

Alma Coffin Reminiscence, c. 1910

August 7, 1878

We lost no time. Our baggage was conveyed to the hotel. We were allowed only twenty-five pounds each on the stage, so we worked half the night unpacking, repacking and trying to decide what articles to take and what to leave in the trunks. . . . The trunks are to be forwarded by ox-freight and we may not see them again until mid-winter.

The stage proved to be a “jerky” and well worthy of the name. There were two seats inside facing each other, with room for three on each seat. The coach springs were not very good or, perhaps, too good, for one’s head sometimes bumped against the top.

In the Sun River Valley the roads were bad in many places. The passengers climbed down and out, the men helping to pry out the wheels. Once when we offered to walk, the driver called cheerily, “Sit still ladies! Sit still! And we’ll all be buried together!” When we began to climb the hills clad with evergreen amid the rocks, the

view was beautiful and we all wished it were possible to ride outside. . . .

Of the country between Benton and Helena we saw but little for we traveled all night. No wonder our vehicle bounced and jolted all the way, for it drew up at the Grand Hotel four hours ahead of schedule time. If mud splashed us the first part of the journey, dust covered us the last part. Sunburned, windblown and weary, after thirty-two hours without rest we were glad to escape to a quiet room. . . .

I know now why people love the West. The beauty and grandeur of the mountains, rocks and trees, canons and dashing streams! The vast landscapes revealed in the clear atmosphere are beyond all description. The people are friendly and hospitable. New comers are warmly greeted for do they not bring news from “The States?”

Source: *Alma Coffin Kirkpatrick Reminiscence*, [ca. 1910]. *Small Collection 940*. Montana Historical Society Research Center. Archives. Excerpted in *Not In Precious Metals Alone: A Manuscript History of Montana* (Helena, 1976): 110–11.