

Personal
Narrative
of a
Woman Emigrant

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place. We camped in a house belonging to George W. Clark, a half mile out of the town. There was no possible prospect of getting to our destination located in an enemy's country. Ultimately my husband's headquarters were established at Fort Scott. The only person we knew, either man or woman, was our friend and neighbor, Mr. H. F. Sheldon, who rendered us great assistance on this perilous event. The war raged around this military post during the years of 1861 and 1862. I was often left alone with my two children, my husband being absent on official business as Indian Agent. Often while alone with my two children I found myself in the midst of the dangers of threatening invasions and attacks by rebel troops. Standing by a window in the fall of 1861 I saw the dash of rebel cavalry out on the adjacent hill for a hundred government mules, being herded on the prairie. This force was met by Captain Williams and Captain Stewart, the fighting parson, as he was called. This skirmish was in sight of the house, where I could see the clash of arms, the attacks and charges, to save the mules. The wounded came in with thumbs and fingers shot off and others wounded

in arms and legs. My husband had gone to attend court in Minneola, Franklin County, taking Lena (the daughter) to visit her girl friends, I alone with the boy, Aldamar, felt no fear and was not conscious of peril or harm from this new and strange entertainment. Much of my time during the fall of 1861 was spent at the military hospital with other ladies administering to the wants and sufferings of federal soldiers.

In October, 1861, Generals Price and Raines invaded Kansas below Fort Scott, on Drywood Creek. An indecisive battle was fought between the rebel forces and the Kansas troops under General Lane. My husband was gone (as usual) to Minneola, attending court. General Lane's forces retreated to Fort Scott and partially fortified the post, but fearing a night attack, General Lane ordered the removal of all families to Fort Lincoln, twelve miles in the rear of Fort Scott. Lieutenant Colonel Jewell was ordered to prepare faggots to burn the town on the approach of Generals Price and Raines' forces. The night was rainy, dark and gloomy. General Lane's headquarters were at a hotel nearby. In the midst of a drenching rain, about



THE AUTHOR, MRS. P. P. ELDER

my grandmother

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PREFACE

THERE have been numerous narratives written of the dangers and deprivations of men who emigrated to Kansas at an early day, but nowhere have the perils, sufferings and struggles of wives and mothers been published to the world.

This has induced one of the women who came to Kansas in 1858, and settled in Franklin County, Kansas, to place on paper some of the thrilling incidents of her early settlement in a new country forty-five years ago, and compare the history with those who have come here recently with plenty of means and luxurious surroundings.—
Author.

MRS. P. P. ELDER was born in Concord, Somerset County, State of Maine, August 11, 1824.

Her parents were Daniel Felker and Catharine Felker, who settled at an early day in the town and county aforesaid.

The subject of this narrative was married to P. P. Elder on the twenty-first day of May, 1845, and this couple moved onto a farm in New-Portland, in said State, on the day of their marriage. Then stoves for cooking were not in common use. They used open fireplaces, pots, kettles, pot-hooks and cranes in place of stoves during the first summer. After twelve years of married life, her husband started for Kansas in April, 1857, leaving her and two small children; Lena Elder, twelve years old, and a boy, Aldamar P. Elder, four years old, in care of friends and relatives, with a limited amount of means for her comfort and support.

The husband came to Franklin County, Kansas, in April, 1857. Took a claim and pre-empted the northeast quarter of section 11, township 18, range 19. Built a rude cabin, which was made warm for winter and cool for summer. Waited anxiously for

the coming of the author of this and her children. In July, 1858, I and my two children embarked on board of a steamer at the city of Bangor, Maine, on the Penobscot River, leaving my kind and anxious father standing on the wharf waving his farewell.

We landed in Boston next day, and bought tickets for Wyandotte, Kansas, arriving there without an accident or a mistake.

We boarded a Missouri River steamer at St. Louis. Wyandotte was the objective point, as designated by correspondence between husband and wife. There were few mails.

This long journey, with two young children and many trunks and boxes, required care and the greatest anxiety, determination and courage. I made no mistakes and had no mishaps until I met my husband at Wyandotte.

My husband lived in the country, with no mails oftener than once a week, and no postoffice nearer than Lawrence, thirty-five miles from his claim. My husband had therefore no knowledge of my departure from Maine or my arrival at Wyandotte until a man on foot arrived at Ohio City at twilight on the evening of July 10, 1858. The news was broken to the anxious ears of my husband by

this lonely traveler. After this young man had arranged at the hotel for supper and lodging, he enquired "if there was a man here by the name of Elder." Being quickly confronted by P. P. Elder, he told him "that he came up the Missouri River on a steamer with his wife and children." This welcome information, after a separation of nearly one and one-half years in a country two thousand miles away, caused a hustling about for a team to start by break of day for Wyandotte to convey us to our strange country home sixty miles away. The incidents, obstructions and disappointments incident to this journey are omitted. The meeting of the long-parted family was like the long-absent soldier returning from the war. After a stay of two days we boarded a steamer for Kansas City, located a few miles down the Missouri River.

There was no Kansas City then. We landed on the levee with our freight. We were terribly disappointed to learn the man Randal and team we had brought to transport us and our baggage to Ohio City had returned to his home, leaving us with no conveyance.

My husband left us and our bag-

gage on the levee and went in search of this man and his team. Went four miles to Westport and returned, but heard nothing of Randal or his team, whether murdered and his team stolen by "border ruffians," or whether he returned, leaving us stranded in a hostile country. Returning to the river, we found a generous freighter who had a poor team and an old rickety wagon full of flour and groceries, bound for Gardner, Kansas. He generously agreed to convey us and outfit if we could ride on top of his load, to which we agreed as an only alternative. The first station was old Shawnee Mission, in Johnson County.

The Mission was a large, commodious house occupied by one lonely family. We arrived in the midst of a violent rain storm about dark. We all turned in and slept in one bed, cold and wet without supper. Slept well; got no colds. The poor woman furnished a little breakfast and we moved on.

Camped the next night on Cedar Creek, east of Olathe. I and the children laid on the load under the canopy of heaven and the men on the ground. Had a scanty meal for supper and no dinner.

Roads were bad. No bridges or culverts over mud holes, and a poor, weak team. Next day we arrived at the comfortable home of the generous freighter about noon. There we camped and fared sumptuously until the old horses were fed and recruited up, and unloaded his freight at Gardner. We then resumed our journey for Ohio City under a palatial wagon cover, arriving in good order in sight of a rude cabin, built with hewed logs and a rough board floor.

This cabin had a roughly-built chimney, built without lime or sand, trowel or stone hammer, for there were none in that desolate country. The chimney was intended to carry off the smoke from the room below, but was built wrong end up. Our readers can imagine the disappointed feelings of a woman that had been reared and accustomed to a good comfortable and well-furnished home in Maine.

In this cabin there were two improvised bedsteads in each corner of the room; one table and a bench or two made from rough boards by husband with auger and ax, for his own accomodation, but not mine. This constituted the cabin furniture for nearly a year. Gradually we thrived

and made a living and some money. I preferred this condition to the long separation of our little family. We had but few wants, and they were easily supplied. We had no aristocracy to annoy and rival our efforts. All were on a level. We soon had better houses and furniture, cows and chickens, pigs and money.

Both years of 1858 and 1859 were very rainy. Myself and both children had chills and fevers, as all emigrants had in the new country in the early days.

During the winters of 1859, 1860 and 1861 my husband was a member of the Territorial Legislature. I, with the two children, stayed alone in the old cabin, where the nightly entertainment was the howling of "coyotes."

Lena, the daughter, and the boy, "Damar," led the cows a quarter of a mile to water every day. During all these long and dreary days and nights we had plenty to eat and wood to burn, but a woeful scarcity of water to either drink or cook with.

June 6, 1861, after that disastrous drouth of 1860, we started with our two children and little plunder, loaded on the team of H. F. Sheldon for the Quapaw Agency, my husband having

been appointed to the Neosho Agency as an agent of the Osage, Quapaw and other Indians, located in Southern Kansas.

This Agency was 140 miles away, southeast of where Baxter Springs now is, and east of Spring River. The avenues of information were so limited we had little information as to the impending dangers ahead. The rebellion between the States had broken out with all its furor. Fort Sumter had been fired on and demolished, old glory hauled down and furled. The people were aroused to desperation. General Seigle had encountered Generals Price and Raines, two rebel generals, near Carthage, Mo., with a large force of rebel cavalry. Overpowered by numbers, General Seigle fell back, using his two batteries with deadly effect on the enemy.

All the loyal population of Southwest Missouri, with their flocks and herds, teams, families and dogs, started in wild dismay for Kansas. We met the frightened mass of humanity at or near Mound City, Kansas. The horrid stories of the battle and hostility of the Missouri people had no terrors for us. We drove on to Fort Scott for want of a better