Recollections of Past Days
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Foreword
Maureen Ursenbach Beecher

With the publication of Recollections of Past Days: The Autobiography of Patience Loader Rozsa Archer comes the continuing fulfillment of a dream that began ten years ago when John Alley, editor at Utah State University Press, agreed that Life Writings of Frontier Women was indeed a marketable series. The seven volumes already published, to personal and professional acclaim, have proven their worth. Each of the women reflected in the series has had her own unique voice, her own appeal. Now we bring you Patience Loader’s account, a captivating narrative such as would have enthralled live audiences as it does later readers. My own attachment to Patience’s story is that it was with her description of the 1856 Martin handcart tragedy that my love of these texts began.

Early in my exploration of women’s life writings, I shared tidbits of Patience’s memoir with my eighty-five-year-old mother, my “common reader,” the one whose judgment I most relied upon. Her response assured me that the kinship of faith and sacrifice, courage and sisterhood does indeed transcend circumstance and generation, that the women writers in our series would speak their stories as honestly and meaningfully to us as to their contemporaries. Now, after eight volumes have appeared, I am still of that mind.

As the series began, however, there was no editor for Patience Loader. Five years passed before Sandra Petree, then a PhD candidate at the University of Arkansas, completed her superb dissertation, “The Power of the Word: Self-Inscription in the Journals of Nineteenth-Century Mormon Women.” Reading her text, we realized that here was the right person to edit Patience’s narrative. She agreed and began work. Her own teaching, her family responsibilities, and the death of her husband interrupted but briefly the research that would take her west to Utah and east to England in pursuit of details that would enhance her understanding of Patience and her times and places. Dr. Petree has read well, understood splendidly, and now presents with admirable scholarship the story that Patience Loader Rozsa Archer left us.

We are grateful.