

So Much to Be Done: Women Settlers on the Mining and Ranching Frontier (Women in the West)

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The genuine creative achievements of nineteenth-century western women have often been obscured by sentimental tributes to their devotion and diligence, while men are praised as pathfinders, entrepreneurs, and community builders. But the nineteen narratives in So Much to Be Done by women of diverse status and background reveal women's involvement in every aspect of settlement. Their part in making hard decisions, producing essential income, and developing new communities was as important as their flexibility, humor, and sense of adventure. This collection describes the experiences of pioneer women responding in individual ways to the challenge of frontier hardships.

The letters, diaries, and memoirs presented here offer glimpses of women's courage, physical strength, and independence that were the equal of any man's, even as they also reveal the failures, weaknesses, and tragedies that beset both sexes during the complex settlement process. Women describe their multiple daily tasks, the ingenuity by which they asserted themselves or circumvented patriarchal authority, the networks of relatives and friends who made the survival of both men and women possible. Such information is seldom found in men's narratives. Women's words provide rich veins of new material for social historians.



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