Nancy Owen

In the Pacific Northwest in 1824

The Shoshone Wife of Major John Owen

Nancy — Owen's Indian wife — was to all appearances considerably older than he. She was a diminutive woman, scarcely five feet high, and in her later years, at least, with a very wrinkled face. She had no children. Nancy was an indefatigable worker; was unquestionably deeply attached to Owen, and so far as was possible clung to certain ingrained Indian traits in spite of her position. She took little or no part in festivities; devoted her waking hours to fishing, berry-picking, cooking, or other toils, and at night took her blanket, rolled up in it, and slept on the ground or some floor apart from the remainder of the Fort's population." She accompanied Owen on several of his expeditions, and on such occasions apparently did a man's work. Eight years after the beginning of their relationship Owen made a formal statement of marriage with her. He was deeply concerned whenever she was ill, gave her every care that was possible; and at her death was profoundly affected. His whole attitude toward his Indian wife was unusual when compared with the ordinary association of the kind."

Nancy is described as a beauty by some and by others as having a wrinkled face looking older than Owen.

Nancy probably wore the traditional Shoshone long deerskin dress with wide sleeves and moccasins until she met John Owen and then after residing at Fort Owen she may have worn cotton dresses.

Nancy is referred to as Shoshone (Snake) but it isn't mentioned where she came from when John Owen met her near Fort Hall. The Shoshone or Shoshoni are a Native American tribe in the United States with three large divisions: the Northern, the Western and the Eastern (Sheepeaters). "The Western Shoshone tribes lived in Oregon and western Idaho, and ranged from central Idaho, northwestern Utah, central Nevada. Some are also located in California. The Idaho groups of Western Shoshone (Mountain) were called Tukuaduka (sheep eaters), while the Nevada/Utah bands were called the Gosiute or Toi Ticutta (cattail eaters)." http://www.crystalinks.com/shoshone.html

"The name "Shoshone" comes from sosoni, a Shoshone word for high-growing grasses. Some neighboring tribes call the Shoshone "Grass House People," based on their traditional homes made from soshoni. Another explanation is: "The expression So-so-goi means "those who travel on foot." The old ones called the Shoshone by that name. When horses became available, the So-so-goi joined the mounted hunting groups in annual harvests."

https://quatr.us/nativeamerican/early-shoshone-history-native-americans.htm

"The Shoshone tribe spoke a language, formerly called Plateau Shoshonean which was a division of the Uto-Aztecan language. The Shoshone, Paiute, Bannock and Ute people are related, and call themselves Newe or Neme (the People). http://www.nwbshoshone.com/culture.php Shoshones who inhabited the Snake River area in Idaho were called the "Snake People" by the whites." https://www.warpaths2peacepipes.com/indian-tribes/shoshone-tribe.htm "The origin of the term Snake People is based on the sign, in Indian sign language, that the Shoshone people used for themselves. The hand motion made during the sign represents a snake to most signers, but among the Shoshones it referred to the salmon, a fish unknown to the Great Plains." http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.na.105

"The Northwestern Shoshone traveled with the changing season. They looked upon the earth not just as a place to live; in fact, they called the earth their mother, she was the provider of all they needed for their livelihood. The mountains, streams, and plains stood forever, they said, and the seasons walked around annually. The So-so-goi believed all things came from Mother Earth. https://quatr.us/nativeamerican/early-shoshone-history-native-americans.htm The Northern Shoshone are concentrated in eastern Idaho, western Wyoming, and northeastern Utah lived in teepees, rode horses, and hunted buffalo. http://www.crystalinks.com/shoshone.html

"They walked around their territory to different places to harvest different wild foods as they came ripe. They dug up roots like wild onions (camas) and wapato, and they picked berries as they came ripe. Then the Shoshone dried the berries in the sun to store them. And they hunted rabbits and other small animals." https://quatr.us/nativeamerican/early-shoshone-history-native-americans.htm It was a time to socialize with each other and when women talked about the latest happenings of the tribe. Late summer was root digging time and smaller-game hunting time. In the spring and summer, Shoshone people gathered seeds, especially pine nuts. Around late October, the band moved into western Utah and parts of Nevada for the annual gathering of pine nuts. The nutrient-rich nuts were an important part of the Shoshone diet. They could be ground up into meal for mush (cereal) or roasted and eaten as a dessert or snack. "Of all the plant foods, pinyon nuts were the most important. The band usually went to Grouse Creek, in northwestern Utah, to gather the nuts in the fall. After they harvested the green cones, they would roast the cones to release the seeds. They would then parch the shells to make them brittle, crack them with a metate, and winnow the nuts with a fan tray. The parched nuts could be eaten whole or ground to make a warm or cold mush." https://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/american_indians/shoshoneofnorthernutah.html

"Plants were also critical to survival. The Shoshone ate such diverse plants as thistle stems, sagebrush seeds, the leaves and roots of arrowleaf balsamroot, buffalo berries, limber pine seeds,

sego lilies, wild rye seeds, Indian rice grass, cattails, and much more."
https://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/american_indians/shoshoneofnorthernutah.html

In the early autumn, the Northwestern Shoshone moved into the region near what is now Salmon, Idaho to fish. They caught salmon and dried them for winter to use. After fishing was over, they moved into western Wyoming to hunt for buffalo, elk, deer, moose, and antelope. It was very important to get the big game, for it meant feast or famine. It also meant clothing and shelter for them. https://quatr.us/nativeamerican/early-shoshone-history-native-americans.htm "Other animals used by the Shoshone included beaver, elk, porcupines, mountain lions (rarely), bobcats, hares and rabbits, otters, badgers, marmots, and bears. The hunters often took care to avoid killing female animals, birds and fish during times when the animals would be bearing or caring for their young."
https://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/american_indians/shoshoneofnorthernutah.html

"The Shoshone people spent the long, cold winter quietly telling stories in their lodges."
https://quatr.us/nativeamerican/early-shoshone-history-native-americans.htm "The religious beliefs of the Shoshone tribes stemmed from supernatural powers that often took the shape of animals and other mythical creatures. With variations from tribe to tribe, some of the most popular characters in these stories were Coyote, their mischievous and trickster father of the people; Wolf, Coyote's brother and wise and revered hero, the creator of the earth; and a people called Nimerigar (Nim-air-ee-gar), a magical race of violent little people that the Shoshone often battled against in their myths. Among other figures that usually took the shape of animals, these are the deities that the Shoshone people believed in and it shaped their culture very much (Redish, L., & Lewis, O. (2009). Native Languages of the Americas: Shoshone Indian Legends, Myths, and Stories. Retrieved from http://www.native-languages.org/shoshone-legends.htm; Redish, L., & Lewis, O. (2009). Native Languages of the Americas: Shoshone Indian Legends, Myths, and Stories. Retrieved from http://www.native-languages.org/shoshone-legends.htm ;http://freebooks.uvu.edu/NURS3400/index.php/ch09-shoshone-culture.html

"While many Indian tribes are well known for jewelry, the Shoshone tribe excelled instead in basket making, becoming well known for their beautiful hand-woven baskets. While their clothing depended greatly on the seasons and the adjustments they had to make due to harsh weather climates, their summer wear was simple with loincloths for the men and aprons for the women." http://freebooks.uvu.edu/NURS3400/index.php/ch09-shoshone-culture.html "When they needed to keep warmer during the winter months, they wore rabbit robes and pants or other type of fur."
http://native-american-indian-facts.com/Great-Basin-American-Indian-Facts/Shoshone-Tribe-Facts.shtml

"Family is an important part of the Shoshone values. They not only live with their immediate family but with their extended families as well, including aunts, uncles, and grandparents. The Shoshone parents and grandparents share the ancestry and history of their people through stories told to their children. They would tell them the stories about the origins of their people and the great stories of the heroes in their tribe's past. Because the Shoshone people had no written records, these stories were important to the history of their people." (Shoshone Tribe, 2015)
http://freebooks.uvu.edu/NURS3400/index.php/ch09-shoshone-culture.html

The area around what is now called Franklin and Preston, Idaho, was a permanent wintering home of the Northwestern Shoshone. It was known as Moson Kahni, which means Home of the Lungs. The rocks in the area looked sponge-like and made the Shoshone think of lungs. In this area and the rest of Cache Valley were natural places for the Indians to make their homes. The land along the Bear River was in a natural depression with lots of willows and brush, which they

could use. Hot springs were plentiful as were fish and wild game. Willows and brush served as wind and snow breaks during the winter months." Mae Parry, http://www.nwbshoshone.com/culture.php

They adapted to the Plains culture and hunted buffalo on the plains. One of the Northern Shoshone tribes was the Lemhi Shoshone were who called the Akaitikka, Agaidika, or "Eaters of Salmon." "Among the buffalo hunters were the Lemhi Shoshones, who had once lived on the plains of what is now Montana. The Lemhi band had superb horsemen and brave warriors." http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/native/sho.html Nancy may have a Lemhi Shoshone (as was Sacajawea). Fishing is an important source of food, and salmon, and trout were staples. Gooseberries and camas root, Camassia quamash are traditional vegetable foods for the Lemhi Shoshone." Wikipedia This may explain why Nancy was so good at fishing and berry picking. Father Lawrence Benedict Palladino wrote about the Jesuits of St. Mary's "The Fathers' manner of living, in the main, was like the Indians, their ordinary fare being roots, berries, dry buffalo meat with its tallow, and game, when they could get it. As to fish, the river flowing by, a fine, beautiful stream, whose waters are clear as crystal, and were then alive with mountain trout, supplied them in abundance." Anthony Ravalli, S. J, Forty Years a Missionary in the Rocky Mountains, Memoir by L. B. Palladino, S. J, George E. Boos & Co., Helena, Montana,1884 This is where Nancy fished almost daily.

Nancy's mother gave birth to her in a tepee in 1824 and she learned the Shoshone tribal culture and the ways of her people as she grew to womanhood. Her parents are not known and who her siblings are never mentioned, as she had nephew named Mat who lived with them so she had at least one sibling. Many Shoshone relatives visited with them at Fort Owen over the years from 1850 to 1868. Joseph Lumpry's Shoshone wife, Mary Cooquecoye, was a close friend of Nancy and "the two would spend hours together talking in the soft gutturals of the Shoshonean tongue." Men and Trade on the Northwest Frontier as Shown by the Fort Owen Ledger, George F. Weisel, 1955, Montana State University Press, p60.

John Owen mentioned Mary Lumpry a number of times in his journals:

"May 8, 1867 Wednesday, Madam Lomprey got a Severe fall from her horse a few days ago & was for Some time in a Critical Condition. She is alive to Day & that is about all. The Revd Father Giorda has been up to See her."

On September 17, 1868 John Owen remarked, "Madam Lomprey called to see my poor old Wife. They are old friends. Had a long old fashioned Chat in pure Shoshonee." Mary had a brother, William, and a sister whose name is not recorded. The sister and an Indian named Faro were killed and scalped by a party of Shoshoni and Bannock in the Hell Gate Defile. William carried the news to John Owen on Feb. 12, 1862." Richard Malouf

September 17, 1868 "Thursday Madam Lomprey called to see My poor old Wife. They are old friends. Had a long old fashioned Chat in pure Shoshonee. A pleasant dialect to listen to - provide you understand it Well."

[Mary Cooquecoye, born about 1825, was the Shoshone wife of Joseph Lumpry (Lampre or Lompre) (1810-1890) they had at least nine children.] [Joseph Lumpry (abt 1810-1890) A true mountain man, Joseph Lompre hunted and trapped about the Bitterroot as early as 1842. When the great immigration started to California in 1849 and '50, he turned his attentions to trading with the people who annually thronged the overland trails. William Rogers, Ben Keiser, Gabriel Prudhomme, and Ben and Jim Simonds (Delaware Jim) were his contemporaries and probably were his partners in some enterprises. Most of their business consisted of trading for foot weary cattle which they drove to the valleys of the Green River, Beaverhead, and Bitterroot to recuperate. In the fall of 1856, when trade had fallen off on the "Road" and competition was keener, Lompre relinquished this nomadic life for a farm in the Bitterroot, a place within easy walking distance of Fort Owen and probably along

Burnt Fork Creek. He added to his income by working on the construction of Fort Owen. In 1852 he was making some of the first adobes, and in 1857 he made the foundations for the fourteen foot-square bastion which flanked the southwest corner. "Men and Trade on the Northwest Frontier as Shown by the Fort Owen Ledger, George F. Weisel, 1955, Montana State University Press, pp.59-61]

Other Shoshone women that knew Nancy were Fred Burr's wife, Mary [or Catherine], the sister of Awbonnie Tookanka who married Montana pioneer, Granville Stuart. Both Granville and James Stuart married Shoshone women, as did Jim Bridger, Shawnee Jake, and Louis Grimizau whose wife was Sarah. John F. Grant, son of Richard Grant and Mary Ann Berland, married a Shoshone woman. [Awbonnie (Aubony)Tookanka or Stookaraka called (Ellen)] [James took a Bannack Indian wife in early 1863 whose name is unknown and she left him in June 1863). In February 1864, James took as his wife Ellen Lavatta. Her father Thomas was Mexican and her mother was Shoshone Indian. (Thomas is credited with building the first dwelling in what is now Deer Lodge city.) Born to James and Ellen were the following sons: Dick June 13, 1866; Robert April 24, 1868 and John December 26, 1869. http://granitecountyhistory.blogspot.com/2013/02/james-stuar.html]

[Loui Grimizau was the champion adobe maker of Fort Owen. After the cattle had been driven about the adobe yard and trampled the clay into the right consistency, he could make from 500 to 700 bricks a day. Hitherto, 100 a day had been considered a good day's labor. Loui started work for Major Owen on May 13, 1857, the year of great expansion for the Fort. Loui was employed only for the spring and summer of that year. Men and trade on the Northwest frontier as shown by the Fort Owen, George Weisel, pp160-161.]

[Shawnee Jake
"Shawnee Jake was a Shawnee Indian. He may have come west with Tom Hill and Delaware Jim; in the 1830's the three were together for several years among the Shoshoni. Shawnee Jake married a Shoshoni woman and had a son, but he left him behind when he moved on to the Flathead, where Delaware Jim met him again after his own sojourn among the Nez Perce. Among the Flathead Shawnee Jake married a Blackfoot woman named Mary Kalziishina. She was described as an "old woman" when baptized March 1, 1868. She was said to be 71 in 1886, implying birth in 1815, which is too early considering the birth dates of her children." Family Histories for the St. Mary's Mission Book, draft manuscript, Richard Malouf (received from Bob Bigart, Dec. 3, 2003).]

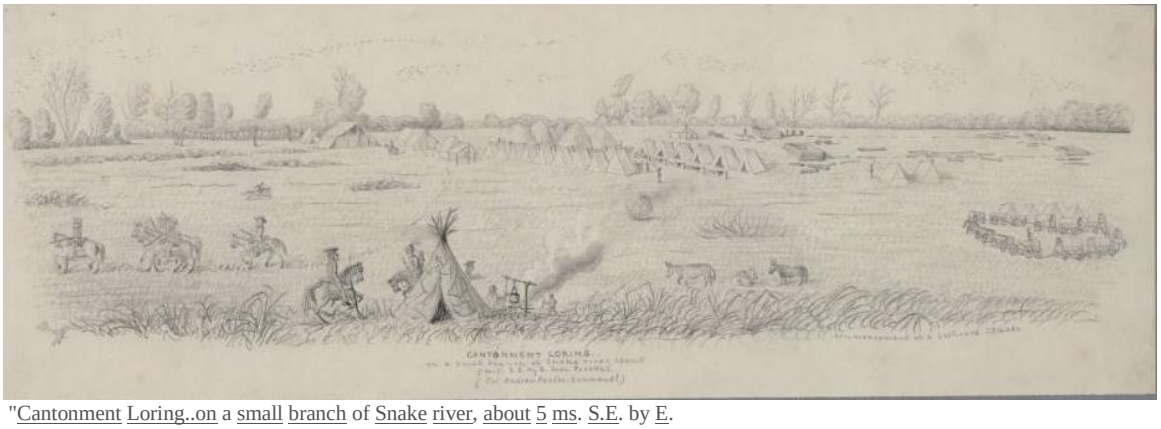
John Owen was born in Pennsylvania on June 27, 1818. Little or nothing is known of his earlier life he disappears from the historical record until the autumn of 1849. Sometime in 1849 John Owen started from Fort Leavenworth, Missouri as sutler [A sutler or victualer is a civilian merchant who sells provisions to an army in the field, in camp, or in quarters. Sutlers sold wares from the back of a wagon or a temporary tent, traveling with an army or to remote military outposts. Wikipedia] for a regiment of United States troops known as the Mounted Rifles [dragoons or mounted infantry] commanded by Lt. Colonel [Brevet Colonel] William W. Loring, destined for Oregon. Loring's Mounted Rifles were on the way from Fort Leavenworth to Oregon. "And arrived, as much of it as was left by desertion, deaths, and detachments, in October. This regiment, when it left Fort Leavenworth, numbered six hundred men, thirty-one commissioned officers, some women and children, with guides, agents, helpers and teamsters a large number. There were one hundred and sixty-one wagons in the train, one thousand and two hundred mules, and seven hundred horses. For all these men and animals subsistence had to be carried." https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Oregon_Historical_Quarterly/Volume_3/The_First_Oregon_Cavalry] Tradition credits him with service in the Mexican War, but recent research in the files of the Department of War failed to unearth any record of him.

They got as far as the Snake river in Idaho, when winter caught them, causing them to build winter quarters on the bank of that river about six miles above Fort Hall, where they spent the winter. The camp was called Cantonment Loring and the place was long known by that name.

John Owen remained at Cantonment Loring until the troops resumed their march in the spring of 1850, not wanting to continue with the Mounted Rifles he relinquished his sutlership, and spent the summer on the emigrant road, trading with the emigrants bound for California and Oregon." A Sketch of the Early History of Western Montana by Judge F. H. Woody written in 1876-1877] There was an Owens, Ritch [Ritchie]and Company trading at Cantonment Loring at this time and there was reference to a "Owens Trading Post." The Plains Across - The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60, John D. Unruh, Jr.,

P484, University of Illinois Press. [In 1850 there was two Fort Hall's about five miles apart one was a United States Army post and the other belonged to the Hudson's by Company with Chief Trader Richard Grant in charge.]

[Fort Hall Diary: History Through the Words of the Traders and Visitors, Compiled by Jacquelyn J. Alvord, Chairman, Fort Hall Replica Commission January 1999: [July 28, 1850] "In three miles we found the United States Station Ft. Loring, some twenty or thirty rods from the river, and five miles up above Fort Hall. It was established last season and is built in a square, the wall composed of low log houses with one roof covered with longs and dirt, some vacancies between the buildings fenced up with poles. It was garrisoned with some 300 troops but last spring they got out of provisions, so Col. Porter who was in command marched them off to Ft. Van Couver on his own responsibility, leaving two young men of the quartermasters department to take care of the government property, which there is considerable. The sutlers were also left here with their goods and on one to buy them as they are mostly unsuitable for Indian trade. They must lose greatly, so says one of them, Mr. Ritchie, who has two partners, out however, trading horses &c to the emigrants and have been trading with the Indians. It was these we passed on Bear River 25 mile before we reached Beer Springs, Ritchie talks very discouragingly of Cal., this from information he possesses that it will be nearly impossible for any teams as late as we are to get through, say that the grass was nearly all gone a month ago, and when we get there (if we should be so fortunate) we must starve if we have not provisions with us, as the immense numbers going can never be fed from the Pacific. He advises all that want to go live in Oregon and at the proper time go to Cal." Byron N. McKinstry, California Emigrant]



"Cantonment Loring..on a small branch of Snake river, about 5 ms. S.E. by E. from Fort Hall. (Col. Andrew Porter, command?)"; Note under right side of sketch reads: "Commencement of bastioned stockade". Joseph Goldsborough Bruff, 1804-1889.

[Joseph Goldsborough Bruff is best known as a topographer, journalist, and artist of the gold rush era. Bruff was born in Washington, D.C., on October 2, 1804. He attended West Point from 1820 until his resignation in 1822. From 1827-1836 he worked as a topographical engineer, predominantly at Gosport Naval Yard in Norfolk, Virginia. He returned to Washington, D.C., in 1837 and from 1838-1849 worked for the U.S. Bureau of Topographical Engineers. Bruff then organized the Washington City and California Mining Association, which he accompanied to California. While in California he produced extensive journals and drawings of the mining camp experience. In 1853 Bruff returned to Washington, D.C., where he worked in office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department until his death on April 14, 1889.] http://hdl.huntington.org/utils/getdownloaditem/collection/p15150coll7/id/4965/type/singleitem/filename/5213.jp2/width/6965/height/3236/mapsto/image/filesize/16410448/title/Cantonment%20Loring/size/large

He traded out of Cantonment Loring for a brief period of time. "It was during this time he met Nancy, a member of the Snake Tribe. He took her for his common-law wife and moved in with her family for a short time. When his financial situation became desperate he decided to leave their camp, and in the Fall of 1850 John Owen with his wife and brother, Frank, arrived in the Bitterroot Valley." Fort Owen: An Artifact Analysis by Michael L. Wilkerson B. A. University of Montana, 1963 Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts University of Montana 1968 He was 31 years old and Nancy was 26 years old. [At this age she may will have been married before.] He established himself as a trader in the Bitter Root Valley, which was then part of the Oregon Territory. They had made the harrowing journey to Bitterroot Valley by ox-cart from Cantonment Loring. He had heard of the varied attractions of the Bitterroot Valley which the men of Isaac Stevens's western railroad survey called "the valley of perennial spring" and bearing in mind its potential importance as a crossroads in western travel as well as the potential to capitalize on trade with Indians and emigrants."

At this time the Jesuits Fathers had decided to close St. Mary's Mission which was located in the valley. "The official recommendation for the closing of St. Mary's was issued by Father Gregory Mengarini, S.J. who had come into the Northwest in 1841," and Father Joseph Joset, S.J. who had recently arrived in the region, was sent to the Bitter Root Valley to arrange for the disposal of the Mission property. He found at St. Mary's a little church edifice, the miniature flour-and sawmills here mentioned, and a few other buildings designed for homes and farming purposes. These were of necessity useless so far as their former purpose was concerned, and if no profitable disposition of them could be made their abandonment would represent a complete loss." Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, Pioneer of the Northwest 1850-1871

[Fr. Gregory Mengarini, S.J. He was born in Rome on July 21, 1811, Gregory Mengarini entered the Society of Jesus in 1828. Finishing his religious studies, he served as an instructor in grammar in Rome, Modena, and Reggio for several years. Mengarini's desire to serve in the Rocky Mountain Mission began with an appeal by Bishop Joseph Rosati of St. Louis, Missouri who gave a lecture while visiting Rome. Selected by the General of the Society because of his virtues, great facility with languages, and knowledge of medicine and music, Mengarini arrived tin the United States in 1840. A year later he left St. Louis with a party headed by Peter DeSmet, S.J. and helped to found the first mission among the Flathead Indians in the Bitterroot Valley of Montana (St. Mary's) in the fall of that year. Mengarini stayed at St. Mary's until 1850, after which he spent two years in Oregon before going to California in 1852 to help found Santa Clara College, where he served until his death on September 23, 1886. Mengarini was noted for his skills in both medicine and herbalism. A first rate scholar, he contributed articles to several ethnographical and anthropological journals in the United States. In addition to his knowledge of Latin and Greek, he was fluent in Italian, French and Spanish. His contributions to the Flathead language provided a solid foundation for further studies by other missionaries, for the Indians claimed that he understood it as well as, if not better than, they." http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/kalispel/pagemengarini_1.html Excerpt from the "Guide to the Microfilm Edition of the Oregon Province Archives of the Society of Jesus Indian Language Collection: The Pacific Northwest Tribes". Copy write, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA, 1976. He wrote Recollections of the Flathead Mission – The Memorie of Fr. Gregory Mengarini, S.J. 1841-50]

"John Owen finding the mission property for sale he purchased it, taking title to the material improvements created by the missionaries under the terms of a bill of sale dated November 5, 1850. The text of that instrument is the earliest known record of such a transaction in all that region." Owen purchased the mission and paid $250, cash, for the physical remains of St. Mary's Mission, which, as we shall soon learn, had opened in 1841 and closed nine years later. Immediately Owen began developing his property into what was to become, for a short time, one of the most important commercial centers in the Northwest. He named his stoutly palisaded trading post Fort Owen. Major Owen's Lolos, http://www.lewis-clark.org/article/3150. "Should the Jesuits return within two years the mills and fields would revert to them. When they were unable to return by the designated time, the Jesuits sent word to burn the church to save it from desecration. http://www.saintmarysmission.org/history

PLATE XXII

St. Mary's Mission - Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, Pioneer of the Northwest 1850-1871

"It was sixteen years later (1866) when Father Joseph Giorda, Superior for the Rocky Mountain area, called back Father Ravalli and Brother William Claessens and re-established St. Mary's Mission about a mile south of Fort Owen. Brother Claessens built a little chapel, the fourth he had built for St. Mary's, to which he attached a study, dining room, kitchen and a story and a half barn. Father Giorda made the "new" St. Mary's the Jesuit mission headquarters for the Rocky Mountain province." http://www.saintmarysmission.org/history John Owen would often visit the new St. Mary's.

John Owen's "career in the region continued until 1877, and here for the twenty years following 1850 he was one of the outstanding pioneer figures. During the years between 1851 and 1864 he made thirty-four journeys throughout the Northwest, the aggregate extent of which amounted to some twenty-three thousand miles. His manuscript Journals and Letters, … cover the period between 1850 and 1871." Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, Pioneer of the Northwest 1850-1871

Fort Owen is located in the Bitterroot Valley of western Montana 29 miles south of Missoula, Montana and approximately one-half mile northwest of Stevensville, Montana just off Stevensville road on the north side. [The Bitterroot Valley, in which Fort Owen is located, was one of the most favorable locations for frontier settlement within the present limits of Montana. This fertile valley, which is bordered on the west by the Bitterroot Range and by mountain foothills on its eastern periphery, has an average width of approximately six miles. The Valley extends from the vicinity of Darby, Montana, to the confluence of the Bitterroot and Clark's Pork Rivers near Missoula, Montana, a distance of about sixty miles.

The area which comprises the Bitterroot Valley has many varied types of vegetation cover. The western slopes are heavily forested with coniferous trees such as Ponderosa Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Spruce, White Pine, Larch, and Fir, while forestation is generally absent on the mountain summits and on the slopes of the steep canyon walls. Quaking Aspen and other deciduous trees grow in scattered stands in the mountain foothills and valleys. The lower western and southern slopes which are grassy give way to the valley floor which is given to many cottonwoods, willows, birch, and alders which grow along the Bitterroot River and its many tributaries. Choke cherries, service berries, hawthorn berries, gooseberries, raspberries, currants, and other edible wild fruits and vegetables along with bitterroot and camas are also found growing near streams and well-watered areas of the valley and foothills, while huckleberries can be found almost anywhere on the forested mountain slopes (Stubbs, 1966:10).

Many game animals, both large and small abound in this area. In the higher valleys Bighorn sheep and mountain goats are found along with cougars, bears, and mule deer, while along the lower reaches of the valley moose and white tail deer are most common. Supplementing these

large game animals as food supply for the Indians and early priests were numerous small animals, birds, and fish. Cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hares, and foxes were very common along the dense underbrush of the river bottoms and various species of ducks and geese made seasonal appearances. In addition, three species of grouse were to be found all during the year in the bottoms and on the slopes.

The Bitterroot River and its tributaries held a variety of edible fish such as Cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden Char, and Rocky Mountain whitefish. Rough fish such as northern squawfish, suckers, and slimy sculpins were also found together with mussels, freshwater clams, and crayfish.

Fort Owen: An Artifact Analysis by Michael L. Wilkerson B. A. University of Montana, 1963 Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts University of Montana 1968]

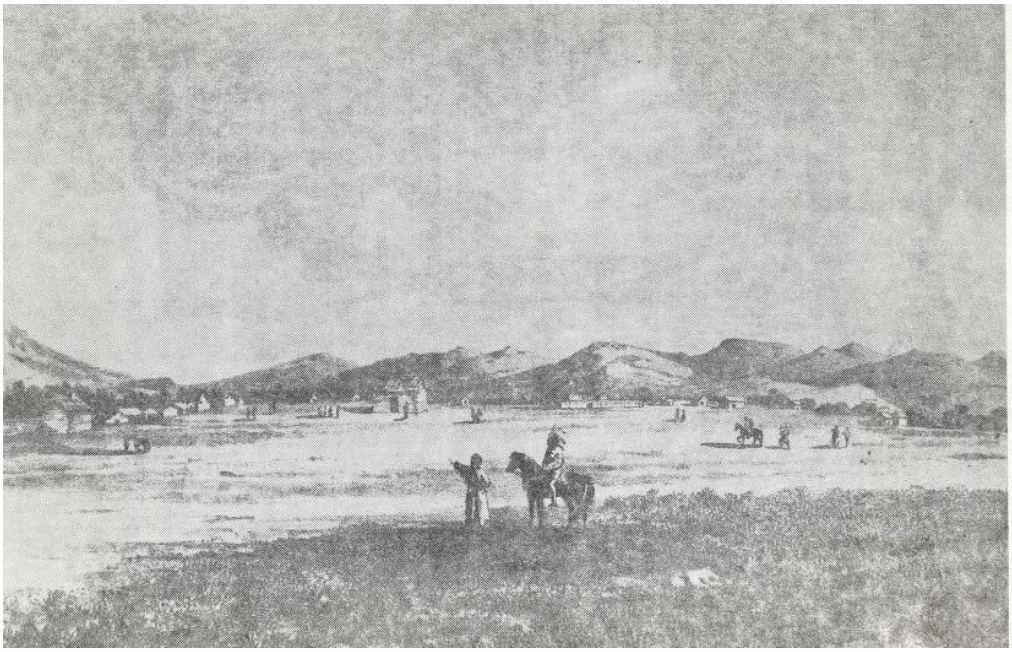
Fort Owen was a "rallying point hundreds of miles from any other white settlement; became the Indians friend; represented the Government for six critical years in dealings with them; assembled within his wilderness fort a library containing the best of modern and classical literature and philosophy; dispensed his hospitality with the manner of a medieval baron to all who came his way; married by proclamation an Indian woman to whom he was devotedly attached; built the first commercial gristmill of the Northwest and by it fed the settlers who gathered around him; was an adviser of Steptoe and Wright in the Indian Wars; and assisted in locating the route of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Yet, notwithstanding the part he played in that section of the continent during its transformation from Wilderness to a civilized region, he has been all but forgotten." Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, Pioneer of the Northwest 1850-1871

The earliest known pictorial delineation of Fort Owen is that drawn by John Mix Stanley, the artist accompanying Governor Isaacs Stevens' expedition of 1853. "It shows the Fort as a high wall of palisaded timbers enclosing two or three interior structures and surmounted by a flag. Outside the wall were several other small buildings, all apparently of wood."

"The transformation of the Fort from its early construction to its final adobe form, with its huge wall, seems to have taken about eight years, and to have been completed in 1860. This wall extended about a foot above the buildings it enclosed, and its top was so smooth and level that a man might run on it. The adobe walls of the fort buildings were about eight or ten inches thick, and, on the interior, were lined with hewed lath and plaster. All the buildings were floored with heavy planks, and nearly every room had a big fireplace.

The supply of water for the fort was obtained from an enclosed well sunk near the center of the courtyard, and tons of potatoes and other vegetables were kept in the underground root house, located between the library and the southeast bastion. The root house, and the steps leading down into it, are still in fair condition. The principal entrance to the fort was at its southern end and consisted of two very heavy timber doors surmounted by an arch into which they fitted. They were fastened by cross-timbers and wrought iron bars, and in one of them was cut a small, narrow door to permit the ingress or egress of a man without the necessity of opening the entire gate. A much smaller but equally strong entrance was located in the center of the north wall."
"In the economic and social development of the Rocky Mountain Northwest Owen stands, as a historical personage, between the years of the Hudson's Bay Company's domination and the coming of the gold miners. With his own elaborate establishment as a base he carried on a trade extending from Fort Benton on the Missouri to Fort Dalles on the Columbia, and southward to Fort Hall. Although almost all his business accounts have disappeared, we know from his Journals that he traded extensively for furs and supplied the Indians with all sorts of goods not included in the list of commodities supplied to them, through him, by the Government. Owen

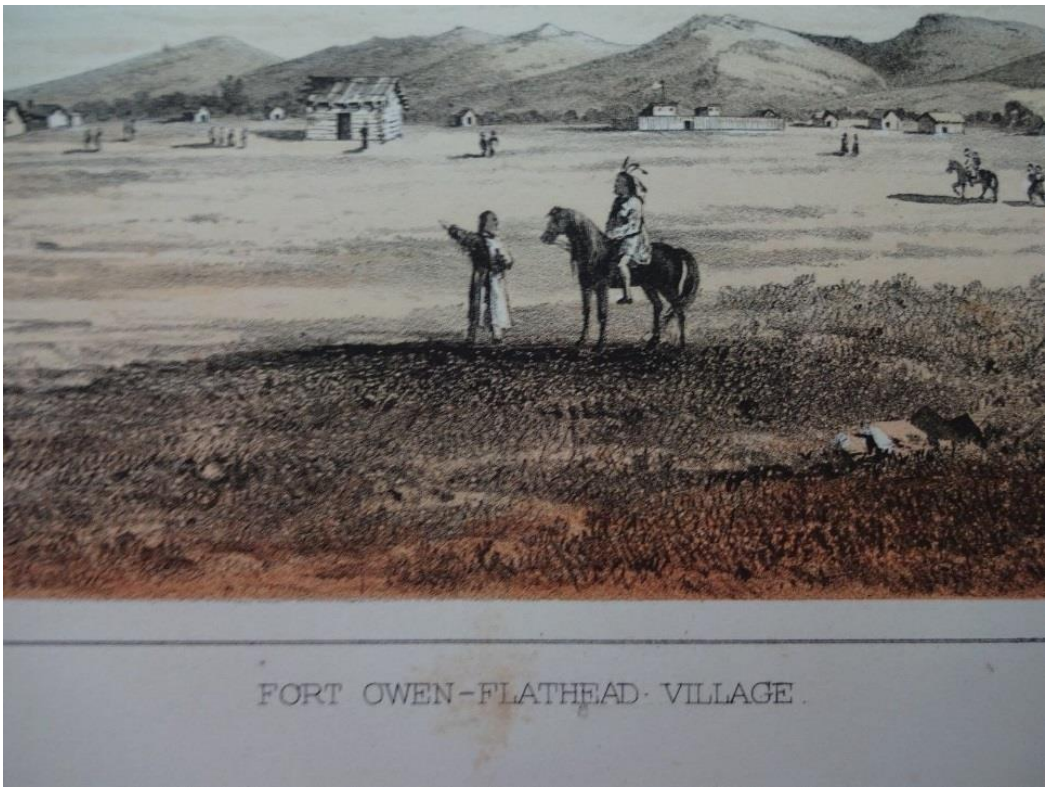
was not a transient frontiersman. He began at once to plant grain and labored constantly to encourage and develop farming. He brought in agricultural machinery and built a gristmill that was of extreme importance and value to the later settlers. He introduced better qualities of livestock and finer seed. He planted an orchard. He sought for and helped to create better overland roads. He strove to protect the Indians; to alter their earlier method of living; and to turn them to a settled life as agriculturists."



Gustavus Sohon's sketch of Fort Owen in 1854 - Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, Pioneer of the Northwest 1850-1871 [Gustavus Sohon (1825–1903) was an artist, interpreter, and topographical assistant. Born in 1825 in Tilsit, East Prussia, Gustav Sohon immigrated to the United States in 1842 at the age of 17. In the early 1850s, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. Upon his enlistment he was stationed in the West, and eventually found his way to Fort Steilacoom. One of his first assignments was with Lieutenant John Mullan, who was surveying the country between the Rocky and Bitterroot Mountains for the Pacific Railroad Surveys railroad survey led by Isaac Stevens. From that moment on, Sohon witnessed and contributed to some of the most momentous events in the history of the Northwest. As an army private, he served with the Stevens railroad survey for over a year before his artistic ability came to the Governor's attention. Sohon proved to have a flair for linguistics, and was soon fluent in the Flathead and Pend d'Oreille languages. This skill enabled him to communicate with the Indians and allowed him the opportunity to draw portraits of many of the most important Native American leaders. It is because of Sohon's easy way with native conversation that we can now witness his perspective of the past through the expressive images he created. Sohon was also a talented painter, who produced accurate landscapes and vivid scenes from native life, including the first panoramic view of the Rocky Mountains and the earliest-known sketch of the Great Falls of the Missouri. He also recorded several of the treaty councils during his time with Steven. Sohon's five-year enlistment ended in July 1857. He then sought out his earlier friend and mentor, Lieutenant John Mullan. Mullan was spearheading the construction of a military road from Walla Walla to Fort Benton, and Sohon surveyed routes and monitored the construction progress. In 1860 Sohon guided the first wagon party to cross the Rocky and Bitterroot Mountains to the Columbia Plateau by a route other than the more accustomed Overland Trail. When Mullan's Road was complete, Sohon accompanied him to Washington, DC, to assist in the preparation of topographical data, maps, and illustrations for a report on the road's construction. He never returned to the Northwest. In April 1863, Gustav Sohon and Julianna Groh were married. For a brief time they lived in San Francisco, where Sohon ran a photography studio. Several years later, they returned to Washington, DC, where Sohon disappeared from public life, running a shoe business and raising a large family with Julianna. He died on September 9, 1903.Sohon's artistic abilities place him the same league with such other, better-known Western artists as George Catlin, Paul Kane, and Karl Bodmer. As an artist, Sohon was a product of his time and his depictions of treaty events reflect this. His drawings and watercolor paintings allow everyone who views them to see, through his eyes, the treaty councils between the United States Government and Indian tribes of the Pacific Northwest.]

Cantonment Stevens from the Railroad Survey Report. Cantonment Stevens is shown on the left with Flag Flying. The post on the right surrounded by teepees is presumed to be Fort Owen, by Gustavus Sohon

Cantonment Stevens Capt. John Mullan's Winter Quarters 1853–4. Drawn by G. Sohon Bowen & Co. lith. Philad. from *Report on the Construction of a Military Road from Fort Walla-Walla to Fort Benton. by Capt. John Mullan, U.S.A.,* 1863.



Fort Owen by John Mix Stanley (1814-1872) 1860 Railroad Survey Report [John Mix Stanley (January 17, 1814 – April 10, 1872) was an artist-explorer, an American painter of landscapes, and Native American portraits and tribal life. Born in the Finger Lakes region of New York, he started painting signs and portraits as a young man. In 1842 he traveled to the American West to paint Native American life. In 1846 he exhibited a gallery of 85 of his paintings in Cincinnati and Louisville. During the Mexican-American War, he joined Colonel Stephen Watts Kearney's expedition to California and painted accounts of the campaign, as well as aspects of the Oregon Territory. Wikipedia]

Father Lawrence Palladino, S.J. says of him: "Major Owen lived at the Fort like a King. He was the ruler. He always had many guests at the Fort and, was famed for his hospitality to his guests and to transient travellers who were passing through the region. He was a man of very loveable, kindly and generous character, and the most influential pioneer in the country for years. He was esteemed and trusted by the Indians as well as by the whites. His word was always good. When hostile tribes of Indians threatened one another he would interpose, and, if it was possible, soothe them, compose the differences and avert the trouble. At the Christmas holiday time it was his custom to give a general feast to many people of the region."

"Owen's hospitality at Fort Owen became widely renowned. Travelers and guests enjoyed excellent hospitality and fine wines, delectable meals, even iced lemonade. Owen's library was, according to Lt. John Mullan, the finest in the Northwest." https://www.greatfallstribune.com/story/life/my-montana/2015/05/17/john-owens-sad-end-part/26530337/

"For a description of Owen's physical personality and manner there remain three living authorities. One of these is Father Palladino. A second is the gracious gentlewoman who was the Kate Higgins of the Journals, and the third is the well-known Montana pioneer, George Bruffey. These three are in close agreement regarding the physical aspect and manner of the Fort Builder. They describe him as a heavy man of medium height — about five feet and eight inches tall — and weighing nearly if not quite two hundred pounds. He had a fine face, strong features, a rather

florid complection, and dark hair that became white. He had a strong voice, a pleasant and rather sedate manner that seemed at times to verge on laziness, and gave the impression of seriousness and sober-mindedness. Owen's Indian name was "I-mool-tzen," an expresson based on the appearance of his beard when he first appeared in the region. The Indians then used drinking cups made of bison or mountain-goat horns, which were hung over the shoulder in the same manner that powder horns were carried. Owen at that time wore a heavy goatee which in profile view resembled such a horn cup, hence the name."

PLATE I

Major John Owen

In 1856 John Owen was appointed special agent for the Flatheads gaining the title major. He continued to act in that capacity for six years, and from time to time his responsibility was increased until it included the Flatheads, Upper Pend d'Oreilles, Mountain Snake and Bannack tribes.

The Shoshones were warlike and spent considerable time around Fort Owen or in the Bitterroot Valley looking for horses to steal, a lone man to kill, or food.

“His life was assuredly a busy one. No man who took upon himself the planning, creation and administration of such a project; who served as custodian and mentor of the humbler peoples around him; who wrote and copied his own correspondence; who kept the daily record of transpiring events; and who, prior to 1865, still found time to travel afoot and by pack-train for twenty-three thousand miles throughout the country between Fort Benton on the east, the Pacific on the west, the Canadian line on the north and the Great Salt Lake on the south, could be otherwise than busy. Yet, despite all this, there still remains the mental picture of Owen sitting in his library at night, while the rest of the Fort people were deep in slumber. With his pipe in hand; his dog at his feet; his glass of grog at his elbow; and Lingard's History of England propped on the table before him; he studied the story of a history that was past, oblivious of the mighty history that he himself was shaping.”

“Fort Owen during these times was the center of many pioneer festivities, and Major Owen was seldom without at least one guest. Since 1853, when Governor Stevens and his party had arrived in the Bitterroot Valley, the post had been host to many prominent persons. John Owen was a friend of the early explorers who came into that region and also maintained a cordial relationship with the local priests who visited him frequently.” Fort Owen: An Artifact Analysis by Michael L. Wilkerson B. A. University of Montana, 1963 Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts University of Montana 1968

When gold was found in quantities in the nearby rivers and mountains Owen had been in the country nearly fifteen years. He did not materially alter his course as a consequence of the discovery although he was at times discouraged because of hard times, and on occasion, in his Journals, expressed his belief that the country was not after all a good one for enterprises such as his, and that the situation could only be saved by the finding of rich gold deposits.

He never succumbed to the mining excitement, though he visited some the last years of Owen in Montana have been described by Father Palladino, for the purposes of these volumes, as follows: "Some time, soon after 1871, it was apparent that his mental powers were gradually fading. He had always enjoyed liquor — though he never drank a drop when visiting St. Ignatius Mission — and at times he was known to drink to excess. It was believed, and I think, that his failing mental powers were due to that cause, though it may not have been so. He showed no outward sign of any disease. "At any rate, some time after 1871 he came to St. John's Hospital in Helena. He was brought to the Hospital by the Grand Master of the Masons, of which order Owen was a prominent member. "Major Owen was kept at the Hospital for several years — I do not remember just how long — and for the care given to him the hospital received no recompense at the time. While at the hospital he was received into our Church. I myself baptized him. The record of his baptism should be found in the records at Helena, where, also, may perhaps still be found a record that will show how long he remained at the hospital. His memory continued slowly to fail. "On leaving the hospital — I am not sure of the year — he went East to his old home in Philadelphia, where, a few years afterward, he died."

John Owen's original manuscript Journals, in which he describes his life and work at Fort Owen and many of his journeys through the Northwest, belong to the State of Montana, and are no doubt the most important single possession of its Historical Library. Actual title of Owens’

journals is: JOURNALS AND LETTERS OF MAJOR JOHN OWEN Pioneer of the Northwest 1850-1871 EMBRACING HIS PURCHASE OF ST. MARYS MISSION; THE BUILDING OF FORT OWEN; HIS TRAVELS; HIS RELATION WITH THE INDIANS; HIS WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT; AND HIS ACTIVITIES AS A WESTERN EMPIRE BUILDER FOR TWENTY YEARS Transcribed and Edited from the ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS IN THE MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE COLLECTION OF W. R. COE, ESQ. BY SEYMOUR DUNBAR: AND WITH NOTES TO OWEN'S TEXTS BY PAUL C. PHILLIPS Professor of History in the University of Montana WITH TWO MAPS AND THIRTY PLATES IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME ONE NEW YORK EDWARD EBERSTADT 1927

Fort Owen by Peter Toft in 1866 - Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, Pioneer of the Northwest 1850-1871 Peter Peterson Toft (1825-1901) a Danish landscape painter and adventurer. He was active in America and England, he arrived in San Francisco, California in 1850 travelling to Montana in the mid-1860s. His paintings today are worth thousands.

John Owen mentions his Shoshone wife, Nancy, throughout his journals from 1852 to 1868. He mentions her in Vol.1, fourteen times as Nancy and in Vol. 2, seven times. And as "Old Wife" a total of 55 times in Vol. 1 and 51 times in Vol. Two. Owens wrote 23 journals from 1850 to 1871. He also wrote many letters from 1856-1866. June 26, 1852 was the first time he mentioned her in his journal, "Working in Garden — Nancy off Strawberrying."

Nancy, whom Owen always referred to affectionately as "Old Wife," was always out fishing for trout and picking berries. She was less than five feet tall. In brief John Owen was a very decent fellow. Nancy was not necessarily old; he usually called her "my old wife" in his journal, as in our time "old girl" indicates affection and stability." John Owen wrote in his journal on June 21st and 22nd, 1857: "The Women folks and Children out after Strawberries, and "had a fine dish of Strawberries and Cream," and on the 28th: "the Women folks and children off strawberrying they report a fine prospect for sarvice berries." She had at least one dog, a black and tan Scottish terrier named Chips that a friend gave to her as a birthday gift on November 4, 1866. (John Owens Journals, Dunbar and Phillips 1927 pp 36, 76)

Nancy accompanied on his early treks to Fort Walla Walla and Fort Colville but not through Blackfeet country to Fort Benton.

Owen mentions many times in his journal of her going to pick strawberries and of her trout fishing and she always brought home a nice string of trout. Her nephew Mat stayed with them until a horse accident caused his death, and it seems more of her relatives lived with them.

She occasionally cooked meals, but apparently that was not her favorite activity. Nancy detested cooking so much that Owen either had volunteers to cook meals for his employees or hired them including at least three Chinese cooks. "Major Owen hired his first Chinese cook, noted as "John Chinaman", from Missoula on June 7, 1867 and paid $110 for his services over a period of 11 weeks. "During his employment at Fort Owen, the Chinese cook was apparently accosted by a grist mill employee badly swelling one eye, and Major Owen subsequently fired the employee. On August 22, 1867 the Chinese cook hired by Owen returned to Missoula to visit his brother, suggesting at least a small population in the growing agricultural community 35 miles north of Fort Owen (Dunbar and Philips 1927[2]:68). In October of 1867, Owen hired another Chinese cook, but fired him after only one week as Owen remarked in his journal, "My Jno China Man Not So good a cook as the one I had during the Summer. He appears Stupid" (The Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, Pioneer of the Northwest, 1850-1871, by Seymour Dunbar). "Only a few days after firing the previous cook, Major Owen hired another Chinese cook, though by January of 1868 he mentions two in his journals (Dunbar and Philips 1927[2]:75, 82). It appears that the same two Chinese cooks appearing in Owen's journals for January of 1868 worked through the summer of that year, and were re-hired the following fall of 1869 (Dunbar and Philips 1927[2]:82, 144). The last recorded mention of Chinese at Fort Owen is located in the 1870 Federal Census where it lists Jako Lann, a 51-year-old Chinese man, whose occupation is listed as, "cooks at [Indian] Agency" (Census Bureau 1870). The presence of Chinese cooks from 1867 to at least 1870 at Fort Owen highlights one type of employment opportunity that Montana Territory offered this immigrant population, and at least tangentially associates them with the most significant individuals in early state history." "The Coming Man From Canton" Chinese Experience in Montana (1862-1943), Christopher William Merritt, 2010, page 52. The Chinese were in the area attracted by the gold rushes. Owens also had a black cook named Richard Sortu.

G. G. R. Sangiovanni wrote on December 18, 1856, "Christmas approaching Maj. Owens asked me if I could make mince pies. Why, of course, I made mince pies. The old man gave me some brandy to put in the mixture, so I made the first mince pies in Montana. (This is no fiction). Among the guests were Michell Ogden, a half-breed trader; Fred Burr, from Washington, D. C, and his Shoshone "wife," Catarine, Capt. Ivin, a trapper, and his squaw, and several others. The old major was not behind the rest. "Mrs. Owens," usually called "Nancy" was a Shoshone beauty of about "65 snows." [This is wrong] They all had a good time. One thing I can say of those men— never did I hear a cross word from any of them. Seventy-five miles to the north of Fort Owen was the Ponteray mission. All of the old Indians belonged to the faith. The fathers taught them farming and other kinds of work." The Young Woman's Journal, volume XXIII, The Deseret News, Salt Lake City, 1912, Overland Trips Across the American Deseret, G. G. R. Sangiovanni.

“When Loui Grimizau’s Shoshone wife Sarah died in 1859 their baby daughter was left in the care of Nancy.” http://www.fulkerson.org/1-harris.html [Loui Grimizau was the champion adobe maker of Fort Owen. After the cattle had been driven about the adobe yard and trampled the clay into the right consistency, he could make from 500 to 700 bricks a day. Hitherto, 100 a day had been considered a good day's labor. Loui started work for Major Owen on May 13, 1857, the year of great expansion for the Fort.]

Another child that they raised was the daughter of Shoshone chief, Louis Sirogan, Mary Lark Use, [Louis Sirogan Use who was born in 1820 At Fort Lemhi. http://www.genealogy.com/forum/general/topics/ai/9481/] Her great-grandson, Carmel Garnett says that not long after Mary Lark Use was born in 1849 in the Salt Lake City area (where some of the Shoshone had drifted) her mother died. “Sirogan took young Mary to the Bitterroot Valley and became the esteemed horse herder for Maj. John Owen at his new trading post, Fort Owen. Owen and wife Nancy, a Shoshone, took Mary in and raised "Princess," as Owen called her.” “In 1869, Mary Lark Use married Abraham Stearn Blake, a Vermont prospector turned Bitterroot farmer. They homesteaded at what became the town of Victor, named after a Bitterroot Salish chief. When their first child died in infancy, he became the first person buried in the Victor Cemetery. Vestiges of the family still lived in Victor when Carmel was born in a Hamilton hospital in 1942. His parents, Oran and Mary Garnett, eventually moved to Anaconda, where the kids grew up.” http://missoulian.com/lifestyles/hometowns/western-montana-lives-carmel-garnett-s-gift-for-stories-leaves/article_d100d0cc-61bc-11df-a76d-001cc4c03286.html; Western Montana Lives: Carmel Garnett's gift for stories leaves legacy by Kim Briggeman of the Missoulian May 17, 2010.

Mary Lark Use was of the Shoshone Indian Tribe. She was born July 3, 1849, in the area of Salt Lake City, Utah. At that time, the Indians were not settled on reservations, and were moving about from place to place. (Some of Mary’s family members are still living in the area of Fort Hall). Mary’s mother died when Mary was young and her father, Chief Sirogan, took Mary to Stevensville, Montana. Sirogan was the beloved horse-herder of John Owen, and is mentioned frequently in “The Journals & Letters of Major John Owen.” John Owen and his Shoshone wife, Nancy, took Mary in, and raised her at Fort Owen. John Owen refers to her in his Journals as “Princess.” Mary met Abraham Stearns Blake at Fort Owen. Blake, a native of Vermont, came to the Fort for the first time in 1861, before going to the gold fields at American Fork. He visited Fort Owen many times over the next few years, but in 1867 he returned there to live and farm the land with John Owen. A. S. Blake and Mary Use were married in 1869. They left Fort Owen and homesteaded at Victor, MT. Mary delivered her first child, Richard, at about age 20. Richard died very young and was the first person buried in the Victor Cemetery. A second child, Frank, was born in 1871, and a third boy, Joseph, was born in 1873. (Joseph lived to the age of 17, when he died of measles.) In 1874 a daughter, Nelly, was born. Stearns and Mary had two other children, George and Emma. All six of these children died at a very young age. Stearns and Mary then had five more children who lived into their seventy's & eighties. All were life-long residents of Victor, MT. by: Pat Close
http://www.mtgenweb.com/ravalli/MARY_U_BLAKE_BIO.html

[“Abraham Stearn "Sterny" Blake was one of the group of sixteen who made the 1863 Stuart Expedition to Yellowstone Country. Between mining and expeditions he spent considerable time at Fort Owen. Thus when he became tired of the prospector life in 1867, Stearnie settled at the Fort assisting the Major with the flour mill and established a relationship with Mary Lark Use. Mary (1849-1919), called "Princess" by the Major was the daughter of Shoshone Chief Sirogan who served as Horse-Herder for the Fort. Mary's mother died when she was an infant and she was raised by Nancy and John Owen. After Nancy Owen died, Mary moved from the Fort to town and the Major's journal has almost daily entries stating "Young Blake went to town again tonight."” http://granitecountyhistory.blogspot.com/2014/10/the-blake-brothers.html]

Mary Lark Use Blake http://www.mtgenweb.com/ravalli/MARY_U_BLAKE_BIO.html

“For the benefit of the Indian and half-breed children at Fort Owen, a number of whom had been taken in by John and Nancy Owen they hired P. MacDonald to teach school in December, 1858. MacDonald left the following April, but school continued, intermittently, whenever a suitable tutor was available. By 1862, ten children were attending school at the Fort. Owen's attempt to educate the children he and Nancy took in often ended in disappointment.

On October 25, 1866, Owen wrote: “My Boys ran away yesterday & as Yet have not retd I find I can do Nothing with them So I am determined to let them run with the Indians & have Nothing More to do with them....” One of the school masters was named Robinson is probably the John Fisher Robinson that Francis Ermatinger wrote to his brother, Edward on February 26,1839 from Fort Vancouver. “The school master of which, from discoveries that were made by Mr. Douglas, was this year flogged in the most public manner twice, yet not half severe enough for the villain [John Fisher Robinson]. He ought to have been shot. The Dr. will burst when he hears of it, and it will give the person who went home (Rev. Beaver, who criticized the school master and he was ignored) a triumph over him. They never could agree, in all parson Beaver’s reports to their honors, he was severe upon the immortality of the Big House. The school master, it would appear, has been in the habit of taking advantage of the female part of his pupils and our friend Work’s daughter has had her share of the odium, altho’ a mere child yet.”

Robinson the schoolmaster’s punishment for molesting the girl students at Fort Vancouver:

“[Rev. Herbert] Beaver departed for England about a month later, and the record becomes a bit obscure as to the subsequent fate of the schoolmaster. Evidently James Douglas, then in charge of Fort Vancouver during Dr. McLoughlin's absence on furlough, began to look into rumors and accusations of misconduct on Robinson's part, and by January or early February 1839 had uncovered a most unpleasant situation. It appears that the teacher was molesting some of the young girls entrusted to his care.

Douglas's reaction was swift and violent. Robinson was tied to one of the guns in front of the Big House and twice flogged "in the most public manner." There were some among the district's officers and clerks who believed the "villain" should have been shot. Needless to say, Douglas was soon casting about for a new schoolmaster.” http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/fova/hsr/hsr2-10.htm

By 1862 Robinson made his way to Montana and Major John Owen wrote in his Journal XVI:

"February 1862

Friday 28" Robinson the schoolmaster [The school was in the fort. What room was used is not known] was Yesterday Morning Set adrift for taking improper liberties with the little daughter of Mr. Harris.

March 19, 1862 "Wednesday We at last have some little appearance of Spring. But there is So Much Snow and Ice on the plain that it is quite late in the day before the influence of the Sun is felt. Francis an Indian lad arrived from Hell Gate late last Evening & Reports the Man Robinson who left here Some days ago Drowned in the Hell Gate river. Poor man peace to his Ashes."

"John Owen and his wife, Nancy, never had any children of their own, yet Owen was obviously fond of children arid frequently wrote in his journals about the children of his friends and acquaintances. Owen believed strongly in the importance of sanctifying his relationship with Nancy, a custom followed by few of the Western trappers and traders. On January 8, 1858, Owen recorded in his journal number twelve: "....Myself Mr Harris & Mr Irvine did this day Sign marriage contracts with our Indian Wives I have often thought of the Correctness of it & in the absence of any person duly authorized to perform the Marriage Ceremony We did it in ourselves in the presence of Witnesses I have been living pleasantly with My old Wife Since the fall of 49 and in case of accident I should feel Much hurt if I had not properly provided for her according to law..."

This made Thomas Harris, Nancy's adopted son, although Harris' mother was alive and came out West to live on his Three Mile Creek ranch.

[Thomas W. Harris
"Harris was born in Woodford County, Kentucky, August 20, 1827. In 1851, he travelled to Fort Hall and there entered the employ of John Owen. While at Fort Owen, Harris aided in the construction of buildings, helped operate the grist mill, accompanied Owen on a number of excursions, and often managed the trading post while Owen was away. Until 1856, Harris also bartered livestock along the Oregon Trail. In 1862, Owen hired Harris as an Indian Department farmer, paying him $1,000.00 per year. The following spring, Harris assumed charge of the Fort while Owen traveled to Pennsylvania and Washington D.C. Displeased with this responsibility, Harris spent a good deal of time at his own farm on Three Mile Creek. After his return, Owen began hearing derogatory rumors, supposedly initiated by Harris. Any friendship which had previously existed, soon deteriorated." Master interpretive plan fort owen state monument by Michael Douglass. "For more than a dozen years he was Owen's most trusted assistant. Harris is credited with bringing the first sheep to Montana and cultivating the first fruit trees, both in the 1850s. In 1862 he was elected Missoula County commissioner for Washington Territory. In 1871 he built a tiny school at his home on Three-Mile Creek. It was relocated a mile to the south and became Lone Rock School." Kim Briggemankbriggeman@missoulian.com Jun 27, 2015]

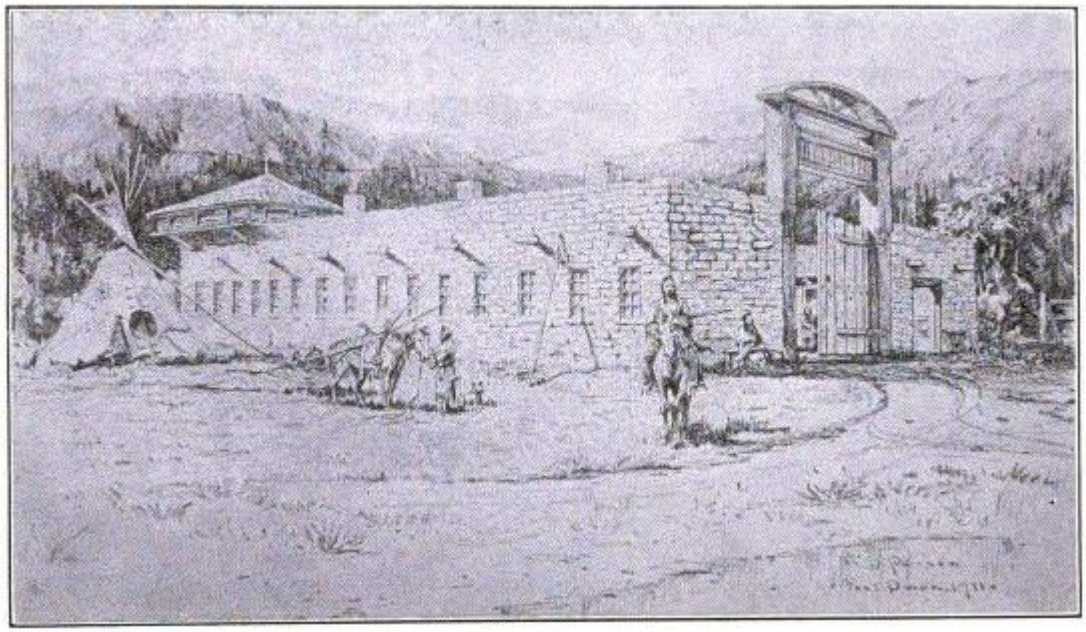
"Food is another topic upon which John Owen frequently commented in his journals. His physical appearance, five feet eight inches tall and nearly two hundred pounds in weight, corroborates his love for good food. From the earliest journal entries in 1852 to those in the late 1860's, it can be surmised that the diet of the Fort builder and his dependents consisted of a combination of domestic and wild foods. Cattle, pigs, and chickens were raised at the Fort and the journal frequently notes "Killed Beef" or "killd Pig 110 pounds 6 Mos old." Just as often, Nancy provided the dinner table with a "fine string of trout" or one of the hunters brought in a "fine Mess Mt. Grouse."

The Fort also boasted a garden with all of the usual garden vegetables including potatoes, carrots, parsnips, melons, peas, beans, corn, tomatoes, etc. Nancy and the other women of the Fort paid great attention to wild berry seasons including strawberry, service berry, and

huckleberry. Following a series of journal entries noting "Nancy off Strawberrying" comes "Strawberries fine indeed" and "Strawberries and Cream."

“Special attention was given to the preparation of Christmas and New Year's feasts. New Year's dinner in 1858 is typical of the repast enjoyed at these holidays: “Mrs Harris got us up a very Nice roast of Beef trimd With Sundry Vegetab all of Which was Nicely closed with a rich plum pudding and a few Mince pies from our Christmas feast to Say Nothing about a very Strange resurrection of a very Mysterious Cache of Sundry bottles of brandy and whiskey.”

“Feasts such as these represented the best of times at Fort Owen and contrast sharply with the leaner days Owen describes in April, 1865: “My little dab of Meat gone So we are on Bread & potatoes again - Dry living - Old Wife Mounted old Mike & put out to try her luck fishing. ....The old Wife ret'd with a fine String of trout.”
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1485&context=etd



Old Fort Owen near Stevensville, Montana “Montana, Its Story and Biography: A History of Aboriginal and Territorial” ... edited by Tom Stout, page 133.

Diary of a Journey from Fort Owen to the Dalles between September 21 and October 24, 1852

Tuesday Sept 21st Left Fort Owen for the Dalles' party Robinson Crusoe Nancy Madam Harris & 2 children & Ind boy Nine pack animals Made a late start the Morning being unfavorable Crost St Marys [St. Mary's is the Bitter Root River. It was named St. Mary's by Father De Smet. De Smet. opus citra. v. I, p. 343, II, p. 550.] close to fort and continued down west bank some 12 Miles & left trail & turned into the left & a few Miles Struck Lo Lo fork & campd packs Wet & heavy

Tuesday 28 [September 1852] Crossd Several Steep & Rocky points trail still Continues open with but little fallen timber traveld Some 6 hours without Meeting with any water and Came to a

Small Spring on top of Mt & Campd Not water for the animals here they eat snow off the Sides Mt & during day they find Small pools standing in the road from the Melting of Snow Madam Harris lost one of her horses Yesterday poor & completely given out We are Moving Slow Say in the 6 hrs travel Some 15 Miles Not More Kill a Grouse & Pheasant latter large

In 1854 Major Owen made a trip to The Dalles from Fort Owen and back, with him was Nancy. "Going toward the Pacific Coast Owen traveled along the general route of the Mullan Road, making the distance to the Dalles about seven hundred miles. On the return he followed the shorter but rougher Nez Perce trail, covering a distance of about six hundred miles. Coming back to the Fort he was again lost, and the entire party suffered hardships and privation." Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, Pioneer of the Northwest 1850-1871 Owen wrote in his journal: "July 1854 Friday 14 Made a start for the Dalles Party — Batiste, Lolo & Loui the Son of Piere Animals 11 Mules, branded 21 on left hip 4 Am[erican] Mares 21 on left shldr 1 Am horse 21 Do 2 Ind Mares & 4 Ind horses brd 21 on left hip I Yearling Colt y2 breed not branded Number in all with two Colts 24 head We hav had a fine Breese all day that has helped us very Much or we should have suffered from the heat." Although he does not mention Nancy at the beginning of the journal she accompanied him.

During the trip he got lost and he wrote in his journal: "September 30" 1854 Morning Cloudy we Moved in fair time however. I[n] assigning the Number of packs to Each Man & Counting the Animals I found one Mule pack Missing. I soon found it Cached in the brush which delay though [threw] Me Entirely in the rear of the train. I followed on in the trail driving the Mule before Me and had traveld Some four Miles When through pure obstinacy it left the trail Which was dim at best and took down a Steep Mt. Covered with dense hard brush I dismounted leading My animal [and] followed on after the Mule When getting down Some distance it halted probably for reflection to get back on the ridge again & find the trail was the trouble. I saw the ridge running around far above where I Supposed the road passed but to get there was No Small difficulty Hoping the train Might yet be in hearing distance I commenced halloing at the top of my voice but could hear Nothing but the Echoes of my Cries reverberated by the Surrounding Mountains I Sat a few Moments ruminating I then fastened the Mule With one End of my riding cord the other End around My horses Neck & So I went it blind over [?] logs ravines & the Lord Knows What I Came out shortly to a Small opening at the foot of the Mt. on Which I thought the trail ran the Mule refused to take the Mt Either from Exhaustion or Stubborness but I think the latter — I unpacked & unsaddled it & took My horse in Search of the trail first however taking a prominent Butte as My landmark for My return to the Pack. I think I was not over three Miles in finding the trail My intention was to proceed forwd Catch the train & bring a Man back to assist Me I was about starting When I heard a sound behind Me I soon Saw it was My old Wife leading her pack animal She had fallen far in the rear of the train I thought with her assistance [and] with the use of the horse She was riding we Could take the pack on So tying her pack horse & My riding animal I on foot told her to follow, the Mt. is densely timbered We were Soon Separated I was certain I could find the pack without any difficulty I wandered & roamed got bewildered was out Some two hrs & could Not See My land Mark & Nothing but timber I reflected It Was worse for Me to be lost Now than when With the pack & My horse for My tobacco Sack Was on My Saddle bow with my fire Steel & flint I had forgotten

in my hurry to take them — After a few Moments the Sun Now about high Meridian I thought it best to try & find My way out in taking the Mt. ridge I again Struck the trail I could see the way the train had gone but where was the place the old Wife & Myself had tied our horses I thought I certainly was behind the Spot so I proceeded on I walkd Some Six Miles but came to No horses & then concluded they Must be behind I Continued on Some three Miles further & Came to a Small Stream running through a very pretty Narrow prairie Some Six Miles long
hoping My party would Not pass it I crossd the Stream once then through a Small Skirt of timber crossed it again & then took along the Side of the Mt Crossed two Small tributaries Crossed a point or two of timber & then to My joy found the Camp the Sun was yet about two hrs high I turned back So Soon as I could have a horse caught & Saddled with two Men they were on brisker horses than I they were Soon out of Sight It was Not long before it Commenced growing dark in the timber Some five Miles from Camp I passed a burning stump after riding Some distance & it quite dark & thinking I Must be close to where I left My horse I again passed a burning Stump & knowing of but the one I concluded I Must have got Completely turned around in timber & was then on My back trail three or four Miles further brought me to the Stream Some three Miles further My Camp fire I turned out My horse Mortified at My defeat & lay down to rest I was uneasy about the Wife fearing she Might get lost & if Not lost Night Would overtake her without food or Water & she would be Compelled to tie her Animals & Camp & So it turned out.

Sunday Oct 1st As Soon as light I took the old Nes Perce Indian & went in Search of the party out Some ten Miles from Camp I met the old Wife Coming in with the pack horse She told Me the two Men Were back Where I had left My horse I proceeded on & Soon Came up & Started the two with the Nes Perce in pursuit of the lost pack & Mule I showed them My land Mark & gave them the Course as Well as I Could they hunted & retd hunted again & retd No Success I then thought I would again try My own luck So taking Batiste with Me I took the trail towards our last Camp I Saw My land Mark & the Side of Mt where I thought the Mule had come down We had to dismount & lead down to a Small bottom I found My trail put Batiste upon it & he followed it up the Same as a hound Would follow a fox I never could have found it Myself the Mule had Entangled himself in the Cord fell & Choked himself to death We put the pack on Batiste's animal & went on We Soon Struck the road where the other two where [were] with a large fire they had Killed a few chickens & had them roasted two of them with Nothing to Eat from the day before & Myself & Nes Perce without [any thing] that day I Eat a chicken with Some avidity & proceeded ahead to Camp leaving the rest to Come on Slow with the pack
The Sun was about down when I got in & found a good pot of Coffee With Some dried Meat already which I partook of Some two hrs afterward the boy came in with pack & after seeing them have their supper & a good Smoke turned into our Blankets for the Night."
John Owen wrote Saturday 30, 1858: "The Dr's foot doing well My old Wife Mrs Harris & Child were vaccinated to day It has taken Very Well on the two little boys."

"October 1860 Sat 20 Warm & Clear to day. Lisette and Nancy gone to Millers, will stay all knight." [Lisette Ranier, born in 1829, was probably the daughter of a French-Canadian fur trapper, who was either French or mixed-blood or full Iroqouis, and who worked for Hudson Bay Company (HBC). Many of the HBC's French-Canadian trappers were "civilized" Iroquois whose forebears had adopted the Christian religion and taken Christian (French) names during France's occupation of Quebec in the 1600's. Family history, from both Harris and Fulkerson descendants, states she was French-Canadian (Indian)/Umatilla. An 1857 entry in John Owen's journal stated all the women at Fort Owen were full-blooded Indians. Lisette died on Feb. 15, 1880 of "consumption and dropsy" at Stevensville, MT]

[There were some Millers living on Burnt Fork Creek, and some others further north in the Flathead Valley in 1860.] Excerpts from the Journals of Thomas W. Harris Bitterroot Valley, Montana, 1860-1868 http://www.fulkerson.org/1-harris.html

Nancy was enumerated in only one census the 1860 U.S. Census of Washington Territory, Spokane County. Bitterroot Valley:

John Owen, Indian Agt., value of real estate: 10,000, age 42, male, value of personal estate: 10,000, precinct: Bitterroot Valley, county: Spokane: post office Colville Valley: Dwelling number 110: enumerator: George Taylor: September 16, 1860, born in Pennsylvania, page 18, Line 16.

Nancy Owen, Indian, age 36, Female, Cannot Read, Precinct: Bitterroot Valley, County: Spokane, (same as above), birthplace, Washington Territory. [John Owen was the 1850 Oregon Territory Census but Nancy wasn't because Native Americans were not counted on that census.]

Owen wrote Saturday February 7, 1863 "My old Wife quite Sick" and Sunday on February 8th "old wife better", Wednesday the 11th "My old Wife about recovered from her recent Spell of Sickness."

Monday Sept. 5, 1863 "Commenced Messing at home My old Wife in Charge."

John Owen went back East about this time (1864) and was gone 15 months. Nancy stayed at Fort Owen with Thomas Harris who was left in charge of the fort by Owen.

Thursday March 30, 1865 "Old wife and Suit gone out to pay Mrs Harris a Visit."
Tuesday April 25, 1865 "Old wife off visiting,"

Sunday May 21, 1865 "Henry in from 3 Mile Creek for Some linament for My old Wife who was thrown from her horse going out to visit Mrs Harris on Yesterday. Mrs. Roberts gave us a Nice dish of Boiled ham & Greens for dinner."

Sunday June 28, 1865 "Mrs. Harris & family in from 3 Mile Creek. My old Wife after a weeks Visit to 3 Mile Creek."

Major John Owen wrote on "July 1868 Friday 3rd. My old Wife quite unwell — Sterny plowing potatoes quarelled with the old Mare & turned her out in disgust. Maj Graham Chatfield & Myself dressed the Cabbage It has been quite Sultry Most of the day. Another Shower would be very acceptable. Hornerton from the other Side Says that the hail fell day before Yesterday Sise of a Patridge Egg & Was quite deep in the ground. The Storm done considerable damage to the gardens. It passed up through town but Missed us altogether. Dr Baker Still abov With Mr Chaffin He May be able to Sav him. Mill idle for Want of Wheat. Nine Pipes brought a 50 Bu grist of good Wheat yesterday. "No Hen fruit."

July 26, 1868 Sunday "Madam Clairmont down to See My old Wife. Sent off Eastern Mail by G. P. White. Came very Near having frost last Night. It was quite cold during the Night. Old Wife gone out after berries."

August 7, 1868 Friday Retd to day from Missoula. Sorry to See the Tomato's — Potatoe's — Squash & other Vines cut down by frost last Night. This can be No country for the farmers Frost 1st Week in August— I regret the loss of the Tomatoes Exceedingly — Blake & Myself had taken So Much Care of them promising ourselves a fine treat for our labor— But So it is Found. … "My old Wife I am uneasy about."

August 8, 1868 Saturday "My old Wife quite unwell. Swelling of her feet & legs Something like dropsy She has been Scarifying them to let the Mater out. Poor Woman I don't Know What to do for her. Bro. Frank down."

Wednesday August 19th "Last Night My poor old Wife taken quite Sick & Suffered considerable until Mning When she fell asleep. Poor Woman has suffered all day. I fear her time for this world is short. She has Nearly lost the use of her right arm. Most of the day out of her head. Talks wth difficulty. I am lost to Know what is the Matter with her. Her feet & legs are badly Swollen."

August 20, 1868 Thursday "My old Wife More comfortable this Mning— She passed a tolerably Easy Night. Her right Side is partialy paralysed."

Friday 21st "My old Wife appears Easy but she is Speechless & helpless poor Woman. The Revd. Father Giorda calld down to see her this Morning. He Very Kindly offerd her Spiritual Consolation. But poor Woman Knows but little about such things."

Saturday 22nd. "Cause Not Known old Wife perfectly helpless."
August 23, 1868 Sunday Too Warm to any one to Stir. Old Wife continues the Same — She is Not Suffering but is perfectly helpless. Appetite good."

Tuesday 25th "Old Wife the Same."

Tuesday September 1,1868 The Revd. Father Rivalli down last Evening & Very Kindly left Some Medicine for My old Wife."

Wednesday 9th "Last Evening the Revd Fathers Rivalli & Bandini Called. My old Wife No better.

Monday 14th "old Wife about the Same poor Woman..."

Tuesday 15th "My poor old Wife No better. Poor Woman I am trying to Make her Comfortable it's all I can do. Last Night I gave her a few Grains Morphine to quiet her. It had the desird effect."

September 17, 1868 Thursday "Madam Lomprey called to see My poor old Wife. They are old friends. Had a long old fashioned Chat in pure Shoshonee. A pleasant dialect To listen to — provide you understand it Well."

Monday 21st "Old Wife Not So Well."

September 24, 1868 Thursday "My old Wife passed a Miserable Night— poor Woman. 12 o'clk M. My poor old Wife unconscious. She is Not suffering but breathing hard & perspiring on her

Forehead. She continued in this unconscious state until 3 p.m. when she quietly & peaceably relinquished all that Was Mortal. Her Snake friends were with [her] & had been With her all the Mning. Poor Woman She is No More." She may have had dropsy.

Nancy was approximately 44 years old when she died at Fort Owen. Major Owen never mentioned her again in his journals.