

## In Search of Sadakichi Hartmann – Part Two:

### *“Sadakichi and the San Gorgonio Pass”*



#### **Sadakichi in Role as the Court Magician in *Thief of Bagdad*.**

“Like a snow ghost in feathery flight” Sadakichi Hartmann floated in and out of the San Gorgonio Pass from the 1920s to the 1940s.(line from Sadakichi’s poem, “Snowfall.”) Sadakichi Hartmann, 1868-1944, was a world renown artist, art critic, author, philosopher, and poet who divided his time between Europe, Hollywood, New York and ultimately the San Gorgonio Pass from the late 1880s until 1944.This is the second part of a series of articles on Sadakichi Hartmann, the most famous resident of the San Gorgonio Pass.

From 1906, until the end of his life Sadakichi continued writing books and poetry, lectured on art worldwide (at least 1700 lectures), and assisted in establishing art collections, libraries and museums across the United States. He was highly sought after as an art expert and was a mentor to burgeoning artists. For the first two decades of the 1900s Sadakichi lived and worked back and forth between Europe, New York and Los Angeles.

His book, "My Theory of Soul Atoms" was published in 1910, and his "The Last Thirty Days of Christ" (in Charlie Chaplin's words, "the best story ever written about Christ") was published in 1920. The Banning Public Library has non-circulating copies of both of these books.

The large amount of time Sadakichi was spending in the Los Angeles area gave him the opportunity to learn about the nearby San Geronimo Pass, its very low cost of living and its climate conducive to relief for lung conditions. It was his asthma which ultimately drove him to make a move to Beaumont in 1923. He would often say that he was almost immune to his asthma as long as he remained in Beaumont. He could also remain within striking distance of Los Angeles and his many contacts there, both professionally and socially.

Albert Einstein, Irving Berlin and countless other known celebrities frequented the San Geronimo Pass in the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s, usually on their way to or from Palm Springs. Sadakichi is the only one who was a long term resident of the Pass from 1923 to 1944. His Hollywood friends made frequent trips to the desert resort towns and Sadakichi was able to hitch rides with them between the two areas.

As he was moving to Beaumont in 1923, Sadakichi was simultaneously working with Douglas Fairbanks on the classic silent film, "Thief of Bagdad." Sadakichi played the role of the court magician and the money he made from the movie helped sustain him for awhile in Beaumont. When Sadakichi first moved to the Pass he lived with his wife and children at a house near the corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Michigan in Beaumont. He later lived in a house on Magnolia Ave., south of 5<sup>th</sup> Street and near the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks.

During his residency in the Pass few were aware of their famous neighbor whose notoriety was at its peak around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Now, nearly a century later, in 2018, he is even less known though his influence in the art world is timeless.

It must have been difficult for Sadakichi to adjust to life in the San Geronimo Pass. Who would he find to talk with about his important role in the history of art and the famous people he knew? Where would he find the intellectual comradery he was so accustomed to?

It didn't take long for him to find the answers in his friendship and collaboration with Beaumont Mayor Guy Bogart.

## **Sadakichi and Guy Bogart**

After researching Guy Bogart's and Sadakichi's biographies I haven't been able to determine exactly when or how they met although they both lived in the Los Angeles area prior to 1923, and travelled in parallel circles of art and film. It is likely they may have met in Hollywood before moving to Beaumont and shared their enthusiasm for relocating to the Pass area. Or,

they may have first met in Beaumont after both relocating here. It wouldn't have taken long for the two of them to find each other given their common interests. Bogart would have undoubtedly known who Sadakichi was and may have initiated their collaborative relationship.

Guy Bogart opened his home on Euclid Avenue to Sadakichi and was unabashedly honored to be associated with him. He wrote numerous articles about Sadakichi and assisted him in many ways, sometimes financially.

Speaking of Sadakichi, Bogart wrote, "He is not the cynic some have hailed him. His mad Bohemian dances do not make him a clown. There is no bitterness in his make-up, nor any sense of responsibility to standards which have never registered. He is an appreciator of art, discriminating and concrete, with the power of literature in which to tell his views." In Bogart's opinion Sadakichi was a true poet. He would publish and revise his writing constantly, often never getting a poem completed to his liking.

From 1927 to 1932, Sadakichi was writing his book on ethics and living in poverty in Beaumont. Guy Bogart wrote in his memoirs; "I went over to Sadakichi's house on Michigan Ave. and 13<sup>th</sup> Street one cold winter in the 1930s. His five children and wife were hungry. There was no wood in the fire, but Sadakichi sat in a corner, wrapped in an overcoat, writing the last chapter of his philosophical book, 'Esthetic Verities.' "

Beaumont residents who knew of Sadakichi and his family's predicament criticized him for not working. Even Bogart questioned him on the wisdom of turning down some of the magazine writing assignments that were often offered to him.

"I may squander my talents but I will not prostitute them!," said a defiant Sadakichi. He accepted the derision and insults from many Beaumont residents with the belief that, "Someday the people at the edge of the desert will wake up to see that a great esthete lives among them. The funny part is that nobody in Beaumont will know what an esthete is."



**Guy Bogart Holding Sadakichi Painting of Mt. San Jacinto. Courtesy of UCR Special Collections.**

### **Sadakichi Moves to the Morongo Reservation**

After relocating to Beaumont in 1923, Sadakichi continued traveling as often as he could or was commissioned to do, mainly back and forth between Greenwich Village in New York and Los Angeles. Around 1934, Sadakichi moved in with his daughter Wistaria Linton (Mrs. Walter Linton) on the Morongo Reservation. At this point his health had worsened and he was nearly destitute. The move was likely an economic necessity.

Soon after his arrival on the Reservation his family and friends helped Sadakichi construct a small cabin he named “Catclaw Siding” on the Linton property. According to both Marigold and Tyron Linton (Sadakichi’s granddaughter and grandson) the cabin was appropriately named because of the overabundance of cat’s claw plants surrounding the property.

Sadakichi lived there for another ten or so years as he continued writing, painting and entertaining his leftover Hollywood acquaintances, reduced to those able and willing to make the trek from Los Angeles to Banning. Fellow writer and friend Ezra Pound helped finance the building of Catclaw Siding.

A humorous anecdote tells the story of one of Sadakichi’s closest Hollywood friends, W.C. Fields, who stopped at an eastside Banning gas station looking for directions to find Sadakichi

after driving around lost on the reservation. “Where the hell is Sadakichi?!” an exasperated Fields shouted at the station attendant. He eventually found him and they spent the weekend sharing one of their favorite pastimes.

Sadakichi’s one lifeline to his past and the art world was the U.S. mail. The Banning Post Office was located on N. San Gorgonio (present day Dorothy Ramon Learning Center) and was 2 ½ miles from Catclaw Siding. When Sadakichi first moved to the Linton property on the Reservation, the road was dirt. According to Tyron Linton the road was oiled in the late 1930s. Sadakichi would walk the distance to the post office, or if lucky hitch a ride, nearly every day, hoping to find mail from someone who remembered him or wanted to employ his skills as a writer or lecturer. Some people can still describe the skeletal Sadakichi in his long, dark coat and fedora walking the dusty road to the Post Office.

Ernest Siva, Director of the Dorothy Ramon Learning Center, remembers seeing Sadakichi waiting for a taxi on a bench on the northwest corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Ramsey St. in Banning. “I never heard him talk. He just smiled with a twinkle in his eyes,” said Ernest.

One of Tyron Linton’s earliest memories of his grandfather, Sadakichi, was when he accompanied him to the train depot in Banning on one of his many trips out of the area. Tyron, who still lives on the Linton property, was probably about five or so years old at the time.

## **Guy Bogart Diaries**

I researched 18 years of Beaumont Mayor Guy Bogart’s diaries from the San Gorgonio Pass Historical Society’s Bogart Collection. Bogart felt the need to document every moment and every detail of every day of his life. He rarely expanded on his experiences, just notated the day and time they occurred. He would make an entry regarding Sadakichi as; “Lucy had a headache today, found our lost cat, pruned a peach tree and Sadakichi Hartmann called, or Sadakichi Hartmann came by for dinner.” He would make no mention of their discussion or any details as to their conversation. For a researcher this is very frustrating. What did they talk about?!! I was however able to use these diaries in conjunction with the correspondence between Bogart and Sadakichi from the UCR collection.

One sample diary entry is:

**January 24, 1934:** “Sadakichi Hartmann called today and took dinner with us. Bob (Bogart’s son) and Lucy (Bogart’s wife), Brandon Ollar, Sadakichi and I went to Redlands to get artist’s supplies for Sadakichi, who is spending a few weeks on the Indian Reservation with Wistaria and plans to do pastel work”

From “*Sadakichi Hartman; An International Enigma*” by Guy Bogart:

"We have noted a new power in Hartmann's pastels. Far be it for me to invade the realm, where few tread the same high rung of the ladder as Sadakichi, and try to turn critic. Even a novice reporter, however, can feel (and did feel) the power of these pastels, publicly displayed in Hollywood and privately to a little group of us in Beaumont. Views of the East, of our own San Gorgonio Pass which Sadakichi has come to know as well as the salons of New York City; many moods; symbolic sketches; dream pictures of the old German cities, cities he loved in his youth."

Sadakichi worked mainly in pastels because he was allergic to oils and avoided that medium due to his asthmatic attacks. He would sit for hours outside Calclaw Siding trying to capture the elusive shading of Mt. San Jacinto at different hours. Harry Lawton (author of "Willie Boy") saw a collection of Sadakichi's pastels, owned by his daughter, Wistaria Linton. Lawton described them as "impressionistic, soft and glowing as a jewel, in rich, vivid hues."

Although Bogart had given Sadakichi a few hundred dollars over the years he never considered the money to be a loan. He felt it was a small price to pay for Sadakichi's companionship, intellect and entertainment. There was probably some bartering involved as well when Sadakichi provided a line drawing of Mt. San Jacinto, titled "San Jacinto From Bogart Bowl." Bogart used this drawing in many programs and promotional materials relating to the Japanese Cherry Festival programs at the Bogart Bowl. Guy Bogart, along with Sadakichi, created an authentic Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival designed as a tribute to international peace. This annual festival began in 1929 and changed during WWII because of anti-Japanese sentiments, then revived itself later as the present day Beaumont Cherry Festival.

Bogart would often give Sadakichi rides to or from the artist, John Decker's studio in Brentwood where Decker, W.C. Fields, John Barrymore Jr., Anthony Quinn, Charlie Chaplin, and Sadakichi would often spend hours that would turn into days of drinking and philosophizing.

Once, while on their way to Los Angeles, Bogart describes the scene; "We were driving an old model T to Los Angeles at 14 miles an hour, chugging uphill (probably the old 60 route). Sadakichi looked around loftily and said, "Here go the entire intelligentsia out of Beaumont."

UCR Special Collections has a photograph of Guy Bogart taken in his study, surrounded by numerous photographs of family and cat memorabilia. He is holding a painting by Sadakichi of Mt. San Jacinto. Other Sadakichi related items in the photograph are the cover of Sadakichi's book, "My Crucifixion, Asthma for 40 Years," and a small print of the famous Ben Berlin painting, "Opus to Sadakichi," 1934.

Bogart analyses Sadakichi and his relationship with him; "Even while borrowing your money and drinking your liquor Sadakichi would never flatter you. He was always blunt. He was a genius, completely honest where literature and artistic judgments were required." This blunt



honesty was even turned on himself when Sadakicchi was defining his own greatness. His comment to Bogart after giving him his painting of Mt. San Jacinto was “I’m not claiming this painting is a great work, but it is a souvenir from a great critic!”

Sadakichi, and the majority of his compatriots, thought of him as the “King of Bohemia,” and it would be difficult to find another individual in the world of art to challenge that claim. In Bogart’s own words, “As long as Sadakichi lives, Bohemia survives. My humble study has been the capital of Bohemia many and many a night during the past twelve years, for Bohemia is the space of four walls enclosing Sadakichi Hartmann.”



Berlin: *Opus to Sadakichi*, 1934 (Cat. No. 38)

**Ben Berlin Painting, “Opus to Sadakichi”, 1934. Courtesy of UCR Special Collections.**

### **Ben Berlin Painting**

In a spring art exhibit in New York a six by six ft. painting of Hartmann was exhibited by cubist artist, Ben Berlin, hailed by Hartmann as America’s greatest cubist painter. He painted his “*Opus to Sadakichi*” in 1934.

Somehow Sadakichi ended up with this painting and solicited Bogart’s help in selling it. He either purchased it after the exhibit in New York or Berlin gave it to him. Sadakichi was asking \$350.00 for the painting but mentioned in a letter to Bogart that he would take \$50.00. Bogart

wrote back that he had offered the Ben Berlin painting to the Beaumont Public Library for \$50.00. The library unfortunately declined to purchase the painting which would today be priceless. In November of 1937, Sadakichi and Walter Linton picked up the painting from Bogart's house on Euclid Avenue.

Here the trail goes cold in my research as to where the painting went from there. Does anyone in the San Geronimo Pass recognize this painting or know where it may be?

## **Mt. San Jacinto**

"Is there a mountain more beautiful than San Jacinto on this earth?" asked Sadakichi at the end of one of his four poems dedicated to the beauty of the mountain. He described Mt. San Jacinto as "America's Mt. Fuji." Sadakichi painted numerous pastels of the mountain and wrote four poems entitled, "Four Views of San Jacinto."

The following poem about San Jacinto was written from Catclaw Siding:

*At the approach of Spring I see the mount of San Jacinto as in a dream – a good omen?  
The snow on the summit resembles white silk with a silver greenish tint. Only the sheet  
lightening towards eve awoke me from the dream, as at the window of a shack I was  
waiting for the rise of the moon. The desert wind which caresses San Jacinto's base and  
top alike also bears fragrance to all dwellers in San Geronimo's Pass.*

In an article promoting Riverside County and Beaumont, Bogart quotes from Saddakichi, "If Mt. San Jacinto were in the Alps, millions of dollars would be reaped from it annually, largely paid by American tourists."

Bogart believed there were supernatural forces that surrounded Mt. San Jacinto, "It must be preserved not merely as a park but as a sacred altar. The Indians feel supernatural forces about the peak." Bogart believed that as well.

## **Accusations of Spying During WWII**

After the attack at Pearl Harbor Sadakichi, now about 72 years old, became a suspect for spying because of his dual German and Japanese ancestry. The U.S. Government determined he must be guilty of something, perhaps helping one side or the other. He was accused of climbing Mt. San Jacinto and sending signals to either Japanese or German intelligence. The 10,833 elevation would have been quite a task for an aging asthmatic but the Riverside County Sheriff's Dept.



put a tail on Hartmann, his relatives and associates, and followed them when they left the Reservation and went into town.

Sadakichi loved to walk the desert at night making charts of the constellations. This was interpreted as proof he was somehow signaling Japanese bombers off the coast with a lantern. The FBI got involved and questioned him repeatedly although he escaped being sent to an internment camp along with thousands of other Japanese Americans during the climate of fear and paranoia at the beginning of WWII. The absurdity of the government's suspicions eventually evolved into common sense and Sadakichi was left alone, no longer a suspect.

The second part of this article has grown into a third part. **In Search of Sadakichi Hartmann – Part Three** will include the controversial book about Sadakichi, "Minutes of the Last Meeting," by Gene Fowler, Sadakichi's afflictions and remedies, and his final years at Catclaw Siding.

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