

PATTY LIMERICK

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Patty Limerick is the Faculty Director and Chair of the Board of the Center of the American West at the University of Colorado, where she is also a Professor of History. Limerick has dedicated her career to bridging the gap between academics and the general public and to demonstrating the benefits of applying historical perspective to contemporary dilemmas and conflicts.

Limerick was born and raised in Banning, California, and graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1972. She received her Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale University in 1980, and from 1980 to 1984 she was an Assistant Professor of History at Harvard. In 1984, Limerick moved to Boulder to join the History Department of the University of Colorado, where she was promoted to tenured Associate Professor in 1987 and to Full Professor in 1991. In 1985 she published *Desert Passages*, followed in 1987 by her best-known work, *The Legacy of Conquest*, an overview and reinterpretation of Western American history that has stirred up a great deal of both academic and public debate. Limerick is also a prolific essayist, and many of her most notable articles, including “Dancing with Professors: The Trouble with Academic Prose,” were collected in 2000 under the title *Something in the Soil*.

Limerick has received a number of awards and honors recognizing the impact of her scholarship and her commitment to teaching, including the MacArthur Fellowship (1995 to 2000) and the Hazel Barnes Prize, the University of Colorado’s highest award for teaching and research (2001). She has served as president of several professional organizations, advised documentary and film projects, and done two tours as a Pulitzer Non-Fiction jurist. She regularly engages the public on the op-ed pages of local and national newspapers, and in the summer of 2005 she served as a guest columnist for the *New York Times*. Limerick is also known as an energetic, funny, and engaging public speaker, sought after by a wide range of Western constituencies that include private industry groups, state and federal agencies, and grassroots organizations.

In 1986, Limerick and CU Law Professor Charles Wilkinson founded the Center of the American West, and since 1995 it has been her primary point of affiliation. During her tenure, the Center has published a number of books, including the influential *Atlas of the New West* (1997), and a series of lively, balanced, and to-the-point reports on compelling Western issues, including *What Every Westerner Should Know About Energy* (2003), *Cleaning Up Abandoned Mines* (2006), and *What Every Westerner Should Know About Energy Efficiency and Conservation* (2007). Limerick and Center staff are currently working on several projects, including a book about the role of the Department of Interior in the West, based on the “Inside Interior” series of interviews hosted by the Center between 2004 and 2006; an illustrated history of the Denver Water Board; and a PBS series titled “Living with Energy.” Under her leadership, the Center of the American West serves as a forum committed to the civil, respectful, problem-

solving exploration of important, often contentious, public issues. In an era of political polarization and contention, the Center strives to bring out “the better angels of our nature” by appealing to our common loyalties and hopes as Westerners.