

IRIS PARKER CORRY

NELLIE UNTHANK

aged ten,
walked, starved, froze
with the Martin Company
and left her parents in shallow graves
near the Sweetwater.

The Richards on First South
hugged their children's heads to muffle
Nellie, strapped to a board, without anesthetic,
screaming, her frost-black feet
removed with a butcher knife
and a carpenter's saw.

After that she walked on her knees,
married in polygamy to
William Unthank (of Cedar City)
who took her home to one room with a dirt floor.
She damped and scraped that floor
hard and smooth as sandstone,
washed it every day;

clean muslin curtains at the window,
on goods box cupboards,
Sundays the hearth whitened,
and Nellie made her way
knitting crocheting carding wool
kneeling by the washtub set on blocks
scrubbing townspeople's clothes on the board
and trading a yeast start for
a handful of sugar sent in the jar.

Said *never* to another operation —
waddled on leather kneepads in her little skirt
dragging her unhealed stumps
or pushed herself on a board on wheels.

Once a year Nellie and her six children cleaned
the meeting house.
The boys fetched water;
Annie, Martha, Polly washed the windows.
Nellie scrubbed the floor.