

Covered Wagon Women: Diaries and Letters from the Western Trails, 1854–1860



ABOUT THE READING As did many who crossed the West in covered wagons, Martha Missouri Moore kept a diary of the journey. Along with several other families, she and her husband, James, left Missouri on May 2, 1860. In addition to their wagon, horses, and cattle, the Moores started the journey with 5,100 sheep, hoping to bring most of them to land that James had settled near Sacramento, California, on a previous trip. The following excerpt begins on July 30, several months into the trip.



As you read the passage, identify the things that seemed most important to the travelers. Also, take note of what surprises or most interests you in this excerpt.

Monday 30th The weather cold, crossed a spring branch soon after starting, come to the river some 10 miles after leaving camp crossed it and camped on a little creek after 5 P.M. plenty of wood, water & grass. Made 13 miles

Tuesday 31st Traveled up the creek we camped on until noon when it suddenly disappeared, passed a slight ascent over a rocky ridge and we were through the South Pass. Crossed Sandy whose foaming & dashing torrent was rushing to join its mad waters with those of the Pacific Camped on a little branch fine grass and good water.

August Wednesday 1st It rained during the night and the morning was damp & chill it continued showery all day. Come over mountains to Big Sandy where we nooned found a nice mess of strawberries. Passed a grove soon after starting, over a barren desolate country stopped at the first grass we saw some distance from the road no water.

Thursday 2nd Ice in the wash pan and great demand for shawls and over coats. Come 1 and 1/2 miles to Little Springs where we laid over until noon. Started on the 18 mile desert come 9 miles and found plenty of water & grass, sage for fuel to the left of the road.

Friday 3rd The weather cold enough for December over a desert country to the No Fork of Green River. Crossed it safely & nooned on the stream caught some fine fish out of its pearly depths. Drove 5 miles to the main river where we camped for the night. Made 14 miles.

Saturday 4th Crossed the main river with but little trouble. Nothing about the stream to excite terror though so many sad accidents have happened here. The water is so very clear & cold. Camped on Clover

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Creek 12 miles from Green River. Raining and wet all evening, another of our best steers died this evening. Mr. Moore was very unwell.

Sunday [August] 5th Came 9 miles to Big Spring Creek where we camped for the day it being Sunday. So unwell all day I could not enjoy anything found some strawberries Plenty of willow wood, water & grass.

Monday 6th Crossed a little creek soon after starting and come into the mountains at 9 A.M. Traveled up Beaver Creek some 2 or 3 miles where we nooned found plenty of gooseberries. Camped at the Block House built by the company that worked on the road . . . Made 13 miles.

Tuesday 7th Over mountains, down canons on heights that make one dizzy to look down such has been our road all day & tonight watchworn & weary we are camped in a valley where there are plenty of strawberries but not much else. Made 10 miles.

Wednesday 8th The heaviest kind of frost lay upon the ground . . . The road very much as it was yesterday . . . everyone is getting very tired. Camped on Smith's Fork at the head of the canon No grass plenty of wood & water.

Thursday 9th Waited in camp for lost horses. The Indians attacked us while there every cheek was blanched white as driven snow, and we were running everywhere to get out of the way. They shot Hunter one of the teamsters through the arm, thigh and ankle. Mrs. Dicus and I ran to the willows where we hid until Mr Moore sent us word he was starting the teams. We hastened away thankful that our lives have been spared, but the roads were miserable and to mend the matter Dawn upset my wagon. We stopped to put everything in which detained us one hour longer. Camped on Salt river at dusk. Mr. Moore stood guard all night.

Friday 10th Down Salt river to the trading post where we nooned. They gave us some fresh bear meat which was very good. Camped on Salt river everyone on the lookout for Indians Plenty of wood, water & grass

ANALYZING LITERATURE

1. **Critical Thinking: Finding Supporting Details** What concerns were most important for the Moores on this journey? Use passages from the text as evidence for your answer.

2. **Personal Reflection** What did you find surprising or most interesting in this excerpt? Why?
