Environmental History and Public History

Catherine A. Christen, Research Associate, Smithsonian Institution

Picture it: high tea at the elegant Empress Hotel in Victoria, British Columbia. Over crumpets and cups of Ceylon in this evocative early 20th-century building, environmental and public historians converse about past and present. ASEH’s next annual meeting, a joint conference with the National Council on Public History (NCPH), will offer this opportunity. The conference is scheduled for March 31–April 4, 2004.

The similarities between these two organizations are numerous. Both are now in their third decade, each attracts a modestly growing and ever-diversifying membership, and each has its own quarterly journal—respectively, Environmental History and The Public Historian. Combining these two groups promises a conference of optimal size and thematic diversity. As ASEH members have come to expect from our annual meetings, this joint gathering will be large enough to guarantee contact with new colleagues and new intellectual pursuits, yet small enough to allow for catching up with longtime friends and associates.

Public history employs the high standards, sources, and methods of academic historical research, applying the resulting historical data, analyses, and interpretation to a gamut of non-academic situations. Environmental history functions as public history in multiple applications and venues, many of which fit within the “cultural spaces and natural places” theme of the Victoria conference. Environmental historians, variously employed at universities, government agencies, museums, and private firms, aspire to reach an audience beyond other historians and beyond the academy. Many of this conference’s sessions, field trips, and informal discussions will investigate how historians engage the public on a wide variety of environmental history topics, among them water politics, marine policy, fish and wildlife issues, energy development, environmental justice, public health policy, and mining and reclamation.

In addition to the similarities in their organizations, environmental and public historians generally share a common individual trait: a desire to produce work that will prove useful not only in understanding the past but also in addressing the problems of the present and affecting the future. Fittingly, the conference plenary, on Wednesday evening, March 31, focuses on the nexus between environmental and public history, offering some new takes on questions already familiar to ASEH members, such as the “uses” of environmental history.¹ The Wednesday night plenary will feature authors from a forthcoming book on environmental and public history, edited by Martin Melosi and Phil Scarpino.

¹ See, for example, William Cronon, “The Uses of Environmental History,” Environmental History Review 17 (Fall 1993).

The plenary will also feature contributors to the special environmental history issue of The Public Historian (forthcoming, winter 2004). This special issue of the NCPH journal focuses on environmental history’s intersections with public history, particularly on how history can be deployed in ongoing policy debates. It explores ways historians can engage in discussions about environmental issues with non-historians, including policy makers, engineers, scientists, activists, attorneys, energy industry executives, and the general public. Each author is an environmental historian who works with the public in some capacity, and the articles take care to address their personal experiences.

This ASEH-NCPH joint meeting will provide outstanding opportunities to continue to discuss over tea, cocktails, or a conference table the professional experiences in environmental and public history and their utility for understanding the past and affecting future environment-related policy and practice.

A selected bibliography is presented below. For more information on the Victoria conference and NCPH, see pages 4 and 5.

Selected Bibliography: Environmental History Articles in The Public Historian (TPH)


Arndt, Douglas P. “A Client’s Commentary: How Saving the Salmon Will Serve the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Public,” TPH 17,
From the President’s Desk

ESEH Meeting in Prague

At least with respect to academic collaboration, I am delighted to report that our relationship with Europe is as good as it gets. Steven Anderson, Gary Blank, Sandra Chaney, Mark Cioc, Charles Clossmann, Frank Coleman, Geoff Cunfer, Donald Davis, Angela Gugliotta, John Hausdorffer, Paul Hirt, Don Hughes, Tom Lekan, James Lide, Tim Luke, Christof Mauch, John McNeill, Mara Mills, Steve Pyne, Ravi Rajan, Thomas Reed, Matthew Schreiber, Mark Stoll, Noël Sturgeon, Peter Thorsheim, Dolores Wilson, Donald Worster, Tom Zeller and myself went to Prague September 3-7 for the Second International Conference of the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH). With 30 of us representing American scholarship, we ended up, to everyone’s astonishment, as the largest national grouping at the conference, which, appropriately enough, was entitled “Dealing with Diversity.”

ASEH’s presence was further demonstrated by our new 3’ by 7’ ASEH banner in the book exhibit room. Our banner was displayed adjacent to Steve Anderson’s Forest History Society table, which showed off our attractive recent issues of Environmental History and offered discounted joint memberships to ASEH-FHS.

One of the many memorable moments was the showing of a film produced by Kratky Film, Prague, entitled “Water, Water, Everywhere.” As most of you will recall, Europe, now reeling from an unprecedented, lethal heat wave, was devastated by millenial floods (in both senses) three years ago. One of the worst-hit cities was Prague, which sits astride the normally well-behaved Vltava River. With stunning footage and compelling narration the film explored the etiology of the flood, its course, and its consequences. Above all, the film asked how we might learn to live with flooding and mitigate its consequences through alterations in our cultivated and built environments and our economic practices. After all, despite the dreams of Stalinist scientists and Strangeloves in NASA, we have not yet learned how to control global weather, and perhaps that is a good thing.

Interestingly, environmental history in Europe continues to exhibit a slightly different intellectual flavor than much American scholarship. By this I mean a greater emphasis in Europe on what we would call historical geography: attempts at reconstructing human-occupied and non-occupied landscapes of the more distant past, to reconstruct climate change and its relationship to natural catastrophes, to chart the evolution of energy bases, flows and consumption in society, and a particular focus on the environmental history of Europe’s common lands. These emphases are partly explained by the long, rich and accessible archeological and written records in Europe, partly because many European environmental historians come out of programs in geography or landscape architecture, but partly also by the widespread pan-European tradition of hiking, mushroom gathering, and berry picking. For many of us with a less systematic acquaintance with our natural surround, an emphasis on environmental discourse, politics or biography is completely understandable. Tellingly, one of the panels this American attended was one featuring three American presenters offering discourse analysis of the origins of American consumerism (it was actually a superb panel!).

Finally, another feature of ESEH conferences that has become something of a delightful tradition is a farewell party featuring a local folk ensemble, complete with dancing. In St. Andrews, we were encouraged to sacrifice our dignity and get out on the dance floor with an instructor in a kilt, and try our hands at complicated, fast reels. Leoš Jeřábek, Prague Local Arrangements Chair, was determined not to be outdone. He brought in a quintet, complete with cimbalom (dulcimer), which enchanted us with Moldavian csardas and polkas, while the Local Arrangements group sang and some of us, emboldened by the local beer, wine and Becherová, danced ourselves to near exhaustion.
from History page 1


ASEH's Membership

September's ASEH membership statistics brought encouraging news. Our membership is officially 1,023, not counting those of you who have not yet had the time to send in your renewals. The library count is 507, up from 499 in April on the heels of the RoweCom bankruptcy, but still below the 544 libraries that subscribed to Environmental History (with society membership) in 1998. If you have time, please check to see whether your home library, or even municipal library, subscribes, and, in case they do not, please consider a gentle request to your acquisitions librarian. And while your attention is focused on how you might help your favorite academic society, please also give thought to encouraging those you know to include the ASEH in bequests. As the economy founders, directed giving may be our best hope for endowing an Executive Director position.

From the administration’s “Healthy Forests Initiative” to the IBM ethylene glycol story, not to mention the North Korean atomic weapons program, the Arizona oil pipeline break, farm subsidies and Cancún, global warming, Nicholas Kristof’s reporting from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and the Middle East, environmental issues are far from going away. We are telling the crucial stories of our age. Politicians, academic administrators, journalists – are you listening?

Douglas Weiner, ASEH President
Historic Empress Hotel
Victoria, British Columbia
March 31 - April 4, 2004
Joint conference with National Council on Public History (see opposite page for more information on NCPH)

Wednesday Evening, March 31
Plenary session, featuring public and environmental historians

Thursday Evening, April 1
Reception at the Royal British Columbia Museum

Friday Evening, April 2
Dinner banquet, featuring The History Channel

Saturday Evening, April 3
ASEH Fundraiser at historic Swan's Pub
NCPH Fundraiser at St. Anne's Academy

Swan’s Pub, Victoria

For more information on the plenary session, field trips, registration, and hotel prices, see summer 2003 issue of ASEH News, or check ASEH’s website at <www.aseh.net>

Or contact: Lorne Hammond, Local Arrangements Chair, Curator of History, Royal British Columbia Museum, 675 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC V8W 9W2. (250) 387-2486. <lhammond@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca>

How to Get to Victoria

Flying to Victoria, B.C.
A number of airlines can get you to Victoria, including Air Canada, American, and Alaska/Horizon.

From Victoria Airport to Fairmont Empress Hotel, call the shuttle, Akal Airport Express at 250.386.2525. Price $14 Canadian one-way; reservations recommended. Taxis average from $35-$40 Canadian one-way.

Flying to Seattle
Many major airlines fly to Seattle. Call Kenmore Air at 250.385.2203 for flights from Seattle to Victoria.

The ferry "Victoria Clipper” is an appealing option for transportation from downtown Seattle to Victoria Inner Harbour, very near the Fairmont Empress Hotel. To get from the airport in Seattle to ferry terminal in downtown Seattle, call Shuttle Express at 425.448.5000, or check the website at <http://www.victoriaclipper.com/marketing/homepage.shtml>.

Vancouver, B.C.
Conference attendees can also fly or take AmTrak to Vancouver. To get from this city on the mainland to Victoria (located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island), contact Pacific Coach Lines at <http://www.pacificcoach.com/>.

ASEH Future Meetings

Mark Your Calendar
Local Arrangements Chair, Kathleen A. Brosnan, Department of History, University of Houston, TX 77204. (713) 743-3120.

Attention Authors and Presses

The Victoria conference will include a book exhibit. For information on exhibiting and on Canadian customs, please contact:
Lorne Hammond, Local Arrangements Chair
Royal British Columbia Museum
675 Belleville Street
Victoria, British Columbia
CANADA V8W 9W2
Phone: 250-387-2486
<lhammond@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca>

Scholars Choice (if your press does not plan to exhibit):
<www.scholarschoice.com>
What is public history?

- Engages the public in history and enhances their understanding of the value and uses of history in society
- Utilizes historical skills and analysis to address contemporary issues
- Makes professional historians aware of their responsibilities to serve diverse audiences
- Works to improve the teaching and presentation of history at all levels and in assorted forms

Who are public historians?

Educators and School Teachers
Faculty and Students
Administrators of Historical Organizations
Archivists and Records Managers
Librarians
Curators
Documentary Editors
Film and Media Producers
Government Historians
Historic Preservationists
Interpreters and Museum Educators
Oral Historians
Policy Advisers
Publishers and Writers
.... and many others!

What are the benefits of membership?

- The quarterly journal *The Public Historian* including articles about current issues in public history, special studies, and reviews of books, films, exhibits, and media
- The quarterly newsletter *Public History News*
- Special discounts on NCPH publications such as our best selling *Careers for Students in History*
- Early registration discount for NCPH annual meetings, including the upcoming 2004 meeting in Victoria, British Columbia, held jointly with the American Society for Environmental History.
- A broad network of professional historians that brings together the many expressions of history into one organization and provides you with numerous resources to enhance the teaching and practice of history

Become a member of the National Council on Public History and receive a one-year subscription to *The Public Historian* and *Public History News*.
(Special 15% Introductory Offer for New Members!)

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Send your name, address, and check (payable to UC Regents) or credit card number and expiration date to:
The Public Historian/NCPH Membership
C/o The University of California Press
2000 Center Street, Suite 303
Berkeley, California 94704-1223

Or register online at www.ncph.org

Visit the NCPH web site at www.ncph.org to learn more about public history and the activities of NCPH and link to assorted public history sites that can help in the teaching of history.

Become a part of the public history community – join the National Council on Public History today!
Announcements

Call for Papers

Vernacular Architecture Forum

2004 Annual Meeting

The Vernacular Architecture Forum is soliciting proposals from academics, consultants, and other scholars for presentations at its Annual Meeting to be held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, May 12-16, 2004. The conference theme is “Pennsylvania German Architecture and Landscape, 1720-1920.” Papers may address any aspect of vernacular architecture from any geographic region worldwide. They should be primarily analytical rather than descriptive. The committee especially encourages submissions investigating topics related to the conference theme.

Proposals may be for either a twenty-minute paper on a subject the author has extensively researched, or a ten-minute “work in progress” report. Selection will be based on the proposed paper’s original contribution to the study of vernacular architecture. Papers presented at the meeting will be considered for publication in the VAF’s Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture series. One-time fellowship awards may be available to students and young professionals whose papers have been accepted.

Proposals should include a title for the paper and the author’s name, address, email address, and telephone and fax numbers. The proposals should be single-sided, a maximum of 400 words, and accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae. They must state the argument of the paper, discuss the methodology, and lay out scope and content. Only one submission per author will be accepted. 

Proposals must be postmarked by October 15, 2003. Accepted papers, tailored to the prescribed time limits, must be submitted in full to the session chairs by March 15, 2004. Presenters must deliver their papers in person and be VAF members at the time of the conference. Please send proposals to: Warren Hofstra, Department of History, Shenandoah University, 1460 University Drive, Winchester VA 22601; <whofstra@su.edu>

Environmental History Appointment

The Department of History at the University of Kansas has appointed Gregory Cushman (Ph.D., University of Texas) to teach international environmental history. Cushman’s other fields include Latin America and the history of science and technology. He joins recently appointed Karl Brooks (J.D., Harvard; Ph.D., University of Kansas), who is a member of the History faculty and Director of the Environmental Studies Program and a specialist in the history of Kansas. Cushman is a member of the History faculty and Director of the Environmental Studies Program and a specialist in the history of Kansas.

Hall Professor of American History. Others in the department who will assist in developing a University-wide workshop on the history of environment and technology will interact with graduate students in the History Department. The Fellow will be appointed as a Lecturer for one year and may be renewed, subject to satisfactory performance, for up to three years total. The successful candidate will have graduate training and research experience in the history of technology or environmental history, and will plan to develop expertise in the complementary field during the fellowship. Additional information about the position and program may be found at www.tcc.virginia.edu/news/chet-job. Prior teaching experience is desirable. The candidate must have completed the Ph.D. prior to beginning the appointment in September 2004. The appointment includes competitive salary with benefits. Send letter of application that includes research and publication plans, c. v., sample publication or paper, and three letters of recommendation to Professor W. Bernard Carlson, Division of Technology, Culture, and Communication, University of Virginia, PO. Box 400744, Charlottesville, VA, 22904-4744.

Application deadline is February 1, 2004. The University of Virginia is an AA/EOE and strongly encourages applications from candidates who would enhance the diversity of the university’s faculty.

Scholars in Residence Program

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) invites applications for its 2004-2005 Scholars in Residence Program, including applications for collaborative residencies. The Scholars in Residence Program provides support for up to three months of full-time research and study in manuscript and artifact collections maintained by any Commission facility, including the Pennsylvania State Archives, The State Museum of Pennsylvania, and 26 historic sites and museums around the states. Collaborative residencies fund research that relates to the interpretive mission and advances the programmatic goals of any PHMC program or facility, including the agency’s history sites and museums. A collaborative residency proposal must be filed jointly by the interested scholar and host program/facility.

Residency programs are open to all who are conducting research on Pennsylvania history, including academic scholars, public sector history professionals, independent scholars, graduate students, educators, writers, filmmakers, and others. Residencies are available for four to twelve week between May 1, 2004 and April 30, 2005, at the rate of $1,500 per month. However, because both the Pennsylvania State Archives and the State Museum of Pennsylvania professionals whose papers have been accepted.

Proposals should include a title for the paper and the author’s name, address, email address, and telephone and fax numbers. The proposals should be single-sided, a maximum of 400 words, and accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae. They must state the argument of the paper, discuss the methodology, and lay out scope and content. Only one submission per author will be accepted. 

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Positions Open

North Carolina State University history department invites applications for a tenure-track assistant professor of American environmental history to begin July 2004. Applicants should have PhD by fall 2004. Evidence of scholarly potential and a strong commitment to teaching is expected. Application deadline is November 1, 2003. Please send a letter of application, resume, and three recommendation letters to: Prof. Ross Bassett, Environmental History Search, Department of History, Box 8108, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8108; email:<ross_bassett@ncsu.edu>

History of Environment and Technology. Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow, University of Virginia. The Committee for the History of Environment and Technology brings together faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering and Applied Science in order to facilitate research and teaching in the history of environment and technology. To further this aim, the Committee will hire a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow for 2004-2007, using funding from the National Science Foundation. This Fellow will teach undergraduate courses in the Engineering School which integrate historical perspectives with professional communications and engineering ethics. In addition, the Fellow will assist in developing a University-wide workshop on the history of environment and technology and will interact with graduate students in the History Department. The Fellow will be appointed as a Lecturer for one year and may be renewed, subject to satisfactory performance, for up to three years total. The successful candidate will have graduate training and research experience in the history of technology or environmental history, and will plan to develop expertise in the complementary field during the fellowship. Additional information about the position and program may be found at www.tcc.virginia.edu/news/chet-job. Prior teaching experience is desirable. The candidate must have completed the Ph.D. prior to beginning the appointment in September 2004. The appointment includes competitive salary with benefits. Send letter of application that includes research and publication plans, c. v., sample publication or paper, and three letters of recommendation to Professor W. Bernard Carlson, Division of Technology, Culture, and Communication, University of Virginia, PO. Box 400744, Charlottesville, VA, 22904-4744.

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Awards

Each year, the ASEH awards the following four prizes for outstanding published work in the field of environmental history: George Perkins Marsh Prize for Best Book in Environmental History; Leopold-Hidy Prize for Best Article in Environmental History; Alice Hamilton Prize for Best Article Outside Environmental History; and the Rachel Carson Prize for Best Dissertation in Environmental History.

Award Submissions for 2004

This year ASEH’s prize committees will evaluate submissions (published books and articles and completed dissertations) that appear between November 1, 2002 and October 31, 2003. Please send three copies of each submission by November 7, 2003 to: Lisa Mighetto, 119 Pine Street, Suite 301, Seattle, WA 98101. No need to send copies of articles published in Environmental History. If you have questions, contact Lisa at <mighetto@hrassoc.com>

ASEH Travel Grants Awarded

Congratulations to the following individuals, who will receive travel grants for the ASEH/NCPH conference in Victoria, British Columbia in 2004:

- Helen MacDonald E.V. and Nancy Melosi Travel Grant
- Jan Oosthoek Morgan and Jeanie Sherwood Travel Grant
- Stefania Gallani Morgan and Jeanie Sherwood Travel Grant
- Will Barnett Ellen Swallow Richards Travel Grant
- Lawrence Culver Donald Worster Travel Grant
- Melissa Songer J. Donald Hughes Travel Grant
- Felicia Bell John D. Wirth Travel Grant
- Tom Robertson ASEH Travel Endowment Grant
- Lissa Wadewitz ASEH Travel Endowment Grant
- Brian Frenner ASEH Travel Endowment Grant
- Sara Gregg ASEH Travel Endowment Grant

ASEH Donation Form

I am pleased to support the ASEH through a gift, which is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

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My check in the amount of $______________ is enclosed. Make checks payable to American Society for Environmental History.

My pledge in the amount of $____________ is payable [ ] monthly [ ] quarterly [ ] annually for ____ years (Reminders are sent)

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Telephone _________________________________ E-mail _____________________________________________

Unless otherwise indicated all donors will be listed in the ASEH Newsletter. [ ] I prefer to be listed as anonymous.

Mail to: Mark Madison, ASEH Treasurer, National Conservation Training Center, 698 Conservation Way, Shepherdstown, WV 25443-9713

Call for Manuscripts

Are you writing an environmental-related book or planning on it in the near future? If so, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers would like to talk with you. This press is actively looking to expand our environmental-related book offerings and invite you to submit your book proposal to Brian Romer, Environmental Studies editor, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Rowman & Littlefield is currently looking for core texts, supplemental texts, and readers that can be used in the college classroom. While we do publish scholarly works and works for the general trade, my current focus is on college texts. To learn more about us, please visit us online at www.rowmanlittlefield.com. To submit a book idea, go to the “Submission Guidelines” section on how to do so, then send it to Brian Romer at <bromer@rowman.com>, Brian Romer, Environmental Studies editor, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2825 SE 67th Ave., Portland, OR 97206, (503) 788-1539.

Member News

During 2003-04, Philip J. Pauly, Department of History, Rutgers University, will serve as a fellow at The Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers, The New York Public Library. For more information about fellows and their projects, see <http://www.nypl.org/press/03scholartopics.html>.

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Pennsylvania will be undergoing extensive renovations during 2004-2005. archival collections may only be available through September 2004; certain artifact collections will not be available for study at all during the 2004-2005 residency period. Deadline for application is January 16, 2004. Complete information and application materials are available at the PHMC website: <www.phmc.state.pa.us>. You may also write: Division of History, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Commonwealth Keystone Building Plaza Level, 400 North St., Harrisburg, PA 17120-0053; or call 717-787-3034; or email <lshopes@state.pa.us>.

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Are you writing an environmental-related book or planning on it in the near future? If so, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers would like to talk with you. This press is actively looking to expand our environmental-related book offerings and invite you to submit your book proposal to Brian Romer, Environmental Studies editor, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Rowman & Littlefield is currently looking for core texts, supplemental texts, and readers that can be used in the college classroom. While we do publish scholarly works and works for the general trade, my current focus is on college texts. To learn more about us, please visit us online at www.rowmanlittlefield.com. To submit a book idea, go to the “Submission Guidelines” section on how to do so, then send it to Brian Romer at <bromer@rowman.com>, Brian Romer, Environmental Studies editor, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2825 SE 67th Ave., Portland, OR 97206, (503) 788-1539.

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