

Diary of Luna E. Warner

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Characters:

Luna: age 15 when diary begins

Walter and Alice Cleveland Warner: her parents

Louie: Luna's brother

Frank and Julia Cleveland Warner: Luna's aunt and uncle

Oramel, Arabella, Alton and May: their children, Luna's cousins

Eli and Lucia Cleveland Warner: Luna's aunt and uncle

Velma, Venelia and Vesteen: their children, Luna's cousin

Howard: Luna's uncle

Note: Walter, Frank and Eli are brothers; their wives, Alice, Julia and Lucia are sisters

The diary begins when the extended family has left home in Massachusetts and is about to board a train in New York City to travel to take up homestead claims near Cawker, Kansas, on the plains in the western part of the state.

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Tuesday, February 28 [1871]-In the morning we all started for New York bag and baggage. When we got there all the girls got into the horse cars and rode up to 8th Avenue. The girls got their pictures taken. Then we went back to the Astor House and stayed until night when Aunt Abbie, Lamartine, Viola, and Genelia went back to Staten Island and the rest of us went over to Jersey City on the boat and took the cars for Kansas. We had a car to ourselves.

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

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

Friday, March 3-Every day is the same, only each is more tiresome than the last.

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

Saturday, March 11-Cold and rainy. We loaded up, pulled down the tent and started up the valley. We ride on Uncle Eli's wagon on top of goods. There are so many of us that some have to walk all the time. We passed several prairie dog towns. We stopped at Lonzsey Hotel at 8 o'clock. Gena is sick. She rode all day. We had a good supper.

March 15-Cold and stormy. We moved into a dugout. It is a nasty, dark place. We went to most every house but could not find a warm place. We froze all day and starved too. In the

afternoon Mama and I started out to find a place to sleep. We are to sleep in the Post Office. I am awful homesick.

March 16-We went to the dugout again and ate what passed for a breakfast, then the men had a jaw and the women a cry, then we started on a-foot as usual. It is most all prairie dog towns all the way. We left Mr. Wilson at Beloit under the doctor's care. At night stopped at Glen Elder on Asher Creek. It is quite a pretty place for Kansas.

March 18-All the men started off to hunt up claims. The 3 boys went hunting. They got back at dark with 5 lbs. of buffalo meat which they bought at 3 cents a lb. There are 3 kinds of flowers in bloom here. We bathed for the first time since we started from home.

March 24-Some men went to the claims with rifles and shovels to work. All the men and boys that were left started off buffalo hunting. We all eat nothing but spider bread and meat and sorghum until yesterday we had beans. We eat more all the time and are just as hungry.

March 27-We started for a log house just opposite our claims to live till we get houses built. I walked. We crossed Oak Creek. It is a very bad crossing. The log house is one little room. The men went back to Cawker after another load of goods. Gena took Henry's revolver and I took Louie's and we waded across the river and went over all the claims. We saw 5 wild turkeys and 2 ducks. I shot at a turkey but did not hit it. We waded back across the river and went home. It was dark when we got there and the folks were out hunting for us. We got some gooseberries. I shot at a

large animal in the dark but did not hit it. When we went to bed we had to pack as tight as we could. Some slept out.[3]

April 9-It rained and hailed this evening. The fireplace smoked so we could not stand it. This morning we saw 6 buffaloes coming down the river. Louie took the rifle and I took the revolver and went under the bluff until we got opposite them. They came toward us and we lay down and waited until they got near, then Louie fired. He shot 5 times. How they did run!

April 10-The snow sifted into our faces all night. Our fireplace smokes very badly. It keeps our eyes crying all the time. Toward night it cleared off and the wind went down. I have found 8 kinds of flowers here. The cabin is full of mice.

April 18-The wind blew very hard. Everything out of doors blew away, even to two pails of water. Papa salted a tub full of buffalo meat.

April 19-Louie and I went over to Uncle Eli's. The wind blew so hard we could hardly get there. We had to wade the river.

April 23-We went out on our claim and picked out a building spot on this side of the river. We had baked antelope for supper. It is like mutton.

April 24-Uncle Eli plowed a spot for our house and garden and started digging on the cellar. I went out by the river bare foot and came very near stepping on a small rattlesnake.

April 27-I killed 3 snakes today. Helped Papa plant onions and peas, sweet corn and melons. The cottonwood trees are leafing out.

May 8-Mamma and I waded the river and went over to our claim. We have peas, potatoes and pumpkins up in the buffalo wallows. We saw 5 buffalos off on a hill about 2 miles. They were

lying down. The men went after them. They killed one and broke the leg of another, which they finally killed after it ran down into the river. Then they got the team and cut up the buffaloes and brought them home. The buffaloes smell like skunk.

May 17-I am 16 years old today. I do not feel so old. Mamma and I went across the river and went all over our claim. It is splendid. The trees are beautiful. The mice or birds or something are disturbing the things in our garden. The mosquitos trouble us very badly when the wind does not blow.

May 20-I have been bringing water from the river. It is hard to get it. It is so slippery. I found a dandelion. We have found 37 kinds of flowers. I milked some this morning. We get 4 or 5 quarts of milk at a time.

May 26-Two loads of lumber came from Solomon City for our house. They raised the roof today. We went to a dance in Cawker. Arabella curled my hair and I wore my white dress and slippers. We all went in the wagon and sang all the way. The dance was in a little house with 3 rooms. Two sets could dance at once. They had fiddles. The music wasn't very good but we had a good time and danced till 2 o'clock then had refreshments and came home over the trails in the dark. Got home at 4:30.

June 8-71 kinds of flowers. Papa and I planted corn. We are teaching the calf to drink. It is a splendid calf. Gena wants me to go with her next Sunday when she goes to be married. . . .

June 21-A very hot day. We got up early. Arabella curled Gena's hair. The men went over to Uncle Howard's cabin and got Gena's trunk. After breakfast Gena went down to the house and dressed to be married in her white pique and pink ribbons. Henry was dressed very nice. They are going to Beloit to be married. Uncle Howard and Uncle Ephraim are going to Massachusetts.

July 1-Alf went to Cawker with Uncle Eli, so Louie and I went to water his horses. I rode one and he the other. Then Gena rode one back. It was fun.

July 2- Cloudy and cold. Louie and I went up to the cabin and went buffalo hunting with Alf and Arabella. We went past Mr. Coop's and up Dry Creek. Louie shot a jackrabbit. We crossed Dry Creek and went over to Twelve Mile Creek, then up the creek 2 miles and ate our lunch, then we started for home. . . . We found 10 new kinds of flowers.

July 4-Cool and pleasant. Mama, Louie, and I went up to the cabin and started with Alf and Arabella for Cawker. When we got there we went up to the arbor made of green boughs. It had a floor filled with seats and the seats filled with people. They had singing, speaking, and reading. After that some played baseball. They had running in bags and such things. Then they set the tables in the arbor and had dinner. . . . We danced all afternoon. After the lanterns were lighted they had a minstrel performance. Just as it was through, it commenced to rain very hard. We all started for the hotel on the run. It rained about 5 minutes. Then we all went back again but were wet to the skin. We danced on the wet floor until one o'clock, then started for home. We hated to come, the dancing was so nice. Charlie rode home with us and then walked home. He is nice. Venelia, Velma and Tene stayed here all night

July 17-Hot's mustard. We went over the river and got 3 pails full of sumac berries to make vinegar. We took the water that they were soaked in and sweetened it. It was good as lemonade or better. It goes good when we have no water to drink but what is milk warm. In the night there was a tremendous shower and the wind blew a gale. The house swayed back and forth and I was frightened.

July 19-We didn't do much of anything today. I rambled around a little and went across the river. We let the cow loose over [on] the other side. I do wish I had somebody to go to 7 mile bluff with me. I picked 6 cucumbers today. We have a great many sweet melons ripe. We had sweet corn.

July 22-Comfortably cool. Arabella came down and churned. Ma churned. At 7 Velma and I started for Oak Creek bluffs. Took our lunch and some sticks to kill snakes with. The rolling prairie we crossed is beautiful. It is a great ways to the bluffs. It is very steep - almost straight. We climbed to the top and could see our house. We then went down to the creek ½ mile, got in the shade and ate our lunch. We had a cucumber that we dug out for a water cup. We came down the creek within a mile of the crossing, then came out to Mr. Comb's and got into the road and came home. Got here about 5 o'clock and were hungry. I went barefoot most of the way. I got a sore heel. Found 2 new kinds of flowers -117. Alf's dog has 4 puppies.

July 29-Alf started for Solomon City after my piano. We went over to Uncle Eli's to go to the bluff. They could not find the horses so went up the river to look for them. About 3 o'clock after they found the horses we all went to the bluff. Came back through Venelia's claim. Ma read aloud in *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

August 6-I played a good deal. The piano does not sound swell at all. Ma finished reading *Martin Chuzzlewit*. . . .

August 19-We heard last night that the Indians are up the river about 15 miles. Just before noon Tene came over with the team and brought us some buffalo meat. A man that was over to Uncle Eli's shot it. Read a good while in *Nicholas Nickelby*.

August 22-Uncle Ephraim, Pa and Louie tried running the lines of our claim. Just this side of the river I saw a very large rattlesnake. I shot at it with the revolver. It squirmed around behind the tree and I could not find it. I picked nearly 3 pails of cucumbers. After supper we saw a buffalo coming on the other side of the river. A man on horseback chased him. He crossed the river just a few rods below here. Louie ran out and got a shot at him and hit him in the side. He ran out past Mr. Ray's corn field, we all after him. Alf and Arabella and the dogs stood on top of the cabin. They killed it beyond Mr. Ray's. We all went out to see it and then came around by Mr. Ray's and home after dark.

August 26-I finished my picture of the cabin. We saw a buffalo coming from the road. Alf and Mr. Coop went after it and killed it two miles beyond Mr. Ray's. . . .

September 15-Louie had a chill. He took quinine. Ma has to stay with him all the time.

September 17-Louie had a hard chill. He was crazy. Alf sold 26 trees. We went up to Mr. Jakas's 2 miles beyond. We saw a fox squirrel and a prairie squirrel and some prairie chickens.

October 12-I went down across the river. Saw a turkey and a squirrel. Pa and I went up the river looking for game. Ever so many geese went over. Some stopped in the river. Mr. Root went to Cawker with Uncle Eli. He heard that a great part of Chicago is burnt and the fire is still burning.[7] Alf shot a turkey down by the river. . . .

October 30-There was a prairie fire that came down to Uncle George's claim. Uncle Eli and Venelia came along. Venelia stayed with me. They brought word that Uncle Howard is in Solomon. Alf will go after him in the morning.

November 1-After noon we saw a fire coming in the bottom beyond Ray's. We all went out and set fires all around the ploughing. Before we got the road burnt, the fire came sweeping down from Beal's, swept across the road into the bottom. Then we burnt side of the path to the river and kept burning until night and made out to save the premises. We were tired. . . .

November 4-I put on Pa's old overshoes and crossed the river. Got some red berries. Alf, Mr. White and Uncle Howard came. Uncle Howard was drunk. He has been drinking for 11 days. They had a terrible time. He is very sick. . . .

November 5-Uncle Howard is very sick. He vomited all night. Had the delirium tremens. Uncle Ephraim sat up with him. Miss Lines played the piano all day. Henry came this morning horseback. After noon he and Gena started for home on horses. Uncle Howard lay abed all day. Felt better towards night. . . .

November 30-Thanksgiving Day. It did not seem much like it. Jerome came from Osborne this morning. He got lost last night and went to a house. Uncle Howard was here. He was not very well, not well enough to go [to] the dance. We had chicken and plum pudding for dinner. Uncle Eli and Miss Lines came. Uncle E. went back and she stayed. Louie froze his feet. Had a terrible time all evening.

December 18-I went skating. Venelia and I read *Dombey and Son*. I finished it this evening. Uncle Howard came over to stay.

December 29-Very pleasant and warm. Mama baked three loaves of bread an I baked seven for the buffalo hunters. Uncle Eli came and brought the New Jersey boys. Pa and Louie went over to the cabin and saw the hunters start-Henry, Howard, two Mr. Morses and the men from New Jersey.

December 30-Uncle Eli's folks came and went over to their cabin and got some potatoes. I went over to Alf's and got a book, *David Copperfield*. Ma read in it this evening.

December 31-Very cold in the morning. Ma read a good deal. We stayed in the house most all day. Uncle Eli's cabin got afire and burned down. Alf's folks got everything out of it. They took Uncle George's boards, cut them up, and made a floor for his house, then moved in upstairs feeling awful nice. . . .

PARTICULARS OF THE BUFFALO HUNT [In January, 1872]

There were seven men and one two-horse team. Up sixty miles they crossed a sand plain, then came to rich soil again. One day they saw an enormous cedar tree on a rocky bluff. There was no other tree within miles. The South Fork of the Solomon starts in two little brooks-one running east and the other west. This is in Colorado. There is no timber on the stream except now and then a tree. The Pawnee Indians are there hunting buffalo. They met one of them and asked him how far it was to timber. They made motions with their fingers. They found a little willow swamp and three large cottonwood trees. They made camp there. High up in the tree was a platform with the Indian clothes hanging around it. A string of scalps and a white blanket hung in the tree.

One night before they got there, they were traveling to get ahead of the Indians when they saw dark objects moving at a little distance. Uncle Howard thought they were buffalo so said to the

men, "We will have shot at them in the dark." Just then an Indian called out, "Ugh, good Omaha, buffalo twenty miles away."

One afternoon they saw a buffalo at a distance of several miles. Alison Morse and Uncle Howard started for him. They had to run to get ahead of him and were pretty well out of breath when they came within shooting distance. They killed it, then Uncle Howard started for the team to haul it, leaving Mr. Morse there to skin it. But before he had gone far he saw more buffaloes so gave chase a long way but got none. Then he did not know which way to get back to camp, so walked back to Mr. Morse who said he knew the way. So he took the lead and they started on. It was now about sunset. They traveled on and on. At last they concluded they were going the wrong way, so turned and went another way but found no camp. Several times they saw a light and, thinking it was the camp lantern hung out for them, followed it but it proved to be Indians. Once they fired, thinking if it were any of their men they would know what it meant and answer it. The light disappeared and they saw it no more. They had eaten nothing since morning. At last Mr. Morse gave out and they had to stop. He was very cold. They had but two matches and did not dare to use them for fear they would need them worse before they reached camp.

While they were resting an Indian came to them and they learned by signs that he was lost also and did not know where to find their camp or his. They gave him one match and a small piece of tobacco. He whistled to his pony which knelt down for him to take off its blankets. He then tried to have Uncle Howard lie down on them, but he would not. They went on and left him. At three o'clock in the morning the Indian came into camp, took out of his pocket the match and tobacco and showed them to the men and pointed out the direction that he had seen two of their men. They asked him if they were there now and he shook his head. He cooked his breakfast at their fire. It consisted of buffalo meat packed in the skins of buffalo inwards.

Uncle Howard and Mr. Morse got into camp before noon the next day. The Indians sent a white boy to them asking them to come with them but they did not go.

The men took turns watching nights. The wolves howled around them one night. One came quite near, frightening the horses very much. They killed nine buffaloes in all. After they got started for home the wagon broke. There was one ash tree in sight. Uncle Howard cut it to repair the wagon. He had to make holes four inches through with jack knives and hot irons. At last they got started again. Their boots were worn so before they got home that several of them had to walk with their bare feet on the ground. They killed a good many of grouse and rabbits. When within two days' journey of home, two of them asked leave to go ahead and got home before the team. Another came on after them and Wednesday, two weeks and five days after they started from home, they all got back where they could get something besides mush and meat to eat. They saw splendid stones while they were gone. There were squaws with the Indians. They were dressed fancy.