

10-28-1991

# Food and Females: The Taming of the Oregon Palate?

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## Recommended Citation

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<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.6079>

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Peggy Ann Lutz for the  
Master of Arts in History presented October 28, 1991.

Title: Food and Females,  
The Taming of the Oregon Palate?

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

  
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Food and Females, The Taming of the Oregon Palate? is a study of the variations in the preparation and consumption of food as reflected in the changes in the roles of women during the hundred years between the settlement of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver and 1920, which marks the beginning of modern times.

Most of the data obtained for this topic was in the form of personal testimonies or culinary records, which came

from nineteenth and early twentieth century diaries, journals, letters, and cookbooks. Some secondary sources were used, as well, primarily in the research on Fort Vancouver and on women's roles on the frontier.

Though, in modern times, women's roles moved away from the nineteenth century ideology of the cult of domesticity and toward a status of greater independence, the manner of preparing and eating food did not necessarily become more refined. The height of Oregon's culinary resplendence occurred at the time that the trans-continental railway reached Portland in 1883. This was a time when the "doctrine of the spheres" reigned supreme. As women played out their roles of moral teachers and domestic rulers within their separate spheres, food was at its best. Modern times didn't cultivate the Oregon palate, nor did it tame women.

FOOD AND FEMALES  
THE TAMING OF THE OREGON PALATE?

by  
PEGGY ANN LUTZ


A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS  
in  
HISTORY

Portland State University  
1991

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this paper came from my interest in the history of the foods eaten in Oregon during the approximate 100 years in which this region was settled (from the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company to modern times). It proved necessary to have an historical perspective through which this subject could be explored. Because of the close connection between food and women, it was a natural choice to use the changes in the roles women have played during this time as an anchor to gain historical insight on the subject of food. This paper is not an attempt to research women's history in Oregon. Rather, its goal is to gain an understanding of Oregon's historical foods: how they were grown, cooked, eaten, and recorded. The focus of this examination is on food and it is meant to bring forth a more defined picture of how people ate during the various stages of the settling of the Oregon Country.

Though much has been written about pioneer women's roles, my subject of the history of Oregonian's food is rather an obscure one. For that matter, little has been written about Western food. There is some mention of historical foods of the Pacific Northwest in Joseph R.

Conlin's Bacon, Beans, and Galantines, a story about nourishment as it was known in mining camps. Sam Arnold, a food historian from Colorado, has written several historical cookbooks: Frying Pans West and Eating Up the Santa Fe Trail. Arnold is an authority on foods of the Santa Fe Trail.

This thesis examines the foods of the Oregon Trail and its destination the Oregon Country, about which little has been written. John A. Hussey wrote about the food history of Fort Vancouver, in part, through many of the works he prepared for the National Park Service. His two accounts, "The Fort Vancouver Farm" and "Historic Furnishing Study of the Bakery, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Washington," were particularly helpful in writing this thesis. His extensive labors in beginning the research of the preparation and consumption of food of the earliest white settlers in the Oregon Country (the Hudson Bay Company), aided me in laying a foundation for the food history of Oregon. My purpose has been to further the exploration of Oregonian food by examining the foods prepared and eaten on the Oregon Trail, in early American settlement, and during the period that marks the transition to modern times in the region. Thus, a hundred years of Oregon's food history brings the reader to the point of the foods consumed in modern times and leaving her/him with the



question: "Was the Oregonian palate actually tamed by the end of World War I?"

## CHAPTER II

### FORT VANCOUVER (BRITISH SETTLEMENT) 1825-1860

The production of food proved to be the strong base from which the Columbia Headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company was to develop. From the very beginning, Governor George Simpson saw Fort Vancouver as producing an abundance of "grains, fruits, and vegetables" which were to supplement the diet of "fish, game and potatoes."<sup>1</sup> He envisioned producing enough of these agricultural products to export the surplus to such points as California, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Russian settlement in Alaska, as well as to provide for other company forts.<sup>2</sup>

Not only was the production of food important, but Fort Vancouver also gave great importance to the excellence of presentation in the consumption of food. There was an air of elegance about the depot in the form of gracious hospitality particularly during the tenure of Chief Factor John McLoughlin (1825-1846). Food was one of the principal

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<sup>1</sup>John A. Hussey, "Fort Vancouver Farm" National Park Service, Region 4, n.p., n.d.: 11-12, photocopied.

<sup>2</sup>John A. Hussey, "Historic Structure Report, Historic Data, Volume II, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Washington" National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Denver, Colorado, Denver Service Center, Historic Preservation Team, April, 1976, 335-37.

expressions of this hospitality. Food for the officers and gentlemen at Fort Vancouver was always bountiful, of high quality and served with the greatest hospitality, as is reflected in the records left by visitors to the depot during the years of its existence: 1825 to 1860. One such account was left by Thomas J. Farnham who described the meals he had at Fort Vancouver in 1843:

Course after course goes round, and the Governor fills to his guests and friends and each gentleman in turn vies with him in diffusing around the board a most generous allowances of viands, wines, and warm fellow feeling.<sup>3</sup>

This gracious hospitality was possible because of the extensive level of production that was the goal of the depot from its earliest conception.

Fort Vancouver was the first industrial center in the Pacific Northwest and among its leading commercial items were wheat and pickled salmon.<sup>4</sup> Besides producing food for export, Fort Vancouver also produced a bounty of food for local consumption. An increase in the total food production can be seen in comparing the early harvest of 1828 with that of 1836 and finally with the plentiful harvest of 1846. In 1828, McLoughlin wrote to the London directors that Fort

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<sup>3</sup>Thomas J. Farnham, Wagon Train Journal: Travels in the Great Western Prairies, The Anahuac & Rocky Mountains in the Oregon Territory (New York: Killey & Lossing, 1843), 98.

<sup>4</sup>John A. Hussey, The History of Fort Vancouver and its Physical Structure (Tacoma, Washington: Washington State Historical Society, 1957?), 1.

Vancouver had reaped 1300 bushels of wheat, 300 of peas, 1000 of barley, 100 of oats, and 400 of Indian corn, as well as the produce of an extensive garden. Provisions accordingly did not need to be sent from London that year.<sup>5</sup> Narcissa Whitman wrote of the agricultural production in her journal when she visited Fort Vancouver in 1836

They estimate their wheat crops at 4000 bushels this year peas the same oats and barley between fifteen and seventeen bushels each. The potatoes and turnip fields are large and fine. Their cattle are numerous, estimated at 1000 head in all their settlements. Also sheep and goats. But the sheep are of an inferior kind. We find also Hens, Turkeys, Pigeons but no geese.<sup>6</sup>

In 1846, the farm yielded 5000 bushels of wheat, 2000 of peas, 1500 of oats, 300 of barley and 6000 of potatoes.<sup>7</sup>

In this 18 year period, this growth marked an increase of 385% in wheat, a 667% in peas, a 1500% increase in oats, and a 70% decrease in barley. (There was not any specified number given for the amount of potatoes grown in the earlier years.)

Simpson foresaw that Fort Vancouver would excel in farming to the point that hunting would not be necessary as a means of supplying meat because the farm would provide

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<sup>5</sup>John A. Hussey, "The Fort Vancouver Farm" Internal use document for the National Park Service, Region 4, n.p., n.d., 23, photocopied.

<sup>6</sup>Narcissa Whitman, My Journal, ed. Lawrance Dodd (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1836), 52.

<sup>7</sup>John A. Hussey, "The Fort Vancouver Farm" Internal use document for the National Park Service, Region 4, n.p., n.d., 103, photocopied.

"more beef and pork than would be required by the whole department."<sup>8</sup> Along with the beef and pork, Simpson also envisioned providing enough fish, corn, and butter for export trade.

Chief Factor John McLoughlin proceeded to carry out Simpson's vision. In September 1826, McLoughlin asked London for ten barrels of salt for putting up forty or fifty barrels of salmon to be sent to Monterey as an experiment.<sup>9</sup> This experiment was just the beginning, and exporting did become an important enterprise for the fort. To help meet the increasing demand that was being placed on the depot, the Puget Sound Agricultural Company was established in 1839. Dr. McLoughlin was appointed to the position of manager of this new operation, which he was to fulfill along with his responsibilities as chief factor and manager of the Hudson's Bay Columbia Department.<sup>10</sup> The main items produced by this subsidiary were wool, wheat, hides and tallow.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>9</sup>John A. Hussey, The History of Fort Vancouver and its Physical Structure (Tacoma, Washington, Washington Historical Society, 1957?), 63.

<sup>10</sup>John A. Hussey, "The Fort Vancouver Farm" National Park Service, Region 4, n.p., n.d., 78, photocopied.

<sup>11</sup>John A. Hussey, "Historic Structure Report, Historic Data, Volume II, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Washington" National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Denver, Colorado, Denver Service Center, Historic Preservation Team, April, 1976, 362.

A large part of the increase in agricultural activity, at this time, came from an agreement the Hudson Bay Company made with the Russian American Company in which the mainland portion of the Alaskan coast from Cape Spencer to latitude 54'40 would be leased to the Hudson's Bay Company for ten years for agricultural purposes if the Company would agree to sell "wheat, wheat flour, peas, grits, hulled pot barley, salted beef, salted butter, and pork hams" to the Russians. Also in the agreement were pickles and dried apples, "but it wasn't known if they were produced at Fort Vancouver or imported from England."<sup>12</sup>

The garden at Fort Vancouver probably dated from 1825, for a report sent to the United States Secretary of War in 1830 by Jedediah Smith, the famous American fur trapper, said that there was an established garden and orchard at the Fort in 1828, the year that Smith was seeking refuge at the post after the Indian massacre of most of his party on the Umpqua River.<sup>13</sup> The following fruits were noted to have been grown at Fort Vancouver: "apples, peaches, grapes, pears, figs, oranges, lemons, citrons, quinces, pomegranate, cherries, plums, prunes, and nectarines."<sup>14</sup> Narcissa Whitman wrote in 1836 that there were "apples, peaches,

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<sup>12</sup>John A. Hussey, "The Fort Vancouver Farm" Internal use document for the National Park Service, Region 4, n.p., n.d., 78, photocopied.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 30.

grapes, pears, plums, figs, cucumbers, melons, beans, peas, beets, cabbage, tomatoes, and every kind of vegetable (sic), to (sic) numerous to be mentioned."<sup>15</sup>

There was a great bounty at Fort Vancouver and McLoughlin shared it with the Americans who came to the area. In her journal, Whitman expresses a deep sense of gratitude for the help McLoughlin gave them with the necessities for getting started in the wilderness. McLoughlin helped many American settlers in the years to follow the Whitman mission by giving them seeds, food, tools, and livestock.<sup>16</sup> He was indeed a good man, but kindness was not his only motive in supplying the Americans. These people actually posed a threat to the Hudson's Bay Company in that they were encroaching on the Company's territory. Nevertheless, McLoughlin wisely felt it would be better to get them started than to have them fail and, in turn, become dependent on the fort. Thus seeds, food and other goods were given to the Americans.<sup>17</sup>

Governor Simpson's early vision of Fort Vancouver becoming an agricultural exporting center had been fulfilled to such great measure that in an indirect way its very

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<sup>15</sup>Narcissa Whitman, My Journal, ed. Lawrance Dodd (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1836), 15.

<sup>16</sup>John A. Hussey, The History of Fort Vancouver and its Physical Structure (Tacoma, Washington: Washington Historical Society, 1957?), 2.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 82.

success helped destroy that very dream. The vast agricultural activities of the Columbia Department made a large impact on American settlers. The great success of the Hudson's Bay Company attracted Americans to the Oregon Country in such large numbers that eventually the Company was crowded out of the Pacific Northwest.

While the Hudson Bay Company was in existence, quantity and quality were the rule in the production of food at the depot. Likewise, was excellence found in its final stages of production and preparation. For example, the dairy was "modern" for its day, as can be seen in Narcissa Whitman's comments on the innovative appliance used for raising cream. She describes the use of an oblong pan with a hole in the center which had a long plug in it. After the cream had been allowed to rise to the top, the pan was placed over a pail and the plug let out to drain the milk from the bottom. She was impressed with this "improvement in the manner of raising cream."<sup>18</sup> Whitman also commented on the abundance of butter and cheese that was made at the dairy.

The fort was selling this butter by the mid 1830's, for Mrs. Jason Lee writes in her letters of purchasing it and other items at the fort:

I have made 12 pounds of butter a week since I have been here but our cows seemed to fail now. We cannot make soap here on account of not having fat and have been obliged to pay at the Fort 15

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<sup>18</sup>Narcissa Whitman, My Journal, ed. Lawrance Dodd (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1836), 53.



cts a pound, vinegar 12 shillings a gallon - the best loaf sugar for 15 ct a pound.<sup>19</sup>

Flour production was high at Fort Vancouver. Thomas J. Farnham commented on this production at the gristmill in his travel journal which was written for the United States government to be used in promoting settlement in the Pacific Northwest. Farnham says: "The gristmill is not idle. It must furnish breadstuff for the posts, and the Russian market in the northwest. And its deep music is heard daily and nightly half the year."<sup>20</sup>

Part of this flour was used at the bakery which produced bread and sea biscuit not only for the employees of Fort Vancouver, but also for other Hudson's Bay Company posts, and for ships as well. Samuel Parker noted in his journal:

There is a bakery here in which two or three men are in constant employment, which furnishes bread for daily use in the fort and also a large supply of sea biscuit for the shipping and trading stations along the North-West coast.<sup>21</sup>

The bakery's output was high, thus making the demands placed on this facility exceptional. Not only were they

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<sup>19</sup>Theresa Gay, The Life and Letters of Mrs. Jason Lee (Portland, Oregon: Metropolitan Press, 1936), 163.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas J. Farnham, Wagon Train Journal Travels in the Great Western Prairies, The Anahuac and Rocky Mountains in the Oregon Territory (New York: Killey & Lossing, 1843), 98.

<sup>21</sup>John A. Hussey, "Historic Furnishing Study of the Bakery Fort Vancouver National Historic Site Washington" Internal use document for the National Park Service, Region 4, n.p., n.d., 9, photocopied.

baking for export purposes, but there were the needs of their own employees that had to be filled. In 1845, there were 249 men in the outfit not including the officers and clerks.<sup>22</sup> In his 1838 reports, the chaplain, Herbert Beaver, wrote that the weekly ration for the ordinary workingman at the depot was three pounds of bread or potatoes.<sup>23</sup> Contrasted to this was an 1843 report, in a letter to Governor Simpson and the Committee, written by Dr. John McLoughlin. He stated that the daily ration for the men included one and a half pounds of biscuit except when potatoes were available; and they then received a bushel of them a week.<sup>24</sup> The daily supply of bread for the outfit, along with the sea biscuit for export, put a lot of pressure on the bakery. Hussey states, "The demands on the bakery exceeded the output both in quantity and quality."<sup>25</sup>

In the new bakery, erected in 1844, it took 3/16th of a cord of wood to heat the oven to bread baking temperature, which was about 550 degrees to 580 degrees.<sup>26</sup> The baker

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>23</sup>Herbert Beaver, Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-1838 Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, Oregon: Champeog Press, 1959), 78.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>25</sup>John A. Hussey, "Historic Furnishing Study of the Bakery Fort Vancouver National Historic Site Washington" Internal use document for the National Park Service, Region 4, n.p., n.d., 10, photocopied.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 32.

knew if the oven was hot enough by seeing if the bricks glowed with a white appearance and also by throwing a few pinches of flour on the oven hearth. The oven was the right temperature when the flour turned a light brown.<sup>27</sup> Another method for determining oven temperature was to place one's hand in the oven and try to hold it there for the count of twenty.<sup>28</sup>

While staying at the fort, Anna Maria Pittman, later to become Mrs. Jason Lee, wrote in her letters that there was "bread and butter" and that it was "all of their own make." In his "Historic Furnishing Study of the Bakery", John A. Hussey outlines the probable bread making process as it was done at Fort Vancouver in the early to mid-nineteenth century. First, a "stock yeast" was made from hops water, flour, and malt. This was beaten into a stiff batter and allowed to sit covered for twenty-four hours. Next, a "ferment yeast" was made. Here a thin batter was concocted from mashed potatoes, flour, water and the stock yeast. This was allowed to sit for four to twelve hours. Once the ferment yeast was finished, the actual bread making process could begin. This started with "setting the sponge." Here ferment yeast, warm water and flour were mixed to form a "sponge", which was a moderately stiff batter. After the sponge had risen and then started to fall it was ready for

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 33.

making dough. If the sponge was allowed to rise and fall two or three times, a sour bread occurred.

The next stage was called "breaking the sponge" in which salt water was added to the sponge. After thorough mixing, enough flour was blended in to make a soft dough. This was kneaded well. Then it was allowed to rise several times for several hours each time. Finally, it was baked in a hot oven. In nineteenth century Fort Vancouver, a 280 lb. sack of flour would have been used in making one batch of bread. This would have made eighty quatern loaves. A quatern loaf was four pounds and fifteen ounces each.<sup>29</sup>

The bread was prepared in the bakery, while the rest of the food was cooked in the kitchen. Though there must have been a kitchen prior to 1837-1838, it was not until these years that the first one was recorded. It was a small building, separate from the main building, except for a passage way that connected the two structures. Its dimensions were 60 by 24 feet.<sup>30</sup> In this kitchen, meals were prepared for those individuals living in the Chief Factor's House and for the "gentlemen" who took their meals in the mess hall of this building. Stewards also served meals to the other "gentlemen", those who were living in the Bachelor's Hall, but were not invited to the Chief Factor's

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 36-8.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 172.

table. There were also deliveries made to the patients in the hospital.

The foods that were prepared were English. During a visit to Fort Vancouver, John Minto wrote in his reminiscences, that the sound of the bell was "understood to be an invitation to a good English dinner."<sup>31</sup> In another account, he said that they were served "an excellent English dinner of roast beef and vegetables".<sup>32</sup>

This roast beef dinner took place in 1844 when McLoughlin was allowing beef to be served at the depot. The original herd numbered twenty seven in 1825 and it was McLoughlin's decision that none of the cattle should be slaughtered, excepting an occasional one to get rennet for cheese, until the herd had multiplied to a healthy number.<sup>33</sup> Governor Simpson totally supported McLoughlin in this endeavor and there was no beef at the table until 1836.

During this year, Narcissa Whitman was at the fort and she wrote of the foods consumed there. Her report emphasized the quality and variety of the foods eaten by the people at the Big House. For breakfast, Whitman had ". . .

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<sup>31</sup>John Minto, "What I know of Dr. McLoughlin and How I Know it," Oregon Historical Quarterly, vol.11. (June 1910): 189-90.

<sup>32</sup>John Minto, "Reminiscences of Experiences on the Oregon Trail in 1844", Oregon Historical Quarterly, vol.2. (September 1901): 235-36.

<sup>33</sup>John A. Hussey, The History of Fort Vancouver and its Physical Structure (Tacoma, Washington: Washington State Historical Society, 1957?), 53.

coffee or cocoa, salt salmon and roast duck, and potatoes." Continuing, she pointed out how elegant the service was with the change of plates: "When we have eaten our supply . . . our plates are changed and we made a finish on bread and butter." Whitman found dinner had an even greater variety. It started with a soup which shows the care taken in food preparation then. Whitman gives the recipe:

First we are always treated to a dish of soup, which is very good. Every kind of vegetable (sic) in use is taken and chopped (sic) fine and put into water with a little rice and boiled to a soup. The taumatoes (sic) are a promanant (sic) article. Usually some fowl meat duck or any kind, is cut fine and added if it has been roasted once it is just as good . . . they spiced to the taste.<sup>34</sup>

Another visitor, George B. Roberts, commented on the elegance of the food and table settings at Fort Vancouver: "We often had a beautiful table in those days and how often I've heard the Dr. say 'it's all produce of the country, gentlemen.'"<sup>35</sup>

Thomas J. Farnham left another very good account of the elaborate repasts partaken in at the mess hall which was in the Big House. He spoke of the large variety of foods served as well as the exquisite table settings:

Roast Beef and pork, boiled mutton, baked salmon, boiled ham, beets, carrots, turnips, cabbage and

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<sup>34</sup>Narcissa Whitman, My Journal, ed. Lawrance Dodd (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1836), 55.

<sup>35</sup>George B. Roberts, "The Round Hand of George B. Roberts," Oregon Historical Society, vol.63 (June-September 1962): 183.

Roast Beef and pork, boiled mutton, baked salmon, boiled ham, beets, carrots, turnips, cabbage and potatoes, and wheaten bread are tastefully distributed over the table among a dinner set of elegant Queen's ware, burnished with glittering glasses and decanters of various colored Italian wines.<sup>36</sup>

It is interesting to note that the foods eaten by those not fortunate enough to be seated at the Big House were possibly not of the same quality. The chaplain, Herbert Beaver, complained about the food he and his wife were served at the Bachelor's Hall:

Indeed our living on the whole is not only miserable, but mean in the extreme. We have seldom anything good to eat, and when we have, it is generally so badly cooked, as to be uneatable. I can scarcely ever touch a dinner that is not cooked by my wife.<sup>37</sup>

This comment must be tempered with the fact that Beaver complained incessantly about everything during his two year stay at the fort between the years 1836 and 1838. However, the food the stewards took to the other buildings on the fort site (including "the strangers' room", the single room at, or near, the north end of the barracks, which was called the Bachelors' Hall, where visitors not invited to the manager's table ate their meals) may very well have been of lesser quality than that served at the Big House.

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<sup>36</sup>Thomas J. Farnham, Wagon Train Journal Travels in the Great Western Prairie, The Anahuac, and Rocky Mountains and in the Oregon Territory (New York: Killey & Lossing, 1843), 98.

<sup>37</sup>Herbert Beaver, Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver 1836-1838, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, Oregon: Champeog Press, 1959), 79.

Alcohol was served at the Fort as can be seen in Farnham's comment on Italian wines. Whitman also mentions wine. She says that the gentlemen frequently had toasts, but that they never gave the Whitman party the chance to refuse to join them because the Whitmans were known to belong to "the tetotal (sic) society."<sup>38</sup> Alcohol was included in the supply lists. There was mention of claret, lisbon, madeira, port, sherry, Spanish red wine, and OLP Teneriffe among the fermented grape liquors. The distilled liquors included brandy (cognac and bordeaux), gin, rum (demarara, jamaica, mixed and Indian), and whiskey.<sup>39</sup> Though alcohol was served in the mess hall, McLoughlin did not use it in trading with the Indians, or in paying the fur trappers. However, alcohol was given to the trappers when the brigades came in and on other special occasions.

In examining foods at Fort Vancouver, it is necessary to look briefly at what was eaten at the village outside the stockade where the company's employees lived with their native wives. In her dissertation entitled "The People Bought This and the Clatsop Became Rich," Susan Kardas states that the native peoples on the Columbia River changed the white working man's diet. At the Kanaka Village, (the

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<sup>38</sup>Narcissa Whitman, My Journal, ed. Lawrance Dodd (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1836), 55.

<sup>39</sup>Lester A. Ross, Hudson's Bay Company Suppliers: Volume I Internal use document for the National Park Service, Region 4, n.p., 1979, 230, photocopied.



area just outside the fort walls were where the fur trappers lived with their Indian families), "the Hudson's Bay Company employees ate salmon, elk, and camas roots prepared according to native practices."<sup>40</sup> Kardas points out that the women in the village obtained foods for the families since the company did not provide them with rations. Wild camas and blackberries grew abundantly around the fort and were gathered by these women. The Indian slaves caught fish and hunted. Kardas also notes that the husbands hunted.<sup>41</sup>

In his journal, Dr. John Scouler talks about the foods eaten by the natives at Fort Vancouver. He writes that the root of the Phalangium esculentum, was employed by the natives as a substitute for bread. He said that when raw, camas tasted sweet, but if it were cooked, it had the flavor of molasses. According to Scouler, the Indians had two methods of preparing these roots, "They sometimes boil them and eat them cold; but their more favourite (sic) method is to compact them into a cake, which they bake by placing it under heated stones and covering them with hot ashes."<sup>42</sup> In many ways, the foods eaten at the village outside the

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<sup>40</sup>Susan Kardas, "The People Bought this Land and the Clatsop Became Rich" Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr, 1971, 166.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 216.

<sup>42</sup>Dr. John Scouler, "Dr. John Scouler's Journal of a Voyage Northwest America," Oregon Historical Quarterly, (June 1905): 174.

fort walls were strongly influenced by the native American diet of the Columbia River peoples.<sup>43</sup>

Juxtaposed to this emphasis, the foods eaten inside the stockade had a strong English influence. The visitors within the walls of the fort found great hospitality marked by good food. From the earliest visions of Governor George Simpson, food had always been an important element at Fort Vancouver: first, in the emphasis placed on its production; and, then, indeed, in the very way of life food expressed through the hospitality found within the fort walls. Narcissa Whitman has been quoted as saying that Fort Vancouver was the New York of the Pacific Northwest. The production, preparation and consumption of food helped to make it such a civilized center.

Women, within the walls of the fort, did not play an important part in the flourish of activity, including the preparation and consumption of food. The fact that women didn't prepare the food at Fort Vancouver, and ate it separately from the men, helps to express the insignificance of their role in making the fort such an important center. The only women within the stockade were mixed bloods and Indians until the mid 1830s<sup>44</sup> when the white women, Mrs.

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<sup>43</sup>Susan Kardas, "The People Bought This and the Clatsops Became Rich" Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr, 1971, 166.

<sup>44</sup>John A. Hussey, The Women of Fort Vancouver. Internal use document for the National Park Service, Region 4, Vancouver, Washington, 1977, 45, photocopied.

William Capendale, wife of the manager of the dairy operations, and Mrs. Herbert Beaver, wife of the chaplain, arrived. The British applied the customs of their homeland to the lifestyles of these Indian women. At that time, in Britain, the cult of domesticity dictated that women be placed on pedestals and kept from any hard labor. They were not to be concerned with the activities of the world, but were to occupy themselves with the moral teachings within their own family. This is exemplified in the way Marguerite McLoughlin and Amelia Douglas lived their quiet lives. Their time was spent in their own apartments doing needlework, playing cards and assisting with the school. Until 1836, when the arrival of Narcissa Whitman changed this tradition, these women played no part in the entertainment of visitors that was carried on within the fort.<sup>45</sup> Eloisa McLoughlin Harvey explained the lifestyle of the women at Fort Vancouver in an 1878 interview.

When my father had company, he entertained them in the general mess room, and not in the family mess room. The families lived separate and private entirely. Gentlemen who came trading to the fort never saw the family. We never saw anybody.<sup>46</sup>

Also, these women played no part in the planning or cooking of food. This activity rested in the hands of men. The wives of clerks and officers also were not required to

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>46</sup>Eloisa McLoughlin Harvey, "Life of John McLoughlin", MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

cook. The kitchen, located behind the Big House and staffed by a "blackguard cook and steward",<sup>47</sup> fed about 50 people. The women were not consulted for most domestic matters, such as the supervision of the house or any culinary affairs.<sup>48</sup> The fact that women within the fort were exempt from all areas in the preparation of food removed them in a large way from taking part in the family economy. Thus, the women within the walls of Fort Vancouver were placed on a pedestal that the cult of domesticity carved out for them. This can be seen in the consumption of food as well as its preparation. The women ate separately from the men in their private sitting rooms. In Narcissa Whitman's writings upon her party's arrival at the fort, she noted that the table in the McLoughlin sitting room had to be enlarged to accommodate them.<sup>49</sup> Women, even white women, were not allowed to eat with the officers and gentlemen in the mess hall. Within the fort, the women didn't assume places of status because they had few responsibilities, and, thus, they played inconspicuous roles in the thriving activities of the center.

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<sup>47</sup>John Hussey, The Women of Fort Vancouver Internal use document for the National Park Service, Region 4, Vancouver, Washington, 1977, 72, photocopied.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>49</sup>Clifford Drury, First White Women over the Rockies, Diaries, Letters, and Biographical Sketches of the Six Women of the Oregon Mission who made the Overland Journey in 1836 and 1838, vol.I (Glendive, Ca: A.A. Clark Co., 1963), 191.

However, the Indian women in the Kanaka village led very different lives from those of Mrs. McLoughlin, Mrs. Douglas, and the officers' wives. The village women were not provided with rations from the company; thus their roles must have been very similar to that which they had in their native homes.<sup>50</sup> The women "cooked, sewed, treated furs and hides, made moccasins and other items of clothing and equipment, gathered roots, berries and other vegetable foods, and cared for children."<sup>51</sup> They played an essential part in the family economy and therefore had a more substantial role within their own families, as well as within the community, than did the more civilized women who lived under the dictates of the cult of domesticity. These women were not an oppressed group, though a subgroup within this group was - that of the women slaves.<sup>52</sup> The preparation of food (and clothing) were key elements to the substantial roles these women played in Kanaka village. It gave them an important place in their society. Preparation of food, or the omission of that preparation, seems to be a key element in the roles played by women at Fort Vancouver, as does its consumption.

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<sup>50</sup>Susam Kardas, "The People Bought This and the Clatsop Became Rich" Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr, 1971, 216.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 216.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 152.

## CHAPTER III

### THE OREGON TRAIL 1836-1898

The history of the food on the Overland Trail is one marked by necessity. As a result of this, food was much less elaborately prepared on the Trail than it had been in the homes these pioneers had left behind. Looking at the food on the Oregon Trail provides a very good way to assess the various interpretations of gender roles and the impact the Trail had on them.

In examining the foods of the Oregon Trail, it is important to remember the roles women played on that journey. A number of historians have examined this topic, and three, Julie Roy Jeffrey, John Mack Faragher, and Sandra L. Myres, have quite differing views about it. With respect to food, the evidence about women's experience on the Trail suggests the interpretation of Julie Roy Jeffrey was most accurate. She holds that women's status changed on the Overland Trail from that which they had known under the influence of the cult of domesticity in the Midwest, from whence most of the pioneers came. This cult of domesticity is also known as the "doctrine of the spheres." According to this doctrine, men lived in the worldly sphere of

business as defined by capitalism, and women lived in the separate sphere of the home, where she had complete reign.<sup>1</sup>

In *Frontier Women*, Jeffrey writes about the cult of domesticity, which kept women at home providing a quiet retreat for men and giving women the job of instilling moral and cultural values in the family. Jeffrey states, "Although the cult of domesticity evolved in the East and applied specifically to urban middle-class women there, its influence ranged beyond the confines of New England and the middle-class."<sup>2</sup> For this reason, most women on the Overland Trail were touched by this code of rules.

Similarly, Jeffrey states that the role of women, including farm women, began to lose its importance in the family economy with the increase of manufactured goods starting in 1810.<sup>3</sup> According to Jeffrey, women's emigration West restored their role in the family economy.<sup>4</sup> Changes started taking place in the roles of these traveling

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<sup>1</sup>For contrasting views on the changes in frontier women's roles consult Women and Men on the Overland Trail and Sugar Creek, Life on the Illinois Prairie by John Mack Faragher; Frontier Women, The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880 by Julie Roy Jeffrey; Westering Women and Frontier Experience 1800-1915 by Sandra L. Myres; and Far from Home, Families of the Westward Journey by Lillian Schlissel, Byrd Gibbens, and Elizabeth Hampsten.

<sup>2</sup>Julie Roy Jeffrey, Frontier Women, The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 11.

women. In the journey west, women began assuming the responsibilities of men and doing men's work, such as driving the team. In the case of death or injury, women would take over completely. The typical women's work on the trail was very unfeminine. Finding buffalo chips and cooking over open fires took away from women's attractiveness. Thus women changed in their views of themselves. Jeffrey says that few women commented on their growing importance in the family though they seemed to enjoy their new roles.<sup>5</sup> Her book is helpful in understanding the increased independence women gained on the trail as well as their separation from the ideology of the cult of domesticity.

The following is an examination of the evidence we have of food during the journey West. The first white women to arrive in Oregon were missionary women. The accounts of their trip across the Rockies and their settlement in the new country include mention of food. The food on the Overland Trail was different from that which these people ate back in the States where domestic meats, fruits and vegetables were prepared from a wide variety of recipes. Condiments and homemade beers and wines graced the tables of these middle class people. Their meals would be topped off

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 39-45.



with puddings, pies, or iced cakes.<sup>6</sup> The difference between these foods and those of the Overland Trail reflects the new roles women played in their families on this long journey.

During the trip, Narcissa Whitman writes in her journal that she thought often of her mother's bread and butter. She also wrote that she fancied "pork and potatoes would relish extremely well."<sup>7</sup> These people dreamt of the foods that used to bring them comfort back in their civilized homes. Yet, the food they were eating on the Trail was somewhat varied and high in nutritional value. Nevertheless, it was stark food that was cooked under harsh circumstances.

Just as food lost its civilized aspects, so, too, did the Whitman party's relationships change. Women and men's relations on the trail were divorced from that which they were used to back home, where the cult of domesticity reigned. The role these women played on the trail was an essential one and the work they did was mandatory for the survival of the family unit. The jobs of these women were simple, but difficult. Their work lacked variety and it didn't necessarily know gender.

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<sup>6</sup>Mrs. Lydia Child, The American Frugal Housewife (Boston: Carter, Hendee, and Co., 1833) and M.H. Cornelius, The Young Housekeeper's Friend (Boston: Brown, Taggard, and Chase, 1859).

<sup>7</sup>Narcissa Whitman, My Journal, ed. Lawrance Dodd (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1982), 15.

The Whitman party didn't divide jobs according to sexes. This all served to strengthen woman's role, allowing her to be more of an individual, with a purpose, than she was back home. On the trail, men and women's roles began to be mixed. For instance, Whitman writes of John McLeod, Chief Trader of the Hudson's Bay Company traveling with the Whitmans, who did his own cooking<sup>8</sup> and washing.<sup>9</sup> He brought Whitman presents of food, such as salmon and fried cakes,<sup>10</sup> and even shared the recipe for the cakes: mix flour and water to make a dough, roll it thin, cut it into square blocks, then fry these in beef fat.<sup>11</sup> Other recipes recorded during Whitman's trip were fresh salmon "boiled for breakfast," dried salmon boiled in the hot springs for five minutes, and, finally, another bread recipe called "mountain bread" in which course flour and water were mixed and then fried in buffalo grease.

While going overland, these people's food and lifestyles had gotten closer to nature. The technology of the preparation and consumption of food was much more limited than that which they had known in the Midwest. They lived outdoors and were faced with survival issues due to the violence of nature. There was a variety of wild meat

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 27.

that was eaten. Whitman takes note of their sources of protein. When her party reached the Rendezvous, a summertime meeting in the mountains where fur company caravans met with trappers and Indians for trading purposes, she wrote that they had been living on fresh meat exclusively for two months.<sup>12</sup> They left the Rendezvous on July 23, 1836, and, by the 27th, Whitman records that there had been no fresh meat except a few antelope.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the party was living on dried buffalo meat which had been purchased from the Indians. Whitman's comment on this food was: ". . . and dry it was for me."<sup>14</sup> On the Platte River, she mentioned that her husband cooked buffalo, since he was the only one who professed to have the art.<sup>15</sup> Eliza Hart Spalding, the other missionary woman who traveled with the Whitman party, wrote that while traveling along the Platte River she took ill. She attributed her illness wholly to the change in diet. They were eating buffalo meat at that point of their journey. It was a dish that was cooked by men and relished by them as well. Not all women reacted so strongly. Sarah Gilbert White Smith, a missionary in the

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>15</sup>Clifford Drury, First White Women over the Rockies, Diaries, Letters, and Biographical Sketches of Six Women of the Oregon Mission who made the Overland Journey in 1836 and 1838, vol. I (Glendale, Ca: A.A. Clark Co., 1963), 51.

1838 party that followed the Whitmans, wrote that she wished her father could eat buffalo. She was sure he would enjoy it. The meat made Spalding sick, perhaps because it was so masculine, so western, so untamed and wild, and so against her notions of her place in civilization.

Spalding wrote that the provisions they had brought from the settlement were only calculated to last until they could depend on buffalo. She finds consolation for enduring a diet of buffalo by calling on "Him who ruleth all things well."<sup>16</sup> In the Christian world, of which she was so much a part, the Supreme Being played a role which was almighty and masculine. This helped to diminish women's sense of individuality and self. This idea of God, of course, was never questioned. Their idea of God might be considered as a strong contributing factor to why these women of the missionary parties were less liberated from the restrictions of the cult of domesticity on the trail than were the tougher women who followed them to Oregon.

Whitman and Spalding were still pampered to a degree on the journey - they were held up to be the softer sex and treated accordingly. Whitman writes in her journal that Mr. McLeod was ready to leave Fort Boise, but seeing that the ladies had not yet rested after doing their preparations for the journey (mainly washing), he proposed they stay over the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 191.

Sabbath.<sup>17</sup> Rarely resting on the Sabbath, frontier women crossing the Overland Trail in years to come were not treated with such tender care. They fulfilled men's duties and had roles that appeared to be equal with those of men. Though Christianity was a part of many of their lives, it was not the single, central focus that it was for Whitman and Spalding. Spalding and Whitman's intense involvement with Christianity helped keep alive the cult of domesticity for these people even on the rough ride across the continent.

For protein sources other than buffalo, the Whitman party ate fish, when it could be obtained. Whitman writes that they got salmon from the Snake tribe and that they boiled it for breakfast. She comments, ". . . find it good eating."<sup>18</sup> These people also gathered and ate wild berries along the trip. For instance, Whitman writes that they ate hawthorn berries just before arriving at Fort Boise.<sup>19</sup> At Fort Hall there were stewed service berries for tea. They ate other wild vegetation on the trail as well. She describes the Indian food, camas, as looking like an onion

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<sup>17</sup>Narcissa Whitman, My Journal, ed. Lawrance Dodd (Fairfield Washington, Ye Galleon Press, 1982), 30.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 29.

in shape and color, and she writes that when it is cooked it is very sweet in taste and looks like a fig.<sup>20</sup>

The party made stops along the way at Fort Hall and Fort Walla Walla. At Fort Hall their food had a western influence: there was a dinner of buffalo meat and fried bread, which Whitman writes was a luxury. "The mountain bread is simply coarse flour and water mixed, and roasted or fried in buffalo grease."<sup>21</sup> Fort Walla Walla produced an even greater effect on the woman who wrote this journal. It brought a little of civilization to her. Two miles east of the fort there was a large garden and their arrival was marked by the present of a muskmelon as they were coming up the trail.

It is interesting to note that the cooking and housework done at this fort was done chiefly by men.<sup>22</sup> The lady of the house was Indian, but she was not engaged in a typical Indian woman's role. Like the British at Fort Vancouver, the men at Fort Walla Walla removed their wives from the typical woman's way of life, which they had known in their tribes, and placed their wives instead on the pedestals carved out by the cult of domesticity, as these men had known it in their homelands. This ideology, as it was known by these fur traders in their places of origin,

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 41.

required a woman to work within the sphere of her home where she was in complete charge of all household activities.

In the "Civilized World," the cult of domesticity had women in charge of their "separate sphere," which was the home. There, they were to supervise the entire household as well as be the moral teachers in charge of the spiritual lives of all the members of their families. They were held to be above the worldly activity of men. At the forts in the Pacific Northwest, the wives of the traders were exempt from some of those duties considered to be typical of wives in England and the East, where the cult reigned. At the forts, the Indian women, much like the "civilized women," were placed on pedestals, that is they were separated from worldly activities. However, the Indian women were also exempt from the labor of cooking and household duties. They were left with being teachers and performing the feminine duties of wife and mother.

The food at Fort Walla Walla resembled that which these fur traders had known in the world from which they came, as the roles of the Indian women had similarities to the roles of women in England. The fact that the food was cooked by men elevates the Indian women one step higher than the white females from the more refined places such as London and New York. To extend the rules even further was an essential way to extend civilization. It can be seen that the traders absolved their Indian wives from most physical household

duties. They did less than their white sisters back in England. This waste of labor in the underpopulated wilds of the Northwest seems to be illogical. But, it was an important way to assert the "civilized" nature of their existence by placing women on an even higher pedestal than had their English and Eastern brothers. Representing the foods of the world from which these men had come, this meal consisted of pork, potatoes, beets, cabbage, turnips, tea, bread and butter.<sup>23</sup> The Whitman missionaries were very pleased with it.

Two years after Whitman and Spalding crossed the Rockies, four other white missionary women were to follow in a reinforcement for the Oregon Mission. They were Myra Eells, Mary Walker, Sarah Gilbert White Smith, and Mary Augustus Dix Gray. They ate lots of buffalo on the overland trip, for Eells writes of staying in camp long enough to dry it.<sup>24</sup> Walker writes of making baked soda biscuits and fried soda fritters.<sup>25</sup> They had a supply of milk and butter for their diet as well. However, Walker writes on July 28, 1838, that they had to leave their cows at Fort Hall, due to the barren deserts that existed the last five

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>24</sup>Clifford Drury, First White Women over the Rockies, Diaries, Letters, and Biographical Sketches of the Six Women of the Oregon Mission Who Made the Overland Journey in 1836 and 1838, vol.II (Glendale, Ca: A.A. Clark Co., 1966), 106.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 106.



hundred miles between Fort Hall and Waiilatpu, the Whitman mission, their destination in the Oregon Country.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note that these women were more accepting than the 1836 party of the staple of buffalo. In commenting on a supper they had of this meat, Smith states, "We love it very much when it is cooked as good as it was tonight."<sup>27</sup> Men cooked this masculine food in both the 1836 and 1838 trips. While they were traveling along the Platte River, Smith notes in her journal that Mr. Gray and Mr. Smith were the buffalo cooks. She said that they sometimes made nice soups of it, sometimes boiled and fried it, and sometimes chopped it like sausage. They also would make milk gravies for the meat after frying it. She adds that at that point of the journey they were eating no bread at all in order to conserve flour for the trip across those portions of the plains where there would be no game.<sup>28</sup>

Smith really did enjoy the buffalo and seemed well acclimated to the masculine world it represented as a wild meat that had to be hunted and cooked by men. She writes more than once of its high quality: "Our supper is ready, it consists of roasted buffalo. I think father would love to

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>27</sup>Clifford Drury, First White Women over the Rockies, Diaries, Letters, and Biographical Sketches of the Six Women of the Oregon Mission Who Made the Overland Journey in 1836 and 1838, vol.III (Glendale, Ca: A.A. Clark Co., 1966), 89.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 86-7.

take supper with us. I am sure he would enjoy the buffalo. It is very fine."<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, she misses civilization, for she finishes this paragraph with: "I sometimes feel I would like to sit once more at dear mother's table."<sup>30</sup>

These women's reactions to the trail experience represented those of the first white females who underwent the transformation that the trail worked on the civilized attributes of their nineteenth century characters. After examining the evidence, as reflected in the food, it can be concluded that women's role, as dictated by the cult of domesticity, was drastically changed by the western experience while these immigrating women were on the Overland Trail. This experience is translated to a new found equality in women's and men's roles as seen on the trail. However, this equality becomes obscured in the settlement period in Oregon. Nevertheless, before examining that later period, it is necessary to look first at the conditions of the trail. It might be said that the foods eaten were viewed as more masculine than feminine in nature, because the ingredients and the methods of preparation were removed from those used in civilization. Nevertheless, these people had great appetites. Sarah J. Wiseman Seely commented, ". . . it did not take a second call to get us

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 88.

there to eat even bacon with sand gritting in our teeth all the time, too hungry and tired to care."<sup>31</sup>

In The Great Platte River Road, Merrill J. Mattes gives the list of supplies that were recommended by Lansford Hastings, one of the earlier guidebook writers. He advocated that each emigrant take 200 pounds of flour, 150 pounds of bacon, 10 pounds of coffee, 20 pounds of sugar, and 10 pounds of salt.<sup>32</sup> These supplies produced the common diet of what Mattes calls the bread-bacon-coffee formula.

Other items were brought by some emigrants, but they were luxury foods, or items, beyond the necessities, that added to the comfort of the travelers. There was always the chance that these would have to be abandoned if the load got too heavy along the way. Mattes states that some of these foods were: "chipped beef, rice, tea, dried beans, dried fruit, saleratus (baking soda), vinegar, cheese, cream of tartar, pickles, ginger, and mustard."<sup>33</sup> Corn meal and hardtack (also known as sea biscuit and pilot's bread, among other names) were often brought along for variation to the

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<sup>31</sup>Sarah J. Wiseman Seely, "My Crossing the Plains When A Child" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>32</sup>Merrill J. Mattes, The Great Platte River Road (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska Historical Society, 1969), 46.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 46-7.

pioneer bread which was made in Dutch ovens, over camp fires fed by buffalo chips.<sup>34</sup>

These pioneers also ate wild game, fish, roots and berries whenever they could be obtained. However, it was impossible for the emigrants to rely on nature's bounty in planning their inventory of provisions, because they were to be traveling across the relatively treeless, semi-arid High Plains.

Those who crossed the Oregon Trail had simple food that served the function of providing survival. There were few luxuries and it was only the occasional foods from the wilds and the extras the pioneers had brought in their supplies, or were able to purchase along the way, that provided variation in the diet. Mrs. E. J. (Goltra) Farrington wrote that toward the end of their 1853 journey they purchased fresh beef for 25 cents a pound and the next day they were able to buy potatoes and peas from the Indians. "Welcome foods after long journey."<sup>35</sup>

The foods purchased on the trail were not always luxury items. Sometimes they were needed to ward off sickness and starvation. Mary Collins Parsons commented, in her 1852 journal, that at the Dalles her family had been able to buy a bushel of turnips and potatoes. They cooked them together

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 46-7.

<sup>35</sup>Mrs. E.J. (Goltra) Farrington, "Journal" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

and had a feed. She adds that a sick man, in their company, bought a plateful from them for 50 cents and got well after eating it.<sup>36</sup> Parsons writes that earlier in their trip they had been facing semi-starvation, due to having run out of flour. Two of their girls were killing birds with ox whips for their food. They were saved when they met a man in the Blue Mountains who sold them flour at 50 cents a pound.<sup>37</sup> Once in Oregon, the availability of roadside food was greatly increased. Pamela Francis Benson wrote that when they reached Oregon, they always camped where they could get plenty of apples, tomatoes, muskmelons, and peaches. She added that near Eugene they had also obtained pears and sweet corn.<sup>38</sup>

The women who prepared the food worked hard. "Aunt Phoebe" Newton, a pioneer who came over the Overland Trail at the young age of fifteen, recounted to Fred Lockley, an Oregon journalist, of the role these pioneer women played. She speaks of women on the trail: "{b}oth women and cows had to work hard in those days."<sup>39</sup> The cows had to provide milk as well as pull the wagon. She explains that women had

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<sup>36</sup>Mary Collins Parsons, "Reminiscences 1852" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Pamela Francis Benson, "Overland Diary" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>39</sup>Fred Lockley, "Interview with 'Aunt Phoebe' Newton." In Conversations with Pioneer Women. Reprt from the Oregon Journal, (Eugene, Oregon: Rainy Day Press, 1981).

to work so hard when she was a girl, that most men had two or three broods of children. This was due to the wives dying and leaving their children behind, only to have the husbands remarry and the cycle of another woman being worked to death would begin. Another woman's attitude about the trip overland was that it was a "honey-moan."<sup>40</sup> From these statements it is clear that women worked hard on the Overland Trail, and that this way of life continued for them once they settled in Oregon.

Even though the work was hard, not all women found the trip to be totally lacking in pleasure. In her reminiscences, Mrs. Cecelia Emily McMillan Adams wrote that she and her husband had left for Oregon in the spring of 1852. She mentions difficult work:

P. done some washing and I baked bread and made pumpkin and apple pies, cooked beans and meat, stewed apples and baked suckeyes in quantity sufficient to last some time, besides making Dutch cheese, and took everything out of the wagon to air.<sup>41</sup>

Conditions under which they worked were difficult. "Rained all day which makes it very disagreeable getting supper tonight."<sup>42</sup> She also mentions the lack of water and wood. In spite of these harsh circumstances of the trail,

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<sup>40</sup>Sarah J. Seely, "My Crossing the Plains When A Child" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>41</sup>Mrs. Cecelia Emily McMillan Adams, "Crossing the Plains in 1852." Transactions of the Oregon Pioneer Association (1904), 296.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 292.

Adams's conditions were not oppressive, for she writes that they would stop at noon to eat dinner and that was the time she got to write or read. Thus, she wasn't working ceaselessly. Often she records that they stopped for the Sabbath. In one place, she was commenting on the scenery and she writes: "We do enjoy ourselves very well."<sup>43</sup> This woman's overland experience was not disagreeable to her, yet, working hard, she fulfilled a necessary role in the family. The time this woman had to do as she pleased while still maintaining an essential part in the family economy marks the rise in status she had achieved with the men in her wagon. However, the pleasure Adams found in her trip was not typically found in the trips of most pioneer women. Some female overland travelers had to work ceaselessly, as can be seen in Margaret Elizabeth Irvin's reminiscence: after supper when the chores were done the men "lounged about the campfire resting, swapping yarns and talking about the happenings and adventures of the day." On the other hand, the women were busy washing clothes and preparing for the next morning's work.<sup>44</sup>

Adams's food, such as pumpkin and apple pies, cheese, stewed fruit and baked beans, was also better than most

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 291.

<sup>44</sup>Margaret Elizabeth Irvin, "Covered Wagon Days as Related by Margaret Elizabeth Irvin to Myra Abbett Adams in 1934" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

families experienced.<sup>45</sup> Here there was an abundance of the luxury foods being used for everyday staples. Compared to this, Irvin doesn't mention any luxury items at all in her family's supplies. She does speak of eating ham and bacon interspersed with wild meats such as deer, antelope, buffalo, grouse and rabbits.<sup>46</sup>

The better the nourishment was in quality, quantity, and variety, the better the quality of life women seemed to have. People interested in better food had better social conditions in their wagons. However, good food could not be connected solely with wealth. For instance, some families coming from farms were not rich, but had very good food. Some rich people were not able to purchase decent supplies. But, in the cases where good food existed, women were treated better. In her reminiscences of her 1850 journey across the Overland Trail, Mary Jane Hayden wrote of the supplies her family obtained at Council Bluffs. The food they brought was better than that of the typical wagon, for Hayden writes that their outfit was the best in the train as to variety.<sup>47</sup> At Council Bluffs, there was a purchase made

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<sup>45</sup>Mrs. Cecelia Emily McMillan Adams, "Crossing the Plains in 1852." Transactions of the Oregon Pioneer Association (1904).

<sup>46</sup>Margaret Elizabeth Irvin, "Covered Wagon Days as Related by Margaret Elizabeth Irvin to Myra Abbett Adams in 1934" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>47</sup>Mary Jane Hayden, "Pioneer Days," MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.



of bacon, flour, cornmeal, rice, sugar, dried fruit (apples, plums and peaches,) coffee, tea, a very large cheese and hard bread. In addition to this purchase, they had brought ham shoulders, butter, eggs, and vinegar from home.<sup>48</sup>

This wagon had quality food, and, as with other wagons with a healthy diet, the life of its woman had some healthy freedoms. Hayden, for instance, was quite an independent woman who made decisions that altered the destiny of her family. At the Dalles on the Columbia River, her party was faced with a decision between two routes. One was over the Cascade Mountains and the other was down the Columbia. She wrote that it was thought best that the women go down the Columbia which would only be a four day trip and less perilous than the two week mountain route. Hayden was determined to stay with the men and go over the Cascades even if it meant she would perish doing it, as she was in poor health, due to mountain fever. Because of her determination to stay with her family, Hayden's party changed their plans, made a boat out of the bottom of the wagon, and floated down the Columbia together.

Like Hayden, with her independence and better quality of life, Adams, who enjoyed the scenery so much and took such pleasure in her reading and writing, also ate very well with her pumpkin pies, stewed fruit and baked beans. These women enjoyed their trip in spite of its difficulties and

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

their families ate decent food in spite of the hardships in carrying and preparing the ingredients. Indeed, the good food must have contributed to the capacity these people had for the enjoyment of the simple pleasures they incurred along the trail.

It seems that the type of people that would take the care to bring luxury foods were also the type of families that gave women special rights and freedoms. Those men who allowed their families to bring better food, placed more value on the quality of life their women experienced. However, not all wagons had a variety of good food or quality life for their women. Arvazona Angeline Cooper wrote in her reminiscences of her journey across the plains, which began on April 8, 1863, that her party was starting in Missouri, and because of the war it was impossible to get any dried fruit or beans. She added, however, "We had plenty of bacon, flour and milk on the start . . ." <sup>49</sup> This same woman was giving birth on the journey, and the group was not going to stop while she did so, until, finally, the guide decided that they should stay over for the day. She wrote that "a little blue-eyed brother" came to their wagon at two o'clock and that at five o'clock a couple took advantage of the lay-over to get married. Women's needs

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<sup>49</sup>Arvazona Angeline Cooper, "Our Journey Across the Plains from Missouri to Oregon" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

were not given a high priority on the trail in some wagon trains.

Wagon trains with poor food were also more likely to have social problems. Mrs. Mary Jane Long writes in her reminiscences of her trip across the plains in 1852 that it was ". . . not very luxurious out there I assure you." At one point, her family was so low on provisions that her father fished out of the river a sack of flour another man had discarded, according to his right to destroy surplus goods if he so chose. Saving the wet flour was possible, as described by another overland journal writer, Margaret Elizabeth Irvin. She wrote that flour was not damaged much by river crossings when the wagon bed leaked, soaking the provisions. She explained that the moisture on the outside of the sacks made a paste of the outer layer of flour, insulating the sack.<sup>50</sup>

After drying the flour, Long's family had plenty to last the trip. This wagon train, which had poor food, also had social ills. Long made this journey as a young girl and along the way she witnessed trail justice, which was like the justice system these people had left back home. In

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<sup>50</sup>Margaret Elizabeth Irvin, "Covered Wagon Days as Related by Margaret Elizabeth Irvin to Myra Abbett Adams in 1934" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

Long's wagon train, one man was hanged for wanting another man's wife and murdering him to achieve his end.<sup>51</sup>

Another case of social problems was recorded by Amanda Jane Parker in her diary in 1878. She wrote of a dreadful affair that occurred in her train. A man's mule started to run and because his wife didn't have a hold of the reins he beat her. Parker felt that this was an outrage. The unhealthy social atmosphere of this wagon train was marked by a somewhat lean diet. Parker mentions buying provisions along the way: ten cents per quart of skimmed milk, twenty-five cents per pound of butter, three dollars for a sack of flour, and small radishes, which had been grown at Council Bluffs, at a cent a piece.<sup>52</sup> There was no mention of their diet having any of the luxury items, such as tea and dried apricots. They ate the basic overland foods, such as the bread which they baked in an oil stove in their wagon.

There were many similarities in the diet of the various pioneers. Many journals mention butter. Mrs. Mary Jane Long wrote that her family brought milk cows and that the milk was hauled in cans which would be filled with balls of

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<sup>51</sup>Mrs. Mary Jane Long, "Crossing the Plains in the Year of 1852 with Ox Teams" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>52</sup>Amanda Jane Parker, "Diary" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

butter by night time.<sup>53</sup> Arvazona Angeline Cooper described the same butter balls, formed in their churn by the movement of the wagon.<sup>54</sup> Esther Belle Hanna writes that one of her neighbors had a churn and made a quantity of butter. Hanna was given a slice with which she dressed her game.<sup>55</sup> In her reminiscence of her covered wagon days, Margaret Elizabeth Irvin tells of the women milking the cows morning and evening. She adds that they placed the morning milk into a churn which would be lashed to the outside of the wagon, thus supplying fresh butter and sweet buttermilk each day.<sup>56</sup>

Cooper mentioned that they could not use the milk once they were in the alkali country. The issue of alkali was a large one for the pioneers, for it appeared many times in the trail journals. Historian Merrill Mattes says that the cows would supply milk until they reached the alkali regions of Wyoming.<sup>57</sup> Mrs. L. A. Bozarth wrote that they had

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<sup>53</sup>Mrs. Mary Jane Long, "Crossing the Plains in the Year of 1852 with Ox Teams" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>54</sup>Arvazona Angeline Cooper, "Our Journey Across the Plains from Missouri to Oregon" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>55</sup>Esther Belle Hanna, "Journal" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>56</sup>Margaret Elizabeth Irvin, "Covered Wagon Days as Related by Margaret Elizabeth Irvin to Myra Abbett Adams in 1934" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>57</sup>Merrill J. Mattes, The Great Platte River Road (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska Historical Society, 1969), 47.

passed some small lakes which were encrusted with "almost pure saleratus." Her party gathered a quantity of it and used it as baking soda.<sup>58</sup> It was necessary to keep the stock from drinking alkali water or eating alkali grass. Jane Davis Kellog commented that they had milk all the way, because when they came to the white ground they traveled all night, not daring to stop and let the animals loose.<sup>59</sup> Sarah Cranston also wrote that they didn't allow their cattle to eat the abundant grass, because the "alkaly was so strong."<sup>60</sup>

This salt looked and smelled very pungent.<sup>61</sup> It caused great sickness in the animals and prohibited them from producing milk. The pioneers had many remedies for this poisoning. The most common one was to feed bacon to the stock.<sup>62</sup> Lard and vinegar were pored down the throats of one party's livestock. Mrs. E. J. (Goltra) Farrington wrote of this last remedy and said the animals soon seemed

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<sup>58</sup>Mrs. L.A. Bozarth, "Narrative of Mrs. L.A. Bozarth, A Pioneer of 1852" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>59</sup>Jane Davis Kellog, "Memoirs of Jane D. Kellog Across the Plains in 1852" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>60</sup>Sarah Cranston, "Overland Journal, 1851" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>61</sup>Mrs. Samuel Hadley, "Overland Diary 1851" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>62</sup>Margaret White Chambers, "Reminiscences" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

better. However, she added that after driving out of the poisonous place their beasts remained weak two days later.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, the alkali, found primarily in the Wyoming region, put a termination to the overlanders' milk supply. Among the complaints about alkali, there was also an explanation, of another sort, for loss of milk. This complaint was that the cows got nothing but green grass to eat, causing them to become thin and give very little milk.<sup>64</sup> It can be seen that the milk supply of the pioneers lessened, or became extinct, during the middle of their journey.

One account indicates that butter had become available again by the end of the trip: Harriet Scott Palmer writes that before her family reached Oregon City her father bought two pounds of butter. She said the children never got any of it, for it was gone by the time they had their turn at the makeshift table.<sup>65</sup> Early in the journey, butter and milk were common among these travelers, but they became scarce during their trip, only to be in abundance again once

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<sup>63</sup>Mrs. E.J. (Goltra) Farrington, "Journal 1853" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>64</sup>Margaret Elizabeth Irvin, "Covered Wagon Days as Related by Margaret Elizabeth Irvin to Myra Abbet Adams in 1934" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>65</sup>Harriet Scott Palmer, "Crossing over the Great Plains by Ox-Wagons" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

the pioneers were in the Oregon Country. Toward the end of her journey, once she was in Oregon, Catherine Stuart Forbes writes in her diary of having apricot shortcake and milk for supper.<sup>66</sup>

Another natural occurrence that changed the diets of these travelers were the soda springs that occurred along the way. This natural sparkling water was used to make several recipes which varied their liquid consumption. Mary Collins Parsons wrote of her 1852 trip that at the Soda Springs they "sweetened the water, added a little acid and all enjoyed a delicious drink."<sup>67</sup> It seems likely to assume that the sweetener was sugar and the acid was vinegar. This was also mentioned in Hayden's account of her 1850 journey. She writes that they added sugar to the soda water which made "a very pleasant drink." This same party brought five gallons of vinegar with which they made "harvest drink" and "mountain lemonade."<sup>68</sup> No recipes were given for these last two drinks.

Sometimes beverages were less appealing. In The Great Platte River Road, Mattes writes that an alternative to dying of thirst was to drink the urine of mules which

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<sup>66</sup>Catherine Stuart Forbes, "Diary" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>67</sup>Mary Collins Parsons, "Reminiscences 1852" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>68</sup>Mary Jane Hayden, "Pioneer Days" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.



"tastes like coffee."<sup>69</sup> A little more palatable way of quenching thirst was to drink vinegar.<sup>70</sup> Another unthinkable drink was mentioned by Sarah Elizabeth York. She noted that often they had to get water out of the river in which cattle had waded and even died.<sup>71</sup> Abigail Scott Duniway wrote that near Fort Kearney the water was so thick with sand, they had to mix corn meal with it, let it settle, then strain it. The result was tolerably clear water.<sup>72</sup>

As well as having difficulty finding water, the pioneers had to worry about finding fuel. Cooking on the Overland Trail was primitive. Of all the sources of fuel, the one that was probably used most frequently was buffalo chips. One couple had a rather cultured name for this animal refuse. On his trip from Missouri, David E. Pease notes, "At night we camped where there was not a stick of wood the '*bois de vache*' was to (sic) wet to burn."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Merrill J. Mattes, The Great Platte River Road (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska Historical Society, 1969), 49.

<sup>70</sup>Jane Davis Kellog, "Memoirs of Jane D. Kellog Across the Plains in 1852" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>71</sup>Sarah Elizabeth York, "Reminiscences" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>72</sup>Abigail Scott Duniway, "Journal of Crossing the Plains in 1852 of the Family of John Tucker Scott" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>73</sup>David E. Pease, "Diary of a Trip from St. Joseph, Mo. to Astoria, Oregon Made by David Egber Pease and his Wife Hannah Pegg Pease in 1849" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

Cooper writes that though they saw no buffalo they used the ubiquitous buffalo chip for fuel and found it very satisfactory.<sup>74</sup> The account of Mary Jane Long mentions the burning of buffalo chips to a cinder. Then, the frying, boiling, and cooking began. She said that the smell of the green smoke could never be forgotten.<sup>75</sup> Buffalo chips might be replaced by other sources of fuel upon occasion. In her journal, Hanna writes, "We got a little driftwood this evening quite a treat indeed, baked bread with it, the first we have had for a week."<sup>76</sup>

There were other fuel sources, as well. At the beginning, in the midwestern part of the journey, wood was often scarce.<sup>77</sup> It was at this point that buffalo chips were starting to be used. This use of buffalo chips occurred as late as 1878, according to a diary of a journey made from Nebraska to Oregon.<sup>78</sup> An 1898 diary describes the employment of cow chips, since the buffalo were gone by

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<sup>74</sup>Arvanzona Angeline Cooper, "Reminiscences" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>75</sup>Mrs. Mary Jane Long, "Crossing the Plains in the Year of 1852 with Ox Teams" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>76</sup>Esther Belle Hanna, "Journal" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>77</sup>Sarah Frances Dudley, "Diary 1852" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>78</sup>Pamelia Francis (Loomis) Benson, "Overland Diary, 1878" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

then.<sup>79</sup> Sophronia Turnell expounds on how a fire was built out of cow chips: dig a shallow trench in the ground, kindle the fire in it (with carefully hoarded wood brought in the wagon), then place the cow chips on the top. She said that such a fire would produce nice coals, but they only lasted a short duration. It was necessary to keep adding cow chips above and below the dutch oven, or under kettles and frying pans.

It is interesting to note that Turnell had an easier trip than those women that had preceded her. For example, on their journey from central Texas to Oregon, they stayed in a large hotel in Folsom, New Mexico, because their grandmother was sick. Even though their trip was a softer experience for these women, Turnell still had to do laundry. The quality of this woman's life was good and, as was the general case, she ate well. Turnell doesn't list the supplies they brought, but she does mention some of the foods they were preparing with their dutch oven. Among them were baked biscuits, fried meat, stewed meat with vegetables, cakes, and pies with meat, fruit, and potato fillings. She says fresh fruit wasn't obtainable very often so they used dried peaches or apples.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Sophronia Turnell Barker, "Overland Journeys to the Pacific 1898" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

Another reminiscence says that all the cooking was done for a while with sagebrush. Margaret White Chambers writes that it wasn't much fun cooking with sagebrush, because it was so dry it was like straw. She adds that sometimes the flapjacks (pancakes) turned out black, because of the light ashes blowing on them from the fire. They couldn't throw any away because they had to save on provisions and, besides, the next one would be just as bad. Chambers gives the recipe for the flapjacks: warm water, soda, and some sour dough, if they had it; if not, they did without.<sup>81</sup>

Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer wrote in her diary of her 1847 journey from Indiana to Portland, that they sometimes used a shrub called greasewood for their fuel. It was generally not as large as sage and very thorny. Sarah Cranston also writes of cooking with weeds in her 1851 journal.<sup>82</sup> An 1864 diary mentions using sageroots for fires.<sup>83</sup> Geer gives information on making a fire with buffalo chips. Three bushels of chips made a good fire and it took a man a minute to gather a bushel. She says she doesn't know if sage or buffalo chips were the best fuel. Challenging her friends back home, she instructs them to get

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<sup>81</sup>Margaret White Chambers, "Reminiscence, 1851" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>82</sup>Sarah Cranston, "Overland Journal, 1851" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>83</sup>Elizabeth Lee Porter, "Crossing the Plains by Elizabeth Lee Porter, 1864" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

sage out of their domestic gardens, build a fire, and then try to cook, boil and fry by it.<sup>84</sup>

Sheet iron cooking stoves were employed throughout many of the years of the overland travel. An early account of the use of this appliance was in a reminiscence of the 1852 journey of Mary Collins Parsons, who writes that it was complete with a reflector on each side.<sup>85</sup> Margaret Elizabeth Irvin writes in her 1863 trip from Missouri to Oregon that her family carried with them a sheet iron stove for cooking and that they were luckier than most families that had to cook over a campfire. Finally, Sarah J. Wiseman Seely writes, in her reminiscence of her 1882 trip, that they used a small sheet iron stove and that they carried buffalo grass and buffalo chips so they could have a quick fire for coffee.<sup>86</sup>

Among the foods cooked on the Overland Trail were many wild meats. As can be seen with the missionaries' diaries, buffalo was the most common wild meat eaten during the overland journey. This is also clear in the writings of the later overland travelers. In her 1852 journal, Esther Belle Hanna writes that her party received a present of some

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<sup>84</sup>Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer, "Journal" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>85</sup>Mary Collins Parsons, "Diary, 1852" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>86</sup>Sarah J. Wiseman Seely, "My Crossing the Plains When a Child, 1882" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

buffalo meat from another camp. She said she did not eat any of it, but the rest of her party pronounced it very fine.<sup>87</sup> Catherine Sager Pringle, who was later to become the adopted daughter of the Whitmans, writes, in her 1850 (ca) reminiscences of her Overland journey with her natural parents, about drying buffalo on the Overland Trail. She writes that when the Sager family had reached the buffalo country, they stopped a few days in order to supply themselves with buffalo meat. According to her writings, the drying process was achieved by erecting small scaffolds, and, next, cutting the meat into small strips. These strips were then suspended on cross-sticks and a fire was built underneath them and kept burning.<sup>88</sup>

Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer said that the flesh was generally drier and coarser than that of beef. Though she adds a fat buffalo is "as good meat as I would wish to taste of."<sup>89</sup> Mrs. Samuel Hadley wrote that it was the best meat she had ever tasted. She also writes about eating mountain sheep, which she tried, but didn't like. She notes that the rest, presumably the men in her group, thought it was good. The fact that they would eat anything, including blackbirds

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<sup>87</sup>Esther Belle Hanna, "Journal" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>88</sup>Catherine Sager Pringle, "Reminiscences, ca. 1850" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>89</sup>Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer, "Diary, 1847" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

in a blackbird soup, was her reasoning for their adaptability to this wild meat.<sup>90</sup> In a reminiscence of an 1863 trip, Margaret Elizabeth Irvin tells of the fact that their party purchased all their wild meats, deer, antelope, and buffalo, at the forts and trading posts along the way. However, her party did kill small game such as grouse and rabbits.<sup>91</sup>

Rabbits and sagehens were some of the uncivilized proteins, in the form of small game, that were consumed. Hanna writes, "Had a large sage hen for supper."<sup>92</sup> The diary of Catherine Stuart Forbes also mentioned the killing of many rabbits and sage hens.<sup>93</sup> Fish were also available, mostly through the Indians. Some pioneers got very creative with their recipes. In her 1852 journal, Hanna wrote that they feasted one night on trout and stewed currants. She commented that it was excellent and that the dish afforded them a rich repast.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Mrs. Samuel Hadley, "Overland Diary, 1851" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>91</sup>Margaret Elizabeth Irvin, "Covered Wagon Days as Related by Margaret Elizabeth Irvin to Myra Abbett Adams in 1934" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Catherine Stuart Forbes, "Diary" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>94</sup>Esther Belle Hanna, "Journal" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

To stretch their provisions, it was typical for the early pioneers to buy fish from the Indians when possible. Mrs. Desire S. Griffin wrote of such an occurrence in her diary. She mentioned that the three sons of the Indian who sold the fish to them joined the Griffin party and enjoyed their dinner with them.<sup>95</sup> This was in 1840 at a time when white man's relations with the Indians were much better than in the years to follow. In her 1852 journal, Hanna wrote that they did not feed the Indians because they did not want to encourage them.<sup>96</sup> By 1882, this fear of the red man had grown to the point that Sarah J. Wiseman Seely said they drove miles to avoid making fires near Indian camps.<sup>97</sup>

Death wasn't much more of a threat on the trail than it was at home. In The Plains Across, John D. Unruh, Jr. states that only six percent of the population died on the trail.<sup>98</sup> This was the same death rate that was occurring in the Midwest at that time. Even though the threat of death on the trail wasn't greater than these people were used to, some of them did face starvation due to misfortune.

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<sup>95</sup>Mrs. Desire S. Griffin, "Diary" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>96</sup>Esther Belle Hanna, "Journal" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>97</sup>Sarah J. Wiseman Seely, "My Crossing the Plains When a Child, 1882" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>98</sup>John D. Unruh, Jr., Plains Across, The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1860 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 516.



One such account was given in the reminiscences of Emeline L. Fuller. Fuller was a girl of thirteen when she crossed the Great Plains in 1860. Her family's party was attacked by Indians and the few who were left alive almost met death by starvation. The foods these people survived on, according to Fuller's, account were horse meat, rosebuds, and "pusley". The latter may have been Indian parsley.<sup>99</sup>

As a rule, the pioneers weren't faced with this severe a situation, though many did face true shortages. For instance, Hanna writes about a September night toward the end of their trip: ". . . we ate our dinner consisting of a piece of dry bread and a cup of water."<sup>100</sup> Mrs.A. Bozarth says that her party was running low on provisions and they were in danger of starving. Eating crumbs out of a cracker sack saved them, until they got a small quantity of provisions from a government party. Soon after, they reached the Grand Ronde Valley and were able to buy supplies that lasted until the end of their journey.<sup>101</sup> In her reminiscences of the 'Lost Train' of 1853, Martha J. Hackersmith tells of the party eating "blue beef" to survive. One old woman couldn't tolerate this food, so she

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<sup>99</sup>Emeline L. Fuller, "Reminiscences" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>100</sup>Esther Belle Hanna, "Journal" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>101</sup>Mrs. L.A. Bozarth, "Narrative of Mrs. L.A. Bozarth, a Pioneer of 1852" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

was fed a half a cup of cornstarch everyday to ward off the starvation that was slowly setting in. The party did make it back to civilization and no one starved to death.<sup>102</sup> Starvation was, by no means, a frequent occurrence on the overland journey.

It is important to note that civilization was supportive of these people making a successful move. The pioneers were a satisfied minority back in the Midwest in that they were not leaving for any religious or political cause. They were also an encouraged and loved minority in that they were not looked upon as shirking their responsibility, but rather as executing an obligation laid down by God - manifest destiny.<sup>103</sup> An example of the warm send-off they had can be seen in Jane Davis Kellog's memoirs of her 1852 trip. She writes that at the beginning of their journey they had freezing weather part of the time. People in houses along the way allowed them to enter their homes and cook on their stoves.<sup>104</sup>

There was help to be had from each other along the trail. One account tells of a man being lost along with his

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<sup>102</sup>Martha J. Hackersmith, "Reminiscences of Overland Journey with the 'Lost Wagon Train' of 1853" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>103</sup>John D. Unruh, Jr., Plains Across, The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1860 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 42-43.

<sup>104</sup>Jane Davis Kellog, "Memoirs of Jane D. Kellog Across the Plains in 1852" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

wagon at the Dalles. Others took in his family and cared for them until the journey was completed.<sup>105</sup> Such sharing was commonplace. The welcome they received upon arrival in Oregon was equally as heartening. Cooper called it her "webfoot welcome" in her 1863 journal. She described it as such: the Oregonians did not wait for their party to arrive, but rather ran out to them with "buckets, baskets and pans and failing these, aprons and hats full of good things, till we were threatened with overloading." She adds they had to hide some of their treasures in the bushes, so as to have room to receive the gifts of the people of the next house.<sup>106</sup> The pioneers were nurtured in their move every step of the way. On the journey, nourishment was taken in whatever form it could be obtained. As can be seen from the evidence given, the type, quantity, and preparation of the food reflected the roles women played within their families.

The great crossing required the most from all the people without regard to gender. Thus, women gained an appearance of equality with men on the trail and the foods they ate had lost their feminine aura which had been cast on them by civilization, the cult of domesticity, and good housekeeping. There were no longer carefully prepared rich

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<sup>105</sup>Martha Ellen Rogers Garrison, "Reminiscences, 1845" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>106</sup>Arvazona Angeline Cooper, "Our Journey Across the Plains from Missouri to Oregon" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

sausages and fancy, dainty cakes. Now there was such foods as buffalo meat, often being cooked by the man of the wagon, bacon, coffee, hard tack, and camp fire, dutch-oven bread.

The foods were generic, in that, except for the luxuries, the staples were common to all. These foods tended to be masculine, harsh and simple. Women had entered a masculine world on the Trail and had assumed a rise in status, emotionally as well as productively. The foods they ate represented the innovative foods of this new world of better conditions for women, but neither the food nor the appearance of equality were to last once they reached Oregon.

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY AMERICAN SETTLEMENT 1840-1880

The foods of the trail became more complex once the settlers reached the Oregon Country. Relationships between men and women in the new land reflected the changes that food had taken. According to Julie Jeffrey's thesis, women maintained the equality with the men in their families which they found on the Trail during the early settlement in the West. However, the following evidence shows that women were once again unequal to men under the dictates of the cult of domesticity during these early years in Oregon.

The first white woman to marry, die and be buried in the Oregon Country was Anna Maria Pittman. Though she did not come over the Oregon Trail, her arrival in 1837 was marked by trends in women's roles and food that would later be evident in the lives of the pioneers in their early Oregon settlement. The first meal eaten in Oregon by Pittman's female party was prepared by a man, an occurrence that would not be repeated. On the night of their arrival at the Methodist mission in the Willamette Valley, the women ate a meal prepared by Cyrus Shephard. Pittman, the future wife of Jason Lee, writes that Shephard "proved himself to

be a splendid cook."<sup>1</sup> The abundance and quality of the food was a sign of what the pioneers would find in Oregon's bountiful nourishment in the years to come. Pittman's first dinner consisted of fried venison, sausages, cheese, unbolted bread (bread with the wheat bran and wheat germ left in tact,) butter, doughnuts, and tea. There were strawberries and cream for dessert.<sup>2</sup>

Marked by the rules of the cult of domesticity, the approach to women's labor that the West was to adopt became evident as soon as these American white women arrived on the frontier. Gay writes that Pittman and the other women missionaries with whom she traveled were immediately assigned duties. Miss Pittman and Mrs. White were put in charge of the domestic affairs. They also assisted Miss Downing and Mr. Shephard at the school for the numerous Indian children.<sup>3</sup> Pittman worked very hard at her domestic chores. For instance, she made no less than twelve pounds of butter a week.<sup>4</sup> Women had been assigned their role in this small society and nothing would change this set pattern. This can be seen in the fact that Pittman even cooked the food for her own wedding, though Cyprus Shephard

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<sup>1</sup>Theresa Gay, Life and Letters of Mrs Jason Lee (Portland, Oregon: Metropolitan Press, 1936), 55.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 55.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 56.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 163.

had proven himself very capable in the kitchen. She mentions making bread and an oven full of pumpkin pies and gingerbread.<sup>5</sup>

Like the foods of the pioneers that were to follow, the cuisine of the Methodist mission resembled the foods that were eaten back East. This can be seen in a letter written by Daniel Lee on May 11, 1837 to some missionaries waiting in Honolulu. He starts by saying the mission had a good crop that year: 400 bushels of wheat, 800 of potatoes, all kinds of vegetables, pork, fowl and fish.<sup>6</sup> He adds,

I must tell you what we had for dinner today, we were all seated around a long table 18 of us, the table set with blue. Our first course was soup, the next boiled salmon, then roasted ducks, then such a roast turkey as I never saw or eat (sic) it was a monster, it was like cutting slices of pork, then wheat pancakes, after that bread and butter and cheese all of their own make, and excellent too.<sup>7</sup>

The food at the mission was excellent and this reflected the quality of the agricultural endeavor these people had undertaken. It can be said that the true significance of the Methodist mission, led by Jason Lee, did not lie in its religious achievements, but rather in the success of its agricultural efforts which ended up playing an important role in attracting the American settlers to Oregon. It is clear that quality food was a high priority

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 153.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 153.

to the missionaries. This demand also was true for the settlers who followed.

Vegetables were not listed among the items eaten at the dinners at the mission. Daniel Lee does mention that "all kinds of vegetables" were grown at the mission in his letter to the missionaries waiting in Honolulu.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that in the 1830s the eating of fresh fruits and vegetables was just becoming established as a desired practice. Fashion and increased wealth produced greater consumption of these foods.<sup>9</sup> Yet, the general population still had many prejudices against these foods. It was believed by many that fruit and vegetables produced disease and death.<sup>10</sup>

A reformer, Sylvester Graham, attacked this false belief in his crusade during the decade of the thirties. He endeavored to get Americans to eat more of these fresh foods and less meat and white flour. His greatest alteration to the American diet was the substitution of graham flour for the highly refined white flour. Graham flour was an unbolted flour with the wheat germ and wheat bran left intact.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 153.

<sup>9</sup>Richard Osborn Cummings, The American and his Food: a History of Food Habits in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), 43.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 44.



Graham was actually a social reformer. According to him, the use of unrefined graham flour, along with the introduction of fresh fruits and vegetables and lowered meat consumption, would change human life and thus change society.<sup>11</sup> He toured the country with his lectures which brought riots in some towns where bakers did not want to give up the use of refined flour. The subject of diet was a controversial issue at that time, one surrounded by ignorance.

Popular belief ran high concerning the ill effects of these vital foods. During the cholera epidemic of 1832, Dr. Martin Payne of New York spoke out against fruit and vegetables professing they caused cholera. His support for this proposal was that cholera ran most rampant in the delta of the Ganges where rice and vegetables were eaten. He recommended a diet of meat, potatoes, milk, tea, and coffee.<sup>12</sup> The author of A Young Lady's Friend wrote in 1833 that people got sick from fruits and vegetables only in the spring because they ate too much of them at first.<sup>13</sup>

In The American Frugal Housewife, a popular cookbook which was published in 1833, Lydia Maria Child only devotes two and a half pages to the topic of vegetables. She briefly discusses the storage and preparation of parsnips,

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 46.

cabbages, onions, squash, potatoes, asparagus, green peas, beet tops, tomatoes, and celery.<sup>14</sup> Fresh produce was just becoming popular in the 1830s in the East. In the years that followed, it was to become very fashionable.

With this background, the settlers came to a land where fruits and vegetables were not only plentiful, but were regarded as a staple. Narcissa Whitman mentioned in her 1836 journal that Fort Vancouver had apples, peaches, grapes, pears, plums, figs, cucumbers, melons, beans, peas, beets, cabbage, tomatoes, and "every kind of vegetable (sic), to (sic) numerous to be mentioned."<sup>15</sup>

By the 1840s, American settlers were depending on fresh produce as a very important ingredient in their diet. In a recollection of an 1847 trip, Anna Green Lee writes that when her family first arrived they had only six dollars with which to buy supplies. She comments on the fact that hunger was their visitor until July when the garden produced. From that time on, she said they had plenty to eat.<sup>16</sup> There were still those that didn't place such an importance on garden produce. Susan Isabel Drew wrote of her 1853 arrival

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<sup>14</sup>Mrs. Lydia Child, The American Frugal Housewife (Boston: Carter, Hendee, and Co. 1833, repr., Boston: Applewood Books, nd.), 33-36.

<sup>15</sup>Narcissa Whitman, My Journal, ed. Lawrance Dodd (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1936), 15.

<sup>16</sup>Anna Green Lee. "Account of Overland Journey, 1847" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

that they had no fruit or vegetables the first year in Oregon; however, they planted a garden the second year.<sup>17</sup>

Oregon offered an abundance of fresh vegetables and fruits to the pioneers' daily fare. These ingredients were readily available and they were partaken of heartily. In a diary of her trip in a prairie schooner from Nebraska, by the late date of 1895, Catherine Stuart Forbes wrote that upon reaching Salem on August 30th they set up camp where hay was fifty cents for the duration of their stay, a price that included all the prunes, apples, and blackberries they could eat.<sup>18</sup> Vegetables and fruits were plentiful, cheap and readily used in Oregon from the early part of the nineteenth century forward.

Though there was a heavy use of fruits and vegetables, food wasn't prepared with as much sophistication as it was in the East in the first half of the nineteenth century. Catherine Sager Pringle's reminiscences of her stay at the Whitman mission in the middle 1840s defined the Whitmans' manner of living as being simple: in the winter the meat was beef or mutton, in the summer there was fish, little pork was eaten during any season.<sup>19</sup> Dr. Marcus Whitman insisted

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<sup>17</sup>Catherine Stuart Forbes. "Diary of Catherine Stuart Forbes" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Catherine Sager Pringle. "Reminiscences, ca. 1850" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

on the use of unbolted flour, instead of "fine flour." Corn meal was also used.<sup>20</sup>

There was little tea or coffee, because of their costliness and their lack of availability in Oregon at this time. Pringle writes that wild fruit was purchased from the Indians and garden vegetables were plentiful, as were milk, butter, and cheese. She notes that cakes and pastries were served only on holidays.<sup>21</sup>

There were several fine descriptions of food in Pringle's recollection that help show the role Indians played in the white man's world in the Pacific Northwest. Both Indians and women lost their equality to the white male of this period. The first meal about which Pringle wrote shows Dr. Whitman's careful, purposeful hospitality. Sometime before the spring of 1847, Whitman gave a feast for a Delaware Indian, Tom Hill. It was attended by the principal Cayuse Indians, but no women were mentioned as being present as guests. A large kettle of nearly twenty gallons of water was used to prepare the mush, "an indispensable article for an Indian's table."<sup>22</sup> Pringle writes that it was prepared by stirring in a large amount of tallow and enough flour or meal to form the proper consistency.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

When finished, the kettle was placed in the center of the room in which the entertaining of the Indians was done. The Indians, in lesser political positions than the chiefs, used vessels for eating the mush, but the doctor and the chiefs dipped their food directly out of the kettle. Pringle also mentions that "meat, bread and other foods" were distributed by servers.<sup>23</sup> The meal was finished with tea which the Indians were allowed to sweeten with sugar. They used this item lavishly.<sup>24</sup>

Pringle also writes about being entertained by a Cayuse Indian, Stickas, and his family, when she went with Doctor Whitman who was administering to the sick Indians. This meal and Pringle's subsequent comments on Indian culture indicate the loss of that culture to the American way. At Stickas's house, Whitman and Pringle were fed "a good breakfast of potatoes, squash, fresh beef and wheat bread."<sup>25</sup> At this point, Pringle remarks on the advancement of the Indians in the eleven years since the white man's arrival. She regards the Indians' way of life, at the time of this Americanized meal, to be "abundant and comfortable" compared to the "wretchedness and starvation" they knew in 1836.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

Contrasted with this apparent loss of culture on the part of the Indians is an earlier recollection by a woman who spent some time at the Whitman mission. In writing about her stay with the Whitmans in 1843, Laura A. Patterson Hawn shows that the Cayuse Indians were still offering their native foods to the white population. She recounts that the Indians brought camas roots and dried meat, which the Americans believed to be horsemeat, to the mission. She wrote that the Indians cooked the camas roots by steaming them in the ground with hot rocks.<sup>27</sup> This is very traditional method of food preparation for the Indians. A meal such as this may have been possible because it occurred at an earlier date than the more Americanized breakfast of the 1847 recollection. In the Americanized meal, Stickas may have just been extending a gracious hand of hospitality, but still he and his family would have had to learn how to cook these foods, a process which in itself indicates a loss of their own cultural ways.

The same white man's world that destroyed the Indians in the Oregon Country took away the seeming equality women had earned on the Oregon Trail. There was a popular national cookbook published in 1859 which was titled The Young Housekeeper's Friend. It expresses well the role which women were expected to play nationwide. Mrs.

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<sup>27</sup>Laura A. Patterson Hawn. "Recollections, 1843" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

Cornelius defines her audience as those who have neither poverty nor riches, but, rather, those looking for economy.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the middle class woman's role was specifically in the home at this time. Cornelius writes:

How often do we see the happiness of a husband abridged by the absence of skill, neatness, and economy in the wife! . . . However improbable it may seem, the health of many a professional man is undermined and his usefulness curtailed, if not sacrificed, because he habitually eats bad bread.<sup>29</sup>

On the trail, many women had done men's work, had helped in the decision making for the family, and had basically taken part in the role that was usually reserved for men. As was dictated by the cult of domesticity which was prevalent on the national level, the role of Oregon women reverted to the sphere of domestic life once they reached their home in the West. On the trail nature was changing social conventions because of these people's need to survive. Once in civilization, the attitudes of both men and women were shaped once again by the cult of domesticity. They changed back to these old roles, because they were comfortable with them. It was not acceptable for women to become part of the male world of Oregon that was built by such strong men as Matthew P. Deady, Asahal Bush and Ben

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<sup>28</sup>M.H. Cornelius, The Young Housekeeper's Friend (Boston: Brown, Taggard and Chase, 1859; reprint, Cambridge; Allen and Farnham, Electrotypers and Printers, nd.), iii.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

Holladay. Jesse Applegate expresses this restrictive social attitude toward women in a letter he wrote to Bethenia Owens on June 23, 1848. He warns Owens against her plans to go back East to study hydropathic medicine; instead, instructing her to stay in Oregon to perfect herself by helping others.<sup>30</sup>

In her reminiscences of her life in Oregon, Lucy Henderson Deady writes very little about herself, or, her own experiences. Rather, she fills her account with her husband's (Matthew P. Deady) achievements.<sup>31</sup> This assessment of her overwhelming focus on her husband is brought out further by noting that she doesn't use her given name anywhere in the recollection. She saw herself as Mrs. Matthew P. Deady. The Judge saw her that way also. Throughout the two volumes of his now published diary, *Pharisee Among the Philistines*, *The Diary of Judge Matthew P. Deady*, he always refers to her as Mrs. Deady. On the other hand, he makes frequent mention of a school teacher at St. Helens School, using only her first name, Lydia.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Jesse Applegate. "Letter to Mrs. B{ethernia} A{ngelina} Owens" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>31</sup>Mrs. Matthew P. Deady, "Crossing the Plains to Oregon in 1846," Oregon Pioneer Transactions, (1928): 57-64.

<sup>32</sup>Malcom, Clark, Jr., ed., Pharisee Among Philistines, The Diary of Judge Mathew P. Deady 1871-1892. (Kingston, Tennessee: 1975) I, II.



It can be seen that men considered women's place to be in the home acting as wife and doing domestic chores. In 1849, Leander N. Belieu was on his way to the gold rush in California. On May 28th, he stopped at Rogue River and sent a letter home to his wife in Polk County, Oregon. This woman, whom he had left with all the work of the homestead, received the word that all was well, but "{m}y shirts ar all durty now and mi washer is not here."<sup>33</sup>

A pioneer woman's work was defined very clearly in a recollection by W.B. Chandler, who ascribes more credit to the pioneer wife and mother for the "Winning of the West" than to her male counterpart. This is how he remembers the pioneer woman's work:

She bore the children, nursed them without benefit of nursing bottle, did the cooking, the housework, made the family clothes and kept them washed and ironed, churned the butter, fed, killed and dressed the chickens, created feather beds and quilts, cut, sewed and made into balls the strips of cloth out of which the rag carpets of the day were woven, and always had a bit of work 'set aside to do when she was resting'.<sup>34</sup>

Some women worked very hard on the frontier. One woman, Mrs. Inez Eugenia Adams Parker recalls a period around 1850 in Yamhill County when her mother cooked over an open fireplace and that she managed the windlass, drawing all the water needed for cooking, washing, scrubbing, and

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<sup>33</sup>Leander N. Belieu. "Letter to Wife" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>34</sup>W.B. Chandler, "I Was a Third Generation Pioneer," Oregon Historical Quarterly 66: 208-217.

bathing.<sup>35</sup> An anonymous author of a diary from Clackamas County says she "worked in the kitchen all day very tired at night." She adds that many came to see skaters on the pond, but she washed and went to bed.<sup>36</sup> This same woman wrote everyday about work: "made a loaf jelly cake and railroad cake went shopping finished Johnny's socks . . ." <sup>37</sup> Another entry was "baked bread and regulated the house."<sup>38</sup> Taxing work was part of these women's lives.

Women worked strenuously and they ate well. Unlike the experience on the Oregon Trail, good food did not necessarily signify equality with men. These women were expected to be in domestic roles. In the cities, the type of food these hard-working women ate, and fed to their families, was fully described by E. Steven in her diary of 1867. There were lemon pies, squash pies, mince pies, berry pies, apple pies, plum pies, meat pies, chicken pies, boiled custard, pork and beans, beef with cabbage and turnips, crab apple jelly, oyster fritters, fried cakes and pork steak.<sup>39</sup> This woman also describes the daily, mundane work of

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<sup>35</sup>Mrs. Inez Eugenia Adams Parker, "Early Recollections of Oregon Pioneer Life," Transaction of Oregon Pioneer Association, (1928): 21.

<sup>36</sup>Anonymous, "Diary, 1868" MS. Clackamas County Historical Society, Oregon City, Oregon.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>E. Steven, "Diary, 1867" MS. Clackamas County Historical Society, Oregon City, Oregon.

sweeping and dusting. A diary of a fifteen year old girl, Maria Jane Renshaw, describes food eaten on a farm in Lane County, Oregon in 1851. She mentioned that her father had gotten four ears of popcorn and some squaw corn. Her mother cooked "a mess of beans" for dinner one night; and, on her parents' anniversary, she cooked a chicken and made chicken soup. There was much talk in her diary of churning and gardening among other chores.<sup>40</sup> Good food was evident, but so was hard work within the restricted sphere of the home.

Despite the difficult work, these women also had leisure time. An anonymous diary from Clackamas County, written in 1875, mentions cooking, cleaning, and sewing, but the day ended with going to a neighbors to eat berries.<sup>41</sup> E. Steven writes of going to the Chinese New Year in 1867.<sup>42</sup> A less exciting activity was that of knitting.<sup>43</sup> There were also some large public celebrations that went on throughout these early years. Laura A. Patterson Hawn wrote her recollections of her first Christmas party in Oregon City in 1843. She writes that Dr. John McCloughlin gave out word for everybody to come. Everything was free. "A

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<sup>40</sup>Maria Jane Renshaw. "Diary of Maria Jane Renshaw" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>41</sup>Anonymous, "Diary, 1875" MS. Clackamas County Historical Society, Oregon City, Oregon.

<sup>42</sup>E. Steven, "Diary, 1867" MS. Clackamas County Historical Society, Oregon City, Oregon.

<sup>43</sup>Anonymous, "Diary, 1873" MS. Clackamas County Historical Society, Oregon City, Oregon.

bateaux load from Vancouver of things to treat the people, everybody was happy."<sup>44</sup>

There were a number of other public affairs that served as exciting diversions for these early settlers. In an 1846 edition of The Oregon Spectator, there was an article about a Washington's Birthday ball produced by Capt. H.M. Knighton, the proprietor of the City Hotel in Oregon City. The ball was held on February 24th instead of its accustomed day of the 22nd. The reason for this was the actual holiday fell on a Sunday which wasn't a proper day for celebration. The newspaper article said that few were expected to show up, because there were rumors that there would be "ardent use of spirits." However, all were sober and the event turned out well.<sup>45</sup> On July 4th of 1846, that same newspaper reported a procession which led to the City Hotel where a public dinner was prepared by Knighton. The dinner was free for all and "believed to have been received with general satisfaction."<sup>46</sup>

Another gala event happened sometime before Christmas in 1850. It was a party for the town of Milwaukie, Oregon at which Lot Whitcomb spoke and the Vancouver Brass Band

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<sup>44</sup>Laura A. Patterson Hawn, "Recollections, 1843" MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>45</sup>W.G. T'Vault, ed, "Washington's Ball," The Oregon Spectator, March 5, 1846.

<sup>46</sup>W.G. T'Vault, ed, "Fourth of July Celebration," The Oregon Spectator, July 9, 1846.

played "The Star Spangled Banner," "Hail, Columbia," and "Yankee Doodle", among other favorites. "Supper was served in good style" by Charles Sanburn of the Willamette Hotel.<sup>47</sup> In an 1853 edition of The Oregonian, the editor, Thomas Dryer, writes about the city's elated welcome of Captain James S. Nash of the steamship, Peytona. This steamship's arrival marked Portland's victory over its rivals in becoming the leading town on the Willamette. The day after the steamship arrived, the citizens of Portland celebrated with an oyster supper.<sup>48</sup> On the day the first planks were laid for the Great Plank Road, which was to lead from Portland to the Tualatin Plains, Portland enjoyed great festivities. There was a "spacious table" set on planks on the afternoon of September 27, 1851. Editor John Orvis Waterman, of The Oregon Weekly Times, reported: "{a}mong the dainties of the table, we noticed a large and well-roasted ox."<sup>49</sup>

Women of the early settlement period in Oregon's cities had chances to experience leisure time at large public events as well as one on one get-togethers with neighbors. Rural women lived lonelier lives. Both sets of women worked

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<sup>47</sup>Lot Whitcomb, ed, "Christmas-Sad Accident-Launch of the New Steamboat," The Western Star, December 26, 1850.

<sup>48</sup>Thomas Dryer, ed., "New Steamship between this City and San Francisco," The Oregonian, December 31, 1853.

<sup>49</sup>Eugene Snyder, Early Portland, Stumptown Triumphant (Portland, Oregon: Binford and Mort, Publishers, 1970), 152.

exceptionally hard and ate well, but neither rural nor city women experienced the equality between the sexes that seemed to exist on the Oregon Trail.

## CHAPTER V

### EPILOGUE: TRANSITION TO MODERN TIMES 1880-1920

The material available for researching the period that marks the transition to modern times was primarily in the form of cookbooks, menus and programs. During this period, these materials were generally written either by or for the upper middle class Oregonian, thus marking a change in the focus of this thesis. However, there remains one menu for a banquet held by the Laundrymen's Association in 1906. It was an elaborate menu, thus indicating that the lower class imitated the upper class in the lavish treatment of food at the turn of the century. Another menu remains for a 1919 banquet for the Portland Typothetae, an association of master printers and typesetters. This shows that the middle class of Oregon was no longer being influenced by the cult of domesticity with its elaborate food, for at this banquet there were such simple foods as fruit cocktail for the appetizer, cream of tomato soup, and lettuce with thousand island dressing. Now, there was a trend toward common foods at public banquets. This menu reflected an end to women's laborious cooking procedures as a result of the end of the "doctrine of the spheres." However, the reflection of the cult of domesticity can be seen in upper class Oregonian

cookbooks until the involvement of the United States in World War I.

For the most part, from the coming of the trans-continental railroad throughout the period of modernization, Oregon cookbooks followed the national trends in portraying the development of women's roles in society, as reflected in the food and the recorded instructions for its preparation and consumption. Therefore some attention has been given to a few national cookbooks in order to compare the information found in the various publications from Oregon with the national trends. In the late nineteenth century and at the very beginning of the twentieth century, national cookbooks still contained many rules on women's place in society.

In 1880, there was a popular cookbook, published in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which was called Buckeye Cookery and Practical Housekeeping. This book places women in the position of being teachers of morality with the responsibility of the entire family's happiness resting on their shoulders. The editor of this collection of women's recipes, Estelle Woods Wilcox, writes: "Bread-making should stand at the head of domestic accomplishments, since the health and happiness of the family depends immeasurably upon good bread . . ." <sup>1</sup> On the title page of this ladies book,

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<sup>1</sup>Estelle Woods Wilcox, ed., Buckeye Cookery and Practical Housekeeping (Minneapolis: Buckeye Publishing Company, 1880; reprint, St. Paul, Minn: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 16.



along with the publishing facts, there was a quote that gave the impression that women's place in life was to be of ultimate support to men both physically and spiritually: "Bad dinners go hand in hand with total depravity, while a properly fed man is already half saved." Women were supposed to save men and the way to do this was through preparation of food. At this time, in Portland, men lived in the worldly sphere, while women's sphere was in the home. Her duty was to provide exquisite food to support the man in her life.

Portland's public eating establishments maintained this standard set by these women practicing the cult of domesticity. There were many public dinners given for the leading men in Portland's thriving business arena. One such dinner was for Henry Villard, a German immigrant, who rose to the top in the railroad industry. He was attempting to make Portland the port of trade for the Northwest by establishing the Oregon Rail and Navigation Company. His venture failed in 1883 and a farewell dinner in his honor shows the elaborate foods consumed in this male-oriented environment. The event took place at Eppinger's Restaurant and the dinner menu was extensive. It was as sophisticated as the men it served. The bill of fare included:

Farewell Dinner to the Villard Party  
Sunday, September 16, 1883

OystersSoupFish

Salmon, Trout a la Cardinale

Relishes

Olives, Radishes, Beets, Pickles, Salade of Achovis

Cold Dishes

Boned Turkey a la Jelly, Smoked Tongue, Ham, Chicken Salade

Relevee de Potage

Petit Pattes a la Reine, Andouilletes a la Provencale

Entrees

Fried Frogs, Vol au Vent a la Financiere, Noix de Veau a la Bedeau, Poulet a la Donna Maria, Tame Duck, Braisee, with Olives

Roast

Turkey Stuffed with Truffles, Saddles of Lamb, Loin of Veal, Ribs of Beef, Stuffed Chicken

Vegetables

Green Peas, String Beans, Green Corn, Cauliflower, Sweet Potatoes, Tomatoes

SaladeGame

Saddle of Venison, Cranberry Sauce, Pheasant, Grouse

Dessert

Rum Jelly, Wine Jelly, Assorted Cakes

Ice Cream

Vanilla, Chocolate

Fruits of the SeasonFrench Coffee<sup>2</sup>

This sophistication of food was the rule during this period. An 1888 program for a banquet in honor of Queen Victoria's birthday, at which Judge Mathew P. Deady gave a toast, shows another full meal which was served at Eppingers:

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<sup>2</sup>Business, Miscellaneous - Restaurants. MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

Banquet in Celebration of the Birthday  
of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria  
24 May 1888  
Portland, Oregon

Soup

Consomme Oxtail

Fish

Halibut a la Hollandaise Potato-Croquettes

Entrees

Chicken a la Toulouse Oyster Patties

Salad

Chicken Crab

Vegetables

Asparagus Green Peas

Cold Dishes

Boned Turkey Truffles in Jelly Ham Decorated with Jelly

Roast

Beef Spring Chicken Saddle of Mutton

Dessert

Plum Pudding Decorated Macaron Pyramids Assorted Cakes

Vanilla Ice Cream

Fruit, Nuts, etc.<sup>3</sup>

The wives of these men cooked equally elaborate food at home. Webfoot Cook Book, a Portland culinary book published in 1885, describes the exquisite foods being prepared at this time by women living in the "separate sphere" of their own homes, and from there catering to the needs of the men in their lives. Among the collection, were recipes for "Porterhouse Steak a la Espanola," "Bocup a la Mode" (a beef dish), "Scalloped Oysters," "Deviled Crabs," and "Baked Sturgeon."<sup>4</sup> These foods were complicated in their preparation and complex in their taste. Two such recipes from this cookbook display the careful attention these

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<sup>3</sup>Manners and Customs - Amusements, Invitations. MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>4</sup>San Grael Society of the First Presbyterian Church, Webfoot Cookbook (Portland, Oregon: W.B.Ayer and Co., 1885).

nineteenth century upper middle class women gave to the men in their lives through the foods they cooked for them:

#### Trinity Church Salad

The chickens should be put in water which is very salted and cooked until thoroughly done, and let them lay in water until cold. Pull into shreds (which may be cut if too long,) remove all skin and bone. Use two eggs for every chicken; beat the yolks a little, then stir French salad oil very slowly, a few drops at a time. If the oil begins to separate add a few drops of lemon juice. Add a little cayenne pepper, two salt spoons of salt, a teaspoon of mustard dissolved in a hard boiled yolk of one egg, which has been beaten to a paste with a little oil. When the yolks have been beaten to a stiff batter with the oil mix in the cold water in which the chicken has been boiled and enough vinegar to make the dressing rather thicker than rich cream. Taste it to see if seasoned right. If the dressing should curdle put the yolks of one or two eggs on another platter and add the curdled dressing by degrees, seasoning to taste. Take one bowl of chopped celery to a bowl of chopped chicken. If you like, beat the whites to a stiff froth, mix with a little dressing, stir into the salad oil and put the rest on top. Good for grouse, quail or pheasant. One grouse goes as far as two chickens.<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. J. Myriek

#### Spiced Salmon

Boil three pounds of fresh salmon in water. Then put to boil one pint of vinegar, two tablespoons melted butter, two tablespoons whole allspice, two tablespoons mixed mustard, one teaspoon salt, one quarter teaspoon cayenne pepper. Let the above mixture boil from five to ten minutes then pour hot over the fish. Set aside to cool for twelve hours before serving and serve cold.<sup>6</sup>

Mrs. S.G. Reed

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 63-4.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 16.

Published in 1897, A Portland Girl at the Chafing Dish also exemplifies the detail and time-consuming care upper class Portland women put into the elegant food they prepared. This small book contained chafing dish recipes for oysters, crab, lobster, frogs, mussels, beef, and eggs.<sup>7</sup>

As the twentieth century began, Oregon's women remained the moral teachers in the family. This element of the cult of domesticity is prevalent in the recipes published during this period. In the years 1902, 1903, and 1904, respectively, Portland, First Congregational Church, Ladies Aid, Dainty Dishes, The Ashland Cook Book, and The Alpha Club Cook Book, contained four different recipes for scripture cake. These recipes allowed women to study the Bible while they were baking. This reinforced the ideology of the cult of domesticity held by these women at this time. It helped to make them moral teachers responsible for the well-being of all the members of their family. This recipe aided these women to reign supreme within the spheres of their own homes. One of the versions was in The Ladies Aid First Congregational Church Cookbook, published in 1902:

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<sup>7</sup>Alice Sansbury, A Portland Girl at the Chafing Dish (Portland, Oregon: By the author, 1897).

### Scripture Cake

One cup butter, Judges 5:25; 3 1/2 cups flour, 1 Kings 4:22; 3 cups sugar, Jeremiah 6:20; 2 cups raisins, 1 Samuel 30:12; 2 cups figs, 1 Samuel 30:12; 1 cup water, Genesis 24:17; 1 cup almonds, Genesis 43:11; 6 eggs, Isaiah 10:14; a little salt, Leviticus 2:13; 1 tablespoon honey, Exodus 16:31; sweet spices to taste, 1 Kings 10:10; 2tps. baking powder, 1 Cor 5:6. Follow Solomon's advice for making good boys and you will have a good cake, Prov. 23:14.<sup>8</sup>

The above three cookbooks further show that women were still preparing fine food for men at the turn of the century and that their role was that of housewife. The Ashland Cook Book had recipes for such exquisite foods as duck, quail, lobster, crab, and "Possum Surprise," a whole tenderloin, split and stuffed with mashed sweet potato.<sup>9</sup> However, these women did expect to do housework. There was a recipe for "Washday Meat Pie" which contained left-over veal.<sup>10</sup> At this time, veal was inexpensive, since it was cheaper to slaughter young bulls than it was to raise them. Therefore, on washdays, women served an easy, but still delicious, dish made from cheap left-overs.

Not just the wealthy ate well during this time in Portland's history. There was a banquet for the laundry

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<sup>8</sup>The Ladies Aid of the First Congregational Church, Portland First Congregational Church Ladies Aid, Dainty Dishes (Portland, Oregon: The Ladies Aid of the First Congregational Church, 1902), 29.

<sup>9</sup>Ladies of the Saturday Afternoon Club, The Ashland Cook Book (Ashland, Oregon: Ladies of the Saturday Afternoon Club, 1903), 39.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

drivers at the Portland Commercial Club in 1906 which had food with similarities in quality, if not quantity, to that of the Villard party. These foods were not ordinary or mundane, even though they were for the working class. They indicate the remarkable quality of food that was being served publicly for all people in the period that corresponds to that in which the cult of domesticity was prevalent. The laundry men enjoyed the following meal:

Third Annual Dinner  
Tendered by the Laundry Drivers  
and the Laundrymen's Association  
Portland, Oregon  
December 13, 1906 8:00 p.m.  
Portland Commercial Club

Toke Points on the Half Shell  
Celery Olives  
Turbans of Black Cod, a la Orly  
Potato Croquettes  
Broiled Spring Chicken, au Cresson  
Julienne Potatoes  
Waldorf Salad  
Neapolitan Ice Cream  
Assorted Cake  
Cafe Noir<sup>11</sup>

In the early twentieth century, the cult of domesticity continued on the national scene. In 1906, Mrs. Francis Carruthers wrote Twentieth Century Home Cookbook, which was published in Chicago.<sup>12</sup> This set of recipes

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<sup>11</sup>Manners and Customs, Amusements - Menus, Programs. MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>12</sup>This cookbook is among those kept in the Stevens-Crawford Museum, in Oregon City, Oregon, as on that was used by Mertie Stevens and her mother, Mary Elizabeth Crawford Stevens. It reflected an influence from national cookbooks that was being experienced by women of Oregon in the early twentieth century.

shows that in 1906 some national cookbooks still connected cooking with rules for etiquette, housekeeping and finance. Twentieth Century Home Cook Book reflects a reaction to the women's reform movement going on at that time which was trying to empower women by giving them the right to vote. The book promises women authority by professing to "give confidence to any woman in the Control and Management of her own Home." It promises to give her "the magic key to the Home Beautiful, the power to make it healthy yet economical, cultured yet simple."<sup>13</sup>

The attitude underlying the objectives of this book still had women placed within the role set by the cult of domesticity. With the promise of power over their homes, ladies were to be placed on superficial pedestals, while giving their total lives to the support of men and children. The power women were being encourage to seek was that gained by marrying a man, and, consequently, becoming in charge of a household. This feminine goal of marriage can be seen in a 1902 publication, Portland First Congregational Church Ladies Aid Dainty Dishes, which advertised: "These Cooking Recipes should win any man's heart, as often as a man's

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<sup>13</sup>Mrs. Francis Carruthers, Twentieth Century Home Cook Book (Chicago: Thomas and Thomas, 1906) preface.



heart is won through his stomach. Make doubly sure by using the best enamelled ware ever made."<sup>14</sup>

By the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, Portland culinary publications were still being written by upper class women as was indicated in the section on etiquette for table service in The Neighborhood Cook Book, published in 1914. These instructions talk about the important things that should be remembered by the maid; since the employment of a maid indicates wealth, it follows that the recipes from this collection were intended for wealthier families. Another indication that the women that wrote this collection were monied was the mention of long vacations in this statement which appeared in the household hint section: "Your long-closed house will doubtless smell close and musty when you return from your summer vacation." The solution for this problem was to roast apple peelings on the range.<sup>15</sup>

The Neighborhood Cook Book had recipes for elegant foods to match their level of prosperity marked by maids and beach homes. Several particularly rich recipes were "Artichoke Relish" and "Beefsteak a la Mirabeau." The first

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<sup>14</sup>The Ladies Aid of the first Congregational Church, Portland, First Congregational Church Ladies Aid, Dainty Dishes (Portland, Oregon: The Ladies Aid of the First Congregational Church, 1902), 12.

<sup>15</sup>Council of Jewish Women, The Neighborhood Cook Book (Portland, Oregon: Portland Section of the Council of Jewish Women, 1912, reprint, Portland Section of the Council of Jewish Women, 1914), 313.

was pate de foie spread on squares of toast topped with artichoke hearts, olives, and mayonnaise.<sup>16</sup> The second recipe was a porterhouse steak garnished with anchovies and stoned olives which were stuffed with butter and chopped parsley. This was served with tomatoes and fried potato balls which were placed in shells made from a noodle mixture. A sauce made of out of chicken stock and lightly flavored with tomato catsup was poured around the steak.<sup>17</sup>

Another indication of the wealth and the ultra-feminine attitude of these women writers can be seen in The Portland Women's Exchange Cook Book, published in 1913. It gave indications that the cult of domesticity, with the implications of women's capacity for complete care of the home, still influenced the women who compiled the recipes in it. In More Work for Mother, Ruth Schwartz Cowan writes that health care did not become modern until the end of the nineteenth century, at which time centralized institutions were introduced. The urban poor received hospital care long before the urban rich, for the rich were treated at home and only the indigent went to hospitals.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, cookbooks of the nineteenth century, which were written by monied women, contained a section at the back of each book

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 130.

<sup>18</sup>Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work for Mother (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 75-78.

which was entitled "Invalid Recipes." These recipes would enable the woman of the house to administer homecare to the medically ill.

Though it was published in 1913, after public hospitals had been established, The Portland Women's Exchange Cook Book still had a section on invalid recipes. This exemplifies this group's belief in the cult of domesticity which had a woman capable of fulfilling all the roles, including that of health provider, in her separate sphere, the home. Examples of these invalid recipes were "barley water," which was barley, sugar, lemon and water, and an invalid soup, a broth made out of a mutton's neck, a calf's foot, beef, and veal.<sup>19</sup> These recipes indicated that the wealthy women writing the collection still connected themselves with the nineteenth century attitudes of homecare for the rich. The wealth of these women could be seen in the elegant recipes they published, such as "Son of Rest Beefsteak," a porterhouse steak which was dressed with butter, mustard, and sherry,<sup>20</sup> and "Halibut Cheek Salad," a salad made with the superior cheeks of the halibut.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Portland Women's Exchange, The Portland Women's Exchange Cook Book (Portland, Oregon: Portland Women's Exchange, 1913, repr. Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1973), 247.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 126.

The Portland Women's Exchange was an organization run by women with money. It had its origins in the Portland Women's Union which was organized on May 1, 1887. The Union's purpose was "the promotion of industrial, educational, and social advancement of business women and girls."<sup>22</sup> The Union was Portland's first charitable organization and it was promoted by a group of socially prominent women who wanted to provide housing for "working women without home ties." At an unknown date, under the management of the Union, the Portland Women's Exchange was set up to help women, who could no longer work in the business world. At the Exchange, these women sewed, knit, and made preserves and other simple saleable items. The Exchange had a gift shop and a restaurant and all proceeds went to helping the women. In 1910, the Portland Women's Exchange withdrew from the Portland Women's Union, but the Exchange continued to be a big success.<sup>23</sup> In 1913, it published The Portland Women's Exchange Cookbook to help raise money. Thus, it can be seen that this cookbook reflected the attitudes of wealthy women and these attitudes were still immersed in the ideology of the cult of domesticity as can be seen by the inclusion of a chapter on

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<sup>22</sup>"Portland Women's Union Active in City 45 Years," The Oregonian, (May 8, 1932): 17.

<sup>23</sup>"Women's Exchange, Financial Success," The Evening Telegram, (May 9, 1916): 11.

invalid recipes as well as the sophistication of its regular recipes.

At the same time as the cult continued however, there were seeds of change happening nationally by the early twentieth century that changed food for the middle class. National cookbooks marked the trend toward the end of the cult of domesticity in the early twentieth century. In 1909, the whole nation applauded a cookbook titled The White House Cook Book, A Comprehensive Cyclopedia of Information for the Home. The book's authors, Hugo Zieman and Mrs. F.L. Gillette, prefaced their work with the statement that their book represents "the progress and present perfection of the culinary art more than any previous work."<sup>24</sup> They maintained this single culinary objective in their writing, leaving it totally devoid of any instructions on how women were to live their lives according to strict social rules that would secure their place in society.<sup>25</sup>

In the decade that followed the publishing of The White House Cook Book, the public dinners for the middle class that were being held in Portland were much less refined in taste. The simpler menus reflected a change that had

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<sup>24</sup>Hugo Zieman and Mrs. F.L. Gillette, The White House Cook Book, A Comprehensive Cyclopedia of Information for the Home (New York: The Salfield Publishing Company, 1909), iii.

<sup>25</sup>This cookbook was found in the small collection at the Stevens-Crawford Museum, thus it was being used in Oregon in the early twentieth century. The movement away from the cult of domesticity that was mirrored in its pages can be seen in Oregon menus as well.

occurred in women's relations to men. Women were demanding change at the turn of the century. On the national level, there was a woman who had a particular vision. Her name was Charlotte Perkins Gilman and she wanted to revolutionize woman's role by industrializing housework. This was to be done by using food cooked outside the home, ready-made clothing, and child care. Gilman was trying to find equality for women by doing away with the separate spheres in which only men functioned in the world and women existed at home. Her idea was that women were to join the work force as equals to men.<sup>26</sup>

Women of the nineteenth century were producers and twentieth century women are consumers. This can be seen in the fact that by the later part of the nineteenth century, a cow was not butchered at home, but, rather, sent to the slaughter house. Commercial flour milling, which started early in the nineteenth century, was employed by almost every housewife by the twentieth century. By 1900, the ready-made clothing business was booming.<sup>27</sup> Cafeterias, the new fast service food outlet, marked a shift to the availability of quick food in public places. They were a sign of the beginning of the new era of consumption and, also, the beginning of the end of the old, laborious care

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<sup>26</sup>Susan Strasser, Never Done, A History of American Housework (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 219-223.

<sup>27</sup>Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work For Mother (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 71-3.

women took in preparation of food. Cafeterias were first established in the city of Chicago in the early 1890s. From there, they moved to Los Angeles and San Francisco. Gaining popularity in the twentieth century, they helped to mark the shift in the production and consumption of everyday food from the domestic walls of a woman's home to the public eatery both on the national scale as well as in Oregon.<sup>28</sup>

Though Oregon was moving in the direction of liberation of women from the burden and time-consuming preparation of home-cooked food, it was still evident that the Oregon public regarded the cooking of food to be in women's sphere. In Portland, the year of 1908 brought the opening of a eating establishment at 86 Third Street. George H. Watson was the proprietor of the Baltimore Cafeteria. Its existence shows that the Portland public still accepted the fact that the domestic art of cooking was connected with women even in a public setting. Watson advertised: "You would not marry a wife without seeing her . . . buy a home without seeing it . . . purchase a suit or hat without inspecting it. Why buy food without seeing it." He finished his publicity with the statement: "All Food, Prepared, Baked and Cooked by Women."<sup>29</sup> Thus, even though Portland was beginning to change its attitude about women's

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<sup>28</sup>Richard Osborn Cummings, The American and his Food (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), 153.

<sup>29</sup>Business, Miscellaneous - Restaurants. MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

place being in the home, the city still valued food that was "{p}repared, {b}aked, and {c}ooked by women."

Women gained suffrage in Oregon in 1912. As mentioned, Oregon's food changed around this time, illustrating women's fight for rights. This can be seen in that public dinners were no longer as exquisite as before. Middle class women were silent at this time in terms of expressing their food habits in cookbooks. Gauging from the fact that commercial preparations diminished in style, it would seem that middle-class women no longer labored over a hot stove in detailed preparation of elaborate foods for the men in their lives. A 1910 banquet was very simple in comparison to the nineteenth century dinners that preceded it.

Oberlin Banquet  
 Toastmaster: Judge W. M. Cake  
 March 25, 1910

Oyster Cocktail  
Olives Almonds  
Roast Duck  
Mashed Potatoes Green Peas  
Salad  
Ice Cream Cake  
Coffee<sup>30</sup>

This simple approach to food became even more evident by the end of the decade. A 1919 banquet for the Portland Typothetae, the association of master printers and typesetters, was held at the Benson Hotel featured such

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<sup>30</sup>Manners and Customs, Amusements - Menus, Programs.  
 MS. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.



ordinary foods as fruit cocktail, cream of tomato soup, and lettuce with thousand island dressing.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, there were cookbooks published at this time that were in better taste than this simple dinner at the Benson reflected. The cookbooks had recipes for more expensive foods than those being served at Portland's cafeteria. However, they were written by women with more wealth than that possessed by the people who frequented the Baltimore Cafeteria. There was a division of classes between those eating at cafeterias and the Jewish women writing The Neighborhood Cook Book. Up until this period, the records of food prepared and eaten in Oregon was generally that of the wealthier class. By the twentieth century, foods of the middle and lower class began to be recorded as well, in the forms of menus from less expensive restaurants and cookbooks prepared by and for middle class women. A great number of these middle class cookbooks appeared in Portland in the years following 1920. The nineteenth and early twentieth century cookbooks, prior to this, were collections of recipes contributed by such upper class ladies as Mrs. Simeon Reed.

The lower and middle classes were silent in regards to food during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Oregon's history, with the exception of the banquet for the Laundrymen's Association in 1906, the

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

establishment of the Baltimore Cafeteria in 1908, and the 1919 banquet for the Portland Typothetae. The 1906 banquet for the laundrymen showed how the working class was imitating the well-to-do during the last of the period marked by the ideology of the cult of domesticity as it was known on the national basis. The Baltimore Cafeteria marked a change in Portland's approach to everyday food that followed the national trend, but it indicated Portland's reluctance to let the preparation of food leave women's sphere of activity. It did show that preparation of middle class food was moving away from women's arena of production in the home. Finally, the banquet for the Portland Typothetae showed how mediocre food preparation become for the middle class with such foods as cream of tomato soup and fruit cocktail at a public banquet.

While there was disparity between the styles of food consumed by the upper and the middle classes during the period before World War I, the entry of the United States into that global conflict played a real unifying factor in these two different classes with the nation's attempt to conserve food. During World War I, women as a group became effective in conservation by contributing to the war effort through organizing to meet goals and through actively attempting to follow the guidelines given by the Food Administration to conserve on food. In Portland, women started organizing on August 23, 1917 to meet the need of

conservation. Assembling at Liberty Hall, they defined their goal to be the registration of every housewife by September 15th, in order to obtain their pledges to have only one delivery a day from their local grocery store. This was to lower the prices of the groceries.<sup>32</sup> In July of that year, women were advised to save "peelings, crumbs, plate and pan scrapings, bones, egg shells, nutshells, bacon rinds and the like, with now and then a crust of bread and a dish of fruit or vegetables." These were to be used for chicken feed to eliminate waste.<sup>33</sup>

People, of all classes, also experienced a change in the food that was available in restaurants. On September 25, 1917, Portland's eating establishments agreed on some guidelines for their respective food services. Since there was a great drive to conserve white flour and sugar in order to send these foods to the troops overseas, the Food Administration had issued orders to restrict the purchase of these commodities. This affected all consumers, those at home and those in commercial eateries. Thus, the first guideline of the organized restaurants was that they would use more breads made from ingredients other than white flour and they would entirely discontinue the custom of serving white bread before the meat order. Another rule was that

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<sup>32</sup>"Women Meet to Plan for Saving," The Oregonian, (August 23, 1917): 18.

<sup>33</sup>"Women Advised to Save Table Scraps for Chicken Feed," The Oregon Journal, (July 18, 1917): 16.

they would eliminate meat courses to a great extent by featuring vegetable meals.<sup>34</sup> There was a suggestion to serve "chicken, fish, hare, rabbit, duck, goose, lobster, oysters, clams, seafoods and egg dishes of all kinds."<sup>35</sup> Beef, mutton, and pork were to be offered in smaller portions and at higher prices if they must be used.<sup>36</sup> Finally, due to a shortage of soap fats, because tropical oils for soapmaking had been reduced, there was conservation of butter and oil.<sup>37</sup>

There were several publications in Portland at that time with the purpose of presenting recipes that would conform to the requirements set by conservation. Telegram Conservation Cook Book stated in its preface that the book was the first cookbook to meet "the prescribed goal for good nutrition and at the same time provide the exact cost per person for each recipe."<sup>38</sup> Each recipe was written indicating its precise cost:

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<sup>34</sup>"Menus Change September 25th," The Oregonian, (September 18, 1917): 4.

<sup>35</sup>"Hotel Men Will Help Save Food," The Oregonian, (September 12, 1917): 13.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Aunt Prudence, {Mrs. Inie Gage Chapel}, Telegram Conservation Cook Book (Portland, Oregon: The Telegram, 1917).

Cream of Cauliflower Soup

Cauliflower, leaves and core	\$0.0000
1 qt. whole milk, less some of the cream	.1000
1 T. flour	.0009
1 T. butter	.0156
1 t. salt	.0003
Dash of cayenne pepper	.0001
Gas	.0041
Total for 3 pints or 6 cups	\$0.1210
(One cup costs 2 cents)	

Cook the finely chopped inner leaves of a fine cauliflower, using all tender ribs and tender core. Steam in about one quart of water until very tender, simmering in an uncovered vessel. Rub through a course sieve. Melt butter in double boiler, add flour, cook a moment, adding a little milk and stirring until smooth. Then add the rest of the milk and the cauliflower puree, and, when hot, serve."<sup>39</sup>

During this period, women affected a change through their household management by practicing the rules given for conservation and initiating some goals of their own, such as the pledge to minimize home deliveries of groceries. By the end of the war, as a national group, women had become empowered by the federal suffrage amendment in 1918. However, females in Oregon got suffrage in 1912 and had experienced the benefits of a growing public awareness that had allowed Oregon women to continue their movement away from the ideology of the "separate sphere" of domesticity into the new era of modern times.

Thus, by modern times it is clear that, with the exception of Fort Vancouver and the Oregon Trail experience, Oregon's experience with food followed the national trend in portraying the development of women's roles in society. The

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 79.

story of women in Oregon began with Fort Vancouver where the women of the fort lived a life that was elevated above the work world of the men in their lives, their less fortunate Indian sisters in the employees's village outside the walls, and, even, the lives of the white women these men had known in England. These English men brought from home a stereotype of a woman's role as dictated by the then popular cult of domesticity. Once in Oregon, by excluding them from household supervision and cooking, these men made women's sphere even smaller than it had been in England. The men who brought this mold for women's existence also brought an English style of eating from their homelands to Fort Vancouver. Their foods were refined and their table service was elegant. The very refinement of their eating customs marked the place women held in this society as one being carved out by the cult of domesticity.

When the American missionaries and settlers began their trek across the Overland Trail, they were confronted with having to eat crude foods. Some of these were wild, most were just basic foods brought from home, such as beans, bacon, and coffee. These foods varied from those the pioneers had known in the East. Nature blurred the social roles these people had known at home as well. Women did not have a separate sphere on the trail, for they engaged in all types of labor. Also marking trail women's independence, females were part of the decision making in some instances.

The records show that wagons with good food had a better social climate for the women in them. These foods marked improved nutrition, not the exaggerated elegance of the aliments which were popular in societies dominated by the cult of domesticity.

Because it was comfortable and familiar, the early American settlers, who had come over the Oregon Trail, reverted to their employment of separate spheres once they had arrived in Oregon. The cult of domesticity became more apparent as the society became more established. In the meantime, the men expected women to do their wash, supervise their houses, and to fulfill all other obligations assigned to females. The food these people ate was hearty and good, complete with Oregon's bounty of fruits and vegetables. The excellence of food preparation became more evident with the worldliness that followed the coming of the railroads.

The end of the nineteenth century marked a period of sophistication in the culinary arts in Portland, Oregon. As the cookbooks of this time showed, the cult of domesticity was thriving. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the world of separate spheres began to crumble. Women were involved in reform and food of the middle class was losing its elegance and becoming simple and ordinary. Food of the upper class remained sophisticated in the period leading up to World War I, which indicates a need of the upper class women of Portland to retain the ideology of the

cult of domesticity. World War I brought all women together with the cause of conservation. This was a time in which food continued to lack excellence. Not since the renewed interest in the sophisticated food in the 1980s, has Oregon seen the resplendence in the culinary arts that it knew in Henry Villard's day.



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