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Women Pioneer Diaries, 1820-1920: A Selected Annotated Bibliography

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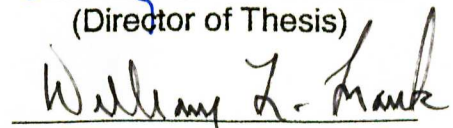
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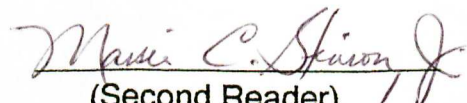
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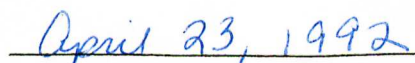
Women Pioneer Diaries, 1820-1920:
A Selected Annotated Bibliography

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Acknowledgements

I wish to dedicate this thesis to Vanessa, Marisa, and Cristina

and to the memory of Dr. Rosemary Sprague.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Annotated Bibliography	16
Conclusion	51
General Bibliography	53
Works Consulted	67
Biography of Author	69

In the following annotated bibliography, the works of twenty women are represented. All of the women participated in the westward expansion at some time between 1820 and 1920. They participated by immigration, emigration, homesteading or simply living in a trans-Mississippi community during the aforementioned time period. The annotations provide a brief summary of each work with representative quotations which show the style or experience of particular interest to the writer. The work as a whole provides a variety of examples of the lifestyle and challenges of the period, which may highlight the uniqueness of each woman, while at the same time showing some common experience. Diaries have been selected to represent as many states as possible, in as many time periods as possible within the one hundred year time span, in an attempt to provide a representative bibliography. Thirteen trans-Mississippi states or territories are represented. In selecting the diaries, and one collection of letters, women from various social classes have been included. The women by and large were not famous, although some did do some publishing in their lifetimes. The experience of the average woman of the time was of particular interest in this project.

The women journeyed westward for a variety of reasons. Some simply enjoyed travel and wanted to see the west. Most likely, the women that fall into this category were single women who perhaps traveled with relatives or traveled by themselves to visit relatives. Abbie Bright clearly stated her desire to see the west. With this in

mind she set out to spend time with her brother and his family in Indiana. She obtained a teaching position during her stay. After that she proceeded to go farther west to Kansas to visit another brother. Mary Austin Holley was another who was enticed by the west. In her diary one can read about the pleasures upper class travelers enjoyed.

There were women who were interested in staking claims of their own or improving their economic situation. Elinore Pruitt Stewart, a single parent raising a young child, was determined to improve her standard of living. In fact, Stewart proclaimed homesteading to be the solution to poverty. She ventured to Wyoming seeking a better way of life for herself and her daughter. Anna Webber accepted a teaching position in Kansas after passing her teacher's certification examination. She wrote about the struggles and responsibilities of a beginning teacher, as well as her fears and uncertainties at being in a new place.

A spouse seeking employment, land, or fortune, would in some cases precipitate the move west. Kate Dunlap and her husband went west to mine gold. With their copy of *J. L. Campbell's Guide to Idaho: Six Months in the New Gold Diggings. The Emigrant's Guide Overland* they proceeded on a well-planned journey west. In contrast, the Korens had a religious mission. Elisabeth Koren accompanied her newly ordained husband on a journey to Iowa, where he would provide long awaited pastoral leadership. Of course, daughters went west with their families.

Several factors seemed to influence to what extent traveling or living out west was a positive experience. The degree of difficulty seems to escalate in the order of the following categories: child of the family, single woman, married woman without children, married woman with few children, married woman with many children.

Josephine Streeper Chase had long days filled with household chores and many children to take care of. She was aware that her husband was not burdened with the magnitude of responsibilities she had.

Elizabeth Geer also struggled each day to care for her children and survive the long journey, one which she completed as a widow:

I was so cold and numb that I could not tell by the feeling that I had any feet at all. We started this morning at sunrise and did not get to camp until after dark, and there was not one dry thread on one of us -- not even my babe. I had carried my babe and I was so fatigued that I could scarcely speak or step. . . . I have not told half we suffered. . . . Sometimes I would be behind out of sight of the wagons, carrying and tugging my little ones along. (171-175)

Obviously, if one had many to worry about and care for the difficulties were compounded.

Mollie Dorsey Sanford and Abbie Bright provide a stark contrast to the two previous accounts. Mollie Dorsey Sanford started her journey westward at age eighteen with her family, and she considered

much of the trip to be a holiday. Her family was referred to as the "Happy Family" by those in the area. Abbie wrote that people characterized her as "a bunch of contentment"; she characterized herself as possessing "a big lump of adaptability." She had gone west because she wanted to, and was not responsible for anyone but herself. Thus, the motivating factor also seemed to play a role in how content the pioneer was. If the woman chose to go west, certainly it would be a more positive experience than if she felt she had little choice in the matter. If a married woman had a supportive husband and family, this fact would definitely provide a more positive experience. If the family was able to afford sufficient food and housing, this would also make for a better journey or settlement. The diaries in this collection represent a range of social class. Some of the diarists dined on lobster and champagne while others were forced to use buffalo dung as a source of cooking fuel.

Whatever the dreams or hopes of the women who journeyed west, their diaries certainly reveal the realities they encountered along the way. The discomforts of travel included a battering by the weather. Extreme temperatures, storms, rain, hail, and snow at times overpowered the protection a wagon provided. Pioneers often found themselves drenched for days, subsisting on provisions molding from the damp, and retiring to beds in the evening which provided no relief from the dampness, cold, or heat. There was always a struggle to maintain adequate provisions, including such basic necessities as

water and fuel. Once on the trip, it was difficult to obtain provisions, and if they were available it was at a high cost. One can assume that the lack of privacy would have been a source of discomfort in accomplishing daily necessities, but this is rarely mentioned in any of the journals.

But perhaps the most overwhelming challenge of all was the constant struggle with disease and the toll it took, evidenced by the fresh graves so often noted in the diaries. The majority of diarists en route west made note of the number of graves and the type encountered. Lydia Rudd, Jane Gould Tourillot, and Agnes Stewart all noted grave diggings. But perhaps one of the most startling descriptions comes from Agnes Stewart's diary:

Camped at a place last night on blue river where a woman has been buried that the wolves had dug her up her hair was there with a comb in it she had been buried too shallow it seems a dreadful fate but what is the difference we cannot feel when the spirit gone I would as soon not be buried at all as to be dug out of my grave.

(7)

It seemed the wolves outwitted all efforts the pioneers made to insure that the graves would not be disturbed.

The travelers and inhabitants of the west often complained of diseases and discomforts such as dysentary, ague (with its fever, chills, and weakness), and cholera. Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer made

it all the way to Oregon from Indiana only to watch in agony as her husband died from illness at the very end. The women suffered enormously from the loss of children, so common on the trip westward, and wrote about the many deaths caused by illness and accidents. The lack of means to cure illness, and the risks of traveling, such as being run over by a wagon or even getting lost, made the journey difficult for little ones. But there were many risks for the adults on the journey. Accidental shootings occurred. The risks and discomfort of labor and childbirth were also present on the road. It was not unusual for a woman to give birth one day and be back on the road the next; travelers felt that the longer a layover the more risk of running out of provisions, or of encountering Native Americans. Men drowned while trying to get livestock and wagons across rivers. Whether caused by illness or accident death was omnipresent in the lives of those traveling to or living in the west.

Encounters with Native Americans were often mentioned in the diaries. Usually, the situation was one where extremely poor Native Americans begged the pioneers for provisions. Mostly out of fear, the pioneers gave them some of an already inadequate supply. Many times the Native Americans assisted travelers in fording rivers either for money or simply out of kindness. They helped in getting livestock across rivers, or navigated canoes for travelers. But there were also serious incidences of dispute mentioned in the diaries. America E. Butler wrote:

The Indians are becoming very hostile in this valley they have killed one man and two oxen without cause or provocation at the present time they are hostile yet pretending friendship. . . . Another man killed one missing and one very badly wounded families are leaving their homes for safety. . . . so our Indian trouble has come to open warfare they have had a regular battle. . . . Our Indian troubles still continues one house burnt and other property destroyed Arms Soldiers and ammunition are expected from Yreka to day (351)

Definitely, several of the women sympathized with the plight of the Native American, understanding that although the government provided large parcels of reserved land, it was no compensation compared to inhabiting an entire continent. Agnes Stewart noted that while on a walk she could see Indian territory and realized how small it was compared to the vast continent "once all their own." Kate Cruickshank Dunlap also seemed to regret how westward expansion had invaded Native Americans:

. . . my thoughts were carried back to the dusky race, which, a short time ago, in this very spot, erected their 'wigwams,' whose council fires have died out and they are being driven to the remotest corner of the continent. (B-6)

Thus, the diarists documented the complex exchanges between the

Native Americans and pioneers.

Women had a variety of reasons for writing diaries. Those journeying west often intended to share their diaries with friends and relatives back home, who would be eager to hear about the adventure. Kate Dunlap made it clear in her diary that she wanted to send friends back home a description of the new surroundings. She also expressed a desire to inform others who might want to make the same journey; therefore she wanted her account to be accurate. Dunlap provided detailed topographic descriptions, and even gave instructions about mining techniques. Elizabeth Geer also stated that her primary interest in keeping her diary was to share her experiences with friends back home:

Dear Friends -- By your request I have endeavored to keep a record of our journey from "the States" to Oregon, though it is poorly done, owing to my having a young babe and besides a large family to do for . . . (153)

One can see that the diarists had to overcome quite a few obstacles in order to keep their journals. Geer would have to get up after everyone else was settled down for the night and write by candle light. After perhaps as many as eighteen hours of traveling by wagon this in itself seems quite an accomplishment.

While some diarists considered their writing a way to share knowledge and experience with prospective travelers, others seemed aware of the diaries' value as a means of recording family history and

hoped that children and grandchildren would enjoy stories of their ancestry. Lydia Milner Waters began her reminiscence, written in 1877, with a message to her son Cochran:

My dear Cochran . . . I wish you would keep this account of our crossing the plains until the year 1900. It will then be amusing to read of things many years past and forgotten. In these dull times it has taken me back to some pleasant scenes. You will always remember riding the black horses. . . . (59)

Some diarists knew that they were embarking on a special adventure and that they were breaking new ground, and were sharing this information with a sense of pride. Both Abbie Bright and Lydia Waters noted their uniqueness as women on the trail. Bright travelled alone to visit her brother in Indiana and then to stake her own claim in Kansas. She recounted being teased about being a single woman traveling west, and that others considered her a "curiosity." Waters was proud of her new skills she learned on the road, such as driving an ox team. She overheard an officer and his wife amused at the sight of a woman engaged in such a traditionally male activity. Waters was also aware that she had most likely been the first white woman to have been at some of the places she was traveling through. Many of the writers desired a record of these new activities which were a result of their redefined roles as westering women.

Women in the 1800's considered keeping a diary a discipline and

a way to improve the mind. Mollie Dorsey Sanford claimed her writing was a source of pleasure and mental stimulation. Some of the diarists addressed their books as "friend" and looked upon them as a confidant. They could thus express their views and feelings without reproach and without guilt; Sanford wrote, "I can say with perfect impunity, anything about anybody I please. . ." (18). Many of the writers even had terms of endearment for their diaries. Emily French referred to her diary as her "dear little book." However, although they considered their diaries as a friends, extremely personal details were not necessarily revealed, perhaps because it was so common to share the diaries with family and friends and because of the lack of privacy on the road and at home.

Some common topics and emotions were written about in many of the diaries. For many women, what started out as an adventure often turned into an almost unbearable situation. They wrote of extreme loneliness, of being torn away from family and friends back home. Kate Dunlap expressed feelings of sorrow and loneliness in her diary. Agnes Stewart wrote of her yearning to see her best friend Martha:

O Martha my heart yearns for thee my only friend and
 would I could see you would not ask more for many a day
 . . . O my friend thou art dear to me yet my heart turns to
 thee I will never forget thee the earliest friend for we
 often cling to an idea which only brings us pain . . . I

know I can never enjoy the blessed privilege of
communing with thee . . . but stop this painful reverie I
cannot bear it. (5)

Many diarists wrote about the pain of moving away from family and friends, and possibly never seeing them again.

When economics necessitated the husbands' frequent absence, the women found themselves utterly alone, responsible for the home and children, often without neighbors or other women around. Julia Gage Carpenter described herself as "dreadfully forlorn." She hated being alone so much and wrote about missing her family back home. These feelings were so pervasive that her life seemed "unendurable." Elisabeth Koren also wrote of extreme loneliness when her husband would have to be away fulfilling his pastoral duties. But she would not let herself dwell on these feelings; instead she would turn to nature for solace and "go outside for a breath of fresh air." In spite of difficult circumstances for the most part, the pioneers were very demanding of themselves, physically and emotionally. They often wrote of not letting themselves dwell on their difficulties or loneliness. Koren would remind herself of her and her husband's mission in writing about the services he would provide "these people who so long have lacked a pastor."

The women were extremely devoted to God and their families. Martha Farnsworth demonstrated her devotion in the way she cared for her abusive and alcoholic husband, John Shaw. She worked

tirelessly to provide their income; in one job she walked a total of five miles a day. She wrote very clearly that caring for her husband was her "duty as a Christian." The pioneer women who wrote the diaries found in this collection were unwavering in their goodness to family, friends, and even complete strangers. Anyone ill or in need certainly was not left to suffer alone. Emily French, in the midst of her own struggle to survive, took care of and supported her disabled sister Annis. French would sit with a sick neighbor through the night. Like so many of the women of her time, she was extremely committed to holding the family together and keeping everyone warm, fed, and clothed, no matter what it took. Even strangers were admitted into the homes for an overnight stay, sometimes longer. Occasionally they paid their hosts, but often guests were welcomed without financial compensation.

Incredibly, despite hardship, the diarists almost without fail wrote about the beauty around them. New species of fauna and flora were often noted. Kate Dunlap observed a type of lizard or chameleon she had never seen before; May Bethia Roberts saw her first crocus flower at the new homestead. The women wrote descriptive passages recalling a beautiful sunset or fields full of wildflowers. Elisabeth Koren eloquently described seascapes and sunsets, and revealed that she was "filled with joy" at their beauty. Agnes Stewart also noted the beautiful scenery along the way:

I am seated on a hill above our camp the south fork of

the platte runs before me . . . the hills and valleys are covered with flowers blue yellow white lilac everything looks beautiful as the Almighty intended it to be the little island looks like orchards I did not expect even so much variety as we have on the route. (11)

Many took comfort in the beauty of nature. These westering diarists wrote quite eloquently, and it is not surprising to learn that some of the women had dreams of writing professionally; a few actually did publish.

A study of the diaries illumines the value of writing itself.

The women wrote for personal enjoyment and enrichment. They hoped to share knowledge and experience. The level of writing or educational background of the author does not seem significant to the value or poignancy of a given diary. One can gain an understanding of how women and men of the 1800's and early 1900's felt and lived. The diaries are a first-hand look at history: not an interpretation, but an actual document of first-hand experience. One reads the reactions and involvement of women in such important events and movements as the suffrage movment, the Civil War, and the conflicts between settlers and Native Americans. The diarists mention important events of their day, such as the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. For the most part the women seem extremely interested in the politics of their day, both secular and religious. The reality of the westward expansion displayed in the diaries may provide quite a contrast to the

idealized notion many of us have. In fact, an inquiry into the government's maneuvering to ensure settlement of the western regions would provide an interesting study in itself. Settlers were enticed by low cost land, but it seems they were not made completely aware of the difficulties which would most likely be encountered.

Certainly, there is enormous value in studying the writings of these remarkable woman. The diaries provide insight into the character of their authors. These pioneer women seem strong and capable, with incredible devotion to family and friends. Elinore Pruitt Stewart provides an example of how brave the women were. She set out on her own, with a child to look after, seeking a better life for the two of them. Abbie Bright also staked her own claim, indicating the bravery and independence westering women were capable of. One can read about the hope and determination of the pioneers. Julia Gage Carpenter and Elisabeth Koren set out, new brides, to start married lives in "foreign" lands, the Carpenters in North Dakota and the Korens in Iowa. One would have to describe the sheer will to survive, demonstrated by women such as Emily French and Elizabeth Dixon Geer Smith, as inspirational. The women exhibited great compassion by the way they treated people around them, and sympathy by their observations of the unjust treatment of Native Americans. These westering women, battered by weather, and confronted with uncertainty about the future, still noted the beauty of the world around them. The pioneer women in this collection demanded little of

those around them, but demanded limitless courage and generosity of themselves.

Bright, Abbie. "Roughing It on Her Kansas Claim: The Diary of Abbie

Bright, 1870-1871." Ed. Joseph W. Snell. *The Kansas Historical*

Quarterly 37.3 (Autumn 1971): 233-268, (Winter 1971): 394-428.

Abbie Bright's journey westward took place in two stages. First she spent some months at her brother Hiram's home, with his family in Indiana. She contentedly taught school during this time, and wrote that she had "eleven scholars, will have more when the corn is out of the way" (10/21/70, 239). Abbie described in entertaining detail everyday events, activities, and chores. The family had help so she was not burdened with the heaviest of household chores. She and other family members gathered wild plums, made apple butter and cider, and enjoyed riding on the open prairie. Abbie described Christmas spent with her brothers and their children: "a plenty of apples, nuts, pop corn, homemade candy and cider. I had a pleasant time" (12/28/70, 241). There were parties and dances for entertainment, and Abbie would go to hear church speakers whenever possible. She also enjoyed reading and letter writing. The days passed quickly for her, and at the end of her teaching and stay at her brother's home she hoped to go farther west before heading back home to Pennsylvania. Another brother, Philip, was in Kansas and she arranged to visit him.

Philip encouraged her to take up land. Government land was parceled out

in 160 acre plots, and after living or improving on it for six months, one could purchase it for \$1.25 per acre. Abbie wrote about the stage coach portion of her journey: "They changed horses every ten or twelve miles, and at times drove like fury. Sometimes your head would bang against the top; then those riding out side, would call, 'How's that for high.' A very common expression out here" (5/1/71, 251). Abbie was very aware of her frontier adventure as being a special one and of herself as being a unique pioneer. She wrote:

I have not seen a single unmarried woman since I am here. There are seven married women in this neighborhood and I will not likely see another all Summer. They all teas me*, and say I am a curiosity to the many bachelors around here. (5/12/71, 261)

She wrote of working in the garden, sewing, washing, and ironing. Baking was a challenge. Because of her small stove she could only bake one loaf of bread at a time. About getting settled in the cabin where she stayed until the dug out on her claim was finished, Abbie wrote:

I am baking yeast bread, with dry yeast Katura [Rhoda] gave me. Will write while it bakes. When finished I will go down to the cabin, and hope to stay. Would have gone yesterday, but my bed tick, was not yet filled with wild hay. This is frontier life for

* Authentic spelling and punctuation have been maintained throughout quoted

material.

sure. The bread is baked, and "a perfect success." I am jubilant over it, wont Philip enjoy it. (5/27/71, 262)

Abbie confided to her diary that "The people here think I am a bunch of contentment, because I dont get homesick , and fuss. If I do not feel well or am blue, I dont tell every Tom, Dick, or Harry, that is all, except that I possess a big bump of adaptability" (7/6/71, 395). She also wrote that her main purpose for going west "was a desire to cross the Mississippi and a love of traveling" (7/8/71, 395). Despite the severe symptoms of ague, she continued to do as much as possible, until finally the attacks were less frequent.

Abbie Bright's diary is a wealth of information about pioneer life. She wrote in great detail about the foods, utensils, modes of travel, and the cabin and dugout. The editor provides an informative introduction and brief epilogue. 71 pages.

Butler, America E. "Mrs. Butler's 1853 Diary of Rogue River Valley." Eds.

Oscar Osburn Winther and Rose Dodge Galey. *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 41.4 (1940): 337-366.

America Butler's diary is a nearly daily log of the weather, chores, and

physical health. It begins on April 19, 1852, when the Butlers left Illinois to begin their westward journey. Rain seemed to be an overwhelming factor on the journey as well as when the family settled in Oregon territory.

Description of the journey itself is a brief account of pleasure and tragedy.

Mrs. Butler detailed some of the lovely meadows and new wildflowers the group encountered. But they also had their share of illness and injury along the way, such as when a young child was run over by a wagon, not an uncommon occurrence.

In December '52 the Butler's were facing a harsh winter in Yreka, California. Provisions were low and supplies were difficult to obtain and expensive. Mrs. Butler kept account of the mule "trains" which came bringing supplies to the community.

The diary continues in Rogue River Valley, Oregon, where Mrs. Butler wrote about the family's daily struggle to raise vegetables and keep up with household chores. She detested chores: "To day Oh! horrors how shall I express it; is the dreded washing day" (6/4/53, 346). She often refers to the "dreded day" and her "domestick duties." She made it quite clear that she considered these duties as a "dull monotonous roteen of business as usual" (12/2/53, 365). She also confided that she "never did like to cook" (11/11/53, 363). In fact she would much rather read a novel, which she was

caught at by a neighbor: "Mrs Miller comes in about 10 O clock finds my breakfast dishes on the table and me reading a novel poor business I think" (5/28/53, 345).

Mrs. Butler also wrote about the conflict the settlers in the area experienced with the Indians. A daily account of those killed and other ongoing incidences were given. The editor informs us that the period from 1850 to 1856 is considered "the period of the Rogue River Indian War" (footnote 12, 351).

The diary ends abruptly on New Year's Day, 1854. 29 pages.

Carpenter, Julia Gage. "Prairie Croquet: Diary of Julia Gage Carpenter, 1882-1904." *To All Inquiring Friends: Letters, Diaries and Essays in North Dakota, 1880-1910*. Compiled by Elizabeth Hampsten. Grand Forks, North Dakota: University of North Dakota, 1980.

Julia Gage Carpenter provides a vivid description of the extreme discomforts she and her husband Frank endured during and after their trip to their preemption claim in LaMoure County, Dakota Territory. The hoards of mosquitos, the scorching heat, gigantic hail, and mice all contributed to their discomforts. Julia wrote, "Every few minutes he [Frank] would jump out of the wagon, slapping the mosquitoes off from the mules, whose sides were so

covered with them that their color could not have been told" (7/2/82, 203).

Nevertheless, Julia "was quite happy" to wake up the first morning on their claim to see her new "home-house, 12 x 12." Beyond these extraordinary challenges to a new bride, Julia humorously recounted her challenge to make the proper biscuit, writing that "they were more like bullets than anything I ever ate" (7/4/82, 204).

But all of this must have seemed more manageable than the extreme loneliness and homesickness she experienced. When her husband would leave for business purposes, Julia confided to her diary that she was "Dreadfully, dreadfully forlorn. Can't stand being alone so much" (4/14/84, 223). Despite her frequent and lengthy visits back home to New York, she wrote "oh how I miss mother. I am so low spirited that life seems unendurable. I long to live near my only people" (7/13/85, 233). She wrote this at a time of illness. Physical health was also a challenge. Julia lamented the prolonged illness of their third child, who finally died at eight months. She detailed the attempted cures and his burial preparations and clothes.

Besides describing the physical and emotional challenges, Julia also kept exhaustive lists of gifts given at Christmas and other holidays, of meals prepared for family, friends, and occasional paying travelers. 53 pages.

Chase, Josephine Streeper. "The Josephine Diaries: Glimpses of the Life of Josephine Streeper Chase, 1881-94." Ed. Fae Decker Dix. *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46.2 (1978): 167-183.

Towards the end of her days, Josephine Streeper Chase described her cares as "Prodigious." Death overwhelmingly invades the pages of her diary. She experienced four stillbirths and she lost her four year old "dear little girlie" named Clarissa, and a nineteen year old son, David. Josephine wrenchingly described her pain and sadness at the loss of her children and lovingly recounted the burial preparations. About David's she wrote:

I feel to mourn greatly I miss him so . . . We all spend the day in lamentation. I feel feeble & sorry But every thing looks pleasant The flowers at Davids head & and feet take the gloom away [. . .] Katy is gone to have Sis Bashabe [Bathsheba] Smith make Davids robe shoes & cap [. . .] Pa & John keep the ice refreshed around David The home is quiet & pleasant And i sit & watch by David & think of him & tell him & the Lord how i feel & callers come & go. (10/26 and 27/91, 181)

Even the children learned to make burial preparations. Josephine wrote that she taught them "how to arrange Some flowers for Sister Tingyes [Tingeyes] little son he is to be burried . . ." (6/25/81, 176). She also lost a grandchild

and wrote "poor Fan feels dreadful, But the Lord giveth & he taketh away all our pets when he wants them. . ." (12/13/90, 179). Sometimes death was simply inserted among the rest of the day's events: "Pa has sold this fall heard to day Sis Nancy Clark is dead. . . Frank & Dave hauled manure all day & did chores. . ." (11/14/88, 176). But in her unwavering faith and strength of spirit, Josephine accepted these as acts of God, and simply prayed for support from Him.

Aside from the emotional challenge of the struggle to survive, there was the ever-present daily work which Josephine also did tirelessly. She detailed moments when all were involved in their chores:

I mixed Bred & set to rise got dinner had Elija Churn Min
 printed it I watered flowers fed the Bird Skimed the milk &
 washed & scalded the usual amount of milk pans & cream can . . .
 John is harrowing Elija Shilling [shelling] corn all morning
 David is watering new orchard & Strawberry plants
 (5/11/91, 181)

The best times seemed to be when family members were engaged in their daily work and she was surrounded by them.

Josephine was interested in church and secular politics going on around her and wrote about her readings of the religious newspapers. She also read

suffrage materials. Josephine was keenly aware of the disparity between her husband's lot in life and her own writing that "Pa & all men folks can go to bed at ten & rest & sit & read all evening But woman poor woman must iron Sew Bake dust tend Babies. . ." (12/11/90, 179). In the same vein she noted ". . . Brother Chase never tells a boy to mind a woman & i feel indignant" (5/19/90, 178).

Josephine Streeper Chase left in her diary a rich source of information about what daily family life was for a Mormon pioneer wife living in Utah in the late 1800's. Fae Decker Dix gives substantial background in the introduction to the diary. 17 pages.

Dunlap, Kate Cruickshank. *The Montana Gold Rush Diary of Kate Dunlap*. Ed. S. Lyman Tyler. Denver, Colorado: Old West Publishing Company, 1969.

Kate Dunlap's diary could most accurately be called a "travelogue." This diary's main purpose was to send friends back home a description of the surroundings encountered, to advise those who might wish to attempt a similar venture, and to provide an accurate account of the journey itself. Kate routinely described her surroundings detailing the wildflowers enjoyed.

She also pointed out previously unknown animal life such as "a species of lizard or cameleon . . . hopping about at every step" (6/9, B-16). Topographic description was also provided. Instruction about mining techniques were given at the end of the diary.

Kate Dunlap experienced the numerous difficulties of a westward journey, but responded in some unexpected ways. Although Indians were a real threat at times, Kate showed unusual sympathy for their plight:

As I gazed on the busy throng below, my thoughts were carried back to the dusky race, which, a short time ago, in this very spot, erected their 'wigwams,' whose council fires have died out and they are being driven to the remotest corner of the continent. (5/18, B-6)

She also felt remorse about the lives, especially of the children, lost on the lonely trails.

Kate Dunlap barely made mention of the common discomforts of inconvenient cooking conditions, mosquitos, extreme weather, and difficult roads and river crossings. She mentioned these almost in passing. Perhaps this is in part because of good preparation and forethought assisted by J. L. Campbell's guide to *Idaho: six months in the new gold diggings. The emigrant's guide overland* . Ironically, it was the very end of the journey that

Kate found the most challenging. Discouraged by bad news brought by those leaving the mines, some members of the traveling party headed back home.

Here we find Kate's first mention of despair:

Oh my dear friends you cannot appreciate our feelings of sorrow and loneliness, so I'll not bother you with an account -- another 24 miles of desert without water & grass lies before us. (7/25 B-40)

Through all of the challenges of the journey, Kate Dunlap remained optimistic about their future prospects in an unknown land. She displayed the strength and resourcefulness required of westward women. This journey was initiated in Keokuk, Iowa. The diary is from the first available entry of May 15, 1864, to August 16, 1864. 43 pages.

Farnsworth, Martha. *Plains Woman; The Diary of Martha Farnsworth, 1882-1922*. Ed. Marlene Springer and Haskell Springer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

From a typical teenager obsessed with boys, Martha Farnsworth developed into a strong woman capable of overcoming endless obstacles and tragedies. Her daily pursuit of being a good Christian woman was apparent in the way she cared for her first husband John Shaw, an abusive alcoholic:

To work at 6 A.M. Home again at 2 P.M. back to work at 4 P.M. and home at 7 o'clock for the night. 17 blocks to the St. Angelo walked four times a day, is 68 blocks, or more than five miles a day, beside my work at home and the the St. Angelo, *all for a man who gives me many curses and very few smiles. I give him my heart's sincerest prayers. In Colorado, I could have the P.O. with salary for a good living and be with my loved ones; instead I am here doing this, not for love, but because I am trying to live aright and believe it my duty as a Christian. I will not leave a thing undone.* (111)

After three miscarriages, Martha does have her "wee girlie," only to lose her at five months.

After John's death, Martha did have a happy marriage with Fred Farnsworth. She also partially filled her childless void by helping to care for relatives' children and even those children unrelated to her who needed a home. She also spent many years as a committed Sunday school teacher and was virtually adopted by her class of "boys."

Martha's political involvement later in her life also provided some insight into the suffrage movement.

Martha's diary is from 1882 to 1922 and is largely set in Kansas. 322

pages.

French, Emily. *Emily: The Diary of a Hard-Worked Woman*. Ed. Janet

Lecompte. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

Emily French referred to herself as a "hard-worked woman," and rightly so. In her diary of 1890, Emily recorded almost daily her chores, business dealings, and constant struggle for survival. A divorced woman, the entire burden of making enough money for herself and her children fell on her. At times she was separated from them, despite the anguish this caused her, for the sake of their education and so that she could earn some meager income and take care of her disabled sister, Annis. Emily displayed the religious and family commitment so unwavering in women of her time.

Emily earned her income mainly from washing and other household chores. She was happier the more work she did get because getting enough work was a struggle in itself. The following is a sampling of the chores she sometimes did for a meager sum but also had to do for herself and her sister: cooking and baking, scrubbing floors and general cleaning, washing dishes, washing clothes, washing windows, ironing, milking, churning, feeding horses and other animals, hauling hay, gathering wood, getting coal, building fires, cleaning stove pipe, carrying water, and sewing.

Despite her own difficult circumstances Emily's devotion to neighbor was also boundless. One can see this in her careful assistance of a woman:

Mrs. Sloans sick all the night, I up with her, the child a girl, still born at 8 this morning. She has a strange growth in her abdomen. . . . I put all away as best I could, got a place for the child, a nice smooth box. I had make her as comfortable as we could, the Dr promising to come in the morning. (1/9, 19)

One of Emily's dreams was to have her own home. She did achieve this temporarily. The editor explains that her home was probably lost to creditors. Emily longed to keep her family together, but only managed to do so sporadically. She traveled back and forth between Elbert and Denver, Colorado, in 1890, working and caring for her sister.

Emily French referred to her diary as the "dear little book," and at the onset wrote that "I seek not the applause of the people only that I may deserve the epitaph -- She hath done what she could," -- she did.

Janet Lecompte provides useful background information about Emily and her family history, also of the settlement of that area of Colorado. 164 pages.

Geer, Elizabeth Dixon Smith. "Diary, 1847." Transactions of The Oregon

Pioneer Association, 1907, 153-79.

Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer wrote her daily account of the journey from La Porte, Indiana, to Oregon by candle light, after her eight children were settled for the night. She recorded the miles made, the weather, and events of each day. It was a difficult trip fraught with illness and tragedy. The travelers experienced extreme temperatures, dust, dysentery, and inadequate shelter from the weather. They seemingly lived from day to day as Elizabeth frequently mentions how the family went to bed cold and hungry, often without water or cooking and heating fuel. When they were fortunate enough to come upon buffalo dung, this provided a source of fuel: "We see thousands of buffalo and have to use their dung for fuel. A man will gather a bushel in a minute; three bushels makes a good fire. We call the stuff 'buffalo chips' (6/23, 157). The men hunted buffalo and other game for food. Just keeping the cattle with the wagons was a challenge. While trying to retrieve cattle, two of the men died by drowning, both leaving large families behind. Another died by accidental shooting, also leaving a large family with six children.

The group often encountered Indians and felt compelled to share much needed provisions. They also paid Indians who assisted them in fording rivers. In the evenings they camped in a circle and posted guards.

Despite the hardships, the travelers still took a few moments in the

evening to be entertained by flute, violin, and dancing. Elizabeth wrote about how the travelers would amuse themselves in the beginning of journey. By the end of the journey the challenges were almost more than she could bear. Elizabeth's husband's illness and the difficult living conditions made her doubt that she could sustain much more. She wrote:

If I could tell you how we suffer you would not believe it. Our house, or rather a shed joined to a house, leaks all over. . . . I have dipped as much as six pails of water off of our dirt hearth in one night. Here I sit up, night after night, with my poor sick husband, all alone, and expecting him every day to die. . . . I have not undressed to lie down for six weeks. Besides all our sickness, I had a cross little babe to take care of. Indeed, I cannot tell you half. (1/31/48, 174)

Elizabeth's husband died on February 1. She explained that they could not leave their circumstances because "the road from here to the country is impassable in the winter, the distance being 12 miles, and because our cattle are yet very weak" (2/21/48, 175).

Elizabeth had written the diary with the purpose of relating the adventure to her friends back home. In a letter to her friends dated September 2, 1850, she wrote that she remarried and thankfully was in

pleasant circumstances on a farm in Oregon. 28 pages.

Holley, Mary Austin. *The Texas Diary, 1835-1838*. Ed. James P. Bryan. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965.

A startling contrast to the stories of struggle and hardship, Mary Austin Holley's diary provides a glimpse into the pleasures enjoyed by the upper class of the period. Although on portions of her journey she did encounter some of the discomforts of boat travel during the early 1800's, such as seasickness and inadequate shelter provided by the cabin, her account is one of a high degree of contentment and comfort. On a visit to friends she described

tables loaded with venison, oysters, & beef of the finest quality.

. . . They live sumptuously here. All foreign things at command.

Strong coffee at rising, breakfast, dinner & supper. London ale & champagne common drinks. (1/37, 53)

After reading this very descriptive and literary diary, it is not surprising to learn that Mary Austin Holly was a respected historian of the time and provided some of the earliest written accounts of Texas (Intro, 6). 220 pages.

Knight, Amelia Stewart. "Diary of Mrs. Amelia Stewart Knight." *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*. Ed. Gerda Lerner. New York: Schocken Books, 1982.

In this journal replete with accounts about weather conditions and loss of livestock, Amelia Stewart Knight demonstrated the ability to make do under almost any circumstances. This ability, so often seen among the diarists, is evident in her almost casual tone when describing the constant rain, hail, wind, and dust storms encountered on the trip. But their struggle through the seas of mud seemed one of the greatest challenges.

She described meeting other travelers along the road:

We hear there are 700 teams on the road ahead of us. . . . Hard times but they say misery loves company. We are not alone on these bare plains, it is covered with cattle and wagons. . . .

(5/12 and 5/16, 205)

Amelia also discussed how although the travelers feared Indians, they were immensely helpful:

At this place, however, there are Indians who swim the river from morning till night. There is many a drove of cattle that could not be got over without their help. By paying them a small sum, they will take a horse by the bridle or halter and swim

over with him. The rest of the horses all follow and by driving and hurrahing to the cattle they will almost always follow the horses. . . . (8/5, 211)

The editor notes that one must consider that when their journey began Amelia was in the first trimester of her pregnancy (amazingly any mention of pregnancy is usually a fact absent from the diaries), and that "one must imagine her in the final days of her pregnancy, stumbling over rocks and fallen trees, carrying her youngest child" (214).

At the end Amelia wrote that her husband exchanged "two yoke of oxen for a half section of land with one-half acre planted to potatoes and a small log cabin and lean-to with no windows. This was the journey's end" (9/17, 216). A journey from Monroe County, Iowa to Near Milwaukee, Oregon Territory, in 1853. 16 pages.

Koren, Elisabeth. *The Diary of Elisabeth Koren, 1853 - 1855*. Ed. and

Translator David T. Nelson. Northfield, Minnesota:

Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1955.

Elisabeth Koren's novelesque diary begins with her overseas voyage with her recently ordained husband, Ulrik Vilhelm Koren. The reader steps into Elisabeth's shoes experiencing the daily sights and adventures of a Norwegian

immigrant. Each detail of the voyage was vividly and entertainingly described. Not all would have weathered the frequent storms and raging seas quite so gracefully. She seemed to enjoy, even relish, nature's fury:

I have never seen the sea so rough as today; there were really mountains and valleys. It was interesting to watch. It is beautiful when the sun shines on the high wave crests until they become clear and transparent and take on a greenish color.

(10/13/53, 16)

Perhaps one of her greatest thrills on sea or land was the sunset: "The sun sank in marvelous splendor that evening. It was large and red without rays, and as it went down it formed beautiful landscapes among the golden and many-colored clouds" (9/20/53, 5). Elisabeth Koren's Romantic inclination is apparent throughout the diary. Nature provided emotional nourishment for her; indeed it even affected her state. When they finally reach their destination it is a great comfort to Elisabeth that the surroundings were so beautiful:

I went to the parsonage land today, too. It was very lovely there this evening. I stood still, was filled with joy at its beauty, and cannot say how happy I am to have my wish that there might be natural beauty where we are to live. (3/6/54, 182)

It seems that Elisabeth Koren found her greatest challenge not to be the difficult traveling conditions, or the cramped and meager living quarters the couple shared with families upon arrival to Iowa, but the extreme loneliness she experienced during her husband's frequent absences. Even through the solitude she tried to "keep a stiff upper lip," and not allow herself to be a victim of her own emotions: "Sometimes when I am thus alone, everything becomes so oppressive and close about me that I have to go outside for a breath of fresh air" (6/25/54, 251).

Elisabeth Koren never seemed to lose sight of their mission in this new world:

Last year I began the new year clad in bobbinet, dancing away with roses in my hair. This year I am sitting here with Vilhelm in this bare room, where tomorrow he is to conduct divine services for all these people who so long have lacked a pastor.

Still, this is best. (12/31/53, 114)

Her writing was a mission also. She regretted when she neglected her diary for a few days, feeling that those moments not recorded were lost forever:

. . . they have now vanished, and I must be content simply to write the main outlines of that period which I should like so much to keep with every possible detail. I certainly think that

the time when we first got some kind of a house and began our own housekeeping deserves to be remembered, does it not?

(6/12/54, 233)

She enjoyed sharing her diary with her husband and with others. An avid reader, Elisabeth kept a record of books read, Charles Dickens' work being amongst her favorites. In a conclusion to the diary written in 1914, upon the prospect of an initial printing, Elisabeth Koren revealed that

With gratitude I look back on my long life here in this land, and think of the many now dead who received us with so much friendliness and surrounded us with love all our lives. Possibly some of their descendants may be interested in reading these notes. (370)

In the introduction, David T. Nelson provides an excellent overview of the Norwegian immigration to the American midwest, and the Koren's family background. This diary is from September, 1853, to December, 1854, and ends with letters to her father in October, 1855. It covers the overseas voyage, the journey from New York to Washington Prarie, Iowa, and most of the first year in Iowa. 370 pages.

Roberts, May Bethia. "Diary of Miss May Bethia Roberts, 1884-1888." *To*

All Inquiring Friends: Letters, Diaries, and Essays in North Dakota, 1880-1910. Compiled by Elizabeth Hampsten. Grand Forks, North Dakota: University of North Dakota, 1980.

Through May Bethia Roberts' eyes, we get a charming glimpse into the life of an upper middle-class girl living in North Dakota during the late 1800's. May lived a nearly idyllic country life filled with farm chores, household duties, gathering fruits, visiting, church life, and school. She kept a running account of correspondence with family and friends. She saw her "first crocus flower" at the new homestead, and often mentioned the prairie flowers. The weather was also recorded almost daily. One of the family's few worries seemed to be an occasional mention of Indians. Her mother "kept the ax by the door as she is afraid of the Indians" (5/27/84, 254).

May wrote about her routine days at school. They were pleasant days of studying, visiting with friends, skating, and church going. She especially enjoyed parlor singing in the evenings. About her stay at school, May confided, "am not homesick & think I shall like it here ever so much" (10/21/88, 260). In her notes about the diary Elizabeth Hampsten provides information about May Bethia Roberts' life and family history. 9 pages.

Rudd, Lydia Allen. "Notes By The Wayside En Route To Oregon, 1852."

Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey. Ed. Gerda Lerner. New York: Schocken Books, 1982.

In this nutshell account of a journey westward, Lydia Allen Rudd recorded the devastating hardships encountered by most participants of the emigration. The endless assault by diseases such as dysentery, cholera, and measles, the constant barrage of wind, extreme heat or cold, rain, and the interminable struggle to adapt to inadequate provisions were described by Lydia. They also encountered daily grave diggings, which were naturally quite disturbing to the travelers. The mosquitos were also a constant source of aggravation. Despite the hardships, she did mention (as other diarists of the time) the extreme beauty of the wild landscape. The last portion of the diary describes how Indians escorted them by canoe.

Lydia Allen Rudd's diary was somewhat unique in her enthusiasm for the journey: "Still farther down lay the busy village of St Joseph [Missouri river] looking us a good bye and reminding us that we were leaving all signs of civilised life for the present. But with good courage and not one sigh of regret I mounted my pony" (5/6/52, 188). 10 pages.

Sanford, Mollie Dorsey. *Mollie: The Journal of Mollie Dorsey Sanford in*

Nebraska and Colorado Territories, 1857-1866. Lincoln and London:

University of Nebraska Press, 1976.

Mollie Dorsey Sanford shares a lifetime's worth of experience and growth in the short nine year span of her diary. Mollie started her journey westward at age eighteen with her family. They traveled by boat and train to Nebraska City, where they stayed while her father secured a parcel of land for the family of ten to settle on. Mollie considered much of this travel and initial settling time to be "a glorious holiday, a freedom from restraint." She also considered it to be a good experience for "the girls" who "were getting too fond of style, too unhappy not to have the necessary things to carry it out" (6/5/57, 33). She described an almost idyllic life full of romping in the woods, berry-picking, and swimming with her brothers and sisters. In fact the family became well known for their blissful life and were called the "Happy Family" by those in the area" (10/18/57, 58).

Unfortunately, her happy times took a turn towards difficulties which persisted for several years. Due to the family's financial hardship, it was often necessary for Mollie to live away from her beloved "Hazel Dell," as the family homestead was called. During these times away from home it seemed there was no job Mollie could not do well, from nurse, to seamstress, to cook at a mining camp, to teacher of children.

Mollie and her husband, Byron Sanford, were persuaded to seek better

opportunity in Denver. They went by wagon on a journey of several weeks, and proceeded to spend the next couple of years moving from place to place in the area. It always seemed that just as Mollie was getting settled into another place they were off again. Their constant resettling seemed even more urgent when set against the Civil War and By Sanford's duties in it. Even in 1865 when Mollie and Byron obtained their own ranch, good fortune was short-lived. Because of an invasion of grasshoppers, the Sanfords were forced to move again. Even this latest misfortune did not sway Mollie's strength of spirit and incredible optimism. By was able to get an appointment with the U. S. Mint in Denver, and Mollie wrote that

It seems a kind Providence has followed us, and when an extremity comes there is a way out of it. We have a house nearby. A family have taken the ranch. O! well! I trust all is for the best. We could not stay there and starve, and it was too late to plant again, but I loved my country home. (7/4/65, 192)

Mollie always seemed to have clear reasons for writing her diary: "I find my journal a great source of pleasure. I can say with perfect impunity, anything about anybody I please, but I must not be unkind or unjust to any one" (4/24/57, 18). But, she also wrote that she considered her writing to be a source of mental improvement (179). In the diary, Mollie confided that she

had at one time dreamt of a literary career:

I used to dream of being an author, of climbing the steeps of fame, but *Fate* has led me from the realms of Poesy and Thought into a sea of perplexities and cares. I have faith though that my life's work will be appointed, that my heavenly Father will show me my duties and my way. (10/5/58, 81)

Many of Mollie's poems are in her diary, although some have been omitted by the editor.

Mollie Dorsey Sanford's diary covers her journey from Indianapolis to Nebraska City, and her residences in Nebraska and Colorado, from March, 1857, to January, 1866. Donald F. Danker provides helpful information about the period in his introduction "Mollie's West." 197 pages.

Stewart, Agnes. "The Diary of Agnes Stewart, 1853. *The Lane County Pioneer-Historical Society*, 1959, 1-21.

Agnes Stewart kept a very personal and descriptive diary in a book given to her by a friend upon leaving Pennsylvania. She wrote of loneliness, of yearning to see her friend Martha, and homesickness. But like so many of the diarists journeying west, she also found pleasure in the beauty of nature:

camping beside a beautiful lake do not know the name of it

such a beautiful little valley the trees hang over our heads as if
 the giver of all things intended rest and peace for the weary
 traveler . . . I saw some rare specimens of wild flowers some of
 them more beautiful than I have seen cultivated in gardens.

(5/5 and 6, 9-10)

On one bluff rock, she saw "under a small projection. . . a hundred little birds
 nests built of moss and mud it looks pretty to see so many little creatures
 living so happy together" (6/14, 14). She wrote descriptive passages about
 the terrain encountered. Agnes also kept an account of the weather, how
 many miles were made in a days journey, and rivers forded. She noted the
 cost of the various ferries they used to get the wagons across, varying from
 \$2.00 to \$5.00 per wagon. She described the discomforts of travel such as
 extreme heat, storms, dust, mosquitos, and lack of water. She noted the first
 time her family ever used buffalo chips for cooking fuel and revealed that she
 would "rather have wood" (6/3, 8-9). Agnes also experienced moderate
 illness at times.

She recounted the graves passed, and their condition, which was somewhat
 shocking after the wolves had gotten to them:

we stopped at noon there grave dug up by the wolves saw a rib
 lying in the place lizzy and I carried stones and filled up the

hole again some person had done the same to it not long ago not liking to see the lifeless clay thrown about. (5/6, 10)

They also passed one grave yard with ten graves in it. Agnes' sympathetic nature extended to the plight of the Indians. She wrote

Sis Elizabeth and I takeing a walk today, and sitting down I can see the Indians across the river. the vast territory lie stretched before me and nothing but wide forests can be seen as far as the eye can reach, and yet it is small compared with the great continent, once all their own, but now the goverment allows them a portion to themselves as a great favour and taken as such, but this does not make it right. (4/10 1-2)

She only noted a couple of encounters with Indians on the journey.

Agnes turned twenty-one on the journey her family made from Pennsylvania to Oregon. No one remembered her birthday as they were busily making their way west to a new home. 21 pages.

Stewart, Elinore Pruit. *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1988.

For Elinore Pruit Stewart, homesteading was "The solution of all poverty's problems" (215). From being orphaned as a young girl and working

for others, she succeeded in her determination to have her own place. Even after marriage she remained unswayed in her goals: "I would not, for anything, allow Mr. Stewart to do anything toward improving my place, for I want the fun and the experience myself. And I want to be able to speak from experience when I tell others what they can do" (216). This collection of letters is dated from April, 1909, to November, 1913. It provides an inspirational account of the life of a woman homesteader in Wyoming. 282 pages.

Tourtillott, Jane Gould. "Touring From Mitchell, Iowa, To California, 1862." *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*. Ed. Gerda Lerner. New York: Schocken Books, 1982.

Because of the diverse nature of the entries, Jane Gould Tourtillott's diary of her journey is an interesting one. She describes the common occurrences of illness, injury, and death of children and adults in uncommon detail. Various types of graves were recorded. Indian attacks were also vividly and frighteningly described. A unique aspect of Jane's diary is her mention of diversions and entertainment the travelers enjoyed. She described dances, playing of the fiddle, target shooting, and even ball-playing. 12 pages.

Wanner, Louisa. "Louisa Wanner's Diary as Hotel Chamber Maid in Tintah, Minnesota." *To All Inquiring Friends: Letters, Diaries, and Essays in North Dakota 1880-1910*. Compiled by Elizabeth Hampsten. Grand Forks, North Dakota: University of North Dakota, 1980.

Louisa Wanner's brief diary was her daily journal of chores, visits with family and friends, and a few diversions. She recorded her activities in a brief and repetitive manner. Each day she was responsible for a variety of chores such as carrying water for the wash, washing and ironing, cooking, and occasionally waiting on tables which she did not enjoy, for there were "too many strange men around and I don't like to speak to them" (2/11/04, 280). She did have a bit of leisure time in which she enjoyed playing games, cards, popping popcorn, and skating. Louisa also wrote letters frequently to family and friends, especially Will, whom she later married. Elizabeth Hampsten gives some background about Louisa and Will and writes that they later homesteaded in western North Dakota. 9 pages.

Waters, Lydia Milner. "Diary, 1855." *Quarterly of The Society of California Pioneers* 6 (1929): 59-79.

Lydia Milner Waters' immigration started when as a child her missionary father was sent to Nova Scotia from England. But the account that she wrote

for the benefit of her son, Cochran, actually is of her family's emigration to California from Iowa. Lydia detailed the scenery, terrain, characters, and Indians encountered on the journey. She described how in the evenings

The wagons were always drawn up in a half circle, ox chains from the hind wheel of one to the front wheel of the next wagon, the tongue of the wagon resting on the wagon box before it. the formed an enclosure for the cattle at night, the guards being on the open side. The tents were then pitched by the wagons to which they belonged so as to be safe if there were a stampede of the cattle. (62)

She also noted that

Ten wagons had horses only, which made their owners our "aristocracy." They would not conform to the rules, would not stand guard, and made themselves very disagreeable. . . . Soon they found it too slow to travel in a train with oxen, and left us, expecting to gallop into California. (62)

The party did not seem as afflicted by disease as others in the same circumstances, but Lydia did remark on the constant challenge of fording rivers, braving storms, and traversing extensive areas of rough terrain. They had to last from water source to water source, often traveling late into the

night so that the cattle could drink.

Lydia made frequent mention of their encounters with Indians who often had to be assuaged with the traveler's provisions. They seemed to be constantly on the periphery of serious conflict between and with the Indians of the area. Lydia wrote about one such encounter:

A long way up the Sweetwater we fell in with a war party of the Sioux. They were in their war paint, rawhide shields, and other fixings. They were civil, and only wanted provisions, so every wagon contributed what they could spare. The men of the train made as great a display as they could clanking their firearms and walking by their wagons. (67)

Lydia also made note of assistance the Indians would give an occasional stray traveler.

All in all, Lydia seemed agreeable to this westward adventure. In fact, she wrote proudly of her new found skills learned on the trail:

I forgot to say I had learned to drive an ox team on the Platte, and my driving was admired by an Officer and his wife who were going with mail to Salt Lake City. I heard them laughing at the thought of a woman driving oxen. Maybe. (77)

Lydia had quite a sense of humor and related the story about how she climbed

a nearby peak and "tore off my petticoat and put it on a long cane and piled stones about it. Later, many miles away we could still see my flag. It is likely I was the first white woman who had ever been on that peak" (77). Indeed, she stated in her account "There were many things to laugh about" (79). The journey took six months. 21 pages.

Webber, Anna. "The Diary of Anna Webber: Early Day Teacher of Mitchell County." Ed. Lila Gravatt Scrimsher. *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 38.3 (1972): 320-337.

In May of 1881, having passed the teacher's certification exam, Anna Webber embarked on her first three month teaching appointment, in Mitchell County, Kansas. Anna kept a diary during this time. In it she wrote about her struggle to get even the most basic necessities such as chairs and a blackboard. As the teacher, Anna was also required to sweep the schoolhouse and at times scrub the floor in preparation for its use as the place of worship on Sundays. She wrote about her feelings of uncertainty about how she would like her new career and temporary home, but Anna found herself dreading the end of school and concerned about leaving her "scholars." She expressed a desire to study as well as teach and determined to write an essay daily. Later, this goal was modified to Tuesdays and Thursdays. She wrote that

essay writing would "improve my intellect and enlarge my small store of knowledge, if I take the right subject to write on" (5/23/81, 324). The editor explains that Anna's maternal grandfather had advised that "As a source of improvement, I would encourage you to write as much as you can" (324).

Anna wrote about her visits with friends, their walks together, and flowers she observed.

Anna Webber described her sadness at the end of the school term as a mixture of leaving her students, and even more painfully, of losing her mother thirteen years before. In the end she wrote "Goodby old Diary" (7/27/81, 337). The editor, a daughter of Anna Webber's, includes a brief introduction and epilogue. This diary takes place in 1881. 17 pages.

Conclusion

Thus, the foregoing is a chorus of unheard voices telling the story of the enormous contributions made by women during the westward expansion. Families survived in large part because of the women's creativity, devotion, and sheer will. They took care of the daily needs of feeding and clothing their families, took care of the ill, and showed unfailing devotion to God and their loved ones. In spite of the constant struggles, the writers disclose unexpected views which many would consider "ahead of their times," such as their compassion for the Native Americans who were also struggling to survive, and their awareness of the inequality of women. In contrast to the romanticized image portrayed by American westerns, this collection of diaries should make it acutely apparent that the painful reality of traveling to and settling the west was an experience vastly different, and with many more players, than the lone cowboy who conquered the "savage Indians."

The diaries demonstrate the immediate value of writing, as well as its long term significance. Writing was important to the diarists for various reasons, such as companionship and personal enjoyment. But without the diaries our understanding of history would be drastically diminished. If a

goal of examining and analyzing literature is to better understand human nature, its complexities, strengths, and weaknesses, then pioneer women diaries are a rich source.

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