

Name: Frances Stevens Reese

Years: 1917 to 2003

Residence: Hughsonville, New York

Brief Biography: Environmental activist Franny Reese was born Frances Stevens in Manhattan in 1917. She attended Barnard College and Yale Art School. In 1937 she married Willis Reese who shared her interests in Historical Preservation and conservation; together she and Willis had five children. In 1963 Franny and several other concerned local citizens banded together to fight the Consolidated Edison power utility's attempt to despoil the Hudson River's scenic beauty and ecosystem by building the world's largest pump storage facility at Storm King Mountain. Her citizens group called themselves the Scenic Hudson Preservation Committee and they were able to get standing to sue the public utility in federal court, an important precedent. The legal battle that ensued defined the modern environmental movement that was sweeping the nation in the 1960's and 1970's. When the dust settled seventeen years later Franny's little group had been officially incorporated into a not-for-profit, Scenic Hudson, Inc. Consolidated Edison (Con Ed) surrendered and signed a treaty, the Hudson River Settlement Agreement in 1981. Under the terms of the agreement, Con Ed agreed to drop its plans to build the Storm King Mountain pump storage plant and donated the project land there to be used for a public park. In exchange, Con Ed was granted a ten year delay in having to build expensive cooling towers for three of its power plants along the Hudson that used the river water to cool their steam powered generators. Franny Reese continued to serve on the Board of Directors of Scenic Hudson until a tragic car accident took her away on July 3, 2003.

Major Achievements: Scenic Hudson Co-Founder and pioneer grassroots environmental activist Franny Reese was a firebrand leader who inspired many in the Hudson River Valley. She was an educator and a member of the Marist College Board of Trustees. On October 16, 2009, The Franny Reese State Park was officially opened. The dedication ceremony opened the park's two hundred and fifty acres overlooking the Hudson south of the Highland Village with two and a half miles of new trails that connect to the world's largest pedestrian bridge over a river, the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge Walkway Over the Hudson.

More Information: Franny Reese Preserve listing at Palisades Park Commission:

<http://www.palisadesparksconservancy.org/news/127/>

Franny Reese-Passing the Torch: http://www.scenichudson.org/files/u2/yvspring_03.pdf ; and

<http://www.scenichudson2.org/aboutus/pressroom/frsp-groundbreaking>

Sources: Riverkeeper-History of the Hudson River Settlement Agreement:

<http://www.riverkeeper.org/campaigns/stop-polluters/power-plants/hrsa/> ;

Scenic Hudson-History: <http://www.scenichudson.org/aboutus/ourhistory> ;

New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/09/nyregion/frances-reese-85-defender-of-hudson-valley.html?pagewanted=1>

By Steve Grim