This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

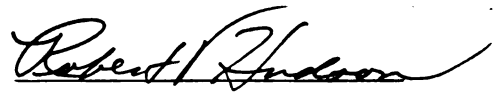
HOW A SELECT GROUP
OF MICHIGAN FRONTIER NEWSPAPERS
DEPICTED WOMEN IN 1849 - 1850

presented by

KENDALL JAMES WINGROVE

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.A. degree in Journalism



Major professor

Date May 12, 1982

HOW A SELECT GROUP OF MICHIGAN FRONTIER NEWSPAPERS DEPICTED WOMEN IN 1849-1850

By

Kendall James Wingrove

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

School of Journalism

1982

ABSTRACT

HOW A SELECT GROUP
OF MICHIGAN FRONTIER NEWSPAPERS
DEPICTED WOMEN IN 1849-1850

By

Kendall James Wingrove

By the 1840s, many Michigan communities had at least one established newspaper. Such publications served as recorders and historians for their communities. These newspapers also provide an insight into the morals and habits of frontier men and women.

This qualitative study analyzes how all 665 issues of 12 Michigan frontier weeklies depicted women for a 13-month period, July 1, 1849 through July 31, 1850. The research divides the depiction of women into the topics of: courtship and marriage; role of wife and mother; fictional characters in literature; famous women receiving coverage; involvement with the temperance movement and political, employment and educational rights; and humor and ridicule directed at women. Investigating each of these subjects should add to the body of knoweldge of the frontier press and the women it depicted.

An additional section provides background material on the population and the newspapers of the Michigan frontier.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many must share my sincere appreciation for the help, guidance and encouragement in this thesis:

The librarians at Central Michigan University, Michigan State University and the State of Michigan Library for their microfilm collections;

Dr. Robert V. Hudson (director), Dr. Mary Gardner, and Dr. Elizabeth Yamashita, my thesis committee, for their helpful suggestions;

Dr. William Franklin and Dr. James Stanford Bradshaw, the two professors at Central Michigan who helped launch the first version of this study;

Kenneth S. Gregg and John Kilcoyne, who generously provided expensive typing equipment for my use;

Michael S. Elliott, Michael Arents and Gary Piatek, who helped by giving constant interest to the project;

My parents, grandparents, and cousin Beatrice, who taught me to love history;

And most importantly to Kathy, whose love and respect helped me daily through this lengthy study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The small weekly newspapers of the booming frontier towns of the mid-1800s provided a valuable service to their readers. Such publications provided news, literature and political rhetoric to their communities. The frontier newspaper was the primary source of communication for residents of the frontier.

By the 1840s, many Michigan communities had at least one established newspaper. These publications provide an insight into the morals and habits of the frontier men and women. By studying how women were depicted in the press of that time, frontier life and the frontier press can be better understood.

This study will examine Michigan frontier newspapers for a 13-month period, July 1, 1849 to July 31, 1850. This period was chosen because it: (a) is during this time that the women's rights movement emerged in the Midwest following the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848; (b) is a time frame well into the frontier era, yet before the Civil War; and (c) is a period when there is an adequate number of frontier newspapers to examine. The newspapers studied are the: Jackson American Citizen, Coldwater Sentinel, Grand Rapids

Enquirer, Grand Rapids Grand River Eagle, Hillsdale Whig Standard, Pontiac Jacksonian, Kalamazoo Gazette, Marshall Statesman, Adrian Michigan Expositor, Niles Republican, Oakland Gazette, and Centreville Western Chronicle.

By using these publications, this qualitative study will examine how the Michigan frontier press depicted women from July 1, 1849 to July 31, 1850. The research will analyze the depiction of women in the topics of: (1) courtship and marriage; (2) role of wife and mother; (3) fictional characters in literature; (4) famous women receiving coverage; (5) involvement with the temperance movement and political, employment and educational rights; and (6) humor and ridicule directed at women.

Investigating each of these subjects should add to the body of knowledge about the depiction of women in the frontier press. Such research is needed and long overdue. A congressional resolution proclaiming the 1982 Women's History Week said that "the role of American women in history has been consistently overlooked and undervalued in the body of American history."[1]

Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger agrees. He said:

> ...women have constituted the most spectacular casualty of traditional history. They have made up at least half of the human race; yet you could never tell that by looking at the books historians write. The forgotten man is nothing to the forgotten woman.
>
> In recent times the women's liberation movement has begun to raise the consciousness of even male historians. The result is the belated recognition that women have been around, too, and that life could not have gone on without them.[2]

Pearson and Pope said there are many historical reasons why the study of females has been neglected. With the rise of individualism, democracy and secularism, men were expected to develop their individual identities. Women, on the other hand, continued to be taught to act as selfless helpmates to husbands and children.[3]

Historians' neglect of women has also resulted from their ideas about historical significance. Traditionally, wars and politics have always been a part of "history," while institutions affecting individuals most immediately, such as social relationships, marriage and the family, have been outside the scope of historical inquiry.[4]

Historian Mary Beard said that in general histories, the western settlement of the population has been treated principally in terms of politics, religion and economics. She said that the preconceived image of the frontier, as in tales of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, makes it appear as if no women were there at all. But as Beard points out, this is only a partial view. Through the study of literature for and by women, other aspects of frontier life emerge.

In thousands of western settlements the handicrafts were nurtured, artistic work was done and learning was cherished. Schools appeared in forest clearings, books were offered in stores, and newspapers were founded and read. It seems that those women who settled the frontier also cared about the cultivation of the mind and the advancement of learning.[5] Women were teachers in most of the nation's

public schools during the 19th century. They staffed and administered elaborate welfare and relief systems. And they made a significant contribution to the growth and development of frontier communities.[6]

Fortunately, the Michigan frontier newspapers available for study provide us with literature to analyze. This material is important because the heroines in fiction of that time depict what the "ideal" woman was supposed to be. Learning what the culture of that era found acceptable is crucial to understanding the morals and habits of the frontier era and the views expressed in the frontier press.

The period is also valuable for study because of the reform movements then taking place in America. The crusade for women's rights was among the most radical of the reforms and evidence shows that it was discussed in Michigan.

Two years before the Seneca Falls Convention, one of the leaders of the movement, Ernestine L. Ross, addressed the Michigan Legislature in an appeal for women's rights. In 1849, a senate committee reported a resolution in favor of a women's suffrage movement. Finally, the Michigan constitution of 1850 gave women property rights but not the ballot.[7] With such activities in the state it is important to see what editorial stand Michigan editors took on the movement.

This study will also add to the body of knowledge about the Michigan frontier. Dunbar criticized historians for

overlooking Michigan in their frontier studies.[8] Any analysis of the Michigan frontier press would add to filling this void.

In summary, study of how the Michigan frontier press depicted women from July 1849 - July 1850 should be valuable for its contribution to knowledge within these broad dimensions:

(1) The study should contribute to an understanding of the role women played in the home, in society, and in politics.

(2) The life of pioneers should be better understood through an analysis of the morals and habits of the time.

(3) A better understanding should be developed of what role the frontier press played in the society of that time.

(4) It should be determined if social issues like women's rights received coverage, favorable or unfavorable, during this time.

(5) This study should add to the knowledge about the Michigan frontier and its people.

(6) It should provide a perspective to those presently involved in the women's rights movement on what their predecessors experienced.

(7) The study should have heuristic value because the evaluation of the Michigan frontier press could lead to the formulation of hypotheses regarding the role of the frontier press in pioneer society.

Methodology

The impossibility in a large research task of using all the evidence remotely touching the subject indicates the need for selection. Obviously, what is desired is a selection of relevant data. By limiting this study to a selected group of Michigan frontier newspapers during a 13-month period, the amount of primary sources was kept under control.

The first task was to determine which newspapers were "frontier" newspapers. By 1850, Detroit was too populous to be considered a frontier region and its newspapers were excluded from the study. All other weekly newspapers published in Michigan during this 13-month period were considered as being frontier publications.

To be included in this study, the frontier newspaper had to publish in both 1849 and 1850. Some newspapers, like the Kalamazoo Telegraph ceased publication in 1849, while others, like the Genessee Whig and Jonesville Telegraph did not begin until 1850.

Locating the frontier newspapers available for research was the next task. Although there were 47 weeklies published in 1850, not all were preserved on microfilm. After a thorough search of indexes listing Michigan newspapers on microfilm, it was determined that 12 frontier newspapers were available for study. The researcher read all 665 issues of the 12 newspapers studied to see how these publications depicted women. In addition to the primary

sources, the research also includes material from secondary sources. Works by scholars in journalism history, women's history, Michigan history and frontier history were consulted for context.

This qualitative study is presented descriptively. The researcher attempted to show what women's issues were discussed in the Michigan frontier press. It is hoped that an overview of how women were depicted in these newspapers can be provided by this study. The research findings were divided into six different categories to facilitate research and analysis. Each of the six topics will be developed into a chapter of the thesis. In addition to the chapters on the six topics analyzed, a section will provide background information on the population and newspapers of the Michigan frontier.

Review of the Literature

After an extensive search, it appears that few studies have been completed about the depiction of women in the frontier press before the Civil War. Several factors could explain this lack of completed research. First, the discipline of women's history has gained momentum in the last two decades and perhaps studies underway about women in American press history have not yet been completed. Second, efforts to microfilm and preserve frontier newspapers have been successful in preserving the frontier press for study, but some newspapers have been lost forever. And

finally, even though some frontier newspapers have been microfilmed, many of those have not yet been studied by researchers.

Bibliographies on Michigan history list studies of literature of the frontier era, but none of how women were depicted in the frontier press. However, two articles by Midwest researchers have dealt with the topic.

A 1949 article, "Literary Content of a Pioneer Michigan Newspaper," by Joseph George Duncan, an information services writer for Michigan State University, analyzed the Niles Republican from April 1842 to April 1860. Duncan's material, printed in Michigan History, did not deal specifically with the depiction of women in the Niles Republican, but his research did touch upon the subject. After studying the fiction used in the Niles newspaper, Duncan concluded that women were presented in a "traditional way...ready to swoon in a moment of crisis."[9]

Dru Riley Evarts, an associate professor of journalism at Ohio University, has also done research on the midwestern frontier press. At the Association for Education in Journalism convention in 1980 her paper, "Women's Rights as Covered by the Ohio Frontier Press, 1850-1855," was presented. Evarts analyzed press reaction to six women's rights meetings that took place in Ohio during the 1850s. A review of the newspapers in the host cities and towns concluded that support was highest in Salem, site of the first meeting. From that point, however, press coverage of the meetings was

not supportive, and by the last meeting in 1855, the press either ignored the movement or derided it.[10] The Michigan frontier newspapers also gave coverage to the Salem meeting of 1850. Specifics on Michigan press reaction to the Ohio suffrage meetings will be presented in Chapter VII.

There are also several books discussing the image of women in nineteenth century fiction. These include Fred Lewis Pattee's The Feminine Fifties,[11] Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope's The Female Hero in American and British Literature,[12] and Women, Women Writers and the West, by L.L. Lee and Merrill Lewis.[13] A particularly valuable source is Barbara Welter's 1966 American Quarterly article, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860." In this piece, Welter analyzes the image of women as hard-working wives and mothers.[14] Sister Patricia Kennedy's 1968 dissertation, "The Pioneer Women in Middle Western Fiction," is another source.[15]

Two sources that discuss the women's suffrage movement in the midwest during the 1850s include Florence E. MacLelland's 1943 master's thesis, "The Women's Suffrage Movement and Public Opinion with Emphasis on Michigan, 1848-1898,"[16] and Judith Papachristou's Women Together, a 1976 book that includes some important information about the Ohio suffrage conventions of 1850-1855.[17]

Two unpublished master's theses offer material on Jenny Lind and Jane Grey Swisshelm, two of the famous women discussed at length in the Michigan frontier press. G.E. Morris Allen's "P.T. Barnum's 1850 Press Campaign in New

York City to Herald Jenny Lind's American Concert Tour" analyzes the publicity effort by showman Barnum that helped to make Lind's tour a spectacular success.[18] A 1969 thesis by Dorothy Langdon Yates includes newspaper articles written by Swisshelm. In "Belles of Freedom, Three Antislavery Editors: Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, Lydia Maria Child and Jane Grey Swisshelm," Yates assesses the lives and work of these three pioneer women newspaper editors. Swisshelm's editorials from the Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter were reprinted in Michigan newspapers.[19]

To search the available literature about this era is to find a void of materials on how women were depicted in the Midwest frontier press before the Civil War. This study is an effort to help contribute more knowledge about the era's frontier newspapers.

ENDNOTES

[1]"Women Seek Place in History Textbooks," Lansing State Journal, 9 March 1982, sec. 2, p. B7.

[2]Joanna L. Stratton, Pioneer Women (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 1.

[3]Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, The Female Hero in American and British Literature (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1981), p. 6.

[4]Berenice A. Carroll, ed., Liberating Women's History (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 359.

[5]Mary R. Beard, America Through Women's Eyes, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1933), p. 88.

[6]Carroll, pp. 353-354.

[7]Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), p. 433.

[8]Willis F. Dunbar, "Frontiersmanship in Michigan," Michigan History 50 (June 1966): 97.

[9]Joseph George Duncan, "Literary Content of a Pioneer Michigan Newspaper," Michigan History 33 (September 1949): 195-209.

[10]Dru Riley Evarts, "Women's Rights as Covered by the Ohio Frontier Press," paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Boston, Mass., August 1980. Riley served as an associate professor at Ohio University's School of Journalism.

[11]Fred Lewis Pattee, The Feminine Fifties (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1966).

[12]Pearson and Pope.

[13]L.L. Lee and Merrill Lewis, Women, Women Writers and the West (Troy, N.Y.: The Whitston Publishing Co., 1979).

[14]Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966): 151-174.

[15]Sister Patricia Kennedy, "The Pioneer Women in Middle Western Fiction" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1968).

[16]Florence E. MacLelland, "The Woman Suffrage Movement and Public Opinion with Emphasis on Michigan, 1848-1898," (M.A. thesis, University of Detroit, 1943).

[17]Judith Papachristou, Women Together (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1976).

[18]G.E. Morris Allen, "P.T. Barnum's 1850 Press Campaign in New York City to Herald Jenny Lind's American Concert Tour," (M.A. thesis, The American University, 1966).

[19]Dorothy Langdon Yates, "Belles of Freedom, Three Anti-slavery Editors: Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, Lydia Maria Child, and Jane Grey Swisshelm," (M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1969).

CHAPTER II

THE FRONTIER AND ITS PRESS

Historian Frederick Jackson Turner once defined the term frontier as "the boundary between savagery and civilization."[1] Despite numerous attempts by historians, properly defining the word "frontier" and "the West" has been difficult for the reader of American history.

Suggest the term "frontier" historian Ray Billington said, and people will conjure up visions of "painted Indians, gaudily-dressed hurdy-gurdy girls, straight-shooting cowboys and villainous bad men, all besporting themselves beneath sun-bathed western skies."[2] The common perception of the frontier in the popular media and some history books is that of a land from the Great Plains to the Rocky Mountains and beyond.

But that is an incomplete view of history. For decades, the frontier also included the Middle West and the North Central States. Into that region, occupied only by Indians, poured a stream of settlers from Europe and the East, bringing with them the complex political, economic and social customs of another land. These institutions did not always fit well into the new environment and many underwent change. Highly developed political forms gave way to simple

associations of settlers or rudimentary representative bodies. Complex social activities were abandoned in favor of simpler pursuits such as husking bees, cabin raisings and log rollings which seemed more appropriate to the environment.

Actually the frontier was a series of contiguous westward-migrating zones, each representing a different stage in the development of a society from elemental to complex forms.[3] Into this context, historians must try to place the frontier journalist. The pioneer editor certainly was not the first to come into the western country.

John Mason Peck, in his Guide for Emigrants, described the three classes of settlers. After the explorer and the trapper, Peck said pioneers consisted of farmers who depended on the gifts of nature and cultivated crops. The second class purchased lands and established better lines of communication. Then came the third group, the men of capital and enterprise, who concentrated in villages and towns and gave frontier life a more commercial atmosphere. The pioneer editor probably belonged to this group.[4]

A community had to have considerable development before a newspaper could flourish within it. To publish successfully, an editor needed a sufficient number of subscribers, both in town and country; a reasonable amount of advertising support from merchants, doctors and lawyers; adequate transportation facilities to move paper, type, ink and printing presses; and a regular and friendly postal service to provide low postage rates to subscribers.[5]

Pioneer editors used other newspapers and letters to supply the news needed for their papers. Due to slow and irregular transportation and to the editor's heavy involvement in the print shop, news was often weeks old by the time readers saw it.[6]

Because of the heavy workload and the time limitations, the pioneer editor often neglected to chronicle some significant events in the local community. That the newspapers failed to include these events is due in part to the editors' conception of what their function was. Lyon said editors were less interested in society than in the individual; their concern was not always for customs and mores, but for the actions of people.[7]

But the record pioneer editors left of these actions is still a valuable source for historians. Speaking of the American press in general, de Tocqueville characterized the newspaper as a primary sociological and political record, with the magazine, the sole dependable record of young America.[8]

Journalism historian Frank Luther Mott maintained a similar view. In his A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850, he said that the newspapers and magazines of each period provide material for historians to make useful studies of America's several regions.[9] This study is examining Michigan's frontier newspapers to see what materials it offers on the depiction of women.

Having provided an overview of the frontier and the role of the newspaper editor within it, an examination is needed of the Michigan frontier population in 1849-1850 and the newspapers of that era.

Population of the Michigan Frontier

Michigan's colonization, delayed by the War of 1812 and by unfavorable reports by land surveyors, picked up considerably after more accurate information appeared in the mid-1820s. The opening of the Erie Canal, the development of steam navigation on the Great Lakes, the land speculation activity of the 1830s and the coming of the railroads in the 1830s and 1840s, helped Michigan attract a flood of settlers from New York, New England and Canada.[10] One Vermont writer, alarmed by the "rage for western emigration" said:

> Sons of the Green Mountains! Maintain your independence. We can spare a portion of our young men, every year, to settle in the wilds of the east, and aid in establishing those fertile regions, the institutions and habits of New England; but we cannot, without deadly injury to ourselves spare our enterprising and industrious farmers to...go off to Michigan or Illinois...Beware of this Western fever.[11]

Many people seemed to catch "the fever." In 1820, Michigan's population was only 8,000. This figure climbed to nearly 32,000 in 1830 and 212,267 in 1840. By the 1850 census, the total population was 395,071 with 174,131 persons coming to Michigan from the six New England states, New York and Pennsylvania.[12]

This movement of New Englanders and New Yorkers into the state was not comprised of adventurers, hunters or shiftless cattle grazers. Instead the new settlers were small, middle-class farmers and merchants, who had a tradition of thriftiness and domestic order. They had a fondness for village life and the institutions which thrived in a more populous community.[13] Generally this was the first time the traditionally and geographically limited New England society had an opportunity to expand in a region where resources were so abundant and where there were less natural restrictions.[14]

Yet settling on the frontier was not always easy. After the settlers came to Michigan by wagon, ferry, steamboat or train, they faced the often-difficult task of starting over with few resouces in a strange new land. Two women who lived in Michigan during this era, Anna Howard Shaw and Caroline Kirkland, wrote about their Michigan frontier experiences and elaborated on the problems facing pioneers.

Shaw (1847-1919) was a famous minister and women's rights advocate. In 1859, her father took up a claim of 360 acres in the wilderness of Michigan and sent Anna, then 12, his invalid wife, and four other children to live there alone until he joined them 18 months later. In her memoirs, The Story of a Pioneer, Shaw recalled the family's arrival in Michigan:

> We all had an idea that we were going to a farm, and we expected some resemblance at least to the prosperous farms we had seen in New England. My mother's mental picture was, naturally, of an English farm. Possibly she had visions of red barns and deep meadows, sunny skies and daisies. What we found waiting for us there were the four walls and the roof of a good-sized loghouse, standing in a small cleared strip of the wilderness, its door and windows represented by square holes, its floor also a thing of the future, its whole effect achingly forlorn and desolate.
>
> It was late in the afternoon when we drove up to the opening that was its front entrance, and I shall never forget the look my mother turned upon the place. Without a word she crossed its threshold, and standing very still, looked slowly around her. Then something within her seemed to give way, and she sank upon the ground...in that way she sat for hours without moving or speaking...her face never lost the deep lines those first hours of her pioneer life had cut upon it.[15]

Sometimes it took families years to become prosperous, if they ever did. Caroline Kirkland (1801-1864), who came to Michigan from New York in the mid-1830s, was one of the first writers to examine the pioneer woman's daily life unromantically and in detail. Under the pen name Mary Clavers, she gave her readers a highly realistic and straight-forward account of what life was like in Michigan.[16]

Settling in Pinckney, 60 miles northwest of Detroit, Kirkland described the women she knew as "grumblers." She said that "many of them...made sacrifices for which they were not at all prepared and which detracted largely from their everyday stores of comfort."

Kirkland said the women and their husbands plodded on day in and day out, dulled by the arduous work, indifferent to the change, and toiling all their lives "for a little

more than a living." She said that some were so wearied by the daily routine they were unable to visualize that it might be better.[17]

Through studying histories of the frontier two pictures emerge. Historian Mary Beard said that the pioneers went with spirit to the wilderness and there handicrafts were nurtured, artistic work was done, learning was cherished and refinements were purchased at immense personal costs.[18] Yet Kirkland said the West was a "scarce reclaimed wilderness" in which little advancement had been made in "preparing the way for civilization, for intelligence, for refinement, for religion."[19]

Although the New Englanders who settled the state were a non-demonstrative and taciturn people, the attachments of blood relationships were strong and there was affection in the home. Kniffen describes it as "restrained warmth." Frontier families did have some fun after the long days of chores. Games like checkers and cat's cradle were played and folk music was performed. In their isolation, frontier families had limited knowledge of the outside world. Travelers and newspapers provided news to the frontier. The frontier newspapers did carry world news, but they also included local news because people were interested in community events.[20]

The Michigan Frontier Press

The growth of newspapers in Michigan during the frontier era paralleled the swift increase in population. In 1828, Michigan had only two newspapers. The number grew to 32 by 1840.[21] In 1850, there were 58 publications in Michigan. The newspapers consisted of 47 weeklies and a handful of publications printed daily, tri-weekly, semi-monthly and monthly.[22] All the newspapers examined in this study were weeklies. In trying to define what newspapers were frontier newspapers, there are the same difficulties mentioned earlier in trying to determine the meaning of the word "frontier." During this era, the Michigan frontier was already an anachronism. Those settling there were not just gaining a foothold, it was already an era of expansion. By this time, immigrants were pouring into the port of Detroit every day and many other pioneers were coming to Michigan from overland trails.[23]

Because of the huge influx of immigrants, Detroit had become a metropolitan center of importance in the Middle West. Trade and manufacturing flourished and the population more than doubled in the 1850s. Being an urban center, Detroit developed cultural advantages and refinements not enjoyed by those who lived in rural areas. For example, by 1850, gas lights illuminated the principal streets of the city.[24] Because it was a city of some consequence, McMurtie

said that beyond 1837, Detroit had become too large for its press to be considered on the frontier.[25]

The newspapers studied were published in smaller cities and towns, such as Grand Rapids, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Marshall and Adrian. Although life in these towns had some similarities to that in Detroit, Dunbar said these smaller towns were affected to a greater degree by the rural environment in which they existed.[26]

Frontier journalism was a young man's game. Editors on the frontier needed physical stamina and a minimum of family obligations. Because there no schools of journalism, most frontier newsmen had little formal training in their profession. Grammar and spelling errors were not uncommon. Karolevitz said that politics played a big role in early-day newspapering. Editors "reveled in it, lambasting the opposition and glorifying the party heroes." Many editors became candidates and office-holders themselves.[27] In Michigan, most communities had at least two newspapers, started by both the Whig and Democratic parties. Even in communities where a second newspaper was not feasible, the opposition party would have a temporary organ.[28] By present standards it did not take much money or equipment to get into the newspaper business in the small frontier communities. An army press, a bundle of "readyprint" and a supply of type were the principal requirements necessary for a frontier editor to conduct business. The local newspaper office was usually the job-printing headquarters for the

community. In addition to putting out their newspaper, editors were also busy printing business cards, letterheads, and bill posters.[29]

Through the efforts of historians and librarians, about one-fourth of the weekly newspapers published in 1850 have been preserved on microfilm. The following is a brief description of the founding of each newspaper being studied and of its editors.

The American Citizen, published weekly in Jackson, began as the Jacksonburgh Sentinel in 1837 and was the first paper started in Jackson County. In 1848, the old Sentinel office was taken over by Albert A. Dorrance.[30] On August 15, 1849, the 21-year-old Dorrance began a new Whig paper, the American Citizen, published weekly in an office on the second floor of the Porter Block, on the east side of the courthouse.[31] On November 28, 1849, Dorrance announced that Charles V. DeLand, who had helped him establish the Citizen, was to become a full partner.[32] A year later, DeLand became the paper's sole proprietor.[33]

The Coldwater Sentinel was started in 1841 by Albert Chandler.[34] In the June 9, 1848, issue of the Sentinel, Elihu B. Pond announced he was taking over as publisher and proprietor. The Democratic sheet was published in the third story of Clark's brick building on the corner of Monroe and Chicago streets.[35]

The Grand Rapids Enquirer began publication on or about May 18, 1841. James H. Morse and Company was the first

publisher of the paper. Although it began non-partisan it soon became Democratic. Jacob Barns became the publisher on June 5, 1846.[36] Barns had come from Vermont in 1836 and learned the printer's trade in Michigan. He was connected for many years with both the Enquirer and the Detroit Free Press before his death in 1883.[37]

Thomas B. Church, a prominent Grand Rapids lawyer and journalist, was the editor of the Enquirer from December 29, 1847, to January, 1851.[38] Both Barns and Church were active in the Democratic party. In early 1850 the Enquirer said that Church had been chosen as a delegate to the state constitutional convention. Barns was the secretary of the Democratic district committee that chose Church as a delegate.[39] Church went on to become a member of the State House from 1851-1856.[40]

The Grand River Eagle was established on December 25, 1844, as a Whig organ by Aaron B. Turner. Turner had begun as an apprentice in the office of the Grand River Times when it started in 1837. A.H. Proctor was Turner's partner in 1849; because of a lack of funds, they suspended publication several times from inability to buy paper.[41] When they did have sufficient capital, the pair published the Eagle from their office on Canal Street, north of the post office, in Grand Rapids.[42]

The Hillsdale Whig Standard was first published on June 30, 1846, when it pledged to print "good Whig doctrine." The paper was published every Thursday morning at Underwood's

Block Third Story office.[43] Stephen D. Clark and Harvey B. Rowlson, former employees of the Hillsdale Gazette, served as its editors. In the spring of 1850, Rowlson became the sole editor and proprietor.[44]

The Kalamazoo Gazette began as the Michigan Statesman in White Pigeon in 1833. The paper was moved to Kalamazoo in 1835 by the owners, Henry Gilbert and Albert Chandler. Chandler retired from the firm the same year and on January 23, 1837, Gilbert changed the name of the paper to the Kalamazoo Gazette. Eventually, Volney Hascall, an apprentice in Gilbert's employ, became owner of the Gazette in 1844 and continued as publisher until 1862. Gilbert, although ceasing to be owner, remained with the Gazette for at least 25 more years.[45] The Democratic paper was published every Friday morning.[46]

The Marshall Statesman first appeared as the Western Statesman on September 12, 1839. The paper was established by Seth Lewis, who came from Strykersville, New York. Lewis conducted the paper from its establishment until his death on August 8, 1879, with the remarkable record of never missing an issue on a publication date while the Statesman was a weekly.[47] James Pratt served as editor of the paper until he left to search for gold in California in 1849.[48] Pratt's successor was George Pratt, who became editor as of the February 13, 1850 edition. James Pratt continued to write for the Statesman during his journey, vividly describing his exploits in California. The philosophy of the Statesman was

explained when the paper pledged to be a "good family newspaper with a healthy moral influence." It further promised to be an "able and consistent helper in the cause of reform, advocating the sound, republican doctrines of the Whig Party.[50]

In 1843, S.P. and T.D. Jermain established the Michigan Expositor as a rival to the Adrian Watchtower, whose editors advocated "Jacksonian Democracy." During its early years, the Expositor was the recognized organ of the Whig Party in Adrian. After 1854, it became a leading Republican paper.[51] The paper was published weekly by Jermain's Power Press.[52]

The Niles Republican was established on October 25, 1839, by Henry B. Miller and a partner named Van Vleet. On April 17, 1842, Miller and Darius B. Cook became joint publishers, with Cook as editor. Cook became sole editor and publisher on October 21, 1843.[53] The Democratic organ was published every Saturday morning.[54]

The Oakland Gazette was established on February 7, 1844, by J. Dowd Coleman.[55] Three weeks later it was announced that the paper had been purchased by W.M. Thompson, a "true Whig."[56] Thompson served as a joint editor and as sole editor during the following four years. On April 28, 1849, J.B. Seymour became proprietor, but Thompson continued as editor.[57] The Whig paper was published weekly in Pontiac.[58]

The Pontiac Jacksonian was established March 24, 1838, by the partnership of Eldridge and Denton. The newspaper changed hands several times, and by 1846, W.L. Bancroft and

William B. Sherman were its publishers, with Bancroft serving as editor.[59] By 1849, the Democratic organ was being edited and published by Thornton F. Brodhead.[60]

The Western Chronicle was established on September 29, 1849. It was published every Saturday at Centreville, St. Joseph County, by B.W. Guernsey and G.H. Crosette, in their office at Case's Brick Building on Main Street. The newspaper was established for "the maintenance of Democratic measures and the support of Democratic men."[61] The July 6, 1850, edition of the paper announced that Guernsey had left the firm and was replaced by Andrew J. Brown.[62]

Like most frontier newspapers, much of the news in the Michigan frontier press was reprinted from other publications. As the Emerys said in The Press and America, any subscriber who could read or write usually contributed an article at one time or another to the press.[63] The papers studied are full of contributions from local readers, often identified by a pen name or simply as "anonymous local scribe."

Each of the papers studied was four pages in length. Most advertisements appeared on pages three and four, but occasionally advertisements would appear on page one. Usually, speeches by political leaders or short stories ran on the front page. Letters, editorials, and news briefs were on page two, with additional news placed on pages three and four with the advertisements.

ENDNOTES

[1]Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 3.

[2]Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1957), pp. 1-3.

[3]Ibid.

[4]William H. Lyon, The Pioneer Editor in Missouri, 1808-1860 (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1965), p. 7.

[5]Ibid., p. 8.

[6]Ibid., p. 162

[7]Ibid., p. 47.

[8]Ibid., p. 46.

[9]Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850 4th ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 4.

[10]Turner, Frontier in American History, p. 271.

[11]Paul S. Taylor and Anne Loftis, "The Legacy of the Nineteenth Century New England Farmer," New England Quarterly 54 (June 1981): 252.

[12]Thomas D. Clark, Frontier America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 306.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Anna Howard Shaw, The Story of a Pioneer (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers 1915; reprint ed., New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970), p. 24.

[16]Caroline M. Kirkland, A New Home or Life in the Clearings (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1953), p. 4.

[17]William S. Osborne, Caroline M. Kirkland (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 67.

[18]Mary R. Beard, America Through Women's Eyes (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933), p. 90.

[19]Osborne, p. 51.

[20]Fred B. Kniffen, "Milestones and Stumbling Blocks," Pioneer America 7 (January 1975), p. 4.

[21]William Chauncy Langdon, Everyday Things in American Life, 1776-1876 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. 155.

[22]The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850 (Washington: Robert Armstrong [1853]), p. 898.

[23]Kirkland, p. 5.

[24]Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 434-436.

[25]Douglas C. McMurtie, Early Printing in Michigan 1796-1850 (Chicago: John Calhoun Club, 1931), p. 80.

[26]Dunbar, Wolverine State, pp. 434-436.

[27]Robert F. Karolevitz, Newspapering in the Old West, A Pictorial History of Journalism and Printing on the Frontier (Seattle: Superior Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 12-15.

[28]John Cumming, "History of the Michigan Newspapers," Family Trails 3 (Fall-Winter 1971), p. 1.

[29]Karolevitz, pp. 13-20.

[30]History of Jackson County, Michigan (Chicago: Interstate Publishing Co., 1881), p. 421.

[31]Kenneth John Wyatt, That Vile Invective: A History of Partisan Journalism in Jackson County, 1837-1866 (unpublished M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1976), pp. 63-64.

[32]American Citizen, 28 November 1849, p. 2.

[33]History of Jackson County, p. 421.

[34]McMurtie, p. 257.

[35]Coldwater Sentinel, 9 June 1848, pp. 1-2.

[36]Dwight Goss, History of Grand Rapids and Its Industries (Chicago: C.F. Cooper and Co., 1906), p. 900.

[37]Ibid.

[38]McMurtie, p. 278.

[39]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 24 April 1850, p. 2.

[40]Goss, p. 838.

[41]McMurtie, p. 279.

[42]Grand River Eagle, 6 July 1849, p. 1.

[43]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 30 June 1846, pp. 1-2.

[44]McMurtie, p. 280.

[45]Ibid., pp. 287-288.

[46]Kalamazoo Gazette, 6 July 1849, p. 1.

[47]McMurtie, p. 293.

[48]John Cumming, The Gold Rush (Mt. Pleasant, Mich: By the Author, 465 Hiawatha Drive, 1974), p. iii.

[49]Marshall Statesman, 13 February 1850, p. 2. It cannot be determined if the Pratts were related.

[50]Marshall Statesman, 13 February 1850, p. 2.

[51]Richard Illenden Bonner, ed., Memoirs of Lenawee County, Michigan (Madison, Wisconsin: Western Historical Association, 1909), p. 551.

[52]Michigan Expositor, 3 July 1849, p. 1.

[53]McMurtie, p. 303.

[54]Niles Republican, 7 July 1849, p. 1.

[55]McMurtie, p. 310.

[56]Oakland Gazette, 28 February 1844, p. 2.

[57]McMurtie, p. 310.

[58]Oakland Gazette, 7 July 1849, p. 1.

[59]McMurtie, p. 309.

[60]Pontiac Jacksonian, 4 July 1849, pp. 1-2.

[61]Western Chronicle, 29 September 1849, pp. 1-2.

[62]Western Chronicle, 6 July 1850, p. 2.

[63]Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America 4th ed., (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), p. 98.

CHAPTER III

FOR BETTER OR WORSE: DEPICTION OF COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

I'm told there's care in married life,
  That all the joy's in courting
When young men have secured a wife,
  They say their vows are sporting.[1]

The above verse, taken from the Jackson American Citizen, is one example of the poems and articles written in the Michigan frontier press about courtship and marriage. The newspapers offered a variety of discussion on the topic of matrimony. Advice of all kinds was given to both men and women on how to best pick the ideal mate with predictions of misery for those who made the wrong choice.

When viewing the treatment of courtship and marriage by the frontier press, it is important not to judge the standards of the past by today's practices. Although some statements might be considered unacceptable today, they may have been normal in 1850. The Marshall Statesman said that "young ladies are bound to fall in love as soon as possible, and bound to be bound to a partner for life after the necessary preliminaries." The six steps toward marriage were getting a lover, fascinating him thoroughly, being courted,

having the question popped, arraying wedding garments and inviting friends to witness the wedding.[2]

Women were shown as eager to snag a husband. The Statesman said that "young ladies pick up husbands at Coney Island by venturing into the surf and coming near getting drowned. Their deliverers become their wooers."[3]

The Grand Rapids Enquirer reprinted an article from the Boston Post titled "Manifest Destiny," where a Dr. Liebeg[4] said that women were born to be married. The good doctor said that "men are born to die, too--but when you...talk of the preparation for the event, they are as little fitted for it as the girls for the future state of matrimony."[5] The Hillsdale Whig Standard claimed that the "woman does not marry the man, the man marries her." With quotes from the Bible, the article states that the wife "agrees to love, honor and obey, which are only promises contingent on the good conduct of the husband."[6]

Articles appeared instructing men on how to "get a wife." The Statesman said that some men conquered women by gold, some by intellect, some by beauty and accomplishments, and still others captivated the fair sex by stratagem and skill. The piece concluded that "getting a wife is very serious business."[7]

Men were advised on how to choose a spouse. They were told to find a woman that could play and sing, dance the polka and entertain company.[8] The Standard suggested that if a man was courting a young lady he should try her temper

by tearing her dress as if by accident. If the girl kept her equanimity, the man should "loose not a moment in popping the question."[9]

The man was told he would suffer if he did not exercise caution in choosing a mate. The Enquirer instructed men to look for a woman with the seven requisites for being a good wife, those being piety, sense, temper, education, manners, beauty and riches.[10] The Niles Republican told men never to marry a girl who is "fond of being always on the street, who is fond of running to night gatherings, who has a jewelled hand and an empty head." The paper said this would be the kind of girl who would let her mother work while she sat in bed all day reading novels or feigning sickness. "Should you get such a one," warned the Republican, "you will have a dirty miserable home...you will be kept poor all of your life."[11]

Endless woe was the consistent prediction for men careless in picking a wife. "Nobody can feel more truly wretched than on the happiest day of his life," said the Standard. "A wedding is even more melancholy than a funeral."[12] The same paper warned that "to dream of a millstone about your neck is a sign of what you might expect if you marry an extravagant wife."[13]

The Standard advised men that good looks were not enough. In the fictional "A Coquette's Account of Herself," the title character was a bewitching girl with a sweet figure, charming teeth and fine eyes who calculated to break

a husband's heart.[14] In an advice column, "Happy Home," the Standard said that good looks were something that would fade away:

> A young man meets a pretty face in the ballroom, falls in love with it, "marries," goes to housekeeping with it, and boasts of having a home to go to, and a wife. The chances are 9 in 10 he has neither...Her pretty face gets to be an old story...[15]

It is clear from this advice that men were not supposed to choose a wife simply because she was beautiful. Good looks were depicted as something used to trick men or that would fade in time.

Women also were warned about making the proper choice for marriage. The Kalamazoo Gazette said that "a woman's head is always influenced by her heart; but a man's heart is generally influenced by his head."[16] "Marriage," said the Statesman, "is the great event in a woman's life, from which all other events take their coloring. If she err here, her whole life is one of unavailing penance." The newspaper also said that couples should not get married without the permission of the bride's parents. "In most clandestine marriages, the girl is a child, ignorant of the world...," said the Statesman. "Her mind is probably filled with false notions and fanciful day-dreams derived from novelists and romances." This was because a "reflecting woman" would see that the young man who seeks her love without the approval of her parents gives evidence that something is wrong with him.[17]

The Adrian Michigan Expositor said that a young lady who talked eloquently about love was probably incapable of feeling much of it. "Many a young woman sincerely believes that she is capable of never-ending attachment when she likes only the excitement of having a lover and hearing her virtue extolled by others."[18]

The frontier press also provided rules for the woman to follow in selecting a husband. If a man talked loudly, squeezed a woman's hand or ate heartily in her presence, the Statesman advised a woman not to marry him.[19] The Republican provided guidelines in an article titled, "Rules for Ladies." The five rules for not marrying men were:

> (1) Marry not a profane man--the depravity of his heart will corrupt your children, and embitter your existence;
> (2) Marry not a gambler, a tipler, or a haunter of taverns; because he who has no regard for himself will never have any for his wife;
> (3) Marry not a man who makes promises which he never performs, because you can never trust him.
> (4) Marry not a man whose actions do not correspond with his sentiments;
> (5) Marry not a man who neglects his business; if he does so when single, he will be worse when married.[20]

In addition to the fiction and advice columns written about how to choose a mate, poetry in the frontier press also offers hints on the subject. One such poem in the Centreville Western Chronicle advised women to marry the man they truly loved, regardless of his financial status:

> Oh, marry the man you love girls,
> If you can get him at all;
> If he is as rich as Croesus,
> Or as poor as Job in his fall.

Pray do not marry for pelf, girls,
'T will bring your souls into the thrall,
But marry the man you love, girls,
If his purse is ever so small.

Oh! never marry a fop, girls,
Whether he's little or tall;
He'll make a fool of himself and you,
He knows nothing well but to drawl.

But marry a sober man, girls,
There are few left on this ball;
And you'll never rue the day, girls,
That you ever married at all.[21]

There was disagreement in the frontier press about who should pursue whom. The Republican said that women should remember "that the province of a woman is to be wooed, not to woo; to be caressed, not to caress."[22] Yet, a poem in the American Citizen pondered why women didn't ask men to marry them. The anonymous author said:

"The men are shy," the ladies cry,
"Their minds they'll not disclose."
If this be so, I'd like to know
Why don't the girls propose?...

Ye maidens fair, now laughing there
So coyly with your beaux,
Take my advice, don't be o'er nice,
They'll wed if you propose...

Poor Martha Meers for twenty years
To wedlock was opposed,
But now she sighs and whimpering cries,
"I wish I had proposed."

Then pity take for Hymen's sake,
On these unhappy beaux,
Who are, poor elves, too shy themselves,
A marriage to propose.[23]

One man, Hiram Mott, was not too shy to propose marriage. In an advertisement in the Oakland Gazette, Mott described the woman he was looking for:

> A lady of moderate size, from 15 to 20 years of age, light complexion and blue eyes; who has tenderhearted parents, brothers and sisters; or if an orphan, is in comfortable circumstances. If she is feeble, he will help her do housework, and bring her wood and water. She must have a mind of her own, and not be biased by others...
>
> For himself, he acknowledges he is poor, but promises to be honest, industrious, and faithful...[24]

Other frontier authors agreed with Mott. Women were expected to exhibit beauty, kindness, thrift, and the ability to work hard. If they exhibited these traits, wives were highly praised and considered to be influential in the family. The American Citizen said that "woman is the last and most perfect work of God."[25] The Expositor also described the "good woman:"

> A good woman never grows old. Years may pass over her head, but if benevolence and virtue dwell in her heart, she is as cheerful as when the spring first opened to her...In her neighborhood she is the friend and benefactor. In the church, the devout worshipper and exemplary Christian.[26]

The theme of a "good wife" having influence over her family was also discussed in the Republican. The newspaper said that it was the woman's job to make the home a "seat of happiness." The article said that each day men's feelings are lacerated and he must have a "place of repose" after days full of irritations and disappointments.[27]

In the 12 frontier newspapers examined for this study, a consistent theme was that the woman's place was in the home. Men seeking a wife were told to make certain their choice could provide them with a quiet home to escape from the world's problems. It is never pointed out where women were expected to go to escape from the drudgery and

difficulty of housework and raising children. The best advice offered in the frontier press to women is that their choice for a husband better be a good one, for a mistake in selection would be regrettable.

The poems, fiction and advice columns of the frontier press offered hints to both men and women about what to look for in choosing a mate. Acceptable women were pious, beautiful and polite. Any woman who was not a hard worker was depicted as unacceptable in the frontier press. A woman's beauty was seen as an attribute, but one that would fade away in time. And a woman who had all the acceptable traits was seen as creating a pleasant environment for her family, no matter how much work it took.

From the frontier press, it appears that the "ideal woman" had specific duties she was expected to fulfill after she was married, as did her husband. The next chapter shall analyze the duties of the frontier woman as wife and mother, according to the Michigan frontier press.

ENDNOTES

[1]American Citizen, 26 December 1849, p. 4.

[2]Marshall Statesman, 26 September 1849, p. 1.

[3]Marshall Statesman, 3 October 1849, p. 1.

[4]Ronald Gottesman, et al. The Norton Anthology of American Literature (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), p. 1538. Dr. Liebeg was probably, Justus, Baron von Liebeg (1808-1873), a German chemist.

[5]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 17 October 1849, p. 1.

[6]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 28 May 1850, p. 1.

[7]Marshall Statesman, 14 November 1849, p. 1.

[8]Marshall Statesman, 5 June 1850, p. 1.

[9]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 4 September 1849, p. 2.

[10]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 26 December 1849, p. 1.

[11]Niles Republican, 10 November 1849, p. 1.

[12]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 11 December 1849, p. 1.

[13]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 9 October 1849, p. 1.

[14]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 10 July 1849, p. 1.

[15]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 19 March 1850, p. 1.

[16]Kalamazoo Gazette, 22 February 1850, p. 2.

[17]Marshall Statesman, 27 February 1850, p. 1.

[18]Michigan Expositor, 8 January 1850, p. 1.

[19]Marshall Statesman, 26 September 1849, p. 1.

[20]Niles Republican, 29 September 1849, p. 1.

[21]Western Chronicle, 12 January 1850, p. 1.

[22]Niles Republican, 13 October 1849, p. 1.

[23]American Citizen, 27 February 1850, p. 4.

[24]Oakland Gazette, 8 December 1849, p. 2.

[25]American Citizen, 5 September 1849, p. 2.

[26]Michigan Expositor, 5 February 1850, p. 1.

[27]Niles Republican, 12 January 1850, p. 3.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOMESTIC SPHERE: DUTIES AS WIFE AND MOTHER

> Her youth is to be passed partly in learning to keep house and the use of the needle, partly in the social circle, where her manners may be formed, ornamental accomplishments perfected and displayed, and the husband found who shall give her the domestic sphere for which she is exclusively prepared.
>
> --Margaret Fuller[1]

Once they had courted and married, a husband and wife each had duties they were expected to perform. The frontier press of Michigan depicted both men and women as hard-working people willing to sacrifice almost anything for their families. Each sex was viewed as unique, and each had a special role in society. To shield women, especially mothers, from the economic and physical problems of the 19th century world was even regarded as enlightened by the liberals of the day.[2]

The domestic sphere was the woman's domain. The home and the children were considered her responsibility. It was this responsibility that gave women their greatest power and their most difficult hardships. The Niles Republican described the woman's role:

> ...Home is the empire of woman. There she plans, directs, performs, the acknowledged source of dignity and felicity...The early years of childhood...are confined to woman's superintendence; she therefore may be presumed to lay the foundation of all the virtues, of all the wisdom, of all the evil, and crime that enrich or impoverish the world.[3]

In 1851, one writer divided the duties of women in the home into three specific areas: (1) providing food, clothing and medical care to their husbands, parents, children and other family members and to guests; (2) forming and improving the general manners and conduct of the other sex, by society and example; and (3) modelling the human mind of the children they supervised.[4]

Welter said that women's magazines of the 19th century developed the "cult of true womanhood" where the woman was the hostage in the home. Welter said:

> The attributes of true womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues - piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife - woman. Without them...all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power.[5]

On a similar subject, a popular writer of the 1850s, Grace Greenwood, said that true feminine genius was "ever timid, doubtful and clingingly dependent; a perpetual childhood."[6]

A variety of opinions on who held the power in the household were given in the Michigan press. The Republican said that the husband must govern the wife with wisdom and tenderness. Although the wife was depicted as inferior, she was considered a fellow ruler with him over children and

servants. "She is subject as his vice gerent, always preserving love and reverence in affection, and expressing meekness and obedience in actions," said the Republican.[7]

The Hillsdale Whig Standard reminded readers that there should be equality in a marriage. If a married man considered it justifiable to spend an evening away from home, the Standard said, it was equally fair for the woman to go out and visit her friends.[8]

The Jackson American Citizen said that society demanded "from the female sex the highest tone of purity and strictest observance of duties pertaining to the woman's sphere." The American Citizen also remarked on the difference cast upon the sexes for similar faults: "Woman must suffer in the dust...for trivial faults, while man walks proudly upright... though covered with his vices."[9] Because the woman was considered a role model for her children, it appears she was severely criticized for making mistakes, whereas a man was not. At least this anonymous writer in the American Citizen noted the inconsistency of judging the sexes.

Not only was a woman supposed to be morally superior, she was also expected to endure tremendous amounts of labor. The endless hours of back-breaking toil left little time for rest or leisure. Day in and day out, they worked in the house and in the fields to produce the basic necessities of life.[10] In reviewing the memoirs of frontier women, author Joanna Stratton found that at first the heavy workload seemed almost unbearable; it was physically exhausting and

emotionally draining. But over the years most women learned to abide the drudgery and monotony which filled their lives. Stratton said they developed a certain fortitude and resilience which enabled them to withstand the privations and overcome the hardships.[11]

The difficulties must have seemed overwhelming. Ordinary tasks like making cheese and preserving butter forced women to battle bugs and maggots.[12] Women doing laundry were forced to soak hardwood ashes because they had no soap to clean their clothes.[13] One article in the frontier press expected women to keep a cheerful attitude toward such drudgery. The American Citizen said the happy girl was known by her fresh looks, buoyant spirits and willingness to work. Day in and day out the good wife "has something to do and she takes hold of work as if she did not fear to soil her hands or dirty her apron," the Citizen said.[14]

It was a serious offense for a frontier woman to be lazy. Kniffen said the work ethic was exceedingly strong. There was even competition to outdo one another in feats of labor.[15] This competition for recognition was reflected in the press. In an article from the Detroit Advertiser, both Grand Rapids papers, the Enquirer and the Grand River Eagle, said a Mrs. Charles A. Taylor of Chicago had sewed a quilt composed of 9,800 pieces of silk, each an inch square, for her mother, Mrs. A. Wilcox of Detroit.[16] The Standard told of a 35-year-old woman who had to raise five children by herself when her husband left for California. This

particular wife wove 700 yards of satin, made 800 pounds of maple sugar and cut all the wood for her family. She also raised six cows, 11 sheep and drove her own team of oxen to the mill and trading center 15 miles from home.[17]

The day of one hard-working housewife was described by the Enquirer:

> There is a woman in town that washed a whole week's washing and hung the clothes out to dry, cooked three meals, made a pair of pants for her youngest boy, darned her husband's socks, had the cholera and cured herself and then dyed - four dresses in one day.[18]

Highly praised was the frontier woman who could manage with next to nothing. The Standard reprinted an article from the Cincinnati Atlas about a poor woman with seven children who was "out of money, out of bread and out of everything to eat." The resourceful woman had nothing but some hens that produced a total of eight eggs a day. The woman exchanged them for supplies to barely support her family. She was congratulated by the newspaper for her intelligence and thriftiness.[19] No doubt examples like this were published in the press to help inspire women readers to better manage their households.

Women's cooking and handicrafts were given praise in the frontier press. The Republican reported the success of the Presbyterian Society's cake auction where women served as auctioneers.[20] The Coldwater Sentinel reprinted an article from the Detroit Free Press listing many women's prize-winning efforts at the State Fair.[21]

The frontier wife had to know how to do everything because help was scarce and unaffordable. She had to dry fruit, make candles and even build caskets for dead babies.[22] If a woman wanted a dress, she was expected to make her own. On March 20, 1850, the Marshall Statesman said that every woman should be able to make herself simple yet elegant dresses.[23]

Sochen said that many travelers to the middle-western frontier in the first half of the 19th century commented on the hard-working women and the lazy men.[24] One article touching this subject appeared in the Statesman. In this piece, a man told what he liked about a woman. He said, "I like to see a young woman out in the morning scraping up chips to build a fire and her husband in bed, it shows that she thinks more of him than she does of herself."[25] Once again, the woman is depicted as putting her husband's comfort before her own. A quip from the Grand River Eagle was in a similar vein: "Industry must prosper, as the man said when holding the baby while his wife chopped wood."[26]

Despite the evidence of how hard a frontier wife's life was, there were those in 1849 that thought women had several advantages over men. An anonymous contributor to the Enquirer wrote a piece representative of this view saying that a woman could "take a snooze after dinner, while her husband has got to work, run into debt until the husband warns the public by advertisement not to trust her on his account, and dress herself in neat and tidy calicoes for a dollar which her husband has to earn and fork over.[27]

Many women paid dearly for their dedication to hard work. Women aged noticeably on the frontier after constant childbearing, maintaining the home, caring for children and working in the fields.[28] Women's diaries and journals contain accounts of the difficult tasks frontier women faced and the toll it took on their health.[29] In addition to their physical hardships, many frontier wives were lonely. The life on the frontier was radically altered from the existence they had previously known. Instead of giving birth and raising children near mothers or other female relatives, the frontier mother did not always have someone close to share womanly experiences.[30] Some were able to ease the loneliness by participating in camp meetings, quilting parties and other activities. But these social events meant more work because the frontier wife was required to entertain, provide the refreshments and clean up afterwards.[31]

Loneliness due to separation or death spurred some women to contribute poems about absent loved ones to the frontier press. In the Centreville Western Chronicle, a regular contributor known as Martha M. submitted this verse, expressing a longing for female companionship:

> My mother and my sister, ye are gone
> I call you but you never may return
> And I an orphan, sisterless and lone,
> Stifling the thoughts in my sad heart that burn,
> Oh where shall I for love and pity turn?[32]

Mrs. M. C. Conant submitted this poem to the Standard dealing with the death of a child:

Months have fled, my darling baby
Since thy lovely form I gave
With calm look, but bursting bosom
To the cold and lovely grave.
Months have fled, and those around me
Deem the stricken heart is healed,
They little know the depths of anguish
Hid within the fountain sealed.[33]

Countless other women like Martha M. and Mrs. Conant contributed material to the frontier press expressing grief for dead loved ones.

The material submitted by grieving women is only one example of a consistent theme in the frontier press about the responsibility of motherhood. The Statesman described the mother as an "angel, guardian and guide."[34] The Standard said that a good mother never spoke to her children with a loud voice or in harsh unkind tones.[35] She also never showed fear before her children.[36] Drinking mothers who neglected their children while becoming intoxicated were condemned.[37]

The ideal mother was shown as willing to sacrifice her own life to save her children. In "A Mother's Love," a fictional story in the Standard, a family was overcome by a snowstorm while sleighing in Vermont. The heroine of the story wrapped her own clothes around her shivering baby and although the mother perished, her sacrifice allowed the child to survive.[38] Real frontier mothers were shown by fiction like this that their own sacrifices were small by comparison.

The good mother was depicted as a Christian woman, willing to forgive anything her children did. A Western Chronicle writer said that "a man's mother is the

representative of his Maker." The article, titled "My Mother," said that as long as a man's mother lived, he would have at least one friend on earth who would not listen when he was slandered, who would not desert him when he suffered, and who would soothe him when sorrowful.[39]

Women seeking solace from their difficulties were supposed to find it in religion, according to the frontier press. The Republican, discussing the anxieties of being a mother, wondered how any woman could be sustained without religion. The newspaper said that the "many days of anguish" when their offspring were ill, absent or in danger, should be a "powerful inducement for mothers to become true Christians."[40] This view is similar to the one discussed in the chapter on courtship and marriage saying men were supposed to seek women who were pious.

Above all, mothers were supposed to be patient. The Pontiac Jacksonian said that the patience of many mothers exceeded that of Job's, and remarked on the plight of some frontier mothers:

> Some poor women are...obliged to raise a family of 10 or 12 children, without help, spending months, years - all the prime of life - in washing, scouring, scrubbing, mending, cooking, nursing children...[41]

The picture that emerges of the "ideal" frontier wife and mother in the press of 1850 is a patient, religious, hard-working and cheerful woman devoted to her family. Despite the heartbreaking loneliness, the weary toll of daily existence, or the painful sacrifices, the frontier

wife depicted in the frontier press of Michigan withstood the hardships of life with only her religion to provide comfort.

It is debatable whether the woman portrayed in the 665 editions studied were representative of how real women felt and acted. While many may have lived the hard-working lives described in the press they may not have been patient and pious along the way. Rather than turning to Christianity, it is possible that many of them became embittered about their sacrifices in a difficult existence. But in the frontier press, the hard-working, God-fearing woman who ruled the domestic sphere with cheerfulness and thrift is the image presented most often.

In the next chapter, the short stories and literature reprinted from popular woman's magazines and submitted by local authors will be analyzed to see how fictional female characters were depicted.

ENDNOTES

[1]Margaret Fuller Ossoli, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 218.

[2]A.E. Dick Howard, "The Sexes and the Law," The Wilson Quarterly 5 (Winter 1982):81.

[3]Niles Republican, 12 January 1850, p. 3.

[4]Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States (New York: The Science Press, 1929; reprinted, New York: Octagon Books, 1974), p. 101.

[5]Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966):150-152.

[6]Ibid., p. 160.

[7]Niles Republican, 11 August 1849, p. 1.

[8]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 11 September 1849, p. 1.

[9]American Citizen, 7 November 1849, p. 1.

[10]June Sochen, Herstory (New York: Alfred Publishing Co., 1974), p. 114.

[11]Joanna L. Stratton, Pioneer Women (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 75.

[12]Gro Svendsen, Frontier Mother (Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian Historical Association, 1950), p. 39.

[13]Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 252.

[14]American Citizen, 20 March 1850, p. 1.

[15]Fred B. Kniffen, "Milestones and Stumbling Blocks," Pioneer America 7 (January 1975), p. 4.

[16]Grand River Eagle, 12 October 1849, p. 1; Grand Rapids Enquirer, 24 October 1849, p. 1.

[17]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 21 May 1850, p. 1.

[18]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 26 September 1849, p. 1.

[19]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 4 June 1850, p. 1.

[20]Niles Republican, 22 December 1849, p. 1.

[21]Coldwater Sentinel, 5 October 1849, p. 1.

[22]Mary R. Beard, America Through Women's Eyes (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933), p. 100.

[23]Marshall Statesman, 20 March 1850, p. 4.

[24]Sochen, p. 112.

[25]Marshall Statesman, 18 July 1849, p. 2.

[26]Grand River Eagle, 13 July 1849, p. 1.

[27]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 7 November 1849, p. 1.

[28]Sochen, p. 114.

[29]Elizabeth Fries Ellet, Pioneer Women of the West (New York: C. Scribner, 1852), p. 420.

[30]L.L. Lee and Merrill Lewis, Women, Women Writers and the West (Troy, N.Y.: The Whitston Publishing Co., 1979), p. 33.

[31]Sochen, pp. 112-113.

[32]Western Chronicle, 16 March, 1850, p. 1.

[33]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 9 April 1850, p. 1.

[34]Marshall Statesman, 10 April 1850, p. 2.

[35]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 12 February 1850, p. 1.

[36]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 6 November 1849, p. 2.

[37]Marshall Statesman, 20 February 1850, p. 1.

[38]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 18 December 1849, p. 1.

[39]Western Chronicle, 6 April 1850, p. 1.

[40]Niles Republican, 22 December 1849, p. 1.

[41]Pontiac Jacksonian, 24 July 1850, p. 1.

CHAPTER V

HEROINES, YOUNG BRIDES AND OLD MAIDS: FEMALE CHARACTERS IN LITERATURE

> I can, indeed promise no solid reading, no useful information, no learning nor poetry, no lofty purpose...for myself, I but seek to wile away a heavy hour this dull autumn day...
>
> --Grace Greenwood[1]

By 1850, feminine fiction began to appear in a flood and most of it was being produced by New England women. Women had been contributing freely to magazines since the 1830s, but their offerings had been mostly poetry. Americans of the 1840s bought feminine poetry, and by the 1850s women were writing more and more successful short stories and novels.[2] The short stories and poems found in popular magazines like Godey's Lady's Book and Graham's were reprinted material from other newspapers and accepted contributions from anonymous local authors.

Writers like Grace Greenwood, Fanny Fern and Catharine M. Sedgwick provided much of the popular fiction. As the above quotation by Greenwood indicates, this fiction was not always of high literary quality and it did not endure, but it did confirm the moral values of the culture. Christian virtues were upheld, sin was punished and obedience to God

was rewarded. Thus women were depicted as being in charge of their own moral destiny.[3] Sochen said that in a typical plot the beautiful young heroine, yearning, long-suffering, and consumed by strong emotions and inner conflicts, was punished for any sexual indiscretion she committed.[4] For many years the fiction in women's magazines was mostly sugary and noble and followed the sentimental conventions of the period. Excessive detail was used to help create an illusion of reality.[5]

A theme consistently explored in the pages of the frontier press was how a woman chose a husband. Most fictional women characters were instructed to marry a man they truly loved, regardless of his station in life. Representative of this theme was Kate Sutherland's "The Maiden's Choice," published in the Grand Rapids Grand River Eagle. The main character is Kate Darlington, the daughter of a well-to-do merchant. Her father takes in young Edwin Lee, the son of a dead employee. After several years, Edwin becomes one of Mr. Darlington's best law clerks and sees Kate very often. Wanting to marry her, but deciding he's too poor, Edwin decides to go away. Kate finds out why Edwin is planning to leave and persuades him to stay, and eventually they marry. "Fashionable people were greatly surprised when the beautiful Kate Darlington married her father's clerk, and mustached dandies curled their lips, but it mattered not to Kate," said the author. Kate had married Edwin because she was confident of his worth,

affection and manliness. She was a happy wife if not a fashionable one.[6]

Occasionally, waiting for the right man was a tragic choice for the woman. In "Minnie Clifton, A Heart History," published in the Hillsdale Whig Standard, the main character suffers such a fate. Poor Minnie led a dull and dreary life waiting for Hubert Woodley, the man she truly loved, to marry her. Hubert left town to marry another while Minnie cared for his aged father.[7] But in "Pauline," also printed in the Standard, a French girl had to choose between a rich suitor, Alexis Laparout, and the poor man she truly loved, Jean Provost. Although Pauline chose Jean, they lived a happy and prosperous life.[8] Equally happy was Clara Walton, who married Charles Forester, although he had almost nothing financially to offer her. "Clara Walton" was a reprint from Godey's Lady's Book that appeared in the Marshall Statesman.[9]

Fictional material reprinted from Godey's appeared regularly in the Michigan frontier press. In turn, most of the material in Godey's had been clipped from English publications without acknowledgement, as there was no copyright agreement between Great Britain and the United States. Godey's practice was no different from other American magazine and newspaper publishers who used material by Dickens, Thackeray and others without permission or payment.[10]

Newspapers also reprinted stories from other newspapers. A short story, "Jane and John of Farmersville," originally

published in the Genessee Farmer, was reprinted in both the Statesman and the Oakland Gazette. The story, by James Mapleton, explored the role of a working pioneer wife, Jane Elmily and her husband, John. Mapleton said John had the prettiest wife and Jane had the best husband. Together they had the best farm, the neatest garden, the prettiest cottage and the prettiest children in all Farmersville. Much of the credit went to Jane for the fine meals she prepared and the long hours she toiled in the family garden:

> Jane no sooner got at home than she commenced her work. She was always in the garden - making flower beds and planting seeds. She didn't stand with her gloves on and direct a gardener, but went at it herself, with the spade and hoe.

Although some had said that John would make a slave of Jane, it just did not happen. Mrs. Elmily was happy to be living in Farmersville and working for her family. "Jane's sparkling eyes...spoke of anything but slavery - her rosy cheek and joyous laugh told not of unwilling toil."[11]

Another Jane and John did not fare as well. In "The Last Pawn," the couple's home falls into disrepair and their children stay hungry because John is a drunkard. Eventually the inebriate asks to see the family bible. Jane, relieved that he is seeking God's word, fetches it for him. It soon becomes apparent that John is planning to use the bible to pay off his drinking debts. Jane asks, "John, you will not pawn the word of God for rum, will you?" But in the end, John takes the bible and pays off his bill at Squire Barber's tavern.[12]

The two Jane and John stories demonstrate how marriage in fiction could be depicted as either extremely happy or tragic. Because Jane Elmily and her husband both worked hard and lived a good life they prospered. But the second Jane did not choose a good husband. She suffered endlessly because her husband chose to put his love of alcohol above all else.

The theme of alcoholism was also used in "A Girl That Would Be Married." The title character, Mary Watts, is the only child of a prosperous drunkard. Aware of the consequences of alcohol, she tries to persuade her father to change but his resolutions are meaningless. On the way to an errand, Mary meets John Dunn, a well-educated man. Mary, tired of her plight as a drunkard's daughter, asks John if he wants a wife. After mulling it over for a few seconds, John decides he does. The anonymous author reveals that Mary proposed because she needed a man to help run the household in place of her drunken father. And by tale's end, John and Mary's fields "smiled and flourished like an Eden."[13] As in "Jane and John of Farmersville," hard work and a righteous life brought happiness and prosperity.

Not all female characters were as fortunate as Jane Elmily or Mary Watts. In "The Mechanic's Wife," by Mary Leman Gillies, the main character, Susan Morris, leads a tragic life because she marries a selfish man who pursues his own selfish interests. Because Philip Morris neglects his wife, she dies, worn out from the hard life she must

endure.[14] This tale, printed in the Enquirer and in the Adrian Michigan Expositor, provides a fictional account of the heartbreak that many real-life women must have suffered.

Another sad tale, "The Seamstress," was printed in the Coldwater Sentinel. Author Charles J. Peterson said that the young woman, an orphan, must toil late into the night to scratch out a living. Residing in a miserable apartment, she barely has enough wood for a fire. Exhausted by her labors, she cries to God for mercy and falls asleep, dreaming she is reunited with her parents. By story's end her prayers are answered. Her dream passes into reality and in death the weary seamstress finds relief from her earthly cares.[15] This story demonstrates that even those fictional females who suffered would be vindicated in the end if they led a righteous life.

In "The Widow's Will," the themes of alcoholism and death are both used. The tale, printed in the Niles Republican, begins with Mrs. Watkins on her deathbed. She summons a Mr. Rowland to her home. Years ago, the Widow Watkins owned the farm, originally a gift from her father on her wedding day. But Rowland introduced Mr. Watkins to liquor and he eventually tricked the drunkard out of the mortgage to the home, forcing the widow to pay rent if she chose to stay there. As she dies, Mrs. Watkins makes Rowland the "heir to the tears she cries," and then the widow's soul is summoned to God, who has said "vengeance is mine and I will repay." [16]

At least one female character was shown as having a career and some influence in society. In Mrs. E.M. Seymour's "The School Mistress," published in the Oakland Gazette and the Jackson American Citizen, the title character is Julia Wescott, the new teacher in town. Tom Jones, the 12-year-old "bad boy" of the class, tries to intimidate the new teacher, but Miss Wescott understands human nature and decides to help mold young Tom into a better man. By gaining his trust and making him feel important, Julia Wescott changes Tom. He eventually becomes successful as a lawyer and gives the school mistress credit for his achievement.[17]

Three stories from the frontier press, "The Young Bride," "The Old House and the Young Wife," and "A Modern Wife," all deal with the high expectations of newlywed wives. In Mrs. E. Wellmont's "A Modern Wife," Belinda, about to marry Mr. Hodge, continually tells her aunt about the luxurious existence she plans to lead. Shortly after their marriage, it is revealed that Mr. Hodge has stolen money. When asked why he committed such a crime, Hodge replies, "To please my wife's fancy...she wanted to live like other people, and I wished to gratify her."[18] So even though Mr. Hodge committed the crime, the moral is it was Belinda's fault.

The women in "The Young Bride" and "The Old House and the Young Wife" both learned to quit complaining about their station in life. In the first story, Emma West badgers her husband Charles to spend $75 for a new sofa. Charles takes

her for a walk to Mrs. Wright's house, where she sees the plight of the widow and her hungry children. Upon returning home, Charles gives Emma the $75 and tells her she can spend the money as she wishes. Seeing the error of her ways, Emma takes the money and helps the children of the sickly Mrs. Wright.[19]

In "The Old House," Dr. Lawrence Bell, a middle-aged physician in a small New England town, takes a young bride, Charlotte. The bride, who grew up in posh Boston surroundings, finds Bell's old house unsuitable and continually pleads for a new dwelling. While walking in the woods the couple gets caught in a rainstorm and must seek shelter in a nearby hut. There Charlotte sees how a poor widow and her children exist in humble surroundings yet are still appreciative of God's blessings. Charlotte learns just how lucky she is and no longer yearns for more.[20] Like Emma West, she learns to be satisfied with what she has.

Although Charlotte Bell and Emma West eventually resolved their problems, other fictional females did not. In "Conjugal Endearments," Mr. and Mrs. Snapdragon have a bitter argument during breakfast that seems to indicate they really dislike each other and should have never married.[21] An untitled story in the Grand Rapids Grand River Eagle follows the marriage of William and Harriet Snooks. After six months of marriage, Harriet predicts they will stay happily married. "Oh, William...it will last and we shall see many years even happier than this, for our love will

grow stronger," says Harriet. To say the least, Harriet's prophecy is incorrect. After six years, the Snooks are arguing at the breakfast table, just like Mr. and Mrs. Snapdragon. William complains that Harriet neglected to pass the sugar. As the children begin to cry, Harriet slaps her daughter. William reprimands his wife; yet when his son tears up the newspaper, he strikes him and is rebuked by Harriet. "Let me tell you ma'am," says William. "I'll hear it no longer. You are as snappish and surly as a she-dog - and if there's a divorce to be had in the land I'll have it... Oh that I could once more be a bachelor..."[22] Both the Snapdragons and the Snooks were examples of how bad a marriage could be if the wrong two people got together.

In "Connubial Chit Chat," Julia and James Jones are celebrating their second wedding anniversary. During the festivities they recall that a "certain old raven" wrongly predicted that their marriage would be riddled with arguments. Julia recalls that a "Mr. Sawyer" said these words, while James says it was a "Mr. Brown." By the tale's conclusion, James has left his wife, "slamming the door with violence." Author Laura Cleveland, who "witnesses" the scene, said she was thankful for her own old-maidenhood, where she could possess a garret, "with no more quarrelsome companions than a teapot and a parrot."[23]

The life of old-maidenhood was examined in "Delicate Attentions," where the main characters were the five Blinks sisters: Juliana, Sarah, Belinda, Wilhelmina and Sophronia.

Although they were "the toasts of the bloods, the belles of the balls, and the beauties of the commencement," they rejected too many suitors and became old maids. When it came to marriage, the anonymous writer said, "they wouldn't when they could, and they couldn't when they would." So, because they were too choosy, the Blinks sisters gave up the love-chase and like sensible girls, became chatty, pleasant and agreeable old maids.[24]

A similar fate awaited Lydia Little, one of the "most vain, shrewd and heartless coquettes that ever made a bonfire of true hearts in order to laugh at the flame." In "Lydia Little's Lovers," the manipulative Lydia is outfoxed when she turns her two suitors, Brown and White, against one another. The two men discover her scheme, become good friends and tell Lydia to forget it.[25]

In "The Trifler" by Ellen Ashton, and "Nose at a Masquerade Ball," by an anonymous author, women outsmarted men. In "The Trifler," a male version of Lydia Little is tripped up by his own greed. The story tells how Harry Colbert woos the affections of Eveline Vallier and Sophy Green. Eveline was amiable, pretty and rich, but had no wit, while Sophy was pretty with a fine wit. Torn between the desire for Sophy's hand and Eveline's money, he eventually loses them both, because he is so "base, fickle and selfish."[26]

The female character also outsmarts the man in "Nose at a Masquerade Ball," a short story in the Grand River Eagle. At an elegant masquerade ball, a man becomes infatuated with

a woman he meets and is convinced she is divinely beautiful. For most of the story he pleads for her to remove her mask. She finally agrees and to his horror, beneath it lies a huge nose. His reaction is less than kind:

> What a nose!...a beet root, a scymitar-a knife case-an Egyptian pyramid - Great heavens and they say our country is reformed! Why then, do they submit to such gigantic abuses...why isn't there a law against such exaggeration of the human nose.

Although he tries to avoid the lady for the rest of the evening, she sits beside him during dinner. During the meal she removes a second mask and reveals that the gigantic nose was also a disguise. Thus the man lost his beauty fair because of his own rudeness.[27] Stories like "The Trifler" and "Nose at a Masquerade Ball" show that fiction writers depicted women as having the ability to outsmart men.

In both poetry and short stories, women were depicted as brave individuals who were willing to give their lives to help build a nation. In "The Patriot Martyr," Mellicent Granville aids the patriot's cause during the Revolutionary War and dies a hero just moments after the Declaration of Independence is read to a cheering crowd.[28] The Enquirer and the Oakland Gazette each reprinted a poem titled "The Pilgrim Mothers," first published in the New York Evening Post, that depicted women as helping to lay the foundation for a free country.[29]

Two short stories, "The Matron's Defence" and "Polly Dust's Long Fight with the Commanches," depicted women in actual battle situations. "The Matron's Defence," reprinted

in the Standard from the New York Times, told of how three Kentucky women defended themselves against a group of Wyandot Indians after their men folk had been killed. In a fierce battle, the three heroines exacted their revenge against the "swarthy warriors." By the end of the day, Miriam, Hope and Alice had shot, axed and knived 11 of the Indians.[30] Equally brave was Polly Dust, a widow struggling for survival in Texas. Arriving home to find that Indians have slain her infant daughter and kidnapped another child, Polly prepares to fight the Indians when they return to burn her cabin. An expert shot with the rifle, Polly successfully defends herself against the savages. Thanks to Polly's courage and cool manner during a crisis, her daughter is rescued and her land is saved from the Indians.[31] In both tales, the women characters react to difficult frontier situations with courage and skill.

Fiction in the frontier press was not highly regarded by critics, but it does provide a glimpse of how writers of that era depicted women. Women who married the man they loved, like Kate Darlington, usually led happy and prosperous lives, while other women like Minnie Clifton and the Blinks sisters did not get their man and became old maids. Some women, like Julia Wescott, chose careers like teaching and were able to influence others, while some, like the Widow Watkins, just never seemed successful. The theme that hard work paid off was illustrated in the happiness and prosperity of Jane Elmily. Other young wives like Emma West and

Charlotte Bell learned to be content with their fortunes, while women like Harriet Snooks became bitter and unhappy wives. Not all bad marriages were the woman's fault--many were ruined by the husband's alcoholism. And the theme of courage among frontier women was depicted in the tales of Polly Dust and Miriam, Hope and Alice, who were as strong and brave as any man. So according to the fiction in the frontier newspapers studied, women who married well, worked hard, and remained courageous would thrive. Other women who suffered were shown as receiving vindication from God.

In the next chapter, the study will shift its emphasis from fictional characters to real women like Jenny Lind, Queen Victoria and Jane Grey Swisshelm.

ENDNOTES

[1]Grand River Eagle, 3 August 1849, p. 1.

[2]Fred Lewis Pattee, The Feminine Fifties (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1966), pp. 50-52.

[3]June Sochen, Herstory (New York: Alfred Publishing Co., 1974), p. 114.

[4]Ibid., p. 142.

[5]Helen Woodward, The Lady Persuaders (New York: Ivan Obolensky, Inc., 1960), p. 7.

[6]Grand River Eagle, 27 July 1849, p. 1.

[7]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 9 October 1849, p. 1.

[8]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 16 October 1849, p. 1.

[9]Marshall Statesman, 3 October 1849, p. 1.

[10]Woodward, p. 22.

[11]Oakland Gazette, 2 March 1850, p. 4; Marshall Statesman, 20 February 1850, p. 1.

[12]Coldwater Sentinel, 27 July 1849, p. 1.

[13]Niles Republican, 8 September 1849, p. 1.

[14]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 17 July 1850, p. 1; Michigan Expositor, 19 March 1850, p. 1.

[15]Coldwater Sentinel, 6 July 1849, p. 4.

[16]Niles Republican, 20 April 1850, p. 1.

[17]Oakland Gazette, 10 November 1849, p. 1; American Citizen, 24 April 1850, p. 1.

[18]Oakland Gazette, 29 December 1849, p. 1.

[19]American Citizen, 28 November 1849, p. 1.

[20]Coldwater Sentinel, 21 September 1849, p. 1.

[21]Grand River Eagle, 21 January 1850, p. 1.

[22]Grand River Eagle, 28 January 1850, p. 1.

[23]Grand River Eagle, 13 July 1849, p. 1.

[24]Oakland Gazette, 1 June 1850, p. 1.

[25]Grand River Eagle, 14 January 1850, pp. 1-2.

[26]Coldwater Sentinel, 3 August 1849, p. 1.

[27]Grand River Eagle, 13 July 1849, p. 1.

[28]Kalamazoo Gazette, 9 November 1849, pp. 1-2.

[29]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 31 October 1849, p. 1; Oakland Gazette, 8 September 1849, p. 1.

[30]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 13 November 1849, p. 1.

[31]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 8 May 1850. p. 1.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE LIMELIGHT: FAMOUS WOMEN WHO RECEIVED COVERAGE IN THE FRONTIER PRESS

> She has occupied through life, with eminent and equal property and dignity, an humble and exalted position.
>
> --Eulogy for Dolley Madison published July 23, 1849[1]

Although the Michigan frontier press was usually concerned with the merits of political candidates and new legislative measures, it did take space to report on the lives of famous women. Among the numerous speeches by President Zachary Taylor, Henry Clay, Lewis Cass and John Calhoun, the frontier press provided some brief sketches and filler material about notable women such as Jenny Lind, Dolley Madison and Queen Victoria. It also quoted journalist Jane Grey Swisshelm and Swedish author Fredrika Bremer. Coverage in the frontier press of both famous and ordinary women is the subject of this research. This chapter will analyze what was said about these famous women of July 1849 to July 1850.

Popular singer Jenny Lind (1820-1887) was one of the most frequently mentioned women in the Michigan frontier press during this 13-month period. The "Swedish

Nightingale" made her long-awaited American debut in 1850 under the direction of Phineas T. Barnum.[2] When she signed for the tour it was a coup for Barnum because she was at the height of her career.[3] Barnum gave her tour a tremendous promotional buildup.[4] By the time she arrived in New York on September 1, 1850, newspapers were issuing extra editions and 20,000 people had gathered at the wharf where she landed.[5]

The Michigan press covered attempts by Barnum to sign Lind for the concert tour and reprinted letters Barnum had written to other newspapers. One letter that illustrates this appeared in the Niles Republican on November 24, 1849. Reprinting a letter Barnum sent to the Baltimore Sun, the Republican said that the showman was offering Lind up to $200,000, plus expenses to sing in America.[6] Other Michigan papers like the Grand Rapids Enquirer[7] and the Hillsdale Whig Standard[8] printed lists of when and where her concerts were scheduled.

Along with the particulars about her scheduled tour, the press also discussed Lind's personality. The press coverage depicted Lind as a beautiful, talented and generous woman who had enchanting powers and incredible charisma. It is difficult to tell whether the stories about Lind are the truth or merely publicity. One such tale, which the Kalamazoo Gazette reprinted from the London Athenaeum, portrays the singer's generosity to devoted fans. The story tells how Lind stopped at the house of an old woman while walking one day. While there the woman spoke to Miss Lind,

not knowing she was the "Swedish Nightingale." The old woman said, "I have lived a long time in the world, and desire nothing before I die but to hear Jenny Lind." Upon hearing this, Miss Lind broke into song, and with an impromptu concert, gave the woman the gift of a lifetime.[9]

The news about Lind depicted her personality as above reproach. Her singing talent was also receiving rave reviews. The Niles Republican ran a typically favorable critique:

> An English critic described the voice of "Swedish Nightingale" as unlike that of any other singer..in the expression of hope, joy or grief, no tones of human voice or instrument can compare to those of Jenny Lind. They penetrate the inmost recesses of the heart, and touch insensibly the most mysterious chord in our nature, the vibration of which causes the gushing tear to flow involuntarily.[10]

By reading the frontier press coverage of Lind's personality it becomes apparent that newspapers were willing to give her credit for a unique talent. She was depicted as having a generous and kind personality despite stardom. Thus, readers of the frontier press were presented with the role model of a talented career woman who could handle both her professional and private lives with success.

Favorable coverage was also heaped upon another Swedish import, Fredrika Bremer (1801-1865). A writer, reformer and champion of women's rights, Bremer visited the United States where she was welcomed in New England for her stand against slavery.[11]

The Kalamazoo Gazette announced in October 1849 that the "charming Swedish authoress" was about to arrive in New York on the next steamer from Europe.[12] By November the Jackson American Citizen had coverage of her arrival, and it reprinted a Godey's Lady's Book account of her early life.[13] During the fall of 1849 Bremer became the toast of the literary circle. The Adrian Michigan Expositor reprinted a piece from the Providence Journal describing Bremer.

> She is a chatty, pleasant body, and looks kind and considerate enough to be a pattern maiden aunt to all little children who love gingerbread and good stories. She is pronounced...to be a most truthful, unassuming, and lovely character. She is one of those persons whose extreme plainness, ere long, grows quite agreeable, and you think more of her fine and beautiful hand than of her ungraceful figure and prominent nose.[14]

Thus, like Lind, she was depicted as being a famous woman who did not let popularity change her basic good-nature.

The great deal of attention paid to Bremer's journeys irritated one writer from the Chicago Journal. The anonymous writer said that newspapers were exemplifying a system of "toadyism" (or servile flattery) to Miss Bremer, chronicling her every movement with the gravity of a court journal. The writer then provided a parody of the Bremer coverage, which was reprinted in the Kalamazoo Gazette.

> Miss Bremer is remarkable - she has two ears and four fingers on her right hand; the thumb exclusive. Her exact weight has not been ascertained, but her age we are happy to say is known to be about 40. It is a noteworthy fact that Miss Bremer's mother was a woman - which satisfactorily accounts for her being the maternal relative of the distinguished authoress.[15]

One American woman writer rivaled Bremer for compliments and coverage in the frontier press. She was Jane Grey Swisshelm, (1815-1884), who published the Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter from 1847 to 1857. The Visiter won respectful recognition from Horace Greeley in his New York Tribune, Godey's Lady's Book and other prominent publications. Because of its intense political style, the Visiter was widely quoted by newspapers throughout the country, and even when damned, its views were circulated.[16]

The American Citizen said that "Mrs. Swisshelm...boasts that she holds a baby on one arm, while she scribbles away with the other."[17] And scribble she did--on topics such as women's fashions, marriage and women's rights. Beginning in 1849, Swisshelm published a weekly series of "Letters to Country Girls" explaining her views.[18] In reading material written by Swisshelm it can be seen how a famous woman depicted the women of her time.

Swisshelm chastised foolish women who were prisoners to the fripperies of the day's styles. But she did not go as far as to advocate the bloomer.[19] The Republican printed her opinion on pantaloons:

> ...it would be too humiliating to be met and mistaken for a man...we shall use all our influence to preserve a man's right to his pantaloons inviolate. They ought to be his, and his only, for they are too ugly for anybody else to wear.[20]

Swisshelm said marriage was a union that should be renewed continually by the free will of both parties. "It is a base prostitution of the name and object of marriage to

bind two to live together, contrary to the will of each," she said.[21] In January 1850, Swisshelm wrote a sharply critical piece combining her views on marriage and fashionable girls:

> There are hundreds of girls in every large city who parade the streets in feathers, flowers, silk and laces, whose hands are as soft and white as uselessness can make them, whose mothers keep boarders for a living for their idle daughters. These mothers will..do the most menial drudgery... while their hopeful daughters spend their mornings lounging around in bed, reading some silly book, taking lessons in French, fixing finery, and the like.

Swisshelm went on to say that these "piano playing simpletons" married equally brainless husbands and the two ninnies spent their money foolishly and commenced on empty lives with no other prospect than living at someone else's expense.[22]

The Michigan papers reprinting Swisshelm's material praised her writing and her opinions. The Kalamazoo Gazette said she was a lady who talked right out on all subjects.[23] The Grand Rapids Grand River Eagle called her "one of the pleasantest and most original writers of the age."[24] Swisshelm's ability to show off the follies of both sexes earned her the praise of the Expositor which said she was "a woman of correct principles" and one of the very few who could do something to reform society.[25]

Other women merited some comment in the Michigan frontier press. Dorothea Dix (1802-1887), the social reformer who dedicated her life to helping the mentally ill, was praised by the Statesman as "the Crazy Angel" who wakes

up the minds of the public in behalf of the insane." In an article reprinted from the Detroit Tribune, the Statesman also described Dix's visit to Michigan nine years earlier.[26] Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910), the first female to receive the M.D. degree in the United States also made news. Having received her degree on January 3, 1849, she went to Europe for further study.[27] Her trip to Paris was covered in the Standard and the Kalamazoo Gazette. The papers said she had bewildered the faculty with her diploma authorizing her to "dose and bleed and amputate with the best of them." They also said she was young and rather good looking, her manner indicated great energy of character; and she entered her career from motives of duty.[28] This coverage depicts Blackwell as entering a profession and having proper motives in doing so.

The press took note of the death and funeral of Dolley Madison, the former first lady, in July 1849. The Statesman said that "Mrs. Madison...was an American jewel," and a counselor and friend to the late President Madison.[29] The Coldwater Sentinel said that despite little education she was considered graceful and pleasing, with an inexhaustable good-nature and captivating manners.[30] The Expositor described the funeral scene for Mrs. Madison at St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C.[31]

Queen Victoria was evaluated as a mother in an issue of the Standard. Victoria, then the mother of seven children, was said to be trying to produce a dozen aspirants for the

throne. "England never produced a sovereign who promises to do more for the country than little Victoria," said the Standard.[32] The Expositor also said that the queen had donated to the fund promoting female emigration to Australia.[33]

The Standard also used filler pieces about other famous women giving away money to worthy causes. Miss Catherine Beecher (1800-1878), an American educator, was credited by the Standard for giving $1,000 to help build a Milwaukee high school for young ladies.[34] The Standard also said that Charlotte Cushman (1816-1876), a famous actress, gave $1,000 toward establishing a house and school of industry in New York City.[35]

For women in the limelight of 1850, press coverage was almost always favorable. When Jenny Lind and Fredrika Bremer came to America, they were showered with accoladés from the press, including Michigan's. While the newspapers may or may not have been aware of Barnum's motives for publicity, their sensationalistic coverage of Lind and Bremer's tours are not unlike modern-day preoccupation with popular entertainers.

Generally, the press seems to have given favorable reviews to women writers and other professionals. A journalist like Swisshelm was quoted and complimented regularly, and reformers like Dorothea Dix were praised for their efforts. Yet the queen of the most powerful country on earth was described as "little Victoria." The significance of this coverage is that readers on the

frontier could read about women having careers. Women like Swisshelm could present their views for both men and women to read. And frontier women could have the chance to read about women pioneering professions like medicine. Perhaps girls on the frontier that read about Elizabeth Blackwell or Jenny Lind grew up hoping to be doctors or singers.

In the next chapter, an examination will be made of how the Michigan press handled the issues of women's rights and education for females.

ENDNOTES

[1]Marshall Statesman, 23 July 1849, p. 2.

[2]Encyclopedia Britannica, 1979 ed., s.v. "Jenny Lind."

[3]Fred Lewis Pattee, The Feminist Fifties (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1966), pp. 148-156.

[4]G.E. Morris Allen, "P.T. Barnum's 1850 Press Campaign in New York City to Herald Jenny Lind's American Concert Tour" (Master's thesis, The American University, 1966). This thesis studies the publicity effort by showman Barnum that helped make Lind's 1850 American tour a spectacular success.

[5]Pattee, pp. 148-156.

[6]Niles Republican, 24 November 1849, p. 1.

[7]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 10 April 1850, p. 1.

[8]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 18 June 1850, p. 1.

[9]Kalamazoo Gazette, 15 February 1850, p. 1.

[10]Niles Republican, 4 May 1850, p. 1.

[11]Encyclopedia Britannica, 1981 ed., s.v. "Fredrika Bremer."

[12]Kalamazoo Gazette, 5 October 1849, p. 1.

[13]American Citizen, 7 November 1849, p. 1.

[14]Michigan Expositor, 26 March 1850, p. 1.

[15]Kalamazoo Gazette, 18 January 1850, p. 1.

[16]Dorothy Langdon Yates, "Belles of Freedom, Three Anti-slavery Editors: Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, Lydia Maria Child, and Jane Grey Swisshelm" (Master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1969), p. 151.

[17]American Citizen, 2 January 1850, p. 3.

[18]Yates, p. 181.

[19]Ibid., p. 153.

[20]Niles Republican, 6 October 1849, p. 2.

[21]Kalamazoo Gazette, 28 June 1850, p. 1.

[22]Kalamazoo Gazette, 18 January 1850, p. 1.

[23]Kalamazoo Gazette, 18 January 1850, p. 1.

[24]Grand River Eagle, 30 November 1849, p. 1.

[25]Michigan Expositor, 29 January 1850, p. 1.

[26]Marshall Statesman, 27 March 1850, p. 1.

[27]June Sochen, Herstory (New York: Alfred Publishing Co., 1974), p. 114.

[28]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 7 August 1849, p. 1; Kalamazoo Gazette, 27 July 1849, p. 2.

[29]Marshall Statesman, 23 July 1849, p. 2.

[30]Coldwater Sentinel, 27 July 1849, p. 4.

[31]Michigan Expositor, 31 July 1849, p. 2.

[32]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 25 June 1850, p. 1.

[33]Michigan Expositor, 19 March 1850, p. 1.

[34]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 2 October 1849, p. 1.

[35]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 21 May 1850, p. 2.

CHAPTER VII

WINGS OF REBELLION: SEEKING MORE RIGHTS AND A BETTER EDUCATION

> For my own obscure self I can say that every fiber of my being rebelled, although silently, all the hours that I sat and sewed gloves for a miserable pittance which, as it was earned, could never be mine. I wanted to work, but I wanted to collect my wages. That was my form of rebellion against the life into which I was born.
>
> --Charlotte Woodward[1]

As one writer put it, the 1850s women's rights movement was "a rebellion that made the decade a battlefield of words."[2] This chapter examines what was said on the "battlefield" that extended to selected newspapers on the Michigan frontier. It is important to see just what frontier readers had an opportunity to read about the women's rights movement. Issues like temperance, women's political rights, employment rights and educational rights were covered. Some newspapers allowed leaders of the women's rights movement space in their pages, while others merely mentioned them or dismissed them as loud-mouthed radicals. Before examining the depiction of such issues in the Michigan frontier press, a background of what is happening in the women's rights movement will be provided.

After the background section, this chapter is divided into three sections: the first on political rights, the second on employment rights and temperance reform and the third on educational rights. A concluding section follows.

Background on Women's Rights Movement

Legally dead. As late as the Civil War, that was the status of a married woman almost everywhere in the United States. Under the law, the husband was the master of a woman and her pocketbook; she had no control over her children; if she earned money her husband took it over. In terms of her legal rights, she was classed with minors, lunatics and idiots.[3]

In 1850, women could not sit on juries. Professional schools usually would not accept women (women who studied law could not take bar examinations in any state). The women's rights movement before the Civil War exposed the plight of women in America, but was not too successful in initiating any immediate changes.[4]

A milestone for women's rights came on July 13, 1848, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), called together several hundred women in Seneca Falls, New York. This is usually credited as the first women's rights convention in the United States. Stanton and others composed the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions which said women were equal to men.[5] Here is an excerpt from that declaration:

> The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman...
>
> He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to elective franchise.
>
> He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.
>
> He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men--both natives and foreigners...
>
> He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, and colleges being closed to her...[6]

Many male commentators ignored Seneca Falls or mocked it. One journalist described the women in attendance as "divorced wives, childless women, and some old maids."[7] Although there was no mention of the Seneca Falls meeting in the Michigan frontier press from July 1849 through July 1850, the newspapers did discuss a Salem, Ohio women's rights convention and women's rights issues. But what transpired at Seneca Falls laid the foundation for the Salem convention.

Coverage of Political Rights

During the half-decade 1850-1855, six women's rights conventions were held in various cities of Ohio. The first of these meetings took place in Salem, a small town in the northeastern corner of the state. At least 500 women attended the meeting. The purpose of the Salem convention of April 1850 was to influence lawmakers to incorporate women's rights into a new state constitution.[8]

Six of the newspapers in this study provided accounts of the Ohio convention or at least referred to it. The

Marshall Statesman said that 500 delegates had come to Salem to "obtain an equal participation in the social, civil pecuniary, and religious responsibilities." The article said letters from Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were read in Salem. The Statesman supported the women saying Ohio had a "disgraceful and disorderly legislature." The paper said:

> The right of suffrage, once extended to females, would place political power in the hands of those who would consign to oblivion the unprincipled politicians...of Ohio...

The Statesman also said it hoped the suffrage movement would come to Michigan.[9] The Jackson American Citizen said that the women of Michigan, as those of Ohio, were already talking about the right to vote for public officials. The Citizen said a mass meeting was being discussed to appeal to the State Convention for the right to vote.[10]

Of the newspapers studied, the Niles Republican gave the most coverage. It was the only newspaper to print the text of 22 resolutions submitted to the convention.[11] A week earlier it ran a lengthy letter from Mrs. Lydia Jane Pierson of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, one of the organizers for the Ohio convention. Although Pierson was unable to attend the affair, she did mail a letter expressing her views to the delegates. In this message, printed in the Republican and the Adrian Michigan Expositor, Pierson said women had mental capabilities equal to men and advocated a better educational system for women. She also could not understand how women could be excluded from the right to vote as long as their

property was taxed. She also stood firmly against early marriages:

> The greatest bane of women, and the strongest obstacle to her elevation, is the deplorable manner of early marriages. Very few girls attain their growth, fewer still maturity of constitution and intellect, before they are made wives and mothers.[12]

Thus, readers of the Republican and the Expositor at least received some exposure to the views of women's rights leaders like Pierson.

But not all Michigan editors allowed their readers access to accounts of the convention. The Centreville Western Chronicle informed readers that it had been furnished with the entire proceedings of the Ohio convention but said it would not print them because they were too long. The Chronicle would only say that the convention passed resolutions claiming the right to suffrage and eligibility to office. Despite the Chronicle's failure to print the proceedings the paper said:

> We...hope that we shall never fail to influence...any proposition designed to protect the rights, extend the sphere, promote the happiness, and ameliorate the condition of Heaven's last, best gift to man.[13]

The sincerity of the Chronicle's claim of support for women's rights is questionable, considering the paper could not find room to print more about the Ohio convention. When male political leaders gave lengthy speeches that sometimes filled two issues of the newspaper, it must be asked why the women's rights convention was not given similar space.

Another editorial supporting women's rights that seems insincere appeared in the Grand River Eagle. In an article originally printed in the Albany Evening Journal, the paper said:

> We have never failed...to give cordial support...to protect the rights, ameliorate the condition, enlarge the sphere and promote the happiness of the gentler and better sex...But instead of being half satisfied with their lot, the women of this country are demanding radical reforms.

The Eagle used an excerpt of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's letter to the Ohio convention and said it would not mind granting women the right to vote, if they would not "cease to be women." What they meant by this is unclear. The attitude given here seems contradictory; support for women's rights, yet condemnation to women leaders for demanding radical reforms.[14]

Other positive statements for the movement were given space in the Republican and the Hillsdale Whig Standard. The Republican, which gave favorable coverage to the Ohio convention, also printed a piece titled, "Woman's Rights," by Grace Greenwood. The popular author said she was thankful that women were finally gaining a perception of what was impeding their development and hindering their full potential.[15] An anonymous woman, known only as "C." contributed a pro-rights piece to the Standard. "C" said:

> I wish my sex would arise in her strength and cast off that hallucination of asserted inferiority with which men art constantly coupling to the name of woman.[16]

The comments by "C" show that at least one woman was interested in expressing her views for women's rights, yet did not want her name in the paper. No reason was given for her reason to remain anonymous.

Another woman writer, Mrs. E.M. Sheldon, contributed an article to the Expositor decrying women's rights. In "Respect for the Ladies," Mrs. Sheldon said that it was "absurd to take a woman away from her appropriate sphere and place her...amid the turmoil of political life." The author made it clear that she did not believe women were inferior, only that their minds were constituted differently.[17] Sheldon's piece indicates that there was opposition by women themselves to the women's rights movement. It also demonstrates that Michigan newspapers provided pro and con statements by women on the suffrage issue. While the Republican ran the positive statements of Pierson, the Expositor published the negative feelings of Sheldon.

The Kalamazoo Gazette and the American Citizen did not veil their disdain for the women's rights movement and its leaders. The Gazette, referring to a group of women's rights supporters from Syracuse, New York, said that the women may have been smart, but they were more famous for "smutty faced babies, heelless stockings and hen-pecked husbands than for profound wisdom or unostentatious benevolence."[18] The Citizen, printing material from Godey's, poked fun at the term, "women's rights":

> We hear much of the rights of women. I insist upon it, that they have the right, like their blessed New England mothers, to be released from strolling over the country as public lecturers, from wasting time in street gossip and novel reading, and to make their homes tidy and happy.[19]

It is clear from the comments of both papers that they resented those who supported the women's rights movement, and depicted those who spoke out on its behalf as neglecting their families or wasting their time.

The Kalamazoo Gazette, the American Citizen and the Michigan Expositor each used material against the movement and its leaders. The Expositor also used material favorable to the movement, as did the Republican and the Standard. These three papers allowed readers, even anonymous ones, to submit material, and in effect, allowed other readers to judge the material for themselves. The Eagle and the Chronicle both gave endorsements to women's rights but seemed to contradict themselves.

The Temperance Cause and Employment Rights

While women of this era sought voting rights and an improved legal status, the frontier press also shows they supported the temperance cause and they bargained for higher wages. The Coldwater Sentinel reported that the Grand Union of the Daughters of Temperance had met in Coldwater, and the paper presented a list of the group's officers.[20] The Oakland Gazette provided the text of an address given before the Mary Washington Union No. 20 of the Daughters of

Temperance in Pontiac, Michigan. In the address, an unnamed "sister" called on her fellow Temperance Society members to work on influencing their children and husbands to stay away from that "monster" alcohol.[21] A similar address, by a Miss Rees to a division of the Sons of Temperance in Georgia, was printed in the Republican. Rees complained that the Sons of Temperance excluded women from the secrets of their order.[22] All three newspapers allowed the Daughters of Temperance and its members to speak for themselves, and the press provided no favorable or unfavorable comments with the speech texts.

Women seeking higher wages on the job received the coverage and support of four newspapers in the study. The Grand Rapids Enquirer told about a group of women in Fairhaven, Connecticut, who struck for higher wages for opening oysters.[23] The Expositor, the Standard, and the Pontiac Jacksonian praised a group of seamstresses in Adrian, Michigan, that banded together to not work for prices lower than they had agreed to. Condemning the "niggardly" compensation the seamstresses received for their industry, the papers said, "Girls, remember the motto of Davy Crockett--be sure you are right, then go ahead." They added that "of all the human specimens of infamy we despise him the most who would rob a woman of the full value of her labor."[24] Thus, at least these four papers depicted women as being justified in seeking adequate wages for their efforts.

Woman's advocacy for suffrage, temperance and employment rights received coverage in the frontier press. So did their

effort to improve education. The next section of this chapter will examine what the frontier press said about education for women.

Education for Women

Writers and reformers like Sarah Josepha Hale, Jane Grey Swisshelm and Lydia Jane Pierson considered education for females a fundamental right. Hale, editor of Godey's Lady's Book said:

> We have said little of the rights of women. But her first right is to education in its widest sense, to such education as will give her the full development of all her personal, mental and moral qualities. Having that, there will be no longer any questions about her rights.[25]

Beginning in 1849, Swisshelm published a weekly series of "Letters to Country Girls" in the Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter.[26] One of the causes she supported was the education of girls with boys. One of Swisshelm's comments on education was printed in the American Citizen. She said in this piece that women were generally given a "false, superficial education" where they could do little more than quote Byron or Shakespeare. "Genuine education...gets along modestly and attracts little attention," she said.[27] Swisshelm was clearly agitated by what she considered a futile education with no relevance to women's everyday life. At best, she considered women who attended schools with such curriculum as little more than showoffs.

In a letter printed in the Republican and the Expositor, Pierson also expressed the uselessness of some schools for girls:

> ...the fashionable schools for girls have been infinitely worse than none, for it has been their effort to smother...the little common sense that survived the restraints of the nursery. After being taught etiquette, the hypocritical conventionalities of fashion, a little music and a few French phrases...they are turned out...to win a husband and secure a settlement. They are married at 17, soon to become mothers, are consigned to oblivion...

Pierson attributed most of the evils of society to poor education. She said educators neglected to teach boys the proper domestic skills and girls the necessary scholastic material. If girls could attend colleges as boys do, said Pierson, women would need no conventions for revolution or reform. "Education of itself will make us free," she said.[28]

The concepts discussed by Pierson and Swisshelm shed light on this era's debate over what training schools and colleges were supposed to provide women. While some saw their function as teaching etiquette and domestic training, others said schools should train women for the professions. The entire educational system was undergoing change in the frontier states. Between 1825 and 1850, all the frontier states became part of a crusade for state free-school systems. Even the teaching profession was changing as women began to invade a vocation that had been reserved for men.[29]

Numerous special schools for girls began to appear in Michigan as early as the 1820s. In 1837, the Michigan

Legislature provided for each branch of the University of Michigan to have an institution for the education of females in the "higher branches of knowledge."[30] Yet, confusion still reigned over the role of these schools. At the Young Ladies Seminary in Monroe City, Michigan, the catalogue admitted that few of its graduates would "fill the learned professions." Instead, the average women was to be the "presiding genius of love" in the home.[31]

Material in the frontier press reflected the various opinions about education for women. Female seminaries were also discussed in one of the newspapers studied. The Statesman announced on March 13, 1850, that a seminary for young ladies "under the care of an accomplished and experienced teacher" was soon to open in the village.[32] Two weeks later, the Statesman praised the female seminary, saying its rooms were attractive and pleasant, and that the teacher, Miss Burgess, was competent.[33]

Articles in the Enquirer and the American Citizen stressed the importance of education for housewives. In "Chemistry for Girls," by Dr. E. Thomson, the doctor said that every woman should be taught chemistry to be "better qualified to superintend domestic affairs, guard against household accidents and save lives."[34] The Citizen said that female education was important for domestic training. A well-trained wife was seen as creating a better home.[35] Another Citizen article said that every woman should be a "sound minded, well-informed female," rather than a "silly,

giddy, heartless belle."[36] An anonymous contributor to the Expositor said that women should be educated to act and think with more independence. "The great portion of our country women are scarcely educated at all - from infancy to womanhood, they drudge on in the kitchen and the dairy...," said the anonymous writer.[37]

The Citizen reprinted a piece from the Boston Mail which portrays a different function of female education. The article reported that measures were in progress for the American Medical Education Society to provide more educated females as practitioners. The proposal called for a school of instruction in Boston with an accompanying hospital. The Citizen called it a "noble undertaking."[38] The Sentinel also discussed women who were applying for admission to a Syracuse, New York, medical school. The article cited Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor to obtain a medical degree, for providing these women with an example to follow.[39]

Conclusions

The Michigan frontier press presented a diversity of opinion about the women's rights movement of 1850. Space was given to famous women, local readers and anonymous contributors to air their views about women's rights. Some newspapers let their contributor's comments stand for themselves, while others did not even present the speeches of female leaders, but instead chose to deride the women's

rights movement. Still other papers presented contradictory opinions about the right to suffrage.

Women who bargained for higher wages were supported by four of the newspapers in the study. Women supporting the temperance cause were given coverage and the newspapers provided no favorable or unfavorable comments with temperance leaders' speech texts. In discussing a woman's right to an education, newspapers provided the views of some famous women. The papers did not always agree on what function education had for women in society. While some thought schooling was to teach domestic training, others saw it as a place to train women for the professions.

The newspapers were probably one of the few places a frontier woman could discover what others of her sex were thinking or doing about women's rights. Perhaps like the girls who wishe to be like Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, some women got their first taste of the women's rights movement from the reportage and commentary in the frontier press.

While newspapers discussed serious topics such as temperance, education and women's rights, they also printed humorous items about women. The next chapter will examine how humor in the frontier press depicted women.

ENDNOTES

[1]Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 103-104. Woodward was the only participant of the Seneca Falls Convention who lived to see women's suffrage ratified.

[2]Fred Lewis Pattee, The Feminine Fifties (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1966), p. 92.

[3]Helen Woodward, The Lady Persuaders (New York: Ivan Obolensky, Inc., 1960), p. 1.

[4]June Sochen, Herstory (New York: Alfred Publishing Co., 1974), p. 134.

[5]Sochen, p. 125.

[6]Ibid., pp. 199-203.

[7]Ibid., p. 127.

[8]Dru Riley Evarts, "Women's Rights As Covered by the Ohio Frontier Press, 1850-1855," paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism Convention, Boston, Mass., 1980.

[9]Marshall Statesman, 15 May 1850, p. 2.

[10]American Citizen, 22 May 1850, p. 2.

[11]Niles Republican, 15 June 1850, p. 1.

[12]Niles Republican, 8 June 1850, p. 1; Michigan Expositor, 21 May 1850, p. 1.

[13]Western Chronicle, 25 May 1850, p. 2.

[14]Grand River Eagle, 20 May 1850, p. 2.

[15]Niles Republican, 15 June 1850, p. 2.

[16]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 25 December 1849, p. 1.

[17]Michigan Expositor, 29 January 1850, p. 1.

[18]Kalamazoo Gazette, 31 May 1850, p. 2.

[19]American Citizen, 22 May 1850, p. 2.

[20]Coldwater Sentinel, 19 October 1849, p. 2.

[21]Oakland Gazette, 20 April 1850, p. 1.

[22]Niles Republican, 18 May 1850, p. 1.

[23]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 21 November 1849, p. 2.

[24]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 23 July 1850, p. 2; Michigan Expositor, 16 July 1850, p. 2; Pontiac Jacksonian, 31 July 1850, p. 2.

[25]Woodward, pp. 32-33.

[26]Dorothy Langdon Yates, "Belles of Freedom, Three Anti-slavery Editors: Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, Lydia Maria Child, and Jane Grey Swisshelm" (Master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1969), p. 181.

[27]American Citizen, 14 November 1849, p. 1.

[28]Niles Republican, 8 June 1850, p. 1; Michigan Expositor, 21 May 1850, p. 1.

[29]Thomas D. Clark, Frontier America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 393.

[30]Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States (New York: The Science Press, 1929; reprinted, New York: Octagon Books, 1974), p. 370.

[31]Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966):168.

[32]Marshall Statesman, 13 March 1850, p. 2.

[33]Marshall Statesman, 27 March 1850, p. 2.

[34]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 3 October 1849, p. 4.

[35]American Citizen, 31 October 1849, p. 1.

[36]American Citizen, 7 November 1849, p. 1.

[37]Michigan Expositor, 29 July 1849, p. 2.

[38]American Citizen, 5 December 1849, p. 2.

[39]Coldwater Sentinel, 16 November 1849, p. 1.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LADY EVE: HOW HUMORISTS DEPICTED WOMEN

> Mrs. Partington propounds some very important questions. Her last inquiry is "If bills before Congress are not counterfeit, why should there be such difficulty in passing them?"
>
> Marshall Statesman
> May 1, 1850[1]

Scattered throughout the pages of the frontier press are humorous comments and quips about women. These one-liners, witticisms and funny stories depicted women as excessive talkers, crabby wives and husband seekers. Although they occasionally outsmart the men, women are usually the butt of male jokes. In reviewing the humor of this period, Pattee said there were few humorous elements to female characters. Most of the humor provided by fictional females came from their copious use of malapropities.[2]

The outrageous Mrs. Partington, a character created by Benjamin Penhallow Shillaber in 1847, provided many of the malaprops in the Michigan newspapers studied.[3] Each newspaper studied had a Mrs. Partington story, and some used Shillaber's unsigned tales on a weekly basis. Shillaber has been called the "pioneer of American newspaper wits." When he started the Mrs. Partington papers he had the field to

himself. During the 1840s, Shillaber, a staff writer on the Boston Post, wrote quips characterizing a woman patterned after Sydney Smith's anecdote about a Mrs. Partington who had tried to sweep back the Atlantic Ocean.[4] Much of Mrs. Partington's humor was inherent in her language, which was meant to represent a lower class New England dialect and to typify the speech of the American "democrat" of the mid-nineteenth century. Her speech was often distinguished by regional expressions, jumbled syntax and unconventional grammar.[5]

Mrs. Partington's problems with the English language are apparent in her discussion about education which appeared in the Statesman:

> For my part, I can't deceive what on airth eddication is coming to. When I was young, if a gal only understood the rules of distraction, provision, multiplying, replenishing, and the common denominators, and knew all about the rivers and their obituaries, and covenants, and dormitories, the providences and umpires, they had eddication enough.
>
> But now they have to study bottomy, Algier-bay, and have to demonstrate suppositions about the syncophants of circusses, tangents and diagonies of paralelograms to say nothing about the oxhides, cowsticks and abstract triangles.[6]

Shillaber also created some interesting incidents about religion for Mrs. Partington's comment. One Thanksgiving, Mrs. Partington said her minister preached about the "parody of the probable son."[7] She also wondered why her preacher said "A-men" at the close of every prayer. She thought he could sometimes say "A-women." It would make just as good grammar, she said, and would pay attention to the ladies in

church as well.[8] And on one trip to the museum, Mrs. Partington asked the superintendent if she could see the famous cutlery, "the axe of the Apostles."[9]

Shillaber also used humor about topical events in the Mrs. Partington series. The Michigan press used items about the California gold rush and the temperance movement. In the Jackson American Citizen and the Grand Rapids Enquirer, Mrs. Partington expressed great apprehension that the people in California were going to bleed to death, because every paper she picked up announced that another vein had been opened.[10] She also was shocked at hearing that Powers, the sculptor, was on another bust. "Are there no temperance societies in Rome?" she asked.[11] Although Mrs. Partington was fictitious, she is an important character to study in the depiction of women in the frontier press because of how often her tales were reprinted. Mrs. Partington was a confused person, but she did read the newspapers and formed opinions about what she read, even if her views were unorthodox.

A recurring theme in frontier humor was the depiction of women as constant talkers. "I have never seen a woman die with the lock-jaw," said one man in the Oakland Gazette.[12] The Enquirer said that "woman...needs no eulogy, she speaks for herself."[13] The American Citizen asked why women could not whistle. The answer was because she could not stop talking long enough to fix her mouth.[14] The Statesman told this story:

> It is said that a girl in Pitsfield, Massachusetts, was struck dumb by the firing of a cannon. Since then it is said that a number of married men have invited the artillery companies to come and discharge their pieces on the premises.[15]

The Enquirer told of a minister speaking on the same theme:

> Be not proud that our blessed Lord paid your sex the distinguished honor of appearing first to a female after the resurrection, for it was only done that the glad tidings might spread the sooner.[16]

The talkative nature of a woman was the theme of "How David Price Cured his Wife's Bad Temper," a short tale reprinted in the Oakland Gazette from the Durham Chronicle. David, a meek man and kindly spirit, had "long suffered from the clatter-patter, never ending tongue of his worse half." One day an herb doctor asked David how he and his wife were. David said he was fine, but that his wife was not. When the doctor inquired what was wrong, David said his wife had a "bad breaking out about the mouth." The herb doctor said he had a cure, and later took it over to Mrs. Price. The cranky Mrs. Price chased the unwitting doctor away with a broom, but from that day forth she was cured of her scolding habits.[17]

Occasionally, women were depicted as outsmarting the men in exchanges of witty conversation. The Hillsdale Whig Standard said that George II, at a masquerade party, observed a lady whose dress displayed a rather large portion of her shoulders and chest. "Madame," said the monarch, "allow me to place my hand upon that soft bosom." "Sire," replied the lady, "give me your hand and I will put it upon a much softer place." She took the hand and laid it on his

forehead.[18] The Enquirer told of another man outdone by a woman: "My dear," said a gentleman to a lady who he thought to be married, "do you wish to make a fool of me?" "No," replied the lady, "nature has saved me the trouble."[19]

Jokes based upon names were a common feature in the frontier papers studied. The Enquirer said a Miss Julia Long had recently gone before the squire to get married. A rather absent-minded fellow, the squire asked during the ceremony, "Julia Long, is not your name Julia Long?" "Well, squire," said Julia in reply, "it ain't nothing shorter."[20] In "A Hint to Bachelors," printed in the Standard, a lady named Mary Ann Aldridge had sent a note to a gentleman. She put two r's in her first name in the signature, thus it read "Marry Ann Aldridge." The man was a bachelor and he accepted the proposal at once.[21] The Republican told about Widow Wiggins, age 40, who was becoming weary of living alone at her country road residence. She made proposals to a young man named Cushing, who was not celebrated for his wit. But they married and she took him home "to be her comfort in old age." Upon hearing of this match, a hard-hearted hag was heard to remark that "the widow had got a very soft Cushing on her country seat."[22]

Another common theme was the young lady searching for a husband and at least hoping to steal a kiss. The Kalamazoo Gazette said that a young lady, rebuked by her mother for kissing her beau, justified herself by quoting a biblical passage: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you,

do ye even so to them."[23] Another young lady, having purchased an assortment of music at a warehouse, had returned to her carriage when she recalled a piece she had forgotten to buy. "Sir," she said on entering the shop, "there is one thing I have omitted." "What is that, madam?" The lady said, "One Kind Kiss Before We Part," on which the youth vaulted over the table and "saluted the fair stranger."[24] A third young lady was told by a married woman that she would be better off throwing herself off the Niagara Falls than marrying. The young lady replied, "I would if I thought I could find a husband at the bottom.[25]

From reading the humor of the frontier press, it appears a chatty woman was the subject of many frontier press jokes. Although they occasionally outsmarted the men, women were usually chastised for their talkative natures and mean dispositions. Unmarried women characters were depicted as taking advantage of situations to secure a husband or steal a kiss. The most famous female character, Mrs. Partington was a woman who had many unorthodox opinions on various topics of the day.

These pieces of humor are important reminders on what people on the frontier probably thought about and talked about. After reading humor items like these in the frontier press, it is likely that people told these same jokes to their friends. And whether or not it was a true depiction, women were probably regarded by these joketellers as talkative females.

This chapter concludes the section on the findings of how women were depicted in the frontier press. The next section contains the study's conclusions.

ENDNOTES

[1]Marshall Statesman, 1 May 1850, p. 3.

[2]Fred Lewis Pattee, The Feminine Fifties (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1966), pp. 50-52.

[3]John Q. Reed, Benjamin Penhallow Shillaber (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 33.

[4]Pattee, p. 225.

[5]Reed, p. 38.

[6]Marshall Statesman, 30 April 1850, p. 2.

[7]Western Chronicle, 29 September 1849, p. 1.

[8]Western Chronicle, 15 June 1850, p. 4.

[9]American Citizen, 12 June 1850, p. 1.

[10]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 2 January 1850, p. 2; American Citizen, 26 December 1849, p. 4.

[11]Niles Republican, 28 July 1849, p. 1; Oakland Gazette, 15 September 1849, p. 2.

[12]Oakland Gazette, 13 October 1849, p. 1.

[13]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 29 August 1849, p. 1.

[14]American Citizen, 2 January 1850, p. 1.

[15]Marshall Statesman, 13 February 1850, p. 1.

[16]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 2 January 1850, p. 1.

[17]Oakland Gazette, 24 November 1849, p. 1.

[18]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 31 July 1849, p. 1.

[19]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 12 December 1849, p. 1.

[20]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 12 September 1849, p. 1.

[21]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 30 October 1849, p. 1.

[22]Niles Republican, 30 March 1850, p. 3.

[23]Kalamazoo Gazette, 6 July 1849, p. 1.

[24]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 19 February 1850, p. 1.

[25]Oakland Gazette, 1 September 1849, p. 1.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

This study has examined how 12 Michigan frontier newspapers depicted women from July 1, 1849 through July 31, 1850. All 665 issues of that 13-month period were analyzed and the depiction was divided into six categories. By determining the themes and patterns in each of these categories this qualitative study has attempted to develop a portrait of how women were depicted.

The frontier press coverage of courtship and marriage depicted women as being eager to catch a husband. The press consistently advised women to make a careful decision in selecting a husband because a careless mistake could have long-lasting effects. Acceptable courting behavior for both men and women was discussed. Men were told to seek women with good looks, cheerful attitudes and patient dispositions. Women were advised to look for non-drinking, hard-working men who could provide them with the material wants of life. As the Marshall Statesman said, marriage was the "great event in a woman's life."[1] Once married the woman was supposed to provide her husband with a "place of repose" after days full of life's disappointments.[2]

At home, the wife was depicted as ruler. Caring for her children, husband and home was her responsibility. The "ideal" was portrayed as a patient, religious, hard-working and cheerful woman devoted to serving others. No matter how difficult the task or how painful the heartbreak she was expected to use her own resourcefulness or religious faith to get through any crisis. The good wife always had something to do and took "hold of work as if she did not fear to soil her hands or dirty her apron."[3] The wife's own comfort was her last concern. As the "angel, guardian and guide of the family" her duty was to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of the family.[4]

Fiction in the frontier press had several consistent themes. Women who married the men they loved were depicted as leading happy and prosperous lives, while women who did not "get their man" became old maids. Wives like Jane Elmily, who worked hard and obeyed their husbands, were shown as leading difficult but productive lives.[5] Writers depicted alcohol as an evil capable of destroying families and of leaving long-suffering wives to pick up the pieces. Young wives like Emma West were shown as being too concerned with social rank during the early years of marriage, but most story lines had them seeing the error of their ways.[6] Before long, these young brides were helping others less fortunate than they. And frontier women like Polly Dust were depicted as brave heroines able to fight Indians and survive the ordeals of pioneer life.[7] This frontier fiction

depicts women as having some voice in their own destiny. Although they had to obey their husbands, they could still think and fight for themselves. By working hard and being loyal and brave, they could have happy and productive lives. Women could share this happiness by creating a serene and secure home life for their families.

Famous women like Jenny Lind, Elizabeth Blackwell and Jane Grey Swisshelm received coverage in the frontier press. This meant readers had access to material about women leading professional lives as performers, physicians and writers. And the newspapers studied usually gave these famous women favorable coverage. Some newspapers printed the texts of speeches and letters written by well-known women. Because the newspapers provided coverage like this, women could use these famous female personalities as role models.

The women's rights movement provoked much comment in the newspapers studied. Famous women, local readers and anonymous contributors submitted their opinions on the subject. Some newspapers printed the views of women's rights leaders, while others would not give space to the movement. Still other papers criticized the women's rights movement and its leaders, while others presented contradictory views on the subject. The depiction of women leaders ranged from well-informed females seeking reform to radicals who neglected their household duties and had "smutty-faced babies, heelless stockings and hen-pecked husbands."[8]

Women seeking higher wages were supported by four Michigan newspapers, and women supporting the temperance cause were given space in the press. In discussing a woman's right to an education, newspapers provided a debate on the function of education in society. While some writers pictured education as a method to better instruct housewives, others saw it as a training ground for the professions.

The newspapers provided a forum for debate on the women's rights movement. They were one of the few sources women had to obtain information about what others of her sex were thinking about women's rights. It is possible that some women got their first exposure to the women's rights movement from material in the frontier press.

Humor in the frontier press generally depicted women as loud-mouthed, cantankerous wives who made life miserable for their husbands. Occasionally women outsmarted men in witty exchanges, but usually the woman was the butt of a man's joke. A particularly favorite character among frontier editors was Mrs. Partington, whose humor came from the use of malaprops and misconstrued meanings during discussions of topical issues.

These, the portraits of fictional and real women in the 12 Michigan frontier newspapers studied, could enhance understanding of how both men and women perceived the role of women in society. It was a role undergoing change, and the coverage of women entering the work force is one indication of this change. Historian Gerda Lerner says

there are two schools of thought about the "cult of true womanhood" described in the literature of the frontier era. She said that some believe the portrait of the hard-working, pious mother and wife was representative of how women really felt and acted in society. The other school of thought says that the newspapers' and magazines' concern with woman's domesticity was a response to an opposite trend in society. These historians note the great changes in women's roles at this time: lower-class women were entering factories and middle-class women were becoming discontented with their accustomed roles.[9] These changes received coverage in the Michigan newspapers studied. Women in the work force, most notably the Adrian seamstresses seeking adequate wages, were discussed.[10] The discontent of some women was reflected in the coverage of the Salem, Ohio women's suffrage convention.

These frontier newspapers not only reported what was being said about women, but also may have helped women form an opinion about themselves as individuals and as a sex. Provided she could read and obtain a newspaper, the frontier wife could read the fiction depicting her as the hard-working, patient mother, but she could also read the opinions of women journalists, women's rights leaders and local women contributors. She also had the option of submitting material herself. Thus the frontier newspaper reflected the views that both men and women writers had of women's roles and it provided new ideas to women seeking to define their role in society.

The question of how the average frontier wife and mother felt about herself and her society is a difficult one to answer, and beyond the scope of this study. In every region of the country there are accumulations of women's literature in every form - diaries, letters, journals, memoirs, novels and poems. This neglected material is of major importance and historians have just begun the effort of recovery and analysis. When the process is complete, the view we have of American history and literature may be changed.[11]

This study has attempted to contribute to the body of knowledge on the frontier press. Similar studies are needed to fill the great void of material on how the frontier press depicted women. Perhaps similar studies could be undertaken about how women were depicted in newspapers of other years and in other frontier states.

One of the best reasons for studying the frontier press was explained in the Hillsdale Whig Standard when a British newspaper correspondent wrote:

> When I review my past life...How interesting would it be now...to look at the papers read when I was 12 years old. How many events, feelings, and associations would come to mind.[12]

The correspondent summarized it well when he said that newspapers "preserve and assist the memory." By studying the frontier press historians can explore the image of women that emerges through its pages.

ENDNOTES

[1]Marshall Statesman, 27 February 1850, p. 1.

[2]Niles Republican, 12 January 1850, p. 3.

[3]American Citizen, 20 March 1850, p. 1.

[4]Marshall Statesman, 10 April 1850, p. 2.

[5]Oakland Gazette, 2 March 1850, p. 4; Marshall Statesman, 20 February 1850, p. 1.

[6]American Citizen, 28 November 1849, p. 1.

[7]Grand Rapids Enquirer, 8 May 1850, p. 1.

[8]Kalamazoo Gazette, 31 May 1850, p. 2.

[9]Berenice A. Carroll, ed., Liberating Women's History (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 359.

[10]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 23 July 1850, p. 2; Michigan Expositor, 16 July 1850, p. 2; Pontiac Jacksonian, 31 July 1850, p. 2.

[11]Carroll, p. 81.

[12]Hillsdale Whig Standard, 23 October 1849, p. 1.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Applegate, Tom S. A History of the Press in Michigan. Adrian, Mich.: Times Steam Presses, 1876.

Bald, F. Clever. Michigan in Four Centuries. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954.

Barzun, Jacques and Graff, Henry F. The Modern Researcher. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977.

Beard, Mary R. America Through Women's Eyes. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933.

Billington, Ray Allen. Westward Expansion. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949.

Bonner, Richard Illenden, ed. Memoirs of Lenawee County, Michigan. Madison, Wis.: Western Historical Association, 1909.

Carroll, Berenice A., ed. Liberating Women's History. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1976.

Clark, Thomas D. Frontier America. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969.

Collin, Henry P. A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Branch County, Michigan. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1906.

Coolidge, Orville W. A Twentieth Century History of Berrien County. Madison, Wis.: Western Historical Association, 1909.

Cumming, John. The Gold Rush. Mt. Pleasant, Mich.: By the Author, 465 Hiawatha Drive, 1974.

Dunbar, Willis F. Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973.

Ellet, Elizabeth Fries. Pioneer Women of the West. New York: C. Scribner, 1852.

Emery, Edwin and Emery, Michael. The Press and America. 4th ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978.

Fisher, David and Little, Frank, eds. Compendium of History and Biography of Kalamazoo County, Michigan. Chicago: A.W. Bowen & Co., 1906.

Gardner, Washington. History of Calhoun County. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1913.

Goss, Dwight. History of Grand Rapids and its Industries. Chicago: C.F. Coopers and Co., 1906.

Gottesman, Ronald; Holland, L.; Kalstone, D.; Murphy, F.; Parker, H.; and Pritchard, W. The Norton Anthology of American Literature. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979.

Hathaway, Richard J. Dissertations and Theses in Michigan History. Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Department of State, 1974.

History of Jackson County, Michigan. Chicago: Inter-state Publishing Co., 1881.

Karolevitz, Robert F. Newspapering in the Old West, a Pictorial History of Journalism and Printing on the Frontier. Seattle: Superior Publishing Co., 1965.

Kirkland, Caroline M. A New Home or Life in the Clearings. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1953.

Langdon, William Chauncey. Everyday Things in American Life, 1776-1876. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.

Lee, L.L. and Lewis, Merrill. Women, Women Writers and the West. Troy, N.Y.: The Whitston Publishing Co., 1979.

Lyon, William H. The Pioneer Editor in Missouri, 1808-1860. Columbia, Mo.: University of Illinois Press, 1965.

McMurtie, Douglas C. Early Printing in Michigan. Chicago: John Calhoun Club, 1931.

Memoirs of Lenawee County. Madison, Wis.: Western Historical Association, 1909.

Michigan Department of Education State Library Services. Michigan Newspapers on Microfilm. 4th ed. Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Department of Education State Library Services, 1973.

Mott, Frank Luther. A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850. 4th ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Osborne, William S. Caroline M. Kirkland. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972.

Ossoli, Margaret Fuller. Woman in the Nineteenth Century. New York: Greenwood Press, 1968.

Pattee, Fred Lewis. The Feminine Fifties. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1966.

Paxson, Frederic L. History of the American Frontier. Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1966.

Pearson, Carol and Pope, Katherine. The Female Hero in American and British Literature. New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1981.

Portrait and Biographical Album of Oakland County, Michigan. Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1891.

Reed, John Q. Benjamin Penhallow Shillaber. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972.

Shaw, Anna Howard. The Story of a Pioneer. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1915; reprint ed., New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970.

Sochen, June. Herstory. New York: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 1974.

Stratton, Joanna L. Pioneer Women. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981.

Streeter, Floyd Benjamin, ed. Michigan Bibliography. Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Historical Commission, 1921.

Svendsen, Gro. Frontier Mother. Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian Historical Association, 1950.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. Frontier and Section. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961.

_____. The Frontier in American History. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.

Wertheimer, Barbara Mayer. We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.

Woodward, Helen. The Lady Persuaders. New York: Ivan Obolensky Inc., 1960.

Woody, Thomas. A History of Women's Education in the United States. New York: Octagon Books, 1974.

Periodicals, Journals and Pamphlets

Cumming, John. "History of the Michigan Newspapers." Family Trails 3 (Fall-Winter 1971-1972): 1.

Dunbar, Willis F. "Frontiersmanship in Michigan." Michigan History 50 (June 1966): 97-110.

Duncan, Joseph George. "Literary Content of a Pioneer Michigan Newspaper." Michigan History 33 (September 1949): 195-209.

Howard, A.E. Dick. "The Sexes and the Law." The Wilson Quarterly 4 (Winter 1982): 81-82.

Kniffen, Fred B. "Milestones and Stumbling Blocks." Pioneer America 7 (January 1975): 3-6.

Taylor, Paul S. and Loftis, Anne. "The Legacy of the Nineteenth Century Farmer." New England Quarterly 54 (June 1981): 252.

Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860." American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966): 151-174.

Williams, Beth. "The Woman Pioneers of the Eighteen Forties." Michigan History 26 (1942): 215-222.

Unpublished Materials

Allen, G.E. Morris. "P.T. Barnum's 1850 Press Campaign in New York City to Herald Jenny Lind's American Concert Tour." M.A. thesis, The American University, 1966.

Evarts, Dru Riley. "Women's Rights as Covered by the Ohio Frontier Press." Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Boston, Mass., August 1980.

Wyatt, Kenneth John. "That Vile Invective: A History of Partisan Journalism in Jackson County, 1837-1866." M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1976.

Yates, Dorothy Langdon. "Belles of Freedom, Three Antislavery Editors: Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, Lydia Maria Child, and Jane Grey Swisshelm." M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1969.

Newspapers

American Citizen. Jackson, 1849-1850.

Coldwater Sentinel. Coldwater, 1849-1850.

Grand Rapids Enquirer. Grand Rapids, 1849-1850.

Grand River Eagle. Grand Rapids, 1849-1850.

Hillsdale Whig Standard. Hillsdale, 1849-1850.

Jacksonian. Pontiac, 1849-1850.

Kalamazoo Gazette. Kalamazoo, 1849-1850.

Marshall Statesman. Marshall, 1849-1850.

Michigan Expositor. Adrian, 1849-1850.

Niles Republican. Niles, 1849-1850.

Oakland Gazette. Pontiac, 1849-1850.

Western Chronicle. Centreville, 1849-1850.

"Women Seek Place in History Textbooks." Lansing State Journal, 9 March 1982, sec. 1, p. B7.