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To: Field Services Alliance Colleagues

From: J.D. Britton, Immediate Past FSA Chair

Date: October 10, 1997

Re: Meeting in Denver

To those who attended our FSA meeting in Denver, thank you for coming. For those who were unable to attend, you missed a very good meeting, but we hope to see you next year at the AASLH Annual Meeting in Sacramento.

Present: Karla Nicholson, **Kentucky**; John Harris, **Indiana**; Alvin Gerhardt, **Tennessee**; Rodger Stroup, **South Carolina**; John Schleicher, **Nebraska**; Cynthia Robinson, **Massachusetts**; Barbara Coffee, **Colorado**; Jo Ann Williford, **North Carolina**; Sandra Washington, **Nebraska**; Verginia Terpenining, **Indiana**; David Nystuen, **Minnesota**; Tom McKay, **Wisconsin**; Pat Miller **Illinois**; Kent Powell, **Utah**; Sandra Clark, **Michigan**, and J.D. Britton, **Ohio**.

J.D. Britton welcomed all and then everyone introduced themselves. J.D. reviewed the FSA goals and activities and pointed out items that were accomplished and things that the group might want to do over the next year. He also noted the passing of our colleague and friend, **Ron Brentano**, director of the field services office in Oregon. Ron had done his best to beat cancer this past year, but died about two weeks before the AASLH Annual Meeting. **Tom McKay** mentioned that the Oregon Historical Society was accepting memorial gifts in Ron's name to support the Oregon Historical Society's field services office. Anyone interested in making a donation is encouraged to do so.

Following the chair's report, **Sandra Washington**, who serves on the AASLH Council and works for the National Parks Service's Midwest District based in Omaha, Nebraska, gave us a report on AASLH. She said that 1997 represented the first time that AASLH had had a joint annual meeting and conference. Meeting with the Colorado/Wyoming Association of Museums, the conference was a big success with more than a thousand attending. AASLH hoped to have similar joint meetings and wanted everyone to come the 1998 Annual Meeting in Sacramento. The 1999 meeting will be a joint meeting held with the Mid-Atlantic Museum Association.

Sadra noted a few programs and initiatives of AASLH. The Association is working with the History Channel to create cultural sites on the web so that interested people could easily find out about cultural activity, such as historical societies and history museums in different parts of the country. She mentioned that AASLH is currently developing a strategic three-year plan with the following goals:

Being recognized as a national leader by becoming more visible with effective programs
Taking advantage of the nation's current interest in history
Providing personal service to members and constituents

Maintaining a stable financial picture

Sandra mentioned that AASLH's membership is very strong with the addition of many new members and a very good retention rate. Its finances are very good and AASLH has set up an endowment. Lastly, she noted that AASLH is considering a move to a different part of Nashville. Its current facilities are not being fully used and are very expensive.

Next we had a FS-LIST report from **John Harris** of the Indiana Historical Society. He noted that twenty-five of our group are on the FS-LIST, but they generated only forty-five messages over the past year. Most were administrative in nature, but there were a few requests for information, posting/listing of jobs, and discussions of national meetings. With more of us using the internet and e-mail, John is hopeful that we may start using the FS List more for communication. We thank John, "techno-nerd" that he is, for being so steadfast in his haranguing us to use the List and certainly for maintaining/managing this list these past three years.

John also discussed a FSA home page. He envisions this home page with a table of contents, the FSA purpose, goals, and activities, and list of the field services offices. In a discussion about the FSA home page, several people expressed concern that consultants (those who sell goods to historical organizations) should be included on the list of field services offices. It was agreed that only field services offices associated with state or regional agencies or not-for-profit groups should be listed. This home page could be used by any historical organization in the country to connect with us. A FSA Home Page committee was formed, consisting of John, **Karla Nicholson**, Kentucky; **Jo Ann Williford**, North Carolina; and **J.D. Britton**, Ohio. John agreed to set up the home page and work with AASLH to see if we could attach it to its web site. A draft will be available to our colleagues by the end of the year for their review.

The meeting then turned to a discussion of an aspect of our work, that is trying to figure out the best way to work with our constituents. We discussed whether we should have different standards for the different levels of historical societies. All agreed that we appreciate the work of all historical organizations even though some, especially some all-volunteer organizations, do poor jobs with collections management and interpretation. The question was "Should we lower our view of professional standards for these groups?" The answer was no. In the end we agreed that we must be satisfied with providing professional advice and hoped that continually reminding historical societies that there are professional standards in historical agency administration would eventually result in better work on their part.

Several people talked about creating a "check list" of what a "good" historical society should be doing. This check list could be used in consulting with historical organizations and for conducting "needs assessments." The group agreed that we should continue to discuss the topic by way of our FS List. **J.D. Britton** said that he would get the discussion going by posting a check list question on the FS List--what should the checklist consist of.

Following the discussion on standards, a motion was approved that the term of office for the FSA Chair should be reduced from three years to two. **Tom McKay**, chair of the FSA Nominating Committee, then presented the Nominating Committee report. **David Nystuen** from the Field Services Program in Minnesota was unanimously elected to serve as chair for the next two years. Good luck David and have fun.

And now at the end of this memo, I would like to say that I have very much enjoyed being the FSA Chair for the past three years and want to thank you all for coming to our meetings and participating in our activities. This group has meant a lot to me since it was created in 1988. I hope that I have been able to give it a little more direction and purpose. It seems to me that we must continue to have direction and purpose for without those, our group could stray and possibly dissolve. The best part of the AASLH meeting is seeing all of you and continuing the discussions of our very important work.