

The Public Lands History Center Newsletter

Volume 2, Number 1, Spring 2011

Message From the Director

As students of the past, we are acutely aware of our connections to it. Over forty years ago, our senior colleagues Liston Leyendecker (1931-2001), Jim Hansen, and John Albright began to blaze the trails that led to the establishment of the graduate public history program in 1976 and that the Public Lands History Center follows to this day.

The PLHC has completed its fourth year with notable successes. The amount of research funds that our projects have generated totals some \$725,000. This summer we have a record number of students working on PLHC projects. Special thanks to faculty affiliates Janet Ore, Ruth Alexander, Adrian Howkins, Jared Orsi, Reagan Waskom, and Greg Smoak, program manager Maren Bzdek, our student researchers, History Department chair Diane Margolf, Associate Dean Stephan Weiler, and our partners—the National Park Service, the Farmers Reservoir and Irrigation

Company, and the Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station.

The coming year holds enormous potential as we enter into another round of projects. Like other public and private entities, we struggle with the fiscal constraints that the Great Recession has imposed on us. Faculty affiliates continue to practice public history while upholding their teaching and service responsibilities—a problem addressed recently in *Tenure, Promotion, and the Publicly Engaged Academic Historian*, a report by the Working Group on Evaluating Public History Scholarship. Above all, we are concerned for our students and share their anxiety about what the future might have in store for them. Despite the challenges, we are confident that hard work, good faith, and support from partners and friends such as you will see us through another year and will help us build on the legacy of professors Leyendecker, Hansen, and Albright.

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



Center staff and researchers outside the PLHC office in Aylesworth Hall.

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Colorado State University

PUBLIC LANDS HISTORY CENTER

Featured Project

“Crossroads of Change: An Environmental History of Pecos National Historical Park”

Pecos National Historical Park preserves and interprets a diverse history. Prehistoric ruins, a Spanish mission, ruts from the Santa Fe Trail, a Civil War battlefield, a twentieth-century cattle ranch—all are part of the Pecos story. Research Associate Cori Knudten and Program Manager Maren Bzdek recently completed an environmental history of Pecos as part of a cooperative agreement with the Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (RM-CESU). *Crossroads of Change: An Environmental History of Pecos National Historical Park* explores the Pecos story from the perspective of environmental change. The landscape at Pecos is a dynamic one that has transformed over time in response to a variety of factors, including the presence of humans. Pecos’s geographical location between the southwestern plains and the Rio Grande Valley positioned it in the path of trade and travel, ensuring that many different cultures came into contact there. This cultural interaction provided one of the major drivers for environmental change over time. Whether Franciscan priests

introducing livestock, Hispanic settlers planting crops and building homes, or tourists clambering over ancient ruins, people altered the Pecos environment, creating landscapes that reflected their cultures and beliefs.

Beyond synthesizing the history of Pecos National Historical Park, the environmental history also serves as a management tool. As park officials make decisions about future land management, the environmental history will serve as a reference for determining how the landscape looked in the past and the many different factors that have influenced and continue to influence the environment—factors which managers need to be aware of to make informed decisions. While conducting their research, the environmental history team coordinated closely with researchers working on a Natural Resource Condition Assessment for Pecos. The environmental history focused specifically on questions which were of greatest concern for land managers in an effort to make the history a useable document.



This historic sign at Pecos National Historical Park reflects the long history of grazing that affected the environment (photo by Cori Knudten).

The environmental history also informed the development of a Resource Stewardship Strategy (RSS) for Pecos National Historical Park. RSS documents develop strategies for achieving desired conditions for park resources. The PLHC served as the university cooperator on the RSS. Although management plans fall outside the normal scope of PLHC projects, the Pecos RSS offered an opportunity to integrate a historian’s perspective into the plan. Often Park Service management plans separate resources into “natural” and “cultural” categories, a tactic that removes the resources from their context. Many within the Park Service (*continued on page 3*)

Grad Student Spotlight

Brandon Luedtke

From 2009 to 2010 Brandon Luedtke worked as a graduate student researcher on an NPS-funded environmental history of Rocky Mountain National Park's Kawuneeche Valley. The Kawuneeche's history is punctuated by dramatic environmental change resulting from mining, human settlement, tourism, construction of irrigation networks, park administration, wildlife management, and natural disturbances. In addition to "muddying his boots" by visiting sites in the valley, Luedtke conducted research at several repositories, including the National Archives in Denver and the Water Resources Archive at CSU. Assisted by Luedtke and Dan Knowles, a graduate student researcher from CU-Denver, Principal Investigator Thomas Andrews (CU-Boulder) will author the final report.

After earning his MA in May 2010, Luedtke continued working with the PLHC as a member of the "National Parks Beyond the Nation" Colloquium planning committee from summer 2010 to spring 2011. This position afforded him the opportunity to network with scholars around the world. Both of these projects have provided Luedtke a valuable professional foundation on which to build once he begins his Ph.D. program in History at the University of Kansas this fall.



Featured Project, continued from page 2

are working at overcoming this divide, and at Pecos, park staff wanted a plan that represented the many ways in which "natural" and "cultural" resources are intertwined. The Pecos RSS took a holistic approach to management, recognizing that managers do not deal with resources in a vacuum. Every resource exists in relation to the other resources of the park and has its own distinct history.

At a series of workshops, the RSS team brainstormed methods of representing resource integration in the document. The team often struggled to overcome the boundaries enforced

by language and disciplinary distinctions. The environmental history proved to be a useful tool in developing "resource contexts" which demonstrated how resources are and always have been connected at Pecos. Although there is still a long way to go towards achieving effective integration in management plans, the Pecos RSS pioneered several approaches that hopefully will prove useful to other parks. The published reports of both the environmental history and RSS are forthcoming and links will be provided on the PLHC website when available.

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.

Rocky Mountain National Park: Perry Cabin HABS and Historic Structures Database

Principle Investigator Dr. Janet Ore and researcher Tyler Welch recently completed a two-part project for Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). The first phase of the project involved completing a Historic American Buildings Survey for the Perry Cabin. The Perry Cabin, built in 1921 as a summer cabin for tourists, is one of the few remaining structures from the period when many private individuals owned resorts and dude ranches within the park. The log cabin also is a fine example of rustic architecture and has been used as park housing for many years. The final report includes an architectural description, a site history, a historic context, a site map, and detailed drawings. It will be utilized by the park to inform future decisions about the continued use of the cabin and its subsequent preservation.

The second part of the project provided RMNP with an electronic, updateable database that includes every built feature at the park. The park first created a database for their structures in 2001 while writing a Five Year Plan for Historic Building Treatments, but the database needed to be updated and accessibility improved. The database is useful for all park staff, not only cultural resource managers. The updated database now provides accurate and easily accessible information for buildings and other structures, including National Register status, recent maintenance, and current interpretation strategies.

Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument: Oral History

Principal investigator Ruth Alexander and researcher Nichelle Frank will complete an oral history project for Colorado's Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument in summer 2011. Florissant Fossil Beds was established in 1969 to protect scientifically

significant insect and leaf fossils and related geologic sites at the prehistoric lake beds located near the town of Florissant. The process to establish the monument was a contentious one. Several high-profile individuals were instrumental in the fight, including Estella Leopold, scientist and daughter of Aldo Leopold; Victor Yannacone, the pioneering environmental attorney; and former Colorado governor Dick Lamm. The project team will organize, preserve, and transcribe existing oral history interviews from the monument's archives and will conduct additional interviews with select individuals. The project will provide important primary source material for future research on this NPS site and on the history of paleontological research on public lands.



Fossilized butterfly found at Florissant Fossil Beds (NPS photo).

Poudre River Digital History Project

Principal investigator Mark Fiege and researchers Maren Bzdek and Ashley Baranyk are developing an educational website describing the history of agricultural water use on Northern Colorado's Cache La Poudre River, with an emphasis on the shift of water from agricultural to urban-industrial use. Patty Rettig, archivist of the Water Resources Archive, and Tom Cech, CSU adjunct instructor and author of two books on water resources, will also participate

on the project team. The website will serve as an online exhibit that features primary sources from Morgan Library's Water Resources Archive and other regional collections, as well as historical narratives, biographical sketches, timelines, and maps. The site will explain the historic interrelationships between urbanization and agriculture in Colorado and question the assumption that urban and rural sectors function only in opposition to each other. The Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station has provided \$120,000 to fund this three-year project, which the PLHC hopes to use as a model for similar projects on other Colorado watersheds. The project team plans to create opportunities for CSU students to contribute research, writing, and website development through related coursework and research projects. Opportunities also exist to pursue research partnerships and engagement opportunities with ditch companies, CSU Extension, the Colorado Foundation for Water Education, and other entities.

FRICO Phases I and II

Since June 2009, researcher Clarissa Trapp and principal investigators Dr. Mark Fiege (Public Lands History Center) and Dr. Reagan Waskom (Colorado Water Institute and Colorado State University Water Center) have been working on a two-phase project to research and write the history of the Farmers Reservoir and Irrigation Company (FRICO). In Phase 1, the team interviewed farmers, municipal leaders, and employees involved in the irrigation company, with special emphasis placed on recording the stories of the company's oldest generation of shareholders and board members. By the end of Phase 1 in May 2011, thirteen interviews had been completed and transcribed by Clarissa Trapp and PLHC Program Manager Maren Bzdek.

In Phase 2, which commences on June 1, 2011, the team will incorporate oral histories from Phase 1 and archival research into a book-length history of FRICO, which will be completed in 2013. Because FRICO is situated in and north of Denver's northern suburbs, it became heavily involved in agricultural-urban water legislation, and its history provides an opportunity to illuminate the complexities of agriculture and increasing urbanization as they relate to water use on the Front Range. The PLHC hopes to incorporate

FRICO's history into a larger project on Colorado water history in the future.

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument: Environmental History and National Register District Amendment

The PLHC has two concurrent projects with Little Bighorn: an environmental history authored by former CSU professor Greg Smoak (now at the University of Utah) and an amendment of the monument's National Register nomination under the direction of Dr. Janet Ore. The site memorializes one of the last armed efforts of the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians to preserve their way of life. In the 1876 battle, 263 soldiers, Indian Scouts, and attached personnel of the Seventh Cavalry, including Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer, as well as more than 100 Native American warriors died or were mortally wounded. The environmental history project will result in a book that will improve the public's understanding of the battlefield landscape and will assist NPS management staff in their efforts to restore and protect the landscape, geomorphology, and native plants that the site was created to preserve. The National Register amendment process will improve the historical context for the site and will evaluate the potential inclusion of important landscape features and Mission 66-era NPS infrastructure in the historic district. Recent CSU graduate Jim Bertolini is working as a researcher on both projects.



PLHC researchers will be studying the landscape of the Little Bighorn Battlefield as part of two ongoing projects (photo by Jim Bertolini).

Related Activities and Events

Expanding Connections

Public Lands History Center organizes colloquium on national parks in an international context

The Public Lands History Center will host “**National Parks Beyond the Nation**,” an interdisciplinary colloquium reconsidering national parks in an international context, **September 14-17, 2011**, in Fort Collins and at Rocky Mountain National Park. The planning committee (Dr. Mark Fiege, Dr. Jared Orsi, Dr. Adrian Howkins, Brandon Luedtke, and Maren Bzdek) has organized the participation of thirteen leading environmental history scholars from around the world who will share original essays that challenge the national framework within which national park history often has been told.

To accomplish this, participants have asked diverse questions and adopted a range of approaches. For example, Mark Carey’s (University of Oregon) research will analyze the ways in which climate change narratives and global warming discourse in the United States has influenced national parks abroad. Alan MacEachern (University of Western Ontario) will examine the relationship between the Canadian and American national park systems during the 1910s, tracing how they simultaneously supported

and challenged one another. In similar fashion, Ann McGrath’s (Australian National University) essay will compare the climbing controversies at Ayers Rock (Australia) and Devils Tower, investigating how visitors may be engaging in, if not re-enacting, different kinds of cultural stories. And Jane Carruthers (University of South Africa) will use the history of South Africa’s parks to explore the contradictions, controversies, contested values, and political divergences inherent in the rhetoric of “national parks.”

In addition to discussing and developing their research in intensive workshop sessions, participants will speak on one of three public panels. The evening panel presentations on September 15, 16, and 17 will introduce the audience to these emerging ideas and promote scholarship and debate in open community forums. The colloquium will conclude with a field trip to Rocky Mountain National Park, where participants will have an opportunity to see national park management in action. The Public Lands History Center is working with the University of Oklahoma Press to produce an anthology of essays from the colloquium. For more information, please visit nationalparksbeyondthenation.wordpress.com.



Marakele National Park, South Africa (SANParks photo)

Center Notes

Ruth Alexander is working as the Principal Investigator for the oral history project at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument this summer.

Nichelle Frank, M.A. student, is serving as the researcher for the project.

Avana Andrade is researching the history of grazing and documenting historic sites as a full-time intern at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

Ashley Baranyk was a STEP (Student Temporary Employee Program) employee in the archives at Rocky Mountain National Park in summer 2010. She earned her M.A. in May 2011 and is working as a researcher on the Poudre digital history project.

Jim Bertolini returned to the PLHC in summer 2011 to provide additional research assistance to **Greg Smoak** on the environmental history project for Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. He is also working on an amendment to Little Bighorn's national historic district with **Janet Ore**.

Maren Bzdek attended the annual meeting of the National Council on Public History in Pensacola, Florida, April 6-10, 2011. She participated in THATCamp (The Humanities and Technology Camp) and represented the PLHC in a working group, "Using Centers to Teach Public History."

Maren Bzdek and **Cori Knudten** presented "Environmental History: A Foundation for Interdisciplinary Resource Management" at the biennial meeting of the George Wright Society Conference on Parks, Protected Areas & Cultural Sites in New Orleans in March, 2011.

Mark Fiege presented "National Parks and the Environmental History Imperative" at the ASEH 2010 Conference in Portland. A journal article on the same topic will appear in an upcoming issue of the *George Wright Forum*.

Cori Knudten finished the environmental history and Resource Stewardship Strategy projects for Pecos National Historical Park and will enter the Ph.D. history program at UC Davis in fall 2011.

Brandon Luedtke completed his work on the environmental history of the Kawuneeche Valley at Rocky Mountain National Park with **Thomas Andrews** of CU-Boulder and has served as planning coordinator for the PLHC's fall colloquium on the national parks in an international context. He will enter the Ph.D. history program at the University of Kansas in fall 2011.

Sam Levin and **Janelle Gulick** are working as our summer 2011 museum interns at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site in Deer Lodge, Montana.

Kelsey Matson, M.A. student, is **Mark Fiege's** research assistant this summer for the administrative history of grazing in the national parks.

Janet Ore presented "Modern by Design: Mission 66 Architecture and Consumer Culture in Rocky Mountain National Park" at the 2009 Western History Conference in Denver. She also presented "Mules and Machines: How the Forest Service's Ninemile Remount Depot Fostered Aerial Firefighting" at the 2010 Montana History Conference in Helena.

Clarissa Trapp completed an oral history project for the Farmer's Reservoir and Irrigation Company (FRICO) in May 2011. In August 2011 she will earn her M.A. and begin research for a narrative history of FRICO.

Tyler Welch completed two historic preservation projects for Rocky Mountain National Park in 2010 and will begin working on his law degree at the University of Colorado in fall 2011.

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 support for general administrative operations not covered by project funds. For more information, please contact Maren Bzdek at maren.bzdek@colostate.edu, 970-491-6130 or visit publiclands.colostate.edu/support.

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The Center would also like to thank Stephan Weiler, Associate Dean for Research, for his ongoing strategic support. Nancy Rehe and Lorraine Dunn, Department of History, provide critical budgetary and administrative assistance.

PLHC Reports (click to download)

[People and Nature on the Mountaintop: A Resource and Impact Study of Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park \(2010\)](#)

[The Mission 66 Program at Rocky Mountain National Park: 1947-1973 \(2010\)](#)

[Perry Cabin: Historic American Building Survey State Level II Documentation \(2010\)](#)

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