



A Voyage to Montana *Serena Washburn's Account* *of Her Trip up the* *Missouri River* *in 1869, Part II*

by Aubrey L. Haines

Introduction

Serena Washburn's reminiscence of an ill-fated attempt to reach the Missouri River port of Fort Benton in 1869—an account that remained unpublished and nearly unknown for ninety-five years—made its debut in the Winter 1999 issue of *Montana*. In its pages, the Washburn family's exasperatingly slow progress toward their intended new home in Helena, Montana Territory (where Henry D. Washburn was to take up duties of the surveyor general) was stopped somewhat short of the mouth of the Musselshell River by the sinking of the steamer *Lacon* due to snagging.

Serena's account was interrupted at that point—as crew and passengers faced raising and repairing the crippled boat to attempt a down-river retreat to civilization, a feat that had to be accomplished by their own slender means because the season was too late to expect other steamboats that year. How that was accomplished in a wild region where danger of attack from hostile Indians was always present is the focus of this concluding portion of her reminiscence. (Page changes in the original manuscript are indicated by the bracketed numbers.)

A placid Missouri River (left, 1883) belied its treacherousness as a transportation route. Serena Washburn discovered as much on July 16, 1869, when the steamer she was on, the *Lacon*, hit a submerged log and sank, stranding its passengers and crew more than three hundred miles short of Fort Benton, their destination. Serena and the Washburn family were traveling to Helena, Montana Territory, where her husband Henry was to assume duties as surveyor general. Serena (above, no date) recalled in Part I of this article (Winter 1999) how devastating the mishap had been to the *Lacon*. "A snag, a part of a tree," she wrote, "had broken entirely through the hull, making a hole nine feet in length by three feet wide."



Courtesy the author

E. Jay Haines, photographer, Haines Foundation Collection, MHS Photograph Archives, Helena

The Voyage

Inside the wall made by the sacks of corn, the men went to work to raise the boat. They stretched a heavy tarpaulin over the hole on the inside of the boat, then brought blue clay from a bank near[by] in the yawl, and pounded it against the canvas. By three o'clock the leak from the outside was stopped. A sick man in his bunk directed the rigging up of a siphon pump and the steam pumps were put in readiness, hand pumps, kegs, buckets, and pans were used by the deck hands, officers and passengers, all working for dear life. Sister and I ran a pump till we blistered our hands. The mate, who had a voice almost [37] like thunder, said "work hard for ten minutes and we can tell if we can raise the boat." Splash, splash, went the water, but not a word was spoken, and there was not even a smile to lighten the gloom. Then the mate came again saying to heave away, the water was lowering. Then the glorious shout that went up from the broken boat seemed enough to raise it half way to the clouds. The anxious faces now grew cheerful and the jolly joke went round. Captain Bailey called out, "Where are we now?"¹ The mate seemed to be everywhere at once, encouraging and cheering every one to do his best. Now dipping water here then off to another place, his energy was contagious and parties

worked faster for his visit. Every now and then he would say, "All hands together, the water is lowering, the boat will soon be afloat. Pitch it lively, she is raising. Hurrah, hurrah!"

At seven o'clock in the evening the boat was afloat after a day's hard work. It was thought by running the steam pumps all the time it would float till morning. The Captain ordered supper, dinner had been out of the question. The tired men and passengers ate a hearty meal and many of them retired at once. At sunset I wandered out on the bow of the boat alone to see where we were and what were our surroundings. My husband soon joined me there, then my brother Seymour and my sister. We were facing the north, to my right was a range of mountains some distance from the shore. The river was wide and shallow, and to my left was a long sandbar reaching far into the river. Next to this was a willow thicket and beyond this a cottonwood forest, and a little south of this was a range of barren mountains. The gravity of the [38] situation made us look in silence, nothing heard but the plashing of the water against the boat. Suddenly a hideous cry broke the silence, and we saw two large wolves come out of the willow thicket and down to the river for water. Two of our party had gone there to hunt. I said, "Our boys will be eaten up." My husband replied that they would return soon. Just then we heard shots and some deer ran from the willows and at the same time a drove of

Such accidents as the *Lacon's* were almost common on the Missouri. Low water, snags, and sandbars often caught steamboats midjourney. Such was the fate of the *Benton*, below, which snagged on the lower river five miles above Washington, Missouri, on September 15, 1889.





Civil War veteran Captain Thomas C. Bailey, pictured (seated second from left) with fellow clerks in the surveyor general's office in Helena in 1872, proved his mettle and averted possible disaster when he smoked a pipe of peace with a war party that showed up during the raising of the *Lacon*.

Lelia Washburn (below, circa 1870) was fourteen years old when she accompanied her family on their trip up the Missouri River in 1869.



Washburn, Lelia, D. McKim Collection, courtesy Lee P. Brown

buffalo without fear came to the river's brink, while a herd of large elk came half-way down the mountain and stopped, frightened by the unusual scene of the broken boat, while upon the top-most crag of the mountains could be seen the Indian sentry who was keeping watch over our movements.

Sunset, wolves, deer, elk, buffaloes and Indians, a broken boat, no help in sight, is there any wonder, then, that I shuddered when the hungry cry of the wolves rent the air? There was great fear that our boat would break in two and we would have to go ashore and take our chances with the wild beasts and Indians. It had been seriously considered of sending the women and children down to Fort Buford, three hundred miles, in the yawl with two men to manage it, with the hope of floating past the Indians during the night time.² We went to our beds, but not to rest. The wolves howled all night and I expected the Indians to be upon us at any moment. I never before appreciated the full meaning of that old hymn, *This earth's a howling wilderness*.

At two o'clock in the morning, all hands were called to work, as the water was rapidly gaining on the steam pump. Every one seemed tired and disheartened, but after several hours' work they lowered the [39] water sufficiently to get up steam and run the boat a few yards across the river and with the spar raise the broken side out of the water, so they could go to work in earnest to mend the rent. July 21. All hands are at work taking out the temporary filling preparatory to putting in one

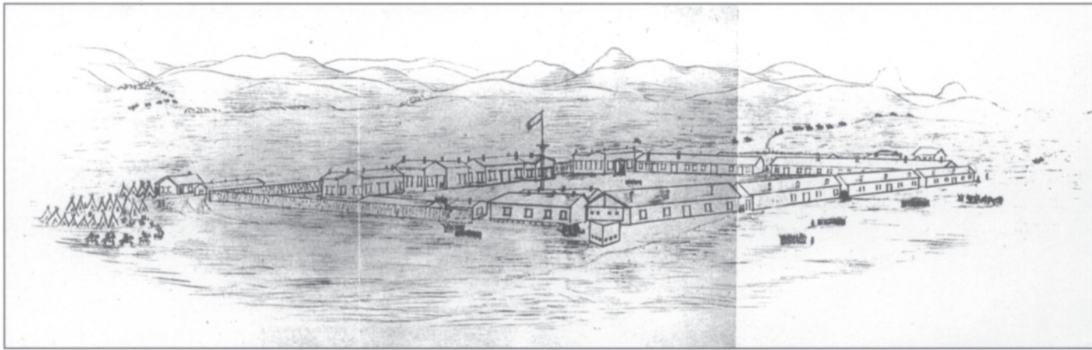
more substantial. Some passengers are looking on, others are fishing, when suddenly we are startled by the clatter of hoofs and a war party of Indians are upon us.

They jumped from their ponies and the thicket seemed full of them as they lined up and placed their arrows in their bows. A few had heavy rifles. On they came, a cloud of dark, red faces. Captains, officers, and everyone, hurriedly came aboard the boat. The fishing party joined in the rush, all except Lelia. She had just caught a large catfish and was so excited that she did not notice the Indians, and when Seymour went to find her and wanted to help her up at the stern of the boat, she thought there must be another sandstorm coming. She gave him her fish, then turned and ran right into the midst of the Indians. Then, for once in her life, she was swift-footed. She had heavy hair hanging down her back and it had been a great attraction to the Indians. They had often motioned from the shore that they wanted her scalp and this fact increased her speed.

Captain Sedan was a timid man, as we had learned before.³ He came to my husband and said, "General, what are we to do with these fellows?" Mr. Washburn replied, "Order every man on board on deck with a gun," (it really took a man with a gun to drive the deck

1. Thomas C. Bailey was a captain in the Fourteenth Indiana Infantry during the Civil War. Serena mentions him again on page [40] with the explanation "of our party."

2. Closer to 387 miles.



It was at Fort Buford, the military post opposite the mouth of the Yellowstone River (above, drawn in 1868), that Serena and the passengers of *Submarine No. 14* had transferred to the smaller *Lacon* in hopes of better navigating the almost eight hundred miles to Fort Benton. That was on June 28, 1869. Within three weeks they had repeatedly “spered” through low water, sunk, been raised and repaired, and returned downstream to the fort, having traveled halfway to Fort Benton from Fort Buford, and having covered almost 90 percent of the distance from St. Louis before sinking.

hands out of the hold to hold a gun, they were so frightened), “and wait and see what [40] the Indians are going to do.” The Indians saw such a company of men and such a supply of guns, but they did not know they were empty, for we had used all the ammunition before this time. It was thought best to make overtures of peace. The steward sent out a large clothes basket full of our meager supplies. These were placed before them and Captain Bailey of our party went out to smoke the pipe of peace with them. He smoked the long-handled pipe awhile and handed it to the chief, who stood a little in advance of his men, but the chief took no notice of the pipe or of Captain Bailey. I noticed that on his arm hung six scalps and one of them was light hair. I knew not how soon our locks might be added to the list. Captain Bailey smoked three times, and still no notice was given his offer of peace. Then the chief reached out his hand and took the pipe and smoked it a long time. Again we felt another crisis had passed. The Indians stayed around half a day, trying in every way to come aboard, by [but] Mr. Washburn said they must not be permitted to do so.

There was so much excitement while they were around that no work could be done on the boat and no dinner was prepared. And when they mounted their ponies and rode away, we were more alarmed than ever, for we feared they had gone for reinforcements. Now

everybody who could lend a hand to the work did so. We had been told by passing boats that there were no other boats to come down the river. Imagine our great joy, late in the afternoon, to see the smoke of a vessel as the *Ida Stockdale* came to meet us. Mr. Washburn hailed her and asked the Captain to take our party. “No sir! I am already loaded too heavily [41] for the low water and may be caught at any time and we have but little provision.” After much talk, my husband saying he must, and backing this assertion with a liberal cash offer, he consented to take six of our party, but no more. He said the young men could fight their way through some way. Our family and Nelse and Thirza came to the new boat, but with heavy hearts, as brother Seymour had to be left on the broken boat with the rest of our party. Although the water was low, we found it much faster coming with the stream. We arrived at Fort Peck and learned that our Indian visitors were a war party of Crows going to fight the Sioux. There had been another fight at the Musselshell and no freight or passengers would venture on the road.⁴

July 22. We had become somewhat reconciled to leaving brother Seymour and our friends on the broken boat and were trying to cheer up, when the cry of fire was heard on the hurricane deck. Fortunately it was extinguished without much trouble or damage. Our piano had been placed near the engine to dry and had

3. On manuscript page twenty-five the captain’s name was given as “Ticher.” It is possible that one of the men was a pilot, rather than a ship captain. Unless a ship captain also held papers as a river pilot, he had to employ a registered pilot who directed the movement of the vessel. The Steamboat Inspection Law of 1838 was supplemented by the Steamboat Act of 1852, which required the licensing of pilots and engineers; captains and mates on river boats did not have to be licensed until 1871. William E. Lass, *A History of Steamboating on the Upper Missouri River* (Lincoln, 1962), 172-73.

4. The hostility of Sioux war parties stifled the activity of traders, freighters, and “wood-hawks” and led to eventual abandonment

of the stockade trading post at the mouth of the Musselshell River and the central Montana wagon road. Peter Koch, “Journal of Peter Koch—1869 and 1870,” ed. Elers Koch, in *Frontier Omnibus*, ed. John W. Hakola (Missoula, Mont., 1962), 335-43.

5. This might be the freight mentioned by Serena on July 8 (p. 30).

6. The Indians of the upper Missouri River had learned about smallpox the hard way. In 1837 Alexander Harvey was bringing up the annual outfit for Fort McKenzie (Brulé) when a case of the dread disease broke out in his party. He prudently stopped with the cargo at Judith River, but the Piegiens believed they were being duped and

When below Fort Peck, Serena Washburn described Grovon [Gros Ventre] bull boats, much like the one at right, photographed by Stanley J. Morrow in 1877. The boats, she later wrote, were “made by bending willow poles making a round basket about ten feet in diameter, this being covered by buffalo robes, skin side out.” Capable of carrying the Indians’ “winter’s supply of meat,” she observed, the boats were “perfectly waterproof.”

taken fire. July 29. Passed the *Sully’s* freight.⁵ Probably our Captain gave them some flour. The men had placed a number of paddies around their camp to make it look as if there were many men.

The Indians will follow the boat all day, sometimes, hoping it will land. And when it does tie up they rush from every direction, running or riding, often three children on one pony carrying their dogs. They come in blankets and buffalo robes and a few of them in their bare skins, a motley, dirty throng. It is difficult to see in [42] them the noble red man. At Fort Buford the Captain hung out the smallpox flag to keep them from the boat.⁶ The Indians, hundreds of them, came no closer than a quarter of a mile. As we neared the mouth of the Yellowstone River, a strange procession met us. A large party of Grovon Indians had been up the river hunting and laying in their winter’s supply of meat.⁷ They had made a successful hunt and were returning with their boats laden down to the water’s brink. Their boats are made by bending willow poles, making a round basket about ten feet in diameter, this being covered by buffalo robes, skin side out, and perfectly waterproof.⁸ Several of these are tied together. A squaw sits in the front of the first one and propels the boat with a single paddle. There were two hundred boats in this fleet. The braves kill the wild game, but the squaws dress the meat and cure it, then pack it into the boats. They have their papposes [*sic*] with them and they sit on the meat and relish a piece of raw fat buffalo meat while the mother works.

insisted the cargo be brought up. That was finally done and the scourge was loosed among them with terrible results. Hiram M. Chittenden, *History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River*, 2 vols. (New York, 1903), 1:229. The disease continued to devastate the tribes along the Missouri River.

7. Gros Ventre Indians or “Big Bellies.” The term has been used to identify two entirely different groups, the Gros Ventres of the prairie, or Atsinas (an Algonquin people), and the Gros Ventres of the river or Hidatsa, who were a Siouan people. In this case, since they were bound downriver following a buffalo hunt, it is likely they were of the river, returning to old Fort Berthold where they occupied a village together with Arikaras and Mandans. Carling Malouf, “Historic Tribes and Archaeology,” *Archaeology in Montana*, 8 (January-March, 1967), 9-10, 15. See also John Stoutenburgh, Jr., *Dictionary of the American Indian* (New York, 1960), 129.



MHS Photograph Archives, Helena

These boats were protected by two hundred mounted warriors on each side of the river. This was absolutely necessary, as they were passing through the country belonging to another tribe, and they are constantly warring with one another.⁹ A chief wanted to come on the boat for the rest of his journey. The Captain was afraid to refuse, so the squaw unloaded their boats and the two braves, the squaw and pappoose came on board, paying three buffalo robes for the short trip. It was thought each one of their boats contained about a thousand pounds of meat. The little pappoose was three hundred days old. They kept its age by cutting a notch in a stick each day. It had not been browned [44; Note—there was no p. 43, a numbering error] by exposure and looked pretty and sweet. As they neared the fort the brave went to the highest part of the boat and chanted the story of their successful hunt.¹⁰ A more doleful, disheartening piece of music cannot be conceived. At least so it seemed to the white folks.

August 1. Very warm. Wooded at St. John’s Agency and bought a cow, which was brought on board to be killed for beef. The prairie was on fire. At night all the valley and waves of hills are a blaze of light, a sea of fire. August 2. Passed Yankton, Dakota, a town of half

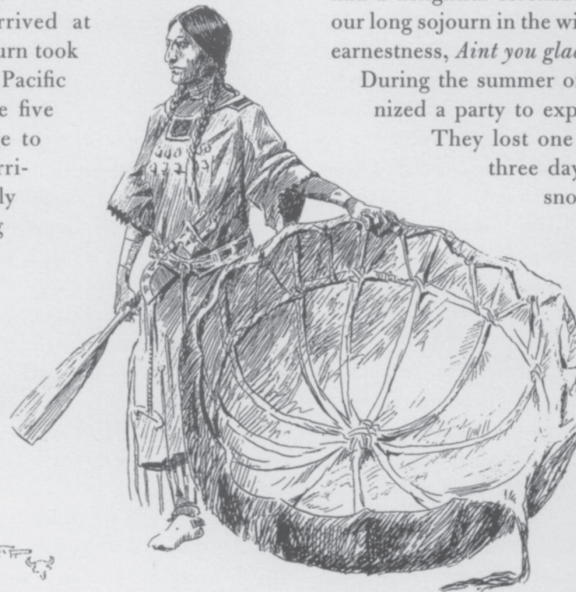
8. Such coracles were usually called “bull boats” from a preference for the larger hides of buffalo bulls for the covering. Stanley Vestal, *The Missouri* (1945; reprint, Lincoln, 1996), 158-60.

9. The Assiniboines, “which are a very treacherous tribe of Indians, they go on the principle of to-day a friend to-morrow an enemy.” J. Allen Hosmer, “A Trip to the States in 1865,” in Hakola, *Frontier Omnibus*, 301.

10. Fort Berthold. Not the original fur trade post by that name but the nearby Fort Atkinson, renamed Fort Berthold after the American Fur Company took it over from the army after June 1867. The three tribes—Arikara, Mandan, and Gros Ventre—occupied a nearby village named “Like-a-Fishhook.” Ray H. Mattison, ed., “An Army Wife on the Upper Missouri: The Diary of Sarah E. Canfield, 1866-1868,” *North Dakota History*, 20 (October 1953), 194.

a dozen houses, the last signs of civilization on the river.¹¹ The steward bought some potatoes. It had been weeks since we had tasted any. August 3. Passed some cattle, up to their necks in mud, just their heads above the water. Three men and a woman were trying to rescue them. August 4. Landed in Sioux City, where most of the passengers left the boat. Our boat took on a good supply of provisions. This was a pleasant sight to us. However, with all our mishaps, we had never been starving hungry, but it was often very difficult to eat what was served. We purchased the daily papers here, the first we had seen in weeks. We passed several wrecks, as there are many boats lost on this turbulent, crooked river.

August 6 [5th]. Arrived at Omaha and Mr. Washburn took the train on the [Union] Pacific to _____, thence five hundred miles by stage to Helena, Montana Territory.¹² This was the only possible way of reaching his destination. He goes alone. It is sad. After the four years of terrible separation during the war and part of the time while he was in



Squaw with Bullboat, by Charles M. Russell, pen and ink, 1901

MHS Museum, Helena



Congress, we had decided never to be separated again. But I am too [45] frail to take the trip overland, so must return to Clinton, Indiana. But if he gains his health, we will feel rejoiced and repaid for this sacrifice. Nelse Anderson and wife return with us.

August 5 [6th].¹³ The eclipse is here, but the day is dark and cloudy and we do not have the fine view we had wished for. Still, it is wonderful, the beautiful shadow and the small silver rim. So strange to see our daylight turned to shade. We are a few miles from Leavenworth City. We landed here and went out to the fort. The grasshoppers are thick, devouring everything green. August 7. Laid at Parksville last night. We had a delightful serenade. It sounded heavenly after our long sojourn in the wilderness. We sang with great earnestness, *Aint you glad we're out of the wilderness?*

During the summer of 1870, Mr. Washburn organized a party to explore the Yellowstone River.

They lost one of their men and remained three days to look for him. A heavy snowstorm came upon them and he contracted a cold from which he never recovered. He returned home in December, and after an illness of six weeks passed quietly away from earth to heaven.

11. Unlikely in the light of this description from 1865: "This town has no streets but is scattered about in spots. The Capitol is a three story frame building, and looks more like a school-house than a place where they make laws, there are two groceries, and one hotel which they call the 'Ash House,' and there are also some very handsome private residences at this place," Hosmer, "A Trip to the States in 1865," 313.

12. Corinne, Utah Territory. Serena left a blank in her manuscript, probably intending to fill in the station's name when she could determine what it was. The stagecoach connection with Montana Territory is described by James A. Garfield two years later: "From Corinne in 1872, Wells Fargo and Co. ran a daily line to Helena, a distance about 500 miles [480 is closer], over a well-worn but natural prairie trail. The scheduled time to Helena was four days, traveling day and night." Oliver W. Holmes, "James A. Garfield's Diary of a Trip to Montana in 1872," in Hakola, *Frontier Omnibus*, 349-50.

13. It appears that the date should be August 7 on the basis of a newspaper comment. Parsons to author, April 20, 1997.

14. Henry Gannett, *Boundaries of the United States*, 3d ed. (Washington, D.C., 1904), 131. It appeared also as Bulletin 226, Series F, Geography, United States Geological Survey.

15. See Aubrey L. Haines, *Yellowstone National Park: Its Exploration and Establishment* (Washington, D.C., 1974), 191, for

deLacy's presentation of the geography on both sides of the boundary.

16. Nathaniel P. Langford, *Diary of the Washburn Expedition to the Yellowstone and Firehole Rivers in the Year 1870* (St. Paul, Minn., 1905), viii.

17. Haines, *Yellowstone National Park*, 38.

18. Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: A History of Our First National Park*, 2 vols. (1977; reprint, Niwot, Colo., 1996), 1:91-101.

19. Two maps bear the same date, "November 1st, 1869," RG 49, Old Map File (Montana 2 and 3), National Archives (hereafter NA), Washington, D.C. Map 2 shows Yellowstone Lake with the spindle shape of earlier cartography, while map 3 has a large bay on the west side and outlines the "Route of Messrs Cook & Folsom 1869," noting many of their discoveries on the trail. Pertinent areas of these maps are on facing pages in Haines, *Yellowstone National Park*, 192-93.

20. *Ibid.*, 194.

21. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, 1:103-8.

22. Langford, *Diary*, xii, xv-xvi.

23. *Ibid.*, xvii.

24. H. D. Washburn to J. S. Wilson, commissioner of the General Land Office, December 26, 1870, L 28803, Letters Received from Surveyor General of Montana, RG 49, NA.



Epilogue

Henry Dana Washburn arrived in Helena on August 13, 1869, to assume the duties of his appointed position as surveyor general of Montana Territory. The territory had been organized May 26, 1864, and thus was only a little more than five years old, with most of its great expanse yet poorly mapped.¹⁴ Along the south boundary, eastward from the Madison River nearly to the Wind River, was a mountain-girt plateau known only imperfectly from the map prepared in 1865 by Walter W. deLacy for the First Legislative Assembly.¹⁵ It was a place reputed by mountain man Jim Bridger to hold a geyser seen to “spout as high as the flag pole in Virginia City, which was about sixty (60) feet high.”¹⁶ In the same vicinity, prospectors reported, was a great lake, below which “the whole river [Yellowstone] falls over the face of the mountain thousands of feet.”¹⁷

Such tales invited confirmation and there were attempts to form exploring parties in 1867, 1868, and 1869. All failed for fear of Indians; however, three Confederate Gulch miners, who had applied to go in the latter year, decided to go anyhow and made a low-keyed but fruitful exploration of what is now Yellowstone National Park.¹⁸ One of them, David E. Folsom, a thirty-year-old Quaker, had some training in civil engineering and was able to make observations which were of great interest.

Folsom returned to Helena on October 11, 1869, and his notes on the little-known country around Yellowstone Lake evidently reached Washburn’s office very soon because the geographic information became part of a map signed by the surveyor general on November 1, 1869, that accompanied his annual report to

Henry Washburn (left, circa 1867) finally arrived in Montana from Omaha on August 13, 1869, via the Union Pacific Railroad and stage lines. Although he assumed the territorial surveyor general post, he is best known for leading the 1870 expedition into what is now Yellowstone National Park, where a prominent peak is named for him. He died the following January.

the commissioner of the General Land Office.¹⁹ Walter W. deLacy, whose 1865 “Map of the Territory of Montana with Portions of the Adjoining Territories” was still in print, also had access to Folsom’s information and used it in an 1870 revision that provided the first realistic delineation of Yellowstone Lake and adjacent features to appear on a commercial map. It was first available in summer 1870.²⁰

Later, Washburn became involved in the planning of a more elaborate exploration to take place in late summer 1870.²¹ He was likely one of the twenty members Nathaniel P. Langford mentions as enlisting “about the 1st of August 1870,” and by the middle of the month he was prominently involved in obtaining a military escort to accompany the expedition.²²

Initially, James S. Stuart of Deer Lodge—an experienced Indian fighter—was asked to lead the expedition but was forced to decline when he could not be excused from jury duty. Thus, as Langford states: “While we were disappointed in our commander and advisor, General Washburn was chosen captain of the party.”²³ It was a remarkably good substitution, for Washburn had been a popular and capable officer in the Civil War, in which he reached the brevet rank of major general of volunteers. With no particular authority to rely on, Washburn managed a party of free spirits that included several fractious natures, and did so with little friction. Except for the unfortunate decision to pass around Yellowstone Lake by its east and south shores (with the loss of Truman C. Everts in the tangled thickets south of the lake, and the waste of time and means searching for him) the exploration went well.

Serena Washburn believed the rigors of that exploration, in which he did not spare himself, unduly advanced her husband’s consumption and ultimately caused his death. However, a letter her husband wrote from Clinton, December 26, 1870, requesting a thirty-day extension of leave presents his illness differently: “I am now confined to my room from a slight attack of pneumonia but expect to visit Washington the middle of January if leave is granted.”²⁴ Thus, the trying win-



Edward DeMotte Collection, courtesy Lee Parsons

After her Missouri voyage, Serena Washburn (below, circa 1903) lived the next forty-nine years in Indiana and Kansas, often spending time with her daughter's family in her later years. Pictured at left at Serena's house in Greencastle, Indiana, in 1906 are (left to right): son-in-law Professor John B. DeMotte II, daughter Lelia Washburn DeMotte, grandsons John B. DeMotte III (top step) and Lawrence Washburn DeMotte (bottom step), Serena, and Truman W. Harrington, the professor's assistant.



Courtesy the author

ter trip from Helena to the railroad at Corinne, Utah Territory—four days and nights of nearly continuous travel in a drafty, unheated stagecoach—could have been the source of his fatal illness. Regardless, Washburn, although he did not live to directly participate in the establishment of a national park in the wonderfully endowed wilderness his party had explored, contributed by his competent leadership of the 1870 exploration.

Henry Dana Washburn died at the home of his stepfather-in-law, Aquila Nebeker, at Clinton, Indiana, January 26, 1871. His thirty-nine years of life were particularly useful to his community and his nation, which was duly noted at his burial and is remembered in the *Biographical and Historical Record of Vermilion County, Indiana* (1888).

Serena J. Washburn survived her husband by some forty-seven years, two months, and eight days, and yet, surprisingly little information is available about her life during those years. She moved to Greencastle, Indiana, in 1871, to further the education of her children.²⁵ It seems likely that Lelia met her future husband, John B. DeMotte II, a professor of physics, while a student at Indiana Asbury College (renamed DePauw in 1884).

They were married in January 1878. Aquila (the middling boy of the voyage) matured into a medical doctor known for many years, in and around Clinton, as "Doctor Quill."

In 1886, Serena, accompanied by Thirza with whom she maintained a close relationship, homesteaded 160 acres in Kansas about thirteen miles northwest of Lakin. Lee Parsons believes that "investments," such as the Kansas property, provided much of her income, allowing her to build "two houses on Vine Street" in Greencastle, Indiana, that she managed for years as boardinghouses for DePauw University students.²⁶ "She was independent, headstrong, and not particularly absorbed with conventional distaff occupations."²⁷

25. Serena J. Washburn, "Autobiography of Serena J. Washburn," p. 45, Yellowstone National Park Research Library, Mammoth, Wyoming.

26. *Ibid.*, 53.

27. Parsons to author, April 20, 1997.

28. One copy of Serena's fifty-four-page, typed reminiscence titled "Autobiography of Serena J. Washburn," donated by Mary Washburn Rodriguez to the Yellowstone National Park Research Library, Mammoth, Wyoming, on August 17, 1965, is marked for one of Serena's grandsons and reads "Henry E. Washburn, Clinton, Indiana, Christmas 1904" on the inside of the flyleaf. The other, held by Washburn

Payne DeMotte of New York City, is similar except for the inscription on the flyleaf indicating it was given to another grandson with the inscription "John B. DeMotte, Jr., December 1903, Greencastle, Indiana." This copy also has notes from the *Biographical Dictionary of Congress* handwritten inside the back cover by Lawrence Washburn DeMotte, probably on November 22, 1928. Mary Washburn Rodriguez, Monterey, California, to Lee Parsons, May 19, 1980; Clinton, Indiana, *Daily Clintonian*, August 17, 1915.

29. *Ibid.*, September 16, 1915.

30. *Tacoma Ledger*, July 9, 1911.

31. Livingston, Montana, *Enterprise*, August 23, 1911.

32. Parsons to author, April 20, 1997.

The grandson to whom Serena sent one of the bound copies of her autobiography—Henry Evan Washburn—followed the example of his father by taking up the practice of medicine. Information on him provided by his daughter indicates he “was doing research on Rocky Mountain tick [spotted fever] when he died at a comparatively young age.” A newspaper report on his death at thirty years of age attributes his demise to a severe cold, however, which developed, six months later, into “pleural troubles.”²⁸

The death of Dr. Henry Washburn was followed a month later by the death of his father, the ten-year-old boy of the voyage to Montana. According to the local newspaper, “Washburn [Aquila] and his son were practically inseparable, and the son’s death weighed heavily on the father to such an extent that he suffered a nervous breakdown, which with a cold contracted shortly after, developed into the illness that caused his death, which came as a shock to Clinton.”²⁹

During Serena’s later years, she “bounced around the family,” spending some of her time with Lelia, and after Lelia died in 1910, often with grandson John. In summer 1911, Serena made a trip to Tacoma, Washington, to visit him and her presence there made the society page of the local newspaper. After introducing her as the widow of Major General Henry D. Washburn, the leader of the first [second] exploring expedition into the headwaters of the Yellowstone River, the edi-

tor remarked that “Mrs. Washburn is an interesting figure herself. She combines in a way which the women of a passing generation alone seem to have known the secret of—the gentle dignity of a snowy-haired age, and the keen intellect and bodily activity of a young woman. But she steadfastly refuses to talk of herself, preferring to tell of incidents in the life of her famous husband about which her early memories lovingly cluster.”³⁰

On the return trip to Terre Haute, Indiana, Serena stopped at Yellowstone National Park for a first and only look at the wonder-filled area her husband had explored forty-one years earlier. There she saw the great geyser, “Old Faithful,” named by him, and the prominent peak named for him. She was pleased.³¹

Serena died April 6, 1917, while visiting John at Montgomery, Alabama, where he had moved after re-marrying. She died “virtually in the hour that President Wilson signed the declaration of war with Germany.”³² Her body was returned to Clinton, Indiana, for burial beside her distinguished husband. *M*

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Henry Washburn’s expedition to Yellowstone in 1870, which named Old Faithful geyser, had far-reaching ramifications. When Nathaniel P. Langford, who accompanied the expedition, lectured on their discoveries, he inspired Ferdinand V. Hayden to lead a United States Geological Survey party into the area a year later. Hayden’s expedition included photographer William H. Jackson, whose photographs helped convince Congress to establish Yellowstone as a national park in 1872. Below is Jackson’s 1938 painting of the Hayden expedition at Old Faithful.

From Howard R. Driggs, *Westward America* (New York, 1942), opp. p. 294

