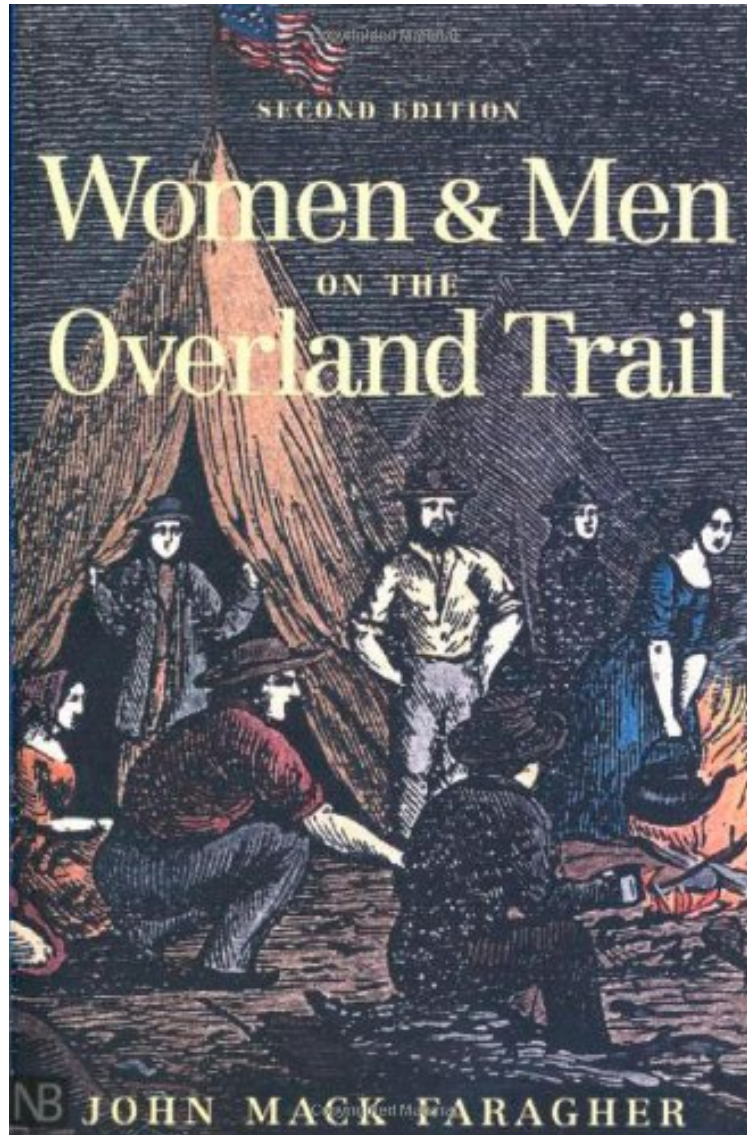


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Women and Men on the Overland Trail, Revised edition

John Mack Faragher

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John Mack Faragher : Women and Men on the Overland Trail, Revised edition before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women and Men on the Overland Trail, Revised edition:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Women's work is never doneBy CustomerIn the historiography of the westward movement the male perspective predominates. It is the story of men seeking their own destinies in an empty wilderness, searching for land and wealth. It is often a romantic tale of buffalo, Indians, wagon trains, and the

gold rush. It is the patriotic story of Manifest Destiny. It is Bonanza, Gunsmoke, and Rawhide. Although it is often about greed, it is always about adventure. John Mack Faragher in *Women Men on the Overland Trail* tells a different story from a different perspective. His story is about women being ripped from their families, and how they managed to keep their families together and retain their culture in adverse situations. Faragher's story is generally about the migration of families, and more specifically about the role of women in this migration and their relationships to men within marriages during the 1840s and 1850s. He bases his analyses on 169 diaries and other narratives from women. He then extrapolates to women in general who he believes were coerced into moving west by the socially-constructed dominance of their husbands. Whether it is fair or right to assign the emotions of 169 women to the thousands of women who left no journals, is debatable. He uses a large cohort but not necessarily a representative one. The tables that Faragher compiled in Appendix 1, however, do corroborate his contention that the migrants were young, married, from the Midwest, and took with them only the necessities to start up a new life. It shouldn't be a surprise that women were less free than men; women had few rights prior to the 20th Century. Their roles were limited to such activities as cooking, cleaning, sewing, bearing children, nurturing the family, and teaching. As such, their work was never done and they could never rest. During migration, women no longer had their own sphere of influence (a home); instead, they were forced to work within the boundaries of male structure (the trail). Women wanted to bring their culture with them, such as the music, clothing, and literature from back East; yet even here, men controlled which parts of their culture to transport to a new land. What little they included was often discarded along the trail. Women were isolated on the trail, having supportive camaraderie from other women only at the sufferance of men. Men, however, "were never short on company; there were always other men on the road." (p 143) In their diaries, women expressed their sorrow at leaving their lives behind, their fears for the families and the future, and their sense of aloneness on the trail. However, they kept their opinions to themselves when men were present since they remained dependent upon those men. Men made all the critical decisions and ultimately shouldered the responsibility for the success or failure of the migration. However, women, according to Faragher, shouldered more than their fair share of duties. In addition to socially-defined women's work, women also performed male duties such as driving wagons and handling livestock. Women excelled at women's work as well as men's work. Left unsaid by Faragher is that the blurring of the division of labor led to strong, independent women with the self-esteem to perform any task. It led to women obtaining socio-political rights such as the vote first in the West. This fact could and should have been linked to the strengths that women learned and obtained while migrating and creating a new homestead.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars
By Erik M.R. Great condition.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A dusty, desperate chapter in American history comes alive
By K Spottswood I picked this up on a whim during summer vacation and was pleasantly surprised it held my interest to the end. Other reviewers have addressed the strengths and weaknesses of Mr. Faragher's major thesis. I found this of less concern than the service he does presenting this unprecedented wave of migration in the words of those who experienced it. History truly comes alive in this book - not the big cycle of history, like a clash with another culture or a polemic against Manifest Destiny, but the history of the individual. These are our forefathers and foremothers, slogging over boulders, flailing through floods, eating as much trail dust as bread, and clinging to the shaky faith that their fellow humans will come through in desperate times. It's a fascinating read and, I think, a thesis of lasting value, despite the constant revisionism of gender studies today.

This classic book offers a lively and penetrating analysis of what the overland journey was really like for midwestern farm families in the mid-1800s. Through the subtle use of contemporary diaries, memoirs, and even folk songs, John Mack Faragher dispels the common stereotypes of male and female roles and reveals the dynamic of pioneer family relationships. This edition includes a new preface in which Faragher looks back on the social context in which he formulated his original thesis and provides a new supplemental bibliography. Praise for the earlier edition: Faragher has made excellent use of the Overland Trail materials, using them to illuminate the society the emigrants left as well as the one they constructed en route. His study should be important to a wide range of readers, especially those interested in family history, migration and western history, and women's history.

Kathryn Kish Sklar An enlightening study.
American West A helpful study which not only illuminates the daily life of rural Americans but which also begins to compensate for the male orientation of so much of western history.
Journal of Social History

"An enlightening study." -- American West
From the Publisher Winner of the 1980 Frederick Jackson Turner Award offered by the Organization of American Historians
From the Back Cover A lively and penetrating analysis of what the overland journey was really like for midwestern farm families in the mid-1800s. Through the subtle use of contemporary diaries, memoirs, and even folk songs, Faragher dispels the common stereotypes of male and female roles and reveals in a new and absorbing fashion the dynamics of pioneer family relationships.