

## **UC Merced**

### **Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology**

#### **Title**

Memorial to Harry Clebourne James

#### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4060c2ck>

#### **Journal**

Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology, 1(1)

#### **ISSN**

0191-3557

#### **Author**

Jennings, Bill

#### **Publication Date**

1979-12-01

Peer reviewed

# Memorial to Harry Clebourne James



Harry Clebourne James with Hopi Chief Tewaquaptewa on the south rim of the Grand Canyon prior to 1939. Courtesy of *Desert Magazine*.

Harry Clebourne James died 28 May 1978 in a Banning hospital, the date of the annual Malki Museum Memorial Day Fiesta at the nearby Morongo Indian Reservation. He was 82 and had been ill a few months with cancer.

James' role at the little museum—the first on a California reservation—was an advisory one, but he particularly contributed tangibly to its successful publications program.

He and his wife, Grace Clifford James, annually offered their home for a picnic/reception for the museum's publications board and authors at their Lolomi Lodge home near Lake Fulmor in the San Jacinto Mountains. Additionally, in 1969, James had given the museum the rights to a second edition of his 1960 book, *The Cahuilla Indians*, published originally by Westernlore Press. It is considered a major study of this important Southern California tribal group.

His death, while not perhaps a shock to his many friends and collaborators in Indian and conservation projects of the past 60 years, nevertheless was untimely. He was completing a manuscript based on the life and contributions of his principal early stimulator in Indian life, Joseph Willard Schultz, New York-born latter-day frontiersman, author, and adopted member of the Blackfeet tribe of Montana.

James remained active in guidance and inspiration for the Trailfinders, a youth group he founded in 1915. With his wife he operated the Trailfinders School for Boys from 1927 until 1950.

The Schultz manuscript, along with a large box of memorabilia is now in the Schultz collection at the Montana State University Library. Most of James' other materials, including his own 14 published books and more than 100 articles, are in the Special Collections Department of the Library,

University of California, Riverside.

James, a native of Ottawa, Canada, came to Los Angeles in 1913, admittedly movie-struck. He worked behind the camera for several of the early film companies, including D.W. Griffiths. His one venture as an actor failed because he couldn't force a scowl on cue in an audition with his new friend, Dorothy Gish. The Gish sisters, Dorothy and Lillian, as well as many other early Hollywood celebrities, were early and enduring supporters of many James causes, including the Cahuenga Council, his first boys group, the Western Rangers, and the Trailfinders.

The council was named for the aboriginal inhabitants of the Hollywood Hills, where James conducted his first hikes and camps with a Penobscot Indian actor, Tahamount, known in the films as Dark Cloud. James met Schultz while the then literary editor of the Los Angeles Times attended a council meeting at the Hollywood branch public library. Schultz later shared his Indian knowledge with the group and accompanied James and the boys on many extended camping trips.

Grace James recalls meeting Harry at the old 24th Street Elementary School near downtown Los Angeles when he conducted a boys' meeting on Hopi legends in about 1924. She was a teacher there and her principal, M. Amelia Foshay, later became their benefactor in establishing Lolomi Lodge.

James established his school in Altadena in 1926, the year before he and Grace were married, and she became the teacher of basic required subjects while James and his friends conducted classes in Indian and conservation themes and led the summer-long camping adventures into Indian areas throughout the West.

His lifelong involvement with the Hopi apparently began about 1921 when a short camping trip to Old Oraibi with the Trailfinders lengthened into a two-week stay due to flooded roads. The Pueblo people be-

friended James and the boys, providing them with food and endless nights of legend telling. The incident had a profound effect on James and most of his best writing from that time concerned the descendants of the Anasazi.

James was instrumental in the founding of two early-day Southern California philanthropic groups in the Charles Lummis tradition, the National Association to Help the Indian and the Indian Welfare League.

In 1923 James and the Trailfinders were instrumental in the establishment of the San Gorgonio Wilderness of the San Bernardino National Forest. After an initial turndown by U.S. Forest Service officials, James employed a precedential maneuver, petitioning President Calvin Coolidge for the formation of Junipero Serra National Monument, with the same boundaries—the upper elevations of Mt. San Gorgonio, highest peak in Southern California. Rather than lose any acreage to the rival National Park Service, the Forest Service established the wilderness in 1925. It became a model for similar enclaves throughout the western states.

James also battled the backers of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, up the eastern slopes of Mt. San Jacinto. He lost this campaign in the 1960's but at least was able to curb the developers' plans for a commercial center coincident with the tram.

This latter campaign was carried out with the help of the Desert Protective Council, which James had established in 1954. After the closing of his school in 1950, James concentrated on conservation causes and stepped up his writing in both Indian and environmental fields. He converted the school's alumni group and the broader based Trailfinders organization into a strong conservation voice.

In 1949, the Jameses had begun construction of their mountain home and headquarters, thanks to the Foshay gift. Artist Don Perceval, a James associate in many ventures, contri-

buted the log cabin plans.

In 1966, after extended negotiations, the couple donated the lodge and its surrounding acreage to the University of California, with lifetime tenancy. The site has become the James Reserve of the University's Natural Land and Water Reserves System.

After James' death, Grace remained at Lolomi briefly to assist in the disposition of his library, including an extensive musical collection—rare records, scores, and other items. Grace stayed at the lodge to supervise disposal of literally several tons of memorabilia. She is now living at Banning, close to friends and away from the rugged winters of the mountains.

BILL JENNINGS

*University of California, Riverside*

**PUBLISHED BOOKS OF  
HARRY CLEBOURNE JAMES**

- 1922 Handbook for Western Boys. Western Woodcraft Association, Inc., Los Angeles.
- 1927 The Treasure of the Hopitu, a Story of the Arizona Desert of Today. Los Angeles: Publisher unknown.
- 1940 Haliksai! A Book of the Hopi Legends of the Grand Canyon Country, as told to Harry C. James. El Centro: Desert Magazine (Press).
- 1956 The Hopi Indians, Their History and Their Culture. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Press.
- 1957 A Day with Honau, a Hopi Indian Boy. Chicago: Melmont Publishers.
- 1958 Red Man, White Man. San Antonio: The Naylor Company.
- 1959 A Day with Poli, a Hopi Indian Girl. Los Angeles: Melmont Publishers.
- 1959 A Day in Oraibi, a Hopi Indian Village. Los Angeles: Melmont Publishers.
- 1959 The Hopi Indian Butterfly Dance. Chicago: Melmont Publishers.
- 1960 The Cahuilla Indians. Los Angeles: Westernlore Press. (Reprinted 1969, Malki Museum Press, Banning.)
- 1963 Grizzly Adams. Chicago: Children's Press.
- 1969 Ovada, an Indian Boy of the Grand Canyon. Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press.
- 1971 The First Americans. Vol. I, Indians of the Americas Series. Los Angeles: Elk Grove Press.
- 1972 Western Campfires. Flagstaff, Arizona: Northland Press.

