
Southern Water, Southern Power is more about power—in terms of energy, wealth, and politics—than water. In the author’s words it is “a story about how private corporations, public institutions, and citizens challenged one another to manage natural resources equitably while stimulating and sustaining economic growth” (12). In a potent contribution to southern history, Christopher Manganiello makes the compelling case that water politics have been every bit as important in the American South as in the West. Tracing water management decisions through the New South, New Deal, and Sun Belt periods, Manganiello argues that water saturated resource management discussions as the South became an urban-industrial region.

In seven chapters, he traces the transition from water-driven mills serving local markets across the Piedmont, to the growth of regional electric corporations that built privately owned dams and reservoirs, to the arrival of federally financed multi-purpose dams that provided navigation improvements and flood control, along with power. He then presents a post-1945 backlash to the Corps of Engineers’ big federal dams. The resistance had much to do with traditional southern concerns about federal intrusion on local politics framed by racial tensions. Chapters on water quality and the designation of the Chattooga River as a Wild and Scenic River round out the volume.

In the title and elsewhere, Manganiello introduces drought as a key factor in driving the shifting agenda of the big power companies and political deal-makers. While the irregularity of flow was certainly a concern as Duke and Georgia Power added coal-fired and nuclear plants to mitigate their risk of temporary inadequacies, the underlying decisions to use water power in the first place lay with a perceived abundance. And indeed, the many relatively small Piedmont rivers had ample flow for early twentieth-century demands, but the expanding urban and industrial demands on water accentuated the climatic droughts—a point that could have used further development.

Manganiello is at his best when digging into the political deliberations and deal-making behind the creation of the hydrologic landscape. His work is richly documented and the story clearly told. My chief critique is the focus on the Piedmont and to a lesser extent on southern Appalachia. To truly tell the story of southern water, it would have been illuminating to consider areas with other
fuel options and different topography—although he presented this work as a corrective to prior over-attention to the Mississippi River Valley. A secondary concern is his discussion about race. Manganiello appropriately develops this central southern theme, but neglects some exciting new literature on race and rural electrification and state park politics. And for readers of this journal, agriculture appears only briefly in discussions about displacing floodplain farm families and again toward the end in an important irrigation discussion. Overall this is a highly satisfying volume that is an important contribution to southern water politics and environmental history.

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The latter half of the nineteenth century in America saw a remarkable transformation in the way animal diseases were understood. The germ theory of disease brought new understandings of a variety of diseases, including their influence on animal health and their implications for public health and the livestock industry. Intervening proved difficult as each disease had its own individual attributes, and the responses to them from various affected sectors varied widely. Scientific, bureaucratic, and public attitudes toward intervention ranged from enthusiasm to hostility to even murder in rare cases.

The centralized, bureaucratic apparatus created to deal with the many scientific, political, economic, and social influences of animal disease is at the heart of Alan Olmstead and Paul Rhode’s work. They contribute a much-needed and thorough examination of the genesis and early operation of the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), from the years preceding its creation in 1884, to its operation into the mid-twentieth century. This is a very dense examination of the BAI, but it necessarily reflects the complicated nature of animal diseases in this period and the responses that ultimately resulted in their control.

Olmstead and Rhode position their study in response to critics, particularly those of the Chicago public choice school, who posit that the heavy-handed intervention of the federal government beginning in the late nineteenth century was unnecessary and that the threat animal diseases posed to human health or economic interests were relatively benign. Olmstead and Rhode argue through-