

# Provenance, Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists

---

Volume 9  
Number 1 *Issue 1 and 2*

Article 9

---

January 1991

## Reviews, Critiques, and Annotations

Ann S. Ritter

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/provenance>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ritter, Ann S., "Reviews, Critiques, and Annotations," *Provenance, Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists* 9 no. 1 (1991).  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/provenance/vol9/iss1/9>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Provenance, Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu).

**Book Review**

*A Home-Concealed Woman: The Diaries of Magnolia Wynn LeGuin, 1901-1913.* Edited by Charles A. LeGuin. Foreword by Ursula K. LeGuin. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990. Bibliographical references. Pp. xxxii, 374; index; illustrated; ISBN 0-820-31236-3; \$24.95.

No war, depression or milestone of progress marks the first decade of this century. Events during those years happened largely in the lives of individuals, families, and communities. With few exceptions, those happenings are lost to us.

What a treasure then to glimpse a rural life centered around home and community. How confirming to share the thoughts and feelings of a woman of conscience, a self-described "home concealed woman." How revealing to find that, although circumstances and environment differ markedly, her central cares and concerns differ little from those of modern wives and mothers who live "close at home."

Magnolia Wynn LeGuin spent her life in Georgia's Piedmont near High Falls, in an area first known as Wynn's Mill, later as LeGuin's Mill. It was a landscape that offered her plenty of seasonal contrasts and opportunities to worship nature. The time in which she lived offered her less. She had few choices other than overlapping roles of daughter, sister, wife and mother—roles she accepted and learned to balance with grace.

Yet her need for reflection, her driving urge to capture her world through the written word are what set Magnolia apart as a woman. It is those needs which yield a comprehensive and careful record of her maturity.

Magnolia was a realist, a strong and independent thinker whose complex personality unfolds on the page as she bears children, grieves over the loss of parents, and keeps home and family moving forward.

Diary-keeping began in earnest for her in 1901, although she had made several earlier attempts at keeping a journal. Published entries contain a few passages from 1892 and 1899. These place Magnolia both chronologically and psychologically for the reader. A variety of ledgers, and account and memorandum books served as the physical diaries. Some of these had been used previously for farm records, and Magnolia simply wrote around and over the earlier copy. Six books in all cover the entries from 1901 to 1913. There are also two existing copybooks which contain recipes, poems and Bible verses.

The middle years of diary keeping seemed to be Magnolia's most critical, for entries are both longer and more numerous from 1902-1907. In the same period, she was most occupied with her duties as a wife, her children and her babies—she gave birth to four during the six years—and had precious little time to write. In one 1902 entry she notes, "I have had to write like fighting fire, in extreme haste--baby crying as hard as he could."

She speaks in 1903 of "a craving to read often, strong inclinations to write and lots to do." In 1906 she names

more than one hundred guests who visited her home in a single summer.

Magnolia in fact kept two diaries from January 1903 through February 1906. The second diary seems more reflective of her public face, of her participation in what took place around her. Original diary entries, meanwhile, were written in more direct language and seem to be reserved for her deeper feelings. Near the end of 1905, the distinctions in style blur, which would indicate an integration of Magnolia's public and private selves. She wrote exclusively in the second diary for the remainder of 1906, then abandoned it and returned to the original.

Her love of trees, flowers (both wild and cultivated) and fall weather is evident throughout the diaries. Yet her entries indicate a conflict between her own desires and her motherly concern for making a good home AND giving her children sufficient time and attention. (At the conclusion of the published entries are many of Magnolia's recipes for sweets and desserts, as well as preparations for home remedies.)

Later entries reveal a more serene Magnolia, one who gets out into the community more often and is easier on herself. In later years, she is occupied with her children's education, with her own reading and development, and with passing along her love of words. "Good literature," she records, "builds character—sorry reading tears it down, lays no foundation to make good men and women."

Her dedication took effect. Grandson Charles LeGuin, who wrote the introduction to the volume, is a university professor and husband of writer Ursula LeGuin, who wrote

the foreword. It is through LeGuin's foresight and connections that his grandmother's contribution to our literary heritage is preserved.

Ann S. Ritter

Decatur, Georgia