

Transcription: "My First Trip to Seattle" by Nora Leonard Vandeventer

My First Trip to Seattle
Dedicated to my beloved play mate
school mate and friend of
those early days
Sophie Frye Bass

Nora Leonard Vandeventer

My First Trip to Seattle

Looking one morning last winter at a snow which had fallen over Seattle's housetops during the night, time seemed to flow backwards; I thought of another morning when I was a little girl and of my first glimpse of Seattle and our perilous trip here from Olympia.

It was early on a cold January day in the early seventies when we took passage on the little stern wheeler Zephyr, my father, mother, two small sisters and myself; the wind blew and the waves rolled high: a friend who came to the dock with us said: "I do not like the looks of things, better wait until tomorrow." Unheeding, we went aboard, father carrying my baby sister, mother leading the next one, my hand held firmly by our friend as we walked up the narrow gangplank goodbyes were spoken and as the boat shoved away and our friend's face faded in the distance, I cried for I did not want to leave Tumwater the only home I knew.

As the day wore on the wind raged harder shrieking and moaning like demons loosed from the nether zone, and the boat was tossed like a toy by the angry waves. I can see yet the white scared faces of the passengers; the fire had to go out and everything shook and rattled, nearly everyone was seasick with the exception of myself and one or two others; someone brought in a plate of pickles, saying "eat them and you won't get sick." I was fond of them and believe that I ate all they had. I did not get the least bit sick but never knew whether it was due to the pickles or not.

Some time somewhere near Steilacoom was anchored a mighty sailing vessel, "The Dashing Wave." To her staunch side our steamer was made fast. What a relief! And thankfulness to God that the danger was over and we were safe from the tempest at last.

Beds were made down on the cabin floor, for the Zephyr was not equipped with sleeping quarters for passengers.

Sleep seemed far from me; perhaps on account of the nervous excitement or too many sour pickles.

I crept into the bed beside mother but the covers were too narrow to reach over me so I crept out again without disturbing her and walked about; I found one who was wakeful too, one I had stayed near during the dreadful day of storm and terror; she was Susannah Mercer Graham and was a comforting and delightful companion to the home sick little girl on the Zephyr. When morning came she combed my touselled hair and I was presentable for breakfast.

The storms of the night were over; we had a tearful, thankful good bye to the ship "The Dashing Wave," for she had been the means of saving our lives. We soon came in sight of Seattle and snow was over everything, the house roofs and the big trees at that time near the water.

From her lofty height the stately University looked down on the village below.

The bay was frozen over quite far from the shore, a clear passage showing where the Alida had made a way through.

When we went ashore all seemed bleak and friendless to me, for I was still longing for Tumwater. The first person I saw in Seattle was the Reverend Daniel Bagley, who was waiting for Mrs. Graham. He and my father crossed the plains together in 1852 and the meeting was a surprise to both that day. He clasped father's shoulders saying "well Austin are you lost?" He greeted us all kindly, patted my cheek and invited us to go with him but our destination was 8 and Spring and we started up the hill. I was bitterly cold and thought I would freeze as we toiled on over the slippery two board walk through the woods; we arrived there after a while where warm fires and hospitality awaited us.

It is a far ways back to that day. Some things of that journey will never be forgotten but our mother kept the memory bright. She lived again with us that time over as we gathered about her for a story. I can see yet the flickering firelight on her clear face as she talked. But for her I should not be able to relate it. When we became settled in a new home and went to Sunday school at the Brown Church of which Rev. Bagley was pastor I was reconciled and we spent many happy hours at his home.

I learned to love the shaggling little town, made friends with the Indians, who roamed everywhere. I loved the big city and was glad of the progress made as time passed on, but not without a tear of regret when I saw them wash away the beautiful green hills of my childhood.