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WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGES OF PLAINS LIVING

GLENDA RILEY

Women settlers on the Great Plains frontier, as on other frontiers, carried the primary responsibility for home and family. Not only wives and mothers, but *all* plainswomen, young or old, single or married, white or black, employed outside the home or not, were expected to attend to, or help with, domestic duties. Thus, women living on their own, with storekeeper fathers, with farmer husbands, or in any other circumstances devoted a large part of their time and energy to providing their households with food, clothing, and other goods or services, to maintaining houses both as family homes and as women's workplaces, and to promoting the general welfare of family members. In every one of these areas, plainswomen had to deal on a daily basis with the particular limitations imposed upon them by the harsh and demanding plains

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environment. This article discusses how the Plains affected women's duties and concerns and how the majority of women triumphed over these exigencies.¹

Of course, the Great Plains had a multitude of both supporters and detractors during its settlement period—the early 1860s to the early 1910s. Land promoters and other boosters of the region were quick to claim that health benefits, rich farming and grazing lands, and unlimited business opportunities awaited settlers. This “boomer” literature presented an attractive image that did not always seem totally truthful to those men and women who tried to profit from the area's purported resources. Particularly during the early years of settlement, many settlers bemoaned the realities of scarce water and relatively arid soil as well as their own lack of the skills or technology that would have allowed them to grapple effectively with the Plains. At times their inability to tame the Plains brought them to such desperate straits that special relief committees and such groups as the Red Cross and the United States Army had to supply food, clothing, and other goods to help them survive.²

Consequently, twentieth-century historical accounts depicting the settlement of the Great

Plains often focus on men's and women's ongoing struggles against numerous obstacles. Until recently, only a few of these had documented or analyzed the special problems that the Plains posed to its female settlers. Fortunately, a growing sensitivity to women's roles in history has led to a thorough examination of female settlers' own writings. This analysis of women's diaries, letters, and memoirs has clearly and touchingly revealed the details of their lives as settlers.³

The challenges that confronted female settlers on the Plains can be grouped into three categories: the native inhabitants of Plains territories, numerous aspects of the natural environment, and political upheavals among Americans who often held differing views on such crucial issues as black slavery and economic policy. Obviously, all of these factors also affected male settlers, but they had a particular impact upon female settlers.

NATIVE INHABITANTS OF THE PLAINS

For years, many future women settlers absorbed dramatic and often inflated stories about the terrifying demeanor and brutal ways of American Indians. Through word-of-mouth, captivity narratives, and the media, they learned that natives, especially the reputedly warlike Plains Indians, were to be greatly feared by settlers hardy, or perhaps foolish, enough to venture into their territories. Thus, these women took to the trail with misgivings and trepidation. While their menfolk made bold threats and practiced with their weapons, women confided to their diaries and letters their fears that natives would steal their meager food supplies or worse yet, their children. In addition, they feared that Indians might rape them and kill the men of the family who helped support and protect them.

Only gradually did many scared women realize that the "rape, pillage, and burn" image of Plains Indians was often inaccurate. They learned that Indians had their own problems with retaining their traditional cultures or simply surviving. Ada Vogdes, an army wife in

Wyoming, filled her diary with the expression "frightened to death" but slowly, as she came to know individual Indians such as Red Cloud and Big Bear, she developed sympathy for their plight, learned some of their dialects, and became an adept trader. While Plains Indians gained a reputation among women settlers for petty theft, begging, and unabashed curiosity about white ways, they also frequently served as guides, domestic laborers, and close friends.⁴

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment of the Plains created particular difficulties for women. For instance, the Plains lacked water, a crucial resource for domestic tasks. Women settlers showed tremendous creativity and energy in obtaining it. They carried water in pails attached to neck yokes or in barrels on "water sleds." They melted snow to obtain cooking and wash water. They used sal soda to "break" the alkali content of plains water. Women also helped build windmills and dig wells. And in their desperation they even resorted to hiring a "water-witch" or diviner to help them locate a desperately needed "vein" of water.⁵

The aridity of the Plains created another problem for women: the horribly destructive prairie fires. Men feared these fires because they endangered the animals, crops, and buildings that were largely men's responsibilities, but women often thought of their children and homes, and their cows, pigs, and chickens. An 1889 fire in North Dakota destroyed one man's horses and barn while it also claimed the lives of his wife's precious cows and chickens. Four years later, another fire in Fargo, North Dakota, burned to the ground both the shops where primarily men labored and the homes where primarily women worked. A Kansas woman explained that because most settlers' buildings were made of wood, the "greatest danger" they faced was fire. She added that her father immediately turned all stock loose in the face of an oncoming fire because they instinctively headed for the safety of the river valley, while her mother placed

her in the middle of the garden on the presumption that the fire would not "pass into that ploughed land." Other plainswomen described the deafening noise and blinding smoke of the fires that threatened their families and homes.⁶

Yet other women might have argued that torrential rains and the resulting floods or sand, wind, and snowstorms were at least as dangerous as fire. Charged with the protection of children and animals at homes and in schoolrooms, women greatly feared those days when the harsh climate would imperil them and their charges. In 1880, a South Dakota woman was able to save her children but lost her pig to a three-day blizzard. Ada Vogdes remarked that while sandstorms were not as life-threatening as blizzards, they certainly made housekeeping nearly impossible.⁷

Even when storms were not in progress, many women claimed that the elements plagued them and interfered with their work. A Norwegian woman confronted her cold kitchen each winter morning dressed in overshoes, heavy clothing, and a warm head-scarf. Another woman simply wrote in her journal, "the snow falls upon my book while I write by the stove."⁸

The ever-present insects and animals also challenged plainswomen at every turn. Grasshoppers not only demolished crops, but could destroy homes and household goods as well. The "hoppers" gnawed their way through clothing, bedding, woodwork, furniture, mosquito netting, and stocks of food. Bliss Isely of Kansas claimed that she could remember the grasshopper "catastrophe" of 1874 in vivid detail for many years after its occurrence. As she raced down the road trying to outrun the "glistening white cloud" of grasshoppers thundering down from the sky, her major worry was the baby in her arms. When the plague of grasshoppers struck, they ate her garden to the ground, devoured fly netting, and chewed a hole in her black silk shawl. "We set ourselves to live through a hungry winter," she remembered. In the months that followed, she "learned to cook wheat and potatoes in every way possible." She made coffee from roasted wheat and boiled wheat kernels like rice for her children. Another Kan-

sas woman who survived the grasshopper attack bitterly declared that Kansas had been "droughty . . . the state of cyclones, the state of cranks, the state of mortgages—and now grasshopper fame had come!"⁹

POLITICAL CONFLICTS

As if their fears concerning Indians and the physical environment weren't enough to discourage even the hardiest and most determined of female settlers, a third problem, political conflicts, beset them as well. The ongoing argument over black slavery particularly affected Kansas when in 1856 the outbreak of violence later known as "Bleeding Kansas" erupted. "Border Ruffians" added to the chaos by crossing frequently into Kansas from Missouri in an attempt to fasten slavery upon Kansans through harsh and destructive deeds. Sara Robinson of Lawrence felt terrorized by frequent "street broils" and saw her husband imprisoned during what she termed the "reign of terror" in Kansas. Another Kansas woman added that this convulsive episode was followed by the Civil War that plucked men out of homes all over the Plains. Women not only lost the labor and income of their men, but they feared the theft of food and children and the rape of themselves and their daughters at the hands of raiders, thieves, and other outlaws made bold by the absence of men. In addition, the exodus of men caused the burden of families, farms, and businesses to fall on the shoulders of already beleaguered women.¹⁰

The disputes that followed in the wake of the Civil War continued to disrupt plainswomen's lives. The period of Reconstruction between 1865 and 1877 included, for example, the chaotic entry of black Exodusters (former slaves) into Kansas and other plains states. Economic unrest and dissatisfaction with federal and state government policies resulted in Populist agitation through the Plains during the 1880s and 1890s. By 1900, it seemed to many women that their lives had been a long series of political upheavals.

WHY WOMEN REMAINED

After this brief survey of the many difficulties that beset female settlers, a reasonable person may well ask why these women stayed on the Plains. In fact, many did not stay. They and their families returned to former homes or moved onward to try life on another frontier or in a town. After spending two years in Kansas, Helen Carpenter was delighted to be a new bride about to migrate to California. In 1857, Carpenter began her trail journal by going "back in fancy" over the two years she had spent in Kansas. She recalled the initial "weary journey of three weeks on a river boat" when all the children fell ill. Then, she wrote, it was "the struggle to get a roof over our heads . . . then followed days of longing for youthful companions . . . and before the summer waned, the entire community was stricken with fever and ague." Just as she finally made some friends and established something of a social life, "such pleasures were cut short by border troubles and an army of 'Border Ruffians' . . . who invaded the neighborhood, with no regard for life or property." She admitted that Kansas was "beautiful country" with its tall grass and lush wildflowers, but added that "the violent thunder storms are enough to wreck the nerves of Hercules and the rattle snakes are as thick as the leaves on the trees, and lastly 'but not leastly,' the fever and ague are corded up ever ready for use." Given the nature of her memories, it is not surprising that Carpenter concluded, "in consideration of what we have undergone physically and mentally, I can bid Kansas Good Bye without a regret." Another Kansas woman whose family left the region said that her father had taken sick and that her "Auntie wanted to get away from a place always hideous in her eyes."¹¹

Fortunately, not all plainswomen felt so negative about their environment. Whether from an eastern mill or a midwestern farmstead, many plainswomen were used to harsh conditions and, as Laura Ingalls Wilder put it, they saw the rigors of the Plains as "a natural part of life." They hung on because they had hope for the

future, or according to one, because they didn't expect the hard times to last. Often their optimism was rewarded and conditions did improve. The arid Plains were gradually conquered by improved technology, economic booms occasionally appeared, and Indians were replaced by settlers. A Nebraska woman of the early 1900s pithily summed it up: "we built our frame house and was thru with our old leaky sod house. Our pioneer days were over. We now had churches, schools, Telephones, Rural Mail."¹²

A key question, however, is whether the women who remained on the Plains did so in disillusionment and despair, growing old and ill before their time and perhaps blaming their menfolk, who had seen economic opportunity in plains settlement, for their misfortunes. The answer is yes, many women who remained on the Plains did so with hostility and grievance in their hearts. Their writings tell of crushing work loads, frequent births, illnesses and deaths, recurring depression, loneliness, homesickness, and fear. A common theme was the absence of other women and their longing for family members who had not migrated. A Wyoming woman even claimed that the wind literally drove her crazy and that she could no longer bear to spend long winters on a remote ranch with no other women.¹³

Some women's lamentations went unleavened by positive statements, but others gradually included more and more pleasant observations. They noted that other settlers, including women, soon moved in and that often members of their own families joined them. Gradually, the depression of many hostile women ebbed and was replaced by a sense of affection for their new homes. Even the Wyoming woman who feared for her mental stability later maintained that, "Those years on the Plains were hard years but I grew to like the West and now I would not like to live any other place."¹⁴

Also, numerous women did blame men for their circumstances. It is often difficult to determine which of these women were simply using a man as a scapegoat and which women had

fair cause to lay blame. Because women were hesitant to record too many personal details in journals or letters home, it is not always clear how responsible a man might be for a woman's difficulties. Certainly, sad stories do exist of men who verbally or physically abused women or who were alcoholic, lazy, and financially inept or irresponsible. In the patriarchal family structure of the time, men were often slow to recognize the importance of women's labor, to allow women a voice in family decisions, or to understand women's concerns. As early as 1862, the United States Commissioner of Agriculture's annual report suggested that the supposedly prevalent insanity of plainswomen resulted more from the treatment of their own men than it did from the Plains, family finances, or infant mortality. In following years, newspaper reports of wife-beating or a woman's journal describing the alcoholism of her husband gave credence to his assertion.¹⁵

Here again, the negative evidence is balanced by many other accounts. Numerous women wrote about the energy, responsibility, support, community participation, and kindness of fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. Women spoke of men's "cheerful spirits," patience, thoughtfulness, sympathy, and companionship. Army wives Ada Vogdes and Elizabeth Custer both felt that the hardships of their lives as women in far-flung western forts were greatly offset by the courtesy and consideration of their husbands, other officers, and enlisted men. Even Faye Cashatt Lewis, whose mother so plaintively complained that the great trouble with North Dakota was that "there is nothing to make a shadow," claimed that her father was her mother's "saving support" throughout her various travails. Lewis said that her mother "could never have felt lost while he was by her side."¹⁶

HOW WOMEN SURVIVED AND FLOURISHED

More important, huge numbers of plucky women faced the challenges with creativity, energy, and optimism. A Kansas settler of the

1880s, Flora Moorman Heston, is one example of a woman who confronted the problems of weather, poverty, hard work, and loneliness for her family with buoyant spirits. In a letter home, she maintained that "We have the best prospect of prosperity we ever had and believe it was right for us to come here." She added that "I have a great deal more leasure [sic] time than I used to have it dont take near the work to keep up one room that it does a big house."¹⁷

Actually, plainswomen, much like women on other frontiers, developed numerous resources in order to maintain a positive outlook and lifestyle in their new and demanding homes. Although these resources are often overlooked in descriptions of the darker side of Plains living, they did indeed exist. Many plainswomen were adept, for example, at creating rich and varied social lives out of limited or seemingly non-existent materials and opportunities. Especially during the lonely months of early settlement, they relieved their own isolation by writing in cherished journals or penning letters to friends and family. A young Nebraska woman who lamented the lack of women in the neighborhood wrote daily in her journal. "What should I do without my journal!" she exclaimed on one of its pages. Yet as time passed and settlement in the area increased, her entries became less frequent while her apologies to her neglected journal increased.¹⁸

Women also turned to the books and newspapers they had brought with them, borrowed from others, or hoarded butter-and-egg money to purchase. Isely explained that even when she and her husband could "not afford a shotgun and ammunition to kill rabbits" they subscribed to newspapers and bought books. Personally, she made it a rule, "no matter how late at night it was or how tired I was, never to go to bed without reading a few minutes from the Bible and some other book." Other women wrote of their longing for more books, of feeling settled when their books were unpacked, and of borrowing books from others. Faye Cashatt Lewis poignantly wrote: "Finishing the last book we borrowed from the Smiths, and having it too

stormy for several days to walk the mile and a half to return it and get more, was a frequent and painful experience. Seeing the end of my book approaching was like eating the last bite of food on my plate, still hungry, and no more food in sight."¹⁹

Music was another form of solace and sociability. Frequently, women insisted upon bringing guitars, pianos, and miniature parlor organs with them to the Plains. Despite the fact that she and her husband were transported from fort to fort in army ambulances with limited space, Ada Vogdes clung to her guitar. In her journal, she frequently mentioned the pleasure that playing that guitar and singing along with it brought to her and others. Vogdes, like many others, also depended upon mail from home to keep her amused and sane. When a snowstorm stopped the mail for two long weeks, Vogdes proclaimed that she could not wait much longer. To many women, the mail provided a lifeline to home and family while bringing news of the larger world through magazines, journals, ethnic and other newspapers, and books.²⁰

In addition, the coming of the railroad had great social implications. Not only did railroad companies bring settlers, but they also sponsored fairs and celebrations and provided ties with other regions of the country. An Indian agent's wife in Montana wrote, "The coming of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 brought us in closer touch with civilization, with kin and friends, with medical and military aid, but put an end to the old idyllic days." In 1907, a Wyoming woman was delighted to see the railroad come into her area and claimed that its very existence alleviated her depression. She explained that with "no trees and few buildings" to hamper her view of passing trains, she felt that she kept "in touch with the outside pretty well."²¹

Plainswomen also became effective instigators and organizers of a huge variety of social events including taffy pulls, oyster suppers, quilting bees, dinners, picnics, box suppers, church "socials," weddings and chivaries, spelling bees, dances, theatricals, song fests, puppet

shows, and readings. Perhaps most important were the celebrations of such special holidays as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the Fourth of July. The menus concocted by women on special occasions often confounded other women. After a particularly splendid dinner, one woman wrote, "however she got up such a variety puzzled me, as she cooks by the fireplace and does her baking in a small covered skillet."²²

In addition to the sociability they created, women also survived their experience as plains settlers because they saw themselves as cultural conservators in a rough, new land desperately in need of their services. Women often derived great satisfaction and a sense of significance from acting as a civilizing force by establishing "real" homes for their families; preserving traditional values, folkways, and mores; passing on family and ethnic traditions; contributing to local schools and churches; and establishing women's organizations. Many plainswomen probably would have agreed with the poetic woman who said of them, "Without their gentle touch, this land/Would still be wilderness." Certainly, women spent a good deal of time and energy recording and relating their activities as cultural conservators in the plains wilderness.²³

In this role, women emphasized material goods. They preserved, but also used, family treasures. Some insisted on fabric rather than oilcloth table coverings, served holiday eggnog to cowhands in silver goblets, and used their best silver and chinaware whenever the occasion arose. Years after coming to the Plains, Lewis still proudly displayed her mother's Haviland china. She explained that "Father had urged strongly that this china be sold, but the thought was so heartbreaking to mother that he relented and helped her pack it." Lewis perceptively saw that her mother's china was "more than a set of dishes to her, more than usefulness, or even beauty. They were a tangible link, a reminder, that there are refinements of living difficult to perpetuate in rugged frontier conditions, perhaps in danger of being forgotten." Certainly, Mary Ronan felt this way. On an isolated Indian reservation in Montana, she still

regularly set her dinner table with tablecloths and ivory napkin rings. She explained that "heavy, satiny damask" cloths gave her "exquisite satisfaction" although her children did not like them. She added that she had "one beautiful set of dishes" but used them only on "gala occasions."²⁴

Rituals were also important. Among these was the celebration of Christmas. In the early years, Christmas trees were scraggly, ornaments few and homemade, and Christmas dinner far from lavish. But as their situations improved financially, women provided more festive trees, elaborate presents, and special foods. They extended their efforts to schools and churches where they placed trees decorated with nuts, candy, popcorn balls, strings of cranberries, wax candles, and homemade decorations. They then surrounded the trees with presents for each other as well as presents for poor children who might otherwise be deprived of a Christmas celebration. Often music, singing, speeches, and prayers preceded the arrival of a local man dressed as Santa Claus.²⁵

Plainswomen contributed a diversity of cultural patterns because of their own mixed ethnic and racial stock. European, African-American, Mexican, and Asian women who desired to preserve their own rich heritages subscribed to a variety of newspapers and magazines in their own languages, continued to wear traditional clothing, practiced their customary holiday rituals, and added their own words, foods, and perspectives to the evolving society. A Norwegian woman in Nebraska continued to speak Norwegian in her home, sent her children to parochial school, and cooked Norwegian food. Black women were another group who gave their own folkways to the cultural blend, especially after the Civil War when significant numbers of them migrated to plains states as Exodusters.²⁶

Jewish women also brought their own form of culture to the Plains. Although many Jewish settlers first came to the Plains as members of agricultural communities, particularly under the auspices of the Jewish Colonization Association

and the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society, they soon relocated in such cities as Omaha, Nebraska, and Grand Forks, South Dakota. Here they established businesses and communities that could support rabbis and supply other religious needs. This relocation was important to many Jewish women who despaired of their ability to provide their children with religious education and to keep a kosher home when separated from a sizable Jewish community.²⁷

While the factors discussed here were significant to the successful adaptation of women settlers to the Plains, perhaps the most crucial factor was women's ability to bond with other women. On the Plains as elsewhere, women turned to each other for company, support, and help in times of need. Women's longing for female companionship is clearly revealed by their laments about the lack of other women in an area during the early years of settlement. One of only three women settlers in a developing region of North Dakota stated simply, "Naturally I was very lonely for women friends." Consequently, early plainswomen frequently overcame barriers of age, ethnic background, and race in forming friendships. Settling in Oklahoma Territory in the early 1900s, Leola Lehman formed an extremely close friendship with a native woman whom she described as "one of the best women" she had known in her lifetime. A Kansas woman similarly characterized a black woman who was first a servant then a confidante and friend as "devoted, kind-hearted, hard-working." Still other women told how they found a way around language barriers in order to gain companionship from women of other races and cultures.²⁸

Typically, women began a friendship with a call or a chat. Lehman was hanging out her wash when the Indian woman who became her friend quietly appeared and softly explained, "I came to see you. . . . I thought you might be lonesome." The company of other women was especially important in male-dominated military forts where a woman began receiving calls upon arrival. Ada Vogdes recorded her gratitude at being whisked off by another officer's wife

the moment she first arrived at Fort Laramie. Her journal overflowed with mention of calls, rides, and other outings with women friends. When her closest friends left the fort, Vogdes described herself as feeling "forsaken and forlorn" and overwhelmed by an aching heart. Some years later, Fanny McGillicuddy at Fort Robinson in Nebraska also logged calls and visits with other women and noted their great importance to her.²⁹

Women also established friendships, gave each other information and support, and passed on technical information through quilting bees and sewing circles. Isely remembered that as a young woman she was always invited to the "sewings and quiltings" held by the married women in her neighborhood. On one occasion, she invited them in return and was pleased that "they remained throughout the day." Isely felt that these events gave her invaluable training in much-needed domestic skills and that the women had "a good time helping each other" with their work.³⁰

New brides also brought out older women's maternal instincts and they were very generous in sharing their time, energy, and skills with the novice. In 1869 the *Bozeman Chronicle* quoted a recent bride as saying, "In all there were just fourteen women in the town in 1869, but they all vied with each other to help us and make us welcome." This hospitality even included much-needed cooking lessons for the seventeen-year-old wife. A decade later, another bride arriving in Miles City, Montana, recalled that she met with a similar welcome: "Ladies called. . . . I wasn't at all lonely."³¹

Women were also quick to offer their services to other women in times of childbirth, illness, and death. Aid in time of need provided a true bonding experience between women. In 1871, the *Nebraska Farmer* quoted a settler who claimed that these women acted "without a thought of reward" and that their mutual aid cemented women into "unbreakable friends." During the early 1880s, a Jewish woman in North Dakota explained that when a woman was about to give birth she would send her children "to the neigh-

bors to stay for the time" so that she "could have rest and quiet the first few days, the only rest many of these women ever knew." She added that "the rest of us would take home the washing, bake the bread, make the butter, etc." Other women said that in time of illness or death they would take turns watching the patient, prepare medicines, bring food, prepare a body with herbs, sew burial clothes, organize a funeral, and supply food.³²

When Nannie Alderson, a Montana ranch wife of the 1880s, was ill, male family members and ranch hands strongly urged her to call a doctor from Miles City. Her reply: "I don't want a doctor. I want a woman!" When the men surrounding her failed to understand her need, they again pressed her to call a doctor. She sent for a neighbor woman instead. After her recovery, she justified her action by saying, "I simply kept quiet and let her wait on me, and I recovered without any complications whatever."³³

As the number of women settlers increased in an area, women began to join together in the public arena as well as the private. They formed a myriad of social, educational, and reform associations. Women's literary clubs studied books and started libraries. Temperance societies attempted to control alcoholism, which harmed wives and children who were legally and economically dependent upon men. And woman suffrage groups fought for plainswomen's right to vote. Nebraskan Clara Bewick Colby, suffragist and editor of *The Woman's Tribune*, noted again and again that the plains states were particularly fertile ground for suffrage reform.³⁴

Other clubs and associations included hospital auxiliaries, housekeeper's societies, current events clubs, musical groups, tourist clubs, world peace groups, Red Cross units, and Women's Relief Corps chapters. By the 1880s, so many organizations were available to plainswomen that one Wyoming woman termed the era "the golden age of women's clubs." One leading Oklahoma clubwoman actually established or led more than forty associations during her life.³⁵

CONCLUSION

Most women's abilities to create and enjoy socializing, to serve as cultural conservators, and to form strong bonds with other women helped them to triumph over the innumerable demands of pioneering. Although the Plains was undoubtedly an especially difficult environment for people whose gender dictated their special responsibility for home and hearth, plainswomen were not generally disoriented, depressed, or in disarray. Rather, the majority of them managed to maintain homes and families, carry out domestic functions, and perpetuate the many values associated with the home. While depression, insanity, or bitterness characterized some plainswomen's lives, many more were able to respond to the challenges and hardships involved in settling the Plains in ways that insured not only survival but, in many cases, brought contentment and satisfaction as well.

NOTES

1. This article is an extension and expansion of arguments first published in Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairies and Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

2. Gilbert C. Fite, "The United States Army and Relief to Pioneer Settlers, 1874-1875," *Journal of the West* 6 (January 1967): 99-107.

3. Louise Pound, *Pioneer Days in the Middle West: Settlement and Racial Stocks* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, n.d.); Mary W. M. Hargreaves, "Homesteading and Homemaking on the Plains: A Review," *Agricultural History* 47 (April 1973): 156-63; Lillian Schlissel, "Women's Diaries on the Western Frontier," *American Studies* 18 (Spring 1977): 87-100, and Lillian Schlissel, "Mothers and Daughters on the Western Frontier," *Frontiers* 3 (1979): 29-33; Christine Stansell, "Women on the Great Plains, 1865-1900," *Women's Studies* 4 (1976): 87-98; John Mack Faragher and Christine Stansell, "Women and Their Families on the Overland Trail to California and Oregon, 1842-1867," *Feminist Studies* 2 (1975): 150-66.

4. Ada Adelaide Vogdes, *Journal*, 1866-72, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Chestina B. Allen, *Diary 1854-1857*, Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS); Bertha Josephson Anderson, *Autobiography*, ca. 1940, Montana Historical Society,

Helena (MHS); Mary Paddock Berthold, *Montana American Mother Bicentennial Project, 1975-76*, MHS; Mary Peachy Cox, *Interview*, 1957, MHS; Ella M. (Mrs. E. J.) Edsall, *Autobiography*, 1919, Montana State University Library Special Collections, Bozeman; Susanna Larson Bergh and Lydia Burrows Foote, *Pioneer Daughters Collection*, South Dakota State Historical Resource Center, Pierre, (SDSHRC); Emily Lindstrom, *Reminiscence*, undated, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck (SHSND); Martha Roe, *Diary*, 4 May 1864 and 8 September 1864, Montana State University Library Special Collections, Bozeman.

5. See Myra Waterman Bickel, Lydia Burrows Foote, Eleanor Schubert, and Anna Warren Peart, *Pioneer Daughters Collection*, SDSHRC; Abbie Bright, *Diary, 1870-1871*, KSHS; Barbara Levorsen, "Early Years in Dakota," *Norwegian-American Studies* 21 (1962): 167-69; Kathrine Newman Webster, "Memories of a Pioneer," in *Old Times Tales*, vol. 1, part 1, (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1971); Bertha Scott Hawley Johns, "Pioneer Memories 1975," Wyoming State Archives, Museum, and Historical Department, Cheyenne (WSAMHD); Emma Crinklaw (interview by Mary A. Thon) "One Brave Homesteader of '89" 1989, WSAMHD. Regarding "witching" for water in Kansas see Bliss Isely, *Sunbonnet Days* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1935), pp. 176-79.

6. Ellen Stebbins Emery to her sister, 31 December 1889, SHSND; Mabel Lorchbough, "Prairie Pioneer: Some North Dakota Homesteaders," *North Dakota History* 43 (Spring 1976): 22; Adela E. Orpen, *Memories of the Old Emigrant Days in Kansas, 1862-1865* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928), pp. 65-69; Florence Marshall Stote, "Of Such is the Middle West," undated, KSHS; Meri Reha, *Pioneer Daughters Collection*, SDSHRC.

7. Amanda Sayle Walradth, *Pioneer Daughters Collection*, SDSHRC, and Vogdes, *Journal*.

8. Mrs. R. O. Brandt, "Social Aspects of Prairie Pioneering: The Reminiscences of a Pioneer Pastor's Wife," *Norwegian-American Studies* 7 (1933): 5, 9, 26-30; Allen, *Diary*, KSHS.

9. Isely, *Sunbonnet Days*, 196-201, and Anne E. Bingham, "Sixteen Years on a Kansas Farm, 1870-1886," *KSHS Collections* 15 (1919-22): 516.

10. Sara Tappan Doolittle Robinson, *Kansas, Its Interior and Exterior Life* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1856), pp. 85, 249-69, 347; Georgiana Packard, "Leaves from the Life of a Kansas Pioneer," 1914, KSHS; Marian Lawton Clayton, "Reminiscences—The Little Family," 1961, KSHS.

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