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Western History Collections

Emma H. DeKnight Collection

DeKnight, Emma H. Diary, 1886–1892. 1 item.

Teacher. A diary (1886–1892) kept by DeKnight and relating her experience as a teacher at the Chilocco Indian School and the Oto school at the Red Rock Indian Agency. The diary emphasizes the time DeKnight spent among the Otos and includes a list (1887) of her Oto students.

Minor Box D-31

This collection consists of a diary begun in St. Louis, where Ms. DeKnight was visiting her aunt while trying to obtain a teaching position in Indian Territory. She was not impressed by St. Louis. She then traveled to Arkansas City, Kansas, and eventually became the teacher at the Otoe Indian Agency, Ponca, Indian Territory. Ms. DeKnight commented on government policies, and gave detailed descriptions of Indian dancing, feasting, burials, sports, living quarters, etc. Diary entries of note include the following:

September 1886: Earthquake on the Atlantic coast

September 5, 1886: Description of St. Louis, Missouri

September 8, 1886: 13 "Negro schools" in St. Louis

September 16, 1886: 12 train carloads of Indians pass through St. Louis en-route to prison in Florida

October 4, 1886: One-week fair in St. Louis

December 8, 1886: Growth of Arkansas City and the purchase of a lot as a personal investment

December 25, 1886: At 3 PM, seven boys from six tribes (Wichita, Pawnee, Otoe, Cheyenne, Pottowattomie, and Choctaw) recited, followed by songs and skits. Santa Claus distributed gifts - "...a nice little woolen collar...on the tree for me. This is the only gift I got. After lunch and chapel exercises we all went into the dining room and played."

December 27, 1886: Views on an offer to go to China

January 11, 1887: re: lot purchase in Arkansas City

February 5, 1887: Samuel Ahatone attending Lincoln University in Philadelphia

February 14, 1887: Value of lots in Arkansas City; Nelson's referred to as first employees at Chilocco

February 28, 1887: Went to Otoe School at Red Rock to teach

March 3, 1887: Description of Otoe ballgame

March 3, 1887: Describes "...the Otoes play ball...racing over the prairies..." at Red Rock, Otoe Agency, Indian Territory

March 4, 1887: Remarks on Indian freighters

March 6, 1887: Ball game and dance; camp life description

March 6, 1887: Otoe girls play ball, then dance

March 13, 1887: Description of an Otoe graveyard

March 20, 1887: Pawnee freighters: also, views on work of nine Otoe chiefs and the government's solution

March 21, 1887: Mention of two Indians that travel with the circus

March 22, 1887: Description of camp, and dancing among the Otoes

March 24, 1887: Describes Otoe camp at night

March 26, 1887: Description of an Otoe funeral

March 29, 1887: Copy of a questionnaire sent to each Indian Agency covering training methods

April 1, 1887: Shooting at the Otoe school of an employee (school farmer)

April 1, 1887: Texas farmer on Otoe Agency shot by other Agency personnel

April 7, 1887: Troop of soldiers stationed near Chilocco; offer of appointment to San Carlos, Arizona

April 7, 1887: Otoe girls making mud masks and swimming (page 73)

April 12, 1887: Describes "whitewashing walls"

April 23, 1887: Mention of ration day

April 24, 1887: Description of an earth lodge (White Horse)

April 29, 1887: Measles and pneumonia epidemic at Chilocco, Indian Territory

May 18, 1887: Representative of Indian Association, Mr. Painter, visits Otoes

May 27, 1887: Sunbonnet wagon on its way to Oklahoma Territory

May 30, 1887: Squad of soldiers passed through; Indians receive payment of \$26.50 each

June 4, 1887: Reproduction of a letter written in 1869 by Brigadier General E.S. Parker to Benjamin Hallowell re: change in Indian policy. General Grants, President-elect, interested in acquiring suitable Indian agents from the Society of Friends (Quakers). Also, a reproduction of Grant's reply to George H. Stevens re: the same subject.

June 11, 1887: Visit to a Pawnee school

June 11-12, 1887: Describes swimming lessons at the Pawnee Indian Agency

June 12, 1887: Description of the Pawnee school

June 18, 1887: Woman's ballgame and horse race

July 4, 1887: Leaves Otoe school for Arkansas City, Kansas

July 5, 1887: Leaves Arkansas City at 7 PM by railroad; arrives in St. Louis at 7 AM on July 6

July 7, 1887: Leaves St. Louis at 8 PM by railroad to Cincinnati, Ohio; arrives there at 8 AM on July 8. Leaves at 9 PM to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to visit mother

July 21, 1887: Leaves Pittsburgh on the B&O Railroad for Baltimore, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Atlantic City, New Jersey

August 13, 1887: Leaves Pittsburgh for St. Louis "...on the Panhandle thence on the Vandalia line." Describes traveling conditions; is advised to "...read *She*, a novel..." Arrives in St. Louis in time for breakfast on August 24

August 20, 1887: Called on Mr. Landgren in Pittsburg. Appointed as missionary to Wheelock, Indian Territory.

August 24, 1887: Arrives in Arkansas City, Kansas at 6:30 PM

August 26, 1887: Meets new Chilocco Superintendent, a Methodist minister from Mississippi (Mr. Bradford?)

August 28, 1887: The death of an Indian, and the actions of his wife

September 9, 1887: Fifty-one children in school

September 15, 1887: Daily mail delivery established at Otoe Agency

September 21, 1887: Hunting party camped near the school

September 25, 1887: An Otoe father mourning the death of his child

October 10, 1887: Describes "...a long, rainy spell..." Discusses ghosts and Jesus with Indian children

November 27, 1887: Visit of five Quakers

December 7, 1887: Describes a Texas cowboy

December 23, 1887: Describes Christmas entertainment

December 31, 1887: New Year's Eve celebration on the prairie

January 28-29, 1888: Dance, peyote meeting and description of the Ghost Dance at the home of DeRoin. Assembly of tribes in attendance

March 5, 1888: Prohibition and intoxicated Indian braves

March 11-13, 1888: Visit of General Health, U.S. Indian Inspector. About 45-57 death in one year at the Otoe school

April 5, 1888: Trip to Ponca, Indian Territory; prairie fires

April 15, 1888: "...the days are slipping by and we are slipping away one by one with them..."

July 28, 1888: "...only eight girls here now and sixteen boys..."

July 25, 1889: New agent, Reverend Wood

April 15, 1890: Returned to Chilocco

March 6, 1892: Left Chilocco