

Hello, Ms. Barry --

Last fall I had the pleasure of meeting Alicia Christensen at the NonfictionNOW conference in Phoenix. She recommended Bison Books and suggested that I contact you about my current project, a biography of the 1880s botanist and artist, Sara Plummer Lemmon — for whom Arizona's Mount Lemmon is named.

The first draft of *RENDERING THE AMERICAN WEST: Sara Plummer Lemmon, 19th-Century Botanist and Artist*, is now 80 percent complete at 70,000 words. It is well on its way to becoming a richly illustrated, meticulously researched, and vivid work of narrative nonfiction for general-interest audiences.

Sara Lemmon is a little-known and under-appreciated woman of both science and art. Although often identified only as “& Wife,” she did much of the botanical work attributed to her husband, John Lemmon even though she was the first woman to be invited to address the all-male California Academy of Sciences.

In addition, her gift for drawing in the field, combined with her thirst for scientific knowledge, made her “one of the most accurate painters of nature in the State [of California].”

Tragically, most of her exquisite botanical illustrations were lost, probably in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fires — except for 250 recently recovered watercolors. The book would include twenty of those never-before seen paintings, along with another forty photographs.

In addition to her scientific and artistic accomplishments, Sara was a passionate activist for forest conservation. She also established both the first library in Santa Barbara and the first training school for nurses in San Francisco.

So far, there are no books about this remarkable woman. My manuscript is based on the 1,200 pages of her personal letters that are housed in the University of California & Jepson Herbaria. I photographed all of them and recently finished reading, logging, and transcribing them.

Comparable titles include

- Jason Fagone's *THE WOMAN WHO SMASHED CODES: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies* (Dey Street Books, 2017). Just as Elizebeth Smith was smashing codes to defeat democracy's enemies in the 1940s, so did Sara flatten plants to defeat entropy and confusion in Nature's order in the 1880s. Both women were trying to solve puzzles, and both were unassuming women who were (mostly) willing to remain in the background. Both were unacknowledged as they cared for their emotionally damaged and sometimes physically frail husbands — who then got the credit for their work.

- Claire Brock's *THE COMET SWEEPER: Caroline Herschel's Astronomical Ambition* (Icon Books, March 2017) is the story of Britain's determined first female professional scientist in the late 1700s.
- Glynis Ridley's *THE DISCOVERY OF JEANNE BARET: A Story of Science, the High Seas, and the First Woman to Circumnavigate the Globe* (Crown, 2010) is about the young French woman who, disguised as a man, accompanied botanist Philibert Commerson in 1766-69 on his round-the-world exploration.
- Kim Todd's *CHRYSLIS: Maria Sibylla Merian and the Secrets of Metamorphosis*, (Houghton Mifflin, 2007) is about a fascinating woman who was a leading entomologist in her time. It has much in common with *RENDERING THE AMERICAN WEST* even though Maria Sibylla Merian was born nearly two hundred years before Sara.

I am a freelance writer/editor/graphic designer with thirty years of experience in newspapers and other publications. My Sara Lemmon Project is in its fourth year; details of the work completed so far are in a newsletter that now has 600+ subscribers:

[https://mailchi.mp/20bb70d2cdda/looking-back-at-last-year-and-forward-to-2019?e=\[UNIQID\]](https://mailchi.mp/20bb70d2cdda/looking-back-at-last-year-and-forward-to-2019?e=[UNIQID])

I also wrote about Sara in a Smithsonian Institution Archives blog: <https://siarchives.si.edu/blog/friendship-revealed-and-revived>

and in an *Arizona Highways* article: <https://www.arizonahighways.com/blog/southwestern-legacy-sara-lemmon>

My first book, *MORE THAN PETTICOATS: Remarkable Arizona Women* (Globe Pequot Press/Rowman & Littlefield, 2003) earned out its advance and went into a second edition in 2012 to commemorate Arizona's centennial.

You can see more about my work at my website: www.wynnebrown.com. I am also on Twitter (157 followers), Facebook (187 "friends"), and LinkedIn (251 followers).

RENDERING THE AMERICAN WEST: Sara Plummer Lemmon, 19th-century Botanist and Artist is an absorbing and engaging tale of resilience, re-invention — and romance. I am attaching the Prologue as well as Chapter 11, which describes Sara and John's honeymoon (in their forties!) to the top of the mountain that would eventually be named for her.

Thank you for considering my project, and I would be delighted to send you the full proposal.

Warm regards,

Wynne

P.S. As a horse owner for many years, I especially appreciated H. Alan Day's *THE HORSE LOVER: A Cowboy's Quest to Save the Wild Mustangs*.