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Train, Henrichs, and Archer: *Medicinal Uses of Plants by Indian Tribes of Nevada*

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#### **Author**

Zigmond, Maurice L.

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*Medicinal Uses of Plants by Indian Tribes of Nevada.* Percy Train, James R. Henrichs, and W. Andrew Archer. Lawrence, Massachusetts: Quarterman Publications, Inc. Reproduction of revised edition of 1957, 139 pp., \$25.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by MAURICE L. ZIGMOND  
140 Dalton Road  
Belmont, MA 02178

This volume offers impressive testimony to the substantial contribution that the Works Project Administration of more than forty years ago made in certain neglected areas. First appearing in 1941 in the form of three unbound fasciculi, the work was later issued as a book which came out in a revised edition in 1957. The present publication is a facsimile reproduction of the 1957 edition. The three authors, neither anthropologists nor linguists,

pursued their assignment conscientiously. Their stated objectives were three: to secure "data directly from the Nevada Indians regarding their medicinal uses of the native plants," to collect "adequate quantities of dried material of these same plants for use in pharmacological tests and studies," and to accumulate "herbarium specimens of the general flora of the State to supplement the first part of the undertaking." The thoroughness of their research is indicated by the fact that "there were interviewed 275 Indians from every community in the State" and that "103 reports containing 575 pages of data were sent in from the field."

Perhaps it was inevitable that the results are uneven. The third objective falls outside the scope of this publication. An "abstract of pharmacological research" (second objective) is presented, but the chemical analysis of the plant materials does not prove them to be exceptionally effective. "Generally speaking, the research indicated that although most of the plants had little or no clinical significance, yet some of them did have medicinal value as reported by the Indians."

The bulk of the volume is devoted to an alphabetical listing of some 180 plants reported by the Indians to serve therapeutic functions together with their names in four languages, Paiute (with Moapa Paiute considered separately), Shoshone, Washoe, and English, and the ways in which the plants are used as medicine. As to the transcription of native words, the authors anticipate that "anthropologists and ethnobotanists" may protest "when they discover that their phonetical method has not been used in recording pronunciation of Indian plant names." The writers believe that "a better service will be rendered by using the older phonetical method understood by the reader for whom this publication is intended." This assumption, however, is not convincing. The Indian words are spelled out in syllables but, since no key is

supplied, there is no assurance that "anyone understanding ordinary phonetical spelling can pronounce readily these Indian words." Whether a specialist or amateur, how is one to know how to pronounce dye, hoe, neu, uah? We are told that "the accented syllables have been underscored." That seems clear enough except in words where more than one syllable is underscored. Where is the stress in nah-cah nooma, or in ki-bah pah-quanna-av? Further, we are told that "many of the Indian plant names have no meaning." In all probability, the contrary is true. Naming is not a random matter. It all depends upon the linguistic level at which "meaning" is being sought. Basic meanings are often obscured in the course of the long development of a language. Since two of the languages in the present study, Paiute and Shoshone, are members of a common linguistic family, Uto-Aztecan, the root words of some of the plants may be traced to ancient sources. Furthermore, the Paiute and Shoshone plant names given here often show an obvious relationship to one another and to names used in other Uto-Aztecan languages. However, the authors were admittedly not interested in this phase of their research.

The primary area of this study, the medicinal usages by Nevada Indians, of native plants, is explored in great detail. Diverse regimens are offered for a variety of ills. In point of number of ailments for which remedies are suggested, venereal disease heads the list with 44 prescriptions with a few additional ones applicable more specifically for either syphilis or gonorrhea. Other indispositions include colds (45 plant derivatives), sores (41), swellings (41), rheumatism (35), diarrhea (33). Thirty plants provide "physic," while a similar number constitute medicine for stomach ache. It is, of course, not to be assumed that there is general agreement among consultants as to either the medications or their effects. Nevertheless, the pre-

scriptions offered must have been based upon much practical experience.

An introduction, prepared by the wife of Percy Train (now deceased), declares that "the knowledge of medicinal plants is confined almost exclusively to the fast disappearing older generation . . . so it was felt necessary to obtain a record now before all of this Indian medicinal plant lore would be lost forever." We can wholeheartedly agree with this concern. Yet one cannot but regret that, in the process of reprinting, a revision of the text was not undertaken.



*The Fort Sage Drift Fence, Washoe County, Nevada.* Lorann S. A. Pendleton and David Hurst Thomas. New York: American Museum of Natural History *Anthropological Papers*, Vol. 58: Part 2, 1983.

Reviewed by ANAN RAYMOND  
Dept. of Anthropology  
Washington State Univ.  
Pullman, WA 99164

It is difficult to accurately interpret the age and function of surface rock alignments and their association with nearby lithic scatters. Pendleton and Thomas wrestle with this problem at the Fort Sage Drift Fence, concluding that this alignment helped prehistoric hunters intercept and dispatch pronghorn antelope and/or bighorn sheep.

The Fort Sage Drift Fence is a 1800 m.-long rock alignment 20 to 80 cm. high. Traversing three low hills, the alignment includes ten apparently intentional gaps, three of which occur where drainages bisect the fence. The walls are constructed of basalt boulders that appear (from the photographs) to be derived from nearby bedrock outcroppings and the adjacent hillside.

In the first section of the report Pendleton and Thomas discuss their analysis of