

aseh news

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president's column: where in the world is environmental history?

In the first of my President's columns, in Spring 2017, I alluded to the continuing challenge of nurturing and promoting environmental historical scholarship. In this, my last, almost two busy, interesting, and fulfilling years later, I return to that theme, but only after a brief stock-taking. I am pleased that ASEH has navigated the latest rapids of potentially upsetting change. David Spatz, our new Executive Director is in place, working hard, and leading us forward with a new [Strategic Plan](#) in hand. With the new year, Lisa Brady will hand over full charge of our excellent journal, *Environmental History*, to the energetic duo of Mark Hersey and Stephen Brain. By-laws have been amended to smooth the appointment of a new Treasurer. We have formulated a [privacy statement](#) to conform with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation. And we seem to have ridden out the tempestuous buffetings of various political storms. The Strategic Plan finds ASEH in an admirable position of strength in the field of environmental history and among comparable non-profit academic associations of similar size. We are in good shape to move forward. But the Plan also stresses the need for thoughtful leadership and proactive efforts on intellectual and fiscal fronts to ensure the continuing vitality of our American Society and environmental history more broadly.

My conviction on this last point has been redoubled by recent experience. I write this column in New Zealand, after several months spent thinking about the shifting fortunes of historical geography, talking with attendees at events marking the formal retirements of valued colleagues, and engaging with the global community of interest in environmental historical scholarship through service on an ad hoc committee of the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations.

In New Zealand - as in Australia, and Canada - historical geographers look back on a distinguished past as they

Columbus conference update

April 2019						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

ASEH's 2019 conference in Columbus, Ohio will feature the following events:

- more than [100 sessions](#)
- plenary talk
- field trips on Friday afternoon and Sunday
- exhibit hall including a variety of publishers
- FHS breakfast
- Envirotech breakfast
- Hal Rothman Fun(d) Run
- [poster session](#)
- several receptions and networking opportunities

Theme - Using Environmental History: Rewards and Risks



Downtown Columbus



Franklin Park Conservatory
and Botanical Gardens.

contemplate an inconspicuous future. In each of these domains geographers once did much to shape the agendas of historical scholarship. But the larger discipline has grown increasingly preoccupied with technical, applied, instrumental and contemporary concerns; there have been alarmingly few new appointments in historical geography in the last two decades. Cross-disciplinary collaborations with historians (especially those with an environmental bent) have often proven fruitful. But historians also age, and retire, and their departments -- in universities shaped by neoliberal dogma in which the humanities generally are under siege - struggle to hire like for like. In each of these countries long generations of talented students, first in historical geography and now in environmental history, have necessarily found employment in "alt-ac" jobs and been lost to the academy.

When history departments in these countries advertise new "environmental" positions they often stretch to establish "present relevance" to "connect" with today's students: engagement with the Anthropocene (and the future of humankind) is more sought after than an intrinsic fascination with more remote pasts. The essentially instrumentalist rationale behind such choices may place derrieres on chairs, but it bodes ill for the continuing intellectual vitality of history qua history. There is nothing wrong with, or wrong-headed about, contemporary history, of course. But as it sets fair, in this instance, to focus our field on the "age of the broiler chicken," [Carys E. Bennett, et al, "The broiler chicken as a signal of a human reconfigured biosphere," *Royal Society Open Science*, 12 December 2018], I worry about the parallels with geography. Who will inspire and train the next generations of deeply historical scholars when all the pressures are to focus on the here and now? If my own subdiscipline is any guide, foreshortening the past and assimilating it to the present in an effort to remain pertinent is a devil's bargain on the road to irrelevance.

Such gloomy thoughts are banished, at least temporarily, by my anticipation of three sizeable and important conferences forthcoming in 2019: our own in Columbus, OH in April; the World Congress of Environmental History in Florianopolis, Brazil in July; and the ESEH meeting in Tallinn, Estonia, in August. Twenty years ago, some ASEH members wondered whether there was enough intellectual momentum in environmental history to move from a bi-annual to an annual conference. Now we entertain the prospect of three meetings in close succession attended by about 500 people each. The ICEHO committee mentioned above is disbursing travel awards to facilitate the participation, in WCEH III, of young scholars from Low and Lower-Middle Income countries. This is a remarkable and encouraging story in itself. Fund-raising efforts at ASEH, ESEH and SOLCHA conferences, and individual donations, make possible



Our conference will be located in downtown Columbus, Ohio, near the Short North neighborhood.



Newark Earthworks, site of a field trip on Friday April 12



The Brewery District in Columbus is home to some of the many breweries in Columbus.



The conference will include a Sunday field trip to mining

grants to assist the travel of about 20 young colleagues from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and parts of Europe. Selecting these individuals from the larger roll of applicants has been no easy task. All of which is to say that good and innovative environmental history is being done (and its practitioners encouraged) in parts of the globe well beyond the "old" nodes in North America and Europe.

As the sun illuminates the earth, these musings shade environmental history light and dark. On the sunny side of the field we find pleasing vistas of development, intellectual excitement, broadly shared values and commitments, productive industry, and collegiality - a loosely-defined and expanding community of environmental historians seemingly going from strength to strength. Here it is easy to believe in endless days of sustaining warmth, and gin by the pool. We may not have inherited the earth, but from this comfortable vantage it doesn't take much to imagine ourselves the most perceptive interpreters of earthly life: everything, after all, has an environment and a history. But there is no room for complacency.

The dark side of my reflections reminds us that dusk, if not night, has come to other corners of our field. Is the state of historical geographical scholarship in New Zealand, Australia, Canada a harbinger of what lies in wait for environmental history? We hope not. Clearly the fortunes of intellectual endeavours are not as inexorably determined as the diurnal march of daylight around the globe. But the shadows that have already fallen should be a call to arms. Good times don't necessarily last forever. The end may not be nigh, but we must, each and all, fight our corner as hard as we can against its prospect. In the years ahead environmental history will be shaped by countless factors, many of which will remain beyond our individual and collective influence. But this is no excuse for failure to act when and where we might make a difference. Convinced by my encounters with environmental historical scholarship in different parts of the world that timely introspection and strong commitments can shape outcomes, I offer the following coda for the new year and the future of our endeavours. Compromise and forge alliances as needs dictate, but always do so with the long-game in mind - and remember that altruism, sadly, is a rare commodity in university politics. Be a constructive colleague and critic. Exhibit a generosity of spirit, and an inclusive demeanour. Value and defend the long view in the face of those who consider the past irrelevant. Don't shy away from proclaiming the deep-seated importance of our inherently integrative ways of thinking about life on earth. Give big-heartedly of time, wisdom and, yes, even money, in support of environmental history. The field, the planet and its people are worth the candle. Thank you.

communities in Southern Ohio.



See Columbus by bike on a Friday afternoon field trip.



For more information on the field trips (not all of which are listed here), click [here](#).

photos courtesy Experience Columbus.



[Click here](#) to register for the conference.

for graduate students

Graduate students can get free registration at our 2019 conference in exchange for volunteering at the conference. [Click here](#) for more information.

The graduate student reception and caucus meeting will take place from 8:30 to 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 10

The graduate student thesis slam session has slots available. Please contact [David Spatz](#) if you are interested in participating.

[Click here](#) for conference online registration form.

women's environmental

Graeme Wynn, ASEH President

in memoriam: aseh founder john opie

by Lise Sedrez - Instituto de História, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

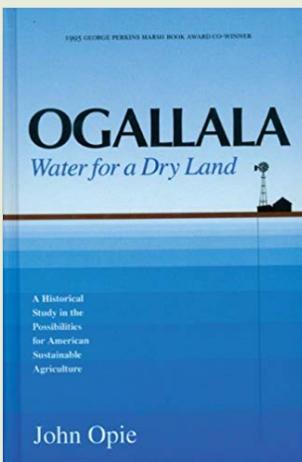
John Opie, environmental historian and the first president of the American Society for Environmental history, passed away on September 30, 2018. He was 84 years old, his speech severely impaired by Parkinson's Disease, and he still played with one of his great passions, photography.

John was the reason so many young scholars found out about environmental history.

This is due not only to his academic work - though I think [Ogallala, Water for a Dry Land](#) (1993) and the



textbook *Nature's Nation* (1998) are masterpieces. But John believed in nurturing networks, communities, minds, and he put much of his soul into it. Thus he was critical to the creation of the ASEH, was its founding president, and kept the Society's journal alive on at least two occasions during hard times.



It was thanks to the ASEH journal that I first learned of John Opie, in Brazil, in 1995. I found his name on the cover, and I wrote to him. I was very surprised when he answered. I had graduated a couple of years earlier, had just married (which was often seen as an obstacle for young female scholars in Brazil), and was working for Greenpeace Latin America. I had a project for a Master's thesis, no funding and less than perfect English. John

Opie improved my project by mail (internet was in its infancy), tolerated my English, and found funding for me to attend the Master of Science Program on Environmental Policy Studies at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. He also offered his own house for me and my husband to stay while we looked for lodgings when we first moved to the USA. He had never seen me in person at that point.

John was generous to a fault, and his wife, Barbara, a gifted painter and flautist, supported him at every step. He was also modest. He began teaching Environmental History in 1968 (the year I was born, in fact), and considered himself to be not on a mission, but on a pilgrimage. (His religious history training often showed).

history network

The women's environmental history network will hold its 4th reception at our conference in Columbus on Thursday evening, April 11, 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. Admission is free for conference attendees.

future conferences

Columbus, Ohio

April 10-14, 2019

Florianopolis,

Brazil

International Consortium of EH Organizations
July 22-26, 2019

Tallinn, Estonia

European Society for Environmental History
August 21-25, 2019

Ottawa, Canada

March 25-29, 2020

Boston

April 20-26, 2021

Interested in hosting a future ASEH conference? Contact dspatz@aseh.net

it's time to renew your membership

Several years ago ASEH activated a new membership system, which is easy to navigate. Our memberships run on a calendar year, from January - December. Have you renewed for 2019? [Click here](#) to join or renew.

He wanted to learn, to share with others, and then learn a bit more. John used to tell me that much environmental history was "site-specific", and that environmental historians needed to be grounded and to learn from geographers the concept of "place." He never ceased to experience curiosity regarding the world around him, and that sense of wonder showed in much of his work.

He was also a loving father for his six children and stepchildren, a happy grandfather for the many grandchildren, and took pride in the accomplishments of each one of them. They kept him on his toes, he believed, and their interests broadened his own. John supported his students far beyond the limits of academic advising. When John retired from NJIT, he gifted me with a complete collection of the *Environmental History* journal. It is probably the only one outside the USA, and Brazilian students are grateful for it. I was lucky enough to visit him and Barbara after the 2017 ASEH conference in Chicago, when Lisa Mighetto asked me to give him a giant thank-you signed card by all the participants of the meeting. He then showed me his most recent photographs, and was delighted that *Ogallala* would have a new edition.

John Opie took mentorship to a higher level, and I only hope I can inspire my students as much he inspired me.

thank you lisa brady

Our journal, [Environmental History](#), is the flagship of the field and a remarkable publication that carries high the banners of both the American Society for Environmental History and the Forest History Society. Although neither society micromanages its interest in the magazine, editing such a publication is no easy task. Quarterly deadlines roll in, incessantly; peer reviews have to be solicited, authors dealt with, constructive suggestions made, and hard decisions taken; and all of this takes place against a backdrop of page allocations set by the publisher, the tyranny of impact factors (ill-designed as measures of anything of much significance in the humanities), and the need to somehow represent, advance, and give shape to a multi-faceted field.

Members of both ASEH and FHS, and the thousands beyond who read *Environmental History* in whole or in part, owe a great deal of gratitude to the editorial team that puts the journal together. This is a sizeable group, that includes the assistant editors named on the masthead; the editorial board; the team at Oxford University Press responsible for technical support and marketing; and student assistants who help editors in their tasks. Ultimately, however, the editor-in-chief drives

We celebrate our life members:

Charles Closmann
Diane Davis
Sarah Elkind
Emily Greenwald
Sarah Hamilton
Donald Jackson
Nancy Jacobs and Peter Heywood
Christopher Jones
Christof Mauch
Linda Nash
Sara Pritchard
Paul Rich
Adam Rome
Ed Russell
James Schwoch
Victor Seow
Paul Sutter
Julia Adeney Thomas

The life membership option is available at the [membership link](#).



aseh mentorship program: call for participants

To enhance inclusiveness and the value of membership in ASEH, we moved last year to expand and invigorate the ASEH mentoring program, initiated and co-ordinated for a number of years by Lisa Mighetto. In essence we opted for a two-year trial of a format that brought together students (plural) and established scholars (plural) in small groups. We hoped that this would create a livelier dynamic and

the bus.

Lisa Brady became Associate Editor of the journal in 2012, when Nancy Langston's relocation to Michigan Tech. foreshortened her editorial term. She has steered our journal tirelessly and effectively since 2013. Now she is handing the wheel to Mark Hersey and Stephen Brain, who will take full responsibility for the journal with the new year (although the first two issues of 2019 will bear Lisa's imprint). Our new editors have benefited from Lisa's experience, generosity of spirit, and sage counsel through the last six months, and the transition will be smooth. But we cannot let Lisa go without expressing warm and heartfelt thanks for all that she has contributed as editor of our journal.

Style **and** substance have been the hallmarks of Lisa's tenure at *Environmental History*. She has been tireless in promoting the journal. Few have been able to resist her energy, enthusiasm, good humour, and obvious love of the field. By recruiting new authors at the four or more conferences she attended each year she increased the number of submissions appreciably. Cheerfully going about her rounds she exuded a joie de vivre that substantially enhanced enthusiasm for environmental history.

Lisa's detailed editor's reports for the ASEH Executive Committee invariably defined challenging new goals for improvement. In the last six years, sub-editors have come and gone, new features have been added to the journal's pages, the turn-around time for submissions to the journal has fallen, and the geographical scope of topics covered in its pages has expanded greatly. Lisa demonstrated her vision and capacity to get things done early. Months after marking her appointment as Associate Editor, this newsletter announced that Lisa had received a grant from the Network in Canadian History and Environment to develop a teaching unit on Canadian environmental history for the journal's [website](#). There are now four such units available. Other developments included Field Notes, featuring on-line essays, and a film forum.

Lisa always strove to be better. In one informal conversation with Steven Anderson of FHS and myself, she noted that she received some feedback on her work from contributors but, typically, lamented that it was invariably positive. She wished, she said, that people were more open and frank about her performance. Knowing her strong character, and her love of word-games and puns, the next day I asked if I could have a quiet word with her about the journal. Of course, she agreed. "I have to tell you" I said, with as much gravity as I could muster, "that as a journal editor, you suc[k].....ceed where others would flounder or fail." Old friends, we shared a good laugh about that.

enhance the experience for all involved. Groups were - and will be - established for the calendar year. Groups are encouraged to "chat" electronically at least 3 or 4 times during the year, and to meet at the ASEH Annual meeting if possible. Mentoring conversations focus on career advice, professional advancement, and facilitating contacts rather than reading student work. "Mentoring at a distance" is less familiar than mentoring in person, but it is neither impossible nor without merit, and those who sign-up to serve as mentors will be provided with some guidelines about how such activity can be orchestrated. Special thanks are extended to those who stepped up to make the experiment a reality last year: Nancy Jacobs, Chris Wells, Laura Watt, Robert Gioielli, Melanie Kiechle, and Graeme Wynn. Let's build on their commitment and experience and double or triple our numbers.

Details of the program can be found [here](#).

We need participants. Engagement is essential to success: we need mentors and we need mentees to identify themselves. If you are interested in either - which I hope you will be - please notify David Spatz at dspatz@aseh.net as soon as possible but no later than 31 January 2019, and include a brief statement about yourself. It would be a great step to expand the program this year and set it on a productive path for the future. I will come chasing mentors if the response is insufficient, so please save me the task and stand as a

Thank you Lisa. We are all in your debt for a difficult and demanding job extremely well done. I hope that you will continue to brighten our days at future ASEH meetings, and soon find other ways to contribute your considerable talents to the work of the society.

Graeme Wynn

member news

Martin V. Melosi retired from the University of Houston on September 1, 2018. He served for many years at the Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen University Professor of History and Director of the Center for Public History. Melosi is past president of ASEH and recipient of the George Perkins March Prize, the Distinguished Service Award, and the Distinguished Scholar Award. He just completed his latest books, *Fresh Kills: The Dilemma of Consuming in New York City* (Columbia University Press) and [New World Cities: Challenges of Urbanization and Globalization in the Americas](#) (with John Tutino) (UNC Press).

Jack E. Davis was awarded the [2018 Pulitzer Prize in History](#) for his book [The Gulf: The Making of an American Sea](#) (Liveright/W.W Norton).

John R. McNeill, ASEH president from 2011 to 2013, begins his one-year term as president of the [American Historical Association](#) in January 2019.

announcements

ASEH's Next Conference



[Click here](#) to register. [Click here](#) for general information on the conference.

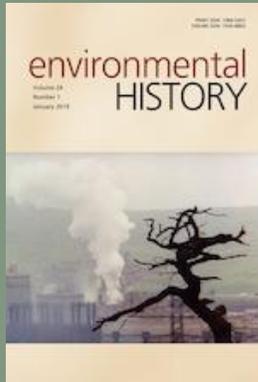
The Executive Committee has been busy over the past few months. It approved a new [Strategic Plan](#), as well as new [Privacy Policy](#) in response to the EU's [General Data Protection Regulation](#). It also renewed the [ASEH/Newberry Library research fellowship](#) for three more years.

ASEH recently submitted a comment to [NARA](#) in response to a [Department of Interior request](#) for

volunteer rather than a conscript.

Thank you.
Graeme Wynn
aseh president

journal



The January issue of *Environmental History* includes a tribute to ASEH founder John Opie, and articles on the Lumbee people and River, the politics of ethanol in Brazil, indigenous forest activism in Bolivia, and more. [Click here](#) for additional information.

reminder: sign up for aseh member directory

Any member can register on this site, which is publicly available to anyone searching for contact info. on environmental historians and their research. The site is open for registration and viewing.

We encourage all ASEH members to register. If you have questions or comments, contact dspatz@aseh.net

[Click here](#) to register. Thank you for your participation!

aseh news

Published quarterly by the

records disposition authority. The "[big bucket](#)" schedule and request, which had been in process for some time, included materials of great interest to environmental historians. NARA [extended the public comment period](#) to allow individuals and organizations to review the records set for destruction. On November 26, ASEH, in consultation with other associations, and through the Ad Hoc Committee on Political Engagement, submitted a comment to point to the potential lack of transparency in the disposition of federal documents as well as the need for longer public comment periods. Along with other scholarly groups, ASEH registered its concerns with the way in which federal documents with research value are handled. [Click here](#) to read about the request and ASEH's response.

opportunities

Two-year VAP in Environmental Studies - Williams College

The Program in Environmental Studies at Williams College invites applications for a full-time, two-year visiting professor position in environmental studies, for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021.

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled, but all applications received by **5 February 2019** will be guaranteed full consideration. For more information and to apply, go to this Interfolio link: <http://apply.interfolio.com/58783>.

The International Society for the History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Biology (ISHPSSB, or ISH) invites submissions for the next biennial meeting, which will take place in Oslo, Norway, 7-12 July 2019. Please visit [the conference website](#) for further information. direct inquiries related to submissions and the program to the ISHPSSB Oslo Program Committee at ishpssb2019@tekniskmuseum.no. The deadline for submission of abstracts is **18 January 2019**.

Two-Year Postdoctoral Teaching Fellowship in Environmental Studies - College of the Holy Cross

The Environmental Studies Program at the College of the Holy Cross invites applications for a full-time, two-year postdoctoral fellowship (2019-2021) to begin August 2019. Information about the program can be

American Society for Environmental History. If you have an article, announcement, or an item for the "member news" section of our next newsletter, send to dspatz@aseh.net by April 15, 2019.



Happy Holidays!
Happy New Year!

connect



Follow us on [twitter](#)

found [here](https://apply.interfolio.com/58689). Interested candidates can apply at <https://apply.interfolio.com/58689>. **For full consideration, please apply by January 18, 2018.**

Two Open positions in global history, environmental questions, problems of sustainability - University of Groningen

The University of Groningen, Department of History, searches 2 Assistant Professors in Economic & Social History. The ideal candidate should have a particular focus on the Economic and Social History of the modern world, with special interest in one or two of the following fields: global history, environmental questions, problems of sustainability, population & health history, inequalities; and it is highly recommended to have also knowledge of social scientific research methods and the analysis of big data. **Deadline 2019, January 31.** [Click here](#) for full job description and to apply.

aseh news is a publication of the American Society for Environmental History

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