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SISTER CATHERINE MALLON'S JOURNAL

(PART TWO)

EDITED BY THOMAS RICHTER

Sister Catherine Mallon came to New Mexico in a party of four nurses at the request of Archbishop Jean Baptiste Lamy to organize a hospital in Santa Fe. They left Ohio in August of 1865 and arrived in September to found St. Vincent's Hospital. Sister Catherine's account of her journey and her subsequent service in New Mexico and Colorado was written for Sister Blandina Segale who had served with her in Santa Fe and was in the process of assembling her memoirs, later published as *At the End of the Santa Fe Trail* (Columbus, Ohio, 1932).

Sister Catherine's journal was graciously made available to the *New Mexico Historical Review* by Sytha Motto, whose comments and amplification of the journal appear just preceding this section of the diary. The editor also wishes to thank Mrs. Motto for her critical reading of the journal, which eliminated errors at some points and clarified uncertainties at others. The first half of "Sister Catherine Mallon's Journal" appeared in the April 1977 issue of the NMHR (52:2).

WE STARTED from Santa Fe in June. Our first day's travel was in an open wagon, with soapboxes for seats; we had to travel two days in wagons before coming to the railroad,³⁹ and, as we had no money to pay our way on the road, we had to beg a pass,⁴⁰ but the ticket agent would not be home before twelve p.m. so we waited at the station until he came; there was a gentleman with us who inter-

Note: The original of the journal here presented is in the Archives of the Sisters of Charity, Mt. St. Joseph (Cincinnati), Ohio, not in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe as reported in the introduction to Part I. The editor regrets this error.

ceded for us so, after considerable hesitation on the part of the agent, and explanations of ours, we got the pass to Durango and back; but when we got on the train the conductor took the pass and did not return it; I demanded the pass, and he refused to give it up. Finally he relented and gave me the pass. Well, it started to rain, and it came down in such torrents that everything seemed to be swept away, and there we had to remain for nearly a day; and as the passengers were very hungry, they made their way to a section house nearby, and ate a barrel of crackers that the poor woman had for her boarders.

Well, after a long delay we got started and reached Durango⁴¹ in safety; but the streets were flooded and it was pouring; and we were pretty wet when we got to the house where we received hospitality. Mr. Kigan was a friend of the Santa Fe sisters, and, having met us on the train, requested us to stop at his house, which we did. Now the priest of Durango had rooms there also so when he heard we were coming, he was determined we should not beg in his parish;⁴² so he stayed up as he did not have the patience to wait until morning. Notwithstanding the fact that it was very late and we were weary and wet, we had to appear before his reverence to hear his refusal. I simply told him we did not come to collect from his parishioners, but the railroad men who were working in and around Durango; [I also mentioned] that some of those men were nursed from death to life by the sisters of Santa Fe when they had not a dollar to pay for the care lavished upon them; and I finished by saying it would be the worst thing he ever did as the men would be so indignant that they would never contribute to his church or himself; "for they well know that if they have broken legs, or are sick and helpless, it is not to you but to the sisters they must go for care and attention." Finally we retired to bed about twelve, leaving the reverend gentleman somewhat mollified; and, as the next morning was Sunday, we went to church where, after mass and on our way back to Mr. Kigan's, many of the congregation gave us a warm welcome, and many seemed anxious to have the honor of entertaining us; but Mr. Kigan would not hear of anybody entertaining us but himself.

The reverend father finally consented to let us collect, and on Monday morning we started out bright and early to begin our not very pleasant task; we were far from home, and very few knew us; consequently we had to bear many rude and unkind remarks. We came to a party of men who vowed they would never again give a cent to sisters; at this remark I became very indignant and said, "Ah! boys, it is a poor return to make to the Sisters of Santa Fe, who have made so many sacrifices for you, if not for you at least such as you; [who] even gave up their beds to make you comfortable." All at once there was an exclamation, "oh sisters, are you from Santa Fe? Please excuse me, we thought you were from [such and] such a place, and we have vowed never to give them a dollar because they did so and so to such and such; but the Sisters of Santa Fe, we have heard of their kindness to the sick and injured, and we will do anything for them; put down my name for five dollars, mine for three, and mine for two;" and in this way the poor fellows tried to atone for the hasty words they had spoken. I tried hard to excuse the sisters [of the other order] by saying that the sisters would never refuse admission to the person referred to, if they could avoid it; but there was no changing their opinion. So after that, we used to tell all that we were from Santa Fe, and so had very little trouble. When we happened to meet any of those we had nursed, they were profuse in their praises of the kindness they received in our hospital, and so [they] encouraged the others to give generously and help on the good work.

We went to the Hi[gh]land Mary mine⁴³ and several others in the San Juan country; in some of them we went away under the mountains. The reflections one makes from the sight of the hardships, which those men endured in their search for gold are often very salutary, and we often had a chance to make them. And the poor women we met in our travels, with five or six children, and they trying to cook for twenty, thirty, and forty men. Oh! How often I thanked the good God for saving me from such a fate.⁴⁴ And I often wished that some of our sisters could see what we saw that they might the better realize the great gift bestowed by God in calling them to the religious state. When we met in little tents

with exiles [workers imported] from Mexico, as we sometimes did, beautiful young women, who had left mother, father, and friends, and all that was near and dear for the sake of a man who might, and did often, forsake and abuse them; and when I considered and saw the inconvenience they put up with, and the hardships they endured for the love of the creature, I felt that whatever I did for the love of the Creator was nothing because of the infinite distance between one and the other. I should have mentioned in this place that the people of Durango, as also those of Silverton,⁴⁵ were very anxious that our sisters should come and establish hospitals at both these places for at that time there were no sisters there.

Well, we finished our task in this direction, where we were very successful, and prepared to start for another; but the railroad and bridges were all washed away, and the whole scene was one of desolation; but we had to make the best of it so off we started, plowing through mud, climbing over broken bridges, tugging along for about a mile and a half, for that was the nearest point the cars could come. Now we had to think of getting a pass on the main line,⁴⁶ and so had to see the general manager, who we were told we would find by going to Colorado Springs;⁴⁷ but when we got there, found to our great disappointment that he was in Denver. So off we started to Denver, and, after encountering some difficulties, succeeded in getting the favor desired; and here I wish to state that during this trip we got seven passes to so many different points, not one of which cost us a cent, verifying the saying, "ask and ye shall receive," in temporals as well as spirituals. No wonder my heart overflowed with gratitude to God and His creatures; when I reflect on the great favors I have received from His mighty Hands and from those of His children, and, at the same time, am filled with fear that I have not complied with the obligations I imposed on myself by promising to pray for all.

We started from Denver to Leadville,⁴⁸ stopping on the way to collect. I shall never forget our experience at Brown's Canyon. We had some very narrow escapes from climbing to get where the men were working. They were generous and kind, but as they could not

accommodate us, and, as it was getting late, we had to make our way accompanied by two Irish boys to a point at which the train was to pass on its way to Leadville;⁴⁹ and, as there was no station nearby, they had to flag the train. Weary and footsore we arrived at Leadville at twelve in the night, and received gracious welcome from Sister Bridget who was then superior of the hospital.⁵⁰ This dear Sister not only made us welcome, but seemed willing that we should collect there if we so wished; and the good Father Robinson⁵¹ treated us with courtesy and kindness. We made the hospital our stopping point as there were many branches of railroad on which we wished to collect; and after finishing one, we had to come back to start for another; but each time we received such a hearty welcome that it was like being at home.

We went up to Breckinridge,⁵² up to Kokoma,⁵³ and on to the Midland Railway;⁵⁴ it would not be possible for me to describe the difficulties and hardships we went through during this trip. I remember one day we were being driven from one camp to another in an open wagon; and, as the roads were very bad, Sister Martha⁵⁵ was thrown out of the wagon and the wheel went over her leg. I can never forget the anguish of those moments; the thought that dear Sister's leg might be broken, in the wilds so many hundreds of miles from home, was terrible. And how heartfelt were our thanksgivings to the Almighty when we found that such was not the case. Dear Sister Martha! When I reflect on her great patience in the trials and hardship of that trip, I feel she was a saint, or she would never have shown such fortitude. It often happened, when we got into a camp somewhat late, our bed would be a comfort[er] spread on the hard ground under a tent, and another [comforter] for a pillow; indeed I remember having a bag of flour for my pillow one night that we slept in the tent where they kept the groceries; but they usually gave us the best they had. I slept another night in a grading camp with a bag of nails for my pillow, it was not their intention to give such a hard pillow, it was just tossed in there, and I utilized it for want of something better; for when one is very tired, after walking over miles of work, pleading the cause

of charity, and riding in an open wagon, or on a hand car in all kinds of weather, any kind of accommodation is welcome to the poor weary body.

And very often it required the example of our Divine Model to brace us up in the humiliations, toils, and hardships of those begging trips, and, what was equally hard to bear, the taunts of thoughtless sisters, I might rather say heartless, who would tell you, you liked such a life; and yet those good sisters never seemed willing to make any sacrifice themselves. It is somewhat painful to have to say such things of spouses of the crucified God, but yet it is true; and I believe in speaking the truth even if it does hurt.

It was on this trip that we went to the Gunnison country⁵⁶ where we had a very hard time especially in the Black Canyon.⁵⁷ On one occasion we got into the camp late in the afternoon, and got a very cold reception from the contractor who, from all we could see, was very bigoted and bitter; and, as it was a very dreary lonely place, we felt very badly, but as soon as the men came from work, and gathered around to welcome us, everything was changed as there were about a hundred Irishmen in the camp; we felt secure. So after awhile they set about preparing our bed, and this they did by cutting down branches from the trees, which were very numerous, and [by] building up [the branches] until they got a heap about two feet high; and this they did to keep the reptiles from crawling upon us for, according to their statement, they were very numerous there. Then a comfort[er] or two was placed over the branches, and another for pillows; and so our bed was finished, and I assure you we slept soundly and felt as secure as if in our convent home for we knew we had as many protectors as there were Irishmen in the camp. God ever bless those poor fellows for the esteem and respect they have ever shown for the sisters, and their generosity in contributing to our institutions. That night, or rather that evening, we collected, and all or nearly all put down their names for one, two, or three dollars; but as the men did not have the money to give, the contractor was to stop it out of their wages, and send it to us; but we never got a cent of it.

Well, the next morning we expected them to send us to the next

camp which was about seven miles off, as all the other camps had done; but instead of doing so, we were told we would have to walk it as all their wagons were in Gunnison. They told us that, if we would climb the mountain, it would shorten our journey three or four miles so we concluded to do so. At first it did not seem so dangerously steep; but as we advanced we were terrified at the task before us; and each one trembled for the other's safety, but we did not care to return to the camp again. It seemed as if even a goat never scaled its heights so we prayed as never before, and climbed and prayed; sometimes resting to get breath. What serious thoughts passed through our minds during those hours of danger for, had those little twigs and projecting rocks, to which we clung, given way, we should have been dashed to destruction, and no one would have even known what became of us. My anxiety was about dear Sister Martha on account of her age; and probably her's was about me. But the good God, for whose sake we undertook the trip and the hardships it entailed, came to our aid, and we luckily escaped the dangers that threatened us. But when we got to the top of that mountain, we beheld another confronting us, but not so terrible in aspect. So we knelt and gave thanks to the Mighty One to whose protecting care we felt we owed our safety, and prayed for strength to face the difficulties before us; and they were not few.

After praying and resting for some time, we started to climb the mountain number two which was easy in comparison with the first, but we were tired and weary and our ascent was slow; but finally we reached the top not far from the main road, and to our great joy saw a wagon coming along; we now felt we would get the information we wanted as to the whereabouts of the camp to which we were going, and perhaps a ride, which indeed we did for about a mile, for they had to turn off another way. Well, we walked and walked; and finally began to think that we could go no farther as we were ready to drop on the road side; and the wonder was that we did not from fatigue and hunger, but here again our merciful Father came to our assistance, animating us to keep on, for soon we would be where we could find rest. How often did we have

need to call to mind, during that trip, the example of our Divine Lord? At last we got to the camp where we were kindly received for, whenever we met the poor Irish, their hearts and hands were open to us. They made us very comfortable for the night; [we] got a good rest, and [we] were ready for a fresh start in the morning. They furnished us with a horse and wagon; and we started for the next camp which was a considerable distance.

It would not be possible to describe the dangers we encountered from bad roads, lonely places, and other causes. There were places where one mis-step of the horse, or the least carelessness on part of the driver, and we would be dashed into eternity. How often during those weeks and months did we seem to stand face to face with death from flying rocks, for often they came down in showers, [and] from immense heights where the men were blasting, crushing all before them and very often the poor men. But our dear Lord brought us safely through, notwithstanding the many dangers we encountered, which it would not be possible for me to enumerate in the limited time at my command.

It was in the wilds of the Gunnison country that we were refused lodging by persons living on farms; we were so far off from any camp, and the roads were so bad, that we could not travel after dark, so we were obliged either to sleep in the wagon, which was very unsafe as the place was wild and lonely, or ask lodging at some farmer's house, which we did; but each and all refused us; they seemed to be afraid of us. The man who drove us declared he would not leave us alone so after traveling some time we saw a tent, and there found a family traveling like ourselves; and they kindly offered to give us shelter, such as it was, in return for which they got many a prayer. What a night that was! There was a way-side whiskey den not far from our little tent; and such fighting, shooting, and cursing as was carried on during the whole of the night that the life was nearly frightened out of us; and how we longed for the day that came at last, and you can imagine how fervently we thanked God for our deliverance. We returned to Gunnison, and, as we had finished the collecting in those parts, set out for home; and you can imagine how the thought of getting

home delighted us after an absence of almost three months. How many Masses, Holy Communions, and spiritual exercises we missed during those trips, and we did not then have the privilege of making up our communions as we have now. But I suppose our good Master will supply all since it was done through obedience for His dear sake and the good of our dear community. I often wonder if, when I die, our good superiors and sisters will not offer special prayers, Holy Communions, and Masses for one who has lost so many in the service of the community. I trust our dear Lord will inspire them to do so. Well, we got safely home, and what was our joy on finding there dear Mother Josephine, Sister Antonia and Mary Agnes, and the good Father Burnes? We soon forgot the hardships of the trip, but Sister Martha did not get over its effects for a long time.⁵⁸

Sister Augustine and I had some narrow escapes on a trip we made together. In crossing the Rio Grande the driver got into deep water, and it seemed as if there was no escape from drowning; our fright was the greater as a few days before seven men were drowned trying to cross it. I have often thought that we never pray aright but when in danger; it seems as if our whole souls go out to God in supplication when we stand face to face with death, and feel that no other power but His can save; and as I have often been in that position, I have realized the mightiness of prayer in those awful moments. We escaped from the river in some miraculous way, and continued our journey towards the camp; and as the way leading thereto was over an immense precipice, we had to go very cautiously; but all of a sudden we heard an explosion; and the rocks were flying in all directions; the poor horses were terrified and seemed about to plunge into the abyss below, but some mighty power seemed to stay their flight; and we were saved again, thanks to the Almighty one who seemed to be with, and guide us everywhere. Oh! May I never forget the miseries of those days so that I may always present a grateful, loving homage to my God for so wonderfully protecting us in the many dangers through which we had to pass in those days of trial. Well, the men in camp saw our danger, and came to our assistance. They unhitched the

horses, and one led the horses, and two drew the carriage to the camp where we were hospitably treated during our short stay.

Dear Sister Augustine realized during that trip that it was not so very pleasant to be traveling through the wilds, seeking for money to supply the needs of the hospital. If those who came after us could only realize what the first sisters went through to build up the different houses in [the] West, they would not so easily find fault with what they find there, but would rather thank the good God and the dear sisters who toiled so hard and faithfully to make it what it is. They would also offer fervent prayers for those poor, hard working men, without whose generous contributions we could have done very little. May God bless every one of them, and may we never forget the debt of gratitude we owe them, which I fear we too often do. They gave us the temporal help we then needed, and in return they asked and were promised the spiritual help of our prayers.

I do not intend to mention anything that happened on the trips which Sister Blandina and I made together as I know she will and can do it far better than I can.

In 1888 I was sent by dear Mother Mary Paul to Albuquerque to open the hospital, or rather to transform the Academy⁵⁹ into a hospital, which was indeed a difficult task as there were few who saw the need of the hospital, and many were very much opposed to the change as they saw plainly the need of the school; and among the many [were] the Jesuit Fathers. And besides, the Academy was not suitable, and never could be made so. It can be easily imagined how unpleasant my situation was, but I felt that God would fix everything in His own good time if only we prayed and trusted. It was very perplexing to encounter so many difficulties as well as opposition, and, being so far from superiors, it was hard to decide what to do or how to act. So I consulted with a few of the sisters as to what was best to do. They thought with me that the best thing would be to write to Mother, and explain everything, and in the meantime make a novena that God's will might be made known to all. This we did and awaited patiently the decision of the council, which came the Saturday before the opening of

school; and the decision was to continue the school, and wait a more opportune time for the hospital.⁶⁰

A few days after, I got a dispatch to go to Trinidad to take charge of the hospital,⁶¹ a thing that had not yet existed. I then little dreamed of the heavy cross awaiting me there. I went, however, feeling that the weaker the instrument chosen for the task assigned, the more powerfully would be the Almighty help, provided we trusted in Him. When I arrived in Trinidad, I found that they had commenced to dig the foundation. Father Pinto had the promise of a few thousand dollars; I had nothing to offer but a good will to do and dare anything and everything that would make the undertaking a success. I found in Father Pinto a faithful worker and a kind father who did everything in his power to secure success. What shall I say of the good Dr. [?] Beshore who made it possible for us by donating the first twelve lots and afterwards twenty-three? The people all seemed very anxious for the hospital, and most willing to help in the good work. So we commenced by getting up a fair which was a good success as we realized two thousand dollars; and so the work went on. I started out to beg, but being all alone I had to provide a prudent companion which I found in dear Mrs. Conroy, who with her horse and buggy was always ready to accompany me wherever I went. She was indeed a generous friend and kind benefactor, and much of the success was due to her; she was always willing to share the hardship and dangers of such trips, and sometimes they were not few; we had some narrow escapes from runaways. Miss Kate Folley was also very kind, going with me when Mrs. Conroy could not.

I had many trying experiences during the process of building; many were the difficulties to be overcome; it was harder to collect a hundred, now, than a thousand when collecting for Santa Fe. I sometimes came to the convent from my begging trip almost frozen, and the dear kind sisters had to help thaw me out, as they called it. I had to climb on all fours in snow and frost to get where I wanted to go. Who shall ever know the hardships and humiliations I endured to get that hospital built? But the good Father Pinto worked hard also, and good Father Mara [sic]⁶² gave substantial

assistance, also, by lending money to continue the work. I must not forget St. Anthony of Padua's share in the work.⁶³ It came about this way: the amount of land donated by Dr. Beshore being twelve lots, it seemed very small for such a building; so I asked Father Pinto to ask the doctor for more, but father declined; so I turned to St. Anthony, and asked his help. I commenced a novena in his honor, for this intention, and the morning after the novena closed, I went to the doctor, made my request, and got twenty-three lots more, in all thirty-five. So you see, St. Anthony had a large share in its success. After all, God, St. Anthony, Father Pinto, and Dr. Beshore were the principal actors; and the people of Trinidad cooperated generously. I have often said I would make them all saints and millionaires [*sic*], were it in my power. God bless them all is my heartfelt prayer.

My dear Sister Blandina, I have tried to give you a brief sketch of the past; I know you will find many mistakes, grammatical, of composition, and of spelling; but you could hardly expect it otherwise. Had I plenty of time at my disposal, I might do a little better.

When you receive this, please write and let me know; as I shall [be] anxious, fearing it might fall into other hands.

NOTES

39. From Chama, New Mexico, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad extended its San Juan extension to Durango, Colorado, in 1881. East of Chama, the railroad already ran to the main north/south line. Tivis E. Wilkins, *Colorado Railroads: Chronological Development* (Boulder, 1974), p. 35.

40. Begging railroad passes was a common practice for the sisters. In July, 1883, Sister Pauline and Sister Blandina received passes on the Mexican Central Railroad from El Paso, Texas, into Chihuahua, Mexico. Segale, *End of Trial*, pp. 240-41.

41. Durango developed when Denver and Rio Grande construction crews arrived in 1880. That action blotted out Animas City whose town leaders had not encouraged the railroad. Robert G. Athearn, *The Coloradans* (Albuquerque, 1976), p. 138.

42. Perhaps the priest knew about the large sums begged by the sisters in other towns and camps.

43. Listed as a producing mine in Hinsdale County. Hinsdale County stands between Silverton and Gunnison. Frank Fossett, *Colorado: Its Gold and Silver Mines, Farms, and Stock Ranges, and Health and Pleasure Resorts, Tourist's Guide to the Rocky Mountains*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1880), p. 521.

44. Sister seemed to consider her vocation as a liberated calling for women.

45. Silverton exists fifty miles north of Durango on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. For a description of mines near Silverton see Fossett, *Colorado*, pp. 525-32.

46. The Denver and Rio Grande railway, running from Pueblo to Denver, Colorado. Fossett, *Colorado*, p. 11.

47. Seventy-five miles south of Denver, Colorado Springs was a health resort by 1879. Fossett, *Colorado*, pp. 36-40.

48. Although Leadville's boom began in 1877, railroad service did not reach the town until 1880. By then, the silver mines rivaled Nevada's Comstock Lode for the greatest amount of silver production in the nation. In 1880 Leadville counted 14,820 citizens, the second largest town in Colorado. Rodman Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West 1848-1880* (New York, 1963), pp. 127-129; For an 1879 description of Leadville, see Fossett, *Colorado*, pp. 97-98, 417-18.

49. On July 22, 1880, the first passenger train from Denver arrived in Leadville on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. Wilkins, *Colorado Railroads*, p. 33.

50. Five Sisters of Charity established a hospital soon after Leadville boomed in 1878. Bishop Machebeuf in early 1879 reported them overworked. Howlett, *Machebeuf*, pp. 387-88.

51. Father Robinson arrived to serve the Leadville area in 1874. He quickly established a church in Leadville during the 1878 boom. Howlett, *Machebeuf*, p. 387.

52. Breckinridge exists thirty-two miles northeast from Leadville, a business center for the Summit County mines in the Blue River headwaters. Fossett, *Colorado*, p. 88.

53. West of Breckinridge sat Kokomo, twenty miles north of Leadville in the Ten Mile mining district which boomed in the early 1880s. Fossett, *Colorado*, p. 97.

54. In 1886 construction began on the Colorado Midland Railroad, the first standard gauge line into the Colorado mountains. In 1887 it reached Leadville, continuing west to Glenwood Springs. Wilkins, *Colorado Railroads*, pp. 57, 63.

55. In December, 1876, Sister Martha received a transfer from Trinidad to Santa Fe along with Sister Blandina. Segale, *End of Trail*, p. 87.
56. Located southwest of Leadville, the Gunnison district boomed by 1880 encouraging a "human 'tidal wave'" to arrive. Fossett, *Colorado*, p. 566.
57. Scenic Black Canyon of the Gunnison River, situated between Gunnison and Montrose, Colorado, presently a National Monument. Sue Duane Vanderbusche, "Man Against the Black Canyon," *The Colorado Magazine*, 50 (Spring 1973): 117-41.
58. Sister Martha died on March 18, 1884. Defouri, *Catholic Church*, p. 103.
59. On August 21, 1882, Sisters Mary Josephine, Pauline, Gertrude, Agnes Cecilia, Mary Alogue, and Blandina received orders to open a school in Albuquerque. On September 21, 1882, school opened in Old Town, replacing a school run by Jesuit priests. Segale, *End of Trail*, pp. 214, 226-27. The Sisters planned an academy for New Town. Defouri, *Catholic Church*, p. 104.
60. In May, 1889, the Albuquerque sisters decided to exchange an industrial school site for land near the Sandia Mountains for a proposed hospital. Segale, *End of Trail*, p. 334.
61. Sister Blandina in August, 1889, received orders back to Trinidad to teach school. Sister Catherine apparently accompanied her to Trinidad. Segale, *End of Trail*, p. 335.
62. Sister Blandina reported that Rev. M. Marra, S.J., served in New Mexico in July, 1882. Segale, *End of Trail*, pp. 214-15.
63. Saint Anthony of Padua, a native of Lisbon, Portugal, lived from 1195-1231. Travelers and people seeking lost items pray to him.