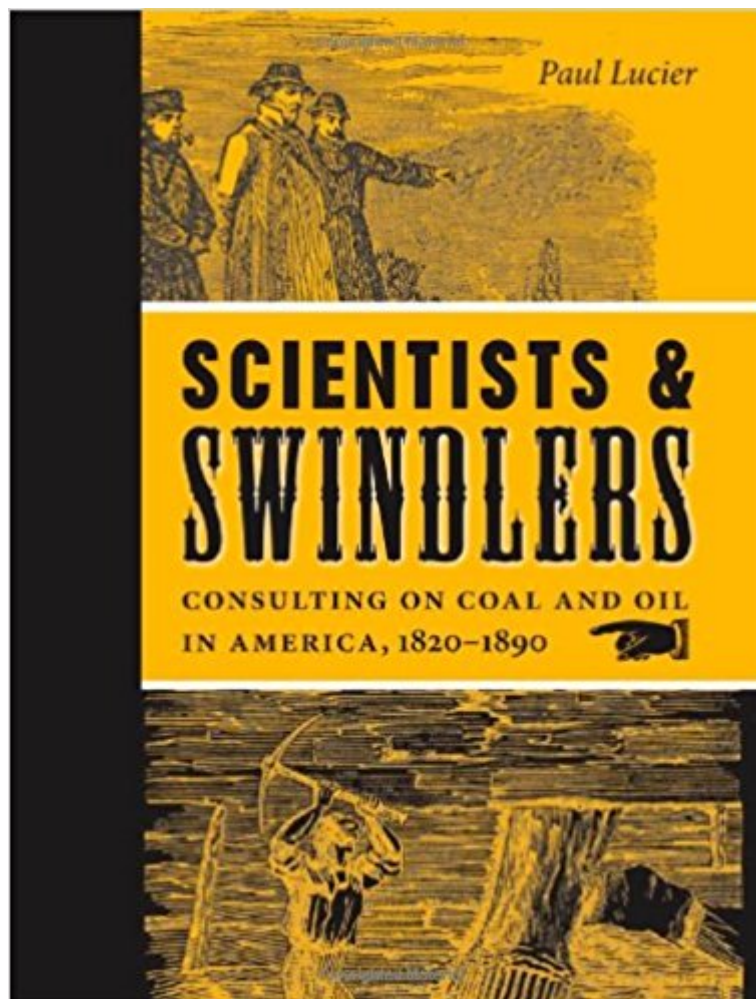


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Scientists And Swindlers: Consulting On Coal And Oil In America, 1820–1890 (Johns Hopkins Studies In The History Of Technology)





Synopsis

In this impressively researched and highly original work, Paul Lucier explains how science became an integral part of American technology and industry in the nineteenth century. *Scientists and Swindlers* introduces us to a new service of professionals: the consulting scientists. Lucier follows these entrepreneurial men of science on their wide-ranging commercial engagements from the shores of Nova Scotia to the coast of California and shows how their innovative work fueled the rapid growth of the American coal and oil industries and the rise of American geology and chemistry. Along the way, he explores the decisive battles over expertise and authority, the high-stakes court cases over patenting research, the intriguing and often humorous exploits of swindlers, and the profound ethical challenges of doing science for money. Starting with the small surveying businesses of the 1830s and reaching to the origins of applied science in the 1880s, Lucier recounts the complex and curious relations that evolved as geologists, chemists, capitalists, and politicians worked to establish scientific research as a legitimate, regularly compensated, and respected enterprise. This sweeping narrative enriches our understanding of how the rocks beneath our feet became invaluable resources for science, technology, and industry.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

" *Scientists and Swindlers* is a model of how the history of science and technology ought to be done. Drawing on materials gleaned from the scientific journal and the courtroom, the textbook and

the business prospectus, Paul Lucier weaves an exciting and original narrative about geology's relations with commerce in the nineteenth century. He shows us how geologists' efforts to classify and understand their materials interdigitated with entrepreneurial ambitions, how the expertise and pretensions of science intersected with the needs of commerce and law, and how geologists struggled to define and walk a line between the ethics of an aspiring profession and the ethics of the marketplace. Lucier enriches our understanding of geology's history while giving us a new appreciation of the continuities between the nineteenth century and our own era of commercialized science. His book prompts pleasure and reflection." (John Servos, Amherst College)"In a remarkable piece of historical detective work, Paul Lucier shows how the search for coal, oil, and other resources that led to the industrial transformation of America also fueled the development of the modern scientific career. Filled with surprising stories and extraordinary characters, *Scientists and Swindlers* offers a fresh perspective on the troubled relations between commerce and intellectual life we face today." (Jim Secord, University of Cambridge)"Extensively researched and replete with bibliographical citations, *Scientists and Swindlers* is a significant reference work for historians and will also be of interest to geologists, chemists, and other scientists interested in the history of their professions." (Ray Bert Civil Engineering)"Gracefully written and well-researched study." (James B. McSwain Canadian Journal of History)"This will be an especially appropriate library resource for history of science and technology and history of geology collections. Highly recommended." (Choice)"An insightful study of scientific consulting practices that integrates business, geology, and environmental issues with the larger context of the early history of the American 'fossil fuel' industry." (Christopher J. Castaneda Technology and Culture)" *Scientists and Swindlers* is a valuable addition to our understanding of the evolution of scientific practice in America. Lucier's work answers much and raises interesting questions. That makes it a worthy read." (James C. Williams Journal of American History)"This is a well-written study, and covers a lot of ground." (Gregory Tweedale Ambix)"Required reading for anyone interested in American science or in the interplay of science and industrial society." (Dan Bouk Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences)

Trained as a geophysicist, Paul Lucier holds a Ph.D. in history from Princeton University. His work as a historian of science and technology specializing in the earth and environmental sciences and the mining industries has received numerous prizes and has been funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation.

In "Scientists & Swindlers: Consulting on Coal and Oil in America, 1820-1890", historian Paul Lucier examines the nebulous position of scientists in nineteenth century, wherein they had to promote and sell their trade in order to perform the research that interested them. Describing the professionalization of science in the nineteenth century, Lucier writes, "Science is a job, and scientists are professionals. For most of the nineteenth century, neither was true. Science had few established sources of support, and the descriptive noun scientist, a term coined in Britain in the 1830s, was rarely used in America until late in the century. Nineteenth-century men of science were becoming professionals, and the key to that process was money to live on and money to do science" (pg. 1). Further, "Making money doing science required initiative, luck, and no small degree of self-promotion, besides the requisite experience and expertise. In other words, nineteenth-century American men of science had to be entrepreneurs" (pg. 2). To this end, scientists sought the patronage of government or capitalists. Lucier examines patronage in three fields: coal mining and prospecting; kerosene; and petroleum mining and its role in shaping economies and nations. Lucier's writing is insightful, often witty, and sheds light on the era before professional scientists.

Thoughtful discussion of an important, but complex topic, much deeper than Daniel Yergin's "The Prize." Thoroughly explores the early confusion about the geological relationship between coal and oil. Good history of kerosene and its inventors.

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