

## Readers Theatre – Women of the West

- Narrator – During the 1800's many people moved from the established East to the land of unknown in the West. Some people went for gold, some as missionaries and some for the promise of land. The Smith family – Pa, Ma, Elizabeth, Rachael, Nathaniel and little Paul – went west for land.
- Ma (to the Elizabeth) - Hurry up now. Pa will be back in a few minutes and he'll be hungry. Help me get the pots onto the fire, Beth.
- Elizabeth (hurrying towards Ma) – I'm sorry, Ma. Little Paul was playing with them and I had to wrestle them away.
- Ma (looking around) – Where's Rachael? I told her to look after him while you and I got supper ready.
- Elizabeth – She was talking to Nathaniel about how far we have come since we left Independence. She seems to think that in a few more days we will reach Salt Lake. I tried to tell her that we still hadn't reached Devil's Gate along the Sweetwater but she wouldn't listen.
- Ma (sighing) – I wish your Pa would stop telling her how close we are and be honest with us. Talking with Mrs. Peabody, I found out that we still have another six weeks before we make it to Salt Lake. And that once we get there, we may have to travel further outside of Salt Lake before we find a place to settle down.
- Elizabeth – I know Ma. But we've made good time, haven't we? I mean we left Independence early in the spring and now we are almost to Independence Rock. We are making good progress?
- Ma – Yes, yes we are. I just hope that Rachael is prepared to cross the Rockies. We have a lot of hard work ahead of us and if she thinks that we are going to be there in a few days she may lose hope.
- Elizabeth – I will go and fetch Nathaniel, Rachael and Paul. We can tidy up the wagon before supper.
- Narrator – While Elizabeth fetches the other children, Ma begins to fry up some bacon to make bacon sandwiches. She makes flour tortillas to use for bread and then she begins to serve up supper.
- Pa (walking towards Ma from outside of the wagon corral) – Boy am I hungry. Ted Wilkins was having a tough time with one of his oxen and I had to help steer the thing in the right direction. When we stopped we found that he had thrown a shoe and so I helped him put a new one on. Mmmmmmm..... smells good.
- Ma – You need to talk to Rachael and set her straight on how far we still have to go. She is telling Nathaniel that we will be in Salt Lake in

a few days and I am worried that she will lose heart and become a burden trying to get across those darn mountains. You must stop talking like we is so close.

Pa (with bread in his mouth) – I will. I just get so excited about how far we've come that I forget that we still have a long way to go. I'll talk with her the minute I see her. Now sit down and eat before the young ones show up.

Narrator – The trip west was tough on everyone but especially tough on women. They typically had to care for their children, cook, clean, mend clothing, find firewood and occasionally herd a cow or two that the family may have brought with them. They were generally the first one awake and the last one to sleep each day. If that wasn't enough, if another woman in the train became ill, the other women were expected to do the ill woman's work too.

Rachael - Pa, Pa, Pa! I told Nathaniel that we would be crossing the Sweetwater today. I told him that it is going to be cold and that we might get swept downstream if we aren't careful. Tell him that that is true, Pa. Tell him.

Pa - Whoa... hang on there a minute. You and I need to talk.

Narrator - While Pa spoke with Rachael about the facts of the trip, Ma fed little Paul and Nathaniel. Elizabeth sat down on a rock and thought about all of the things that they had left behind in Virginia. Grandma and Grandpa Smith were still on the farm with Aunt Nat and Uncle Pat and their boys. Grandpa and Grandma Johansen were a few miles down the road with Uncle Bill. She could still remember the sound the cows made at night when Bill sang to them.

Elizabeth – Ma, when is Uncle Bill coming out west? He said that he would join us as soon as he could.

Ma – Uncle Bill said that he would come when the time was right. Granny and Pop-Pop need him still. They are getting on in age and aren't able to take care of the farm on their own. They need Uncle Bill, besides Nancy Mills said that she would marry Bill in the fall. He can't leave without her and her Ma and Pa won't let her come until she is wed.

Narrator – Elizabeth remembered how excited she had been when Uncle Bill had told her of the wedding and that Nancy had asked her to be the flower girl. She had been so excited to get a new dress and now they were almost 1,200 miles away from home. She missed her friends, her room above the kitchen, even that stinky Jed Cowsley who lived over the hill.

Narrator - If she closed her eyes, she could still see her Ma working in the yard, feeding the chickens when he had come racing down the hill yelling at

Elizabeth. She remembered how he had caused the chickens to run all over and how he had nearly smashed into Ma. Ma had been so mad that Elizabeth thought she was going to burst. Elizabeth couldn't help chuckling.

Narrator -

At that moment the sound of a ringing bell could be heard from the front of the wagon train.

Ma -

Well, we best clean up quickly and get ready to go again. Maybe when we reach the rock we will be able to stop for a few days. I can never seem to get caught up on all of the chores that need doing. Elizabeth, help me put out the fire and get the pots clean real quick.