



Solomon Valley History

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The Diary Of Luna Warner On A Solomon Valley Homestead Near Downs, KS

In 1871 Luna Warner moved with her parents, Walter and Alice Warner, and brother, Louie, from Massachusetts to Kansas where they settled on land in the Solomon Valley near present Downs, land that is now part of Glen Elder Reservoir. Luna was 15 when they moved and kept a diary which is in the collections of the Kansas Historical Society. Portions of the diary were published in 1969 and excerpts are reprinted here as space permits in this and future issues. Luna lived her entire adult life on the homestead. She married Frank Lewis in 1881 and their children grew up on the family farm.

The Warners traveled to Kansas with 16 other emigrants, most of whom were relatives, who settled in the same area. They traveled by railroad to Solomon KS where they purchased a wagon and horses to find land to homestead in the Solomon Valley. Their relatives later moved to California.

Luna's family sold their Massachusetts property at auction before starting to Kansas. The following excerpts from her diary begin with their departure in February 1871.

The Diary (*omissions are "not" noted*)

Friday, February 24 - Papa went to West Brookfield to settle up his affairs. The rest of us worked just as hard as we could packing all day. We are to go to Gilbertville tomorrow to take the cars. It rained in the evening. Mama and I are to sleep at Mr. Snow's tonight. The rest sleep on the floor here.

Saturday, February 25 - Pleasant. We got up and went home, but went back to Mr. Snow's for dinner, then started for Gilbertville. Mr. Snow took our baggage and us on a large corn wagon. Mrs. Snow, Emma and Francis Newton came to Gilbertville to see us off. We started to load the cars before 5 o'clock and loaded until 9 or 10, then not even done in fact.

Sunday, February 26 - We got into New York City this morning. It was raining. We rode over to Staten Island on the boat, then to Uncle Henry's on the cars.

Monday, February 27 - Pleasant. Papa and the men and Louie went to New York City. Papa got a Remington revolver.

Tuesday, February 28 - In the morning we all started for New York bag and baggage. When we got there all the girls got into the horse cars and rode up to 8th Avenue. The girls got their pictures taken. Then we went back to the Astor House and stayed until night when [we] went over to Jersey City on the boat and took the cars for Kansas. We had a car to ourselves.

Wednesday, March 1 - I was sick of riding in the cars this morning. I vomited on my handkerchief. We stopped at Harrisburg three hours. We girls all took a walk. We crossed the river before noon, then rode nearly all day by the Juniata River and past the Blue Ridge mountains and through the Alleghenys. We passed through two tunnels - one a mile long.

Thursday, March 2 - Pleasant out of the cars but not inside them. It is so smoky and dusty. . . . I do not eat more than a spoonful of victuals a day, and that does not taste good. The cars stop quite often.
Friday, March 3-Every day is the same, only each is more tiresome than the last.

Saturday, March 4 - Uncle Ephraim and Gena [Luna's cousin] stopped at Junction City. We got to Solomon City about 7 a.m., washed up, and had breakfast. We had buffalo meat. We do not like it very well. Gena and Uncle Ephraim came at dark There are eight of us to sleep in one room. There are three beds in it.

Sunday, March 5 - The weather is just about perfect. We all took a long walk up the river this morning. Some people went to church this forenoon. We have been to see two or three dugouts.

Wednesday, March 8 - There was quite a severe snow storm this afternoon. It makes it very muddy.

Thursday, March 9 - This afternoon we came about three miles from Solomon and put up the tent by a creek. We built a campfire and made tea. Uncle Howard and Henry Everett each shot a rabbit. We are all to sleep on the ground. We went to a store in Solomon City and were weighed. I weighed 106 lbs.

Friday, March 10 - This morning we cooked the rabbits and some potatoes and had a nice dinner.

Saturday, March 11 - Cold and rainy. We loaded up, pulled down the tent and started up the valley. We ride on Uncle Eli's wagon on top of goods. There are so many of us that some have to walk all the time. We passed several prairie dog towns. We had a good supper.

Sunday, March 12 - We ate breakfast and loaded and started, came to a creek, and just as they were across the whiffle-tree broke, but they got a new one and went on. We came through Minneapolis. We camped on a creek. They put the tent up on trees. We are beginning to have good appetites and nothing to eat.

March 13 - Cold this morning. Mama, Velma and I started walking. We stopped at Delfoss [Delphos] and got warm. We stopped at 2 houses, bought some bread and eggs, ate our breakfast and waited for the wagon to come along. At dark we came through Asherville and stopped at Mr. Gates's log house and had supper. The women slept in the house and the men in the haystack.

To Be Continued