

**“The Girl I Left Behind Me”  
Army Officers’ Wives on the Great Plains 1866 -1900**

**Lesson Plan III: Primary and Secondary Sources in the Study of Women’s History**

**Recommended Grade Level:** 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>

**Description:** In these lessons, students will learn to evaluate primary and secondary sources for their perspective and accuracy. They will analyze primary sources and write a short essay which becomes a secondary source.

Students will also learn to cite references and write a footnote or endnote.

Teachers may want to familiarize students with the use of the footnote or endnote tools on their writing software. (In WORD it is found in *insert>reference>footnote*. In Word Perfect it is found in *insert>footnote*)

There are several opportunities for study in this lesson. Teachers may want to use all of the activities, or only a few of the activities, or let students choose which activity is most interesting. These materials would make a good foundation for a larger research project for class or for National History Day.

**Time Required:** About 2-4 class periods depending on teacher’s interest in utilizing all of the activities in the lessons.

**National History Standards:**

- Standard 2: Historical Comprehension
- Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation
- Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities
- Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

**Background:** The letters and memoirs of Army officers and their wives tell of a great variety of temperaments, marital relationships, and gender expectations. And yet, women had to find a way to “fit in” with the prevailing notions of what an Army wife should be and do (another word for this idea is gender). Each of the quotations the students will read will give a very different description of an Army wife. If the students read just one of these, they should understand that their view will be different than if they read all four.

**Objectives:**

- Students will recognize primary sources
- Students will recognize secondary sources
- Students will expand on their historical research skills
- Students will write a historical essay with citations

**Preparation:** Students should be directed to read the four specific quotations before reading the entire section. Before they write the one-page essay, they should read “Much Depends Upon a Wife: Personal Relationships and Family Life.”

**Glossary:** Teachers may wish to have students become familiar with the following terms either by reading this glossary or by studying these terms in a good dictionary.

**Primary sources:** Documents which were created by people who observed or lived through the event under study. These may include letters, diaries, memoirs, government reports, and church or school documents.

**Secondary sources:** Documents created by someone who has read and studied primary sources to determine their meaning. The secondary source usually includes an analysis of why the events described by the primary source are important. Historians usually write secondary sources.

**Citation:** Reference to a primary or secondary source that is written in a systematic way. A citation should allow the reader to find the exact source the author used.

**Bibliography:** An organized list of reference materials that were used in writing a history. Bibliography entries are compiled in a systematic method that allows the reader to locate the book or article or primary document. Bibliographies are generally organized in alphabetical order and categorized as Primary Sources and Secondary Sources.

**Memoir:** A book or essay written from memory, notes, or a diary which is intended to be read by other people, usually the general public. Memoirs are good sources of historical information because they usually include first person accounts of historic events; they are bad sources of historical information because a person's memory might not be accurate, or the author may write to enhance their own role in a historic event.

**Activity I.** Students read the paragraph taken from Lieutenant Frank Baldwin's letter to Alice Baldwin (dated September 27, 1876) at about page 3 of the section titled "Much Depends Upon a Wife."

*Be an ornament to . . . society, which you are fully competent and able to be, although you may not have all the finery that a few others may have, remember that true greatness lays [sic] in an honest, true, and upright heart, and feel, my darling, that you can by your interests in me and my welfare do a great deal to aid me . . . . You know how much depends on a wife. I believe most fully she can and will cheer her husband in hours of darkness when his prospects are gloomy and improsperous. (Steinbach, p.105)*

In a small group, or the entire class, discuss the following questions:

- a. To whom did Frank Baldwin address this letter?
- b. Did he mean for it to be read by the general public?
- c. Is he *describing* his wife's behavior as it is? Or is he *prescribing* the behavior that she should follow? What is the difference?

**Activity II.** Students read the paragraph taken from Alice Grierson's letter to her husband Colonel Benjamin Grierson, dated April 4, 1866. This is found on about page 4 of "Much Depends Upon A Wife."

*Before we were married I told you I wanted a certain amount of money of my own, to use just as a husband does, exactly as he pleases, or thinks right or proper. . . . You know of course there never has been such an arrangement, and I never have been, and don't know that I ever shall be quite satisfied without it, unless you should come really to think the money you earn, as much mine as yours, which you certainly do not now.*

In the same letter, Alice suggested that Ben might think back to their courtship days and in so doing, might

*deliberately and willfully, [fall] in love with me over again, so deeply too, that you almost entertained the absurd idea, that an earnest – truthful – woman might perhaps have as clear, and just, notions of right and wrong in even business matters as a man. (Leckie, p. 13-14)*

In a small group, or the entire class, discuss the following questions:

- a. To whom did Alice Grierson address this letter?
- b. Did she mean for it to be read by the general public?
- c. What was she asking for? Does she sound like the kind of wife that Frank Baldwin would have wanted?

**Activity III.** Students read the paragraph taken from Frances Grummond Carrington's memoir of her journey home from Fort Phil Kearney in 1867. Annie Sokalski was the widow of a captain who had recently died of disease at a Great Plains post.

*Annie Sokalski flourished into the room with her two favorite dogs, Romeo and Juliet, . . . unbuckled her belt from which two revolvers were suspended and handed them to the lieutenant with these laconic instructions: 'have these pistols repaired at once, and see to it that the same are returned, for if exchanged or otherwise appropriated I can identify them anywhere in the United States.' (F. Carrington, p. 208-209)*

In a small group, or the entire class, discuss the following questions:

- a. To whom did Frances Grummond address this paragraph?
- b. Did she mean for it to be read by the general public?
- c. What do you think Frances Grummond thought of Annie Sokalski? Do you think she would have enjoyed having her as a next-door neighbor?

**Activity IV.** Students read the paragraph taken from a letter written by Lieutenant George Howe in 1873. The women he refers to are officers' wives who are traveling up the Missouri River to join their husbands at a Great Plains Army post.

*[The women] have all been more or less sick, cooped up in the small cabin of a rear wheeled boat, living on the most atrocious of boat fare for 34 days. During that time they have succeeded in discovering each other's failings with astonishing distinctness, and, from all I hear, have made the atmosphere pretty warm. (Howe, p. 527)*

In a small group, or the entire class, discuss the following questions:

- a. George Howe wrote this letter to his mother. Do you think he meant for it to be read by the general public?
- b. What did he mean when he said that the women had been “discovering each other’s failings?”
- c. Since Howe was on the boat with the officers’ wives, do you think this paragraph is completely accurate? Is he a first hand observer?

**Activity V.** Students should read the Section titled “Much Depends Upon a Wife: Personal Relationships and Family Life.” In small group, or whole class discussion, consider the following questions:

- a. What was the accepted position and behavior of a typical Army wife?
- b. Does the author of this web-site, Dr. Handy-Marchello, have sufficient evidence from primary sources to state (on page 18) that “the evaluation of the other women in the command was an on-going process and sometimes resulted in a quarrel if they were in close quarters.”

**Activity VI.** Students write a short (1 to 2 pages) essay describing their understanding of an Army officer’s wife – including her behavior, her work, her relationships with her husband and other officers’ wives. Use the four paragraphs studied above for evidence.

**Citations:** When students write the essay on Army officers’ wives, they may quote from these four passages. Or, they may refer to the passages in their own words, paraphrasing the idea and intent of the passage. In either case, the writer must give credit to the author for words and ideas. To do so, students need to cite the reference. These quotations should be properly cited to the author of the web page and the person who first wrote the words. If the students were reading the primary sources directly, they might cite only the primary source.

There are several different citation styles. MLA style is used widely, but most historians use *Chicago Manual of Style* (often called Turabian after its famous first editor). You can access a useful website for complete Chicago formats at <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html>. Historians using Chicago style cite their references with either footnotes or endnotes.

Computer writing programs usually include a key for positioning and numbering footnotes or endnotes. A proper citation for the quotation in Activity III above is:  
1. Frances Grummond Carrington, *My Army Life and the Fort Phil Kearney Massacre* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910.) Reprint, (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1993), 208-209. Quoted in Barbara Handy-Marchello, “The Girl I Left Behind Me: Army Officers’ Wives on the Great Plains, 1866-1900,” internet address, date accessed.

The citations for this work are complicated, but students should be able to see that they have offered their readers a clear path for locating the information they cite.

To obtain the full citation information, students will have to refer to the Bibliography. However, remind students that bibliography format and footnote/endnote format are slightly different.