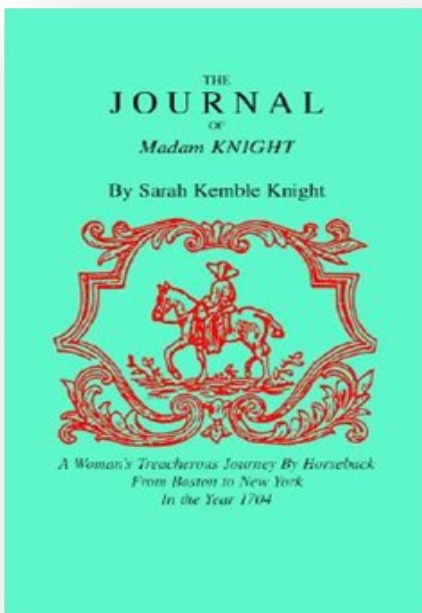




Weaving Her Story Into History ~Travel~

In the United States, June means summertime. School is over. For many of us it is time to pack the family into the minivan (or go to the airport) and see America! Of course, it wasn't always this easy to travel around our great country. Join us as we describe some of the women travelers and explorers profiled in *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*.



In 1704, author **Sarah Kemble Knight** kept a journal of a difficult (and long) trip she made on horseback from Boston to New Haven and to New York City and back, a trip not usually taken by a woman of that time. She followed roughly the route of what would become the Penn Central (and formerly the New Haven) Railroad. She wrote of “Buggbears to a fearful female traveler” such as swollen rivers to be crossed by horse or canoe, and “Bridges which were . . . very tottering and of vast Length.” After the diary’s publication in 1825, it was acclaimed for its realistic depiction of Knight’s encounters with the people and places of her day.

You might not have known of Knight and her travels, but we feel confident you will recall some of the next story. While accompanying her husband, Shoshone **Sacagawea** serves as both a guide and interpreter for the Lewis and Clark expedition. Their mission was to find a water route through North America and to explore the uncharted West. During this over two-year journey (1805-1806), Sacagawea took on an increasingly important role because as she and her infant son accompanied the group, hostile Indian tribes recognized that the expedition was peaceful. Her land



survival expertise and interpretive abilities were essential to the success of the expedition. She helped supply the expedition with food foraged from the wild; she saved valuable records, instruments, and other supplies when one of their boats almost capsized. Another aspect of her support is not often recognized: she negotiated with the Shoshone, actually with her brother, for horses to take the expedition through the mountains – and West to the “great waters.” Today we are aware that more mountains, lakes, and streams bear her name than any other North American woman.

Another woman who travelled with her husband was **Narcissa**

Prentiss Whitman who went from the East Coast to Oregon. Amazingly, she rode sidesaddle during this rugged trip and in 1836, was one of the first two white women to cross the Continental Divide at South Pass, Wyoming. It was this journey that proved it was possible for women to cross the country thus opening the way for the next several generations of emigrants who traveled on the Oregon Trail. She had the first child born of American parents in the Oregon Country. Her letters to her family in New York State were published and widely read, influencing an entire generation of young women. In 1912, an opera



“Narcissa” was produced based on the story of the difficulties of this journey.



Whitman was not the only “adventurer” to bring to your attention. Have you heard of **Fanny Bullock Workman**? She was the first female mountaineer to reach an altitude of over 23,000 feet (in the very long skirt of the time) when she climbed Nun Kun in the Himalayas in 1906. Her interests turned from opera-going and art galleries to climbing and exploring, while she and her husband lived in Europe. Their expeditions to the Himalayas provided them the opportunity to map,



photograph, and make scientific observations of snow and ice conditions, glacier structures and movements, meteorological data, and physiological responses to altitude. Her first altitude record was set in 1903, when she reached 21,000 feet on Koser Gunga. Workman received medals from European geographic societies, was made a fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, was elected a member of the Royal Asiatic Society and is believed to be the first American woman to lecture at the Sorbonne.

And Workman was not our only famous mountain climber at that time. The sight of the Matterhorn kindled **Annie Smith Peck's** interest in mountain climbing. She successfully climbed Mt. Shasta in California in 1888. In 1895, she returned to Europe and ascended the Matterhorn, which brought her celebrity – and some notoriety (as it was not viewed as

acceptable for women to climb mountains!). She climbed volcanoes in Mexico and in 1897 ascended to 18,314 feet, the highest point reached by a woman in the Western Hemisphere up to that point in time.

Peck helped found the American Alpine Club in 1902. In 1911, at age 61, she planted a “Votes For Women” pennant atop Peru’s Mount Coropuna (21,250 feet). Her last climb was in New Hampshire when she was 82 years old. One of the honors she received was that in 1927, the Lima Geographical Society named the north peak of Huascarán in her honor – Cumbre Aña Peck.

Some of you have been fortunate to hear talks given by Polar explorer **Ann Bancroft**. She continues to criss-cross this country speaking about her many polar trips. She ran a dogsled over 1,000 miles, when she was the only female member of the Steger International Polar Expedition (1986).





She also led the first American women’s team to travel east to west across Greenland on skis. Another of her firsts: Bancroft is the first woman to ski and dogsled across the ice to the South Pole (1993). In 2001, she and Norwegian polar explorer **Liv Arnesen** become the first women in history to sail and ski across Antarctica’s landmass. As recently as 2007, Bancroft was describing another polar trip she would take—not as a first, but to focus attention on global warming.

What kinds of adventure travel interest you? Tell us your ideas! As you travel across the country exploring, be sure to honor and appreciate the many women who have been pioneering in quite a number of different ways throughout our country’s history. Enjoy your summer – and travel safe!



Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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