On the Cover:
The time: Sunday evening, November 28, 1869.
The Scene: The parlor of the Lion House.
The event: The organization by President Brigham Young of his daughters into a retrenchment association, later to become the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association.

In the beautiful painting on the cover, Artist Dale Kilbourn has captured the scene as President Young admonished his daughters to “retrench in your dress, in your tables, in your speech .... Retrench in everything that is bad and worthless, and improve in everything that is good and beautiful.”

To capture the facial features of ten of President Young’s daughters (who boldly called themselves “The Big Ten”), the artist referred to the photograph pictured below, which is now in the collection of the Utah State Historical Society. Pictured are: back row, Zina Young Card, Eva Young Davis, Nett Young Easton, Maime Young Croxall, and Maria Young Dougall; back row, Marinda Young Conrad, Carlie Young Cannon, Ella Young Empey (first president of the Retrenchment Association), Emily Young Clawson, and Fannie Young Thatcher.

The painting will be presented to the YWMA during June Conference, June 26-29, when the centennial year will officially begin. In honor of the centennial, this issue of the Era features articles about the YWMA as well as stories, articles, and poetry about women and the Church.

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May 1969
The Pioneer Woman

By Dr. Kenneth and Audrey Ann Godfrey

Up rooted from their homes with hardly time for a proper good-bye, and leaving behind much that was dear to them, the pioneer women did what they could to make their rugged wagons home to their wandering families.

Most of their conveniences had been left in New York, Ohio, Missouri, or Illinois. Thus, they were faced with putting to full use all the talents and skills at their command to make life bearable. They must have thought of the women of ancient Israel who followed Moses, and those who went with Lehi into the wilderness. This would give them strength and renew their hope that with the help of God, they too would find their "promised land," a home to call their own.

"With almost their entire culinary material limited to the milk of their cows, some store of meal or flour, and a very few condiments," as one writer wrote, they learned to fashion a meal that was both appetizing
Before leaving camp each morning, Mary mixed her bread and placed it in the wagon to rise.

and healthful. They found if they hung the leftover milk and cream on the side of the wagon, it would turn to butter as the wagon jogged along. They acquired the skill of working with yeast. When camp was made and a fire laid in an iron stove or an oven dug in the side of the hill, the well-kneaded loaf was ready for baking. Often they would find an oven ready for their use, left by those who had gone before.

Mary M. Voght Garn crossed the plains with seven children. She made regular yeast and thickened it with cornmeal into a heavy dough. She would shape the dough into small squares and place these in a shaded corner of the wagon, knowing that the sun would kill her carefully guarded yeast plants. When new yeast was needed, a new start would be made from the last square. Before leaving camp each morning, Mary mixed her bread and placed it in the wagon to rise. As she traveled, the yeast would do its work, and evening would find the family taking its meal with freshly baked bread.

But food was not always plentiful. Hosea Stout recorded in his diary on June 20, 1846, just two short months away from Nauvoo, that "hunger began to grind hard upon us." Stout wrote: "... my wife went to preparing our dinner which might properly be called our 'ultimatum.' It consisted of a small portion of seed beans and a little bacon boiled and made into soup. We had flour enough to set it out and in fact we this last time... seemed [to have] a more luxurious and sumptuous table than usual which made to a stranger an appearance of plenty."

That night two men took their meal with the Stouts, never dreaming it was the last of the family's provisions. Later the family was reduced to eating boiled corn.

As the wagons came into buffalo country, families busily engaged themselves in making jerk from the freshly killed meat. They cut the meat into long strips that they dipped in a boiling solution of brine. It was then hung on a heavy cord over a smudge fire for the night. The next morning the strings of meat were looped under the wagon bows to be dried in the sun.

As the days grew into weeks, the women of the wagon trains knew a companionship with each other that was very close, brought on by the common hardships they suffered. They nursed each other through cholera, mountain fever, and childbirth. Eliza R. Snow recorded that the first night out from Nauvoo, nine children were born.

As time went on, women gave birth to babies under every circumstance imaginable. Sister Snow wrote: "... some in tents, others in wagons, in rainstorms, and in snowstorms. I heard of one birth which occurred under the rude shelter of a hut, the sides of which were formed by blankets fastened to poles stuck in the ground, with a bark roof through which the rain was dripping. Kind sisters stood holding dishes to catch the water as it fell, thus protecting the newcomer and its mother from a showerbath."

In many cases the women organized, just as the men did, in order to accomplish the goals they had set for themselves. In one organization resolutions were drawn up, such as those noted by Louisa Barnes Pratt in her diary: "Resolved: that when the brethren call on us to attend prayers, get engaged in conversation and forget what they called us for, that the sisters retire to some convenient place, pray by themselves and go about their business." Then Louisa adds, "If the men wish to hold control over women, let them be on the alert. We believe in equal rights."

Often, after children were tucked into bed, the women would gather in small groups and enjoy the coolness and quiet of the evening. Louisa wrote that "the Platte River country was beautiful." The women could be seen strolling along the river banks in the moonlight or enjoying a refreshing bath in its waters. "Our hearts, at the same time, glowed with wonder and admiration at the beauty and sublimity of the scenery, alone in a great wilderness."

Though the days were often dull, there were other times when the excitement was almost more than these prairie women needed, as
Whether they made soap from ashes or paint from skim milk, ingenuity was their key

Rachel Lee found out near the end of her journey. As she walked beside her wagon, delighting in the wind that cooled her a little as she trudged along, an unexpected gust whipped her skirts into the wagon, delighting in the instant they were drawn so tight she knew it, her skirts were being tried to extricate them, but in an instant they were drawn so tight she could only grasp two spokes in her hands, her feet between two others, and make a complete revolution with the wheel.

The wagon was finally stopped, and Rachel found herself almost right side up but still tightly bound to the wheel. Everyone gathered around, trying to decide how to get her loose. There was no question of cutting her clothing, as that she needed badly. It was decided they would unhook her skirt and unbutton the petticoat, and by carefully slitting the placket, she could be pulled free. Her shoes were unlaced. Then she walked between two others, and make a continuous murmur of prayer was heard, like babbling water falling down the hills,” wrote Thomas L. Kane.

With their destination reached, the women found there were still mountains to be climbed in the form of establishing households in the wilds of the Great Basin. M. Isabella Horne, who arrived in the valley on October 6, 1847, told of the difficulties she and other women faced.

“Mr. Horne succeeded in building two small log rooms that season for our family, which consisted of my husband, myself, four children, and Brother and Sister Robert Holmes, whom we brought with us, and when we moved into the house there were neither doors, windows, nor floors.”

She tells how they made their furniture, as they had brought with them only one chair. Holes were made in the logs of the house; in these were inserted poles that stretched horizontally and were held up at the other end by poles that were set in the floor. Rope or rawhide was stretched across the poles to form a bed. The cupboards were made by again inserting two small poles in the spokes in her hands, her feet between two others, and make a complete revolution with the wheel. The middle of the stick was made by again inserting two poles in the floor. Rope or rawhide was stretched across the poles to form a bed. The cupboards were made by again inserting two small poles in the spokes in her hands, her feet between two others, and make a complete revolution with the wheel.
brought a piece of bolting cloth with her that she attached to a frame made for her by one of the men. It was borrowed when any of the sisters wanted to make white biscuits.

The women helped each other in additional ways. Isabella heard of a neighbor who had put some red lead and lamp black into skim milk and painted her home. She borrowed the remaining “paint,” and using a rag, covered her doors and frames.

Setting a precedent for their modern counterparts, the pioneer women used their ingenuity to fashion the tools they needed. Cotton yarn became fish nets. Floured and larded rags were twisted into crude candles to light the homes. Ashes became soap. Squash and pumpkin thickened cornstalk molasses.

The first year was a busy time, with few amusements. But the pioneers felt free and happy, because they had no fear of mobs. They planted gardens that grew well and flowers that brightened their rustic surroundings. The first fruit trees took root. And by the second year, work had slowed enough to allow time for socials, dancing parties, and other activities.

It had been a long, hard journey from Nauvoo, but now the rewards outweighed the labors. Homes were firmly established and gardens had been harvested, with the produce put away for winter consumption. There were free hours for visiting beloved friends. The pioneer women once more settled into comfortable routines of keeping a home and making life beautiful and happy for those around them. The journey had helped them grow in service, in faith, in love, in strength. These attributes would continue to assist these female adventurers in helping to build the kingdom of God on earth.

May 1969

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