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Book Review: *Journeys to the Land of Gold: Emigrant Diaries from the Bozeman Trail, 1863-1866*

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Journeys to the Land of Gold: Emigrant Diaries from the Bozeman Trail, 1863-1866. Two volumes. Edited by Susan Badger Doyle. Foreword by Charles E. Rankin. Afterword by Elliott West. Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2000. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. xx + 838 pp. \$95.00.

Most students of Western history know something about the Bozeman Trail, the 1860s-era cut-off from the Platte River trails bisecting the Powder River Basin before heading toward the Montana goldfields. Usually the Bozeman's story enters our consciousness in the context of the Northern Plains Indian Wars—Red's Cloud's War and the Sioux War of 1876. This outstanding two-volume collection of diaries and memoirs reminds us, however, that the Bozeman was an emigrant pathway before it became a hotly contested military road. Susan Badger Doyle's painstaking efforts to locate, research, and edit these documents reasserts the role played by the ambitions of civilians to travel across and exploit every patch of the West, Indian interests and federal treaties be damned. That this trail represented trespass, from the point of view of Indian occupants and the Treaty of 1851,

mattered not at all. Eventually that trespass sparked war and ended emigrant travel after 1866.

Doyle's goal was to find all emigrant diaries and reminiscences worthy of reproduction and join them in one place. She located the documents in various repositories ranging from Yale's Beinecke to Washington State's library. The result is an amazing collection of primary source material that draws the reader into the trail experience as articulated by a fascinating collection of mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-Americans. The majority of diarists were, of course, young white men, some college-educated, others teamsters or farmers-turned-hopeful miners. Doyle also includes a few documents written by women and adolescent boys and girls. Each provides insight into the racial, class, and gender dynamics of nineteenth-century trail life. Most make clear that the incentive to reach Montana and find economic success superseded any worries about safety on the disputed trail. A few understood Indians' reluctance to cede the land. All seemed entranced with the beauty of the Big Horn Mountains and the abundant wildlife grazing in their shadows. Not even the increasing dangers of using this route, including the loss of members of their own parties, dampened these people's determination. Of greater potential disruption than Indians, in fact, were the internal social dynamics of the wagon trains: bosses' indifferent to employees' needs and comforts; a husband who physically abused his wife; the bickerings inevitable in a trying cross-country trip.

With meticulous detail, Doyle tracked down the stories of each writer—before, during, and after the Bozeman experience. She platted the various routes of the trail, which change over time, and brought to the project a sophisticated, scholarly understanding of why it all matters. This is, in short, a masterful achievement balancing detail and context, particular and broader meaning. The volumes are beautifully produced, with photographs and notes offered along side-columns, making them

especially easy to use. An afterword by historian Elliott West underscores the Bozeman Trail story's complexity, requiring attention to many perspectives. Doyle provides us with the emigrants'. Now we need someone to do the same for Native Americans as well as the military personnel who occupied and eventually conquered this territory. Doyle has shown the way. Any takers out there?

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