earlier period in the history of the Adirondacks through examining “moral ecology” where local ideas influenced how resources were to be used, something that, as Anzalone shows, often challenged conservation goals on the state level (p. 4). His analysis traces the distrust that developed between local residents and the state between the 1920s and the 1980s as well, demonstrating clearly how people, as well as nature, reacted to changes in the Adirondack Park.

The challenges presented to the Lake Placid area by the 1932 and 1980 Olympic Games bookend Anzalone’s analysis. Chapter 1 examines the III Olympic Winter Games, held in 1932, which exposed the drawbacks of hosting an Olympics so far from a major urban area as well as the damage unpredictable winter weather can cause to the schedule of Olympic events. Anzalone places the trials faced by Olympic organizers building the bobsled run within the changing views of state and private land use, showing that the wealthy owners of private lands in the region benefited from the prohibition of recreational development on state-owned lands, also known as the Forest Preserve. The Olympics, in turn, brought more outsiders to Lake Placid and, as Anzalone points out, “gave many more people a stake in the Adirondack Park” (p. 35).

Chapter 2, “Cities of Tents,” focuses on the development of camping areas in the Adirondacks prior to the 1932 Olympics. As Anzalone notes, the modernization of campgrounds between the two world wars reflected the changing expectations of those who camped; modern facilities were expected. The addition of the relative comforts of home, such as electricity and restroom facilities at campgrounds, brought the wilderness closer to the urban areas from which these new middle- and working-class travelers came. In this way, Anzalone points out, visitors were “shielded ... from the hardships of life in the wilderness” and “wilderness became domesticated” (p. 37). The resulting popularity of the campgrounds, however, led to

problems with sanitation and sewage. The focus by the state on “mass recreation” during the Great Depression meant work for those who needed it but also the continuing challenge of managing crowded garbage-filled campgrounds.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the development of Whiteface Mountain and the ski industry in the Adirondacks, which, as Anzalone notes, shows how “wilderness inched closer to the city,” bringing new amenities, new people, and new ideas to the Adirondack Park (p. 79). In his analysis of the construction of Whiteface Mountain Highway, Anzalone shows the continuing resistance of “nature enthusiasts” and local residents to changes to the region, with the former wanting to keep the mountain undeveloped and the latter focused on preventing the state from bringing in more tourists. In the “hybrid Whiteface mountain landscape,” however, Anzalone offers an example of the changing ideas of recreation (p. 65). Some organizations saw the development of the road, and its accompanying tourist-focused structures, as a way to encourage people to engage with nature, opening the area to many more people who would appreciate the region.

The state’s development of ski areas during the 1940s and 1950s, first at Marble Mountain, a failed venture, and then at Little Whiteface Mountain, intended to capitalize on the growing popularity of skiing in northern New England and to compete with ski areas in neighboring Vermont, in particular. While snow-making equipment eventually took care of the poor winter weather conditions, management issues meant that the ski industry struggled to succeed through the 1960s. Resistance toward the state from developers added to the resistance already among those living in the area.

Despite the breakdown in unanimity of purpose between the state and some developers, the push for more recreational development in the Adirondack Park continued. In chapters 5 and 6, Anzalone analyzes the building of the “Northway”

(Interstate 87) through state land in the Adirondack Park. The highway, which eventually connected New York City to Canada, improved access to the region by the late 1960s. With it came the potential, and the pressures, of additional development and added tensions over the uses of public and private lands. The expansion of public campgrounds again challenged the definition of “forever wild” as an increasing number of visitors necessitated the renovation and continuing “domestication” of campgrounds (p. 115).

There were those who, seeking the wilderness experience that had once been the main focus on the state-owned Forest Preserve, disagreed with the state’s development of the region for continued “mass recreation.” Some saw the renovated campgrounds as “suburban sprawl” (p. 124). During the 1970s, the state, through the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Adirondack Park Agency, tried to balance the use of public and private lands by focusing on improving existing recreational facilities rather than building new ones. New state rules for private land use, including for proposed second home developments that would have brought thousands of new homes to the region, led to lawsuits filed by both environmentalists and local residents. In the face of an economic downturn, some local residents fought to preserve local control over land use.

The final chapter focuses on the 1980 Winter Olympic Games. The challenges facing Olympic organizers around the world has been evident for decades, but, as Anzalone points out, the XIII Winter Olympics in Lake Placid are remembered in the United States primarily for the US men’s hockey team’s victory over the Soviet Union and not as much for the myriad issues caused by cost overruns, poor planning, and environmental challenges. The village of Lake Placid, for example, found its Main Street views surrounding mountain landscape blocked by new construction, with ski jumps the height of apartment buildings on the horizon. While most groups, environmental and

commercial, supported the Olympic Games at Lake Placid, this time environmental groups lost to development.

Throughout *Battles of the North Country* Anzalone’s writing is accessible and his analysis multidisciplinary and sophisticated. As he notes in his conclusion, challenges will continue to face the Adirondack Park, so long as it “resembles a modern wilderness playground” (p. 207). Local residents, too, must deal with not only the economic and environmental consequences, positive and negative, of the tourism industry in the region but the effects of climate change as well. Anzalone’s analysis of the 1920s through the 1980s provides insight into the continuing tensions between “forever wild” lands as places to be preserved and the benefits of recreational development for visitors and Adirondack residents alike.

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