



2005

# First Female Native Archaeologist

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# First Female Native Archaeologist

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**From:** "H-AmIndian (Joyce Ann Kievit)" <amindian@MAIL.H-NET.MSU.EDU>  
**List Editor:** "H-AmIndian (Joyce Ann Kievit)" <amindian@MAIL.H-NET.MSU.EDU>  
**Editor's Subject:** Query Digest: First Female N.A. Archaeologist [2 Items]  
**Author's Subject:** Query Digest: First Female N.A. Archaeologist [2 Items]  
**Date Written:** Mon, 11 Apr 2005 23:08:06 -0700  
**Date Posted:** Wed, 12 Apr 2005 02:08:06 -0400

[1]

Date: Sun, 10 Apr 2005 09:43:59 EDT  
 From: Makeda4@aol.com  
 Subject: Re: Query: First Female N.A. Archaeologist

Jack Forbes is also alive and well. He is professor emeritus at UC Davis. Here is his webpage. Perhaps he can help. Also, the American Indian Quarterly published an article on Ella Deloria entitled "Different By Degree: Ella Cara Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, and Franz Boas Contend with Race and Ethnicity."

Spring 2001 Vol. 25 No. 2.  
 Arica Coleman, ABD  
 The Union Institute and University

[2]

Date: Sun, 10 Apr 2005 16:15:57 -0400  
 From: Margaret Bruchac <maligeet@earthlink.net>  
 Subject: Re: First Female Native Archaeologist

The first female Native American archaeologist was, I believe, Arthur Parker's daughter, Bertha (Yeawas) Parker, who passed in 1978. Her nickname was "Birdie."

Much has been written about Arthur Caswell Parker (1881-1955), a Seneca of about 1/8 Indian ancestry, who grew up on the Cattaraugus Indian Reservation with his Seneca mother and Scottish/English father (e.g. see Parker on the Iroquois, edited and introduced by William N. Fenton, Syracuse University Press 1968). Virtually no scholarship, however, has focused on Parker's wife, an Abenaki woman named Beulah Tahamont (1887-1945), who was an influential person in her own right. In a review of the published works on Parker, and the finding guides to his papers at the New York State Archives and the University of Rochester, the focus is overwhelmingly on his work among the Iroquois. Jack Campisi's biography of Parker for the Encyclopedia of North American Indians, like most other writings about any by Parker, curiously omits any mention of his wife and children.

As an adult, Bertha Parker did her professional work as an associate in ethnology and archaeology at the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, California, where she focused on collecting the oral traditions and material culture of California's Native peoples. Her publications for the museum under her married name of Bertha Parker Cody include:

- 1937. "A Maidu Myth of the Creation of Indian Women" Masterkey 13:83.
- 1940. California Indian Baby Cradles. Southwest Museum Leaflets 12.
- 1940. "California Indian Baby Cradles." Masterkey, 14(3):89-96.
- 1940. "Pomo Bear Impersonators." Masterkey 14(4):132-137.

- 1941. "Gold Ornaments of Ecuador," *Masterkey*, 15(3):87-95.

Without further research, I cannot yet say where Bertha Parker had her educational training, but it should be noted that she first became famous, not in academia, but in theatrical pursuits. That interest continued throughout her long marriage to her second husband, the infamous Iron Eyes Cody (born Oscar Espera DeCorti 1904-1999). During the 1950s, Bertha Parker and Iron Eyes Cody hosted a popular California television program on Native American Indian history and folklore, and were often called in as technical advisers and wardrobe experts for Hollywood films. Bertha's expertise in the film industry came, not from her husband, but from her parents, who were stars a generation earlier.

If we reckon the ancestry of Bertha Parker, by blood, she is half Abenaki and no more than 1/16 Seneca; if we reckon by matrilineal descent, she is entirely Abenaki. As a child actress, she self-identified exclusively as Abenaki Indian.

It's a shame that Bertha never focused her ethnological research on the northeast, given the fascinating connections and careers of her relatives. Here are just a few tidbits, from a much larger research project I've been working on for several years, under the working title "Adirondack Abenakis on Stage:"

The Tahamont family had deep roots in two thriving Abenaki communities: Odanak (also known as St. Francis, Quebec, Canada) and Lake George and Indian Lake, New York. Bertha Parker's mother, Beulah Tahamont, was the daughter of Elijah Tahamont and Margaret Camp of Lake George, NY, and great-granddaughter of Sabeal, the Wabanaki Indian for whom "Indian Lake" was named. Beulah Tahamont's mother, Margaret Camp, was the granddaughter of Louis Otondosonne Watso, a famous Abenaki "Indian Doctor" who fought in the War of 1812, doctored people from Deerfield, MA to Saratoga Springs, NY, retired to Lake George and lived to the age of 108.

Bertha's great grandfather, Elijah Tahamont Sr., came down from Odanak (St. Francis, Quebec, Canada) to attend Dartmouth College from 1843-1848, where President Lord described him as "worthy but unintelligent." Bertha's grandfather, Elijah Tahamont Jr., willingly went to Carlisle School to learn how to navigate American society. Elijah Tahamont Jr. later took the stage name "Chief Darkcloud." He was featured, in western-Plains style regalia, in "Les Abénakis d'Odanak" by Thomas M. Charland, Editions du Lévrion, Montreal, 1964:

> "If there were such a thing as a beauty show for men, few white men  
> would stand any chance for the prize against a certain full-blooded  
> American Indian now living in New York city. This man is Tahamont,  
> a brave of the Abenaki tribe of Indians, who is regarded by artists as  
> almost a perfect specimen of manly beauty, both in face and figure...  
> Tahamont is greatly in demand as an artist's model and receives, it is  
> said, the highest price for posing paid to any male model. His face and  
> figure are familiar to thousands who see the illustrations in the  
> prominent  
> weekly papers. E.W. Deming, De Conta Smith and Frederick Remington  
> are among the well known artists who draw from him" (Charland 1964:65).  
The photographs of Bertha's grandfather Elijah and her aunt Bessie, now posted on-line, give you some idea why the family was in such great demand as models. I find it deeply ironic that eastern Indians, who were, at the time, imagined to have "vanished," were actually doing the posing for Remington's famous paintings of western Indians.

[http://www.avcnet.org/ne-do-ba/pic\\_tah1.html](http://www.avcnet.org/ne-do-ba/pic_tah1.html)

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/turns/view.jsp?itemid=13058&subthemeid=19>

Beulah Tahamont apparently divorced Arthur Parker and remarried. She passed away in 1945, survived by her second husband, T.W. Filson, her daughter Bertha Parker Cody, and her son, Melville A. Parker. Her obituary, published in the Mercury-Register, Oroville, California, January 4, 1946, reads in part as follows:

> "A former actress, Mrs. Filson was known professionally as Beulah  
> Darkcloud. She started her stage career as a child of four. She  
> attended public schools and college in Montreal, Canada. Mrs. Filson's  
> father, Chief Darkcloud [Elijah Tahamont], was brought to Hollywood  
> in 1912 by D. W. Griffith. He starred in motion pictures and was well  
> known as a lecturer on Indian lore, touring roadshow and circus circuits.  
> As a young woman, Beulah Darkcloud was active in Los Angeles American  
> Indian Clubs. She produced and directed many pageants, the most notable  
> of which was "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers," one of the first  
> plays produced in the Hollywood Bowl.  
>

> Failing health as the result of a serious accident forced her to retire  
> from professional life 17 years ago. Following her retirement she  
> accompanied her daughter, Mrs. Bertha P[arker] Cody, writer and associate  
> in ethnology of S. W. Museum, on her ethnological expeditions, aiding  
> in the collecting of data on the lore, mythology, and early history  
> of the California Indians."

I'm certain there's a story that would explain why Bertha Parker chose to remain in California to pursue a career in archaeology and ethnography studying California Indians, rather than return to her northeastern roots, but I hesitate to "anthropologize" her by jumping to any conclusions, without consulting her surviving family members. Suffice to say that Bertha Tahamont Parker Cody is a fascinating example of a Native American woman in early anthropology, dancing (literally) across cultures.

Marge Bruchac

PhD Candidate, University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Five College Fellow, Amherst College



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**From:** Margaret Bruchac <maligeet@earthlink.net>  
**List Editor:** "H-AmIndian (Joyce Ann Kievit)" <amindian@MAIL.H-NET.MSU.EDU>  
**Editor's Subject:** Re: Beulah Tahamont Parker and Bertha Parker Cody (Native archaeologist)  
**Author's Subject:** Re: Beulah Tahamont Parker and Bertha Parker Cody (Native  
**Date Written:** Mon, 25 Apr 2005 12:27:47 -0400  
**Date Posted:** Thu, 27 Apr 2005 15:48:59 -0400

archaeologist)

Greetings, all

Here's a little more information you may find it interesting, since it has some poignant clues about the treatment of Native women during the early days of American anthropology.

Marge Bruchac

Re: First Female Native American Archaeologist  
 More Information on Beulah Tahamont, Arthur Parker, and Bertha Tahamont Parker Thurston Cody.

:::Arthur Parker and Beulah Tahamont:::

Arthur Parker (Seneca) married Beulah Tahamont (Abenaki) on April 23, 1904. Beulah's first education was at Sabrevois College in Montreal, but she later attended schools in New York. She provided crucial assistance in Arthur's early work by helping him develop relationships with the Keepers of the Faith at the Newtown Longhouse so he could report on the Seneca Little Water Medicine Society (see Parker 1909 "Secret Medicine Societies of the Seneca," *American Anthropologist* new series 11, pp. 161-185). Arthur Parker, in addition to his advocacy for the Iroquois, was a progressive, an advocate for Indian citizenship, and, ironically, a supporter of eugenics. Like his anthropology colleagues, he believed that intermarriage with whites and white education would "improve" the Indian "race." This stance is chilling when one realizes that the Iroquois and Abenaki were among the populations being considered for social re-education and eugenic sterilization during the first decades of the 20th century, due to their insistence on clinging to the very sort of so-called "pagan ways" that Parker was documenting. Parker used several pseudonyms in his voluminous writings, and during 1914-1915, just after his marriage to Beulah Tahamont dissolved, it's curious that he took the liberty of using the pseudonym "Alnoba Waubunaki," which is Abenaki for "a person who is Abenaki (Wabanaki)." Was this Parker's writing? Was it Beulah's writing? Did he think himself an adopted Abenaki? Without further research, I can't say, but he did publish two poems and two articles by that name in the *Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal*.

Few of the Arthur Parker biographers seem to be aware of Beulah, and few discuss the troubles that caused Parker and Tahamont to divorce. Beulah was clearly distraught, for causes as yet unknown, during the time Parker was forging his career and friendships with prominent white male anthropologists like Lewis Henry Morgan. On November 5, 1911, in a letter to Joseph Keppler, Parker wrote "I sometimes fear for Beulah's mental health" and admitted that he had sent her away to be hospitalized during the winter of 1903 (Arthur Parker to Joseph Keppler, November 5, 1911).

On April 12, 2005, I received some cryptic info in an email from

Edmund Carpenter (now 82), by way of Harald Prins. Carpenter recalled:  
 > "...the Indian store on Fifth Avenue, NY, where Sapir, Speck, Skinner,  
 > Harrington & Parker hung out, was run by F.V. Covert, an Indian. His  
 > daughter married Arthur Parker. She was said to be very beautiful...  
 > I heard she became unstable. Harrington took her in to his home where  
 > she lived out her life. I'm told, for I knew him only slightly, he was  
 > immensely kind."

Harald Prins noted that:

> "this Indian store, this is where George Heye (of "Heye and Mighty"  
 > fame -- now part of Smithsonian) bought many of his earliest Indian  
 > artefacts.

Carpenter isn't sure if his memory is correct, but it can't have been Beulah Tahamont who lived out her life in Harrington's home, since she moved to Hollywood and remarried. Mark Raymond Harrington did have a Native woman in his home, however, after he married Arthur's sister, Edna Parker, in 1927. They later moved to Los Angeles, CA, when he became Curator of the Southwest Museum.

On September 17, 1914, at the age of 43, Arthur Parker was married again, to a 17 year old white woman named Anna Theresa Cooke.

This daughter of Inez and Dr. William Cooke is said to have been a quiet, agreeable companion and talented musician, and Parker eventually had her adopted into the same Seneca Bear Clan that had adopted him. She was given the name Yeiwano:t, "Resting Voice." Harrington may have helped Beulah and Bertha move to California. It's clear he kept in touch with them, since in 1930, he hired his niece to work at the museum.

I have not yet searched for other information about Beulah Tahamont in Arthur Parker's papers.

:::::Letters Between Margaret Tahamont and Emma Camp Mead:::::

A small collection of letters now in the town museum at Indian Lake, New York offers some additional information about Beulah Tahamont after she joined her sister, Margaret Tahamont (stage name Margaret Darkcloud), in Hollywood, California. Margaret corresponded with their cousin, Emma Camp Mead of Indian Lake. Emma (1866-1934) was Abenaki through her father, Elijah Camp, and Oneida through her mother, Elizabeth Kennedy. Emma self-identified as Oneida. She rented out lodges to hunters and tourists, made and sold herbal medicine, and was involved in Iroquois debates on pending citizenship and land claims issues in the 1920s-1930s. She was not fond of her former cousin-in-law, Arthur Parker, or his colleague, Warren Moorehead, Curator of the Peabody Museum at Andover, who was then the northeastern Indian Commissioner.

Emma was an articulate woman who owned a typewriter and was not shy to confront white authorities. She was consulted by several chiefs of the Six Nations (Iroquois) Confederacy on how best to pursue their land claims against the state of New York. In a letter dated July 31, 1923, she coached them on how to respond to Moorehead:

> When that man from Washington gets there be very careful what you  
 > say to him, and don't under any circumstances sign any sort of paper  
 > for him. If he asks what we want, tell him we only want just what  
 > belongs to us, according to the Treaties we have with the General  
 > Government of the United States. We want all our lands, and the  
 > money that is now in the U.S. Treasury that belongs to us. If he  
 > asks if we wish to become citizens of the U.S. tell him no, that you  
 > have no desire whatsoever to become a citizen...Now we have never  
 > been conquered by the United States, therefore we are a Nation by  
 > ourselves...

> And the United States had not better compel us to become citizens  
 > of the United States. Now to compel us to do this, they would have to  
 > take up arms and by war compel us to become citizens, since we have  
 > never been conquered and brought down under their control, and I  
 > believe they would be ashamed to make such an attempt. Besides, I  
 > don't believe the other countries of the world would stand for it,  
 > knowing the circumstances as they do.

> (Emma Camp Mead to Minnie and Albert, July 31, 1923)

Emma Mead's papers include some poignant comments from Margaret Tahamont

about Beulah and Bertha. By 1923, Beulah Tahamont Parker's second marriage had ended in divorce. Her daughter Bertha was 21 years old at the time.

Bertha's husband had passed away. Margaret wrote to her cousin Emma:

> ...Beulah and Bertha and the baby was all working and they staid  
> at my apartment all the time, and we was so upset we could not  
> get to do anything. We had to be downstairs at 10 sharp. We was  
> demonstrating making baskets in a lobby at a theater, advertising  
> for a picture in which we worked in last fall early...Beulah has  
> gone to live with a friend and Bertha is away at the beach working  
> at housework. She boards her baby out. She is 3 years old now.  
> Beulah has just gone through a divorce proceedings with her  
> husband and he has to pay her \$12 a week alimony. He had to pay  
> \$500 for the lawyer and cost of court. So she is free again. I don't  
> know what she will do next...Bertha is corresponding with her father,  
> Arthur Parker. He is in Rochester. She tells me he wrote to her and  
> told her he is going to France this summer...  
> (Margaret Tahamont to Emma Mead 1923)

By September of 1931, Beulah had remarried again, to T. W. Filson.

Bertha had also remarried, to a man named Thurston. Margaret wrote to Emma looking for herbal medicines from back home:

> ...If I only had some wild turnip Jack in the Pulpit. Do you know  
> that is so good for cough and shortness of breath...Is there any  
> sweet fern out there? There is so much of it grows at Lake George  
> ...out here we don't see anything, only weeds, all pricklers on most  
> everything that grows out here and dried up... Beulah has gone with  
> her husband [T.W. Filson, a rail yard worker] about 500 miles from  
> here to the gold mines and she wrote me a letter that she is feeling  
> fine and doing well.  
> Bertha is still working with her uncle in the Northwest [she means  
> Southwest] Museum as head secretary. Her husband is an antropisigest  
> [anthropologist?] and a teacher. They are happy. They have put her little  
> girl in a Catholic School. She is six years old. She pays \$35 a month  
> for her board and tuition so I think it is the best place for her out  
> here since her father is dead...She is an awful bright child only full  
> of mischief so I think that is the best place for her...  
> (Margaret Tahamont to Emma Mead September 14, 1931)

Margaret Tahamont was laid off from her work in Hollywood during the depression, when the film industry collapsed and thousands of actors were, literally, starving to death on the streets. She was promised money from the Moving Pictures Association but they withheld it because she had no written records, no marriage certificate for her parents, or any proof whatsoever of being an American citizen, even though she was born in Lake George. Bertha still had her job at the museum, but by January 1934, things were looking dismal. There was no work for anyone in the film industry, the Tahamont women couldn't afford to go back to New York, Margaret was sick, and Beulah's husband had left for Nevada to try to find some kind of work. Margaret wrote:

> Oh, dear Emma, I don't know what I would do...They would not give  
> me the old age pension because I could not give them the birth certificate  
> because I was baptized in Canada. They tried to make out I was born  
> in Canada and I was a foreign subject...Then the county would cut me  
> out entirely...They have cut lots of people their pension like the old  
> soldiers and the county has poor people and sent out of California  
> because they was not residents. Oh it is terrible...  
> Bertha, Beulah's daughter is still working at the museum. She and  
> all the others have got their salaries cut and don't know how long the  
> museum will keep going, She expects to be let off entirely. She has  
> to pay rent, gas and their lights and board her little girl \$25 per month  
> and support Beulah, her mother, since she has been out of work and  
> could not support herself. No wonder Beulah gets despondent.  
> (Margaret Tahamont to Emma Mead January, 8, 1934)

By June 1934, Margaret was doing better, and Beulah's husband found work with the railroad. Emma Mead sent some herbal medicines to the Tahamont sisters, and Margaret wrote back that Beulah and Bertha had gone off on an ethnology expedition:

> I got a letter from Beulah. They are going to a place called Box Canyon  
 > where no explorer ever came back, 200 feet deep. Three white men  
 > went down at different times, never returned. There is some Indians  
 > down there has a language of their own. Once in awhile one by some  
 > secret passage trades at stores but talk very little. Better they that  
 > is right with gold. They will have to be let down on cables but don't  
 > know if they will come out alive. They will be well armed.  
 > (Margaret Tahamont to Emma Mead June 15, 1934)

By November of 1934, Beulah and Bertha were safely out of Box Canyon, but Margaret never got around to writing any further details of their trips to her cousin Emma Jane Camp Mead, since Emma passed over in December of 1934, at the age of 68. By 1936, Bertha was married, for the third time, to Iron Eyes Cody.

:::::Bertha Tahamont Parker Thurston Cody's Publications::::

Gregory A. Finnegan, Associate Librarian for Public Services and Head of Reference at Tozzer Library Harvard, kindly forwarded me more details about Bertha's publications. He noted that her obituary appeared in The Masterkey, the Southwest Museum's journal, in Jan-March 1979, 53(1): 38. Ironically, it says more about her husband, her famous father Arthur Parker, and her uncle, Mark R. Harrington, than it does about her. Finnegan wrote:

> he [Harrington] and Arthur Caswell Parker are noted as having "performed  
 > their apprenticeships as field archaeologists together, under the  
 direction  
 > of Frederick Ward Putnam." The obituary notes her writing for MASTERKEY,  
 > and begins by noting that she "was an assistant in archaeology at the  
 > Southwest Museum at the time of her marriage to Iron Eyes Cody in 1936."

Finnegan noted that her death notice in the AAA Newsletter for June 1979 20 (6): 5 included even less information. He found her listed in the 1950 International Directory of Anthropologists, but with no information about her education:

> She lists her career as "Field sec., 30-31; Ass't archaeol., Southwest  
 > Mus., 31-40; Ass't., ethnology, 40-42; Assoc. (hon.) 43-. Recording sec.,  
 > Archaeol. Survey Assoc., S.Cal., 47-48." She also lists her "Maj. anth.  
 > int.: Ethnology, archaeol. and folklore of N. America. Field research:  
 > S.Cal. and Southwest U.S.A., various trips."

Finnegan noted, as I did, the glaring lack of attention paid to Bertha's professional career, and lamented:

> She is not, by the way, listed in the standard online biographical  
 sources,  
 > nor is she included in the fairly extensive "anthropology, ethnology,  
 > and archaeology" section of the "field and career index" to Kali Herman's  
 > WOMEN IN PARTICULAR, Oryx Press, 1984.

Her gravestone, by the way, only lists her as "Mrs. Iron Eyes Cody." In an email on April 14, 2005, Gregory Finnegan was able to compile a more detailed list of Bertha's publications from the Tozzer Library database Anthropological Literature. The titles give you some clue about the kind of information that Bertha was apparently able to glean from her subjects, a skill that both her mother and father had been noted for, and the dates show that she was active for more than 30 years. She was also conscientious about recording the names of the Native people she interviewed with, going so far as to give them credit as authors and co-authors, a practice that was not common among most anthropologists of the time.

Published under the name of Bertha Parker Thurston:

1933. "Scorpion Hill." Masterkey. v. VII, p. 171-177.

1933. "A night in a Maidu shaman's house." Masterkey.v.VII, p. 111-115.

1934. "How he became a medicine-man." Masterkey. v. VIII, p. 79-81.

1935. "How a Maidu-medicine man lost his power; related to Bertha Parker Thurston by a Maidu Indian herbalist." Masterkey. v. IX, p.28-29.

1936. "A rare treat at a Maidu medicine-man's feast." Masterkey. v. X, p.16-21.

Published under the name of Bertha Parker Cody:

1939. "A tale of witchcraft as told by a Tewa Indian of New Mexico." Masterkey. v. XIII, p. 188-189.

1939. "A Maidu myth of the first death; by Bertha Parker Cody, as related by Mandy Wilson of Chico, California." Masterkey. v. XIII, p. 144.

1939. "A Maidu myth of the creation of Indian women; by Bertha Parker Cody, as related by Mandy Wilson, Maidu Indian of Chico, California." Masterkey. v. XIII, p. 83.

1939. "Kachina dolls." Masterkey. v. XIII, p. 25-30.

1940. "Pomo bear impersonators." Masterkey. 1940. v. XIV, p. 132-137.

1940. "California Indian baby cradles." Masterkey. v. XIV, p. 89-96.

1941. "A note on basket care." Masterkey. v. XV, p. 23-24.

1941. "Gold ornaments of Ecuador." Masterkey.v. XV, p. 87-95.

1942. "Simply strung on a single strand." Masterkey. v. XVI, p. 175-176.

1942. "Some Yurok customs and beliefs." Masterkey. v. XVII, p. 81-87.

1943. "Some Yurok customs and beliefs." Masterkey. v. XVI, p. 157-162.

1955. "Enrique" crosses the divide." [Obituary]. Masterkey. vol.XXX, p. 102.

1961. "Clarence Arthur Ellsworth [1885-1961]; gifted painter of Indians." Masterkey. vol. XXXV, (no. 1), p. 75-77.

Published under the name of her Yurok interviewee, Jane Van Stralen:

1941. "Yurok tales, as told by Jane Van Stralen to Bertha Parker Cody." Masterkey. v. XV, p. 228-231.

1942. "Yurok fish-dam dance; as told by Jane Van Stralen to Bertha Parker Cody." Masterkey. v. XVI, p. 81-86.

It's not clear whether she published anywhere other than MASTERKEY, but suffice to say that Bertha Tahamont Parker, by whatever name, made a significant contribution to American anthropology, and she deserves to be recognized in her own right, as more than just the daughter of Arthur Parker, niece of Mark Harrington, and wife of Iron Eyes Cody.

Wlioni, Thank you, Birdie.



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