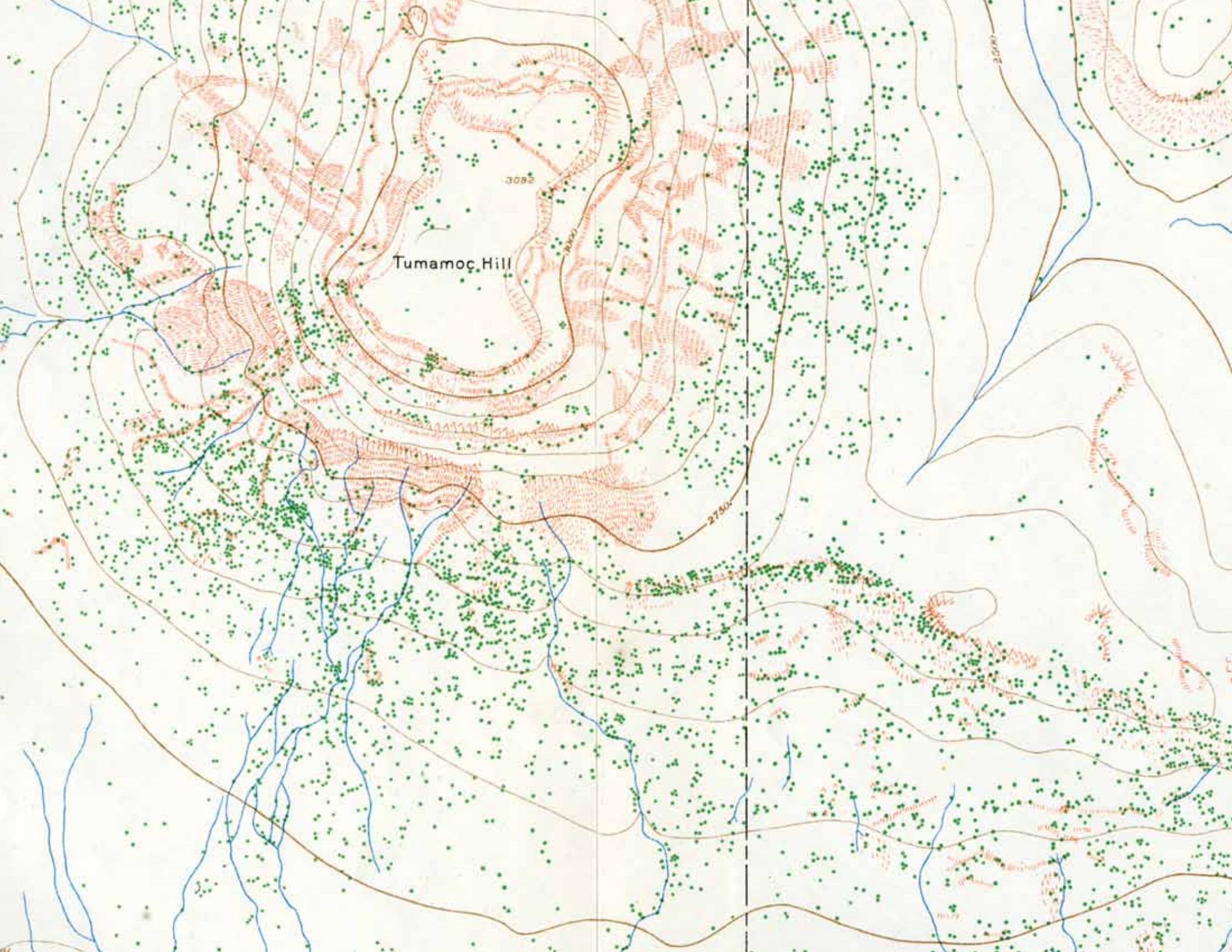




# This Piece of Earth

*Images and Words  
from Tumamoc Hill*

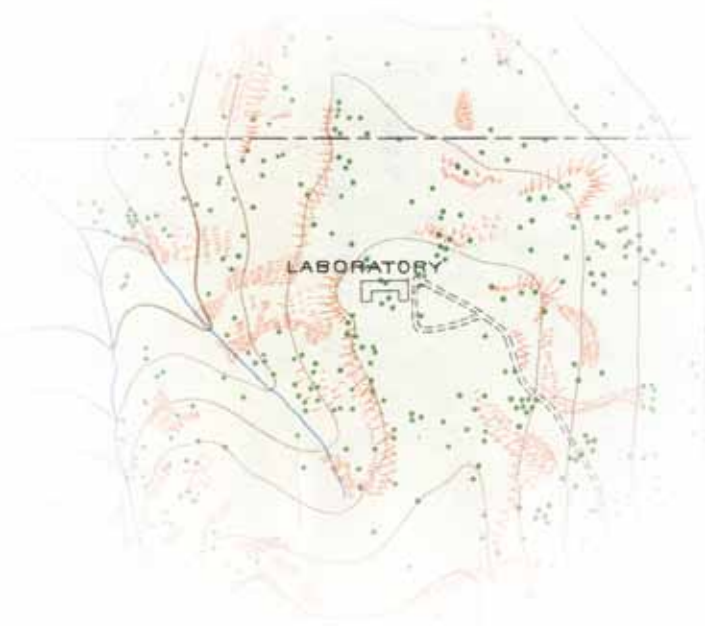


Tumamoc Hill

3092

2750

# This Piece of Earth





PAUL MIROCHA

# This Piece of Earth

*Images and Words from Tumamoc Hill*



Tumamoc: People and Habitats  
College of Science, University of Arizona  
TUCSON, ARIZONA



PAUL MIROCHA

Cover painting: Barbara Terkanian

Inside cover: detail of "Map Showing Distribution of *Cereus giganteus* [saguaro, now *Carnegiea gigantea*] on the Tumamoc Hills and Vicinity, Tucson, Arizona" from Spalding, Volney M. *Distribution and Movements of Desert Plants*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1909.

Design: Kathleen Koopman and Paul Mirocha

**Proceeds from this book go to the Tumamoc Fund at the University of Arizona Foundation.**

Published by Tumamoc: People and Habitats  
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2013

For more information about Tumamoc Hill see  
[www.tumamoc.org](http://www.tumamoc.org)  
To follow art and writing about Tumamoc see  
[www.tumamocsketchbook.com](http://www.tumamocsketchbook.com)

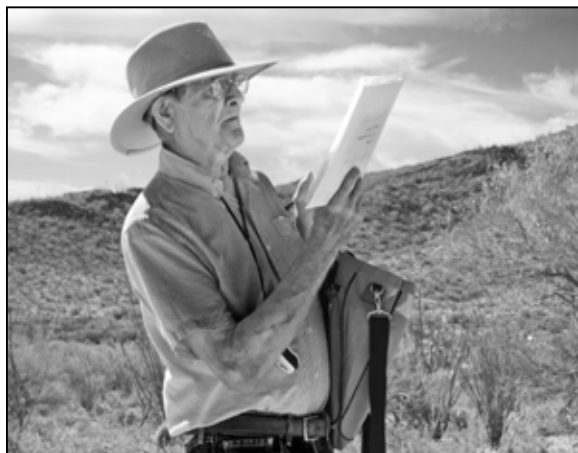
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## FOREWORD

Dedicated to Ray Turner, who links all that has gone on at the Hill with all that continues to happen there.



**E**VERY NORMAL HUMAN being is a unity. Some philosophers teach us that what we know comes to us over different routes – religion, art, science, or community. Is it holy? Is it beautiful? Is it real? Is it shared? But what we feel is a unity, an organic combination of all our perceptions and experiences. And, seemingly without trying, we find a way to live with them as a whole. We see no contradictions in ourselves.

Tumamoc Hill should be a perfect reflection of our wholeness. It has been a holy place for two thousand years. Its storied science and conservation often lead the world. Avidly we study its past and its relics. We cherish its old stone structures. We continue to pursue our science. We build our health by walking its path. And yet something has been missing. We have paid little attention to its beauty. This book proclaims the end to that inattention.

Led by the example of Paul Mirocha, Tumamoc's resident artist extraordinaire, people have been encouraged to let the Hill inspire their art. And spurred by its members like Cynthia Miller, POG — the poetry group — has come to the Hill to learn about the Hill so that it can dream about the Hill.

What a joy, we thought, to bring dreams and images together, and to share them with others.

It is fitting that the result is such a happy hodgepodge of media, styles and perspectives. Traditional watercolor and oil, stunning photographs, and three-dimensional compositions of *objets trouvés* that reflect the Hill's present and evoke the discarded artifacts of two millennia. Poetry that mines the emotions and thoughts of the many people who visit Tumamoc and does its work with a variety of styles. I can feel those styles but am not schooled enough to describe them in fancy terms.

No matter! I am proud of Tumamoc's poets and artists, and I love what they have created. Please enjoy this book and accept it as a signal of Tumamoc's future.

Michael Rosenzweig, Director

# POG AT TUMAMOC HILL WRITING PROJECT

*November 2012–February 2013*

**I**MAGINED COLLECTIVELY by the POG Board of Directors, the Tumamoc Hill writing project collaboration was planned to bring writers and poets to Tumamoc Hill, to explore, to learn from noted scientists at this desert lab, and to write about it.

Initiated after a POG reading and lecture by poet Eric Magrane and artist Paul Mirocha, the Writing Project began with 17 writers enthused with the idea of writing about place. A self-directed endeavor, their task, over the next four months, included spending time on Tumamoc Hill, one of the oldest ecological studies sites, situated by A Mountain/Sentinel Peak, attending public lectures arranged by Hill personnel, and meeting with scientists for informal presentations about all aspects of the historic site. Topics presented ranged from archeology, geology, botany, wildlife, climate change, cultural uses, and folk tales.

In response to their experiences and personal leanings, writers who followed through with the project gave public readings in Spring 2013 of new works for the POG Poetry In Action Reading Series, with local poet and linguist Ofelia Zepeda, and for a special reading event on Tumamoc Hill. Public response to the sincere and wide-ranging works has been enthusiastic and inspiring.

Many thanks to the POG Board who brought this project to the table:

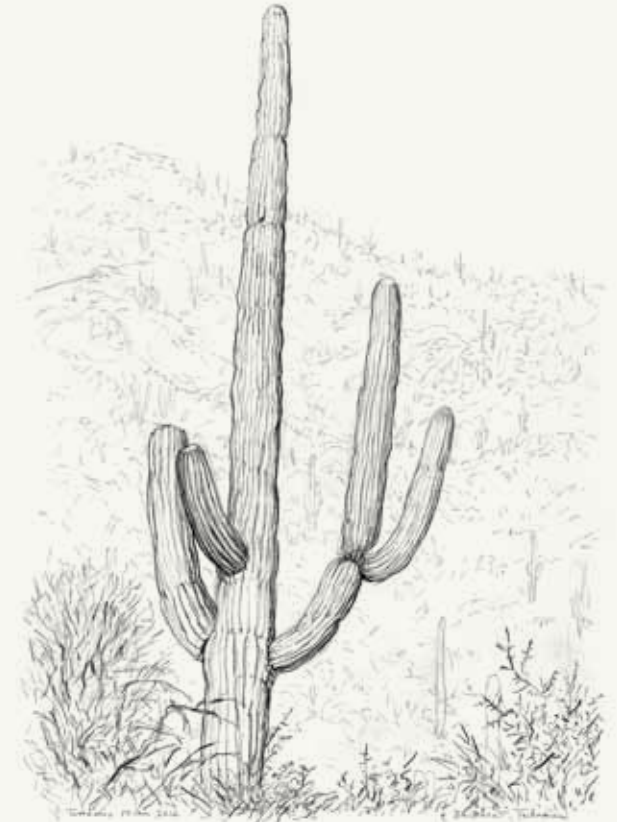
Tenney Nathanson, Charles Alexander, Lisa Cooper Anderson, Tony Luebbermann, Michael Rerick, Steven Salmoni, Samuel Ace, Jamison Crabtree, Kristi Maxwell, and Cynthia Miller.

Special Thanks to Tumamoc Hill people who made the endeavor possible: Cynthia Anson, Paul Mirocha, Dr. Rosenzweig, and the many Hill scientists and experts who took time with our writers.

And very grateful thanks to the foresight of desert dwellers who planned the preservation and continued study of this precious desert site.

Designated a protected site in 1906, many people walk the steep incline of Tumamoc Hill daily, probably not with poetry on their minds. Still these seven writers present their work, formed and informed by this ancient little mountain.

Cynthia Miller, President,  
POG Board of Directors



BARBARA TERKANIAN



## TUMAMOC HILL ARTISTS' PROJECT

ONE SATURDAY last February, Ray Turner led us off the Tumamoc road, into the wild back country to search for Spalding-Shreve plot 10. Ray held an historical black and white 8x10 photograph of the plot, matching clues on the horizon and nearby features to the photograph to guide us to the spot. I had a copy of Volney Spalding's original field notebook, kept when he staked out these 19 long-term ecological study plots in 1906. Spalding was good at setting boundaries; he fenced in the whole mountain to protect these plots, making it a laboratory and an observatory, a special place.

Of course, Ray had found the site many times before. Plot 10 had been lost until Ray tracked it down again in the 1960s. We looked for the rusted stakes marking the corners of the quadrat and stood for a while looking in, as if towards sacred ground—we were not supposed to step inside.

I had invited poets that morning, they chatted with Ray; next to them an artist drew in a sketchbook; a photographer composed some pictures.

The ground inside the stakes looked about the same as the ground outside. Of course. Spalding chose these sites at random to

eliminate subjective responses. Normally, no artist or landscape photographer would have thought to come here. It was nothing special to the eye. Even the spectacular view of the Catalina Mountains across the valley was not in the frame of Ray's photograph.

According to the data, plot 10 had held 35 perennial plant species, each individual followed for 106 years, its life span noted, stem location and canopy area digitally mapped. Exacting, descriptive notes about the state of things: javelina wallows, a cactus wren's nest, the number of pads on a prickly pear cactus, a petroglyph nearby, finally a repeat photograph from the standard picture spot. That was all the information that seemed important to ecologists.

Faced with all this enduring care for the site's detailed history, isn't there something we artists and writers could add to this monument of good science?

It was hard to think so from a technical point of view. But I wanted us to show up anyways, just to see what happened. Those field notes might be a start. Or the photography. I felt sure there was common ground between the scientists and artists.

I feel a kind of kinship with the early

desert scientists like Spalding and Shreve, and now Turner. I'm impressed with the focused attention, almost affection, they lavished on the landscape, making Tumamoc one of the most scrutinized places on Earth.

Maybe that commitment to putting on our boots and going out to take a really good look around is what we have in common.

Sometimes, we don't really know something until we try to draw it. I have watched Meredith stand in one spot for hours, making a pastel painting on site; Barbara observing saguaros in the exacting way historic painters reserved for the human figure. Like the classic Tumamoc scientists, Chip carries a heavy 4x5 film camera and tripod around the Hill because he does not cut corners when recording how he sees. Tumamoc has many layers of meaning and Kathleen has uncovered a new one in the things scientists have tossed away into the landscape, finding beauty in junk.

I think Spalding and Shreve would stop and take notice.

Paul Mirocha  
Tumamoc Resident Artist  
2011-present





## Tumamoc

walkers emerge from their days

– spadefoot toads after rain, ocotillo green –

the weight of human commitments  
in their speech, in passing phrases

we come here alone  
we come here together

– roadrunner, mule deer –

we walk up and down the hill

many reasons

this is the real world

Eric Magrane

**we who are artifacts**

who are the site  
of rock, of stone, of sediment  
of earth falling into earth

no such thing as history  
no such thing as culture

but there are ancestors  
grandparents and grandchildren  
and stories

ways to be in this world  
outside of our knowledge

Eric Magrane



