

Film Review

The Scene of a Crime: Travis Wilkerson's "An Injury to One" Investigates Class Conflict in Environmental History

By Linda Ivey, University of California - Santa Cruz

The opening shot is familiar to environmental historians – a desolate landscape, barren, ghostly hills, with a factory in the background, evidence of a brutal industrialism. In the foreground appear words that distinguish this particular film about mining in the West: "... organize as a class ... take possession of the means of production ... abolish the wage system ... live in harmony with the earth."

Travis Wilkerson's film *An Injury to One* revisits the history of copper mining in Butte, Montana. Rather than focusing solely on the industry's ecological impact, however, Wilkerson reminds us of the social repercussions of industrialization. The above words, drawn from the preamble to the IWW's constitution, reveal the filmmaker's primary concern: the bitter legacy of class conflict that accompanied the exploitation of natural resources in the American West.

Butte's story is a classic in the history of American industrialism: as copper became essential to the distribution of electricity, Butte's generous mineral deposits resulted in a multi-billion dollar industry. But a national tradition of ruthless extractive processes, a capitalist wage system, and the mining industry's desire for profit at nearly any cost (to the land or the people), created not only a future EPA Superfund site, but also an impoverished community of miners who toiled under treacherous conditions. Wilkerson offers a vivid portrait of the labor movement that emerged during the First World War, anchored by the story of IWW organizer Frank Little. Little's subsequent lynching, presumably instigated by corporate thugs,

shows that the combination of the Wobblies' socialist agenda with the mining industry's high stakes war profiteering could be lethal.



Yet the only remaining historical evidence of this ferocity is found in the company newspaper, and so, Wilkerson notes with dismay, "company history becomes official history."

Butte's Berkeley Pit, a one-mile-wide physical scar caused by decades of ravenous mining, is currently one of the nation's most severely polluted regions. In 1995, migrating geese set down on "Berkeley Lake" during a storm. By morning, nearly 350 geese were found dead, their corpses disfigured by lesions. Wilkerson's punchline: the corporation that had bought what was left of the mining operations in 1977, and then assured local citizens that the water was safe, had been less than candid. Corporate profits still outweighed the health of the populace, and while the incriminating documents of the "true" Frank Little story may have been lost, the evidence of ecological degradation could not be denied.

If race is the principal theme of Ken Burns's major

documentaries, Wilkerson's film highlights the role of class in American history. The film includes lyrics of old mining songs that reveal fear of the volatile social situation in Butte's mining heyday, as well as a budding class consciousness. Against a backdrop of environmental blight, Wilkerson's *An Injury to One* portrays violent labor conflict and corporate greed, reminding us of a pervasive theme in the American past: as capitalist industrialism ravaged the land, its appetite for profit at any price did not go uncontested.

53 minutes /Sale-video: \$390/Rental-video: \$125. For more information, see <<http://www.frif.com/new2003/inj.html>>

From the President's Desk

Boosting Books

Most of us write books. We read books, we teach books, we are judged professionally and bureaucratically by books. We award prizes for books, the advertisers in the journal and sponsors of our meeting are publishers, and the central gathering place at the annual meeting, our collective watering hole, is the publishers' book exhibit. Ours is a book culture.

But most of American society is not; that includes much of the modern university. The querulous observations of C.P. Snow still hold. His science colleagues dismissed books, thinking of them, if they entered consciousness at all, as "tools." (What sort of tool might a book make? Snow wondered. A primitive spade?) What his colleague meant was that books exist as repositories for information. They hold data between their covers; that is their only value, and as better media for data arise the book will become antiquarian, a cultural precious object. Even more so today, I find that scientific colleagues are prone not merely to discount books but to scorn them actively.

Plausible explanations are many. Their unit of work is the funded project, whose purpose is to collect data then codified in a suitable suite of journal articles. Books take too long to write and publish: the crest of an active field will rush past and priority will be lost. There is a misplaced tendency to measure productivity by counting

publications, lumping together everything from a letter to the editor of *Science* with an 800-page synthesis of a field, each worth the same. ("Our banquet speaker tonight has 114 publications...") Better to publish six articles than one book. Books are what senior people do after their active scholarship has ended. But this still leaves unaccounted the active animus against the book, for which one must appeal to perhaps irreconcilable scholarly cultures, and especially the idiosyncrasies of the Academy.

Joining a science department has forced our small band (a "Human Dimensions" faculty) to argue for books in a practical way since it affects our various evaluations. I needed a data set, and turned to my own oeuvre. I converted my books into projects with a timeline from conception to research to completed text to publication. This created a muddle of a graph but it was a medium my colleagues thought they comprehended. The numbers, however, were the interesting point. From the time I actually committed to writing a particular book - that is, spent money, visited archives, interviewed - until the book saw print averaged 5.6 years. (Curiously, the shelf life of a book, until it went out of print, was 5.5 years.) This immediately struck me as coincident with various cycles - graduate school, sabbaticals, fellowship funding, and of course tenure decisions. The data isn't, at this stage, more than anecdotal, but it was helpful in arguing that the book as an expression of scholarship has a career logic. One could, in principle, track whether someone was on a suitable path, even if that track diverged in the woods from the well-signed one most departmental members took.

All this avoided the real issue. Was the work any good? And is a book the right medium for expressing it? Or further, what is the value of a book compared with other outputs? Here, discussions broke down. The case for the book rests with a conception of scholarship that goes beyond journal articles, data sets, hypotheses and evidence. It is the case for thick description, for a textured rendering of the world, for an evocation of moral complexity and ambiguity that must appeal to art as well as scholarship. Sometimes an essay can carry this burden, but more often the imagined world simply demands more words and the organization of those words requires yet more words to help carry the strain, like the pilings and cables of a suspension bridge. When I think of a book, that is what I see, not simply so many pages bound between covers, and not something that can be understood by simply being tabulated. But that is a conception not easily conveyed to those who demand simple formulas through which one can crunch scholarship as though it, too, were only so much bundled data.

Historians are often relegated to bardic and archival functions. We might be called upon to open a session with the remembered deeds of the clan, or to gather up the scraps into a chronicle at the end. Too rarely, in my experience, is history considered analytical or synthetic - is it invited to join the hard work of understanding and concocting solutions. In this sense the book is a burden, particularly in fields like environmental studies where we must interact with the sciences and models hungry for coded input. Of course we need to present our knowledge in venues others can absorb, which means shorter pieces and perhaps data-laden tables, but behind them, in my view, must stand the kind of scholarship best conveyed by a book. Our future and that of the book will likely remain joined.

Steve Pyne
ASEH President

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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 <K.J.W.Oosthoek@newcastle.ac.uk> to discuss including material on the web page.

Items for the next newsletter should be sent by *April 10, 2006*, to:
 Lisa Mighetto, Editor, 119 Pine St., Suite 301, Seattle, WA 98101. E-mail to <mighetto@hrassoc.com>.

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ASEH's Next Annual Conference St. Paul, Minnesota March 31 - April 2, 2006

By Mark Neuzil, University of St. Thomas

Field trips to the Mississippi River, the Mall of America and the Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, keynote speaker Scott Russell Sanders and a trio of nationally known environmental journalists are some of the highlights of the 2006 American Society for Environmental History/Forest History Society joint annual meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The conference runs from March 29 through April 1 at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel in downtown St. Paul. The theme of the meeting is "Rivers Run Through Them: Landscapes in Environmental History." The Mississippi River plays prominently in the conference, from the view from the hotel to one of the field trips from the St. Anthony Falls lock and dam downstream to the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. Other field trips include an outing to the Mall, America's largest indoor retail space and a must-see for historians interested in consumerism, business and cultural representations of nature. A third trip will be to the Mill City Museum, which showcases the flour industry in Minnesota, with a stop at the National Center for the Study of Earth Surface Dynamics.

Birders will get an opportunity to see bald eagles, waterfowl, and songbirds at the Minnesota River; warm clothes will be a must! Other field trips will include an environmental justice outing to the Green Institute of Minneapolis and Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota and an urban growth/sprawl/open spaces trip to St. Paul and its suburbs. Although not an "official" tour stop, the Minnesota History Center is another option for an outing, this one self-guided. For those who don't want to brave the weather, the award-winning environmental film *Minnesota: A History of the Land* will be shown.

Sanders will deliver the keynote address on Saturday, April 1. His many publications include short stories, novels, children's books and works of creative non-fiction. A Distinguished Professor at Indiana University, Sanders' most recent books include *The Force of Spirit* (Beacon, 2000), *The Country of Language* (Milkweed Editions, 1999) and *Hunting for Hope* (Beacon, 1998). He is a frequent contributor to *Orion*, *Audubon* and the *Georgia Review*.

The Thursday plenary session will feature nationally known journalists discussing environmental stories and how they were informed by history. Included on the panel are:

William Dietrich, Seattle, a Pulitzer Prize winner for his part in the coverage of the Exxon Valdez accident and a former Neiman fellow at Harvard. He is the author of three books of nonfiction, *The Final Forest*, *Northwest Passage*, and *Natural Grace*; three thrillers, *Ice Reich*, *Getting Back*, and *Dark Winter*; and the historical novel *Hadrian's Wall*. His new book is a work of historical fiction called *The Scourge of God*, published by HarperCollins.

Mark Schleifstein, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, shared a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico. He is also an AAAS award winner, a

two-time Pulitzer finalist and a vice president of the Society of Environmental Journalists. He is a frequent guest on NPR and CNN on hurricane issues. His co-authored series on hurricanes, "Washing Away," published in 2002, predicted many events that happened when Katrina hit the Gulf Coast.

Mike Mansur, *Kansas City Star*, is a past president of the Society of Professional Journalists. He is "The Reporter" in William Least Heat Moon's book *River-Horse*, and was on a *Star* team that won a Pulitzer Prize for its reporting on agriculture. Mike is also a National Headline Award winner who is interested in historical and literary journalism.

Hosts of the joint meeting include the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences and College of Natural Resources and the University of St. Thomas. Sponsors are the National Park Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The conference program and registration form is available online. See ASEH's website at <www.aseh.net>, "conferences" for more information.

Attention Authors and Presses

The St. Paul Conference will include a book exhibit. For more information on exhibiting, contact Mark Harvey at <Mark.Harvey@ndsu.nodak.edu>. If your press does not plan to exhibit, contact Scholars Choice at <www.scholarschoice.com>.

ASEH Travel Grant Recipients for St. Paul Conference

ASEH congratulates this year's recipients of the conference travel grant awards:

Minority Grant: Dianne Glave, Tulane University

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Public Works History and Special Hurricane Katrina Issue

Public Works History, the newsletter published by the Public Works Historical Society, is published by the American Public Works Association three times each year with support from the center for Public History at the University of Houston. Martin Melosi is editor and Carla Curtis is associate editor.

The Fall/Winter, 2005 issue will focus on Hurricane Katrina, emergency management, and public works. The newsletter will include brief pieces by five experts, three of whom are members of ASEH:

“Landscapes of Risk in New Orleans” by Craig Colten, LSU

“In Harm's Way” by Ari Kelman, UC Davis

“Katrina: Historical Perspective Needed” by Martin Reuss, US Army Corps of Engineers

“History and Emergency Management” by Howard Rosen, President of PWHHS

“Emergency Management Responsibility” by James Martin, former director of Public Works, Fresno, California

According to Editor Martin Melosi, this issue of the newsletter is primarily devoted to raising questions about public works and emergency preparedness and management in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (although the essays were commissioned prior to Rita). The results of these disasters affected a broad swath of the Gulf Coast, but also impact the lives of Americans far removed from the devastation. Public works are and will be at the heart of many of the debates over the devastation, be they questions of financing, rebuilding, and even the fate of the poor and the homeless. In times like these, it is difficult for public works to remain “invisible.” For more information, see the website of the American Public Works Association <www.apwa.net>.

Attention ASEH Members Affected by Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita

ASEH is offering registration waivers for the St. Paul conference for displaced hurricane victims. If you are interested in applying, please contact Lisa Mighetto at <mighetto@hrassoc.com>.

A Call for Papers for ASEH's 2007 conference in Baton Rouge will appear in the spring issue of *ASEH News*. It will also be available at the ASEH booth in the book exhibit area at the conference in St. Paul, March 31 – April 2, 2006. Check our website at <www.aseh.net> for more information.

Encyclopedia of American Environmental History Seeking Authors: Some of the Proceeds Could Benefit ASEH

Facts On File recently agreed to publish the *Encyclopedia of American Environmental History*. Stretching from the pre-colonial era to the present, this four-volume set and its 750-800 entries will retell more traditional narratives of political, social, and economic history from an environmental perspective, while interjecting what are perceived as more typical environmental issues into those narratives. The encyclopedia will include a bibliography, chronology, 100-125 black-and-white illustrations, 100 original documents, and 75 maps. The encyclopedia also will open with interpretative essays discussing major themes in environmental history.

Participating authors will have the option of contributing their honoraria toward the ASEH endowment fund and toward greater graduate student participation in the project. The encyclopedia will be housed in the University of Houston Center for Public History. Kathleen Brosnan will serve as editor in chief. Martin Melosi and Joseph Pratt are the associate editors. Robert Thompson, a Ph.D. candidate, will be the assistant editor. If you are interested in participating, please write to <kbrosnan@uh.edu> or <robert.thompson@uh.edu>. Additionally, the editors will have a display table at the 2006 meeting of the ASEH in St. Paul. Please visit us there.

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Announcements

Books

In Progress: A Volume of Envirotech Essays

The Envirotech special interest group of the Society for the History of Technology is proud to publicize the development of a book of essays about the intersection of environmental history and the history of technology. This field conceives of the border between nature and technology as a complex, socially constructed area that shifts geographically, culturally and temporally. Co-editors Marty Reuss and Steve Cutcliffe have drawn together historians known to many members of ASEH and SHOT. University of Virginia Press has contracted to publish the volume (acquisitions editor Boyd Zenner), and the editors hope that the National Science Foundation will fund an authors' workshop in June 2006.

The book was developed through discussions at the "Environment and Technology" breakfasts held at ASEH and SHOT meetings last year, and through the Envirotech listserv. It features essays describing the breadth and variety of the history of environment and technology, including the natural causes of pollution, our development of animals as technology, the technology of agriculture, and large-scale landscape transformation. In addition, Marty Reuss's essay describes a future for the field, and Jeffrey Stine and Joel Tarr have incorporated recent literature into their historiographical essay that appeared in *Technology and Culture*. Contributors of topical chapters include Peter Coates, Steven Cutcliffe, Craig Colten, Sarah Elkind, Bill Rowley, Peter Perdue, Fekri Hassan, Joy Parr, Ed Russell, Ann Vileisis, and James Williams.

Envirotech, a special interest group of SHOT, is co-chaired by Betsy Mendelsohn and Joy Parr. Please visit our website at <http://www.udel.edu/History/gpetrick/envirotech/> and participate in the Environment and Technology breakfast at the upcoming ASEH conference.

Alaska Sea Grant Publication

Alaska Sea Grant recently published *The Journey to PICES: Scientific Cooperation in the North Pacific*, by Sara Tjossem. For more information, see <http://www.uaf.edu/seagrants/bookstore/pubs/AK-SG-05-04.html>.

Call for Manuscripts

The University of Akron Press is pleased to announce that Prof. Stephen H. Cutcliffe of Lehigh University has agreed to serve as the new Editor for their Series on Technology and the Environment, which was formerly co-edited by Jeffrey Stine and Joel Tarr. The series includes works that focus on the intersection of environmental history and the history of technology, a topical area of interest to many

historians, and especially those involved with the special interest group Envirotech.

Previously published volumes in the series include:

Jeffrey Stine, *Mixing the Waters: Environment, Politics, and the Building of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway*

James Rodger Fleming and Henry A. Gemery, eds., *Science, Technology, and the Environment: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*

Joel A. Tarr, *The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective*

James C. Williams, *Energy and the Making of Modern California*

Dale H. Porter, *The Thames Embankment: Environment, Technology, and Society in Victorian London*

William McGucken, *Lake Erie Rehabilitated: Controlling Cultural Eutrophication, 1960s-1990s*

Hugh S. Gorman, *Redefining Efficiency: Pollution Concerns, Regulatory Mechanisms, and Technological Change in the U.S. Petroleum Industry*

Jonathan Richmond, *Transport of Delight: The Mythical Conception of Rail Transit in Los Angeles*

Authors with manuscripts of potential interest for the series are invited to contact the series editor: Stephen Cutcliffe, STS Program, 327 Maginnes Hall, Lehigh University, 9 West Packer Ave., Bethlehem, PA 18015. Phone 610-758-3350; e-mail: stephen.cutcliffe@lehigh.edu.

Fellowships Available

Denver Public Library

The Denver Public Library announces the 2006 Fellowship in Environmental History for the amount of \$3,000, provided through the generosity of Joy R. Hilliard. The fellowship is open to advanced graduate students, independent scholars and holders of a Ph.D. or equivalent.

Requirements:

Academic training and experience in conservation/environmental subjects.

Travel to Denver to use the collection between May 5, 2006, and April 30, 2007; must be in residence a minimum of three weeks.

Application deadline is March 19, 2006

Award recipient will be announced on May 4, 2006

For application information, visit the Denver Public Library,

see **Announcements** page 8

from **Announcements** page 7

Western History web site:

<<http://denverlibrary.org/whg/fellow.html>>

or contact:

Claudia Jensen, Archivist
 Denver Public Library
 Western History Department
 10 W. 14th Ave. Parkway
 Denver, CO 80204-2731
 720-865-1906
 <cjensen@denver.lib.co.us>

Environmental Fellows Program at Harvard

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to ensure that you know that Harvard University's Center for the Environment has launched the new Environmental Fellows Program at Harvard. The Center will invest close to \$1 million annually in the program, providing you with an opportunity to recruit and work with some of the generation's best young scholars on the complex environmental research questions facing us today.

The Center will award eight two-year postdoctoral fellowships in March 2006 and an average of six fellowships per year thereafter. The first eight Environmental Fellows will begin work in September 2006. I hope that you will encourage your graduate students to apply to the program and to alert colleagues at other institutions to this exceptional post-doctoral opportunity. The fellowships will be among the most generous at Harvard, paying a salary \$50,000 per year plus benefits and \$5,000 for professional expenses. *The application deadline is January 15, 2006.*

Applicants to the Environmental Fellows Program may have degrees in any discipline. The Center asks applicants to propose a research program and to secure a commitment from one or more Harvard faculty members to host their

ASEH Internship Program Under Consideration

ASEH is considering sponsoring an internship program for graduate students interested in environmental history contracts and in learning about employment options outside the university. These could include writing natural-resource agency histories, conducting oral histories, and other work.

If you are an agency historian or public historian who is familiar with contracting opportunities and would like to participate, please contact Tom Dunlap, Texas A& M University, at <t-dunlap@tamu.edu> by *January 27, 2006*. Tom plans to compile a list of interested agency and public historians and is considering organizing a meeting at the St. Paul conference in early April 2006.

work. Hosts will provide office or lab space and administrative support as well as professional mentoring. Please help applicants find an appropriate host, and please consider becoming a host yourself.

Additional information on the Environmental Fellows Program is posted at <www.environment.harvard.edu>. If you have any questions about the fellowships or the work of the Center, please do not hesitate to contact me or Rick Minard, the Center's Executive Director. Rick may be reached at <richard_minard@harvard.edu> or 617-496-5458.

Sincerely,

Dan Schrag
 Director, Harvard University Center for the Environment
 Professor, Earth and Planetary Sciences
 <schrag@eps.harvard.edu>
 617-495-7676

Conferences (Non-ASEH)

Fourth NEW-CUE Writers' Conference and Workshop in Honor of Rachel Carson

Nature and Environmental Writers – College and University Educators (NEW-CUE), a non-profit, environmental education organization, will offer its Fourth Writers' Conference and Workshop in honor of Rachel Carson at The Spruce Point Inn in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, from June 13-16, 2006.

The 2006 Conference/Workshop will feature the work of Henry David Thoreau, and the theme will be wilderness/wildness. The event will be held at one of New England's finest waterfront resorts in an area that is well-known for tidal pools, coves and salt marshes. The program includes presentations by featured speakers, hands-on workshops, and a variety of guided outdoor activities. And registration includes all meals – with the exception of one dinner on your own – at the Spruce Point Inn, overlooking Boothbay Harbor.

The Keynote Address will be delivered by Lawrence Buell, author of *Literary Transcendentalism*, *New England Literary Culture*, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the United States and Beyond*, and *Emerson*.

Other featured speakers will include New England author/essayist, Jane Brox; Maine conservationist and author of *Billy Watson's Croker Sack*, Franklin Burroughs; Thoreau scholar, Jeffrey Cramer, Curator of Collections at Walden Woods/Thoreau Institute, and recipient of the 2004 National Outdoor Book Outdoor Classic Award for *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition*; naturalist, writer, and photographer, Ted Levin, whose book about the Everglades, *Liquid Land*, was

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awarded the 2003 John Burroughs Award; and Jennifer Sahn, editor of *Orion* magazine, winner of the 2004 Independent Press Award for General Excellence.

The program will also include a slide presentation by nature photographer, Will Richard; an exhibit of Howard Frech pen and ink sketches by Rachel Carson authority, John Juriga; presentations and activities including hikes led by guides from the Boothbay Region Land Trust; a guided tour of the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens; tide pool explorations with a marine biologist from the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences; and a trip to the Burnt Island Lighthouse.

For further details about the 2006 Conference/Workshop, please visit our website at <<http://www.new-cue.org>>, contact us by e-mail at <info@new-cue.org>, or telephone our registration coordinator, Anne Way, at 910.630.7047.

Environmental Connections: Europe and the Wider World

The European Society for Environmental History invites proposals for panels and posters for its upcoming 4th conference in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 5-8 June 2007.

Environmental historians increasingly work on a global scale, addressing global issues or comparing local and national experiences with other locales. Given the interconnectedness of all parts of the planet in matters ecological, this makes excellent sense. Europe has had longstanding relationships with the rest of the world from the beginning of historical time, causing both enrichment and deprivation of biodiversity and habitats. Lively exchanges of humans and other biota, and of environmental ideas, techniques and practices, existed with Asia and Africa already from Antiquity onwards, with the Americas, Australia and New Zealand from the end of the Middle Ages onwards. The Netherlands, a country with a long tradition of global exchange, was one of the first nations to foster environmental awareness.

The challenging theme for the 4th conference of the European Society for Environmental History in Amsterdam, hosted by the *Vrije Universiteit* (Free University) in Amsterdam is therefore “Environmental Connections: Europe and the Wider World.” Proposals for panels and posters are invited, in particular for the following thematic strands: exchange of biota (both intentional and unintentional); exchange of environmental techniques and practices (in particular regarding water, such as for drainage, irrigation, preparation of drinking water, cleaning of waste water); climate changes; environmental movements and organizations; and monitoring the resources of the earth.

Submission of abstracts: 1 February 2006 -1 June 2006.

Panel proposals should include a cover page with panel title, list of participants (including chair), and individual paper titles; a session abstract of 250 words, three individual paper abstracts of 250 words and a one-page c.v. for each

participant. Poster proposals should consist of an abstract of 250 words and a one-page c.v.

Participation from scholars living in countries with financially low-level research and conference facilities is strongly encouraged. Follow the conference news at the website of the ESEH: <<http://www.eseh.org>>

**The Country and the City Revisited
Environmental Studies Association of Canada, York University, 2006
Call for Papers
Environmental Cultural Studies and Urban/Rural Transformations
Four-panel series
May 31, 2005**

In *The Country and the City* (1975), Raymond Williams undertook a massive task: to write a history of the ways country and city, as both ideas and sets of socio-economic relations, shaped and were shaped by the rise of capitalism in England. The book is extraordinary in its simultaneous attention to the material (especially class) relations of rural and urban transformation, and to the centrality of these themes in English literature, especially in times of crisis and large-scale transformation. Although the work must be challenged for its lack of emphasis on the important role of colonialism in the economic and cultural organization of rural and urban life, and also for its almost complete silence on questions of gender, race, and sexuality, Williams breached the narrow confines of the prevailing definitions that separated literature, culture, and politics. In the process he helped to lay the foundations for cultural studies and within this pave the way for the development of an “environmental” cultural studies by pointing to the importance of other-than-human natures in urban/rural cultures, and also to the need to consider nature in the process of transforming capitalism.

With Williams or more broadly cultural studies as inspiration, we invite proposals for papers that will be part of a four-session series of panels on environmental cultural studies within ESAC (please indicate any desire to cross-list with other societies). We are interested in papers that will investigate any aspect of urban and/or rural cultures of nature, from any disciplinary perspective, but with a particular preference for papers that address questions of change and transformation.

Paper proposals of no more than 150 words are invited on (but not limited to) the following suggested topics: the politics, culture, and/or contest of urban natures; colonialism and the social creation of metropolitan natures; agri/cultures and politics, historically and in the present; rural cultures in the gaze of the city, and vice versa; consuming the city and the country: space and commodification; cultural geographies of food; cultures and conflicts of resource extraction and habitat protection; feminist and anti-racist perspectives on urban and rural

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cultures of nature; sexualities in and sexualizations of urban and rural natures; suburbia and exurbia and/as cultures of nature; agricultural and ecological tourism; popular and material cultures of nature; literature, culture and the environment: reading the country and/or the city; literary, visual, and/or performative renderings of rural/urban/wilderness relations; human/animal relations in urban and rural transformation; cultural politics and environmental ethics; and urban and rural phenomenologies

Proposals should also include your name, institutional affiliation and contact information, as well as any requests for audio-visual materials (please avoid PowerPoint if at all possible). Please send proposals to either or both of the two organizers listed above, either electronically or in hard copy.

Panel Series Organizers:

Lorelei Hanson
Centre for Global and Social Analysis
Athabasca University
1 University Drive
Athabasca, AB T9S 3A3 CANADA
<lorelei.hanson@athabascau.ca>

Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands
Faculty of Environmental Studies
York University
4700 Keele St.
Toronto, ON M3J 1P3 CANADA
<essandi@yorku.ca>

Deadline for Submission: January 14, 2006

Environmental History in Canada

By Shannon Stunden Bower and Liza Piper, University of British Columbia

On the weekend of September 22-24, 2005, scholars from across Canada and the United States met at the McCord Museum in Montreal to consider the place of Quebec in global environmental history. This research colloquium represented the convergence of two flourishing fields of study: the history of Quebec and environmental history. It was the product of collaboration between the Programme d'études sur le Québec (Quebec Studies Programme) at McGill University, *Quelques arpents de neige*, a migratory research workshop in Environmental History, and the Canada Research Chair in the Environmental History of Quebec at the University of Trois-Rivières. The conference featured an opening session led by and John McNeill and Donald Worster, and a talk by ASEH President Steve Pyne.

Participants included historians and geographers, as well as researchers working in the biological sciences, environmental studies, anthropology, and indigenous rights. The colloquium was designed to facilitate interdisciplinary and comparative exchanges within this broad grouping. Six workshops spread out over three days contained two panels apiece, each with a main speaker and two commentators. Following the principal presentation on a specific theme in

environmental history, the subsequent commentary responded directly to the contribution and focused attention on the Quebec context. All of this was simultaneously translated between English and French. For those less familiar with Quebec history, the colloquium served as an excellent learning experience. For those working on Quebec, this meeting encouraged comparisons beyond provincial or national contexts and conversation with a larger historical community keenly interested in their research.

Panels considered such subjects as indigenous experiences in northern Quebec, rural landscapes, the urban environment of Montreal, and ecosystem dynamics along the Saint Lawrence. Participants quickly recognized the territory that historical geography and environmental history share in Quebec and Canadian historiography. In this common ground, studies of past environments take on a strong scientific and spatial bent. The intersection, or lack thereof, between bioregional and political boundaries proved a recurring focus of discussion. Northern Quebec, to the extent that it has more in common with the northern regions of other provinces than with a south from which it is distinguished environmentally and demographically, served as a reminder of the need to engage critically with our geographic categories of analysis. The French factor in Quebec accentuates the importance of the province, emphasizing how many matters of concern to environmental history fall under jurisdictions that are primarily defined by political or social processes. By foregrounding provincial boundaries as the point of departure for environmental inquiry, the colloquium offered a significant revisionist insight: bioregional approaches are valuable, but in places that are constructed by human histories, ecological pathways are not necessarily more significant than political borders. In Quebec as elsewhere, analytical scale must always be explained and defended.

The workshop organizers provided excellent opportunities for participants to encounter Quebec culture and environments. In an evening session, the rich commentary of Yves Laberge of Laval University linked a tantalizing series of extracts from an array of Québécois documentary films. His presentation offered a glimpse into the history of environmental thought in Quebec, and pointed toward the utility of documentary film as a resource for environmental historians. On Sunday morning, the Friends of the Mountain (*Les Amis de la Montagne*) and Rod MacLeod gave guided tours of Mount Royal Park and Cemetery respectively, both excellent examples of how nature and culture interact in urban parks. The colloquium also provided ample opportunity for both informal networking and enjoyable exploration of the McCord Museum.

For those interested in more details about participants and workshop discussions please see the colloquium programme available through the *Quelques arpents de neige* website at <www.arpens.ca>. A portion of the conference proceedings will also appear in *Globe, revue internationale d'études*

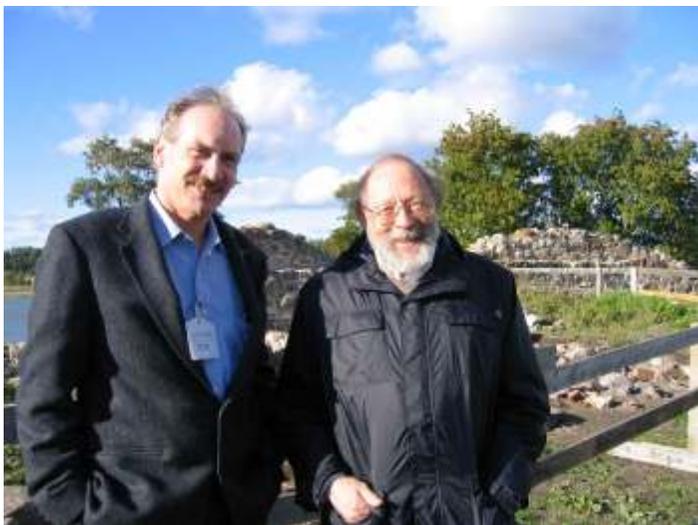
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québécoises / Globe, the international review for Quebec studies in Spring 2006 <<http://www.revueglobe.uqam.ca/>>.

Nordic Environmental History Conference Held in Finland

by Karen Wonders, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen



John R. McNeill (left) and Donald Worster on a field excursion to the medieval ruins of Kuusisto Castle, Finland, at the Nordic environmental history meeting, held September 15-17, 2005. Photo courtesy Karen Wonders

From 15-17 September 2005 a number of ASEH members attended the conference “Thinking Through the Environment” organized and hosted by the University of Turku and the Abo Akademi University. It was the Fifth Nordic Environmental History Conference, held in conjunction with the Turku Methodological Conference Series. With about 150 participants from twenty countries presenting papers in twenty-two sessions, the Turku/Abo conference was a success, showing that “World Environmental History” is thriving. In addition to setting up a stimulating intellectual programme, the organizing committee (chaired by Timo Myllyntaus) arranged evening receptions, city walks, museum visits and field trips. A highlight was the excursion to the archaeological ruins of the medieval castle of Kuusisto (Kustö), founded in 1295 and destroyed in 1528 by order of the Swedish King Gustav Wasa.

Keynote speakers were Kristin Asdal (Oslo), who gave philosophical weight to the notion that “nature” is a cultural construct; Yrjö Haila (Tampere), who outlined a methodological framework for boreal eco-history; John R. McNeill (Washington), who provided three comparative examples of different countries and time periods regarding fossil fuels and geopolitics; Fiona Watson (Stirling) who spoke about the at times comical problems of getting scientists and historians to communicate; and Donald Worster (Lawrence) who elucidated his biographical approach to environmental history. In a speech that preceded

a sumptuous smörgasbord hosted by Turku University, Sverker Sörlin (Stockholm) and Paul Warde (Cambridge) elaborated on the American foundations of the discipline of environmental history.

Among the many and diverse perspectives on the challenge faced by “Thinking Through the Environment” was that of the host nation Finland, home to a Nordic tradition (founded by Johannes Gabriel Granö) which regards geography as a unifying branch of learning, containing both physical, biological and human ingredients. The Nordic interest in landscape was evident in the Finnish contributions on forest history, with a number of papers exploring new dimensions in ethnography, ecoprimitivism, ecofeminism and ecoliteracy. The conference re-affirmed the importance of a genuine transnational understandings of nature as part of a global environmental history. An exemplary paper by Mark Cioc (Santa Cruz) explored the need to think beyond borders when dealing with nature as early put to the test by international wildlife protection agreements. Moreover, several participants urged that the academic/intellectual study of nature and the young field of environmental history go hand in hand with an activist concern to address the pragmatic problems of preserving our environment and contributing to a new world order in which global problems can be rectified. Towards attaining this lofty aim, the Turku/Abo conference made a real contribution.

Member News

Martin Reuss was elected vice-president/president-elect of the International Water History Association. He assumes his vice-presidential responsibilities at the Paris Conference this December, and becomes president in 2007.

After four years as editor of *Environmental History*, Adam Rome is belatedly taking a sabbatical to work on his second book, tentatively titled "New City, New Country: Environmental Reform and the Emergence of Modern America." He is spending his sabbatical year in Corvallis, Oregon, as a fellow at the Oregon State University Center for the Humanities.

Melissa Wiedenfeld left the Galapagos Islands and has joined the faculty at Dalton State College in Georgia.



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ASEH News 

American Society for Environmental History

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