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REVIEWS

Purple Hummingbird: A Biography of Elizabeth Warder Crozer Campbell

Claude N. Warren and Joan S. Schneider,
Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2017,
206 pp., 121 pages of text, 54 pages of appendices,
1 map, 82 black-and-white images, \$19.95 (paper).

Reviewed by Jennifer E. Perry

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As we explore the human histories of different regions we are obliged to consider the work of those who have come before us; through our mutual interests in people and place we may come to know them almost as well as if we had met them in person. Who else could tell the story of a desert archaeologist but other seasoned desert archaeologists? From the opening lines of this book, the reader benefits from the knowledge and appreciation of the desert that is shared by the authors and their subject matter, Elizabeth Warder Crozer Campbell (Betty Campbell). In the preface and Chapter 1 the authors explain why they chose to highlight Betty's under-recognized archaeological contributions. Underlying this rationale is a broader illustration of how life histories and passions, as well as the cultural biases of the times, can influence research for decades.

Organized into twelve chapters, Betty's story is divided into three major phases: her childhood and how she and her husband Bill ended up in the California desert; how her experiences as a pioneer led her to becoming an archaeologist and shaped her interpretations of desert prehistory; and the end of her research and life in the desert. Appendix A, *A Chronological Record of Campbell Fieldwork*, is an excellent resource for those interested in desert archaeology and in specifically utilizing Betty's extensive artifact collections and field notes. In addition, the more than 80 images dispersed throughout the text, many of which are photographs that Betty personally took, are another important contribution in their depictions of the desert, artifacts, and archaeological fieldwork in the early twentieth century.

In Chapter 2, the story begins at a major turning point in Betty's life—her arrival in the Mojave Desert in 1924. Chapter 3 backtracks from her first morning in camp to provide the context of her privileged upbringing in Pennsylvania. Chapters 4 and 5 are a fascinating summary of Betty and Bill's efforts to homestead in the desert in the late 1920s. Not many miles from Hollywood, they were worlds apart at the Twentynine Palms Oasis, where finding enough firewood and potable water were daily concerns. Their experience as pioneers is a worthwhile tale on its own—the authors create a vivid picture of this challenging life. However, in order to draw in readers with limited to no desert experience, it would have been useful to provide more of a backdrop on Twentynine Palms, the Mojave Desert, and the pluvial lakes, both their indigenous prehistory as well as the cultural perceptions and realities of the California deserts today.

As discussed in Chapter 6, Betty came to formulate a landscape approach to indigenous prehistory as she and Bill cut their teeth, so to speak, on the desert sands and winds alongside prospectors and cowboys. That approach, the fieldwork on which it is based, and the criticisms it received are the subjects of Chapters 7–9. At a time when cultural history dominated interpretive paradigms in California archaeology, her focus on human-environment interactions was novel and largely dismissed or misunderstood by leading figures of the day. Based on the correlation between sites and former lakeshores throughout the Mojave Desert, Betty correctly hypothesized about the antiquity of human occupation and identified other elements of what came to be known as the Western Pluvial Lakes Tradition. Her argument, however, preceded radiocarbon dating and faced an uphill battle against chronological conservatism. In addition to the theoretical biases and methodological limitations of the era, Betty was challenged by her lack of academic credentials. It took dedication to fieldwork, collaboration with respected scholars, and a growing intellectual sophistication in her writings for other archaeologists to take her seriously. That she was a woman undoubtedly did not help her case, nor apparently did her personality.

In Chapters 11–12, the authors discuss what is known about Betty after her husband Bill passed away, and

what became of her collections. This is where I cannot help but think that the authors missed an opportunity to engage a broader audience. In contrast to the detailed summary of archaeological debates during her life, there is little discussion of when and how Betty was vindicated through subsequent archaeological work. The book would have profited from a discussion of the methods and data needed—what Betty would have needed but that did not exist at that time—to validate aspects of her thinking about the antiquity of desert adaptations. It would have strengthened the case made by the authors about her relevance, and would have helped to further educate readers who may be less informed about the history of archaeology in California.

That said, works such as this help to pull the contributions of early archaeologists out of the shadows of time, cultural bias, and dominant male thinkers. The authors provide us with a clear understanding of how and why Betty's research was ahead of its day, in spite of her origins as an untrained elite. It is underpinned by what

we may regard as ideal standard practices in archaeology, including meticulous recordkeeping, consideration of changing environmental circumstances, and consultation with experts in other fields. It also speaks to the advantages derived from knowing a landscape intimately. Finally, it provides continuity between archaeologists of the past and today, with the authors themselves providing the bridge.

This book should appeal to those interested in deserts and their inhabitants, the history of Euro-American homesteading, and the history of archaeology in California. To those who aspire to be professional archaeologists, its allure also includes how the authors detail the process of an archaeologist 'in the making.' It is an engaging and accessible case study in how happenstance, curiosity, and hard work can lay the groundwork for a meaningful career, and how some of the best ideas may seemingly come from the most unexpected places. If you keep your eyes open, you never know what you might see and what direction it will take you in—it might just be a purple hummingbird leading the way.



Island of the Blue Dolphins: The Complete Reader's Edition

Sara L. Schwebel (editor), Scott O'Dell (author)
Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016,
256 pp., ISBN: 9780520289376, \$29.95 (hardcover).

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San Nicolas Island, much like the true story of the Lone Woman who survived for 18 years without known human contact, is often shrouded with misty fog and low-lying clouds, making any attempts to see clearly and understand nuances troublesome at best. However, Schwebel and her co-authors successfully manage to clear up some of the ambiguities surrounding the fictional and historical elements of this story by providing significant pieces to the puzzle of the most remote of the Channel Islands, the last native woman to walk its salt-sprayed shores, and the fascinating novel her story inspired.

In this Reader's Guide to one of the most popular and well-loved children's classics of the mid twentieth century, Schwebel and her co-authors pull together literary, historical, and anthropological research to provide readers with a comprehensive account of the context for the publishing of this novel, the historical accounts of the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island, and the state of American society during the 1950s and 60s—which spawned the views and prejudices towards Native Americans and women that were woven into O'Dell's fictionalized narrative of Karana.

As much as we would like to think ourselves capable of unbiased observation, the truth is that we all approach our lives with a certain degree of inherent bias. Our perspectives are molded by the stories forming our cultural upbringings, the unique situations we encounter, and the decisions we choose to make. In her nearly one-hundred page introduction and essay, Schwebel digs through old letters and early drafts, seeking out living descendants and associates of O'Dell, to provide us with the context for his perspectives, which naturally shaped his rendition