

THE PIONEER WOMEN OF OREGON

By Mrs. Owens-Adair, M. D.

NANCY IRWIN MORRISON.

A part of this sketch of that remarkable pioneer woman, Mrs. Nancy Irwin Morrison, was furnished me by her son...

My mother was born April 27, 1808, in Anderson county, Mo. She was the mother of nine children, thirty-one grand children and eleven great grandchildren.

We crossed the Missouri river en route to Oregon, May 2, 1841, and reached Astoria January 19, 1842, after an eight days' trip down the river in an open canoe.

The rain continued throughout the entire trip down the river. The family were wet from head to foot. The time we started for Oregon until we reached Astoria, over nine months later, we have often heard mother say that when she took the beds up from the floor the next morning in Astoria, the floor was wet where they had lain, so saturated was everything from the continuous rain.

Mr. Trask met us at the wharf and taking my youngest sister and a brother-in-law under each arm, went ashore. Father followed with my youngest brother, and mother with rest of the children followed up the rear. I think I can see my mother's face now with such a discouraged expression. She said then that she would have sold out for a "prosperous" \$50, cents.

Mother brought a little wax wheel, a bunch of flax and a sack of wool, but no cards. We children picked the wool from which she spun yarn and we knit stockings and from the flax she spun sewing thread.

When father went to the Cayuse we and was gone from December 1st. My mother managed everything putting in the crops, making butter and doing everything that was to be done. And in addition, she did any work that she could get to do for the support of the family. I remember that she worked for many days with the help of two children, cutting a net that had been woven too coarse for which she only received 10 cents per day. I also remember that she paid the taxes for one year by knitting socks.

At the eighteenth meeting of the Oregon Pioneer Association held in Portland, June 11, 1890, Mr. Miller paid the claim.

following interesting sketch of Mrs. Morrison:

It is a labor of love on the part of the writer to attempt thus to convey to others the character of this estimable woman, as seen in the toilsome scenes and trying location, the sleepless vigils and constant readiness to meet and overcome or endure the trials in which her duties as a wife and mother placed her as an emigrant to Oregon and as a settler in the country upon her arrival.

My task is grateful to me because, through Mrs. Morrison was I think a constant representative of her class, there were many her peers, and some more than her peers in artificial acquirements, while some might fall below her; so that I think, all things considered, she was a good representative. The same was true of her husband. They were both descendants of pioneer settlers of Kentucky, where they were born in the early part of this century, grew up and married and moved west to Missouri with the frontier settlement. Here I wish to speak of the requirements of this worthy pair of representative Americans of a class whose work is done on this continent. Neither of them were much interested in the school teacher. He could read, which he did on the subject of political economy studiously, at every opportunity. He could write also, but with such difficulty that it was never congenial employment. She could read with difficulty, but rarely attempted it in the prime of her life when her children claimed her attention. Later in life it was a source of great comfort to her.

The New Testament being her favorite book. Of course, she was versed and very expert in the domestic labors, which in her early life involved cooking, dairy management, spinning, weaving and carding, as well as the rougher preparation of flax and hemp for the spinning process. She brought with her across the plains a few wool, flax and bobbin weaving, etc., necessary for domestic manufacture of clothing. She had another requirement not usual to women of her class. She was a fine needle worker. As a frontiersman's daughter, left to her father's household, she had been taught the use of the rifle, but never effected it in manly ways. I have heard her tell of killing a hawk in defense of her property, but never saw her handle the rifle we called her gun, although I had observed her aiming when it and the ammunition were one night when the camp was in alarm, expecting a night attack from Indians.

At the time I first saw Mrs. Morrison at her Missouri home, I made up my mind to be kind and to be kind to her like a native, where most and that may surprise you, though it is not so, though you would for even a burglar's line it is not valuable to be thus treated.

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