

# **NARCISSA MARCH 1842**

*by Crystal Calhoun*



Miss Jane Prentiss,  
Quincy, Illinois, U.S.A.  
(Favor of Mr. Edward Rogers.)

## WAILLATPU

**March 1st, 1842.**

Mr. Dear Jane and Edward:

I was busy all the forenoon in preparing my husband for his departure. He left about two o'clock p.m. to go on a professional visit to Brother Walker's, and I am once more left alone in this house with no other company than my two little half-breed girls, Mary Ann Bridger and Helen Marr Meek. Since he left I have copied a letter of one sheet and a half for him to Brother Spaulding and written a short one to Sister S., besides which kept me until nearly dark, although I wrote all with all my might, for we had detained an Indian who was going that way, to take them, and before I could get them completed he began to be quite impatient. I, however, pacified him by giving him something to eat to beguile his time, and when he left gave him a good piece of bread to eat on the way. The Indians do us many favours in this way, and get as many from us in return, for they are always glad of something from us to eat on the way. Since I got my letters off I regulated my house some, got my own and my little girl's supper and some toast and tea for a sick man who has been here a few days, from Walla Walla to be doctored; attended family worship and put my little girls to bed, and have set me down to write a letter to Jane and Edward, my dear brother and sister that I left at home in Angelica more than six years ago. Since or just as I seated myself to write, Brother Gray came in to get some medicine for the sick man. He is in Packet's lodge a few steps from the door, and he is the man who attends to my wants, such as milking, getting water, wood, etc. He is a half-breed from the east side of the mountains and was brought up at Harmony mission, but came to the mountains about eight years ago and has since become a Catholic. Brother Gray has built him a new house and it is quite a piece from us. Thus lonely situated, what would be the enjoyment to me if E. and J. would come in and enjoy my solitude with me. Surely solitude would quickly vanish, as it almost appears to, even while I am writing. Jane, I wish you were here to sleep with me, I am such a timid creature about sleeping alone that sometimes I suffer considerably, especially since my health has been not very good. It, however, gives me the opportunity for the exercise of greater trust and confidence in my heavenly protector in whose hands I am always safe and happy when I feel myself there. My eyes are much weaker than when I left home and no wonder, for I have so much use for them. I am at times obliged to use the spectacles Brother J. G. so kindly furnished me. I do not know what I could do without them; so much writing as we have to do, both in our own language and the Nez Perces; and, besides, we have no way to feast our minds with knowledge necessary for health and spirituality without reading, and here the strength of the eyes are taxed again.

Out of compassion to my eyes and exhausted frame, dear ones, I must bid you good night. You may hear from me to-morrow, perhaps, if I am not interrupted with company.

**2d-**After attending to the duties of the morning, and as I was nearly done hearing my children read, two native women came in bringing a miserable looking child, a boy between three and four years old, and wished me to take him. He is nearly naked, and they said his mother had thrown him away and gone off with another Indian. His father is a Spaniard and is in the mountains. It has been living with its grandmother the winter past, who is an old and adulterous woman and has no compassion for it. Its mother has several others by different white men, and one by an Indian, who are treated miserably and scarcely subsist. My feelings were greatly excited for the poor child and felt a great disposition to take him. Soon after the old grandmother came in and said she would take him to Walla Walla and dispose of him, there and accordingly took him away. Some of the women who were in, compassionated his case and followed after her and would not let her take him away, and returned with him again this eve to see what I would do about him. I told her I could not tell because my husband was gone. What I fear most is that after I have kept him awhile some of his relatives will come and take him away and my labour will be lost or worse than lost. I, however, told them they might take him away and bring him again in the morning, and in the meantime I would think about it. The care of such a child is very great at first-dirty, covered with body and head lice and starved-his clothing is a part of a skin dress that does not half cover his nakedness, and a small bit of skin over his shoulders.

Helen was in the same condition when I took her, and it was a long and tedious task to change her habits, young as she was, but little more than two years old. She was so stubborn and fretful and wanted to cry all the time if she could not have her own way. We have so subdued her that now she is a comfort to us, although she requires tight reins constantly.

Mary Ann is of a mild disposition and easily governed and makes but little trouble. She came here last August. Helen has been here nearly a year and a half. The Lord has taken our own dear child away so that we may care for the poor outcasts of the country and suffering children. We confine them altogether to English and do not allow them to speak a word of Nez Perces.

Read a portion of the Scriptures to the women who were in today, and talked awhile with them. Baked bread and crackers today, and made two rag babies for my little girls. I keep them in the house most of the time to keep them away from the natives, and find it difficult to employ their time when I wish to be engaged with the women. They have a great disposition to take a piece of board or a stick and carry it around on their backs, if I would let them, for a baby, so I thought I would make them something that would change their taste a little. You wonder, I suppose, what looking objects Narcissa would make. No matter how they look, so long as it is a piece of cloth rolled up with eyes, nose and mouth marked on it with a pen, it answers every purpose. They caress them and carry them about the room at a great rate, and are as happy as need be. So much for my children.

I have not told you that we have a cooking stove, sent us from the Board, which is a great comfort to us this winter, and enables me to do my work with comparative ease, now that I have no domestic help.

# Surviving The Oregon Trail

History - Geography - Survival - Homesteading

We have had but very little snow and cold this winter in this valley. The thermometer has not been lower than 20 below freezing; but in every direction from us there has been an unusual quantity of snow, and it still remains. Husband expects to find snow beyond the Snake river, which he would cross today if he has prospered, and may perhaps be obliged to make snow shoes to travel with. Last night was a very windy night, and the same today, but it is still now. Brother Walker is situated directly north of us, so that it is not likely that the snow will decrease any in going. It is uncertain when he will return if prospered and not hindered with the snow. He expects to be gone only four weeks. May the Lord preserve and return him in safety and in His own time, and keep me from anxiety concerning him. Goodnight, J. and E.

**3d.-**Dear Jane, this has been washing day, and I have cleaned house some; had a native woman to help me that does the hardest part. I am unable to do my heavy work and have been for two years past.

This evening an Indian has been in who has been away all winter. I have been reading to him the fifth chapter of Matthew. Every word of it seemed to sink deep into his heart; and O may it prove a savour of life to his soul. He thinks he is a Christian, but we fear to the contrary. His mind is somewhat waked up about his living with two wives. I would not east him any, but urged him to do his duty. Others are feeling upon the subject, particularly the women; and why should they not feel?-they are the sufferers.

The little boy was brought to me again this morning and I could not shut my heart against him. I washed him, oiled and bound up his wounds, and dressed him and cleaned his head of lice. Before he came his hair was cut close to his head and a strip as wide as your finger was shaved from ear to ear, and also from his forehead to his neck, crossing the other at right angles. This the boys had done to make him look ridiculous. He had a burn on his foot where they said he had been pushed into the fire for the purpose of gratifying their malicious feelings, and because he was friendless. He feels, however, as if he had got into a strange place, ad has tried to run away once or twice. He will soon get accustomed, I think, and be happy, if I can keep him away from the native children. So much about the boy Marshall. I can write no more tonight.

**4th.-**There has been almost constant high wind ever since husband left and increasingly cold. Feel considerably anxious concerning him, lest the deep snow and cold may make his journey a severe one. At the best it is very wearing to nature to travel in this country. He never has been obliged to encounter so much snow before, and I do not know how it will affect him. He is a courageous man, and it is well that he is so to be a physician in this country. Common obstacles never affect him; he goes ahead when duty calls. Jane and Edward, you know but little about your brother Marcus, and all I can tell you about him at this time is that he is a bundle of thoughts.

Met this afternoon for a female prayer meeting; only two of us-Sister Gray and myself-yet they are precious seasons to us, especially when Jesus meets with us, as He often does. I am blessed with a

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lovely sister and an excellent associate in Sister Gray, and I trust that I am in some measure thankful, for I have found by experience that it is not good to be alone in our cares and labours.

**9th.**-Last evening received a letter from Sister Walker dated Feb. 21st, in which she expresses some fears lest husband should not arrive in season on account of the deep snow. The probability is that he has had as much as one day on snow shoes if not more. We are having our winter now, both of cold and snow. During the last twenty-four hours there has been quite a heavy fall of snow in the valley, and it is doubtless doubled in the mountains.

Last eve I spent at Bro. Gray's, after the monthly concert. We opened some boxes that have just arrived from the Board to the mission, containing carding, spinning and weaving apparatus, clothing and books. Our goods often get wet in coming up the river, and we are often obliged to open, dry and repack again. We have abundant evidence that our Christian friends in the States have not forgotten us, by the donations we receive from time to time. My work last eve was such cold and damp work that it gave me many rheumatic pains all night, and besides it took us so long that I feel unable to write much more tonight. There is still another evening's work of the same kind, which must be done as soon as tomorrow. We take the eve because Bro. G. has so much labour during the day, and then our children are all in bed. Goodnight, Jane.

**9th.**-While I was thinking about preparing to retire to rest last eve, Bro. Gray came in to see if I could go over and see and aid in the arrangement of the other boxes. I finally mustered courage to go, because they were anxious to have it out of the way. Found it an easier job than was expected, because there was but one that needed drying.

Attended maternal meeting this afternoon. Sister G. and I make all the effort our time and means will permit to edify and instruct ourselves in our responsible maternal duties. Read this p.m. the report of the New York City Association for 1840, and what a feast it was to us! It is a comforting thought to us in a desert land to know that we are so kindly remembered by sister Associations in our beloved land. But the constant watch and care and anxiety of a missionary mother cannot be known by them except by experience. Sister G. has two of her own and I have three half-breeds. I believe I feel all the care and watchfulness over them that I should if they were my own. I am sure they are a double tax upon my patience and perseverance, particularly Helen; she wants to rule every one she sees. She keeps me on guard continually lest she should get the upper hand of me. The little boy appears to be of a pretty good disposition, and I think will be easy to govern. He proves to be younger than I first thought he was; he is not yet three years old-probably he is the same age Helen was when she came here. His old grandmother has been in to see him today, but appears to have no disposition to take him. She wanted I should give her something to eat every now and then, because I had got the child to live with me and take care of, also old clothes and shoes. So it is with them; the moment you do them a favour you place yourself under lasting obligations to them and must continue to give to keep their love strong towards you. I make such bungling work of writing this eve I believe I will stop, for I can scarcely keep my head up and eyes open. So good night, J., for you do not come to sleep

with me, and I must content myself with Mary Ann.

**11th.**-Dear Jane, I am sick tonight and in much pain-have been scarcely able to crawl about all day. The thought comes into my mind, how good to be relieved of care and to feel the blessing of a sympathizing hand administering to the necessities of a sick and suffering body, and whose presence would greatly dispel the gloom that creeps over the mind in spite of efforts to the contrary. But I must not repine or murmur at the dealings of my Heavenly Father with me, for he sees it necessary thus to afflict me that His own blessed image may be perfected in me. O, what a sinful, ungrateful creature I am-proud and disobedient. I wonder and admire the long-suffering patience of God with me, and long to be free from sin so that I shall grieve Him no more. But there is rest in heaven to the weary and wayworn traveler, and how blessed that we may "hope to the end for the grace that shall be given unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Pray for us, J. and E., for we need your prayers daily. Goodnight.

**12th.**-I would that I could describe to you what I have felt and passed through since writing the above. Before I could get to bed last night I was seized with such severe pains in my stomach and bowels that it was with difficulty that I could straighten myself. I succeeded in crawling about until I got something to produce perspiration, thinking that it might proceed from a cold, and went to bed. About two o'clock in the morning Sister Gray sent for me, for she was sick and needed my assistance. When I was waked I was in a profuse perspiration. What to do I did not know. Neither of them knew that I was sick the day before. I at last concluded that I would make the effort to go, casting myself for preservation on the mercy of God. Mr. Cook, the man who came after me, made a large fire for me in my room, and I was enabled to dress and dry myself without getting cold, the weather having moderated some from what it was a few days ago. I bundled myself pretty well and went with Mr. C.'s assistance, for I felt but very little better able to walk than I did the evening before, and Bro. Gray was washing it. In the meantime, after they were informed how I was, they sent me word not to come if I was not able. I took the babe and dressed it, and have been there all day with my children, although I have not been able to sit up all day. Both mother and babe are comfortable tonight, and I have come home to spend the night and Sabbath, leaving Mr. G. with the care of them tomorrow. They have a good Hawaiian woman, which is a great mercy.

**Sab. Eve., 13th**-Was kept awake last night by the headache considerably, and it has continued most of the day. Bro. G.'s house is very open, and the change from ours affects me unfavourable generally. Notwithstanding feeble health, this Sabbath has been a precious day to me. A quiet resting upon God is every thing, both in sickness and in health. My heart cries, O, for sanctifying grace that I may not become hardened under affliction.

**14th.**-I have this day entered upon my thirty-fifth year, and had my dear Alice C. been alive she would have been five years old, for this was her birthday as well as mine. Precious trust! She was taken away from the evil to come. I would not have it otherwise now. All things are for the best, although we may not see it at the time. Spent the day with Sister G., although not able to do much.

Have been taking medicine and feel some better this eve, and hope to be better still tomorrow.

**15th.**-Have been with Sister Gray all day. There is so much there and all around us to call forth feelings of sympathy and care, that I have been so excited all day as not to scarcely realize my own state of health until I retire from it, and then I find myself completely exhausted. Thus it is that the missionary is so soon worn out, and his health fails and he is obliged to leave the field. He constantly sees work enough for his utmost time and strength, and much, very much that must remain undone for the want of hands to do it. We feel a merciful and timely relief in the association of Bro. and Sister Gray in our labours at this station. Had we continued much longer without help we should have been obliged, both of us without doubt, to have retired from the field as invalids. Yet still there is just as much as we all can possibly do, and more, too, for every year brings increased labours and demands upon us, and doubtless will continue to if there is much emigration to this country.

Edward, if you are thinking to become a missionary, you would do well to write a sermon on the word PATIENCE every day. Study well its meaning; hold fast on to patience and never let go, thinking all the time that you will have more need of her by and by than ever you can have while you remain at home. But I must stop before I exhaust myself, and gain strength for the duties of the morrow by rest.

**21st.**-It will be three weeks tomorrow since dear husband left, and I am feeling tonight almost impatient for his return. It has been stormy and cold every day since he left. Indeed, we have had our winter in this month, and now the rivers are so high that it is almost impossible to cross them without swimming. I feel that the Lord has mercifully and tenderly sustained and kept me from anxious feelings about him thus far during his absence. Doubtless he has suffered much, but the Lord will preserve, I hope, and return him again to me, filled with a lively sense of His goodness to us continually. The Indians feel his absence very much, especially Sabbaths. They are here so short a time they do not like to have him gone.

Today I have had the care of Sister G.'s two children and my three, which has been a hard day's work for me. I am more and more pleased with my little boy every day. He is so mild and quiet, and so happy in his new situation that I have not had the least regret that I took him in. He is learning to talk English extremely well-much faster than my two girls did. The second Sabbath he went about the room saying, "I must not work, I must not work," and also a part of a line of a hymn he had hear us sing, "Lord teach a little child to pray,"-all that he could say was, "a child to pray, a child to pray." He is learning to sing, also; he seems to have a natural voice, and learn quick. I think husband will have no objections to keeping him when he sees what a promising boy he is.

Sister Gray is recovering very fast; she came out into the kitchen yesterday to supper, and today she has dressed her babe, which is but ten days old. She took the advantage of me and dressed it before I could get over there this morning. She was going about her own room before it was a week old. Perhaps you will think we do as the natives do when we are among the natives. She certainly is

very well, and we ought to be very thankful, and I trust we are. We all see so much to do that it is difficult to keep still when it is possible to stir. So goodnight, J. and E., for my sheet is full.

**26th.**-Husband arrived today about noon, to the joy of all the inhabitants of Waiilatpu. Mr. Eells came with him. His journey was prosperous beyond our most sanguine expectations, for the day that he would have been obliged to take snow shoes was so cold that by taking the morning very early they went on the top of the snow and arrived there in safety the Saturday after he left here. Sister Walker has a son, born on the 16th, four days after the birth of Sister Gray's. They call him Marcus Whitman. So it is, dear J. and E., that the Lord cares for and preserves us; and it seemed more than ever as if He sustained me from anxiety and gave me a spirit of prayer for him, and answered prayer in his safe return with improved health; and O, may the lives which He does so mercifully preserve, be devoted more entirely to His service.

Bro. Eells came for his boxes and will return next week. We are cheered with an occasional visit from one and another, which is a source of comfort to us in our pilgrimage here.

This sheet is full, and if you have trouble to read it, say so, and I will not do so again.

Your sister,

N. WHITMAN

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## March 23, 1842

-Him-in-il-ip-il-ip, one of the two that was so excited about his bad conduct being told him so plainly, promised before he left the place that he would restore the property he had so unjustly taken. About two or three weeks after the above transaction Ap-ash-wa-kai-kin came into camp. Husband was away at the time-he had gone about a day's ride to visit a sick woman, the wife of the Catholic, and spent the Sabbath with them, as there were many Indians there. He did not, however, after his return, find it convenient to converse with him under two or three days. But it was like a thunder-bolt to him, for it appeared that no one had told him of the transactions of the others. It was in the evening and we were alone with him-he raged and threatened and said he wondered how they had allowed him to escape-although husband had told him as mildly and affectionately as possible. He soon flew out of the house in great anger-leaving the door open behind him and went to his lodge and hid himself from us for several days. Before this conversation took place, he was eager to obtain a plough, but husband wished to see this business settled before he could oblige him. He finally promised before he left the place that he, also, would make restitution, and parted good friends.

I cannot give you the outrages of last fall. I have written them to our dear parents, if it reached them you will doubtless have the perusal of it. That, with this, will give you some idea what we have to meet with, but we may say that these are no trials, comparatively, to what they would be if the full



use of ardent spirits was introduced among them.