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Article Summary: Scott and Fish ranched and lived together as partners for more than forty years, winning respect in their community. They experienced many of the successes and failures of early Plains settlement.

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Photographs / Images: Libbie Scott with her parents, William and Pauline, probably about 1900; Allie Fish with a team of horses in 1902; Scott about 1898; Scott and Fish cultivating corn in 1902; Scott and Fish with two unidentified surveyors in 1900; Election Day 1910 crowds at the Scott and Fish Ranch house, their polling place (2 views); the Brewster dry goods store opened by Scott and Fish in 1912; Scott and her nephew, Paul Van Neste; Fish with an unidentified boy, 1920; Scott on a picnic with an unidentified young couple

"AS INDEPENDENT AS WE WISHED"

Elizabeth Scott & Alice Fish

of Blaine County, Nebraska

By William D. Lock

After carefully thinking the matter over we both came to the conclusion that we could make a better living for ourselves in raising cattle and operating a ranch than in any vocation presenting itself to us in this whole western country. Women had made a success of many things that men supposed they could know nothing about, and we didn't see why we couldn't succeed as ranchers. Both of us had taught in the public schools, and there was nothing to that field to make us as independent as we wished.¹

Thus begins an article written in 1902 by Elizabeth Roberts Scott and Alice Sarah Fish of Blaine County, Nebraska, for the *Omaha World-Herald*, the state's most widely circulated newspaper. The article describes in their own words the first years of a domestic and business partnership that had begun about 1895, and would continue for another thirty-five years. As unmarried women operating a ranch, they appear to have been viewed as something of a curiosity by the *World-Herald*; in their early years, at least, they may have been regarded as odd by their neighbors, as well. Indeed, they were unusual—perhaps less for their lifelong partnership than for their independence and success as ranchers, businesswomen, civic leaders, and community activists.

Although many women came to the Great Plains in homesteading families, and some single women claimed homesteads in their own names, relatively few remained on the land as unmarried women, and most women who "proved up" soon sold their homesteads. In the

view of historians like Deborah Fink, the goal was "to make money that would improve their prospects for marriage. . . . Sooner or later, most women married." Scott and Fish represent the very small number of frontier and settlement-period women who succeeded in pursuing a long-term course independent of men in both their business and personal lives. They not only challenge the stereotype of western frontier women as helpmates to men, but add depth and dimension to the separate and unique "female frontier" described by Glenda Riley and others.²

The unattributed introduction to the *Omaha World-Herald* article, which describes Scott and Fish in language that might be considered at once curious, admiring, and, perhaps, mildly condescending, may represent a typical mixture of responses to young women like Scott and Fish:

Brewster, Neb. May 3

Here in this county two young women of exceptional energy and pluck are now reaping the reward of their enterprise on the "Scott and Fish Ranch," as it is known all over this part of the country. These two Blaine County citizens, Miss Libbie Scott and Miss Allie Fish, secured a half section of Nebraska land, and in 1900 added to their possessions two homesteads where they proceeded to build up a successful stock business which now makes them independent.

If any one doubts that young women are as good hustlers on the farm as the young men who come west to make their fortunes he is recommended to seek an introduction to Miss Scott and Miss Fish, who can tell him all there is to be known at present about stock farming in the west.³

Blaine County, straddling the 100th Meridian in the Sandhills of north-central Nebraska, was settled relatively late, its first large cattle ranches appearing in

the late 1870s, and homesteaders arriving around 1885. By 1902, when the *World-Herald* article appeared, Scott had been living in Blaine County for eighteen years, Fish for thirteen. Both had come to the area with homesteading families, and by the time they formed their partnership both were experienced in farm and ranch work and active in community affairs. At the peak of their success they owned some 3,000 acres of ranchland, and also owned and operated a dry goods store and an implement business in Brewster, the county seat of Blaine County. In addition, they were respected community, church, and political leaders who enjoyed an active social life.

Libbie Scott, born in Morton, Illinois, in November 1864, had arrived in Nebraska in 1884 at age nineteen with her parents, William and Pauline Scott. William was the leader of a group of immigrants from Gilman, Illinois, where the Scotts had owned a brickyard. With them came Charles and Sina Scott Van Neste (Libbie's elder sister) and Thomas and Dolly Thomas. Thomas Thomas had been an employee at the Scott brickyard. The three families filed adjoining homestead claims in the Edith Valley area of southeastern Blaine County and shared a single sod house the first winter.⁴

Allie Fish was born at Colfax, Iowa, in 1873. Her family migrated to Nebraska in the late 1870s, settling first at North Loup, about seventy miles southeast of Brewster in Valley County. In 1889, when Allie was sixteen, the family, which included her parents, Charles and Mary Fish, and her younger sister, Mary, moved to Blaine County, and claimed a homestead two miles east of the Scotts. After building a house and

William D. Lock is a research analyst with the Nebraska Legislative Council.

The "S-Fish" stock brand, reproduced behind the text above, was registered by Allie Fish for the Scott and Fish Ranch in 1931.

Elizabeth Scott and Alice Fish of Blaine County, Nebraska



Libbie Scott (seated, left) with her parents, **William and Pauline**, probably in about 1900. The Scott family homesteaded in Blaine County, Nebraska, in 1884 when Libbie was nineteen. Courtesy Robert Van Neste



Allie Fish, shown here with a team of Scott and Fish Ranch horses in 1902, was an accomplished farm and ranch hand. She arrived in Nebraska with her family in the late 1870s. In the early 1890s her parents left the family homestead in Allie's care, and she successfully operated the farm by herself for several years. Courtesy Robert Van Neste

establishing a farm, her parents and sister returned to Valley County, leaving the new homestead in Allie's care. They remained in Valley County until Allie's mother died in 1892.⁵

Allie was living in the Scott household at the time of the 1900 census, and items in the *Brewster News* describing the activities of the two women suggest she may have begun boarding with the Scotts as early as 1895 rather than continuing to live alone on the family homestead, which she was successfully operating. As a young woman running a farm by herself, she attracted some local attention, as suggested by an item in the *Brewster News* in 1897:

Miss Allie Fish is hauling shelled corn from Edith Valley to the Brewster market. She is a plucky young maid determined in her ways, but masculine assistance is thankfully received when it comes to upending a two-bushel bag full of good sound shelled corn.⁶

Their involvement in community affairs began at least as early as 1892, when Libbie became an officer of the Blaine County chapter of Homes for the Friendless, a statewide women's organization that operated a home for unwed mothers in Lincoln and placed children born out of wedlock with foster parents throughout the state, including some in Blaine County. In 1895 Libbie's mother was president of the Blaine County group, and Allie also became an officer. Other officers were Sarah Barton, wife of County Judge Albert Barton, Dolly Thomas, and Elizabeth Drew, who operated a store in Brewster. The group appears to have been unusually active; in 1895 they raised fifty dollars in Blaine County and sent the money with Pauline Scott to the statewide convention in Lincoln. It was an impressive effort, especially considering that the statewide organization itself had only four hundred dollars in private funds in its treasury.⁷

The Blaine County chapter may have been unusually independent and activist, too; both Thomas and Drew divorced their husbands during the time they served as officers, and in March 1897 the chapter became publicly involved in a local controversy when Lulu Barton, the fifteen-year-old daughter of Sarah Barton, then the club president, gave birth to a daughter out of wedlock. The Barton family accused the Blaine County treasurer, thirty-six-year-old George Sawyer, of fathering the child, and pressed to have him charged with statutory rape. The county attorney, Edwin Riggs, refused to file charges. In addition to holding county offices, Sawyer and Riggs were business partners in Brewster's largest retail store.

Provoked into action by what they perceived as a blatant injustice, the Homes for the Friendless group held frequent meetings, and apparently became a primary source of moral pressure on the

male political leadership of the county. The chapter raised funds for a private attorney and pressured court officials to bring charges. Charges finally were filed by a local justice of the peace, and the district court judge appointed a special prosecutor, Fannie O'Linn of Chadron, Nebraska, one of the first female attorneys in the state.⁸

The controversy involved virtually the entire county courthouse: The treasurer was accused of statutory rape; the county attorney, business partner of the accused, refused to bring charges; the county clerk was called as a witness because he had overheard Riggs and Sawyer discussing whether Sawyer should flee the charges; the plaintiff's father was the county judge.

In August the Homes for the Friendless chapter held a sixteenth birthday party for Lulu Barton. The *Brewster News* printed an open invitation to the party, then followed up with a post-party account. Both pieces were written by Allie Fish, secretary of the Homes for the Friendless group. No doubt they hoped the newspaper stories, besides being conventional small-town "social notes," would remind the community that Lulu had reached the legal age of consent long after the date her child had been conceived.

The *State v. Sawyer* trial was delayed until the district court session in May 1898 because key witnesses were absent, including the county clerk, who took an unannounced trip to Colorado. Sawyer was defended by a legal team that included Riggs, who continued to serve as county attorney. Special Prosecutor O'Linn was unsuccessful in convincing the all-male jury of his guilt. The Barton family retained O'Linn to pursue a civil paternity suit against Sawyer, but it was dropped before coming to trial.

Several months later the Bartons, with Lulu and her child, Pearl, left Brewster and lived in Dawes County for twelve years. Eventually Albert and Sarah Barton adopted Pearl. A year after the trial Lulu Barton was married in Omaha in the home of her uncle, George Brewster,

who had founded the town of Brewster in 1884. The elder Bartons and Pearl returned to Blaine County in 1910, a year after the death of George Sawyer. According to *News* reports, Pearl was a frequent guest at the Scott and Fish Ranch, and in 1912 Libbie and Allie attended her fifteenth birthday party.



In April 1898, probably about the time this photo of Libbie Scott was taken, Allie Fish moved to Ord, Nebraska, to open a millinery shop. In July, Libbie eloped with her cousin, William Hughes Scott, but the couple remained together only a few weeks. That fall Allie returned to Blaine County again residing in the Scott household. Courtesy Robert Van Neste

In addition to the Sawyer-Barton scandal, the years 1897 and 1898 appear to have marked an unsettled, chaotic, and in one case scandalous time in the personal lives of Scott and Fish. In

December 1897, six months after Sawyer had been charged, Allie left the Scott household to join relatives in Ord for the winter. She returned to Brewster in April 1898, sold her personal property, including crops grown on her farm (the homestead had been proved up in 1894, and her father had deeded her the land), and announced that she was moving permanently to Ord to establish a millinery shop.⁹

In July, after the Sawyer trial, the *Brewster News* reported that "Miss Allie Fish is up from Ord on visit and will remain a few weeks. Miss Fish is the young lady who made farming pay in Blaine County and is now engaged in the millinery business in the city of her new home." Libbie's mother, Pauline, had just returned from a trip to Illinois accompanied by a young man named Aristus Fish who wanted to settle in Blaine County. Aristus may have been Allie's distant cousin. Soon after this visit, Libbie and Allie both departed for Ord.¹⁰

In late July they returned together to Blaine County. Two days later Libbie and her cousin William Hughes Scott, who was living on a nearby homestead, traveled to the "Cooleyton" community in adjacent Loup County. On August 1, Libbie and Hugh (as he was usually called) were married by Justice of the Peace O. E. Cooley. Libbie was thirty-three years old; Hugh was fifteen.

The *Taylor Clarion* (Loup County) treated the marriage as something of a scandal, and in a pseudonymous gossip column the following week, alluded to a rumor that the couple had stayed overnight together before the wedding. The *Brewster News* acknowledged the event with a simple congratulatory note.¹¹

The marriage officially lasted until 1905, when Hugh filed for divorce, but Libbie and Hugh apparently lived together only for a few weeks. In 1905 an account in the *Custer County Chief*, later reprinted in the *Brewster News*, reported that a divorce petition had been granted to William Hughes Scott against Libbie R. Scott. The article goes on to declare that "about a couple of weeks after the

Elizabeth Scott and Alice Fish of Blaine County, Nebraska

marriage, the wife deserted her youthful husband and has remained away from him ever since." After Libbie and Hugh separated, she returned to live with her parents, and, according to items in the *Brewster News*, Allie Fish moved back to Blaine County in the fall of 1898, again residing in the Scott household.¹²

A few months later, in November 1898, the *Brewster News* reported that Hugh Scott had started a prairie fire on the William Scott ranch. No criminal charges were filed, but the event prompted the formation of a county fire protection society under the leadership of William Scott and two other ranchers. In April 1899, the Scott ranch experienced another fire of unknown origin; Libbie and Allie were reported to have fought side by side to save the Scott home.¹³

The events of 1898, the Sawyer trial, Libbie's brief, ill-fated marriage to a fifteen-year-old cousin, and Allie's short-lived attempt at a millinery career in Ord suggest that both were attempting to fulfill the cultural norms of acceptable behavior for young women, yet simultaneously rebelling against them. Both were undoubtedly under family and

community pressure to conform to a view of women and their assigned place in the domestic or household sphere described by Fink and others. The experience of challenging the male power structure in the *State v. Sawyer* case may have been discouraging, but it also might have politicized them and hardened their resolve to seek an independent course which included doing things "men supposed they could know nothing about," as they expressed it in their 1902 *Omaha World-Herald* article. Watching Fannie O'Linn, a widow, prosecute the case against Sawyer might have helped them recognize that women could step outside the roles assigned by their culture, pursue a life independent of men, and participate in public life. Whatever their thoughts and feelings, and despite the pressures to pursue the private life of wife and mother, they clearly began to imagine an alternative future. Their actions in the years from 1898 to 1902, like their statements in the *World-Herald*, suggest they had redefined for themselves the conventional household, family, and career structures. In those years they began their lifelong,

domestic partnership, and eventually they gained the respect of the community they had challenged during the Sawyer trial despite their decision to pursue a life course different from that of most women of the community.

Scott and Fish's *Omaha World-Herald* article dates the beginning of their ranch partnership to 1900. That spring, according to the *Brewster News*, Scott's parents leased their ranch property and took an extended trip to Illinois. Blaine County land records indicate that her father deeded Libbie 160 acres. To that property, and the 160 acres previously deeded to Allie by her father, Scott and Fish added an additional 320 acres by filing homestead claims in their own names.¹⁴

In the *World-Herald* article, Scott and Fish describe the accomplishments of their first two years: raising four hundred head of cattle, cutting and stacking one hundred tons of hay; planting and cultivating eighty acres of corn with two teams of horses (they began work at 4:00 A.M. and rested through midday when "the sun began to get torrid"); installing a gasoline engine to pump water for the cattle; and fencing "eight sections"



In a 1902 article in the *Omaha World-Herald*, Scott and Fish described details of their lives as independent women running a ranch, including beginning work at 4:00 A.M. to cultivate eighty acres of corn before "the sun began to get torrid." Courtesy Robert Van Neste

(probably eight fields or pastures, not eight square miles as current common usage would suggest). They also report contracting to graze an Omaha businessman's cattle, and they describe setbacks, including the loss of cattle and crops to disease and drought. Their comment on the loss of a corn crop suggests a view of farming on the Great Plains tempered by experience:

The second summer we listed eighty-five acres of corn, but on account of the drouth we got absolutely nothing. Were we blue? We were. But we were not discouraged for we were prepared in advance for just such reverses and we did not expect that providence would be so kind to us as to always provide a big crop for our particular ranch.¹⁵

Both were experienced in farm and ranch work, and probably as well suited to becoming independent operators as any of their male or female peers. Each had been the only child living at home in a family with no male offspring, and both understood the day-to-day operations of a family homestead. Allie had operated the Fish family homestead by herself for several years and was well known in the area as a successful farmer. Libbie's skills are suggested by a news story based on an interview given to an Illinois newspaper by her father and reprinted in the *Brewster News* in 1902:

Eighteen years ago Mr. Scott sold the brick yard to F. G. Holch and moved with his family to western Nebraska, where he engaged in cattle raising and farming. He finally controlled 12,000 acres all fenced. Several years ago he divided this tract, by running a fence thru the middle of it, and turning over one of the parts to his daughter Libbie, who had previously demonstrated her ability as a "cowboy" and ranch manager.¹⁶

Although both had sisters who were married, neither brother-in-law ever was actively involved in the Scott family operation. Libbie's sister and brother-in-law, Sina and Charles Van Neste, homesteaded near the Scotts and farmed until health problems forced them to move into Brewster, where they operated a retail store. Allie's sister and brother-in-law, Mary and James Way, also settled near

the Scott and Fish Ranch. James and their son, Charles, occasionally worked for Scott and Fish, but never became financial partners. Two of Allie's nieces and their husbands later became tenants on Scott and Fish Ranch properties. At various times Scott and Fish hired other men to build fences and break sod. For a brief period in 1903 Allie's cousin Dollie Brown lived on the ranch and was described in the *Brewster News* as a partner, but there is no record of any formal partnership agreement, and her involvement appears to have been short-lived.

In the *World-Herald* article, Scott and Fish also outlined their future plans, which included expanding their corn acreage and fencing off summer and winter pastures. They concluded the article with an optimistic and, perhaps, by the standards of the day, somewhat cheeky comparison of their life on the ranch with the lives of women in more traditional feminine roles:

Ranch life is a most agreeable one for the active young woman who has her own way in the world to make. And we are not sure but that it beats a life of elegant leisure in every particular, while we are sure it does in some respects. We do not consider ranch life as difficult, or wearing, as the labor of the wife, cook or housekeeper, or clerking behind a counter, or in an occupation where you are on your feet from morning until evening.

Taking it all in all we consider it the most free and easy as well as the most profitable occupation women can find.¹⁷

In 1903 Scott and Fish advertised in the *Brewster News* that they had more than 3,500 acres of pasture available for rent, which would make their ranch one of the largest in Blaine County. They probably never actually owned more than about 3,000 acres, however, and had not acquired that total by 1903. They may have controlled other land through leases, grazing rights, and strategically placed hay meadow purchases and Kinkaid claims that positioned them to control the use of land still held by the government. Blaine County records show that their property was jointly owned, and joint mortgages, signed by both women as partners, also are on file

in county records. Late in their lives, Scott and Fish sold some ranch property to at least one of their tenants, but they also acquired additional property as late as 1933. At the time of Allie's death in 1937 they still owned nearly 2,600 acres of land in Blaine County.¹⁸

Scott and Fish raised cattle, hogs, horses, mules, chickens, prairie hay, corn, speltz (a hardy variety of European wheat), and rye. Despite tomadoes (their soddy experienced a direct hit) and several prairie fires, they were successful, improving the ranch, adding fences, windmills, gasoline-engine-powered water wells, and larger barns. In 1904 they built a six-room frame house, moving out of the soddy they had shared with Libbie's parents.¹⁹

Most of the information available about Scott and Fish's day-to-day affairs during their years on the ranch comes from social notes in the *Brewster News*, a weekly that began publication in 1884. Like many small town newspapers of the period the *News* reported on social and business activities of almost every person and organization in the county.

Scott and Fish apparently maintained an active social life. The regularly drove their buggy thirteen miles to attend the Brewster Congregational Church, and they were frequent guests at other ranches. By 1902, Peder (usually called Peter) and Mollie Erickson, editors of the *News* and close friends of Libbie and Allie, had begun referring to them as "our lady ranchers Scott and Fish." Mollie Brewster Erickson was the daughter of George Brewster, founder of the town and first editor of the *News*. After Mollie's death in 1903 Libbie and Allie cared for the Erickson's young son for a brief time. The friendship continued when Erickson remarried, and is evident in the columns of the *News*, where Scott and Fish are frequently mentioned, often as the objects of praise and admiration.

From about 1908 to 1913, Libbie and Allie contributed a weekly column of personal items to the *News* as the Edith Valley area correspondents. In addition to reporting family visits, social gatherings,

Elizabeth Scott and Alice Fish of Blaine County, Nebraska



Soon after establishing their official partnership 1900, Scott and Fish began adding to their holdings and fencing fields, activities that might have required surveying. The woman holding the flag is Allie Fish; although her face is somewhat obscured, the woman on the left probably is Libbie Scott. The surveyors are unidentified.

Courtesy Robert Van Neste

and trips to town by neighbors, they reported on weather, crop conditions, and neighborhood observations such as this one from 1910:

A rather novel sight seen on Monday morning at the orchard of Mrs. Pauline Scott. Apple trees in full bloom with ground covered with snow to the depth of 3 to 4 inches.

Nor were the Edith Valley correspondents shy about reporting commercial notes favorable to the interests of the Scott and Fish Ranch:

Alva Copp and Holly Baker bought hay of Scott and Fish this week.

Hay! Hay! Oh, where are thou? Scott and Fish have corn for sale at market price.²⁰

Women's rights and political issues also made their way into the Edith Valley columns. Since 1881 Nebraska's school

suffrage law had permitted women to vote in school elections if they had children of school age or owned property in their own names, but school elections ordinarily were held in an informal setting at school annual meetings. In 1910, however, a ballot question concerning the establishment of a county high school allowed Blaine County women to vote in the regularly scheduled election and polling places, although they could vote only on the high school issue. The Scott and Fish ranch house was the Edith Valley polling place, and noting this opportunity to participate in the election in a limited way, Scott and Fish made this observation in their August 26 column:

The election in Edith precinct passed very quietly despite the predictions of Anti-Suffragists that women at the polls would

certainly bring out the very worst that is in man. We do not share these opinions however so please give us a chance to demonstrate.

In November, after the general election, the column noted,

The election this year was especially interesting on account of the women having a chance to vote, and they seem to enjoy the new experience.²¹

In late 1912 after some twelve years of independent ranching, Scott and Fish, decided to scale back their activities. Both sets of parents were dead, and the original Scott homestead had been sold to settle William Scott's estate. Libbie and Allie, then forty-eight and thirty-nine, rented some of their property that fall, and in January 1913 held a farm sale, at which they dispersed some farm



On Election Day in 1910 crowds gathered at the Scott and Fish Ranch house, the polling place for the Edith Valley Precinct. Courtesy Robert Van Neste

equipment and their hogs, chickens, and mules. After the sale, the *Brewster News* noted, they left for a long vacation in New Orleans and Illinois. In early March, Rulo Roberts, a distant Scott relative, moved to the ranch and took over its operation.²²

In April, while Libbie and Allie were still on their extended vacation, Charles Van Neste died, leaving the Van Neste dry goods store in the hands of Libbie's sister, Sina, and her son, Paul. Scott and

Fish returned, and, in late May, bought the store. They rented the remainder of their ranch property to another tenant and established a new household in Brewster. On May 30, under the headline "A Business Change," the *Brewster News* reported:

Miss Libbie Scott and Miss Allie Fish who have operated a ranch in Edith Valley for many years under the firm name Scott and Fish, have bought the C. E. Van Neste and Son merchandise business and store

building. The ladies are well and favorably known throughout Blaine County, coming here among its earliest settlers, and will doubtless enjoy a prosperous business, their method being a course of strict honesty in dealing with all and having had years of experience in managing their affairs alone successfully through cautiousness and conservatism which will greatly assist them in conducting the store affairs, we are justified in predicting the new venture a success.²³

The store, on the east side of Brewster's main street, served a town population of about one hundred people (at its peak in 1920) and about a thousand people in the surrounding rural market area. Its principal merchandise was dry goods and clothing, but Scott and Fish also purchased locally produced food items and furs for resale, and for a time the business included a state licensed cream station, where farm families could sell (or trade goods for) cream, butter, and eggs. They also installed a soda fountain, and eventually added a line of hardware and farm supplies. The Scott and Fish store remained in business for more than twenty-four years until shortly after Allie's death in 1937. Allie is generally regarded as having been most directly involved in the day-to-day management of the store, while Libbie managed household duties.²⁴

It was an opportune time to develop the store. Agricultural prices were high and would remain so for several years, as World War I produced a bonus for American farmers. The Sandhills economy also was bolstered in the World War I period by a booming potash industry. Several potash plants provided employment opportunities, and many Blaine County young people drew good wages from those plants and the booming communities near them.

In late 1915, Scott and Fish purchased 79 acres at the edge of Brewster, and in 1916 built a new house and barn overlooking the North Loup River. Later they added several rental cottages to the property. The house, now considerably remodeled, still stands.²⁵

In 1922 Scott and Fish obtained the contract to haul the mail to Brewster from Dunning, the only town in the county

Elizabeth Scott and Alice Fish of Blaine County, Nebraska



In 1912 Scott and Fish opened a dry goods store south of the Brewster Hotel. The store remained open until shortly after Allie's death in 1937. The two figures on the porch in this postcard view may be Libbie and Allie. Courtesy Robert Van Neste

on the rail line (in 1913 Allie had been active in an unsuccessful community effort to bring rail service to Brewster). That contract provided the basis for still another business. First using horse-drawn wagons, and later trucks, they operated a freighting business and also hauled supplies for the store. This business provided access to the railroad—and thus national markets—for local commodities. For the Christmas season in 1925, for example, they shipped 2,600 pounds of locally raised and butchered turkeys to Chicago.²⁶

Newspaper accounts suggest that Scott and Fish employed as many as five men and women in their various businesses, and supervised several tenants on their ranch properties. They appear to have been indefatigable entrepreneurs and innovators: In 1923 the *News* credited them with installing Brewster's first

gasoline pump, through a contract with Standard Oil. In 1924 the store opened a Saturday ladies' hair salon. In 1925 they installed a light plant in the store building, and it also provided electricity for their house and their rental properties on the east edge of town. In 1934 they erected a new building next to the dry goods store and added an International Harvester implement dealership to their other businesses.²⁷

Scott and Fish advertised regularly in the newspaper, placing one- and two-line inserts in the personal columns, and larger display ads on special occasions. Besides promoting particular products, the ads also boost local trade in general, and seem to express their own business philosophy:

The hen that lays lots of eggs needs lot of grit and oyster shell. Buy your oyster shell at Scott and Fish.

Now is the time to buy garden seed. Don't send off for them, but buy of Scott and Fish.²⁸

The demands of ranching and business did not keep Scott and Fish from participation in the other aspects of community life. Both were active members of the Brewster Congregational Church, serving as Sunday School teachers and leaders of the Willing Workers Sunday School Class for young children, which emphasized outdoor activities, useful work, and character building based on scripture readings. Scott also played the organ and sang in the church choir, and served as a delegate to the Statewide Conference of the Congregational Church on several occasions. In this regard, both were following in a family tradition, as both their fathers had been Blaine County Sunday School superintendents.

Besides being an officer of Homes for the Friendless, Libbie also was an officer

in the Blaine County Federated Women's Club, which, in 1914, was active in the statewide debate over woman suffrage. The group appears to have been uncommonly successful: That year the question of a constitutional amendment extending suffrage to women failed on a statewide vote, but was approved in Blaine County by a vote of 196 to 144.²⁹

Both women came from politically active families. Libbie's father was a Republican Party county delegate several times, and her mother was active in women's groups, including Homes for the Friendless. Allie's father served on a school board, and one of her uncles was active in the Valley County Republican Party. Allie served on local school boards and school bond committees, as did her sister Mary Fish Way. In 1913 Allie made a fifty-mile trip and overnight stay to hear William Jennings Bryan speak in Sargent, Nebraska. Fish also served as the Blaine County delegate to the Republican Party state convention in 1922, and was a voting member of the Blaine County Republican Central Committee on several occasions. In 1924 the Thirty-sixth Nebraska House of Representatives District, which included Blaine County, became one of the first three Nebraska districts to elect a woman, Clara Humphrey of Mullen, to the state legislature.³⁰

In 1935 Allie was elected to the Blaine County Federal Farm Loan Bank Board. She was the only woman from Blaine County ever to serve on that board, and her election suggests the high esteem in which she was held in that farming and ranching community. The Scott and Fish Store was often used as a community meeting site and for fund-raising activities of the Red Cross, the American Legion, and the Congregational Church.

Scott and Fish also maintained strong relationships with their extended families. Allie had five nieces and nephews (the children of her sister Mary Way), and Libbie had one nephew, Paul, the son of her sister Sina Van Neste. The children were frequent visitors to the Scott and Fish household, and when Mary Way died at age thirty-two, Scott and Fish took



Libbie Scott was particularly close to her nephew, Paul Van Neste. She is said to have saved his life by pulling him under her wool skirt when the two of them were trapped by a prairie fire in the late 1890s. Courtesy Robert Van Neste

the younger nieces into their home for extended periods. As they grew up, several nephews were employed in Scott and Fish businesses, and two of the married nieces and their husbands were tenants on Scott and Fish land. Libbie had a particularly close relationship with her nephew, perhaps in part because she is credited with saving his life in the 1890s when the two were trapped by a prairie fire. According to family accounts, Paul survived because Libbie pulled the nine-year-old boy under her wool skirt to protect him from the flames. Scott lost much of her hair, but Paul was spared any significant injury.³¹

Scott and Fish appear to have helped raise at least one orphaned boy, Lloyd Wescott, who is listed as a fourteen-year-old resident of the Scott home in the Census of 1910. Throughout his life Wescott and his wife Lucy Wilkinson Wescott were frequent guests of Scott and Fish. His elder brother, Charles Westcott, was the treasurer of the Blaine County Farm Loan Board on which Allie served.

Many other children in the community also benefited from the generosity and good will of Scott and Fish, according to the *Brewster News*, and one current Blaine County resident credits Scott and Fish with finding her lodging and a job in Kearney, so she could attend college.³²

The *News* frequently reported on activities for the town's children sponsored by Scott and Fish. Typical is a report from Christmas 1918 when an influenza outbreak forced the cancellation of Santa's annual appearance. Scott and Fish organized and led community-wide Christmas caroling for the shut-ins, followed by a party for the carolers at their home. On another occasion the *News* noted that Scott and Fish provided transportation to Lincoln for a local woman whose daughter needed surgery.³³

Scott and Fish also actively supported local schools, renting homes to teachers, maintaining long-lasting friendships with former teachers, donating artwork and other educational materials to the school, and organizing school activities.

Elizabeth Scott and Alice Fish of Blaine County, Nebraska



Allie Fish, probably in about 1920, with an unidentified boy. Scott and Fish were benefactors to many young people in the Brewster area, taking several children into their home for periods of time and sponsoring many community and school activities.

Courtesy Robert Van Neste

Allie served as a member of the Brewster school bond promotion committee in 1923 and led other school fund-raising events. Libbie chaired the Children's Activities committee of the Brewster Chautauqua committee from 1920 through 1928, and Allie was Chautauqua treasurer and fund-raising chair. Allie worked for more than ten years promoting construction of a public auditorium, and served as president of an auditorium stock-issuing corporation.

Innovators, risk-takers and inveterate travelers, Scott and Fish, purchased a REO automobile in 1912, making them among the first in the community to own and drive a car. Allie was one of several adventurers who took a ride when the first airplane visited Brewster in 1920. They also found time to travel, taking in local sights and events such as Fort Hartsuff, the Burwell Rodeo, and the Sandhills lakes, as well as longer journeys to Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, and North Platte, and extended vacations to Illinois, New Orleans, and elsewhere.

In 1926 they made a three-month cross-country automobile trip with two other women to attend the Worlds Fair in Philadelphia, and they spent much of the winter of 1926 in Long Beach, California.³⁴

Their final years, however, were less comfortable. Although they were prosperous in the 1920s, the farm economy was fragile, and like most regions of the country, Brewster and Blaine County were hard hit by the Great Depression. Dominated by Sandhills rangeland, much of the region is ill suited to small-scale farming. Although homesteaders had managed to produce an adequate living, especially in periods of agricultural prosperity, low agricultural prices and farm consolidation in the 1920s led to a declining farm population, and by 1929, many farm families had gone to seek economic opportunity elsewhere.

For almost thirty years, Brewster's business leaders had been Scott and Fish, Ed Riggs, and Peter Erickson. Riggs, county attorney since 1896, was owner

of the town's largest retail store and its only hotel; Erickson was the town's banker, newspaper editor, and farm implement and automobile dealer. By 1929, all were in their late fifties or early sixties. Like most rural towns Brewster's economic health was dependent on the prosperity of the surrounding agricultural community, and as the depression deepened, business dried up and tax revenues declined.

In late summer 1930, with their retail business in decline, Scott and Fish lost the mail contract, which, along with the resignation of two drivers, effectively shut down their freighting business as well. Another blow fell in October, when, in response to the dire economic conditions, Blaine County farmers organized a Farmers Union Cooperative to buy and sell farm cream, eggs, and butter, hoping to "cut out the middleman" and gain a better price for their products. Competition from the cooperative began in late 1930, and by February 1931, thirty farm families, many of them former Scott and Fish customers, were trading through the Farmers Union Cooperative managed by Ed Riggs, Scott and Fish's longtime competitor on the west side of Brewster's main street.³⁵

In May 1931 Scott and Fish placed the following advertisement in the *Brewster News*:

Here is the most important announcement—important to both of us—ever made by this store. On and after June 1st, we are going to sell goods for cash. Cash means we are going to keep in line with our sister store towns in other counties. Let's make our town and our county one of the best in the state. Let's work together.³⁶

In spite of their plea for cooperation, Scott and Fish faced yet another challenge when a third retail store opened in 1931, and became a state licensed cream and egg station in direct competition with them. The new store failed within a year, but the competition for business in a community where so few people had any resources had already begun to take its toll. In his weekly advertisement in the *News*, Ed Riggs began pleading with customers to pay their bills.

In 1932 came the event that marked complete economic collapse for many other Depression-strapped communities: Peter Erickson's bank failed, and Erickson declared bankruptcy. Blaine County schools already were being sustained by state and federal aid, since local school taxes generated so little revenue, and the county itself was deeply in debt. Bond issues proposed for funding day-to-day county operations were rejected by voters twice during the decade. Because county funds were lost when the bank failed, the county took ownership of the *Brewster News*.³⁷

By 1933 federal relief payments were going to more than 20 percent of Blaine County residents, and many other farmers and ranchers, including Scott and Fish, were dependent on federal farm assistance payments to sustain their operations. In September 1933 the Farmers Union announced plans to open its own grocery store. The opening, in October, was marked with a community celebration that included "kittenball games . . . played by the Ladies."³⁸

The opening of the new store seemed to mark a turning point for Scott and Fish, and, characteristically, they apparently decided to meet adversity head on, risking their own capital by investing in the community. In August 1933 they mortgaged all their remaining land holdings—2,759 acres—to the Federal Land Bank of Omaha for six thousand dollars, and in the spring of 1934 they remodeled the old store and built a new building next door. In June they held a Scott and Fish Store twenty-first-anniversary celebration, providing souvenirs for adults and treats for children. An International Harvester Company representative was there to demonstrate new farm equipment and celebrate the opening of the new venture—a farm implement business replacing Peter Erickson's bankrupt dealership. That act of confidence in the community apparently spurred a minor boom in Brewster, as other businesses also were repainted and remodeled.³⁹

Despite Scott and Fish's risk-taking and community boosterism, Brewster

and Blaine County, like most of rural Nebraska in the 1930s, remained in serious economic decline. In this small town there probably were too many stores serving too few customers with too little money. The county board regularly published a record of county expenditures in the *News*, including federally funded relief payments distributed by the county and the payments to local stores for food and supplies for the poor. After the Farmers Union Cooperative store opened in 1933, less government business went to Scott and Fish. In 1935, they took out additional loans, pledging the house, store, and livestock as collateral. They even borrowed from personal friends, including Selma Farha, a former Brewster high school teacher who became their financial partner.⁴⁰

That year also brought two deaths: Ed Riggs, Libbie and Allie's long-time retail competitor, and Peter Erickson, the friendly *Brewster News* editor who had unfailingly championed their causes. Erickson's ranch was sold under a foreclosure notice in January 1936, and later that year the Farmers Union purchased the Riggs store. That year also brought yet another attempt to start a third grocery store in Brewster.⁴¹

The Depression was far from over, but, typically, in February 1937 Allie Fish and the other officers of the Blaine County Farm Loan Board voted to keep their office open, rather than merge with the Custer County office. It was her last publicly reported act encouraging local growth and development in Blaine County.

On the morning of February 17, 1937, while walking to the store, Allie collapsed. She died several hours later at the store where she had faithfully served customers since 1913, her death attributed to a heart attack. It may be significant that the first mortgage payment on the Federal Land Bank loan was due twelve days later, on March 1.

With Allie's death, management of the ranches and business became Libbie's responsibility. Allie's will, drafted in 1922, left her share of the partnership

assets to Libbie, but the probate inventory and records show that the ranch partnership was nearly insolvent, and the store losing money. Debt on the ranch real estate had to be paid, and other mortgages were outstanding on the house, store, and livestock. There were few cash assets available for Libbie to live on. Accounts in the *News* suggest she tried to carry on, inviting new customers and attempting to regain the lost cream-and-egg business, but to no avail. In November 1937 Libbie announced that the store's fixtures and stock would be sold. The new editor of the *Brewster News*, Olin Fletcher, printed this comment along with the sale bill:

The store has been a going institution in Brewster as long as this writer's memory serves him, and the old town is not going to seem the same without it.⁴²

With the proceeds of the sale, and the subsequent sale of the ranch livestock, Scott was able to pay her creditors. The ranch property carried mortgages equal to its value, and became the property of Scott's attorney, Carl Humphrey. He negotiated an extension of the Federal Land Bank loan and was able to pay off the indebtedness by 1944, when the last of the Scott and Fish property was sold.

Title to the store passed to Selma Farha, their friend and financial partner who, by 1937 was a college professor in Quincy, Illinois. Farha also was the beneficiary of an insurance policy on Allie's life. Farha accepted title to the store and the insurance payment in exchange for forgiveness of the debt owed to her by the Scott and Fish estate. Two other life insurance policies were the only substantial benefits to Libbie from the estate. Once all the debts were resolved, she was left with less than five hundred dollars in assets remaining from a lifetime partnership.

Late that winter Libbie fell ill, sold the Brewster house, and moved to Anselmo, Nebraska, to live with her nephew, Paul Van Neste, and his wife. In January 1938 she died. Her obituary in the *Brewster News* described her life, beginning with her arrival in Blaine County in 1884, and

Elizabeth Scott and Alice Fish of Blaine County, Nebraska

acknowledged the life-long Scott and Fish partnership:

She filed on a homestead in Blaine County near Brewster, and during the time of proving up, met Allie Fish, who later became the other member of a partnership which lasted until the recent death of her partner.⁴³

Women living as domestic and business partners may have faced prejudices and barriers not faced by other frontier women, but comments in the *Brewster News* on the death of Allie Fish in 1937 and Libbie Scott in 1938 reflect a highly positive community view. In personal interviews, longtime residents of Blaine County, some of whom knew Scott and Fish, expressed a continuing respect and admiration for these two pioneers, although their lifelong domestic partnership was occasionally regarded with some suspicion—perhaps more than can be found in the contemporary historical record. In her obituary notice the *Brewster News* called Fish a “landmark in the community,” and expressed this view of her role in the community:

In her life-time, Allie has always been kind and considerate to those with whom she came in contact, especially to the children who grew up around her, and always a booster for any community enterprise, giving freely of her time and financial support.⁴⁴

An unsigned letter to the *News* suggests that others held Fish in equally high regard:

This community was greatly shocked Monday morning when word came that Allie Fish had passed away. Allie, as everyone called her, will be greatly missed in Brewster and community. Our sympathy is extended to the family.⁴⁵

Upon Scott's death in 1938, the *News* characterized her life in these terms:

So far as is known, with the passing of Elizabeth Roberts Scott goes the oldest continuous resident of the County. One who has always extended a helping hand to those about her, specially the children and young people. Libbie and Allie, the “Girls” were especially outstanding in that they always continued to chose their friends and associates from among young people, thus keeping them young in spirit and ideas.⁴⁶



A whimsical picnic, with Libbie feeding an unidentified young woman while an unidentified young man in odd headgear towels a plate, suggests that life on the Scott and Fish Ranch was not exclusively hard work. Courtesy Robert Van Neste

As at Fish's death, an unsigned letter suggests that Scott also was held in high esteem by others in the community:

The entire community was shocked to hear of Libbie Scott's death Sunday. Although she had been failing for some time we didn't realize she would be taken so soon. Libbie, as everyone called her, was loved by old and young alike and will be greatly missed as her heart and home was open to everyone who knew her.⁴⁷

Libbie Scott and Allie Fish ranched and lived together as partners for more than forty years. They lived in a sod house, pitched tons of hay, hitched mules to a wagon for the drive to town, planted corn, borrowed money from banks, negotiated rents with their tenants, and developed business relationships with local farm families and suppliers of their retail inventory. They promoted community growth, served as elected political party representatives, bank directors and church board delegates to statewide conventions.

They also taught Sunday School classes and sang in the choir, organized women's groups, and raised funds for unwed mothers and their children, the Red Cross and Ladies Aid. They advocated woman suffrage, supported friends through their divorces, and pursued justice for women and children. They operated a retail store offering merchandise not available elsewhere in town, including fine women's clothing and hair styling services. They supported cultural and educational activities, including Chautauqua, and organized the community to invest in schools and recreation facilities for adults and children. They provided a safe and supportive home for their nieces and nephews and other orphaned children.

The friendly editors of the local newspaper documented their public lives in its columns, and their life together as independent women ranchers and business partners was unusual enough to be noted in a statewide newspaper in 1902. They shared their home with many friends, and were much appreciated by community members. As evidenced by the personal items published between

1892 and their deaths in 1937 and 1938, they were well known and highly valued members of the community.

Many women came to the Great Plains, like Scott and Fish, as members of homesteading families, and like many other migrants to the West, Scott and Fish learned hard lessons about what the land would sustain and what it demanded of a community and its people. They experienced many of the successes and failures of early Plains settlement and community building. Their stamina, courage, and energy are qualities shared by many homesteaders, male and female, some of whom succeeded, while others failed. What makes Scott and Fish remarkable, if not virtually unique, is their success in controlling their own destiny and pursuing an independent life outside the sphere usually accorded to women.

Their financial failure can be attributed primarily to the Great Depression and the generally unsound idea of turning grasslands into a farmers' paradise, an idea shared by many homesteaders and town builders on the Great Plains. Scott and Fish seem to have realized late in their lives that cattle were the future of the region, and their last gamble in pursuit of their dream was to mortgage their store to finance the purchase of purebred Herefords.

Libbie and Allie's lives represent the pursuit of an agrarian dream modified to fit a family farm and a small business owned and operated by independent women, and redefined to fit a household with joint heads in the truest economic and personal sense. They also redefined family, making it fit themselves, the orphans they raised, the other young people they mentored, and a wide circle of women and men who were kindred souls.

Although theirs was an exceptional household, it was not unique; several other women in Blaine County also successfully pursued a similar dream of independence through land ownership, whether as unmarried women, after the death of a husband, or after being aban-

doned. As helpmates and civilizers, as women have been conventionally described in the past, and as builders of independent lives both in a private sphere and in the public world, they suggest a complex and challenging alternative to the various stereotypical views of women's roles in the West. Experience modified their views, and their behavior as pioneer daughters suggests that they were willing to create new roles for women. Perhaps they may be viewed, as Elizabeth Jameson has described other western women, as people "who did not see themselves as passive civilizers or as uniquely oppressed, as either wholly private or public. They understood that they performed valuable work for their families and their communities whose interests were intertwined."⁴⁸

Scott and Fish succeed in winning respect and credibility in their community. They also provided role models for young people seeking education, cultural growth, and spiritual guidance. By the end of their lives together they appear to have been widely admired, and their lives are testimony to the diversity of experience and women's roles in building the character of the American West.⁴⁹

Notes

¹ "Two Blaine County Young Women Rather Run a Ranch Than a School," *Omaha World-Herald*, May 4, 1902.

² Deborah Fink, *Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880-1940*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 4; Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 2.

³ "Two Blaine County Young Women," *Omaha World-Herald*, May 4, 1902.

⁴ Scott family information is from an oral reminiscence by Sina Scott Van Neste dictated to her daughter-in-law, Almira Graham Van Neste. The undated typescript reminiscence was made available to the author by Robert Van Neste of Lincoln, Nebr.

⁵ A. Fish obituary, *Brewster News*, Feb. 19, 1937.

⁶ *Brewster News*, Mar. 26, 1897.

⁷ *Lincoln Journal*, Aug. 7, 1895. In 1897 the Lincoln Home for the Friendless became a state-funded institution housed in a building constructed with

Elizabeth Scott and Alice Fish of Blaine County, Nebraska

state funds at Tenth and South streets. State law required that it be staffed entirely by women.

⁸ *Custer County Republican*, Mar. 18, 1897; *Brewster News*, May 21, 1897. For a brief account of O'Linn's life see Gertrude Lutz, *Sketches of Some Pioneers* (Chadron, Nebr.: Chadron Printing Co., 1953).

⁹ *Brewster News*, Apr. 8, 1898.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, July 1, July 8, 1898.

¹¹ *Taylor Clarion*, Aug. 4, Aug. 11, 1898; *Brewster News*, Aug. 5, 1898.

¹² *Brewster News*, Sept. 29, 1905 (attributed to the *Custer County Chief*). William Hughes Scott eventually remarried and become a respected resident of Custer County. Anecdotal reports indicate that he attended Libbie Scott's funeral in 1937.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Nov. 11, 1898.

¹⁴ Blaine County Land Records, Register of Deeds, Book I: 112, Blaine County Courthouse, Brewster Nebr.

¹⁵ "Two Blaine County Young Women," *Omaha World-Herald*, May 4, 1902.

¹⁶ *Brewster News*, Feb. 2, 1902. The 12,000-acre figure is a misprint or misstatement; the Scotts probably owned and leased a total of about 1,200 acres in 1900. Blaine County Land Records (Register of Deeds, Book I: 112) show that Scott divided a portion of his ranch between his daughters, Libbie Scott and Sina Van Neste, in 1900, transferring 160 acres to Libbie.

¹⁷ "Two Blaine County Young Women," *Omaha World-Herald*, May 4, 1902.

¹⁸ Blaine County Mortgage Records, Book M. The Kinkaid Act of 1904, enacted as a means of effecting a more general distribution of grazing land and encouraging settlement in range country, provided for homestead units of up to 640 acres in thirty-seven counties of northwestern Nebraska.

¹⁹ The 1910 Census of Blaine County lists Libbie Scott as head of a household that also included her mother, Pauline Scott, and a young man named Lloyd Wescott, apparently an orphan taken in by the Scotts. Allie Fish is listed as head of a household nearby, probably the homestead she filed in her own name. The census taker was Libbie's brother-in-law, Charles Van Neste.

²⁰ *Brewster News*, May 6, 1910, Apr. 5, 1912, Mar. 29, 1912.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 26, Nov. 11, 1910.

²² *Ibid.*, Jan. 15, 1913.

²³ *Ibid.*, May 30, 1913.

²⁴ Elsie Nomann, interview with the author, May 15, 2000.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Oct. 29, 1915.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Dec. 25, 1925.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Apr. 13, 1923, Nov. 7, 1924, Apr. 24, 1925, June 23, 1934.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Jul. 13, 1914, Mar. 17, 1914.

²⁹ *Daily Proceedings of the Thirty-fourth Session of the Nebraska House of Representatives*, (Lincoln: Nebraska State Legislature, 1915), 11.

³⁰ *Brewster News*, Aug. 18, 1922. Humphrey served one term in the House of Representatives.

³¹ Robert Van Neste, interview with the author, Oct. 23, 2000; Sina Scott Van Neste reminiscence; *Brewster News*, Feb. 13, 1925.

³² Nomann interview.

³³ *Brewster News*, Jan. 3, 1919, May 14, 1926.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Aug. 20, 1920, July 12, 1912, Apr. 22, 1927.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Oct. 10, 1930. In November 1932, the Farmers Union announced a dividend to be paid only to customers whose dues were current. The board president invited the ladies of the organization to bring lunch for the occasion. No women

ever served as a board member or store manager for the Blaine County Farmers Union.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, May 22, 1931.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Jan. 9, 1931.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Oct. 13, 1933.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, June 22, 1934.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; Blaine County Mortgage Records, Books L and M.

⁴¹ *Brewster News*, June 5, 1936.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Nov. 26, 1937.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Jan. 28, 1938.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Feb. 19, 1937.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Feb. 26, 1937.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Jan. 28, 1938.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," *Frontiers* 8 (1984): 7.

⁴⁹ In recent years many scholars have suggested that women's roles in building the frontier West have been overlooked, or described using stereotypes that mask the complexity of women's lives and contributions. Several recent studies have attempted to supply this missing element with accounts of individual women's experiences, and with analysis of the social attitudes and constraints that have obscured a complete record of the history of women in the West. In addition to studies previously cited, readers may also wish to consult Glenda Riley and Richard W. Etulain, eds., *By Grit and Grace: Eleven Women Who Shaped the American West* (Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publications, 1997); Nancy Wilson Ross, *Westward the Women* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985); Joanna L. Stratton, *Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1981); and Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds., *The Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).