



FRIENDS

OF THE PALM SPRINGS LIBRARY

BOOK CLUB

FOPSL Book Club: February 14, 2020

Book: ***The Food Explorer***

The True Adventures of the Globe-Trotting Botanist Who Transformed What America Eats

Author: Daniel Stone

Discussion leader: Ann Kepcke

Did you know the story of how dates and date palms came to the Coachella Valley? If you read *Food Explorer* (2018) by Daniel Stone and presented by Ann Kepcke, you'd be our local expert! The book tells the story of David Fairchild (1869-1954) an American botanist and plant explorer who is credited with the introduction of more than 200,000 exotic plants and varieties of established crops into the United States, including soybeans, pistachios, mangos, nectarines, bamboo and flowering cherry trees. Also prominent in the story are Barbour Lathrop (1847-1927) an American philanthropist and world traveler, Charles Marlatt (1863-1954) entomologist, and Frank Meyer (1875-1918), a US Department of Agriculture explorer who traveled to Asia to collect new plant species (including the Meyer lemon).

Written in a breezy and entertaining manner, author Daniel Stone fills the narrative with vignettes like the ones about the origin of Hess avocados and the failed first attempt to bring cherry trees to Washington DC and the international incident it nearly created. It is

amazing to consider how dreary our diets would be without the intervention of David Fairchild and his group of food explorers.

Many in the group shared their memories of produce from their youth and today. Some noted a political undertone to the narrative. Other books brought up included those written by Michael Pollan and a variety of cookbooks that chronicle the history of American tastes.

David Kelly

Coordinator: David Kelly, DavidJaxKelly@gmail.com

Friends of the Palm Springs Library Book Club meets online

Palm Springs Library, 300 S. Sunrise Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262