

## The David Livingstone Centenary Medal

The American Geographical Society is one of the very earliest “Learned Societies” in the United States. Founded in 1851, a mere 20 years after its more famous cousin, the British Royal Geographical Society, like that institution it developed as a means to orient the integration of the understanding of national terrain through the use of surveys and exploration as well as global exploration as part of the colonial archive. It pioneered the use of photogrammetry and aviation in land assessment in the early 1900s and has remained active in the new forms of technology as applied to planetary explanation and , exploration. They publish the peer reviewed *Geographical Review* which began publication a year after AGS was founded, making it one of the oldest scientific journals in the US. AGS is an institution was set up for field training and cartography as well as popularizing and disseminating landscape knowledges with a special emphasis on human effects on lands. and to some extent, like the Royal Geographical Society an analyst and policy developer as part of the expansion of global land knowledge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Given the times this was clearly part of the “Colonial Archive”, but recipients throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and 21<sup>st</sup>), have a quite different profile.

The David Livingstone Centenary was set up in 1913 by the Hispanic Society of America on the occasion of Livingstone’s birth. It specifically recognizes "scientific achievements in the field of geography of the Southern Hemisphere".<sup>[1]</sup> One of the most widely known recipients was Teddy Roosevelt, who was awarded the medal not only for his Amazon explorations with Candido Rondon, but also in recognition of his significant role in protecting American land through the inauguration of the US Forest service under Gifford Pinchot, and the US National Park Service under John Muir. The roster of recipients reads like a who’s who in tropical institutional innovation, tropical exploration and geographical passions including Candido Rondon, a half Tembe Indian who integrated Amazonia into Brazil through telegraph lines in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and also founded the Brazilian Indian Protection Service. Intellectual historian Preston James, cultural and historical geographer James Parsons, geopolitical analyst especially of Amazonia, Bertha Becker also were honored with this prize. It is not awarded every year but only when there is a worthy candidate

Dr Susanna Hecht, of the Luskin School, UCLA, and the Graduate Institute for International Development in Geneva. Her work on the political ecology and agro ecologies of Amazon development became land mark and highly cited work. Hecht’s research indigenous knowledge on the formation of highly fertile Terra Preta soils helped stimulate a new paradigm of the “Anthropogenic”amazon, completely displacing the earlier environmental determinist models of Amazon settlement. Her research on resistance movements was a pioneering work on Amazon social history, which culminated in the now classic, and prize winning *Fate of the Forest*. Hecht’s work expanded into the dynamics of secondary forests and the role of remittances and migration in forest recovery throughout Latin America resulted in the widely reviewed and influential *Social Lives of Forests*. Her social history of Amazonia “*The Scramble for the Amazon*” won the Melville Prize of the American Historical Society for the best book on environmental history in 2013. Her most recent effort is the edited volume: *Soy, Globalization and Latin American Politics* published in 2018.