



TO OUR FRIEND, I-EES STEVE
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

"I go make medicine," Steve said. "Maybe you don't think I make medicine. Pretty soon you find out. I go sing Grasshopper Song.

"Long time ago it rain and rain. You can't see no river, just mist. By and by Grasshopper, he come out. He walk down to river. But ain't no river. Just mist. It rain and rain. Grasshopper, he sit by river and sing his song. He say, 'Ai-ai. Ai-ai. Ai-ai.' Then he say, 'Puff.'

"And then he blow like this. Mist, he break and he go down river. Rain, he go away. Sun, he shine. Grasshopper, he go back and he say, 'When mist, he come on river and ain't no sun; and rain, he rain and rain; everybody sing my song and say, "Puff".'

"Then mist, he go down river; and sun, he shine; and rain, he don't rain no more."

In the Land of the Grasshopper Song

TWO WOMEN IN THE KLAMATH
RIVER INDIAN COUNTRY IN 1908-09
SECOND EDITION

by
MARY ELLICOTT ARNOLD
and MABEL REED

**Foreword to the new Bison Books edition by
André Cramblit**
**Introduction to the new Bison Books edition by
Susan Bernardin**
**Afterword to the new Bison Books edition by
Terry Supahan**

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Introduction

Susan Bernardin

In 1980 Andrew Genzoli, a local historian, newspaper columnist, and educator in Humboldt County, California, facilitated the reprint of a beloved regional classic: Mary Ellicott Arnold and Mabel Reed's *In the Land of the Grasshopper Song: Two Women in the Klamath River Indian Country in 1908–09*. It was fitting that he was the one to do so: his review in the *Humboldt Times* had first alerted area residents of the book's publication in 1957. Moreover, his inclusion of Arnold and Reed's mailing address ensured that readers could reciprocate the authors' stories by offering some of their own. Among Arnold and Reed's papers are several dozen letters by readers who sent updates and reminiscences of family members mentioned in *Grasshopper Song*. This reissue of the 1980 Bison Books edition acknowledges the region's unabated interest in this book, underscored most recently with the text's adaptation by the locally based, internationally acclaimed theatre company and school Dell'Arte. Its touring production of *In the Land of the Grasshopper Song* included the very communities where much of the action in the book unfolds—Karuk ancestral homelands, at and near the confluence of the Klamath and Salmon rivers.

This edition of *In the Land of the Grasshopper Song* offers a new foreword, introduction, and afterword that together underscore the book's complex and ongoing role in Karuk tribal history, as well as in broader regional and national stories of cross-cultural relationships. These three perspectives recognize the extraordinarily challenging circumstances that awaited the two women in the communities of Karuk tribal members and settler families. The daily challenges of Karuk adaptation, survival, and continuance

witnessed by these two outsiders make *In the Land of the Grasshopper Song* a living text of lessons still vital today, over a century later. While the foreword by André Cramblit and afterword by Terry Supahan suggest contemporary Karuk perspectives about *Grasshopper Song's* ongoing legacy, this introduction briefly addresses readers' long-held questions about the authors and *their* story: what brought them to northwestern California in the first place, why they left after only two years, and how they determined to write this book nearly five decades later.

Following years of fruitless attempts to interest either university or commercial presses, Arnold and Reed financed the publication of *In the Land of the Grasshopper Song* with Vantage Press in 1957. Although read by anthropologists and writers such as Oliver LaFarge and Ruth Underhill and reviewed in *Publishers Weekly*, *Grasshopper Song* did not reach a wide audience, its circulation largely limited to Arnold's own distribution efforts. In fact, until the Bison Books reprint in 1980, copies were scarce, especially after *Grasshopper Song* went out of print a few years after publication. Its release, however, capped over fifty years of astonishingly varied activism that was shaped in large part by Arnold and Reed's two-year tenure in the lower Klamath River region of northwestern California. Their very presence in the region cannot be understood apart from ruinous federal Indian policies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Just sixty years before the women's arrival, catastrophe ensued after miners and other newcomers moved into far northern California. Like much of California, the origins of Humboldt County and neighboring counties are inseparable from the extermination of Native peoples through massacres, roundups, and removals. Local and regional campaigns against Native peoples following statehood in 1850, including a sanctioned system of de facto slavery, were reinforced by broader federal policies aimed at the same end: the eradication of culturally and linguistically distinct sovereign Native nations and the appropriation of their lands.

Arnold and Reed arrived in the region courtesy of the field matron program, established by the then-named Office of Indian Affairs in 1890 as part of its sweeping efforts to assimilate American Indians, efforts that included the infamous Dawes Allotment Act

of 1887 and compulsory attendance at Indian boarding schools. Part of a broader cultural project that Amy Kaplan has labeled elsewhere as "manifest domesticity," the field matron program recruited white middle-class women "to instruct Indian women in duties of the household; assist and encourage them in bettering their homes, and taking proper care of their children; and incite among Indians generally aspirations for improvement in their life—morally, intellectually, socially, and religiously."¹ Although Native women also served as field matrons, the decades-long program favored those perceived as exemplars of Christian piety and domestic virtue.

Widely held assumptions about Native women as "beasts of burden" and "drudges" had already propelled white middle-class women to the forefront of national Indian reform. Members of the Women's National Indian Association (WNIA), founded in 1879, viewed themselves as rescuing Native women from the throes of savagery. In the words of influential WNIA leader Amelia Quinton, "To go among the women of these destitute tribes to minister to their great sufferings from barbarism, to enlighten their physical, mental, and spiritual ignorance is a work imperatively needed."² These activists used what the era's policymakers deemed the "Indian problem" to their advantage, capitalizing on their prescribed role as "proper" women to enter fields of employment on reservations and in boarding schools. The field matron program highlights the paradox of white middle-class women finding personal and professional fulfillment outside their own homes by entering the homes of Native families. At the 1892 meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian, Emily S. Cook declared that field matrons "give the Indian woman an idea of what can and should be in a home." She equated their role with that of a missionary, and she anticipated "a contagion of home-making on the reservation."³

Cook could not have expressed the situation more accurately in suggesting the contagion spread by policymakers' zealous dismissal of Native family life. Not surprisingly, many field matrons arrived in Native communities with little understanding of the values they encountered and little preparation for *actual* needs, especially in healthcare. *Grasshopper Song* recounts Reed and Arnold's two-

year experience as wayward field matrons in 1908 and 1909. This regional classic offers a startling point of view notably absent in most written accounts by non-Natives from this era: well-humored stories of relationships, conflicts, and interactions among many locally well-remembered families—Karuk, Hupa, Yurok, and non-Native—many of whose descendants still live in northwestern California. While Arnold and Reed's work was dictated by their participation in larger systems of cultural appropriation and assimilation, the two women also forged relationships within communities in Karuk homelands, relationships that at times defy expectations of colonial encounters.

The two women's difficulty in communicating the complexity of their experiences is expressed in the very form of the narrative. Simply put, *Grasshopper Song* is an astonishing hybrid text: part travelogue, part ethnography, part frontier bildungsroman, part feminist western. The authors' subversion of narrative conventions available to them parallels their refusal to fully abide by the conventions of their position as Victorian ladies and as field matrons. *Grasshopper Song* not only gleefully subverts the era's expectations for white women, but as a reverse acculturation narrative, it holds up Karuk values as vastly superior to the ones the two women were paid to disseminate.

Lifelong activists, Reed and Arnold were perhaps more poised than other women to refashion their public role as domesticating agents of the U.S. government. Mary Arnold's papers, along with over one hundred unpublished pages from the original manuscript, help us understand why she and Reed first enlisted as field matrons, far from their homes in the Northeast. Both women were born in 1876 and grew up in two close-knit families in New Jersey. At age sixteen, the two women decided "to share all our respective belongings to the dismay of both families."⁷⁴ In an autobiographical statement included among her papers, Arnold notes, "At the age of 16 I made three important decisions: 1) Not to marry 2) A lifelong association with Mabel Reed 3) a business career." Their lifelong partnership included several years of farming on the Reeds' fifty-five acres near Raritan: "[We] reduced our skirts to knee length. . . . Took plow in hand (in that day and age considered not a seemly occupation for young ladies)."⁷⁵ Although the farming venture proved

unsuccessful, Arnold credited their experience with giving them "iron constitutions" while freeing them from the "ills" of being "mid-Victorian ladies."⁷⁶ Notably, just two years later, they left their jobs in model tenement housing in New York City to go "adventuring" in California. Their visit with Arnold's cousin Annie Bidwell, widow of John Bidwell, one of the first Anglo settlers in the Sacramento region, would prove transformative. Annie Bidwell, a prominent leader in the Women's National Indian Association and the Northern California Indian Association, introduced them to C. E. Kelsey, agent for Indians in northern California. After asking him for jobs in the "roughest" part of Indian Country, the women found themselves traveling up the coast to Eureka, where they began a grueling trail ride of several days through the coastal mountains to the confluence of the Klamath and Salmon rivers.

Among a handful of white women resident in the region, they joined a dispersed network of field matrons in the Yurok communities of Weitchpec and Requa and the Hupa community at Hoopa Valley Reservation. When Reed and Arnold had to dispense with their "best" shirtwaists and "elaborate, trimmed hats" on their grueling journey to Somes Bar and Katimiin, at the center of the Karuk universe, the authors also dispensed with the traps and trappings of white femininity. Their sly awareness of clothes and manners as culturally enforced norms underlines their subsequent actions as field matrons. When it was necessary to impress some settlers, the women played up their status as white ladies; when it was necessary to gain credibility among others, they impressed by virtue of their ability to ford rivers and navigate treacherously steep trails on horseback. While Arnold and Reed pleased their supervisors so much that they received As on their field matron "report cards," they also came to respect many Karuk values and perspectives as superior to those of their own culture.

More specifically, both women shed conventional attitudes they had carried toward American Indians, recognizing instead their own responsibility to "mend their manners." As they observed with humor and insight the ironies, paradoxes, discomforts, and ugliness of cross-cultural coexistence, they also saw that their presence in the region was no game. The women ultimately found no humor in the clear constraints of their position as women in a so-

ciety with little interest in the future of Native peoples. Writing of their unease during their travels elsewhere in the region, where "women have not much chance in this white man's country," Arnold and Reed echo statements they had made regarding the Karuks' lack of legal recourse in securing rights to their land. While aware of the privileges they wielded as "white ladies," Arnold and Reed were also clear about their powerlessness to change local attitudes about Native peoples or the legal system. It was this very frustration over their ineffectuality in providing meaningful and sustained legal redress that propelled the two women to turn to other outlets of social activism, closer to their own home.

After leaving the lower Klamath River region in 1909, Reed and Arnold brought their humor and considerable managerial and accounting skills to a startling range of activist and progressive initiatives, making them leaders in the cooperative movement. They first spent several years creating healthy, budget-conscious dining options for students at Cornell University, then later managed a major cooperative organization in New York City that encompassed up to eleven cafeterias and a large office building. After a meeting with Father Jimmy Tompkins, a leader in cooperative movements in Nova Scotia, they moved to the Canadian province to help finance and design housing developments for coal miners. So admired were the women that one of the developments was named "Reedsville." From there Arnold and Reed turned to cod fishermen in Newfoundland and lobster fishermen in Maine, helping them to launch credit unions. Late in life, Arnold indicated in autobiographical notes that their seemingly disparate career choices were linked by their self-fashioned role as outsiders coming into communities, working to help people reclaim their self-sufficiency.

In 1942, decades after they left northwestern California, Arnold and Reed started writing what they called "Indian letters": their account of their time as field matrons. Ostensibly based on letters home—only a few of which survive—the book took shape while they were busy directing and producing a film titled *Turn of the Tide*, in which lobster fishermen share the economic challenges facing them. At the same time, the women were asked to visit the Japanese American internment camp in Poston, Arizona, to evaluate the possible involvement of cooperative organizations.

Taken together—the drafting of *Grasshopper Song*, the filming of *Turn of the Tide*, and their trip to Arizona—Arnold and Reed's varied tasks in the 1940s underscore the surprising range of their efforts to advocate for diverse communities. Moreover, at every major installment of their careers, Arnold and Reed turned to different genres—plays, books, even film—out of a desire to build broader community participation in and understanding of peoples' legal, economic, and social concerns. That they felt compelled to make sense of their experiences with Karuk tribal members in a book published after nearly fifty years of activism elsewhere suggests the enduring inspiration they had gained early in their careers. In the last years of their lives (Reed died in 1962; Arnold in 1968), both women turned once again to activism aimed at publicizing disastrous federal Indian policies such as termination and regional disasters such as the building of the Kinzua Dam and ensuing flooding of the Seneca reservation in Pennsylvania. Their correspondence with leading American Indian intellectual D'Arcy McNickle shows their interest in community development projects on the Navajo reservation. Arnold was especially active in the Friends (Quaker) Indian Committee, and she developed lectures on Indian rights for schools and community organizations.

When Arnold and Reed started receiving letters at their home in Moylan, Pennsylvania, from relatives and friends of the many people featured in the book, they experienced an unforeseen outcome of their writing: the responses of those they had written about. As a book about the complexities of community relationships and the possibilities of overcoming cultural divides, *Grasshopper Song* has generated feedback that continues today, both from Native and non-Native residents of the region. Beyond simply writing back, some residents even met Arnold and Reed. Beloved physician and community leader Dr. Richard Ricklefs, from Hoopa Valley, and his wife, Elsie Gardner Ricklefs, a former Hupa tribal chair, visited Arnold at her home in Pennsylvania in the early 1960s. In a representative letter to Betty Allen, Arnold writes:

After we had left the Klamath country, it was as though the mountains had actually closed behind us, cutting us off from our friends and all the people and places we had cared about.

For a few years we had messages from our Indian friends (such as, "This is me, Annie" on a postcard). Then a long, long silence for over 45 years. And then suddenly, with the publication of the *Grasshopper Song*, letters and more letters. From all the old familiar places: Eureka and Arcata, and Blue Lake. Hoopa and Orleans and Somesbar. Yreka and Etna. And now yours from Willow Grove. We loved the people from the Rivers very much and though it was true that most of the time we "were scared enough to satisfy anybody," we loved the mountains and the rivers and summer and winter, the long, long days on the trail and, you can have no notion of what it has meant to us to have places and people come alive again.⁷

At the same time, the history of this book's reception in northwestern California extends the unforeseen outcomes of the cross-cultural experiences mapped out in its pages. When I first read *Grasshopper Song*, I found it valuable for the authors' subversion of gender roles and their surprisingly open critique of American settler society. Yet, when I first visited the area in 1996, I found to my surprise that *Grasshopper Song* occupies an important place in Karuk tribal history. I learned that many people have adopted this book on their own terms, claiming it as a vital source of family, community, and tribal stories. The often wryly humorous stories featured in the book tell about feuds, affairs, daily experiences, and lessons whose meanings remain vital today. The late Ramona Starritt, who knew many of the people named in *Grasshopper Song*, told me that the book is "funny in its happenings," remembering how much her family laughed over the incidents related in the narrative. As a young child, she met the field matrons, even remembering what food her grandmother had prepared for their visit.

When Arnold and Reed observed that many Karuks selectively adapted elements of settler culture, but "the influence of the white men came to an end" regarding core Karuk values, the women forecast the ultimate failure of the program that had sent them to the lower Klamath River region. While powerless in the early twentieth century to change the political and legal status of the Karuks with whom they lived, the two women left a written record of Karuk resilience whose legacy continues. Shortly after Reed died, Arnold

sent a letter to health educator Viola Pfrommer and D'Arcy McNickle, to whom she also sent about \$4,000 to support their efforts in Native communities. Arnold's letter speaks of her deeply held sense of accountability, forged during her two-year stay in Karuk communities:

This is the small part of a payment I owe the Indians. When we left Klamath country, I was a member of an Indian family. Not merely the people of Ieesrum, but all their connections up and down river, like the Sandy Bars. When it was "big water," and we had to cross the Klamath, the Sandy Bars put us across at the risk of their lives. At the "big dance" in Orleans and Johnny Allen was out to get Steve, it was our job to see that Steve didn't get killed. Then we came away. We were pretty sure that some of our Indian friends needed money . . . but jobs in New York those days didn't pay much and we had no money to send. Then one by one our friends were gone and the debt remains unpaid.⁸

In her efforts to settle her sense of debt by passing funds on for other Indians "in need of help," Arnold demonstrated just how much she had learned and remembered from a mere two years living and working with Karuk tribal members.

Like *Grasshopper Song* itself, the story of bringing this new edition to life has involved the forging of relationships. I acknowledge with respect the many people who have helped to carry this story along. I am very grateful to the late Marian and David Elkinton, Dr. Richard Ricklefs, Ramona Starritt, Minerva Starritt, and Violet Super for sharing their stories about Arnold and Reed and the book. I thank as well Phil and Sue Sanders and Leaf Hillman for their stories and insights. At so many stages, Joan Berman, Special Collections librarian, and Edie Butler, Special Collections assistant at Humboldt State University, have shared their expertise, kindness, and encouragement. Merry Phillips's continuing hospitality and friendship have been a gift. Rita Falls and C. J. Croce were a vital part of this project's inception in 1996. The archival research undertaken for this project has benefitted from the assistance of Christopher Densmore, curator of the Friends Historical Library

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The spelling of people's names and place locations in *Grasshopper Song* reflects common usage in English of the period. Thus, for example, Mary Arnold and Mabel Reed use the terms *Karok* instead of *Karuk* and *Kot-e-meen* instead of the now-accepted *Katimiin*. For an introduction to the Karuk language and Karuk ways of knowing, see Julian Lang's *Ararapikva, Creation Stories of the People: Traditional Karuk Indian Literature from Northwestern California* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1994).

Notes

1. Thomas J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1892 Annual Report of Indian Affairs.
2. Quoted in Valerie Sherer Mathes, "Nineteenth-Century Women and Reform: The Women's National Indian Association," *American Indian Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1990): 1-18.
3. Emily S. Cook, "The Field Matron," in *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1894), 58-59.
4. Mary Ellicott Arnold Papers, Folder 1, Box 1, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.
5. Mary Ellicott Arnold Papers, Folder 1, Box 1, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.
6. Mary Ellicott Arnold Papers, A-122, Vol. 8, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.
7. Letter dated May 13, 1958, Mary Ellicott Arnold Papers, RG 5, Box 4, Ser. 2, Swarthmore Friends Historical Library.
8. Letter dated December 15, 1962, Mary Ellicott Arnold Papers, RG 2, Box 5, Ser. 2, Swarthmore Friends Historical Library.