

CALIFORNIA
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Number 115
2016

Bulletin





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Front Cover: Portrait of a Mojave man by Maynard Dixon, July 1902. See article by Donald J. Hagerty, pages 2-7.

Back Cover. The first California-built locomotive, the "California." This rare Grafton Tyler Brown lithograph is a recent gift from the Foundation.

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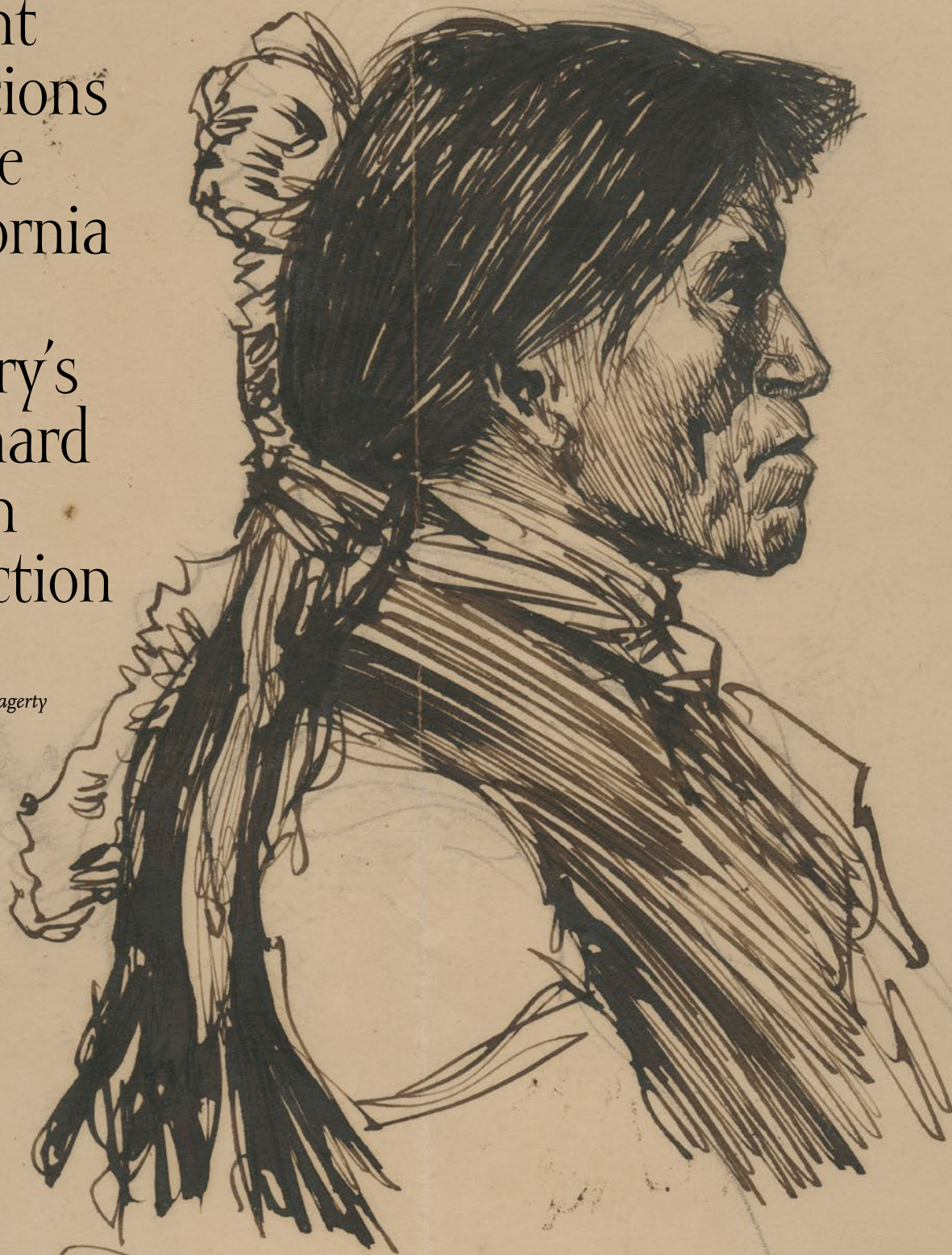
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Recent
Additions
to the
California
State
Library's
Maynard
Dixon
Collection

By Donald J. Hagerty



St. mohave Arizna. July 1900

Typical Mojave Indian *

Through the efforts of the California State Library Foundation, the California State Library recently added several new Maynard Dixon items to its rapidly expanding collection on this acclaimed artist—a striking drawing of a Mojave Indian, several early poems, along with a scarce exhibition catalog. The collection was acquired from Sacramento resident Dixon Dewey. It had been in the possession of the descendants of Amy Pitcher Cecil, a close friend of Maynard Dixon. Dewey was the great nephew of Cecil.

The drawing depicts a Mojave Indian in July 1900 done at Fort Mojave, Arizona on the Colorado River. On a hot day in June 1900 Dixon crossed the Colorado River at Needles, California, entering a spiritual place important in the quest to express his personal vision. For nearly seven years, he had produced countless illustrations on the West for San Francisco newspapers, and for magazines and books. Although by now nationally famous for his work, he had never encountered the West firsthand. The hectic pressure from deadlines of a newspaper illustrator, frustrations with William Randolph Hearst's "Yellow Journalism," and girl troubles prompted him to "Go East to See the West." In this, he was encouraged by Charles F. Lummis, editor and publisher of the *Land of Sunshine* and tireless booster of all things Southwest who sent him off with this prediction, "L. Maynard Dixon, for some time chief artist of the *San Francisco Examiner*, and by odds the most promising illustrator on this coast, has gone out to grow in the waiting country—the New Mexico and Arizona which

are such bonanzas for the artist but bonanzas almost untouched."¹ This first journey into the Southwest initiated a long search for the understanding of a region. Dixon discovered that out in the desert he would find a defining revelation that the landscape and its inhabitants had the power to inform the spiritually perceptive.

Dixon first stopped at Fort Mojave along the Colorado River, eighteen miles northwest of Needles. The post was built in 1859 by the US Army to protect travelers from Indian depredations but was closed in 1890. Some of the buildings had been taken over by Ben Spear who established a trading post to serve the Mojave Indians, Anglo ranchers, and prospectors. By 1900, Spear, a seventy-five-year-old, white bearded, soft-spoken individual had lived at the post for over thirty-five years. When Dixon arrived on the daily mail wagon, Spear invited him to stay and use the post for his work, and helped Dixon initiate contacts with the Mojave Indians. The Mojave, largest of the Yuman-speaking groups along the Colorado River lived in an intersection of narrow river bottom and surrounding arid landscape of cactus, mesquite, and greasewood. During summer months the heat could be hellacious, sometimes reaching 120 degrees. Mojave life centered on farming the humid floodplain along the river, but the Mojave augmented this with fishing, hunting, plant foraging, and selling their crafts to tourists stopping at Needles.

Before the heat descended, Dixon would arrange his sketching materials on a table under the post's overhanging roof. Before

"Among the drawings is the one obtained by the California State Library, a stunning profile portrait of a Mojave man, with striking features and shoulder length hair wrapped in a cloth bun. The portrait is powerful and sensitive, a creative ethnographic and documentary image of an individual determined to retain an identity in a rapidly changing world."



EDITOR'S NOTE

Donald J. Hagerty is the authority on Maynard Dixon having written several books and articles on the famous artist including *The Art of Maynard Dixon* and *The Life of Maynard Dixon*. In addition, he has curated exhibits devoted to Dixon. Over the years, Hagerty has generously donated key material to the State Library on Dixon and Western art and has arranged for the donation of the Anokia murals that hang on the second floor of the Library and Courts Building and the painting *Allegory* that now graces the State Librarian's office. Hagerty is also the Foundation's vice-president.



*Ballade of ye Ladye and ye Cloist and ye
Gentilman who Called -*

*This ballade now that I wol singe
Shall be full sooth, I vow:
All of a ladye and a thinge
That happ'd to him, I know;
And so it be my part to bringe
This laye for his enow.*

*This ballade it shall be withalle
A wery joly one:
Of how a squire woldm calle
Belate the setting sunn,
And how the ladye hid his alle
Away to have some funn.*

MAYNARD DIXON

his mark



TEK-O-PAH

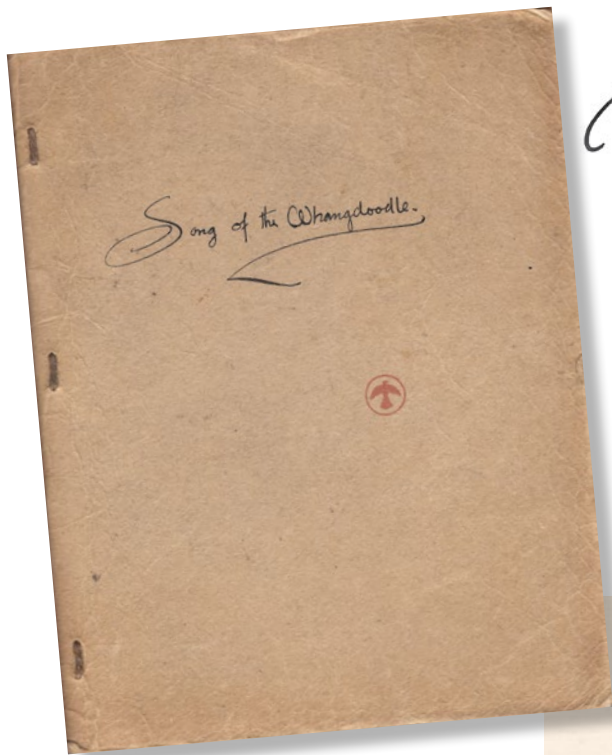
Included in the gift is this very scarce exhibit catalog *Paintings and Drawings* by Maynard Dixon published by the Sequoia Club in 1904. On the title page it reads "Maynard Dixon, his mark," with his thunderbird device below printed boldly in red. Under that has been added Tek-O-Pah, meaning "Crooked-Nose Man," bestowed on him by the Navajo for his rather prominent nose.

Written on November 7, 1896, in the lofty, romantic style of the period with rhymed verse, the seven-page poem *Ballade of ye Ladye* crackles with Dixon's sardonic wit and romantic naiveté.

and shoulder length hair. Among the drawings is the one obtained by the California State Library, a stunning profile portrait of a Mojave man, with striking features and shoulder length hair wrapped in a cloth bun. The portrait is powerful and sensitive, a creative ethnographic and documentary image of an individual determined to retain an identity in a rapidly changing world. Dixon was thrilled with the sights he had seen: "Arizona—the magic name of a land bright and mysterious, of sun and sand, of tragedy and stark endeavor. So long had I dreamed of it that when I came here it was not strange to me. Its sun was my sun, its ground my ground."³ This first visit to Arizona, with its remoteness, dramatic landscapes, and Indian cultures was for Dixon like traveling to an exotic and distant port of call.

In a search for other ways to express his feelings, Dixon started to write poetry in 1896. The three poems in the collection are the earliest examples of his work. There is one he called *Ballade*, which he dedicated to "Mrs. Cecil." Written on November 7, 1896, in the lofty, romantic style of the period with rhymed verse, the seven-page poem crackles with Dixon's sardonic wit and romantic naiveté. He concluded the poem by signing it LMD arranged around his thunderbird motif and the date 96. That thunderbird design was first an extension of his signature, then an extension of his personality, and ultimately a personal totem. It would appear on his drawings, paintings, and letters until almost 1930. An even more lengthy poem, *The Law that men call Fate*, was written shortly thereafter in January 1897. This ran nine pages with four pages of additional stanzas. But this poem showed the emerging power of Dixon's poetry with its dark, haunting flashes of

long, individual Mojave would appear. Dixon would introduce himself and then invite them to sit in a chair where he would sketch them. The Mojave liked to pose, particularly when offered twenty-five cents for a sitting. When sketching, Dixon used heavy paper, a soft lead pencil and white chalk, often identifying each individual with their name or other designation, the date, and the location. Sometimes he added his by now famous thunderbird design to the sketch, a thunderbird captured in a circle. Dixon made over thirty portrait sketches of Mojave men and women while staying at the post.² At that time, the Mojave wore Anglo clothing but still retained ancient customs like face-painting, chin-tattooing,



To her to whom this faint echo owes its
being it is dedicated.

Jan 1897.



The cover and the dedication to Dixon's poem with the improbable title "Song of the Whangdoodle." Each is embellished with his talisman, the thunderbird.

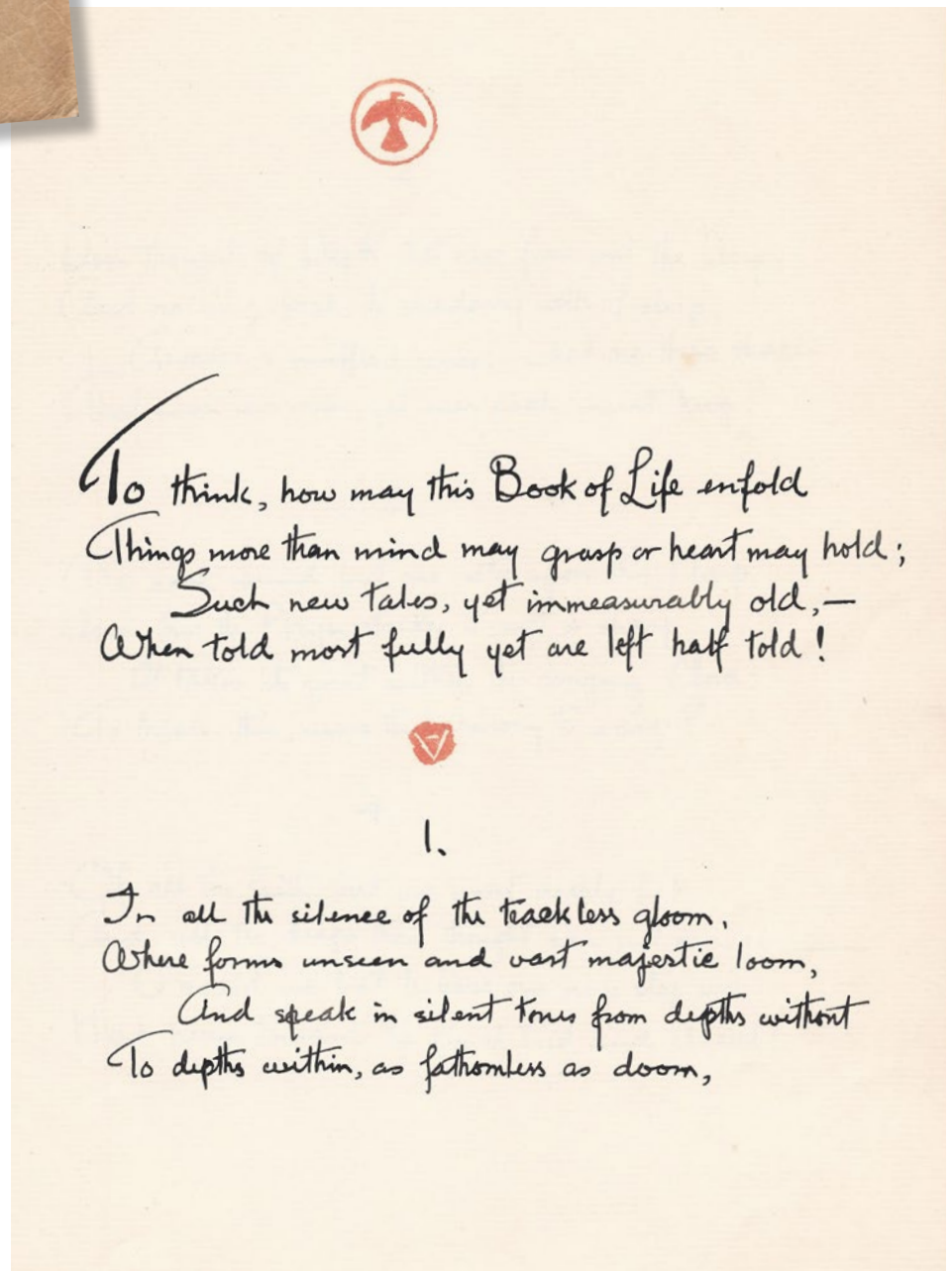
The opening stanza to his whimsically titled poem "Song of the Whangdoodle."

insight and emotional depth as he pondered life and death. Dixon dedicated the poem "To her to whom this faint echo owes its being it is dedicated." He drew his thunderbird on the cover but also inexplicably inscribed on it "Song of the Whangdoodle" as if to say let us not take this too seriously. Then there is *Gloria Republica!* which he wrote in November 1896 with a humorous twist on Latin, most likely as a response to presidential elections that year and San Francisco's rough and tumble politics:

"Politanus oratorium;
Con verbatim magna sorium;
Inebriates whoopanrorarm:
Gloria Republica!

Hiberniamus lacerate,
Coppus in perambulatium;
Matrona pro expostulatium:
Gloria Republica!

Populi prevaricaum;
Bazoo longa emulatum,-
Mi sepulchrum excavatum!
Gloria Republica!



To think, how may this Book of Life unfold
Things more than mind may grasp or heart may hold;
Such new tales, yet immeasurably old,—
When told most fully yet are left half told!



1.

In all the silence of the trackless gloom,
Where forms unseen and vast majestic loom,
And speak in silent tones from depths without
To depths within, as fathomless as doom,