Benjamin Looker Receives 2016 Lawrence W. Levine Award from the Organization of American Historians

BLOOMINGTON, IN—During its annual meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) presented Benjamin Looker, Saint Louis University, with their prestigious 2016 Lawrence W. Levine Award, which is given annually for the best book in American cultural history.

Lawrence W. Levine Award

A Nation of Neighborhoods: Imagining Cities, Communities, and Democracy in Postwar America (University of Chicago Press) is an innovative, imaginative portrayal of the concept of neighborhoods, which has dominated the American cultural landscape throughout the course of the twentieth century. While there is a breadth of work on urban America in the twentieth century, Looker accomplishes something entirely new and original. Unsettling a broader historiography focusing more intensely on the dynamics of urban decline, this study brings together a variety of sources—from federal and local planning initiatives to children’s television programs such as Sesame Street—to enrich the relationship among people, space, and culture. Looker exposes the paradox of a collective wish for neighborhoods in the midst of increasing urban isolation, while at the same time highlighting how the rhetoric of neighborhoods has long been rooted in American political rhetoric. A Nation of Neighborhoods honors Lawrence W. Levine with an exemplary work of interdisciplinary research that frames the familiar in completely nuanced ways. This work is cultural history at its best, with attention to a wide variety of media in constructing a dominant historical narrative.

The award was presented on April 9 by OAH’s 2015–16 President Jon Butler and 2016–17 President Nancy F. Cott.

For more information, visit oah.org or call 812.855.7311.

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS

Founded in 1907, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) is the world's largest professional association dedicated to American history scholarship. With more than 7,500 members from the U.S. and abroad, OAH promotes excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of American history, encouraging wide discussion of historical questions and equitable treatment of history practitioners. It publishes the quarterly Journal of American History, the leading scholarly publication and journal of record in the field of American history for more than nine decades. It also publishes The American Historian magazine. Formerly known as the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (MVHA), the association became the OAH in 1965 to reflect a broader scope focusing on national studies of American history. The OAH national headquarters are located in the historic Raintree House on Indiana University's Bloomington campus. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.