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Days On The Road: Crossing The Plains In 1865

Sarah Raymond Herndon

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“Why are we here? Why have we left home, friends, relatives, associates, and loved ones, who have made so large a part of our lives and added so much to our happiness?”

On May 1, 1865, Sarah Raymond mounted her beloved pony and, riding alongside the wagon carrying her mother and two younger brothers, left war-torn Missouri and headed west.

With the sole motive of bettering themselves, the Raymonds began their journey undecided as to whether California or Oregon would be their ultimate destination.

By the middle of June, however, they had been persuaded that Montana was in fact the place to make for and the train altered path accordingly.

As they passed through Iowa, Nebraska and Wyoming towards the Rocky Mountains, they faced all manner of perils in experiencing the harsh reality of life on the Great Plains.

After four months and four days, the wagon train finally arrived in Virginia City, Montana in early September, and they set about beginning their new lives.

Unvarnished and evocative, Days on the Road is an extraordinary journal of what it was really like on the trail for the many who emigrated west in a bid to start over.

Sarah Raymond Herndon (1840-1914) arrived in Montana at the height of the Gold Rush in 1865. After teaching there for one school year, she married James M. Herndon in 1867. In addition to Days on the Road she also kept a diary of her experiences in Virginia City.

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Olive Griffin:

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Amy Terrell:

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