

Whitman and Sager Stories for the Young Reader

Books about the Whitman Mission and the Orphaned Sager Children Who Traveled the Oregon Trail

A Selected Bibliography

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Washington State Library
Office of the Secretary of State
6880 Capitol Boulevard South, Tumwater WA
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The items selected for **Whitman and Sager Stories for the Young Reader** are those that, in the bibliographer's estimation, are appropriate for children and young adults who are studying the Whitman mission and the early Oregon Trail. The majority of these stories focus on Marcus and Narcissa Whitman's missionary work at Waiilatpu, their adoption of the seven Sager children who were orphaned on their journey west, and the Whitman "Massacre."

A number of the titles on this list were not written specifically with a young adult audience in mind. Rather, some works on this topic could be suitable for older readers, or be used by a teacher to create a Whitman-themed lesson plan. Advanced readers may also benefit from reading directly from the primary sources on the topic, such as Narcissa Whitman's letters or the accounts of the surviving Sager children (published in a variety of formats and available at the Washington State Library). Books in this bibliography that are written at a higher reading level have been marked "for older children."

In creating **Whitman and Sager Stories for the Young Reader**, the author corresponded with the National Park Service (NPS), which operates the Whitman Mission National Historic Site. The NPS expressed a desire to warn educators about two myths that appear in some Whitman and Sager accounts and are unsubstantiated by historical accounts. The first is the "Whitman Saved Oregon" legend in which Marcus Whitman arrived in Washington D.C. in the spring of 1843 to personally prevent President Tyler from signing a treaty with Great Britain that would have traded away United States rights in Old Oregon. The second myth surrounds the Sagers and purports that John Sager alone led his family of six injured and starving siblings through the snow of the Blue Mountains to the mission at Waiilatpu. A spokesperson for the National Park Service wrote, "While the [NPS] respects an individual's rights to interpret historical events and find their own meanings within those stories, the NPS also values historical accuracy." Items in this bibliography that have fictional aspects or appear to give credence to the two myths above are noted in the annotations.

Annotations have been provided by the bibliographer for the purpose of creating accurate lesson plans and reading lists.

This bibliography will continue to grow as the State Library seeks and purchases more children and young adult books for its Northwest collection. Feedback on this list is also welcome at: mschaff@secstate.wa.gov

The call numbers for many of these items are in the process of being updated. Please check the Washington State Library catalog, www.secstate.wa.gov/library to see if an item's call number has changed.

NW prefixed books are available for check out and interlibrary loan. All other prefixes are available to be viewed only at the Washington State Library.

(WR) denotes a book selected by Washington State Librarian Jan Walsh for her *Washington Reads* program. To read Ms. Walsh's comments about the book go to: www.secstate.wa.gov/library/wa_reads.aspx

Allen, T.D. **Doctor in Buckskin.** Harper and Brothers, 1951. 277 p.

NW 813.54 ALLEN 1951

A fictionalized account of Dr. Marcus Whitman, his bride Narcissa, and their life in the Oregon wilderness. For older children.

Blassingame, Wyatt and Richard Glendinning. "Marcus Whitman: Doctor in Buckskins." in **Frontier Doctors.** Watts, 1963. p. 51-69.

R 926.1 BLASSIN 1963

A brief synopsis of the life of Marcus Whitman, which focuses on his career as a doctor and his missionary work among the Indians. Includes disputed information about Marcus Whitman's political role in treaty negotiations with Great Britain.

Bragg, L.E. "Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, 1808-1847: Massacre at Waiilatpui." in **More than Petticoats: Remarkable Washington Women.** Twodot, 1998. p. 8-24.

NW 305.4092 BRAGG 1998

A concise biography of Narcissa Whitman and her life as an Oregon missionary, with emphasis on the Whitman massacre. For older children.

Brink, Carol Ryrie. **Narcissa Whitman, Pioneer to the Oregon Country.** Illustrated by Samuel Armstrong. Row, Peterson, 1950. 36 p.

NW 979.702 BRINK 1950

Part of the "Real People" series, this slim volume emphasizes the early life of Narcissa Whitman and her role as an Oregon missionary. Includes numerous illustrations and a timeline of Narcissa's life.

Dougherty, James. **Marcus and Narcissa Whitman: Pioneers of Oregon.** Illustrated by James Dougherty. Viking, 1953. 158 p.

NW 813.54 DAUGHER 1953

An account of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman's life, with quotations from Narcissa's letters and substantial historical research providing context. Contains additional emphasis on the missionaries' role in increasing migration along the Oregon Trail. For older children.

Egbert, Elaine. **Moccasins through the Rye.** Review and Herald, 1980. 128 p.

NW 979.702 EGBERT 1980

A fictionalized biography of Mary Anne Bridger, the half-Indian girl who was sent to live with Marcus and Narcissa Whitman at their mission in the Oregon territory.

Frazier, Neta Lohnes. **Stout-Hearted Seven.** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973. 174 p.

NW 813.54 FRAZIER 1973

The dust jacket for this fictionalized volume states that it is "the true adventure of the Sager children orphaned on the Oregon Trail in 1844."

Harness, Cheryl. **The Tragic Tale of Narcissa Whitman and a Faithful History of the Oregon Trail.** Illustrated by Cheryl Hines. National Geographic, 2006. 144p.

NW 917.8042 HARNESS 2006; R 917.8042 HARNESS 2006

A heavily-illustrated story which focuses on Narcissa Whitman. Her journey on the Oregon Trail and her work at the Mission are given historical context by a running timeline at the bottom of each page. This work also contains original maps and drawings, as well as a concise chronology, a bibliography, and places worth visiting.

Helm, Myra Sager. **Lorinda Bewley and the Whitman Massacre.** Metropolitan, 1951. 95 p.
NW 979.516 HELM 1951

A biography of Lorinda Bewley, survivor of the Whitman massacre, as well as an account of the capture and captivity of Bewley and the Sager children by the Cayuse after the massacre. Written by the daughter of Elizabeth Sager; contains illustrations by the author.

Jackson, Dave and Neta Jackson. **Attack in the Rye Grass.** Illustrated by Julian Jackson. Bethany House, 1994. 158 p.
NW 813.54 JACKSON 1994

Part of the "Trailblazer" series, this is a fictionalized account of Perrin Whitman's life in Oregon Territory with his uncle, Marcus Whitman. According to the authors, the timeframe of the massacre is condensed in the narrative, and "most of Perrin's and Shikam's personal involvement in the events of the story are imagined." Also includes a list for further reading.

Kimball, Violet T. **Stories of Young Pioneers in Their Own Words.** Mountain Press, 2000. 225 p.
NW 978.02 KIMBALL 2000

A work that covers the entire Oregon Trail experience and uses the words of children who actually traveled the trail. Contains a brief two-page profile of all the Sager children (p. 187-8), but quotes from Catherine Sager Pringle appear throughout the thematically-arranged chapters. Includes an extensive bibliography, index, illustrations, and information on how to receive a Teacher's Guide. For older children.

Morrow, Honoré. **On to Oregon!** Illustrated by Edward Shenton. Morrow, 1946. 239p.
NW 813.54 MORROW 1954

The original fictionalized tale of the Sager children's journey across the Oregon Trail, with special focus on the eldest, John's, responsibilities. Concludes with the Sagers' arrival at the Whitman Mission. The movie "Seven Alone" is based on this work. This book's version of events is challenged by Sager descendents and the National Park Service.

(WR) O'Brien, Mary Barmeyer. "Orphaned on the Oregon Trail: The Story of Catherine Sager." in **Toward the Setting Sun: Pioneer Girls Traveling the Overland Trails.** TwoDot, 1999. p. 57-66.
NW 978.0208 OBRIEN 1999; R 978.0208 OBRIEN 1999

A short biography of Catherine Sager, which includes her trip on the Oregon Trail with her siblings, life at the mission, and what happened after the massacre. Includes a bibliography for additional research.

Saunders, Mary. **The Whitman Massacre: A True Story by a Survivor of This Terrible Tragedy Which Took Place in Oregon in 1847.** Ye Galleon Press, 1977. 56p.
NW 979.503 SAUNDER 1977; YGP 979.503 SAUNDER 1977

The personal account of Mary Saunders, wife of the Whitman Mission school teacher Judge Saunders, and survivor of the Whitman Massacre. For older children.

Tenney, Elizabeth. "The Whitmans' Mission." in **The Oregon Trail.** Cobblestone Publications, 1981. p. 10-14.
R OVERSIZ 979.503 OREGON 1981.

A short article about the missionary work of the Whitmans is featured in this December issue of "Cobblestone: The History Magazine for Young People," which features The Oregon Trail. Additional mentions of the Whitmans can be found in the other features throughout the magazine, including one that features an excerpt from Neta Frazier's "Stout-hearted Seven."

Thompson, Erwin N. **Shallow Grave at Waiilatpu: The Sagers' West.** Oregon Historical Society, Revised Edition, 1973. 178p.

NW 979.748 THOMPSON 1973

A thorough yet easy-to-read history of the Sager family that follows the siblings' journey on the Oregon Trail, to Waiilatpu, through the massacre, and on to life in the west. Includes numerous illustrations, extensive footnotes, a bibliography and an index. For older children.

Thompson, Erwin N. **Whitman Mission: National Historic Site.** National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 37. Washington, D.C., 1964. 92p.

NW 979.702 THOMPSON 1964; Federal Document Number I 29.58:37

Heavily illustrated with black and white pictures, this work explains the history of the Whitman Mission and the development of the site as a national historic site. Includes information about archaeological digs at the mission and a list of suggested reading. For older children.

Williams, Ann West. **Narcissa & Marcus Whitman: Martyrs on the Oregon Trail: The Story of the First American Missionaries to Make the Covered Wagon Crossing.** Association Press, 1954. 151 p.

NW 979.503 WILLIAM 1954

A fictionalized account of the travels and missionary work of the Whitmans, with additional emphasis on their experiences on the Oregon Trail. Part of the "Heroes of God" series.

Web Resources

National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. **Whitman Mission National Historic Site, Washington.** December 5, 2006. Accessed February 9, 2007.

<http://www.nps.gov/whmi/index.htm>

The official government website for the Whitman Mission. Includes lesson plans and reading lists for teachers, as well as historical information about the Whitmans and the land surround the mission.

Sager Orphans. Accessed February 9, 2007.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sager_orphans

The Wikipedia entry for the Sager family, which explains the family's journey over the Oregon Trail, their life at the Whitman Mission, and what happened to the survivors of the "Massacre." Has links to other websites and a bibliography.

The West Film Project. **Westward I Go Free.** 2001. Accessed February 9, 2007.

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/two/westwardfree.htm>

A synopsis of an episode from the Ken Burns' documentary "The West," which describes the Sagers' trip on the Oregon Trail. Includes images and quotations from historians, as well as links to lesson plans for the Oregon Trail and an online quiz.

Wilma, David B. **Fourteen Die in the Whitman Massacre at Waiilatpu on November 29, 1847.**

HistoryLink.org Essay 5192. February 14, 2003. Accessed February 9, 2007.

http://www.historylink.org/essays/output.cfm?file_id=5192

An encyclopedic entry on the HistoryLink.org website for the Whitman Massacre. Contains images and a list of sources.