

Another reporter wrote of his experience with the Mormon laborers:

Here is a party of stalwart fellows returning from their labors. They march with the wagon, carrying their tools and provisions; seated in the wagon is a laughing Mormon girl, whose white teeth form a beautiful contrast with her sunburnt healthy face. She was the only female I saw. The Mormons who have been employed on the railroad, as a general thing, left their wives behind them. The head man of the party, who, I learned, had nine wives brought along with him only one, and that the ninth and youngest. A gentleman, who had made her acquaintance, informed me that there was nothing in her manner to indicate that she was at all dissatisfied with her condition. But then she had sparkling black eyes, and magnificent hair, and was the “old man’s darling.” Her position was rather one of triumph. The fact that there was no certainty in the permanence of that triumph, may be a cause of trouble in her private and reflective moments, but she exhibited no traces of that trouble in public. How it will be when the tenth partner in her joys comes along, it is not for me to say. It may be that she will fall back into the ranks without a murmur. If she does, Mormon human nature must be something different from any article of that description which has ever been presented for analysis (*Alta California* 3 May 1869:1).

An interesting contrast to this description of Mormon women at the Railroad camps comes from an article in the *Deseret News*, a Salt Lake City newspaper that sided heavily with the Mormon church. The article was printed in August of 1868 and describes Harvey’s camp, located near Echo:

One of the most picturesque scenes I have looked upon for some time is Mr. Harvey’s camp. Nesting among the willows are tents, wagons doing duty for sleeping chambers, neat boweries and inviting looking wick-e-ups. Here a lady busy with the needle, there another superintending some culinary operation; with children enjoying themselves among the feathery foliage, and the movements of busy life on every hand. (*DN* August 5, 1868a:n.p.).

Although many Mormon men did leave “their wives behind,” these articles in various newspapers clearly show that there were women present in the Mormon camps. There are also numerous family histories and biographies that tell of the women who went with the Mormon men to work on the railroad (Figure 9.24). Unlike the prostitutes and working women of the UP camps, many Mormon women left a history of their lives, especially since histories and genealogy are stressed as important in the Mormon church. As already mentioned, most of the women were left at home to run the households, stores, industries, and farms that the men left. Mormon men went to work for the railroad for two purposes: one the leader of their church, Brigham Young, requested that they do so; and two, cash, to be paid by the railroad, was a rare commodity in the newly formed territory of Utah and there was great need of it among the population.