



Best of Covered Wagon Women: Emigrant Girls on the Overland Trails

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The diaries and letters of women on the overland trails in the mid- to late nineteenth century are treasured documents. These eleven selections drawn from the multivolume *Covered Wagon Women* series present the best first-person trail accounts penned by women in their teens who traveled west between 1846 and 1898. Ranging in age from eleven to nineteen, unmarried and without children of their own, these diarists had experiences different from those of older women who carried heavier responsibilities with them on the trail.

These letters and diaries reflect both the unique perspective of youthful optimism and the experiences common among all female emigrants. The young women write of friendship and family, trail hardships, and explorations such as visits to Indian gravesites. Some like Sallie Hester even write of enjoying the company of men, and many speculate about marriage prospects. Domestic roles did not define the girls' trail experience; only the four oldest in this collection recorded helping with chores. As they journey through Indian lands, these writers show that even their youth did not prevent them from holding notions of white racial superiority.

Two of the selections are newly published, having appeared only in limited-distribution collector's editions of the original series. For all readers captivated by the first *Best of Covered Wagon Women* collection, this new volume's focus on youthful travelers adds a fresh perspective to life on the trail.

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