

Elizabeth "Bettie" Duncan: Diary of Daily Life, 1864

by Katie H. Armitage

ELIZABETH DUNCAN LIVED an ordinary life in an extraordinary time. Elizabeth, or "Bettie" as she referred to herself,¹ began her diary about four months after Quantrill's raid in August of 1863 had devastated Lawrence. Two months before her final entry of December 1864, she and her family had briefly fled their home in fear of another attack. These traumatic events bracketed the year, but they only periodically intruded into Bettie Duncan's life in which most traumas were of a personal or family nature. This article will examine Bettie Duncan's diary for patterns of daily life and for family and community relationships in a tension-filled time in Lawrence, Kansas, near the end of the American Civil War.

Bettie Duncan's diary provides an unusual perspective on this period in Lawrence. She was mostly an observer of events rather than one who shaped the outcome. In her account, the effects of the widely documented raid on Lawrence and other threats to the town reverberate, but they were not the primary focus of her concerns. Yet, her account is typical of many women's diaries of the nineteenth century for as histo-

rian Sandra L. Myres, who has examined hundreds of diaries, has observed:

Most diaries from the settlement period are daybooks or journals of events, usually intended for private use. Women's diaries of this type often include elements of the journals of conscience as well. Girls in the nineteenth century were encouraged to keep spiritual diaries and to look to their religious development so that they might be better wives and mothers and direct the family's religious life.²

The use of such private accounts for historical purposes has increased in recent years. A recent article on writing and teaching western history discussed the value of diaries and letters of ordinary people:

Listening to their voices and perceptions can fundamentally alter our sense of our subject. The values those women (and men) expressed in their diaries, in their letters home, in the stories they told their children, in their churches, in whatever religious beliefs shaped their understanding of the world, in the meanings they attached to their daily labors: these are as important to the "image" of the West as any dime novel or Wild West show hero.³

Bettie Duncan's private words can best be heard by readers today from within the context of the ideas and expectations of women of her time and status. Born Elizabeth Watts in Kentucky in 1837,⁴ Bettie Duncan grew up in the period when a new set of ideals of

Katie H. Armitage is a program specialist in the education division at the Kansas Museum of History. Interest in the Duncan diary and this article developed from an exhibit, "Their Story: Women of Lawrence and Douglas County, Kansas, 1854-1915," that was directed by Mrs. Armitage in 1980 at the Elizabeth M. Watkins Community Museum, Lawrence.

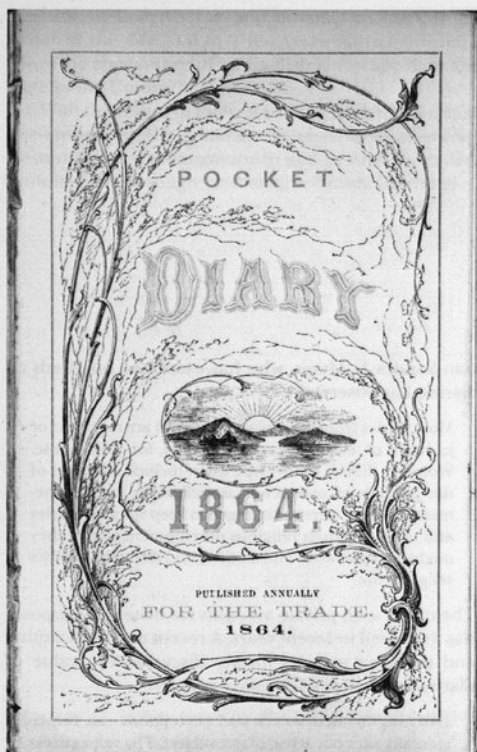
The author would like to thank Marilyn Dell Brady, Laura Tilson Carroll, Nona Brown Thompson, and Barbara Watkins for their assistance in the development of this article, and Ann Clausen, director of Watkins Museum, 1977-79, for encouraging research on the diary.

1. Elizabeth Duncan's 1864 diary, now in the Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, was signed "Bettie Duncan" at the end of the December 1, 1864, entry. All public documents, such as census records and newspapers, list her as Elizabeth, but her choice of the shortened form of Elizabeth, Bettie, will be used in this article.

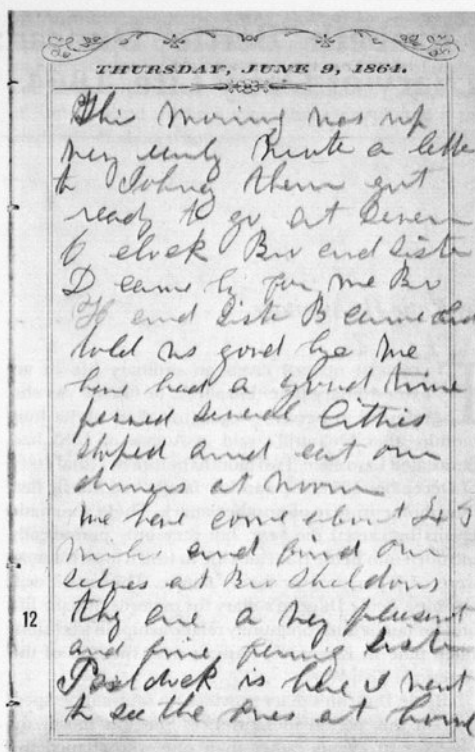
2. Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), xix.

3. William Cronon et al., "Women and the West: Rethinking the Western History Survey Course," *Western Historical Quarterly* 17 (July 1986): 277.

4. *United States Biographical Directory, Kansas Volume* (Chicago: S. Lewis and Co., 1879), 630; *Lawrence Standard*, October 2, 1879; *Lawrence Daily Journal*, September 27, 1879. The granite tombstone for the Duncan family in Oak Hill Cemetery, Lawrence, gives Elizabeth Duncan's date of birth as October 18, 1837.



Elizabeth "Bettie" Duncan faithfully kept a diary during the tumultuous year of 1864. The diary entries, almost devoid of punctuation, kept a record of events and personal thoughts.



womanhood became widely accepted. Historian Barbara Welter has identified these attributes, as presented by women's magazines, gift annuals and religious literature of the period, as "the cult of true womanhood."

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman.⁵

Bettie Duncan may not have described herself as a "true woman" or even as an "evangelical woman," a category that another historian has identified as a particular

category of a "true woman"⁶ of the nineteenth century, but her activities and longings place her solidly within that framework. Early in January, after spending all day at home sewing, Bettie concluded her diary entry:

I have felt the Lord to be with me to day while at secret prayer Bless the Lord for religion how many dark hours it makes bright how many hurts that wo[u]ld be sad is gladden by the comforts of religion O that I was more faithful and devoted O for a deeper work of grace in my poor heart⁷

5. Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 27.

6. Ronald Hogeland is credited with distinguishing four distinct modes, including the "evangelical woman." See Anne M. Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: The Role of Women in Sunday Schools," *Feminist Studies*, 4 (October 1978): 62.

7. Bettie Duncan, January 19, 1864.

With the exception of several days when she was away from home without "my book," Bettie Duncan faithfully kept the diary in her cramped handwriting. The diary entries were almost devoid of punctuation and had many misspellings. These have been preserved as faithfully as readability will allow in the quotes presented here.

Daily she noted the weather conditions, recorded her activities and the people she saw. She noted only occasionally significant events, but she examined almost daily her own spiritual and emotional state. At the time she began the 1864 diary, Bettie Duncan was twenty-six years old and had been married for almost ten years to pioneer Lawrence businessman, Wesley Harvey Duncan. How the very young Elizabeth Watts had met and married a widower twenty-three years her senior is not entirely clear, but it may have been through a family connection. Bettie's sister, Adeline, was married to Wesley's cousin and sometimes business partner, Charles Duncan.⁸

Another relative, a favorite nephew, was responsible for Bettie having the new diary, and her admiration for him probably spurred her desire to begin it. On January 1, 1864, she made this entry:

This morning was intens[e]ly cold but I think some warmer than yesterday I wished all the folks a happy new year. About noon Fred Eggert...presented me this book which I value very highly....

On the second day of the new year, 1864, the consequences of the Civil War fighting far from Lawrence came home.

To day has been very pleasant had several callers... this afternoon Sister Jones and me went to call on Mrs Sutherland who has a son just brought home from the army a corpse poor woman how I pity her we then went down town met my sister and Bro Dennis. This evening Sister P and me went over to the Rev Ds to sit awhile We did have a nice time I have been particularly tired today I fear I give in to my feelings to[o] much I am going to try to live a more elevated life this year than I did last

The year, however, was a difficult one for Bettie Duncan.

Over one hundred persons were mentioned in the diary. Most were residents of Lawrence, a ten-year-old city with a population of over three thousand. Bettie's most frequent references were to her family, which included her fifty-year-old husband, Wesley; her daughters, two-year-old Katie, and one-year-old Bettie; her seventeen-year-old stepson, William, referred to as Willie; and her nineteen-year-old domestic helper, Ella Jackson,

who also lived in the Duncan household.⁹ Fred, the twenty-one-year-old nephew who had presented the diary and was often mentioned in it, had a few years earlier lived in the Duncan household and still clerked in Wesley Duncan's store.¹⁰ Bettie's sisters, Adeline Duncan and Lucetta Gabhart, figured in the diary. Bettie always used formal titles for persons considerably older than herself, regardless of their relationship to her. Thus, her older sister was "Mrs Gabhart," her husband invariably "Mr Duncan" or "Mr D," while Adeline, Fred and Ella, all nearer her own age, were recorded in the diary by their first names.

Almost as important in the diary as family members were Methodist ministers' families, the Dennises and Paddocks, and the Duncans' neighbor, Mrs. Blacklidge, whose husband was away in Washington on city business. Methodist friends were usually referred to as "Bro" and "Sister," and persons with rank were addressed by proper title. Isaac Goodnow, founder of Manhattan, Kansas, and the Methodist college there, appeared as a Duncan houseguest and was referred to as "Bro Goodnow." Mary Lane, a member of Bettie Duncan's Methodist Ladies' Social Circle, appeared in the diary as "Mrs Gen Lane," as befitted the wife of U.S. senator James Lane, the 1861 leader of the Frontier Guard. Free-state leader Samuel Walker and his wife appeared in the diary as "Major Walker and wife" when they were guests in the Duncan home. Edmund G. Ross, commander of Union troops sent to Lawrence after Quantrill's raid, was referred to in the diary as "Capt Ross." Ross' order forbidding his troops to patronize the local saloon so endeared him to the ladies of Lawrence that they prepared a present to show their appreciation. Bettie wrote in her April 8 diary entry:

Sister Blackli[d]ge and me intended to go over to Capt Rosses camp this afternoon as the Ladies of our place was going to present him with an album and each

9. Kansas State Agricultural Census, 1865, Douglas County, City of Lawrence, schedule 1, microfilm roll 3, p. 36-37, Lawrence Public Library.

10. The 1860 U.S. census lists Fred Eggert as a member of the Duncan household. The city directory of Lawrence for the same time period lists him as employed by Duncan and Hornsby and as a boarder at the Whitney House. Although the census spells the name Eggert, the name appears as Eggert in the city directory, diary, and Mary Patterson Clarke, *History of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Lawrence, Kansas* (Kansas City, Mo.: Franklin Publishing Co., 1915), 26, 36, 39. See also U.S. Census, 1860, Douglas County, City of Lawrence, schedule 1, microfilm roll 74, copy T-7, p. 4, Kansas State Historical Society; *Lawrence City Directory and Business Mirror for 1860-61* (Indianapolis, Ind.: James Sutherland, n.d.), 14. The Duncan residence is listed as being at 113 Massachusetts.

8. *United States Biographical Directory, Kansas Volume*, 629-30.



In 1864 the ladies of Lawrence prepared an album of their photographs for presentation to Capt. Edmund G. Ross. The likeness of Bettie Duncan, upper right, was bordered by those of two women given mention in her diary: Mrs. Paddock, upper left, wife of a Methodist minister, and Mrs. Blacklidge, bottom right, a neighbor.

contributed there [sic] picture in it but the rain prevented us from going over....¹¹

Other than a few ventures outside the boundaries of Lawrence, Bettie Duncan for all of 1864 stayed within the confines of a four-block area bounded by the Duncan home, at what is today 1047 Massachusetts Street, the Duncan store in the 700 block of Massachusetts Street, and the First Methodist Episcopal Church in the 700 block of Vermont Street.¹² Most of her days were spent in her own household, in visits to the homes of friends, and in shopping trips to downtown businesses near the Kansas River. Three or four days a week were given over to services or activities of the Methodist church. This pattern of life was typical of many women of her time and of her social and economic class. As women's historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has observed: "Most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women lived within a world bounded by home, church, and the institution of visiting—that endless trooping of women to one another's homes for social purposes."¹³ Even when entire days were spent at home sewing, she was visited by friends, and when at home ill, she had a steady stream of visitors. Though Bettie Duncan confessed to her diary that she was sometimes lonely, she was seldom alone.

The pattern of Bettie's week included church, thirty-seven of fifty-two Sunday mornings in 1864, as well as afternoon Sunday school class and evening service. Washing alongside Ella Jackson consumed her Mondays; prayer meetings were a highlight of Tuesday and Thursday evenings; Ladies' Social Circle of the church met every other Wednesday; household duties, visiting, and sewing occupied Fridays and Saturdays. Bettie varied this routine only during times of illness, trips out of town, or adverse weather conditions. Her husband, Wesley Harvey Duncan, spent his days attending to his business, which must have been especially demanding in the months after the raid when Lawrence was rebuilding.

11. The "Ladies of Lawrence Album" is in the Kansas Collection, University of Kansas. Bettie Duncan's photograph is in the album. The name Blackidge was given at least two other spellings in the diary, but Blackidge would seem to be correct for the Lawrence city directories consistently listed A. N. Blackidge, who was Mrs. Blackidge's husband and a justice of the peace.

12. Almost seventy years later, Ella Jackson's daughter located the Duncan home at the time of the raid as being on the site where the Watkins Bank later stood; this is the present site of the Watkins Community Museum. See *Lawrence Daily Journal World*, November 15, 1933, in Lawrence Scrapbook, Kansas Collection, University of Kansas. For information on the new Methodist church being constructed at Tenth and Massachusetts, near the Duncan home, see Clarke, *History of the First Methodist Episcopal Church*, 26, 29-30.

13. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct, Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 61.

Duncan and his son Willie, who also worked at the store, came home for "dinner," the midday meal at one or two in the afternoon, then returned to the store until evening. Only on Sunday did Duncan's weekly routine intersect with Bettie's activities.

Bettie Duncan was fully occupied with household duties such as baking, canning, ironing, gardening, and on one occasion, milking cows, even though she had household help and the Duncan household was more prosperous than most. In the 1865 census, Wesley Harvey Duncan was listed as owning real estate worth \$18,000 and with a personal estate of \$20,000.¹⁴ This substantial sum in 1865 was despite his loss of \$20,000 in Quantrill's raid in which Duncan's business partner, Duncan Allison, died. As did most Lawrence businessmen, Wesley Duncan immediately reopened his store on Massachusetts Street. His new partner was Lawrence businessman, Robert Morrow.¹⁵

Evidence in Bettie Duncan's diary indicated that the two-story Duncan home in 1864 was spacious and well furnished. During the year she noted that new chairs and a dining room table were purchased, rooms were plastered and papered, and a parlor carpet was laid. She was also well dressed. In the course of the year she acquired several new dresses, black silk, linen, calico, a "ladies cloth dress," and shoes. The material for the dresses and other purchased goods came from the Duncan store where she also procured gifts for family and friends. Bettie Duncan had many problems in 1864—a family crisis, poor health, and the threat of another raid—but lack of material goods and comforts was not one of them.

The Duncans' earliest years in Lawrence had been more typical of a new frontier community. Wesley Duncan, his young bride Bettie, and Willie, the seven-year-old son from his first marriage, moved to the new settlement of Lawrence in May 1855 and set up house-keeping in a small log house on a hillside southwest of downtown. Bettie's first-born child, Alphonso Duncan, died in Lawrence at age two in July 1857, and six months later she lost her second son, Willis Edward, age ten months, who died of "inflammation of the brain." In 1856 Wesley Duncan opened a general store in Lawrence with his cousin and brother-in-law, Charles

14. Kansas State Agricultural Census, 1865, schedule 1, microfilm roll 3, p. 36, Lawrence Public Library.

15. For Duncan's losses in the raid, see *United States Biographical Dictionary, Kansas Volume*, 630. Richard Cordley, *A History of Lawrence, Kansas, From First Settlement to the Close of the Rebellion* (Lawrence: E. F. Caldwell, 1895), 251, reported that the "sentiment for rebuilding was universal.... It was a matter of conscience.... There were business reasons too.... They who rebuilt and resumed at once would retain their trade, and in many cases that was a fortune."

Duncan (husband of Bettie's sister, Adeline). This partnership dissolved amicably and Wesley Duncan entered the dry goods and grocery business with two successive partners.¹⁶

Wesley Duncan had a good deal of business experience to draw upon when he reopened his store in "Miller's New Block" on Massachusetts Street after the raid. The Duncan and Morrow store advertised dry goods, groceries, boots, shoes, crockery, and glassware. Early in 1864 their newspaper advertisement promised readers, "We have on hand and are constantly receiving large stocks of goods, which we are prepared to sell at as low rates as can be purchased here or elsewhere."¹⁷ Bettie often visited this well stocked store, as this typical diary entry of March 16, 1864, illustrated:

Some pleasanter to day but still a little cool this morning. I took little Katie and went down town went into several stores then to ours saw Mr D and Fred then went down to sister Adelines st[a]yed until after dinner then came home by the store. Fred was standing out he came part way home with me Bless his dear life he does seem to be a brother to me. Bro P_____ and wife Bro Robinson and Bro Barrick are here to night on there [sic] way home from conference to night I feel miserably depressed in spirits

This entry is also typical of many in the mention of overnight guests in the Duncan home, in this case Methodists who had traveled to their regional conference. Also typical of many diary entries was her feeling of depression despite her full day of activities and the companionship of her sister and her houseguests.

The precise causes of the depression from which Bettie Duncan suffered cannot be determined but it must have been related in some sense to the realities of her life and the conception of what she believed her life should be. There was evidence of distance in the Duncan marriage. Not only the age difference but certain temperamental differences separated husband and wife. Many times in the diary Bettie referred to good talks with her nephew Fred and other friends, but only on one

occasion did she record talking with her husband. There were also other evidences of a lack of communication. Late in the year, on December 3, Duncan was out all night turkey hunting without his wife knowing where he was. Bettie expressed her worry and gave a veiled rebuke in her diary:

am very lonely and sad to night it is now near one O clock at night and all are sleeping around me but that well known step of my own loved one has not yet been he[a]rd why is it he will give me so many anxious hours

After Duncan returned the next morning, he stayed at home with the baby, Cettie, while Bettie and Ella Jackson attended church.

Certainly Wesley and Bettie Duncan spent their days in different worlds or "spheres," as the different social roles assigned to men and women were perceived at the time and have been contemporarily described by historians. Most nineteenth-century marriages followed this pattern without necessarily being bereft of emotional intimacy as the Duncan marriage seems to have been.¹⁸ Wesley Duncan was characterized in his later years by a granddaughter as a "ruthless, clever man who made lots of money."¹⁹ Business, fraternal, and public life absorbed his attention. He served as the first city treasurer of Lawrence in 1858 and he was a longtime member of the Masonic Lodge. After the 1863 raid on Lawrence, he had the added obligation of participating in the home guard, as did all Lawrence men not serving in regular Kansas regiments.²⁰ Bettie's life centered on home, friends, and church. In private she engaged in Bible reading and prayer. Several times in her diary she vowed to "live a Christian life."

Whatever their differences in daily activities and spiritual life, Wesley Duncan was the dominant figure in his wife's diary. Bettie mentioned her husband over three hundred times in the course of the year, more than any other person. She noted his activities, his health, and sometimes his moods. Husband and wife attended

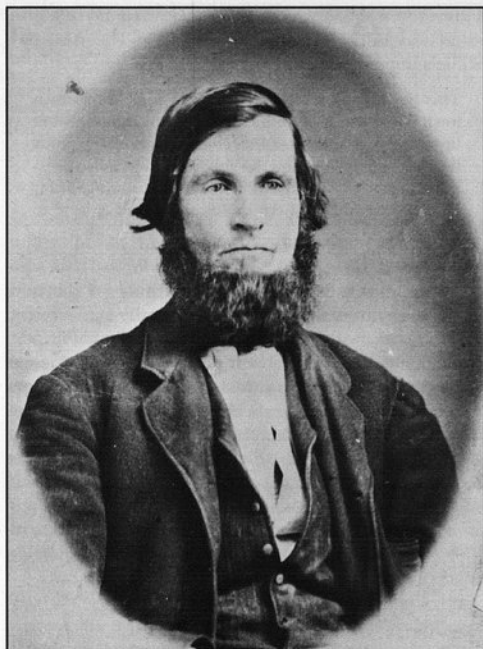
16. For information on the first Duncan home and Alphonso Duncan, see *Lawrence Standard*, October 22, 1879, and the Duncan gravestone in Pioneer Cemetery, Lawrence. For Willis Edward Duncan, see *Herald of Freedom*, Lawrence, December 26, 1857, and B. Jean Snedeger, comp., *Complete Tombstone Census of Douglas County, Kansas* vol. 1 (Douglas County, Kansas, Genealogical Society, Inc., 1987), 258. There also may have been a third Duncan child to die in infancy. The mortality schedule for Douglas County, June 1, 1859-May 31, 1860, lists E. Duncan, one year old, dying in May 1860. See Snedeger, *Tombstone Census*, 270. For the opening of the first store, see *Herald of Freedom*, November 1, 1856. For Duncan's business partnerships, see *United States Biographical Dictionary, Kansas Volume*, 630.

17. *Kansas State Journal*, Lawrence, March 10, April 7, 14, 21, May 12, 19, June 2, 9, August 18, 1864.

18. Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 26. After citing an example of a close marriage, Degler added, "The love and warmth that flowed between...[this couple] were probably not typical of middle-class marriages of the Victorian era...But the affection and emotional dependence were not rare, even among families less well off, or in which spouses were less suited to one another," 35-36.

19. Cettie Duncan became Mrs. Nelson O. Stevens, and their daughter, Myra Blackburn, donated the Duncan materials to the Kansas Collection and made this observation of her grandfather in transmittal communications.

20. Wesley Duncan was a member of the Lawrence Masonic Lodge from 1857 to his death in 1902. See *In the Beginning, A History and Roster... of Lawrence Lodge No. 6, A.F. & A.M.* (no imprint), 64.



Bettie Duncan's husband, Wesley Harvey Duncan, was a pioneer Lawrence businessman and twenty-three years her senior.

public functions, such as weddings, funerals, and Sunday morning church services together. Occasionally, Duncan joined in the monthly suppers to which the men were invited following the meeting of the Methodist Ladies' Social Circle. But, their religious involvement differed in nature and degree. Bettie structured her homelife and her weekly activities on personal religious practice, church meetings, and a network of Methodist friends. Other than Sunday worship and financial contributions to the church building funds, Wesley Duncan attended to other matters. In this difference in religious participation, the Duncans were not unusual. Historian Sandra L. Myres in her study of western settlement observed, "serious religion was woman's work."²¹

Bettie Duncan was a charter member of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Lawrence, but Wesley Duncan did not formally unite with the church. His reasons were not stated, but they may have been related to his Baptist upbringing in a time when doctrinal

differences were contentious matters.²² However, it was not at church but in the home that the divergence in religious devotion between husband and wife created problems for Bettie Duncan. Protestant religious leaders viewed private study and worship as important, but in sermons and writings they emphasized that the religious life of the family was an extension of the religious life of the individual. A recent study of the Christian home in the nineteenth century stated this case:

Private devotion might eliminate hypocritical or ostentatious worship, but it ignored two values held dear in the nineteenth century: the family and the social role of religion.... Family prayer not only seemed natural to the home but also maintained its sacredness....

Protestant ministers and writers encouraged families to organize family worship twice a day.²³

The lapse in religious expression, as revealed in Bettie Duncan's diary entry of December 16, was especially troubling to this woman who took her obligations so seriously.

Cloudy and cold but thawing some have been at home all day with the horrors Cant write much. Tried to have family pray[er] to night find it to be a heavy cross can not get courage enough to pray before Mr Dun[can] we have prayers before he comes home O for a deeper work of grace in my poor heart

In the diary Bettie often expressed feeling "blue," but her use of the word "horrors" to describe her extreme apprehension on December 16 was unique in the diary year.

At a time when women were the moral guardians of the home, mothers bore a special responsibility to their sons and husbands.²⁴ A crisis in the Duncan family early in 1864 was especially distressing for Bettie as it indicated that she had not created the right home atmosphere. As historian Barbara Welter observed in her study of American women in the nineteenth century, "Home was supposed to be a cheerful place, so that brothers, husbands and sons would not go elsewhere in search of good times."²⁵ When seventeen-year-old Willie Duncan ran away from home while his father was on an

22. Duncan's mother was a Baptist and four uncles were Baptist ministers. Although not a member, Duncan was a generous contributor to the Lawrence Methodist congregation. See *United States Biographical Dictionary, Kansas Volume*, 629. Some accounts of the founding of the Lawrence Methodist Episcopal Church list seven charter members; others list twelve. Clarke, *History of the First Methodist Episcopal Church*, 11, concludes, "The first members probably included Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Duncan, Mrs. Wesley Duncan..." and nine others.

23. Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 78-79.

24. *Ibid.*, 129.

25. Welter, *Dimity Convictions*, 31.

21. Myres, *Westering Women*, 186.

overnight trip to Fort Scott, Bettie was distraught. Her comfort in this time of trial came from her nephew, Fred Eggert, and help in finding the boy came from her brother-in-law, Charles Duncan, as indicated in her diary entry of Tuesday, March 29, 1864.

Very muddy and windy to day this has been one of the saddest days of my life All night last night I laid in sleepless agony expecting Willie to come home but he did not come early this morning I went down to town to see about him found he left town about nine O clock yesterday morning. Charles Duncan has gone after him we hear he has gone toward Kansas City. O how much grace we need to bear the trials and temptations of life this evening I went down town again Fred came home with me I do know he is the dearest boy ever lived God Bless him forever I do love him....

The following days were equally sad and anxious for Bettie Duncan who must have suffered, feeling herself a failure to properly influence her stepson as a mother was expected to do. Although Willie was located, he refused to come home. However, when Wesley Duncan returned from his business trip, he retrieved his son from Kansas City and both returned to Lawrence on April 2. Bettie expressed despair in her diary, "I can not express my feelings only I can say I have no desire to live any longer." Family tension continued, for on the next day she wrote, "I have had my patience very severely tried."²⁶

During this family crisis Bettie Duncan's sister, Adeline, wife of Charles Duncan, gave birth to a son. In the circumspect manner of dealing with such intimate matters,²⁷ Bettie only observed in her diary on April 1, "I went down to see Sister Adeline she has a young son." On Monday April 4, she visited the mother and new baby even as she was preoccupied with resolving the situation with Willie.

I went down to see Sister Adeline she is getting along nicely... I came home by the store feeling just as angry as I ever had in all my life I have made up my mind that I will not be imposed on any longer by the one that has caused me more trouble than all others in the world

26. Bettie Duncan, April 2, 3, 1864.

27. Degler, *At Odds*, 59, observes that "few women wrote about their pregnancies.... A modern reader of their most private journals and letters is often brought up short to learn of the birth of a baby." The Charles Duncan household, as listed in the 1865 state census, included Charles S., 43; Adeline H., 37; Maggie W., 18; John O., 16; Sybil, 14; Flemon W., 10; Charles S., Jr., 5; Howard, 1 (the newborn mentioned in Bettie's diary); and Mary Hobbs (a domestic), 17. See Kansas Agricultural Census, 1865, Douglas County, City of Lawrence, schedule 1, microfilm roll 3, p.69, Lawrence Public Library.

This reference to anger and to a decision to make a firm stand was unprecedented in the diary. The next day Willie's immediate future was settled.

This has been a lovely day this morning I went down town had a long talk with Charles [Duncan] then went up to the store and got Willies clothes for him to go away to school got my self and the children a new calico dress have been at home the rest of the day sewing. Sister Paddock came back here this evening and is here to night²⁸

Sister Paddock, wife of the Rev. George W. Paddock who was traveling in the East soliciting funds for the new Methodist church building, stayed with the Duncans for most of the month that the tensions with Willie persisted. Bettie may have been particularly embarrassed that her minister's wife witnessed this family conflict. As a diary entry on April 6 indicated, Sister Paddock was not a confidante to Bettie for although "Sister P is here again to night," Bettie wished for "some dear friend to day some one that I could tell my trials to."

28. Bettie Duncan, April 5, 1864.



The Methodist church in Lawrence was a center for Bettie Duncan's social and spiritual life. In her diary entries she referred to the new structure that would replace the church building shown here.

Not for another month did Willie actually leave. During the interval his behavior exasperated his step-mother. On April 12, Bettie wrote:

This morning I went down town... Mr Duncan was not in when I went. Fred went for him. Again we had a talk of what course to take with our wayward son. O how our hearts is made to bleed the way he acts my only hope now is prayer I have quit every other effort...

During this period Bettie also took notice of a milestone in her husband's life. On April 18 she recorded without amplification, "This is Mr Duncans birthday he is fifty years old to day I have a bad head ache to day." Finally, on May 3 she wrote, "This morning Mr Duncan started to Ohio with Willie [and] Johnny to school I felt both sorry and glad to see them start." Apparently Charles and Adeline Duncan had decided to send their fifteen-year-old son, John, away to school also. Many parents who could afford to do so sent their older children to eastern schools. Although Lawrence had schools for younger children, there were few local opportunities in 1864 for advanced education.²⁹ In the case of Willie Duncan, sending him to Ohio to school solved a problem for the family in Lawrence.

During the period of the problems with Willie, Bettie was without the comfort of the Dennis family upon whom she relied for emotional support. When the Dennises were away on church business, Bettie checked on their home in Lawrence and corresponded with them. When they were at home, she saw them daily. The relationship was as a daughter to parents. On January 4, Bettie noted, "I had a dinner for Sister Dennis as it was her birthday. She is fifty years old to day." The two women exchanged foods, as in January, "Sister D gave me a loaf of the best bread," and in the next month she wrote, "I went over to Sister Dennises and took her some butter and milk."³⁰ As important as this neighborliness was, Bettie Duncan had real affection and regard for the older couple who were her friends. On February 15, after receiving "calls" from Mrs. Blackledge and Sister Dennis, Bettie expressed her feelings in her diary, "how I do love them." On May 9 after "Bro L. B. Dennis" visited the Duncans for dinner, Bettie exclaimed, "he is one of the jewels of this world."

Levin Beauchamp Dennis with his wife Betsey first came to Lawrence in 1855, the same year as the Duncans, to serve the Lawrence Methodist congregation. He again ministered to the church in 1863 and during

that appointment conducted a revival meeting "which resul[t]ed in many accessions to the Church." By 1864 the Reverend Dennis served as a fill-in pastor while awaiting another appointment. During this time he also sold Bibles. A son, Baxter C. Dennis,³¹ was also a Methodist minister, and a daughter, Cettie Dennis, was a student at Bluemont Central College in Manhattan. Both Baxter and Cettie Dennis were also friends of Bettie Duncan.

In early June, Bettie Duncan accompanied "Bro and Sister Dennis" on a ten-day visit to their children in Manhattan. Starting early on the morning of June 9 the Dennises, Bettie, and baby Cettie Duncan traveled "about 45 miles" west of Lawrence and stopped overnight with Methodist friends. (The ubiquitous Sister Paddock was also visiting.) The next day the travelers pushed on another twenty-five miles, but by the third day travel was slower and settlements fewer. Bettie wrote on Saturday, June 11:

found the roads very muddy we have been traveling over Indian lands most of the day about noon we stop[p]ed for dinner made a fire on the side of the road made some coffee had a splendid time some Caw Indians came to us we gave them some dinner which they seemed thankful for about 5 O clock we reached Council Grove where we will stop over the Sabbath...

The next day, a Sunday, the Reverend Dennis filled a pulpit, and Bettie attended with baby Cettie in tow. She enjoyed the "good sermon" and was proud of the baby's behavior, "she acted real pretty." The next day the travelers reached the home of the Rev. Baxter C. Dennis, son of the elder Dennises. Cettie Dennis was also there, and Bettie recorded the satisfying day in her diary entry of June 13:

Very cool and pleasant to day early this morning we started for Manhattan we passed a pretty country and very broken got off our road and had to go back some eight miles got to Bro B C D quite late they all seemed very glad to see us truly they are one good pleasant and sociable family. Cettie the dear girl How glad I was to see her. This has truly been a good day we have had good times to day Bro and Sister L B D are pleasant people to travel with

Bettie particularly enjoyed the company of Cettie Dennis as they shared household chores and confidences. On June 15, Bettie wrote, "Cettie told me some good secrets to night O how I love her."

In Manhattan, Bettie attended the "examinations" at the college, but on this occasion "the little one would not

29. For information on schools in western settlements, see Myres, *Western Women*, 182. Cordley, *A History of Lawrence, Kansas*, 257, notes that Lawrence had plans for a school building but at the time classes met in the Unitarian church's basement.

30. Bettie Duncan, January 6, February 27, 1864.

31. Clarke, *First Methodist Episcopal Church of Lawrence*, 10, 23.

sit still." Other social occasions included a birthday dinner for Isaac Goodnow, founder of Bluemont Central College and fellow Methodist, church services where the Rev. Baxter C. Dennis preached, and a Sunday afternoon concert which Bettie enjoyed.³² The only disappointment in her stay in Manhattan was the lack of a letter from her husband. Letters from nephew Fred Eggert, sister Adeline Duncan, and friends arrived for Bettie. When the expected letter from Duncan failed to come, Bettie found sympathy. On June 18, she wrote, "Bro L B D was I feel very much disappointed that I did not get a letter from Mr Duncan this evening."

Cettie Duncan, her college term over, joined in the return trip, much to the joy of Bettie. While the return home was seemingly as pleasant as the outward journey, Bettie did express some reservation about one accommodation:

Very warm up very early started for home we have traveled all day very hard felt tired we are stopping with an Indian family they seem very kind yet I cant feel perfectly at home we have had a good time notwithstanding the heat we eat our supper out on the prairie I laughed until I could hardly see I do know Cettie is the³³

The uncompleted last sentence was significant as it was the only reference in a year of diary keeping in which she mentioned that she laughed. The travelers reached Lawrence the next day, after a stop in Topeka where Cettie Dennis treated Bettie to candy and lemonade. On June 21, Bettie completed her diary entry thusly, "got home a little after six found Mr D glad to see me also Ella and Katie Ella had supper ready we eat then all but Cettie [Dennis] went home she is here to night."

Ella Jackson was entrusted with the care of the two-year-old Katie and the Duncan household while Bettie was away. Ella and Bettie enjoyed a much more equal relationship than could be implied from their status as domestic servant and mistress of the household. Ella's parents lived in the Lawrence area and visited the Duncan household, and on occasion Ella's brother, Alfred, brought presents to Bettie. In many diary entries Bettie mentioned working alongside Ella, as on April 16, "very busy helping Ella do up Saturdays work"; on July 14, "Helped get the work done up"; and on September 29, "Ella had got up the stove in my room and the parlor she is a good girl." Occasionally, on washdays and for seasonal cleaning "colored help" was also employed at the Duncan household.

Bettie Duncan and Ella Jackson, fewer than ten years apart in age, shared in Sunday school class and in their friendship with the teacher of that class, Fred Eggert. On Sunday, September 25, Bettie wrote, "Mr Duncan and me went to church this morning Ella went to class Fred came home with her." Often Bettie, Ella, and Fred visited before and after the Sunday class. Additionally, Fred often visited the Duncan home, as on December 6 when he brought apples and stayed late, "we all enjoyed our selves hugely." Ella Jackson and Fred demonstrated their regard for Bettie on special anniversaries such as the one on October 18:

A lovely day but cool To day is my twenty seventh birthday it has been rather a peculiar one to me have enjoyed it better than I had expected this forenoon Sister Blackli[d]ge took me out riding we got home just at noon Ella seemed very anxious for me to dress in my best and remain at home and to please her I did so just as I had completed my toilet who should come but Fred. Ella had invited him he made me a presant [sic] of a real handsome little silver mustard spoon. I shall always look at it and remember the donor with pleasure he st[a]yed for tea and we had a right pleasant time. Ella made me a preasant [sic] of a handsome back comb

This birthday party was one of a limited number of happy times Bettie Duncan experienced in the waning months of 1864, a period of growing concern about another invasion of Lawrence, worries about health, and unspecified anxieties. Shortly after her return from the summer trip to Manhattan, she wrote, "went down town he[a]rd some things that made me very sad."³⁴ On a few other occasions she alluded to talk or letters that disturbed her, as on July 8 when she made this entry:

after supper I took little Cettie and went down town I bought her a pen knife for Bro D a birthday present and went up to our store saw Mr D and Fred. I saw some things that make me have most peculiar feelings I started to go to Bro Dennis but met them on there [sic] way to the bridge³⁵ so I came home. Fred and Charlie [here] this evening I feel as if I did not want to live long

What she saw and heard were not explained further, but whatever it was, she was too distressed to be cheered by a visit from Fred Eggert and his brother, Charles.

Her concerns over the health of family and friends were more specific. Bettie and her husband, on separate occasions earlier in the year, were confined to their beds by illness and were attended by a constant flow of

34. Ibid., June 24, 1864.

35. The bridge over the Kansas River at Lawrence was finally opened in 1864. It "drew to itself an immense amount of travel." See Cordley, *A History of Lawrence, Kansas*, 256.

32. Bettie Duncan, June 14, 17, 19, 1864.

33. Ibid., June 20, 1864.

visitors. Through the year Bettie suffered from headaches and eye strain. At various times the children were sick. On the Fourth of July she noted the festivities and the many people in town but lamented a sad Fourth of July as "dear little Bettie has been sick all day." On July 22, Duncan was "sick with pleurisy in his side the Dr has been here seven times to day." The next day she noted a recurring complaint, "I am suffering very severely with my eyes again to night." By late August she observed a "great deal of sickness here now some days there is as many as four funerals and almost every day one or more." When the Rev. L. B. Dennis became ill, Bettie visited and "stayed two or three hours and kept the flies off him." She empathized, "O how I do hate to see one so good as him suffer." The Reverend Dennis recovered, but death was a constant presence in Lawrence. In late August the Duncans attended a "large funeral," and Bettie specified that the deceased "leaves a dear wife and two children to mourn his loss and many other dear friends."³⁶

The summer months brought "great excitement in Leavenworth about Quantrill," and Lawrence responded. As Bettie put it, "We have had to look for Quantrill[I] double guards out to night."³⁷ Yet this concern subsided. Militarily, the situation in Kansas was relatively quiet during that summer.³⁸ The national conflict, however, was never far away, at least in the minds of Lawrence citizens, and the town responded to President Lincoln's call for a day of fasting and prayer. Bettie wrote on August 4, "the day has generally been kept here in our town."

For the most part, however, the war did not affect the Duncans' enjoyment of summer pleasures. Bettie was pleased when more than once her husband took her to the "ice cream saloon" in July. They attended traveling entertainments as they had earlier in the year when humorist Artemus Ward performed and a phrenologist lectured. When the circus came to Lawrence in September, Bettie wrote, "there has been an animal show... it was pretty good." Also, that summer Bettie accompanied the Dennises on a three-day visit to Baldwin City.³⁹

The relaxed summer came to an abrupt end. As historian Albert Castel has described the situation:

Then, with the coming of autumn, full-scale warfare again erupted in Missouri. On September 19 a Con-

federate army of 12,000 cavalry moved northward from Arkansas. In command was Sterling Price.... Price was determined to make one final effort for the Confederate cause in Missouri. His plan was to strike at St. Louis and Jefferson City [Missouri], march up the Missouri River to Kansas City, and retreat southward by way of Kansas....⁴⁰

By October the "excitement," as Bettie phrased it, was intense. On October 9, she wrote, "The excitement gets worse every day," and the next day she added, "all the state militia was called out I fear we will have another raid here... the stores are all closed on account of the excitement." Of the charged situation, Castel has written:

Rumors circulated that Price was already above Kansas City. In Lawrence an accidental discharge of firearms created a near panic.... All business halted throughout the state, and every man capable of bearing arms marched or rode in wagons to the threatened border.⁴¹

On October 12, Bettie recorded, "all the militia but three companys [*sic*] left for Olathe Mr D company is here yet... this truly seems like War times." The next day, October 13, she continued the narrative: "Still a great deal of excitement about Price coming in here all business seems to have stopped there was not prayer meeting to night on account of the excitement." Despite what she described as "peculiar surroundings," Bettie spent that day sewing and visiting with her sister Adeline and family and with Fred Eggert.

During this time of great tension Bettie was without the daily companionship of the Dennises who had moved to take a new church in Iowa. The general anxiety created by the threat of a nearby military engagement may have contributed to her even becoming upset with Fred—her beloved nephew and confidante. On Sunday, October 16, Bettie, Duncan, and Ella Jackson attended church services, and as often happened, Fred returned to the Duncan household for dinner and a Sunday afternoon visit. But, when Fred left for evening services without asking "his aunt Bettie" to accompany him, she was hurt. Fred made amends the following day, for on October 17 Bettie wrote that she was pleased when he "called this morning to make some apologies [*sic*] for his hatefulness last night." Bettie's spirits remained low, however, for on that same day she wrote, "very sad and much depressed in spirits feel as if I had not a friend in this world." The next day Fred joined Ella in making an occasion of Bettie's birthday, in spite of the general concern about an invasion of Lawrence. Bettie's emo-

36. Bettie Duncan, August 26, 27, 29, 1864.

37. *Ibid.*, July 16, 1864.

38. Albert Castel, *A Frontier State at War: Kansas, 1861-1865* (Ithaca: American Historical Association, Cornell University Press, 1958), 184.

39. Bettie Duncan, July 16, February 19, March 15, September 10, August 12, 1864.

40. Castel, *Frontier State at War*, 184-85.

41. *Ibid.*, 188.

tions were so on edge that a perceived personal slight or a few words sent her into despair, as revealed in her diary entry of October 19.

went down town in a great hurry for some spices for my pickels [sic] got a letter from a dear old friend which had one sentence in it which made me feel very sad ever since I have cryed and prayed and almost wished my self out of existence

News of Confederate troop movements and of the retreat of Maj. Gen. James Blunt, commander of the Union forces, further alarmed Lawrence. A sleepless Bettie Duncan wrote on October 22:

Very pleasant Fred called this morning we had a real nice chat he is a dear good boy. I do wish I was a good a Christian as I think he is. About noon to day we had dispatches telling us that our town was in danger of being burnt by the rebells [sic] by night most all the dry goods in town was started to Leavenworth. Fred went to see to ours to night all is excitement here Mr Duncan is on guard. Charly Eggert is here to night it is now two O clock in the morning

On October 23, she continued:

Very pleasant we had still worse news this morning so much so that many females left town. Mr D thought best for us to go so about noon we started...when we got about two miles out of town we heard the good glorious and welcome news that our men was victorious and was driving Price with his forces O how glad we was

The Duncan party camped outside town over night, then the next morning Duncan brought the news that it was safe to return home. Bettie did not record, but she probably knew, that Blunt had made a successful stand at Westport which ended the threat to Lawrence.⁴²

Quickly, life in Lawrence returned to normal. Fred retrieved the Duncan store's dry goods on October 25. The next day Bettie attended the Methodist Ladies' Social Circle and observed "quite a number out." Soon after the invasion scare, Bettie suffered "severely" from toothache and had two teeth "drawn." Earlier in the year she had purchased "speckteles" which led her to facetiously observe at age twenty-six, "I find that I am getting to be quite an old lady."⁴³

Throughout October, despite war tensions and various ailments, Bettie continued her fall sewing. She probably used a sewing machine, which was widely available at the time. She surely sewed for weeks at a time even though she employed a dressmaker to construct her best wardrobe. In early spring of that year

"Miss Kirkpatrick" spent several days in the Duncan home sewing and fitting clothes; Bettie and the dressmaker consulted *Godey's Lady's Book*⁴⁴ for the latest fashions. In early November, Miss Kirkpatrick returned to alter "a silk dress for me," but for the fall sewing the dressmaker did not live in as she had during the spring sewing. Bettie also sewed some of her own clothes, and noted that she had sewn a "Spanish waist." She was clearly interested in her clothes and this concern was not atypical. Sandra L. Myres in her study of western women found that many in new settlements looked to *Godey's* for the latest eastern fashions.⁴⁵ Bettie also received a present from the East when Mr. Blackledge returned from the nation's capital and presented her with a black veil she found "very handsome."⁴⁶

Bettie also sewed for the church "festivals" in the spring and winter. The day before Thanksgiving, which the Duncans observed by attending "union services" at Miller's Hall⁴⁷ and having dinner at Sister Adeline's home, Bettie began sewing for "our grab bag." Members of the church's social circle decided to meet weekly rather than every other week as "we are going to have a Christmas tree." Besides Bettie, the women who worked to prepare the festival included her sister, Adeline Duncan; her neighbor, Mrs. Blackledge; Mrs. Sutherland, whose son had been killed in military service earlier in the year; Mrs. Duncan Allison, whose husband had been Wesley Duncan's partner and was killed in Quantrill's raid; and Mrs. Sam Walker, whose husband was an officer of the Sixteenth Kansas Regiment and had returned recently to active duty after recovering from war wounds.⁴⁸ Thoughts of the war and of the raid, suffering and loss, could not have been far from the

44. Ibid., March 18, November 8, 1864. "Miss Kirkpatrick" was either Eliza Kirkpatrick, 45, or Anna M. Kirkpatrick, 25; both were listed as dressmakers in the 1865 state census. See Kansas State Agricultural Census, 1865, Douglas County, City of Lawrence, schedule 1, microfilm roll 3, p.17, Lawrence Public Library. *Godey's Lady's Book*, published in Philadelphia and circulated nationally, was the leading fashion oracle for American women from its inception in 1830; patterns for clothing and household items were a staple of the magazine, and later issues carried extensive fashion illustrations.

45. Myres, *Westering Women*, 150.

46. Bettie Duncan, August 18, 1864.

47. The Thanksgiving of November 1864 was the second national observance proclaimed by President Lincoln, a result in large part of a campaign led by Sarah Josepha Hale who as editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* had promoted the idea of such a holiday for many years. With its focus on collective prayer and family feasting, the observance appealed to women like Bettie Duncan who could read of Hale's vision of the day in *Godey's*. For Hale's work, see "Our National Thanksgiving—A Domestic Festival," *Godey's Lady's Book* 69 (November 1864): 440; Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "Women Influenced Holiday's Origins," *Kansas City Times*, November 27, 1986, p. A9, reprinted from the *New York Times*. Miller's Hall in Lawrence at Seventh and Massachusetts was located where Liberty Hall is today.

48. Bettie Duncan, November 16, 21, 23, 1864.

42. Ibid., 194-95.

43. Bettie Duncan, July 21, 1864.



To stay current with fashion, Bettie Duncan and her dressmaker consulted Godey's Lady's Book. Shown is Godey's fashion plate for October 1864, an illustration that Bettie most probably examined as she did her fall sewing.

minds of these women as they enjoyed each other's company in the common endeavor of making goods to sell to make money for their church. The women also went out in groups soliciting donations for the festival, or as Bettie Duncan phrased it, "Sister Blackli[d]ge and my self went out begging."⁴⁹ After baking a ham and a cake for the event, Bettie worked on the festival as her diary of November 30 indicated:

Pleasant a little cloudy Early this morning Mrs Allison called for us to go around with her to get things for the festival. I took mine down. Fred met us at the door and took mine was very busy all day our festival came off this evening I enjoyed it Hugely most everyone seemed to be in fine spirits I never saw Mr Duncan and Fred enjoy

them selves so well of course I felt more interested in them than any one else how very tired to night feel glad our festival is over it is raining

The next day Bettie, Mrs. Blacklidge, Fred, and "two or three others" washed dishes and cleaned up "the hall" where the festival had been held.⁵⁰

A few days after the festival, Duncan and Mr. Blacklidge left Lawrence, as Bettie stated on December 6, "started down south to be gone a few days." During this absence Fred must have felt a special obligation to look in on the household of his uncle, who was also his employer. Bettie enjoyed his visits "hugely." After the Methodist ladies had a social on December 7, Bettie wrote:

49. Ibid., November 18, 1864.

50. The festival probably was held at Miller's Hall.

Fred the dear boy came home with Sister Blackliff and me he came in and stayed a while we had more fun than we would at a dozen socials. Fred had prayers with us O what strong confidence I have in him

This good time was in contrast to the "blues" Bettie experienced as the Christmas holiday approached. In mid-December she worked on gifts, "Braided Freds and Mr Duncans slippers" and "left them at the shoe shop to be soled." She "got Willie a little Christmas present," and since he was still away at school she sent it "in a letter."⁵¹ On Christmas Eve, Bettie "went down town got some presents for the children and Ella." Bettie also bought a Bible for Charles Eggert, Fred's brother. On her way home she went by way of "the new church" where "they are busy fixing the tree." The new Methodist church building at Tenth and Massachusetts, currently the site of the Lawrence Masonic Temple, was not finished, but as the church history stated, "By Christmas, 1864, the new building was so far completed that the children's exercises were held there, though the walls were unplastered and the windows boarded up."⁵² Bettie wrote of the occasion, "we all went to the Christmas tree for once I wished my self at home all the time." On Christmas day she recorded:

Warm and pleasant but quite muddy well Christmas has come and is about gone and it has been a sad and gloomy one for I found two presents at my plate this morning one a splendid pair of sleeve buttons from my good friend Fred and the other a nice little present from Ella and pretty little collar from Addie. Mr D and me went to church. Fred came up to dinner Also Addie I gave Fred his slippers he seemed well pleased with them him and me went to class the best general class and a good meeting. I never felt more sad in my life than I am tonight.⁵³

Missing from the list of presents at Bettie's breakfast plate was one from her husband. In what in a later era would be termed "the Christmas blues," Bettie Duncan's next few days were marked by "as heavy a heart as I ever had in all my life." Despite a few days of visiting with friends in the country,⁵⁴ Bettie continued to be depressed. On the last entry of 1864, Bettie Duncan—wife, mother, friend, and church member—completed her diary of 1864, "all alone sad and lonely." She also

noted that much of the diary had been written with a "sad and heavy heart."

Bettie Duncan kept two other partial diaries that have survived to the present. In 1867, for reasons that are not entirely clear, Wesley Duncan and his family joined a wagon train headed for California. Why so prominent a town citizen would decide on "selling out" his business in Lawrence and repeat an overland trip he had made before remains a mystery. A biographical sketch described Wesley Duncan as "an adventurous spirit" and recorded that his first wife had died in California,⁵⁵ but this does not explain the decision to move.

Bettie Duncan clearly was not happy about the trip. On departure day, June 24, 1867, she wrote in a travel diary she began at that time, "The dreaded day has at last come." Her apprehensions were justified, for half way into the journey, west of Salt Lake City, many in their party became ill. Katie Duncan, then age six, died enroute and was buried in the mountains. Bettie grieved during the rest of the trip.

After the family settled in San Jose, California, Bettie started another diary, but this journal of 1868 was never completed.⁵⁶ Within a year, the family returned to Lawrence where Duncan again entered business with Charles Duncan and built a new home, this one more elaborate than the one they had left on Massachusetts Street.⁵⁷

Ten years after the Duncan family returned to Lawrence, Bettie died at age forty-two. Her husband, Wesley, and three children survived her: Cettie, then seventeen; a son, age seven; and a baby, Bessie, two years old. Willie Duncan, her stepson, had returned to Lawrence and had become "a promising young business man."⁵⁸ Bettie's obituary in the *Lawrence Standard*, read:

Mrs. Wesley Duncan, a well-known and respected lady, who for years has been recognized as one of the best and kindest of Lawrence women, died yesterday, after

55. *United States Biographical Dictionary*, Kansas Volume, 629-30.

56. The travel diary and unfinished 1868 journal are in the Kansas Collection, University of Kansas.

57. Granddaughter Myra Blackburn described the new home which was west of Lawrence as "more elegant than most" with marble fireplaces.

58. *Lawrence Standard*, October 2, 1879. For reference to Bessie B. Duncan, see Snedeger, *Tombstone Census*, 17. Bessie's memorial can be found on the Duncan tombstone at Oak Hill Cemetery, Lawrence; born in 1877, she died in 1903. The 1875 state census listed William Duncan, twenty-seven years old, as a clerk in the Duncan store, and as a resident in the Wesley Duncan household. William's business activities were favorably mentioned in *United States Biographical Dictionary*, Kansas Volume, 630. See also Kansas Agricultural Census, 1875, Douglas County, Wakarusa Township, schedule 1, microfilm roll 6, p.45, Lawrence Public Library.

51. Bettie Duncan, December 17, 1864.

52. Clarke, *First Methodist Episcopal Church of Lawrence*, 30.

53. Christmas fell on a Sunday and regular services were held. Addie was probably Bettie's niece, Adeline Gabhart, fifteen-year-old daughter of Bettie's older sister, Lucetta Gabhart. See Kansas State Agricultural Census, 1865, Douglas County, City of Lawrence, schedule 1, microfilm roll 3, pp. 72-73, Lawrence Public Library.

54. Bettie Duncan, December 28, 29, 1864.

quite a long sickness, through which she received the devoted attention of both her own family and many friends.⁵⁹

This description probably would have pleased Bettie. She relished attention of family and friends, and one of her resolutions of 1864 was "to make steady progress in the good way."⁶⁰

The pattern of Bettie Duncan's daily life in 1864, work and meditation at home, church services and meetings of the social circle, and visits to the homes of friends and to downtown stores was only disrupted once late in the year. The prevalent anxieties of the time in Lawrence may have aggravated stresses in her life: marriage to an older man of a temperament opposite her own, distress over Willie's rebellious escapade, concerns over illness in the family and among friends, her own ailments and depressions, and her sensitivity to unsettling news and perceived slights. With some insight into the toll the tension was taking on her health in October when invasion seemed imminent, Bettie observed that she felt well in neither mind nor body, "what a powerful influence the mind has upon the body [*sic*]."⁶¹ Early in the year during the crisis precipitated by Willie, Bettie took a strong stand when she determined to be imposed on no longer. Yet, later in the year she was unable to conduct the family prayer life she desired when she "could not get courage enough to pray before Mr. Duncan."

For sympathy and support Bettie turned to the Dennis family and to Fred Eggert, who shared her devotion to the Methodist church and the life it held

forth. Her neighbor, Mrs. Blackledge, and her sister, Adeline, were both Methodist women who provided important friendships. The presence of Ella Jackson in the Duncan household not only gave Bettie real help in accomplishing household chores, but provided her a youthful companion who remembered her with presents on important occasions. Bettie's young children, Katie and Cettie, mentioned frequently but almost incidentally in the diary, did not hamper her freedom of movement in Lawrence, her participation in the life of the church, or her pleasurable trip to Manhattan. On several occasions Duncan, Ella, and Mrs. Blackledge took turns staying with one or both the children, and often Bettie took them along on her errands or even farther trips away from home.

Community life in Lawrence, although shadowed by ever present reminders of losses from Quantrill's raid and intermittent reminders of the ongoing war, was unhampered except late in the year and then only briefly. Neither the war nor frontier conditions isolated Bettie Duncan in Lawrence. Although the railroad did not reach the city until late in 1864, the fashions she followed and the religious and domestic ideas that influenced her were those emulated by many American women of the time.

Much of what Bettie Duncan experienced in daily life in 1864 was ordinary: cooking, sewing, caring for children, shopping, meeting, and visiting. The extraordinary tensions and threats of the time seemed to heighten her reactions to daily life. In the diary she expressed a full range of emotions: enjoyment and despair, excitement and boredom, laughter and anger, friendship and loneliness, anxiety and hope, and a constant striving to live up to a pious ideal. Her diary adds an emotional and intimate dimension to the historical record of life as it was lived in Lawrence and eastern Kansas as the early settlement period ended.

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59. *Lawrence Standard*, October 2, 1879; *Lawrence Daily Journal*, September 27, 1879.

60. Bettie Duncan, memoranda on last page of diary.

61. *Ibid.*, October 14, 1864.