

The Public Lands History Center Newsletter

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Message From the Director

The Center for Public History and Archaeology has taken a new name, the Public Lands History Center, to reflect the emphasis of our research projects. This is the latest development in the short but lively history of the Center, which contributes to the History Department's more than thirty years of commitment to public history. Since opening in 2007, the Center has worked almost exclusively with the National Park Service, conducting historical research on significant environmental, preservation, and recreational issues and sites. In three short years, we've earned a reputation for producing first-rate historical reports on public lands within the national park system, and we expect our fruitful collaboration with the Park Service to deepen and grow. Our consistent goal has been to improve current park managers' and the general public's historical knowledge about specific national parks and the regions they inhabit. We hope

that a fuller understanding of historical evidence and issues will connect past to present, facilitating park managers' efforts both to protect the national parks' resources and to offer visitors a meaningful experience in park settings. In the future, we hope to conduct valuable historical work in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and state or local public land agencies.

With the help of the Dean's Office in the College of Liberal Arts, the Public Lands History Center moved in the summer of 2009 from its previous location in the Clark building to a bigger space in Aylesworth C104. In addition to providing office space for Maren Bzdek, the Program Manager, and Dr. Mark Fiege, the Center Director, we now have work space for Research Associates Cori Knudten and Tyler Welch, and several graduate research assistants and undergraduate researchers. Our new space also allows us to host meetings, receptions, and small workshops. If you have not yet visited us in our new quarters, please stop by!

— Dr. Mark Fiege
Associate Professor of History;
William E. Morgan Chair of
Liberal Arts



Cori Knudten and Mark Fiege getting a feel for the landscape at Pecos National Historical Park (photo by Maren Bzdek)

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Colorado State University

PUBLIC LANDS HISTORY CENTER

Featured Project

“People and Nature on the Mountaintop: A Resource and Impact Study of Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park”

Principal investigator Ruth M. Alexander and graduate research assistant Catherine Moore recently completed an environmental history of Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park. Longs Peak is the only mountain over 14,000 feet in Rocky, and it looms over northern Colorado’s Front Range. Since the early-twentieth century the summit of Longs has been a popular backcountry destination for hikers and climbers eager to test themselves against challenging trails, sheer rock faces, and harsh alpine weather. This project examined the changing values and practices of individuals who climbed Longs Peak between the early-twentieth century and the present, their impact on its natural and cultural resources, and the efforts of park rangers both to facilitate climbing and protect the peak from harm. In researching the history of Longs Peak, Alexander and Moore gathered NPS documents, read hiking and climbing histories, journals, and guidebooks, consulted histories of wilderness and the national parks, and conducted oral history interviews with technical climbers, hikers, and park rangers. Their study was funded by Rocky and the National Park Service.

National parks in the U.S. have been required by law since 1916 both to promote human recreation and “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein” (National Parks Act, 1916). Additionally, since the 1964 passage of the Wilderness Act the Park Service has been under pressure to manage considerable portions of park lands as wilderness of a “primeval character...affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.” Designated wilderness areas are not to be “improved” by humans, but in them humans are to be afforded “outstanding opportunities” for “solitude” and “primitive” recreation. How to balance the protection of natural and cultural resources with the provision of access to recreational opportunity has been a difficult task, generating debate within the park system

and public controversy. For much of its history, the National Park Service as a whole has tended to place more emphasis on human recreation than resource protection.

Alexander’s study of Longs Peak narrates the development of Rocky’s unique response to the challenges of balancing recreational opportunity with resource protection. Alexander concludes in her report that the park began to view the protection of wilderness resources on Longs Peak as a primary goal in the late 1960s and established policies on backcountry access to advance this goal. The privileging of wilderness protection thus developed earlier in Rocky than in other national parks where officials continued to favor human recreation over resource protection and to resist the ethics and intentions of the Wilderness Act (continued on page 3).



Hikers and horseback riders on the Longs Peak trail (photo by Catherine Moore)

Grad Student Spotlight

Internship at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site

In 2009 History graduate students Michelle Hansen, Alex Hernandez, and Megan Koeman completed a three-month internship at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, gaining important professional skills and familiarity with the NPS. Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site is dedicated to preserving the nation's cattle ranching history. Located on the high plains of Montana, the Grant-Kohrs Ranch was once a ten-million acre cattle empire. The 1600 acres preserved by the NPS is still run as a working ranch and has over 80 historic structures. Grant-Kohrs affords visitors a window onto the late-nineteenth-century world of cattle barons and open-range ranching.

In addition to exhibits open to the public in the various ranch buildings, Grant-Kohrs has a storage facility housing a vast collection of artifacts and archival documents related to cattle ranching. During their internship at Grant-Kohrs, Hansen, Hernandez, and Koeman researched and catalogued historic artifacts, carefully documenting their use and provenance. They also updated the ranch's storage facility, installing earthquake barriers and designing and constructing dust covers for large objects and shelving units. In the summer of 2010, CSU graduate student Sarah Tisdale will begin an internship at Grant-Kohrs to implement their 2010 Historic Lighting Study.

— Alex Hernandez



Student employee Katie Matthew and CSU intern Megan Koeman preparing artifacts for storage (photo courtesy of NPS)

Featured Project, continued from page 2

In advancing wilderness protection on Longs in the 1960s, Rocky's rangers may have been aided by the park's long-standing practice of placing much of the responsibility for safety, enjoyment, and the preservation of natural resources on backcountry climbers themselves. By the 1960s, the peak was attracting more than 4000 casual and technical climbers annually. It was not terribly difficult, in the 1970s and 1980s, for rangers at Longs to update the local tradition of climber responsibility and to insist that backcountry visitors to Longs adopt "leave-no-trace" practices. Still, these practices offered rangers limited tools for handling the human population pressures on Longs. With close to 30,000 people using

the main trail each year by the turn of the twenty-first century, rangers had to abandon the idea that Longs might offer most visitors the "solitude" of an authentic wilderness setting.

Alexander's historical report will help park staff understand the challenges that developed over time on Longs Peak and aid their efforts to improve plans for balancing wilderness protection and wilderness recreation. Though this project focuses on Longs Peak, it is also expected to demonstrate the general value of historical research to park managers and to serve as a model for future studies within the park system. Dr. Alexander expects to revise and expand her report for publication as a book that will appeal to scholars, general readers, and backcountry enthusiasts.

Update on PLHC Projects

Each issue of our newsletter describes a few of the many important projects in which PLHC is involved. Please look for descriptions of other projects in subsequent editions of our newsletter.

Pecos National Historical Park: Environmental History and Resource Stewardship Strategy

Principal investigator Dr. Mark Fiege and researchers Cori Knudten and Maren Bzdek are involved in a two-part project for Pecos National Historic Park in New Mexico. Pecos NHP asked the Public Lands History Center to do this project as a complement to a natural resources condition assessment conducted simultaneously by scientists at the University of New Mexico. The first stage of the project involved researching and writing an environmental history of the park. It was completed in April 2010. Now in the second stage of the project, Fiege, Knudten, and Bzdek are working with NPS staff to use the environmental history in combination with the condition assessment to create a comprehensive Resource Stewardship Strategy for Pecos NHP.

Pecos is an interesting site, but also a challenging place to manage, because it contains significant natural resources as well as wide-ranging historic sites, including pueblo ruins, an important Civil War battlefield, ruins and wayside buildings associated with the nineteenth-century Santa Fe Trail, and a twentieth-century cattle ranch. The Resource Stewardship Strategy will help the park integrate the management of its complex array of natural and cultural resources. This project is especially important for the PLHC as it showcases the interdisciplinary work of academics and the growing role of academic historians and natural scientists in shaping management plans and decisions in the national parks.

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve: Environmental History

Dr. Mark Fiege is directing research associate Michael Geary in writing an environmental history about Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve.

Sculpted by centuries of wind and water, Colorado's Great Sand Dunes became a national monument in 1932. The acquisition of the sprawling Baca Ranch and additional lands adjacent to the dunes led to the establishment of Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve in 2004, and this stunning landscape now encompasses a spectacular array of natural and cultural features, ranging from the tallest sand dunes in North America to the lofty summits of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Great Sand Dunes is a world-class natural and cultural site, but no complete history of the park exists. Researcher Geary produced a master's thesis on Great Sand Dunes in 1997, some years before it acquired national park and preserve status. This project will bring Geary's thesis up to date and is likely to result in a published book that will reflect the elevated status of the site from monument to national park and preserve and serve as its official NPS administrative history. It will also provide a narrative foundation for public and governmental understanding of Great Sand Dunes as a natural and cultural treasure.

Rocky Mountain National Park: Mission 66 Historic Context Report

Principal investigator Dr. Janet Ore and research associate Maren Bzdek recently completed a report for Rocky Mountain National Park that provides historic context and a general survey of the buildings, roads, and trails constructed in the park during the 1950s and 1960s under the National Park Service's "Mission 66" development program. Congress funded Mission 66 to improve poor conditions and facilities in the parks produced by years of wartime and postwar budgetary neglect. It became an important but controversial program. Some members of the public and some park staff appreciated the modernist aesthetic of Mission 66 buildings but other park visitors and staff preferred the earlier rustic style of NPS architecture (continued on page 5).

Mission 66 also provoked controversy because it was implemented just as the nation began to experience a renewed enthusiasm for wilderness preservation; critics of Mission 66 thought the NPS was allowing too much development in park lands and compromising wilderness preservation.

Rocky Mountain National Park constructed several iconic structures, including the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, a National Historic Landmark, and the Alpine Visitor Center, with Mission 66 funding. The park also improved its staff housing, roads, campgrounds, and comfort stations. At NPS sites all over the county, developments from this time period are reaching fifty years of age and are thus becoming eligible for National Register status. Parks are beginning to evaluate them for physical integrity and architectural and historical significance. Rocky will use the factual study produced by Ore and Bzdek to begin this important evaluative process.

Colorado State University: Preserving the National Park Service Resource Management Legacy

In 2009, CSU's Morgan Library acquired the John Albright National Park Service Collection. John Albright taught in the CSU History Department for many years, offering courses in Historic Preservation, American Military History, and American History. Albright's teaching career came on the heels of a distinguished career in historic resource management and preservation with the NPS. His large collection (31.5 linear feet) includes working papers from his employment with the NPS Denver Service Center, park-related course materials and his personal library of publications related to the National Park Service (1901-2000). Dr. Mark Fiege consulted with Archivist Linda Meyer at Morgan Library about the Albright papers, which will become an important resource for faculty and graduate students conducting research on projects for the Public History Lands Center.

Inspired by the acquisition of the Albright papers, faculty in the Warner College of Natural Resources have begun a campaign to identify graduates of the College's Resource Management Program who went on to lengthy and influential careers in the National

Park Service. An effort is now underway to arrange oral history interviews with these graduates and thereby preserve the legacy of the historic relationship between CSU and the NPS. Warner College faculty have consulted with Dr. Fiege and Linda Meyer about preserving the oral histories in the Archives at Morgan Library. Like the Albright Collection, the oral histories will offer researchers affiliated with the PLHC an invaluable source for tracing important issues of resource management through the academic and professional careers of former NPS employees. The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees is assisting Warner College in locating NPS retirees who studied resource management at CSU.



Some of the historic trails in Zion National Park (NPS photo)

Zion National Park: Historic Trails Report

Co-Principle Investigators Dr. Janet Ore and Dr. Greg Smoak and researcher Tyler Welch just completed a two-part project on historic hiking trails in Zion National Park. The team is conducting archival research on seven trails in Zion and amending the 1987 National Register Nomination Forms for four other trails in the park. This project will help to illuminate the relationship of Zion's trails to larger historic themes of regional and national importance, including pioneer Mormon settlement; development of the National Park Service; modern transportation and tourism; public works; naturalistic design and landscape architecture; and Mission 66. The Zion study is the first PLHC project to be developed through the Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CP-CESU). All of the PLHC's other projects have been established through the Rocky Mountain-CESU. We hope to work with the CP-CESU on additional projects in the future.

Related Activities and Events

Going Global

CSU Professors and the Public Lands History Center Work to Solidify Transnational Park Alliance

It has been just a few years since officials from Rocky Mountain National Park established a unique “sister park” alliance with officials at Tatra National Parks, which spans the boundary between Slovakia and Poland and is similar in its ecology to Rocky. In 2006, officials from both Rocky Mountain National Park and Tatra National Park agreed to share knowledge and ideas about how to improve their management systems. Initial interactions between the two parks included an extended visit to Rocky by Slovakian park rangers Martina Pilatova and Stanislov Hudec in 2007. While in the United States, Pilatova and Hudec volunteered at Rocky and further observed the similarities and differences between the two parks.



Tatra National Park (photo by Mark Fiege)

Dr. Mark Fiege (Public Lands History Center) and Dr. David Cooper (CSU Department of Forest Rangeland and Watershed Stewardship) traveled to Poland and Slovakia in the spring of 2009 to further solidify the sister-park relationship. Along with Vaughn Baker, Superintendent, Ben Bobowski, Chief of Resource Stewardship, and Judy Visty, Research Coordinator, Drs. Fiege and Cooper spent ten days meeting with representatives from Tatra National Park and participating in a series of conferences that examined resource management and sustainability in Tatra and Rocky. In March 2010 Tatra National Park sent two ecologists to Colorado to engage in further exchanges with Rocky officials and CSU faculty, including Drs. Fiege and Cooper. In April of this year, Rocky Superintendent Vaughan Baker returned to Tatra to meet with park managers and scientists. He and Bobowski will visit again in September.

The United States, the National Park Idea, and Globalization

Dr. Mark Fiege, Dr. Adrian Howkins, and Dr. Jared Orsi are in the early stages of planning an academic colloquium for fall 2011 that will bring scholars to CSU’s Department of History and the Public Lands History Center to explore national parks in an international context. National parks, as their name implies, have been inextricably connected to the history of the nation-state. In the United States, perhaps more than anywhere else, national parks have become a source of patriotic pride, highlighting not only the grandeur and diversity of the national landscape, but also the benevolent farsightedness of the federal government in preserving these environments. Recently, historians have also brought attention to problematic aspects of our national park history involving wilderness mismanagement, the displacement of Indians, automobile tourism and commercial development, and the privileging of social elites (continued on page 7).

Related Activities and Events of Interest, continued from page 6

This colloquium will examine how U.S. national parks have influenced the history of conservation, environmentalism, and recreation beyond the borders of the United States. It will also consider the extent to which nations beyond the United States have resisted the U.S. national park model and established park systems responsive to differing or alternative national priorities and pressures. Finally, colloquium participants will explore how the idea of the national park—especially in the U.S. context—has responded to a recent history of globalization, looking at the role and meaning of national parks in an increasingly post-national world. Each participant in the colloquium will write a short essay on some aspect of the international history of national parks, and the Public Lands History Center will then seek a publisher for a collected anthology.

Center Notes

Dr. Greg Smoak is a founding faculty affiliate for the Center and a dedicated public historian who contributed important strategic vision in our first three years of operation. We congratulate Dr. Smoak, who will return to his alma mater, the University of Utah, in fall 2010 as Associate Professor of History and faculty affiliate of the American West Center, where he began his career in public history. He will continue his affiliation with the PLHC through the ongoing environmental history project for Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

Avana Andrade worked as an undergraduate researcher this spring for Mark Fiege's history of grazing in the NPS. In summer 2010 she will learn about organic farming and Biodynamics as an intern at the Farm at Sunrise Ranch.

Jim Bertolini worked as a graduate research assistant on the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument environmental history this semester. He will serve as a Student Conservation Corps intern this summer for Shenandoah National Park.

Rachel Kline worked as a graduate student on the Mission 66 project and earned her M.A. in May 2009.

She is now employed as an historian in the Heritage Stewardship Group of the U.S. Forest Service.

Cori Knudten earned her M.A. in summer 2009 and has worked on the Pecos environmental history project. She is now a Research Associate and is working on the Pecos Resource Stewardship Strategy.

Brandon Luedtke worked as a researcher for the Kawuneeche Valley environmental history project at Rocky Mountain National Park. Brandon graduates in May 2010 and is applying to Ph.D. History programs for fall 2011.

Leslie McCutchen worked as an undergraduate intern on the Longs Peak and Mission 66 projects. She completed her undergraduate degree in History in May 2010.

Catherine Moore worked as a graduate research assistant on the Longs Peak environmental history and the Mission 66 project. She earned her M.A. in May 2009 and is now Cultural Resources Program Manager at the Center for the State of the Parks, a division of the National Parks Conservation Association.

Nelly Pierson worked as an undergraduate intern on Dr. Fiege's history of grazing in the national parks. Nelly graduated in May 2010 with a B.A. in Political Science. She will spend the summer in Washington D.C. as an intern with the Subcommittee on the Interior and the Environment in the House Appropriations Committee.

Josh Weinberg served as a researcher for several PLHC projects at Rocky Mountain National Park: the Longs Peak environmental history, and the Historic Structures Database and Perry Cabin projects. He earned his M.A. in December 2009 and recently took a full-time position as an historian with the Heritage Stewardship Group in the U.S. Forest Service.

Tyler Welch contributed research for the Mission 66 project and completed the Zion National Park historic trails project as a graduate student. He earned his M.A. in summer 2009 and is now a full-time Research Associate with the PLHC, working on the Historic Structures Database and Perry Cabin projects for Rocky Mountain National Park.

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Donations to the Public Lands History Center

The Public Lands History Center gratefully accepts donations from those who wish to support our efforts to work collaboratively with the National Park Service and other public land agencies. We are in particular need of funds for administrative operations not covered by project funds. For more information, please contact Maren Bzdek at maren.bzdek@colostate.edu, 970-491-6130.



Great Sand Dunes from Zapata Falls Recreation Area (NPS photo)

On the Trail staff for Vol. I, No.1

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