

From the Editor

If you look at the inside cover, you will see a host of new names on the journal's masthead. This is my first issue as editor. The journal has a new managing editor, Eve Munson — Karie Kirkpatrick resigned to take a job at the Ohio State University Press. Ed Russell has succeeded Mark Harvey as book review editor. The editorial board now has thirty-four members.

I did not expect that so much change would occur in so short a time. But I could not be more pleased with the journal's new editorial staff. For me, one of the attractions of the editor's job was the opportunity to be part of a team, and I look forward to working with a wonderful group of people.

Eve Munson comes to *Environmental History* with experience as both a journalist and a scholar. She worked as a newspaper reporter and editor for more than a decade. Then she returned to school to earn M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in communications at the University of Colorado and the University of Illinois. She has taught at the University of New Mexico and at Pennsylvania State University. She always has had a keen interest in history. At the University of Colorado, she studied Western history with Patricia Nelson Limerick, and she edited a collection of essays on the past and future of the West at Patty's invitation. Eve will integrate all of the elements of *Environmental History* with skill and good humor.

The book review editor for *Environmental History* needs to be a wide-ranging scholar, and Ed Russell seems to me to exemplify the breadth of our field. He majored in English as an undergraduate and then earned a Ph.D. in biology. His dissertation won the American Society for Environmental History's Rachel Carson prize. At the University of Virginia, he teaches environmental history and history of technology in a division of the school of engineering. He won an article prize last year in the history of science. As program chair for the 1999 ASEH meeting, he helped to put together a remarkable international conference that attracted scholars from the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Ed is curious, imaginative, and open-minded.

The expanded editorial board reflects the growing richness of scholarship in environmental history and forest history. I increased the board's geographic reach. Because our subject is becoming more interdisciplinary, I also increased the number of members with expertise outside of history. Lastly, I added several historians who have a great interest in environmental history but who are best-known for work in other subfields, because I want the journal to reach a wider audience within the historical profession. I am grateful that so many accomplished scholars have agreed to help me.

I also appreciate the fine staff at the Forest History Society. Editorial assistant Carol Marochak helps to manage the flow of manuscripts and books. Cheryl Oakes, Michele Justice, and Barbara Lapointe are responsible for the *Biblioscope* — a terrific tool for anyone interested in environmental history and forest history. Kathy Cox keeps the accounts. FHS president and CEO Steve Anderson ensures that all the administrative and financial aspects of the journal are in order. All were especially helpful while I served as editor-elect.

As Hal Rothman suggests in the lead article in this issue, the editor's job is full of challenges. *Environmental History* prospered during Hal's tenure, and we all owe Hal thanks. I will do all that I can to see that the journal remains both intellectually vigorous and financially sound.

Adam Rome



A Decade in the Saddle

Confessions of a Recalcitrant Editor

Hal Rothman

WHEN JOHN OPIE approached me in 1991 to ask me to pinch-hit for him as editor of *Environmental History Review* while he was on sabbatical, neither of us imagined that he'd end up being Wally Pipp and I'd do a lame imitation of Lou Gehrig. In retrospect, I should have known better. John winked at me with the roguish charm for which he is renowned and I took it as camaraderie, a shared moment between a venerated elder and an up-and-coming Young Turk. He clearly recognized better than I what a sucker he'd landed. If I'd knocked over a liquor store that day instead of accepting John's offer, I'd have been out of prison and off parole long before now. As it is, I'm hobbling toward the exit of a decade in the saddle.

It has been a transformative decade, one in which the field of environmental history and the journal you're holding in your hands have emerged as significant participants in the debate about history and its meaning and purpose and as contributors on the larger stage of environmental policy. In 1992, environmental history remained an immature discipline, still taking baby steps toward a comprehensive approach to the field. While it was no longer accurate to say that environmental history was environmentalist history, the parallels between both sides of this equation remained palpable. Yet the work to transform and broaden the field was well underway, some of it published, and I found myself with a boiling pot, asked to try to keep the lid on. Whether I've succeeded or not, the field is in much better shape, this journal has become an important historical publication, the third most frequently cited after the *Journal of American History* and the *Pacific Historical Review*, and the caliber of scholarship in environmental history is daunting and getting better all the time.

When I was handed the journal, Opie had already rescued us from our nadir. John had come back to the editorship in 1987, when ASEH numbered less than 200 institutional and individual members and the organization was truly not strong enough to field independent conferences. Environmental history teetered in 1987, full of promise but with few of the institutional mechanisms necessary for academic survival. In the five years of his second stint as editor of the journal he founded in 1976, Opie brought us back from the brink. The journal I inherited was

stable, with a small but loyal subscription base and the interest of most historians who cared about human interaction with the physical world. Its reach was limited, but considering the resources available, it was as prominent as the circumstances that surrounded it could permit.

Environmental history had its weaknesses in the early 1990s. The field was simultaneously invigorated and hamstrung by its passionate advocacy, the passion making its writing exciting but creating a faux orthodoxy than limited not only the range of subjects considered environmental history, but the ways in which they could be treated. Environmental history had not yet shed its fidelity to the 1960s, to the powerful embrace of the scholarship of the American Cultural Revolution, my phrase for the constellation of forces that inexorably altered the values and premises of American society. Like race, class, and gender, the trio of themes that have become the basis of much recent scholarship, modern environmental history grew directly out of the rewriting not only of the subjects of historical study but of topics such scholarship valued that came from the 1960s. Environmental history did differ from these other forms of scholarship, but close ties to such roots gave the field a political cast that slowed its maturation.

This complicated relationship to the values of a changing society created an inherent tension in environmental history. In one respect, the field strove for clear, concise analytical scholarship about human interaction with the physical world. In another, it sought to redress the presumed wrongs of industrial society, in this case in the treatment of and regard for nature, and to offer blueprints for better approaches to human socio-environmental organization. The two strands were tangled together throughout the first generation; more often than not, the goal of proscription for a fallen world took precedence. This stance did two important things to the field. First it classed it together with other oppositional forms of scholarship that challenged the status quo, making the field at least partially political and inadvertently diminishing the importance of the physical world to many who encountered environmental history. Those who sought to disparage the importance of the environment found it easy to dismiss or diminish environmental history. To them, the field was less significant than racism, sexism, or classism in American and world society, and this feeling that an unworthy idea had been given great credence even encouraged scholars and others to disparage the field. Environmental history was neither history nor science, opponents argued, and as neither, it did not merit genuine attention. Second, the goal of proscription led to a self-righteousness common in the scholarship of the time. That left environmental history subject to the canard that the field was not interested in people. Environmental historians were loosely classed with environmental activists; in the age of Earth First!, this meant being lumped together in an enormous theatrical production that too often drowned the issues in brilliant imagery.

Throughout the first generation, wilderness stood at the pinnacle of environmental history scholarship, unquestioned as an absolute virtue. In large part, this position resulted from the popularity of Roderick Nash's *Wilderness in the American Mind*, which debuted in 1967. Despite the work of other proto-environmental historians such as Walter Prescott Webb, James Malin, Emanuel LeRoy Ladurie

and the Annales School, and countless others, Nash set the agenda for much of the first generation. He brilliantly joined an older tradition in American Studies and American intellectual history—the effort to explicate an American consciousness. Although Nash thanked Merle Curti in his acknowledgements, he borrowed broadly from a tradition that included Henry Nash Smith, R. W. B. Lewis, and even further back, Ralph Henry Gabriel and Vernon L. Parrington. Nash cast wilderness as a moral good and created a complicated paradox: In Nash's formulation, American society only became whole as it made the transition from fear of the wild to appreciation of its sentience. He treated the embrace of wilderness as proof not only of the ascendance of the American people but of the conversion of national values to nature preservation. This ebullience fit the era of "Full Stomach Environmentalism," the period between the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 and that of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, and helped create the dominant vision of the first generation of environmental history.

In various and far more sophisticated forms, Nash's message became the dominant position in 1970s and even 1980s environmental history. Despite some brilliant exceptions, most environmental history was about sacred places and it had an elegiac tone. The fear of loss was palpable, the sense of imminent doom never far from the surface, and the tendency to chastise prominent and outspoken. The nation and indeed the world was losing nature, biological diversity, open space, and the time to act, in this hypothesis, was now. Wilderness studies were dramatically affected by the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II process, providing even greater urgency in authenticating the natural credentials of roadless areas. The rest of the field mostly considered landscapes and often disparaged the human impact on them. But mostly, people were smaller actors on the larger stage of nature in this early stage of the discipline's evolution.

An offshoot of this model was what I call the "tragedy school" of environmental history, most prominently written by Donald Worster. Perhaps the most innovative of the first generation of scholars, Worster carved a parallel track to the wilderness study with a critical approach to American use of the environment. He began his career with the first significant articulation of an intellectual relationship between scientific thought and nature, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (1977), a book that more than twenty-five years later remains the primary and most comprehensive intellectual history of the idea of ecology. Worster then made the story of decline into an environmental history parable with *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (1979), an indictment of capitalism and American attitudes toward the physical world. In a compelling and even seductive formulation, Worster treated human endeavor as a fall from grace from a purer time in which a smaller humanity embraced agriculture and was able to limit its impact on the land. In *Dust Bowl*, Worster indicted American culture for acting exactly according to its belief system, honed in the humid fertile lands in the eastern half of the nation. When applied to the semi-arid southern plains, Worster found those values a prescription for disaster. Indeed, he called the dust storms one of the three worst environmental disasters to that time. Since his writing, the burning of the oil fields of Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf War may have joined that group. Later, *Rivers of Empire*:

Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West (1985) made a similar argument. Both *Dust Bowl* and *Rivers of Empire* persuasively argued that ecological disasters and the hierarchical societies they produced were the consequences of cultural choices and human actions far more than they resulted from environmental circumstances. A compelling and influential scholar, a man with the passion of John Muir, Worster brilliantly blended advocacy and scholarship, passion and insight, and shaped the direction of environmental history for much of the subsequent decade.

One of the best writers of his generation, Worster claimed a Muir-like position in environmental history. He was among the field's leading lights and certainly its Jeremiah, a man whose logic was so clear that his judgments were irrefutable—as long as inquisitors accepted his premises. He influenced a generation of scholars, who trekked first to the University of Hawaii, then Brandeis University, and finally the University of Kansas to study with him. Worster gave talks around the country, wrote for popular publications, and generally advanced the stature of environmental history. In two decades, he produced a broad range of Ph. D.s, including my successor as editor, Adam Rome of Pennsylvania State University.

Worster's work shared other traits with John Muir. Like Muir, Worster offered a unified world view that demanded zealous fidelity. It posited humans as the aggressor in their relationship with nature, and argued for an almost pre-industrial model for human endeavor in the physical world. This "agro-ecological" approach stepped away from the wilderness model, but stalled, at least figuratively, in the late eighteenth century, before industrialization worked its way across the American landscape. While not as clearly Manichaeic as Muir, Worster still treated history in moral terms. Even as he gave the field a near-religious interpretation, Worster included human endeavor in the landscape in important ways, a step away from the full-stomach environmentalism of the era that moved environmental history forward. Even though it is easy to castigate Worster for an environmental fundamentalism, he was an essential figure in demanding the evolution of the analytical dimensions of the field.

Worster's work contained its own counter trends encoded in it, opening the way for the rich dialogue that accompanied the Opie-inspired renaissance in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Following a trend that often traced back to Samuel P. Hays's *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: Progressive Conservation, 1880-1920* (1959), scholars reintroduced policy to the field. Rather than simply point out its shortcomings, they instead analyzed its premises as well as its consequences. This contributed to a change in the structure of the field: scholars analyzed the environmental actions of societies and the consequences of those decisions. They gradually created distance from the position of defending nature—although that component remained prominent—and moved toward weighing the effects of human endeavor and factoring in the consequences of cultural choices.

From this point, it was a short step to an even more complicated look at the way human societies interact with the physical world around them. In the mid-1980s and early 1990s, a series of books, most prominently Richard White's *Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws,*

Pawnees, and Navajos (1983), William deBuys's *Enchantment and Exploitation: The Life and Hard Times of a New Mexico Mountain Range* (1985) and William Cronon's, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (1983) and *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (1991) convincingly argued that human values and the decisions they spawned were at the core of the transformation of environment, creating in their aftermath some environmentally untenable situations. Cronon went so far as to suggest that nature was not a constant. There could be different kinds of nature, an idea that adherents to a catholic view of nature found difficult to swallow. White, deBuys, and Cronon saw a vibrant nature, responding to human endeavor, but in their formulation, culture more than nature lay at the core of environmental transformation.

By the early 1990s, the older model of environmental history had begun to come apart. The advocacy at the core of much of the first generation of scholarship sounded plaintive in a changing cultural climate. Through the James Watt years at the Department of the Interior, the old bipartisan coalition in environmental politics held, even as Watt successfully worked to fracture the ties that crossed political party lines. Watt's aggressive pro-growth stance and his remarkable indiscretion in public settings guaranteed a primacy for anything he threatened. Most environmental history scholarship fit neatly into the opposition to Watt. By the mid-1980s, with Watt gone, the emphasis in environmental history remained constant, but environmental issues migrated away to complex, more morally ambiguous, even confounding issues. As the field started to grow, it needed to extend its reach.

EDITORS RESEMBLE ORCHESTRA conductors, frantically waving their arms in an effort to produce a result that their public will appreciate and that they desire. It is a funny job. In one respect, the editor is entirely powerless: A journal possesses a peculiar inertia, pushing ever onward whether the editor wants it to or not. The journal must come out four times a year with the requisite number of articles in it, on occasion forcing hasty and sometimes ill-considered decisions. It will circulate among its subscribers, library users and browsers, students forced to seek it out as part of one exercise or another. It has a life of its own and the image is strong in my mind of the editor, awash in the detritus of the momentum of an entity that existed before the editor started and will survive any ideas, machinations, goals, or objectives any editor might set. There were days that I thought of the journal as a live being, capable of making decisions of its own regardless of what I thought, hoped, or even attempted. In the most desperate moments, *Environmental History* and I had conversations, the journal usually coming out on top.

In another respect, editors can be tremendously influential in shaping fields, pushing scholars toward broad ideas, new creativity, and even toward goals beyond the simple publication of an article in the journal. This requires an articulated vision, a strategy or three, and commitment to a set of goals that are either widely shared in the field or of which the field can be persuaded. It is a lot harder for an editor to be proactive in shaping a field than it is to simply respond to the field's trends as reflected in submissions. It is also the best chance an editor has to help the field

gain significance. It will come as no surprise to anyone who knows me that I chose this more aggressive approach.

There is a Zen to the editor's job as well, a light touch rather than a heavy one. Successful editors are most important not for what they do, but for that from which they refrain. Like all young editors, I started with a cutlass, a clumsy tool that sliced large cuts. At the time, I thought the tool fit the task, but a little seasoning convinced me that a cutlass was too heavy in my mind, too mono-dimensional for the surgery-like tasks required of me. I consciously put its heavy weight and blunt carving away, and developed, I hope, something that more resembled an épée in my hands.

As I became comfortable in the role of editor, my energies shifted toward encouraging new and diverse scholarship. An editor's first instinct is to serve as gatekeeper. This is a messy and particularly thankless task that comes with the job, and challenges an editor's perception of the field and himself. A gatekeeper has to be honest to the point of fault, defending the field against any challenge, especially those closest to home. In retrospect, I have to admit that I initially relished this task, a common fault of an editor as green as I was when I started. It provided an easy definition of the editor's role as I learned the boundaries of my new responsibilities and felt my way toward a set of objectives. But it was simultaneously stultifying, keeping me from developing the very objectives I sought. Once under control, once an editor has defined his own goals for the journal, enthusiastic gatekeeping is a valuable trait that helps further refine the direction of the field. But being a gatekeeper alone is hard, lonely work. It puts the editor in the position of saying "no" quite a lot. Turning that necessarily negative role into something more positive is a difficult trick. Over time, I learned that holding the line by encouraging topics, themes, treatments, and ideas not commonly regarded as in the mainstream provided a nice and largely positive balance between these two different approaches to journal management.

In the effort to enhance the position of environmental history, the first goal I embraced was to raise the profile of the journal. The work in the field was already outstanding, but environmental historians had not yet compelled other historians to readily grant us their attention. Achieving such an end was complicated. Only a few of the strategies available to journal editors could support such an effort. I chose to take advantage of the prominence and stature of so many environmental historians to run a series of lead essays that were think pieces rather than conventional monographic articles. Beginning in 1993, I commissioned a series of leading scholars to compose pieces designed to ponder as much as inform, to synthesize and push outward rather than to follow historiography and work out details. "What would you tell the entire field about your subspecialty?" I said to one such scholar. "What do they need to know about what you do?" Most whom I asked were generous enough to participate; they wrote thoughtful pieces that tackled large issues and made the readership think. For the last three years of *Environmental History Review*, nearly every lead piece came from this commissioning process. Some, such as Dan Flores's "Place: An Argument for Bioregional History" and Char Miller's "The Greening of Gifford Pinchot," have become classics, widely cited and reprinted in

anthologies sometimes ad nauseam. One, Mike Davis's, "The Case For Letting Malibu Burn," was the first publication from Davis's later bestseller, *Ecology of Fear* (1998).

The pattern continued with the founding of *Environmental History* in 1996. Bill Cronon graciously volunteered "The Trouble with Wilderness or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," easily one of the most significant essays of the past twenty years and certainly one of the most provocative. Three respondents, Tom Dunlap, Sam Hays, and Michael Cohen, all weighed in, creating a vigorous discussion to which Cronon responded. "The Trouble with Wilderness" later appeared on Op-Ed pages around the country and was selected as one of the best essays of 1996, but the fullest explication of its issues came in *Environmental History*. The piece served as a signature, an announcement that the new journal intended to be significant in ways neither of its predecessors could attain. Later pieces such as Alan Taylor's, "Wasty Ways: Stories of American Settlement," which appeared during the same year he received the Pulitzer Prize for *William Cooper's Town* (1995), Theodore Steinberg's, "Do-It-Yourself Deathscape: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in Southern Florida," and Jeffrey Meikle's, "Material Doubts: The Consequences of Plastic," continued to encourage broader approaches to environmental history.

The field I inherited was also ripe for broadening. The innovative work of the 1980s created an audience beyond the very small cadre that embraced the field in the 1970s. By 1990, the quizzical looks environmental historians often received when they explained what they did had ceased; there were no more taunts about being foolish for looking at the world through the eyes of a bear or a beaver. Even more telling, environmental history had migrated from American Studies programs to history departments. Worster was trained in American Studies. For his first decade at the University of Texas, Alfred Crosby held a joint appointment in American Studies and Geography. After the publication of *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900 to 1900* in 1986, the history department became interested in him. Other history departments even began to hire people to teach environmental history, finally countering the observation of a friend of mine in the mid-1980s that "no one gets hired as an environmental historian. You get hired to teach something else and then you sneak environmental history into the mix." The field had become crucial in a number of historical disciplines, "grounding" western history, in the words of the esteemed historian Elliott West, and otherwise influencing the work of scholars in countless fields. Transatlantic history relied on Crosby's work, which changed the story of the New World from conquest to exchange; Native American history rethought its premises around the work of Calvin Martin, Cronon, White and others. Even urban history began to borrow from the work of environmental historians. But the field lacked an identity beyond its first generation of wilderness and landscape studies.

In this reach, I found my first mission: to make environmental history more broad, reflecting not only trends in history, but also natural science, conservation biology, anthropology, and other disciplines. As had many other fields, environmental history remained focused on North America, much to the consternation of British scholars in particular. In an effort to counter this trend, some foolishly

engaged in a weird ritual of reclaiming antecedents for environmental history—all of which happened to come from historical geography and to support a claim of English primacy in founding the field. Silly enough on its face, such arguments did illustrate the need to address the field's overwhelming focus on the United States.

Equally vexing, environmental history did not wholly reflect the range of historical and environmental issues. After Love Canal and Three Mile Island, American environmental concerns broadened beyond the historical class-based emphasis on sacred spaces, the Sierra Club definition of the environmental world. As early as the mid-1960s, the need for this shift became apparent. Eliot Porter's famous photography book of Glen Canyon, *The Place No One Knew* (1963), was tantamount to an admission that a broader vision was necessary; David Brower recognized the limitations of the Sierra Club's approach in the aftermath of the Echo Park controversy. The real changes happened as urban communities, often blue-collar, ethnic, or minority, openly complained about the conditions in their communities. Environmental history followed slowly, perhaps too loyal to the historical vision of the field and not sufficiently supple to respond.

Urban scholars had always been involved in environmental history, but until the 1990s, they had been relegated to the fringes, their issues clearly part of the realm of environmental history, but their subjects far from what held the heart of most scholars. Martin Melosi, a long-time core scholar in environmental history who became president of ASEH in 1993, was still widely regarded as the "garbage guy." His work on urban pollution was treated as anomalous, an odd twist in a professional organization with a different focus. Joel Tarr, Jeffrey Stine, Craig Colten, and other urban and technology scholars sat at the end of the figurative table, participants in every conference and contributors to the journal, but somehow apart from the main thrust of the field. Urban sessions at conferences seemed to attract a wholly different audience; at the Houston meeting in 1991, someone facetiously remarked to me that the urbanists imported their own constituency and sent them home right after the session. Full-fledged integration of urban environmental history required more than simple participation; a seat at the table demanded a rethinking of the boundaries of the discipline.

The urban environmental historians were receptive. Martin Melosi not only responded to my request to author a lead piece, he made a passionate statement for the breadth of the field in "The Place of the City in Environmental History." Joel Tarr and Jeffrey Stine followed with an offer of a special issue on urban environmental themes, published as volume 18:1, the spring 1994 issue of *Environmental History Review*. International in scope, addressing industrial development and its consequences, hygiene and safety in the work place, and waste disposal, the issue served as an announcement of the centrality of urban issues to a fully developed field. After the publication of the issue, environmental history could no longer dismiss urban themes out of hand. In the past seven years, urban themes have become a hallmark of the field, one of the most significant areas of growth and the source of a good portion of the expanding membership. Environmental history without urban history would be intellectually less rich, socially less significant,

inherently less broad and diverse, and far less able to provide a window into human interaction with the physical world over time.

Environmental history also needed to more broadly consider geography. It would not be an overstatement to say that modern environmental history coalesced at the intersection of aridity and technology, and even now, submissions to the journal than begin by either challenging or supporting the generalizations derived from studies of arid and semi-arid lands constitute the firm majority. The American West so dominated the studies of arid places that the region wrongly became a template for the larger field. To be truly international required other kinds of hypotheses derived from other places.

Down Under—Australia and New Zealand—and Southeast Asia arose with an independent historiography that simultaneously accepted and rejected an environmental history based in arid lands. In a series of pieces that began to appear in the early 1990s and continued for a decade, scholars such as Stephen Dovers, Greg Bankoff, and much later Simon Cubitt, crafted a vision for a region of the world that took the model of U.S. environmental history and tweaked it to the needs of the area they studied. From this significant step, an independent historiography apart from the main currents environmental history has grown up. Most compelling about the view from Down Under has always been its willingness to engage conventional environmental historiography in comparative terms.

Canadian history has long provided a powerful counterpoint to U.S. dominance of environmental history. Canada's position as a historical producer of raw materials such as timber and more recently the study of its position as a source of energy provide fruitful avenues for environmental history. Energy exploration has become a common theme, as has urban development, but much of Canadian environmental history remains focused on timber production and its environmental and social consequences. Comparative dimensions have emerged; Canada's state structure and the U.S. open market open the way for further analysis of the impact of different systems. In recent years, "First Nations," as the native people of Canada are called, and Canada's north, in many ways that nation's equivalent to the American stories of westering, have become the subject of environmental historians. I expect great things as this dimension of the field grows.

Africa became a particular focus during my tenure. African history is at its core environmental history: it is always about human interaction with the physical world, whether from a colonial perspective or a native one. Africanists had long been writing a form of environmental history, what scholars used to designate as "ecological factors," but the field had not yet coalesced into a mature environmental history scholarship. There had always been Africanists who contributed to the various predecessors of *Environmental History*. The challenge became trying to encourage a different approach that coincided with the larger field.

A number of people made this happen. Greg Maddox of Texas Southern University, who served as associate editor beginning in 1997, played an instrumental role in recruiting scholars who could be persuaded to rethink their approach to appeal to a different audience. Jim McCann of Boston University, a powerhouse in African Studies and a current ASEH board member, jump-started the process with "The

Plow and the Forest: Narratives of Deforestation in Ethiopia," signaling to other Africanists that *Environmental History* welcomed their efforts. Scholars in Africa and elsewhere, especially the late Ruth Edgecombe, Jane Carruthers, Lance Van Sittert, and many others contributed work on a variety of subjects that inspired more work. Crucial to the evolution was many scholars' acceptance of the idea that while nation and tribe created political and social boundaries that made scholarship sufficiently difficult in and of themselves, environmental history often transcended such distinctions. Scholars were asked to see in terms of bioregions rather than national or tribal boundaries, complicating greatly their task. The result has been, in my estimation, one of the most important influences on environmental history as a whole.

The 1990s saw another challenge to the ideals of environmentalism and its predecessor, conservation. Underpinning environmental history had been the concept that the rise of conservation and the implementation of law had been more than a revolution in values; it had also been no less than a step forward for the good guys. This smug formulation grew from the roots of environmental history in environmentalism, and in some ways, early environmental history contributed to the canonization of the concepts of conservation and environmentalism and the creation of its saints. These comfortable ideas began to come apart in the 1980s, and the genuine critique took a decade to evolve.

The real challenges to this perspective came in analysis of class. Conservation had its roots in the noblesse oblige of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the actions of patrician class individuals such as Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot. Seeing the national good from a lofty perch gave them a view that only the powerful could share. Not unreasonably, they placed national priorities ahead of local ones, creating rational arguments for such decisions that resonated with a national audience. Locals long felt otherwise, but they were silent actors, even villains, in the story of environmental history for a very long time.

A look at such people through the lens of class and race told another story. William deBuys tackled this question in *Enchantment and Exploitation*, and Durwood Dunn did something similar in *Cade's Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (1988), but neither really focused on the issue of class. In *Environmental History*, Karl Jacoby and Benjamin Heber Johnson followed the path opened by Louis Warren's *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (1997), with fine articles that explicated the tension. They built on earlier efforts, most notably Daniel W. Schneider, "Enclosing the Floodplain: Resource Conflict on the Illinois River, 1880-1920," that approached the enclosing of common resources from the point of view of the excluded. In this new formulation, conservationists were often the privileged, imposing on local people of lesser means and inflicting upon them a set of values not only unfamiliar, but that simultaneously deprived them of the limited ways to make a living. They used the force of law, power that they could control, to enforce their views on broader society. The result added a new tension to way scholars regarded environmental history and environmentalism, adding new

complexity as it told a more comprehensive story. Environmental history looked at its roots in a new way as a result.

The question of privilege had longed dogged the relationship between environment and labor. After the decline of the industrial economy, after the OPEC embargo and the beginning of the process of globalization that took high-paid blue-collar job overseas and restructured the nature of work in the United States, an attempt to resuscitate the resource economy by speciously blaming environmental regulation for the loss of jobs became a oft-repeated canard. Throughout much of the 1980s, environment and jobs were juxtaposed as competitors, much to the detriment of environmentalism as the old industrial economy was replaced by information. Many gained political capital by speciously blaming environmentalists for the loss of industrial jobs and a schism arose between the environmental community and struggling organized labor. Many assumed that the differences had historical roots.

They did not, as a number of young scholars including Scott Dewey, Robert Gordon, and Chad Montrie have pointed out. Together, this trio made a strong argument for a labor-environment coalition that predated 1974, an era in which the nation was so flush and labor so secure that it became natural for labor to endorse quality-of-life environmental positions. In *Saving the Planet: The American Response to the Environment in the Twentieth Century* (2000), I labeled this phenomenon "full stomach environmentalism," and argued that it extended broadly across the national canvas. What some have called my insight truthfully came directly from the work of these young scholars, filtered through the mechanism of the journal.

Another area that came to the fore in the 1990s was the concept of environmental justice. This dimension of the field brought environmental history closest to the trio of themes, race, class, and gender, derived from the American Cultural Revolution. Environmental justice had other advantages. Its inclusion added not only the history of non-whites to the story of environmental history, it also accentuated the role of women. Women had been much more prominent in many more ways than early environmental history acknowledged, and the field began to rectify this oversight in a number of ways. The work of Carolyn Merchant offered a blueprint. The creation of two prizes, the Rachel Carson dissertation prize and the Alice Hamilton prize for the best environmental history article published outside the journal, further articulated the significant historical roles of women in the field.

Environmental justice proved a complicated topic, for it was in many ways wrapped up with "oppression scholarship." Environmental justice claimed a particular relationship between minority communities and hazardous waste in the present and read that back into the past. As scholarship, this was both exhilarating and troubling. While Robert Bullard and other social scientists demonstrated a relationship between minority communities and hazardous waste sitings, it became harder to sustain this argument in historical context. If, as technology and waste scholars have long asserted, people historically came to the hazard rather than the other way around, communities often found themselves bound to risk by the chance at prosperity. This complicated scenario lent itself to many types of

interpretation. Even more, historically communities affected by proximity to hazards were more often than not white ethnic communities, Eastern European in origin and often Roman Catholic, a decidedly different model than Bullard and others present. Discussion with attorneys who site hazardous waste repositories confirms this discrepancy. To an individual, they assert that the communities they seek are poor and docile, often rural white or Roman Catholic or even Mormon. In the United States, African-American communities have not been docile in any way for two generations. This reality complicated the racial message of environmental justice, arguing strongly for a different set of links as well: Class played an enormous role in exposure to undue risk and poverty was an even greater predictor of exposure to toxic hazards. The correlation between poverty and being non-white in the United States was more than strong, fueling this argument in a number of ways. The links between race, class, and exposure remain a powerful topic of study and much remains to be done in this arena.

Environmental history also embraced cultural history, if a little haltingly. The two fields would seem antithetical in many ways, for the grounded nature of environmental history and the supple malleability of cultural history differ in more than merely approach. Yet the insight of cultural history had bearing on environmental history in many ways. Chris Sellers and Doug Sackman both contributed seminal essays, encountering resistance from more traditional scholars along the way. "What were they up to?" I was occasionally asked. I once received a letter from the editor of a prominent journal in a related field that castigated me for "taking the post-modern turn." Moi?

In all these cases, what I sought as editor was good, compelling scholarship that pushed the assumptions of the field. In my decade, I wrote countless letters that explained to authors that if their piece was about a place, it belonged in the journal of that place's history; if it was about a field, it belonged in the field's journal. Only if it was about environmental history, if its story told the field something significant about environmental history, if it explored themes of wide interest, did it belong in *Environmental History*. This was a high bar to clear and we probably did not always get over it, but in my mind, it is one that served the field well. Environmental history's promise has always been a redefinition of the boundaries of the discipline of history, an inclusion of the environment in the study of the past. We are not advocates of the environment; instead we are advocates of including the environment in the story of human evolution on the planet.

THE REAL DANGER to environmental history is the coalescence of orthodoxy. As other historical fields have shown, an orthodoxy, even when it is revisionist, stagnates a field, stifles its creativity, and makes it puerile. The nature of academia contributes to smug repetition of approved truths. Historical disciplines are apt to embrace overarching themes and repeat them ad nauseam; even the most brilliant graduate students find it easier to write dissertations that explicate an esteemed name's footnotes rather than attempt the far more difficult undertaking of original scholarship if they can score professional points by repeating the axioms of the masters. This is particularly dangerous to environmental history because the field's leading lights

are so bright and their ideas so compelling. The roots of the field in post-1960s scholarship augment the difficulty. It is easy for us to preach to the choir, firm in our convictions, pushing aside new insights that might invigorate debate and reshape the boundaries of the field. We've gone through a generation-long revolution in scholarship already and it is tempting to resign ourselves to a period of consolidation. If we do, we run the risk of losing the broadening audience for the range of our messages, of becoming stale, of speaking only to one another. Consolidation might be the logical culmination of an era of analysis, yet doing so would turn the field away from one of the strongest currents in the environmental history tradition, engagement with the world beyond the academy. While not always a goal of historians, such involvement has been a hallmark of environmental historians and a trait that has given our scholarship vitality. From activists such as Samuel P. Hays, Michael Cohen, Carolyn Merchant, and countless others to the many of us involved in environmental activities at the grassroots level, we have used our scholarship to inform and even buttress the issues we address in the real world. We've also taken those experiences and made them into scholarship.

The challenge is great. As a field, avoid complacency, address real issues with vigor and vitality, and always, always innovate. As editor, I tried to make sure that the best work got published—whether it fit my conceptions of the field or not. I was frankly predisposed toward pieces that assaulted my own assumptions and beliefs. Never was I more pleased than when *Environmental History* published an article that outraged me, challenged me, told me all I thought was simply wrong, and forced me to grapple with its premises on its terms, rather than repeated the comfortable assumptions widely shared in the field. A decade ago, I decided to try to give environmental history a razor-sharp edge and to keep it finely honed. I hope my efforts have helped in some small way to facilitate all we have seen in the last decade.

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