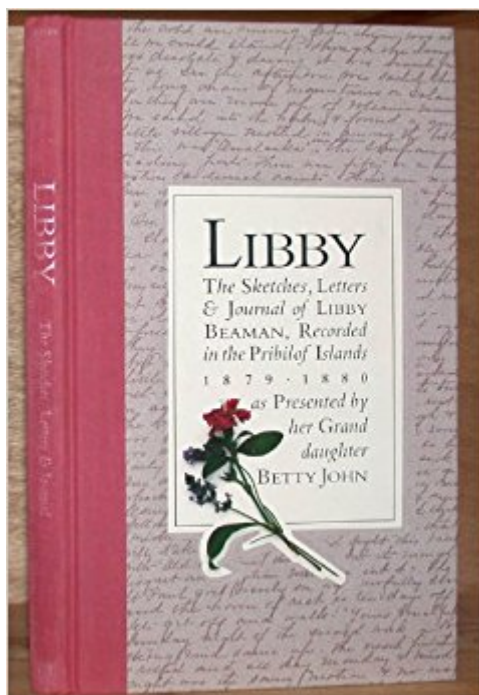


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Libby: The Sketches, Letters And Journal Of Libby Beaman, Recorded In The Pribilof Islands, 1879-1880



Synopsis

The diary of the first non-native woman to live on the remote Alaskan Pribilof Islands in 1879–1880, illustrated with her own drawings: a true story that reads like a historical novel.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Libby Beaman was the first American woman to travel to the Alaskan Pribilof Islands. Based on her diary, the tale of Libby, her husband, and the powerful first officer is told in all its passion. 20 line drawings. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Betty John (1907-1997) authored three children's books, "Hummingbirds", "El Captano Pelicano CafÃ©", and "Seloe", which is based on Libby's notes about the seals' life cycle. She served as a war correspondent during World War II, and her experiences gave rise to her book Flak Bait. In addition, she wrote plays, magazine articles, and an internationally syndicated medical column. Betty John was perhaps best known as the founder, with her late husband Dr. Henry J. John of the first camp for diabetic children. As a designer-craftsman she also won international awards for her liturgical enamels. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Allow me to preface my review by stating that I must have some prejudices regarding this work. You see, Libby Beaman was my Great Grandmother and so I was delighted to learn my Aunt Betty John

took the time and had the skill and patience to put together such a wonderful and revealing look at life in another world. The Pribilof Islands lie in the Bering Sea, removed from the "civilized" world and yet full of examples of how we "civilized" people might learn the values exemplified by the Aleut Natives. Betty uses the Sketches, Letters, and Journal of Libby Beaman to recreate an amazing world that is at times mysterious, unsettling, and impossibly primitive while also being wondrous, beautiful, and compelling to the visitor of these islands. Libby is also a singularly unique and independent human spirit, who was very much set against being stereotyped and confined by the dictates of the mid-1800's. Interestingly, she reminds me a lot of my maternal Grandmother, Amelia Rico, who was frequently referred to as "Pancho Villa" (rebel) because of a mindset that set her apart from the conventional guidelines for women during her time. Both were women ahead of their times! Getting back to "Libby," I was impressed with the content and composition of my Great Grandmother's letters, notes, and journals. Her gifted communications make reading about her Pribilof experiences, adventurous and entertaining, as well as extremely informative. It occurred to me how much more available other cultures and countries would be were these presented in a format similar to what we have here in "Libby". For me, the storyline concerning my relatives makes the reading even more irresistible. Indeed, our human condition, I believe, embraces a certain amount of voyeurism--be it sexually or non-sexually derived. Therefore, Libby's tale held me entranced and hungry to read on to discover what lay ahead in her next episode. I only wish she had written more about the experience there, as well as her experiences back home ... her exposure to such people as Abraham Lincoln, Rutherford B. Hayes, the Franklin family, etc. I'm sure had many anecdotes worthy of exposure. Unfortunately, I don't believe in this possibility ... but then again ... I never thought I would find my Aunt Betty's scrumptuous concoction, "Libby ..."

my aunt wrote the book...She wrote and published prior to Libby; however, Libby is by far her best work. Libby is both historically beautiful, and Libby's art work from her journal, lovely. Yes, my aunt took a tiny bit of creative license, but for the most part held true to the story. I, at one time, physically had art work and journal in hand. Betty was herself a well recognized enamellist, wife of one of the founders of the Cleveland Clinic. She had an intriguing life during world war II. Trust you may read this book at some time.

I would recommend this to high school kids for a history class assignment. Some great discussions would prevail I'm sure.

Libby gives her account of her life before and during her time on the Pribilof Islands. Her letters and journals provide a look at what life was like for the middle class woman of her era with an honesty I have never come across in any other widely-available account of the post-Civil War years. I read the book while I was Alaska, and it was startling to see both similarities and differences between the lives people live in the far north now and in Libby's experience. Libby has the intensity of a well-written novel, and a depth of truth only a woman writing for her eyes alone could present. If you're interested in women of her era, life in the north, or simply an interesting story by an excellent writer, Libby is worth the purchase.

...evidently this is a very highly edited and perhaps even augmented version of her journal. In the editorial review from "500 Great Books by Women"--which does not appear on the page for this edition but is included on the page for for another, unavailable edition of the book (ISBN#0395493250)--it refers to the fact that some of the gaps have been filled in by the author's granddaughter, Betty John, who is the one who actually had the book published. In the forward of the edition I read (which has a different ISBN from both this edition and the one mentioned above), Betty John notes that when she got the sketches and journal some of the pages were missing. She then says, "In Libby's book, therefore, I've had to fill in some gaps by conjuring up memories of the stories she told me and by doing research into her times. Her story, nonetheless, is the true tale of a very real woman... ." In the epilogue, she adds "What was left of [Libby's] journal and sketches ... came to me after her death. Those pages have been the basis for the book." In the book itself, there are maybe one or two small bracketed notes--not longer than a few words--where the editor fills in details. So I am a little puzzled about how much of the book really is Libby's journal. The comments in the foreward and epilogue imply that more than just a few details are added, yet there isn't much notation in the text to show what has been added and what is original. I would rather the publishers had made it clear what parts of the text were added, edited, or paraphrased, and what were the real journal. The way it reads, like a novel (almost like a romance novel at times) and the sometimes modern-sounding prose makes me suspect it may have been heavily edited and/or rewritten. Also the fact that she was committing some very personal things--things she probably did not want her husband to read--to paper made me wonder a bit. (She talks about her husband's boss's attraction to her and hers to him. These are the parts that read like a romance novel--complete with the gruff, aloof-seeming hero who often seems to be mocking her, but actually is attracted to her--total romance-novel stereotype!) That said, I found the book very enjoyable. Libby Beaman's family was very friendly with Abraham Lincoln and in the beginning she gives an interesting look at Lincoln's

election and the circumstances under which he came into office--how he had to sneak into Washington because his life had been threatened by Southern sympathizers. Stuff I may have learned in school, but forgot. She was apparently an interesting woman, impatient with the restrictions that were put on her gender and class. (At the end of the book she recants a bit, though.) There are descriptions of the Alaskan wildlife and of the people and history, and just reading about how Libby and her husband coped with the culture shock and vastly different living conditions in Alaska was fascinating. I just would have liked to be able to tell what was her authentic voice and what was added or changed in the editing.

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