



Michael Shaw on February 21, 2011 wrote: I recently entered an essay contest through BYU and chose to write about my 3rd-great grandmother, Anna Regula Furrer Cardon. My essay has been selected as a finalist. I thought it may be of interest.

My 3rd-great grandmother, Anna Regula Furrer Cardon, has been the primary subject of my family history research for several years. Documents suggest that Anna was among the earliest women in Western society to study medicine as more than a nurse. Her brother-in-law, Dr. David Ebnetter, was a noteworthy Swiss physician, and this enabled her to gain rare access to educational opportunity around 1850. A major aim of my research is to find documentary evidence of her studies, since this could challenge the narrative that Swiss women did not become doctors until later. I also seek to know the details of her life. My quest holds personal significance, and has the potential to inform historians' understanding of the timeline of women in medicine.

Recently, I uncovered an important nugget when searching the Perry Special Collections online archive. I found the diary of John Lyman Smith from his mission to Switzerland in 1855. To my delight, I discovered this handwritten entry for March 11th, 1856:

Sisters Anna Furrer & Ludert took dilligence for Lyons enroute for Valley via Liverpool in good health & spirits & may the Lord grant them strength of body & mind to endure the journey.

To the casual observer, this is trivial information. To me, it is a treasure of previously unknown truth. For some early period of her life, Anna was known as Regula. Written histories indicate that she assumed the name of Anna to conceal her identity in order to obtain passage to America. This journal entry solidifies that by early 1856 she was known to church members as Anna. It also illuminates a bit of the route she took as she made her way to England before sailing on the Enoch Train and eventually taking part in the 2nd handcart company. Finally, it reveals that one of Anna's travel companions was a "Sister Ludert." This opened a new avenue of research and I have since learned that this is likely Josephine Ludert Ursenbach, a fascinating noblewoman who sat in the Tsar's court in Russia.

Both Anna and Josephine were educated, sophisticated women, though their backgrounds differed greatly. Learning of their implausible convergence in Geneva in early 1856 thrills me. The words of Elder Smith make real the excitement, anticipation, and fear of the unknown journey. Knowing that these two faithful women experienced it together has enriched my understanding of the remarkable life of my grandmother.