



MRS. IDA ALLEN

Mrs. Ida Allen, 827 B Street has been named as woman of the year. Each year The Voice selects some person of the city who has made an outstanding contribution to the community.

Mrs. Allen's long years of service as an employee of the Miller and Paine department store is a commendable record. She was employed there in 1909 and is the oldest in years of service of the four Negro employees.

Mrs. Allen retired December 1, 1951 under the Miller & Paine Retirement Law but continued in active service.

Mrs. Allen is a member of Quinn Chapel AME church where she is affiliated with the official board, the missionary society and calendar club. She is also active in the Urban League. Her husband is employed at the Gas Company.



by JAMES C. OLSON, Superintendent STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

I have frequently discussed in this column the diaries kept by overland emigrants, making their way in wagons across the plains to California, Oregon and Utah, as sources of information on the early history of Nebraska. Many emigrants also wrote letters along the way, and often these were published in the newspapers back home. A recently published book—California Emigrant Letters, by Walker D. Wyman—contains a collection of these epistles from the gold rush, many of them written from what is now Nebraska.

Letter writing was difficult. As one emigrant wrote from near Chimney Rock, June 3, 1849, "in the first place we have just as much labour to do as keeps us constantly busy, and in the next place a fellow must tuck himself up on the ground, in the open air, with his legs crossed like a tailor's and write on his lap."

Once a letter was composed, the problem of getting it mailed was apt to be even more difficult. Occasionally a returning emigrant could be persuaded to carry letters back to the states for mailing, but the surest way was to leave them at a military post. Fort Kearny in central Nebraska

was the first such establishment encountered by the travelers after they jumped off from the Missouri River, and many a letter was mailed from there.

From these letters we can obtain good descriptions of eastern Nebraska and of the emigration as it appeared when once fairly out on the plains. As one writer said, Fort Kearny was "an excellent point from which to see all that is desirable to be seen," as all the roads united before reaching there.

The gold rush looked this way to one observer at Fort Kearny, May 18, 1849:

"Every state, and I presume almost every town and county in the United States is now represented in this part of the world. Wagons of all patterns, sizes, and descriptions, drawn by bulls, cows, oxen, jackasses, mules and horses, are daily seen rolling along towards the Pacific, guarded by walking arsenals. Arms of all kinds must certainly be scarce in the States, after such a drain as the emigrants must have made upon them. Not a man but what has a gun or revolver or two."

A letter written from the fort on June 19, reports: "The cry is still they come. Five thousand and ninety-two wagons at sun-

down last night had moved past this place toward the gold regions of California, and 1,000 more are still behind, I think."

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