

The USDA Forest Service History Program

By Aaron Shapiro, Chief Historian, USDA Forest Service

As the new Forest Service historian and as a fellow ASEH member, I want to introduce the Forest Service history program and let you know that I look forward to working with you in the years ahead. The 2005 Forest Service centennial, which included the release of *The Greatest Good* film and companion book, the Centennial Congress, lectures by Char Miller, and many other wonderful projects and events, helped increase awareness of forest history. Building on these accomplishments, the Forest Service history program has identified five critical priorities to guide it into the future: (1) Improve Collection Management and Digital Access; (2) Expand Public Outreach; (3) Cultivate Existing and Establish New Partnerships; (4) Support Scholarship on Environmental, Forest, and Agency History; (5) Conduct Oral Histories Relevant to Current Management and that Aid Historical Research.

I came to the Forest Service from Chicago's Newberry Library, where I was Assistant Director of the Scholl Center for Family and Community History. I also served as a visiting lecturer at the University of Chicago, teaching environmental history and 20th-century American history. I completed my undergraduate studies at Penn and received my MA and PhD from the University of Chicago, where my research examined tourism, land use, and environmental change in the Upper Great Lakes during the 20th century.

For those of you who have done forest-related research, you know it can present challenges. Your travels might take you to the climate-controlled atmosphere of NARA II in College Park or into the woods. Some days a regional records center or a Forest Service office might fit the bill. Other times you might head virtually or in person to one of our partners, the Forest History Society. We need to make things easier for researchers and the general public by providing access and encouraging communication among people interested in forest history.

Current program partners include the Grey Towers National Historic Landmark, the Forest History Society, and the National Museum of Forest Service History, slated to open in 2009 in Missoula. The Forest Service History program plans to develop and expand on its network of organizations and individuals to share in the preservation and interpretation of Forest Service history. That is where many of you come in.

We have a wonderful opportunity to identify and develop projects and programs by bringing together the expertise and collected knowledge within the agency and with outside partners like all of you. I hope that as ASEH members you will help us meet these priorities. I encourage you send ideas and feedback to me at <aaronshapiro@fs.fed.us> or 202.205.0958. Please stop in if travels take you to Washington, DC. I look forward to meeting all of you in Baton Rouge.

Editor's Note: Meet Aaron at the forest history breakfast at the Baton Rouge Conference, March 2007.

Travel Grants Available for 2007 Baton Rouge Conference

ASEH's next conference is scheduled for February 28 - March 3, 2007 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. *Please note the early dates.* We wish to encourage graduate students and minority, low-income, and international scholars to attend and present at this meeting. The following seven named grants, at \$500 each, are available for those presenting at the conference:

- E.V. and Nancy Melosi Travel Grant
- 2 Morgan and Jeanie Sherwood Travel Grants
- Ellen Swallow Richards Travel Grant
- Donald Worster Travel Grant
- J. Donald Hughes Travel Grant
- John D. Wirth Grant for International Travel

Four additional Travel Endowment Grants of \$500 each for presenting at the conference are available. A grant is also available for a minority/non-white scholar from North America,

Mexico, or the Caribbean who would like to attend the Baton Rouge conference.

Apply for 2007 Grants

If you wish to apply, please mail or email your resume, paper title, and a list of all funding applied for this conference to:

David Louter (Travel Grants)
 National Park Service
 Pacific West Region
 909 First Avenue, Fifth Floor
 Seattle, Washington 98104
 e-mail address: <ASEH2007@hotmail.com> (subject line: travel grant)

All applications must be received by October 13, 2006. We will notify recipients at the end of October 2006.

From the President's Desk

The Long Cycle

As background to my Canada project, I read Edmund Wilson's *O Canada*, and was relieved to learn his opinion that the best book on Canada had been written by an American. He referred, of course, to Francis Parkman. That sent me scurrying to flesh out my reading of Parkman and to realize, with a start, that my Cycle of Fire suite had, by time and mass, come to rival *France and England in North America*. It was a humbling experience, like watching one's grandchildren grow and wondering how they could mature so suddenly when you yourself hadn't aged at all.

This minor epiphany inspired me to ponder the perils and prospects of a life of writing, which led me to plot a chronicle of all my books and the tidal flow of their sales. The latter instantly revealed what should have been an obvious fact but which evidently needed a graphic rendering: all my career moves – between universities, campuses, departments – had come during the troughs. They happened when new projects were stalled and old ones in the doldrums, such that I became sufficiently restless to move. There were no major troughs without a move, and no moves save at a trough. The corollary was equally obvious. My career had flowed from my books,

not my books from my university appointments. Books had gotten me hired, had pushed through my promotions, allowed me to continue my scholarship. Whether I admitted it or not, I behaved as though I were a writer first, and a professor second.

But what kind of writer? Between the writer foxes and the writer hedgehogs, I have been (mostly) a hedgehog. I learned one big thing and have stayed with it. Perhaps the time has come to offer an *apologia* for that fact, and a reflection on the delights and hazards of a multi-volume project.

For me, the saving grace has been that the organization of the Cycle is not historical but geographic. Each book is a whole unto itself. Each requires recentering in another locale and culture. Each demands its peculiar informing principle and internal organization. Each can invite – should, in fact, insist upon – a slightly distinctive style. The great danger of a multivolume project organized chronologically is fatigue and staleness, in which ideas become mute as mileposts and words become duties. At least to my own sense, I have avoided that peril, and my interest in writing about other topics, and about fire in other ways, has been in part a calculated strategy to (attempt to) keep my voice fresh and my prose from collapsing under its own weight.

The real pitfall, I think, is social, in that such a project distorts the society of scholarship. What I have are books, not students. Because those books relate to one another, they form a community more or less sui generis and one too large to fit tidily into courses or research agendas. In a sense I have both created and destroyed a field of study. The very integrity and massiveness of the project, which make it so formidable, also render it difficult to integrate with that larger corpus of scholarship that our professional society celebrates. The Cycle has become a kind of gated community; the cost of entry for newcomers is high; probably no one will seriously undertake revisions until I have passed from the scene. As friendly critics have pointed out, one book would have made the point, and encouraged others to pick up the torch. But that, I reply, would have left so much unstudied that I, at least, was not content to abandon to undetermined others.

Here Parkman's belated example offers ambiguous solace. His sweep of volumes can be read for what they say about his own times. Ours, however, is not an age for epics, which can too easily slide into the ironic inversion of the mock epic; there are reasons why "epics" today seem anchored in genre fiction, not scholarship. Will the Cycle speak of our times? I wonder.

What I do not wonder about is whether the task was, for me, unworthy, unwarranted, or uninteresting. I would do it all over again, instantly. That is the core choice before all of us as scholars, not the substance of our labors but the commitment to a life's work; or to paraphrase Socrates, the belief that the examining life is worth living. I have no doubt it is. And while from time to time I might envy the foxes, I suspect they also occasionally look wistfully at the hedgehogs.

Steve Pyne, ASEH President

American Society for Environmental History

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The American Society for Environmental History seeks understanding of the human experience of the environment from the perspective of history, liberal arts, and sciences. The Society encourages cross-disciplinary dialogue on every aspect of the present and past relationship of humankind to the natural environment. ASEH maintains a website at <www.aseh.net>. Contact <webmaster@aseh.net> to discuss including material on the web page.

Items for the next newsletter should be sent by *December 15, 2006*, to: Lisa Mighetto, Editor, 119 Pine St., Suite 301, Seattle, WA 98101. E-mail to <director@aseh.net>.

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The Profession

Dissertation versus Book

By Boyd Zenner, University of Virginia Press

As an acquiring editor at a university press, I often receive submissions from young scholars who apparently have not been given much, if any, guidance on how to revise a dissertation into a book. In today's tough publishing climate, it doesn't make sense for a prospective author to handicap him- or herself by sending out a proposal or manuscript whose appeal is obscured by typical "dissertationese," making it difficult for an editor to see the countours of the book beneath.

The difference between a dissertation and a book is straightforward and function-based. A dissertation is designed to show a faculty committee that an author is thoroughly conversant with and capable of analyzing the scholarship in a given field, and can substantiate – with suitable references – any claims advanced. At the book manuscript stage, this fundamental mastery is a given, and the emphasis shifts to what is original about the author's work, and to how clearly and convincingly this information is conveyed.

A book's argument should be logically conceived and tightly structured. Confidently advanced arguments do not call attention to their own existence with phrases such as "this study will demonstrate" and "my research suggests," nor do they lean (visibly) upon the assertions of others. A good manuscript must be solidly grounded in meticulous research, but this foundation – like that of a house – should not show. For the most part, appearances by other critics should be relegated to the scholarly apparatus and their comments not invoked directly in the text itself. (Let me add that the notes section is not the place to

continue an argument begun earlier in the book: if a point is really worth making, it belongs within the text.)

Generally, the review of the literature with which dissertations in many fields begin should be eliminated in the revision process, along with quagmires of unnecessary specialized language and any other impediments to clarity and succinctness. The notion that "complicated ideas require complicated language" is nonsense, if "complicated language" is taken to mean jargon and stilted, passive-voice prose. Ideas, complicated or not, cannot be understood perfectly unless they are couched in lucid terms. This is particularly important if the author hopes to reach a cross-disciplinary audience and/or a general readership.

Obviously, the recommendations above are very basic. For writers seeking detailed guidance on revising their dissertations, two excellent resources (among the many available) are William Germano's *Getting it Published* (Chicago 2001) and Susan Rabiner and Alfred Fortunato's *Thinking Like Your Editor* (Norton 2002), the latter particularly good for those hoping to reach a wider readership interested in serious nonfiction.

Attention Authors and Presses:

ASEH's next conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (February 28 - March 3, 2007) will include a book exhibit. Space is limited and tables are going fast. To reserve a table, see the form on our website <www.aseh.net>; click on "Conferences."

Film Review: The Manchac Swamp: Manmade Disaster in Search of Resolution (Louisiana)

By Bruce Thompson, University of California - Santa Cruz

The Manchac Swamp was one of Louisiana's natural wonders, a vast belt of wetlands between Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Maurepas, where a majestic forest of cypress trees once anchored a flourishing and distinctive ecosystem. Even today the place has an iridescent beauty, but the great forest has been reduced to a shattered remnant of what it was before intensive logging began in the 1870s, and aerial photographs reveal the spokes of hundreds of artificial canals criss-crossing the wetlands. Historian Samuel Hyde, Jr. and biologist Paul Keddy of Southeastern Louisiana University's Center for Southeast Studies have collaborated to produce a superb documentary film that traces the history of the human assault on the environment of this region.

The film proceeds chronologically from the era of French exploration in the seventeenth century to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. For more than a century settlers avoided the Manchac in favor of places that were, like Baton Rouge, less prone to inundation. By the early nineteenth century, however, the streams that fed the swamp were already under pressure from settlers whose farming practices sent nitrogen-rich topsoil and animal waste products downstream in quantities sufficient to produce eutrophication. But the full-scale assault on the great Manchac cypress forest began after the Civil War. Union soldiers had noticed huge trees ripe for exploitation, and the Radical Republicans who controlled the Congress considered the South's natural resources as the spoils of victory. As timber stands in the eastern United States dwindled, the Manchac's great trees became an irresistible target. The advent of the railroad and steam-powered boats made it possible to harvest the trees and to transport their lumber to distant markets, while an act of Congress facilitated the sale of the swamp's "public lands" to private corporations at prices below twenty-five cents per acre.

For five decades after 1870 Louisiana became one of the country's principal suppliers of timber, with as many as 400 sawmills processing cypress trees around the clock. The film includes vintage archival footage of the system of cables, pulleys, and feeder ditches that were devised to extract logs from the swamp. By 1930 the unsustainable rate of extraction had begun to force the closure of the mills, but the Manchac's troubles were far from over. In recent decades the principal problems have been salt-water intrusion and the arrival of invasive species like the voracious nutria (which devours young cypress trees) and the prolific water hyacinth (which marginalizes other native flora). Only a determined effort by a mobilized citizenry, the filmmakers conclude, has a chance of saving this badly damaged ecosystem and restoring its function as a natural buffer against hurricanes like Katrina.

We tend to think of the destruction of wetlands and deforestation as environmental scourges that afflict very different kinds of places. But in this part of Louisiana, Hyde and Keddy demonstrate, the two scourges occurred in the same

place, with predictably devastating consequences. The Manchac Swamp belongs on the short list of first-rate films about American environmental history.

Note: anyone interested in Louisiana's environmental history will welcome the recent restoration of Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* (1948) by Robert Gitt and his colleagues (available as a DVD from Home Vision Entertainment). Set in the Petit Anse Bayou, it shows the arrival of an oil derrick through the eyes of a Cajun boy who is also an intrepid explorer of the cypress swamp. With a glorious score by Virgil Thomson and exquisite cinematography by Richard Leacock, it is quite simply one of the most beautiful films ever made in America. It also represents the high water mark of American optimism about the possibility of a successful marriage between the industrial world and the natural one.

Environmental Journalists List Influential Books

By Mark Neuzil, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota

I began with a simple question asked of today's leading environmental journalists: Which book was most important/influential to you in your career?

The query, posed on the Society of Environmental Journalists' listserv, was meant to help me in my work on a history of environmental journalism. (The book will be part of Northwestern University's "Visions of the American Press" series.) In no way did I mean to compile the answers in a quantitative way; I was looking for anecdotes. I also culled a few ideas from various book forewords, commentaries and other published sources.

Many of the reporters who responded - and I thought it interesting that most responded "off-list" rather than for everyone else to see - mentioned books about the region of the country from where they report. Thus books like *Cadillac Desert*, *A River No More*, *An Air That Kills*, and *The Natural Heritage of Indiana*. (The latter message led to an interesting exchange about the native Hoosier nature writer Gene Stratton Porter.) The books about place may have been mentioned because of the way I worded the question: "important in your career." I wonder what the responses would have been had I asked what book, if any, "made you want to become an environmental journalist?"

Some books were instructional (*Green Ink*), some were topical (*The War Against the Greens*), some were species-focused (*Kingbird Highway*), or science-focused (*In Control of Nature*, *The World According to Pimm*).

The two most popular responses from the reporters were *Silent Spring* and *A Sand County Almanac*. The journalistic qualities of Rachel Carson's masterpiece - the research and documentation - were important to the reporters; for Aldo Leopold, it was his love of the land that had great meaning.

The most touching reply came from the reporter who was introduced to Leopold's work by her father, who owned four copies of SCA. When her father died, she read from it at his funeral, choosing the text by simply allowing the book to fall open to a well-loved page.

2007 Baton Rouge Conference Update

"Living on the Edge: Human Desires and Environmental Realities"

NOTE: ASEH will meet earlier than usual next year. Our next conference is scheduled for February 28 - March 3, 2007 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Special events include a rolling seminar to New Orleans on the first day. Space is limited for this event, and we will accept registration on a first-come, first-served basis. Most people will need to arrive at the conference on Tuesday evening in order to attend this field trip on Wednesday morning.

The conference also will include an opening reception that features former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, field trips, a jambalaya feast, and a banquet featuring King Milling, Chairman of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Restoration and Conservation and President of America's Wetland Foundation as the keynote speaker. For more information on events and speakers, see our website at <www.aseh.net> and click on "Conferences."

Conference programs will be mailed to members and will be available on our website in November. Here, to help with conference planning, is some preliminary information:

Hotel Info.:

Sheraton Baton Rouge Convention Center Hotel
Phone: 888.627.8567

Rates:

Double \$102/night
Student \$89/night

Registration Info.:

ASEH Member

- Register before Feb. 1, 2007, \$85
- Register after Feb. 1, 2007, \$95

Non-Member

- Register before Feb. 1, 2007, \$95
- Register after Feb. 1, 2007, \$105

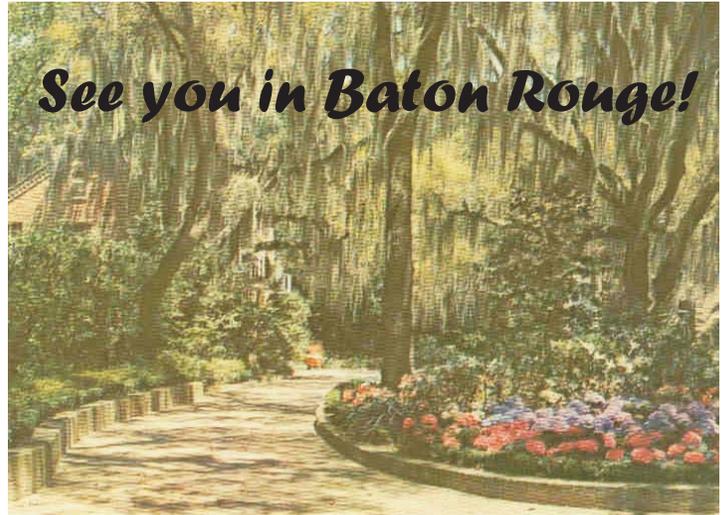
Student

- Register before Feb. 1, 2007, \$40
- Register after Feb. 1, 2007, \$50

Single-Day Registration \$40

Field trips include the following:

- Environmental Justice in the Chemical Corridor
- Old River Control Structure
- Invasive Species
- Birding in the Atchafaloya Basin



- Walking Tour of Nature in the City (Downtown Baton Rouge)

For more information, please contact:

David Louter, National Park Service, Program Committee Chair, at <David_Louter@nps.gov>

Craig Colten, Louisiana State University, Local Arrangements Committee Chair, at <ccolten@lsu.edu>

Second Call for Posters - Baton Rouge Conference

The ASEH Program Committee is offering a second call for poster proposals for its meeting in Baton Rouge, February 28 - March 3, 2007. If you have already submitted a poster application, it is not necessary to submit a second application. Proposals may address any area of environmental history, but in keeping with the conference's theme, the committee specifically solicits submissions examining perceptions of risk and social responses to environmental disasters and the idea of living on the edge: edges of danger, edges of continents, edges of poverty, and the space between history and other disciplines. After the enormous destruction along the Gulf Coast resulting from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, it seems all the more essential to consider the deep complexities of dealing with environmental hazards, and the varying roles of science, government, politics, and community.

To submit a proposal, go to <<http://chnm.gmu.edu/tools/surveys/1725/>> and fill out the form.

Deadline: October 10, 2006

Should you have questions about posters, please contact:

ASEH Program Committee, <ASEH2007@hotmail.com>

Laura Watt, Sonoma State University
 <lawatt@california.com>

Announcements

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Scholars in Residence Program

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission invites applications for its 2007-2008 Scholars in Residence Program, including applications for collaborative residencies. The Scholars in Residence program provides support for up to eight weeks 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 twenty-five historic sites and museums around the state. Collaborative residencies fund original analytic and/or synthetic research that relates to the interpretive mission and advances the programmatic goals of a PHMC program or facility, including the agency's historic sites and museums. A collaborative residence application 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 professionals, independent scholars, graduate students, educators, writers, filmmakers, and others. Residencies may be scheduled for up to eight weeks at any time during the period May 1, 2007 - April 30, 2008; stipends are awarded at the rate of \$375 per week. For a full description of the residency program and application materials, as well as information about Commission research collections, go to the PHMC

web site: <www.phmc.state.pa.us>. You may also write: Scholars in Residence Program, Bureau of Archives and History, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 350 North St., Harrisburg, PA 17120-0090; or call: 717.787.3034; or email: <RA-PHMCscholars@state.pa.us>.

Deadline for application is January 12, 2007. Notification of awards will be made in late March.

The Commission does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability. Individuals with disabilities who require assistance or accommodation to participate in this program should contact the Commission at 717.772.3257 or the Pennsylvania TDD relay service at 800.654.5984 to discuss their needs. For further information, or an electronic version of this announcement, contact: Linda Shopes, Scholars in Residence Program Manager, 717.722.3257; <lshopes@state.pa.us>

Member News

David Louter's book *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington's National Parks*, with a foreword by William Cronon, was published this summer by the University of Washington Press.

Liza Piper will be starting as an Assistant Professor in the Department of History and Classics at the University of Alberta-Edmonton in July 2007.

Call for Proposals to Host ASEH Conferences

The Site Selection Committee is now soliciting proposals from individuals or groups who are interested in hosting the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Environmental History in 2010. Those interested should contact the Chair of the Site Selection Committee, Paul S. Sutter (Department of History, LeConte Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-1602; 706.542.2497; <sutter@uga.edu> for a copy of the ASEH's Conference Guidelines and other information. *The deadline for submission of proposals for the 2010 meeting is March 1, 2007.* Please keep in mind that hosting a conference requires substantial effort and time as well as significant institutional support.

ASEH Awards Submission for 2006 - FINAL NOTICE

This year ASEH's prize committees will evaluate submissions (published books and articles and completed dissertations) that appear between November 1, 2005 and October 31, 2006. *Please send three copies of each submission by November 3, 2006 to:*

Lisa Mighetto
119 Pine Street, Suite 301
Seattle, WA 98101

If you have questions, please contact Lisa at <director@aseh.net>.

For a list of previous award winners and evaluation comments, see ASEH's website at <www.aseh.net> and click on "Awards."

ASEH Fundraising Campaigns

Owing to the wonderful generosity of members, ASEH can report the following progress on the two fundraising campaigns initiated last summer.

ASEH Offers First Rothman Fellowship

In recognition of Hal K. Rothman's commitment to the American Society for Environmental History and to graduate education in the field of environmental history, the ASEH will offer a graduate student fellowship for dissertation research in the field of environmental history.

The applicant should be a doctoral candidate who has completed comprehensive examinations for his or her dissertation subject. The student should submit a vita and a 500-word statement summarizing the project and the particular library or collection in which research would be completed. Additionally, the student's graduate advisor should send a letter of recommendation.

In this inaugural year, and while fundraising efforts are ongoing, the fellowship will be for \$1,000. In the future, once contributions sufficiently build the principal, ASEH will give this fellowship annually and in the amount of \$1,500.

The application deadline is December 15.

The 2007 Hal K. Rothman Fellowship Committee:

- Kathleen A. Brosnan, University of Houston
- Mark Cioc, University of California, Santa Cruz
- Char Miller, Trinity University
- Adam Rome, Pennsylvania State University

The student's vita and statement and the graduate advisor's letter should be sent to <kbrosnan@uh.edu>.

Anyone interested in donating to the Hal K. Rothman Fellowship Fund should complete the form below.



HAL K. ROTHMAN FELLOWSHIP FUND

- \$1,000 or installments of \$ _____ every ____ years
- (ASEH can accept installments of \$100 or more)
- \$500 or installments of \$ _____ every ____ years
- \$250 or installments of \$ _____ every ____ years
- \$100
- \$50
- other \$ _____

Checks should be made payable to the ASEH, with "Hal Rothman Fellowship" on the memo line, and sent to:

ASEH Treasurer Mark Madison
698 Conservation Way
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

UPDATE: Matching Fund Campaign for Executive Director

As reported last summer, an anonymous donor has offered to contribute \$10,000 to our Executive Director fund if ASEH members can match that amount by the end of 2006. We are pleased to report that we have raised nearly \$8,000 to this end so

far. We are very close to our goal – and anyone interested in contributing to this campaign should complete the form below.

With thanks for your assistance,

Steve Pyne
President, ASEH



FUND TO ENDOW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ASEH

I would like to contribute the following amount:

- \$1,000
- \$500
- \$250
- \$100
- \$50
- \$25
- other \$ _____

Checks should be made payable to the ASEH, with "ASEH Executive Director Endowment Fund" on the memo line, and sent to:

ASEH Treasurer Mark Madison
698 Conservation Way
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

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ASEH News 

American Society for Environmental History

c/o Historical Research Associates, Inc.
119 Pine Street, Suite 301
Seattle, WA 98101-1592