To modern New Mexico lepidopterists, W. J. Howard has been little more than a footnote associated with a few late 19th century butterfly records from southwestern New Mexico (e.g., Toliver et al. 1994:401). His role was preserved by Cockerell (1899), who discussed several New Mexico butterflies including “14 species collected by Mr. W. J. Howard in Grant County, N. M.” Howard’s modest lot consisted of Adelpha bredovii Geyer, Eurema nieppe (Cramer), Colias eurytheme Boisduval, Zerene cesonia (Stoll), Chlosyne lacinia (Geyer), Euptoieta claudia (Cramer), Vanessa virginiensis (Drury), Vanessa cardui (Linnaeus), Nymphalis antiopa (Linnaeus), Thessalia theona (Ménétriers), Thessalia fulvia (W. H. Edwards), Danausplexippus (Linnaeus), and Cerconis pegala (Fabricius). His specimen of T. theona is in the collection of the Biology Department at New Mexico State University. Most of these taxa are routine in southwestern New Mexico. Cockerell (1899) offered no clues about Howard’s whereabouts, when Howard’s specimens were collected, or how they came into Cockerell’s possession. This author remained curious about Howard’s identity and collecting activities in frontier New Mexico.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Howard provoked mild curiosity among historians and scientists over the years. Rocky Mountain biologists (i.e., Brown 1957, 1966) were curious about Howard’s role as an early collector of specimens, some of which became types. New Mexico historians (e.g., Bloom 1943, Torrez 1997) were curious because he helped to found the original New Mexico Historical Society. Though neither group benefited from the efforts of the other, their publications represent a collection of secondary sources that, when taken together, opened doors to valuable primary resources.

Old newspapers, originally noted by Brown as a key resource about Howard’s activities, also proved vital in this present study. Microfiche copies of old newspapers were examined at the Museum of New Mexico’s History Library (MNMLH) in Santa Fe, the New Mexico Records and Archives Center (NMRAC) in Santa Fe, and the Silver City Museum (SCM) in Silver City. Minutes of the New Mexico Historical Society were an important primary resource cited in Bloom (1943) and Torrez (1997). A third major primary source was the Special Territorial Census, conducted by the U.S. government in 1885 in preparation for eventual New Mexico statehood. This was reviewed on microfiche at the NMRAC. Information about Howard’s early professional years in New York could not be located because Tiffany & Co. did not retain employee records of that vintage (L. Bann pers. com. 1999).

Information about Howard from the Special Census provided an entry point to genealogical records. Genealogical inquiries first were made through various internet sites. These led the author to the Reference and Genealogy Section of the New Hampshire State Library, which led to that state’s Bureau of Vital Statis-
Watches
people who met in
found the New Mexico Historical
Colony, whose newspaper advertisements continued
cal specimens; geographical maps, and objects of nat­
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were illuminated by Brown (1957:45-47).

Winslow J. Howard first came to the West in 1858
(Table 1). His arrival in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is doc­
dumented by the following advertisement, which he
submitted on 18 December 1858, and which was pub­
lished in the Santa Fe Weekly Gazette of 5 February
1859. "Mr. W. J. Howard begs leave most respectfully
to inform the citizens of Santa Fe and the public in
general that he has taken a room in the plaza of the
Exchange Hotel for the purpose of repairing fine
Watches of every description, also Clocks, Music
Boxes, Jewelry, and other mechanical contrivances. By
the practical experience of thirteen years in the busi­
ness, and with the recommendation of the largest Jew­
elry Establishment in this country—the house of
Tiffany & Co., New York city—he hopes to merit a
share of public patronage in his line."

Howard's broad interests revealed themselves soon
thereafter. On 15 December 1859, he was one of 25
people who met in Santa Fe, the territorial capitol, to
found the New Mexico Historical Society. Comment­
ing on the minutes of that meeting, Bloom (1943:242)
remarked that Howard "was one of the prime movers
in organizing the Society . . . he himself was made sec­
retary of the meeting—and it was he who stated the
object for which they had gathered . . . He was the first
one named in the charter of incorporation." On 26 De­

cember Howard was elected Curator and Librarian
and was asked to "take charge of and classify all Indian
antiquities and curiosities; geological and mineralogical
specimens; geographical maps, and objects of nat­
ural history" (Torrez 1997). Society records indicate
that Howard resigned his office on 17 April 1860, and
left Santa Fe to pursue business interests elsewhere
(Torrez 1997).

His destination and activities for the next six years
were illuminated by Brown (1957:45-47). While re­
searching pioneer entomologists in Colorado, Brown
found scattered references to specimens collected by
Howard. Piecing clues together, Brown deduced that
Howard was associated with mining camps. By reading
old newspapers, Brown found an announcement in
The Western Mountaineer of 19 July 1860, promoting
Howard's new business in Denver. By 1862 Howard
was in Central City, Colorado, where he and a partner
manufactured jewelry under the name of Howard and
Colony, whose newspaper advertisements continued
until January 1865. Brown reported that Howard
moved back East in late 1865, married, and took up
residence in Brooklyn, New York. He returned west in
October 1866, traveling by stagecoach to Montana via
Denver. After that, Brown found the trail of his
"jeweler-naturalist" more difficult to trace. He re­
ported evidence of Howard in Prescott, Arizona, in the
1870s and in Leadville, Colorado, in 1879 (Brown
1966:127), but he never found Howard's trail again.

Howard's life after 1866 remained a mystery until
Torrez (1997) placed him in the mining town of Silver
City, New Mexico, in 1880. Further research by SCM
staff showed that Howard advertised frequently in lo­
cal newspapers to promote his assay, jewelry and
watch-making services (S. Berry, SCM, pers. com.
1997). He was sufficiently newsworthy to be the sub­
ject of at least two feature stories. One appeared on 10
June 1882, in The New Southwest, one of several
newspapers then operating in Silver City: "[A] col­
clection to which we would call special attention is that of
W. J. Howard, assayer and jeweler, who has spent
twenty-three years in the Rocky Mountains, and has
devoted his leisure time to the study of metallurgy and
natural history and who is a member of several sci­
entific institutions." This article detailed his "rare and
choice selections of crystallizations of metals and min­
erals." His was "the largest and finest collection of fos­
sil shells ever collected in New Mexico from various
localities, cemented on cards with their generic
species named, besides butterflies and other insects,
pressed flowers, leaves, etc."

The year 1883 witnessed the arrival in Silver City of
telephones, electric streetlights and a branch railroad
from the main line at Deming (Berry & Russell
1995:24–25). One newspaper article that year featured
Howard as a prominent collector and dealer of ancient
coins, which he occasionally sold in New York. Other
details of Howard's life in Silver City were doc­
umented in the Special Territorial Census of 1885
(NMARC archives). A Silver City census-taker
recorded "Howard, W.J.," as a married, literate, white
male whose profession was assayer. The Census found
Howard living in a boarding house with predominantly
younger, unmarried men including a miner, a tinsmith,
a laborer, a merchant, a butcher and three saloonkeep­
ers. This arrangement was routine in frontier mining
towns and was consistent with having a permanent
home and wife in the East.

The Census listed Howard's birthplace as New
Hampshire and the birthsplaces of his father and
mother as Massachusetts and New York, respectively.
Howard's age was stated as 57 years, indicating he was
born ca. 1828. This information provided a starting
point for researching genealogical records. Searches
for a Winslow J. Howard born in New Hampshire ca.
1828 were conducted on the internet in October 2001, but hours of automated searching through these considerable genealogical resources and databases produced no match. The Reference and Genealogy Section of New Hampshire State Library (NMSL) searched some of their files at the author’s request. Library staff found no reference to Winslow Howard in the New Hampshire federal census for 1850, in Stearns’ “Genealogy of New Hampshire,” or in published Howard genealogies in the Library’s collection (Z. Moore pers. com. 23 October 2001). Similarly, the New Hampshire Bureau of Vital Statistics (NHBVS) found no birth record for Winslow J. Howard (NHBVS pers. com. 8 November 2001).

Failure to locate Winslow J. Howard in New Hampshire genealogical records reflects two basic obstacles. First, genealogical records are incomplete. The NHBVS reported that many vital events of that era were never recorded (W. R. Bolton pers. com. 8 November 2001). Second, “Howard” and “Winslow” were popular family names in New England. Internet searches revealed one intermarriage between the two families, and there likely were others. The NMSL reported Howard surnames in 34 different New Hampshire towns in the early 19th century (Z. Moore pers. com. 23 October 2001).

Howard’s financial fortunes waxed and waned with Silver City’s mining-based economy. In 1886, he was tax delinquent on property worth $400 (SCM archives 1998). Economic troubles worsened in 1887, causing one of Silver City’s three banks to fail (Berry & Russell 1995:35). That year, Howard’s regular newspaper notices assumed a different tone, stating in July 1887 that he sold his Silver City business and, in August, that he began a professional association with George Williams & Co. in Deming. There, Howard’s newspaper trail ended. The author tried to trace Howard through the Deming Headlight, a newspaper that began publishing in 1882, but issues from 1883 to August 1888 could not be located in archives. Review of issues from September 1888 to April 1889 (MNMHL archives) disclosed no ads by Howard or by George Williams & Co.

Discussion

Despite living on the western frontier, far from most professional scientists, Howard did not conduct his natural history work in a vacuum. He was a member of the Entomological Society of Philadelphia (Brown 1957) which later became the American Entomological Society. He collected the Colorado specimen used to describe a new species of bee (Cresson 1863) and he supplied Montana plant specimens to Asa Gray at Harvard (Brown 1957). Butterflies collected by Howard were among the oldest documented Colorado specimens used by Tryon Reakirt to compile the first list of Colorado butterflies in 1866 (Brown 1957).

During Howard’s time in New Mexico, he was linked to University of Kansas entomologist Francis H. Snow. In August 1884, Prof. Snow and his students visited Silver City to collect insects (S. J. Cary & R. Holland in prep.). Reporting on this expedition, Snow (1885:65) acknowledged “Mr. W. J. Howard of Silver City for many favors.” Snow reported 13 butterflies and long lists of moths and beetles, remarking that the “electric lights at Silver City were very attractive to insects” (Snow 1885:69). One particular moth was listed as “Daritis sp. a superb species obtained from Mr. W. J. Howard, Silver City” (Snow 1885:66). For identification of unfamiliar Lepidoptera collected on this expedition, Snow (1885:65) relied on Henry Edwards. In describing the new moth as “Daritis thetis, Klug, var. Howardii” (Arctiidae: Pericopinae), Edwards (1886[1887]:165) noted that “About 2 years ago, I received from Mr. Wilson [sic] Howard, two specimens of this magnificent moth, which had been taken by him in New Mexico.” Linkage of the type specimens from their collection by Howard, through Snow, to Edwards’ description of D. howardi now warrants restriction of its type locality to Silver City, Grant County, New Mexico. No other patronyms were traced to Winslow J. Howard.

It has been suggested that Howard may have collected other specimens that survive today as anecdotal frontier New Mexico butterfly reports, for example from the Sacramento Mountains. While the timing of Howard’s presence in New Mexico makes this connection theoretically possible, the author is unaware of any specific information to support it. Mining was not a big part of the frontier economy in the Sacramentos, making it difficult to imagine what would have attracted Howard to the area or how he could have supported himself as an assayer. Similarly, the author is not aware of any insect specimens collected by Howard during his 1859 sojourn in Santa Fe. Nevertheless, it is clear that more remains to be learned about Howard; additional research may disclose specimens and relationships that are not apparent today.

Conclusions

In addition to being a professional jeweler and assayer, Howard was an active naturalist who collected specimens that helped scientists describe the flora and fauna of the West. Howard appreciated the scientific value of his specimens, researched their identities and recorded generally where they were collected. Specimens collected by Howard ca. 1884 are among the
earliest reliable butterfly reports from southwestern New Mexico (Cockerell 1899). He helped University of Kansas Prof. F. H. Snow collect insects in Silver City in 1884 (Snow 1885). Although genealogical inquiries bore no fruit in this study and no evidence was found that he fathered any children, Howard’s name lives on in the beautiful arctiid moth, Daritis howardi (Edwards 1886 [1887]).

The activities, contributions and lives of professional scientists of the historical period are documented in their publications and through records at their academic institutions. In comparison, the lives of most amateur naturalists and collectors usually were not systematically recorded, even though they supplied much of the raw material with which their professional contemporaries worked. It has been challenging to assemble the story of Winslow J. Howard because his faint footprints are scattered across several states, several decades and several scientific disciplines. Though his origins remain obscure, it is hoped that the above information contributes to the record of this important naturalist in New Mexico and the West.

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LITERATURE CITED


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