

BOOK REVIEW

The Natural History of a Mountain Year: Four Seasons in the Wasatch Range. Claude T. Barnes; foreword by Pamela M. Poulson. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, UT. 1996. \$16.95 softcover.

Claude Teancum Barnes (1884–1968) was a well-known individual in the early part of this century in Utah. His letterhead of 21 August 1946 describes him as “Attorney and Counselor at Law.” However, Davis Bitton (Utah Historical Quarterly 49: 317–339) said of him:

[H]e was identified as a lawyer, businessman, and naturalist. He might also have been counted as a banker, scientific farmer, and politician. And having written some fourteen books and 118 articles he was certainly one of Utah’s most published authors. Of all these labels the one he would have preferred is that of naturalist. For sixty years he observed the birds, mammals, trees and flowers, mountains and canyons, clouds and streams of his native Utah. For Claude Barnes there was beauty all around. And not content to keep his appreciation to himself, he wrote about what he saw. In the tradition of Henry David Thoreau and John Muir and Aldo Leopold he used words not only to describe but also to praise the marvels of nature.

He originally wrote and published this volume as 4 separate essays. Wasatch Summer appeared in December 1956 followed by Wasatch Spring in August 1957, Wasatch Autumn in March 1958, and Wasatch Winter in May 1959.

Shortly after the last essay was published, he had printed 50 copies of the 4 seasons bound together and entitled *The Natural History of a Wasatch Year*. Interestingly, the bound book did not follow the chronological presentation but commenced with winter and followed the seasons of the year. Each copy was numbered, signed by the author, and given to a particular person or organization. Each essay, when

first published, was dedicated to a person. Wasatch Summer was dedicated to Dorothy B. Jensen and the other three to Louise Atkinson. This new edition is dedicated to the latter.

Louise Atkinson frequently accompanied him on his field trips. He said of her:

My companion, a real botanist, had not only remarkably discerning eyes, but also the ability to capture and hold almost any insect that attracted our attention, a knack she had retained from bare-foot wading days about the pastures and sloughs of her childhood home near the mouth of the Jordan river.

The colorful, eye-catching book cover, showing one of Barnes’ beloved mountains in the springtime, sets off this book. The University of Utah Press and Pamela M. Poulson, of Red Butte Garden and Arboretum, have enhanced Barnes’ writings without detracting from or changing any of his text. A map, not found in the original publication, covering the Wasatch Front from Mt. Nebo in the south to Mt. Ben Lomond in the north, locates the major canyons that Barnes refers to so many times in his writings. Dispersed in an attractive manner throughout the book are line drawings of 42 plant parts and 9 birds. He also gave scientific names to the organisms he was describing. Animal names then and now have not changed much, but many plant names have. To assist the reader, a plant synonymy of 45 plants is listed at the end of the book.

Ms. Poulson’s 3-page foreword enables the reader to catch the flavor of Barnes’ prose. Her reason for the publication is aptly summed up in the following paragraph:

Probably the best reason for republishing these journals is to remind us of what used to be. Though Mr Barnes had more than we, what we still have now is well worth close observation. Nature divulges its innermost secrets only to them who consistently tread its by-paths, ever alert to hear or see its undisturbed manifestations.

I would recommend this book to all who live along the Wasatch Front and to all others who love the beauties of nature so well described by Barnes so many years ago.

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Frost, Herbert H. 1997. "The Natural History of a Mountain Year: Four Seasons in the Wasatch Range by Claude T. Barnes, Pamela M. Poulson." *The Great Basin naturalist* 57(1), 90–91.

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