

1000 Travels Of Jawaharlal "Gold Rush Brides"

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"While the young folks were having their good times some of the mothers were giving birth to their babies. Three babies were born in our company that summer. My cousin, Emily, gave birth to a son in Utah, forty miles north of the Great Salt Lake one morning. But the next morning she traveled on 'til noon when a stop was made and another child was born, this time Susan Mollmeyer. And gave the baby the name Alice Nevada."

-- Taken from Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey (by Lillian Schlissel)

Follow the typical signs, the hand-painted lines, down prairie roads. Pass the lone church spire. Pass the talking wire from where to who knows? There's no way to divide the beauty of the sky from the wild western plains. Where a man could drift, in legendary myth, by roaming over spaces. The land was free and the price was right.

Dakota on the wall is a white-robed woman, broad yet maidenly. Such power in her hand as she hails the wagon man's family. I see Indians that crawl through this mural that recalls our history.

Who were the homestead wives? Who were the gold rush brides? Does anybody know? Do their works survive their yellow fever lives in the pages they wrote? The land was free, yet it cost their lives.

In miner's lust for gold, a family's house was bought and sold, piece by piece. A widow staked her claim on a dollar and his name, so painfully. In letters mailed back home her Eastern sisters they would moan as they would read accounts of madness, childbirth, loneliness and grief.

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