

WILLIAM R. SWAGERTY
University of the Pacific

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Primary Areas of Teaching:

History of California, Native America, American Environmental History, John Muir's World: Origins of the Conservation Movement; Historical Imagination for majors; Senior Capstone; and, Catastrophes in World History: Natural and Unnatural Disasters (freshman seminar).

Personal Profile:

A native of New Mexico, Swagerty grew up in the northeastern corner of the state in Union County, which boasts one of the highest ratio of cows to people in the United States. After attending public schools, he attended Colorado College, earning his bachelor's in history in 1973. Graduate work at U. C. Santa Barbara from 1973-1976 was followed by a pre-doctoral fellowship at The Newberry Library in Chicago. He completed his doctorate in 1981 while working at the Newberry as Associate Director of the McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian.

Swagerty's first teaching experience was at his alma mater, Colorado College, where he filled in for an ailing professor during academic year 1977-1978. After four years of administrative work in Chicago, he taught at the University of Minnesota (1981-1982) and at the University of Idaho (1982-2001), where he directed graduate programs and served on the faculties of history, environmental science, and American studies.

Current Responsibilities:

In addition to teaching classes for the history department, since the fall of 2001, Swagerty has been director of the John Muir Center, founded in 1989 as part of Pacific's mission to promote use of the John Muir Papers in Holt-Atherton Special Collections within the university's library. Since 2017 he has served as co-chair of the department with Jennifer Helgren.

Academic Profile:

Early projects on the Spanish Borderlands:

Swagerty's main interests concern the history of Indian-White relations in North America. His dissertation focused on Spanish-Indian relations in the

sixteenth century Spanish Borderlands from Florida to California, summarized in:

Scholars and the Indian Experience, ed. W. R. Swagerty (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

“Entertaining Strangers: North America in the Sixteenth Century,” with Bruce G. Trigger, in *Cambridge Native History of the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1:325-398.

Fur Trade of North America Projects:

Courses at Colorado College under Harvey L. Carter led to a deep interest in mountain men in the Far West. Since 1980, much of Swagerty’s work has focused on fur trade personnel and the response to the fur trade by resident Indian tribes in the trans-Missouri region. His major contributions here include:

“Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 11(2) 1980:159-80.

“Preface” to H. M. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), vol. 2.

“Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West to 1870,” in *Indian-White Relations*, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn, vol. 4 of *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 351-374.

“The Fur Trade from the Bottom Up: The Workforce of the American Fur Company on the Upper Missouri during the 1830s,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 43(1) 1993:18-33.

“Faithful Service under Different Flags: A Socioeconomic Profile of the Columbia Department, Hudson’s Bay Company and the Upper Missouri Outfit, American Fur Company, 1825-1835,” with Dick A. Wilson, in *The Fur Trade Revisited: Proceedings of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, 1991* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 243-267.

“History of the U.S. Plains to 1850,” in *Plains*, ed. Raymond DeMallie, vol. 13 of *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), Part 1:256-279.

“Uncle Sam is a Weak Old Fellow: Northern Plains Indian Response to American Fur Company Activities, 1826-1854,” in *Indians & Traders: Entrepreneurs of the Upper Missouri: Fort Union Fur Trade Symposium 2000 Proceedings* (Williston, ND: Fort Union Association, 2001), 93-112.

“The Leviathan of the North: American Perceptions of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1818-1846,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104(4) 2003:478-517.

Lewis & Clark Expedition Projects:

Swagerty became interested in outdoor survival techniques while a Cub and Boy Scout back in New Mexico. A family cabin in Cimarron Canyon near Philmont Boy Scout Ranch provided a base for many adventures with sisters, fellow Scouts, and cousins. It also catalyzed an interest in explorers of the

American West, especially Lewis and Clark. In anticipation of the Bicentennial of the expedition, in 1999 the Kemper Foundation of Kansas City, Missouri sponsored a heroic scale statue of Lewis and Clark overlooking the Missouri River in that city. Swagerty was asked by the project director to provide expertise on the clothing, accoutrements, and guns on the four main figures sculpted by Eugene Daub, a noted California-based artist. Working with Joallyn Archambeault of the Smithsonian, Swagerty also helped with the Native American context of the piece, which was unveiled in April, 2000. It includes Lewis, Clark, Charbonneau, Sacagawea, and her baby, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, as well as Lewis's dog, Seaman.

That research sparked a curiosity as to how the expedition was able to survive the monumental trek to the Pacific and back without resupply or contact with Euroamerican traders and/or ships. The result: in 2012, after over ten years of research and many trips to archives, he completed a two-volume study of the expedition which argues that the expedition to the Pacific Ocean and back succeeded in large measure *because* the Corps adapted Native American techniques for living and for survival, not *in spite of* contact with over thirty tribes. The study remains his most thorough work to date and appeared as:

The Indianization of Lewis & Clark. 2 vols. (Norman, OK: A. H. Clark Company, a subsidiary of University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

Native Americans of the Northwest Projects:

Flathead Reservation Water Rights Project:

In 1999, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Bureau of Indian Affairs launched a continuation of research on off-reservation water rights of the Salish-Kootenai of Montana. Swagerty became the lead historian for the project, which did not end until 2015. During those sixteen years three major reports were produced documenting the subsistence and transportation patterns of the tribes currently on the Flathead Reservation in western Montana.

Nez Perce Documentary History Project:

Concurrent with this research, which took Bill Swagerty to the National Archives, state historical societies, museums and many university collections, he taught a summer field course on Nez Perce Indian History at the University of Idaho up through 2000, attributing the success of those classes to Nez Perce elders who generously donated time and expertise, especially the late Allen Slickpoo, Sr. and Horace Axtell. Swagerty also studied the Nez Perce language three years and worked with tribal member Diane Mallickan of the National Park Service and University librarian Dennis Baird on a multi-volume documentary history of the tribe under the series title, "Voices from Nez Perce Country: A Documentary Record, 1800-1877." Envisioned as a four-volume series, Vol. 2 was published first as:

The Nez Perce Nation Divided: Firsthand Accounts of Events Leading to the 1863 Treaty (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 2002).

Volume one followed in 2015 as:

Encounters with the People: Written and Oral Accounts of Nez Perce Life to 1858, compiled and edited by Dennis Baird, Diane Mallickan and W. R. Swagerty (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 2015).

History of the California Delta Project:

In 2014 Swagerty joined an academic team formed by former dean of the College of the Pacific, Dr. Robert Benedetti. The purpose: to establish context for nomination of California's Delta as a National Heritage Area within the National Park Service. Swagerty teamed with Dr. Reuben Smith, former dean of the Graduate School and a noted expert on the history of transportation of northern California. Together they produced:

"Stitching a River Culture: Trade, Transportation and Communication in the Sacramento, San Joaquin Delta" (Sacramento: Center for California Studies, Sacramento State University for the Delta Protection Commission, State of California, 2015). This is available on-line in a 92-page essay as:

http://delta.ca.gov/delta_heritage/delta_narratives/

John Muir and Native Peoples Project:

Chosen as a Fulbright Senior Scholar awardee in 2007, Swagerty traveled to New Zealand and Australia, lecturing at select universities and following the 1903-04 "world tour" of John Muir. Muir's journal of this year-long trek had previously been edited and published by Swagerty in the *John Muir Newsletter* of the John Muir Center, as

www.pacific.edu/university-libraries/find/holt-atherton.../john-muir-newsletters.html

Since 2012 Swagerty has been working on a book-length study of John Muir and Native Peoples globally. The book will analyze Muir's attitude about other cultures, his interaction with ethnic, tribal and folk cultures throughout his lifetime (1838-1914) and across all continents except Antarctica. The main hypothesis is that Muir tested the turn-of-the-century ideas of noted anthropologists, and especially the cultural relativism of Franz Boas, in order to better understand how peoples worldwide adapt successfully to their environments in the midst of change during the post-Industrial Revolution modern world. Chapters cover Muir's early experience with Native peoples in Wisconsin and California; his relations with other tribal peoples in Alaska, the Pacific Northwest and the American Southwest; his observations and interactions with people of Finland, Russia, Mongolia, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, and the Hawaiian Islands during his world tour of 1903-1904; and his "final expedition" to South America and Africa in 1911-1912.

Projects in various stages:

Hosting Trade in Buffalo Days.

As editor of the "Papers of the American Fur Company" (on microfilm), Swagerty was introduced to the depth of record keeping of this giant of a firm based out of St. Louis. His Missouri-River work on the fur trade and on Lewis and Clark, as well as an interest in rail transportation in the American West prompted this book-length study of the transition from small fur procurement by Native Peoples to the hide-and-robe trade of the period 1830-1885. This study hopes to fill a gap in the literature on the relative dependency of Plains peoples on the fur-hide-and Indian-trade business conducted by both the U.S. Government through its Indian agents as well as private companies and partnerships.

"The Other Side of the Mountains": Residential Communities of Fur Trade Personnel in the American and Canadian Wests.

Interest in marriage and settlement patterns of men engaged in the fur trade has produced several statistical profiles but no qualitative discussion of retirement strategies and communities. This study explores select places that former fur trade personnel settled down, most with families, in an era predating Social Security and health care policies. Using the data base he has built since 1979, Swagerty plans to quantify where these men and their families landed by mid to late nineteenth century and why they chose the places for retirement that came to be noted for their number as well as their character. These places include Taos, New Mexico; Napa and Yountville, California; Champoeg, French Prairie, and Oregon City, Oregon; Fort Bridger and Robertson, Wyoming; the Flathead Reservation of Montana; Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota; Frazer River Country, British Columbia; Rocky Mountain House, Alberta; Nisqually Plains and Colville Reservation, Washington State; Hardscrabble and Greenhorn, Colorado; and others.

Memberships

Phi Beta Kappa International
Phi Alpha Theta History Honorary
Pi Gamma Mu Social Science Honorary
Western History Association
American Society for Environmental History
California Historical Society
Montana Historical Society
Lewis and Clark Heritage Trail Foundation
Jedediah Smith Society

Other interests:

Book collecting, especially atlases, memoirs, and documentary series
Woodworking
Model railroading (HO scale)
Fishing and scuba diving
John Muir's travels
Native American art and culture
New Mexican and California food and festivals
Professional baseball

Honors and Awards:

1973, Phi Beta Kappa, The Colorado College
1973 Pi Gamma Mu, The Colorado College
1976-77, Pre-doctoral fellow, The Newberry Library, Chicago
1980, Phillip A. Danielson Award through University of the Pacific for best paper given at a Westerners International Meeting in 1979 on "Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders." Chicago Corral of Westerners International.
1982-83, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of California, Los Angeles
1984, Program Co-Chair, American Society for Ethnohistory Annual Meeting, New Orleans, November 8-11
1985, Choice Library Division selection for "Best" publication, *Scholars and the Indian Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984)
1987, National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute Grant, "Classic Early American Texts," University of Connecticut
1988, University of Idaho Library Outstanding Faculty Award
1989-90, "Visiting Scientist" Courtesy Appointment, Department of Anthropology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution
1996, National Park Service, Fort Union Trading Post, Summer Fellow
1996, "Visiting Scientist" Courtesy Appointment, Department of Anthropology, NMNH, Smithsonian Institution
2007 Fulbright Senior Specialist Award to New Zealand, Spring
2016 Dwight L. Smith Award for best documentary research tool in Western American history published in 2015; for *Encounters with the People*, with Dennis Baird and Diane Mallickan. Western History Association.