

MADELEINE APPLETON KIDDER, 1891–1981

The work of no single American archaeologist has received more elegant and sensitive evaluation than that of the late A. V. Kidder. For more than five decades, his fruitful and remarkable career encompassed investigations in the South-west United States and in Central America. The chroniclers of his labors, Wauchope (1965), Willey (1967), Woodbury (1973), say little about the distaff side of Kidder's family, his wife Madeleine, who shared in most of his rich, pace-setting and intellectually rewarding adventures in American archaeology. Firmly convinced that the life partners of distinguished scientists are often the unsung contributors to the unfolding drama of learning, I find it personally gratifying to speak briefly of the role of Mrs. Kidder as an archaeologist in her own right.



Born Madeleine Appleton on July 8, 1891, in Ipswich, Massachusetts, she died peacefully in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on June 4, 1981, a month short of her ninetieth birthday. Between those two dates, one must fit an adventuresome childhood, much of which was spent in Europe, and the varied and rewarding events experienced as the devoted wife of an archaeologist. She learned her first letters from the family governess, and after the age of 10, spent most of her winters in Venice while summering in Ipswich. When in Venice, besides formal tutoring, Mrs. Kidder "taught herself geography by sitting for endless hours watching the shipping come and go, always with her favorite book, *Lloyd's Book of House Flags and Funnels*, on her lap!"

A visit to Santa Barbara, California, with her mother and two younger sisters, was to set a new course for her. There they met Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Kidder and their son Teddy (AVK), then a student at Harvard, where he had just switched his interests from medicine to anthropology, occasioned by a chance registration in Harvard's famed Anthropology 5 taught by Roland B. Dixon. The Kidders believed that a vacation trip to Greece and up the Nile in Egypt to see something of Old World prehistory would be useful experience for an aspiring archaeologist whose eyes had turned to the American Southwest. The Appletons were invited to join the expedition set for 1909. Not surprisingly, that adventure turned out to be the catalyst that brought Ted and Madeleine together as partners. They were married in Ipswich in September 1910 and set out soon thereafter for the Territory of New Mexico.

During those first years of investigation on the Pajarito Plateau and in the Four Corners Country, it was not always possible for Mrs. Kidder to be with her husband, but that changed in 1915, the beginning of the Pecos years that brought her into total involvement with fieldwork. Not only responsible for managing the camp household and commissary, she also ran the laboratory and washed, sorted, marked, and studied the countless thousands of fragments of pottery that came from the ground. Kidder was often heard to say that his wife not only handled more Pecos pottery than anyone in the world, but also knew more about it. Her only bibliographic entry is a paper she coauthored with Dr. Kidder in 1917 entitled "Notes on Pecos Pottery," which appeared in the *American Anthropologist*. But that thin recognition far underrepresents her depth of knowledge and understanding of Rio Grande ceramics and the stimulus her interest in the subject must have been to Kidder.

With Dr. Kidder's appointment as Director of the Division of Historical Research of the

Carnegie Institution in 1930, both his and Mrs. Kidder's interests shifted to the Maya of Central America, although the Southwest, and particularly Pecos, remained their favorite places. As the work among the ruins of the Maya was being set up, in the words of Barbara Kidder Aldana, "Mother was in the thick of it all, interested in every phase of the new field, but most especially in the pottery, ancient and modern. . . . [When the] Kaminaljuyú dig was begun . . . there for the next three seasons, Mother was more often than not to be found either at the bottom of one of the Mound A or Mound B tombs carefully cleaning the lovely polychrome vessels there disinterred or at the museum washing potsherds and fitting them carefully into whole vessels." But Mrs. Kidder's contribution to the projects did not end with that, for in the Kaminaljuyú report (Kidder et al. 1946:7) Dr. Kidder notes that in addition to "assuming the heavy task of cataloguing and caring for the many specimens recovered; she also studied and prepared the section upon the objects of jade." That report is a detailed analysis and represents a significant contribution to one of the Maya hallmarks, their fondness for and superb craftsmanship in the working of jade.

In my long and warm association with Madeleine Kidder, she never spoke of herself as an accomplished archaeologist; yet I am confident that her knowledge of pottery, the "feel" she developed for style, color, and design nuances through time, and the conclusions she drew from that, played an enormous part in her husband's articulation of Rio Grande ceramics as seen at Pecos. Would that those of us who have been similarly immersed in pottery could have seen those guiding principles as clearly as she did, and think of our contributions to archaeology with the same degree of humility. She gave of herself in ways far beyond the pure professional, as an invaluable partner in AVK's life, totally supportive of his work, of his students and colleagues, and as "the best of mothers" to the five Kidder children.

Madeleine Kidder's ashes, with those of her illustrious husband and partner throughout more than a half century of varied anthropological experiences, were buried in the vicinity of their old campsite at Pecos National Monument on October 21, 1981. The solemnity of the occasion was overshadowed by the joyous feeling experienced by those who attended that day in knowing that the hallowed ground at Pecos, so rich in native American and Spanish history, now served as a sanctuary for the remains of the two people most responsible for bringing that heritage to light.

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