



Madison County Genealogical Society



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The program for July was given by John Kielty. He shared the transcript of a diary by his ancestor Jane (Walker) Henery. In the diary she recorded daily events and expenses as they traveled from Ohio to Nebraska in the spring of 1880.

Jane was born in Stockport, Morgan Co., Ohio, 6 Mar. 1838. She married when she was 18 to a 23 year old man by the name of John W. Henery, also born in Stockport, Ohio. They had 7 children, with one who died young, in the next 15 years. Family history suggests that the two oldest boys, then in their early 20's, came to check things out in Nebraska, and reported that homestead land was still available in Antelope Co.

So in the spring of 1880 they sold everything they had, loaded up two wagons, and started west. They had a light wagon and a heavy wagon with most of the supplies, including a stove of some sort. Jane begins the 3rd of May 1880 writing down how many miles they traveled and the towns they passed thru. The place names were still very accurate and a 'trip-map' could be reconstructed. They traveled 10-12 miles a day, and were always looking for a good place to stop, a place with wood, grass, and potable water. The trip with 8 people would have been easier because she did not have any babies or toddlers, her youngest being 7, and her oldest, young men in their 20's. They experienced common traveling problems of the day, wagon breakdowns, horses that became sick or lame, dirt roads and poorly maintained wooden culverts.

One of the issues they dealt with was buying supplies. They bought crackers, sugar, potatoes, meat, eggs, and butter, which sounds like a normal traveling diet to my ears. They bought hay and corn for the horses. Occasionally they bought white lead, I assume for the older boys who hunted small game, like rabbits or duck.

As they traveled thru Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa, Jane bought postals or postal cards. I was surprised. My ideas about wagon travel to the west were challenged. These wagons were traveling on roads, not on the Oregon Trail. They traveled from town to town and had no fear of Indian attack on a circle of wagons. Jane bought post cards to mail back home to their family, letting them know of their progress. This tells me that these territories were organized, with little post offices and stores along the way.

By the 18th of June they were south of Council Bluffs, Iowa and the journal ends. They continued NW, probably following Hwy. 275 to Antelope Co. They arrived north of Neligh, at Willowdale post office, Antelope Co. Nebraska on the 4th of July. They built a house, a shed for the animals and dug a well. Jane was a true pioneer woman, who died at the age of 91, having lived in Nebraska almost 50 years.