



Seeing the Elephant: Voices from the Oregon Trail

Joyce Badgley Hunsaker

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"The target audience for this book is middle and high school students. However, its information will appeal to a far broader audience. . . . A useful introduction to trail travel and associated incidents."—Journal of the West "[A] little gem of a book."—Overland Journal
Theirs has been called America's single largest voluntary, historical migration. From the late 1830's to the mid-1870's—a span of just over forty years—nearly half a million ordinary folk left farms and families, friends, and all that was familiar and turned their faces west to Oregon, to California, to the valley of the Great Salt Lake, and to the gold fields of Montana. All "saw the elephant" along the Oregon Trail. Whether viewed from the perspective of Manifest Destiny or through the vision-dreams of tribal elders, this mass overland migration to the "Land of Milk and Honey" forever changed our nation and forever altered the way Americans saw themselves. The clash of cultures and beliefs that followed left its mark upon the American spirit as indelibly as the Oregon Trail rutted the land over which it crossed. Seeing the Elephant lets the people of the Trail speak for themselves and their times. Drawn from first-hand accounts in diaries, journals, and letters and interpreted by the author of the much acclaimed Sacagawea Speaks, their voices ring true. From Narcissa Whitman, who made an amazing trek into the unknown in 1836, through Lucy Alice Ide, who proclaimed her own modern passage in 1878, each voice of Seeing the Elephant is infused with character and instruction—and the immediacy that comes only from living history. Seeing the Elephant leaps from our nation's historic archives into the imagination. Timelines, maps, photographs, and historical illustrations enable readers young and old to trace Trail migration chronologically and geographically.

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