

A TRUE WOMAN OF THE WEST

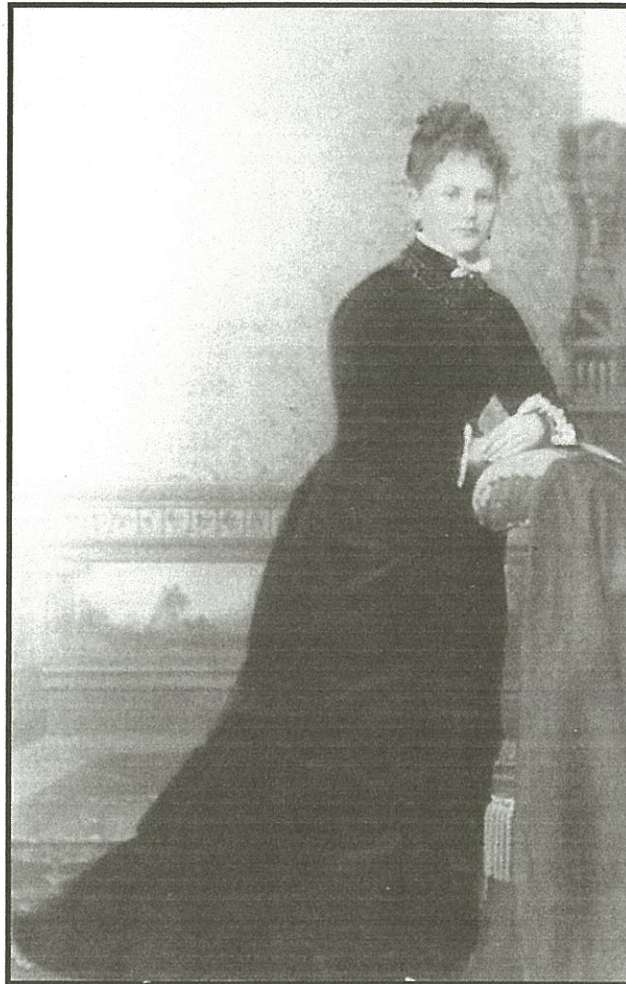
By Elisabeth Ruffner

Marcia Anna Wing, a woman of refinement and culture, was born in Muskegon, Michigan in 1858, and came to Arizona at age 25, in 1883.

She left a gentle upbringing to join her widowed father in the Prescott, Arizona Territory. James E. Wing had located here in 1877, after the death of his wife, the mother of his two sons and daughter Marcia. The sons, James and George had arrived in the area earlier to seek gold.

When Thomas Alva Wing arrived in Prescott he received appointment as Registrar in the United States Land Office for the Territory of Arizona. Wing's daughter Marcia came to Prescott to make a home for him, traveling by train to Ashfork, and then to Prescott on the mail stage. Her mettle was tested by the modes of travel then available. Locomotives were powered by steam which was generated by huge amounts of wood or coal. The smoke from the boiler fires swept back over the passenger cars, covering the passengers with soot and ash even when the windows were closed.

Alighting from the train in Ashfork, Miss Wing rode on a horse drawn wagon in which the passengers sat on board seats in rows in the bed of the wagon. The seats were covered by animal hides to protect the travelers from splinters, but offering no padding. The stage covered about five miles an hour over extremely rough country. At night, the backs of the bench seats were



Marcia Anna Wing, 1880, portrait from the Payne family collection.

lowered to provide a sleeping platform on which the travelers were forced to lie "spooned", bouncing over the rocks and ruts.

When the stage came to a steep grade, passengers either got out and walked, or assisted the driver by pulling on ropes on the downgrades and pushing the wagon on the upgrades. The stage charged 10 cents a mile, plus meals, which were usually dried meat, beans, salted pork and coffee.

At a distance of 50 or more miles from Ashfork, Prescott must have appeared as a haven to Miss Wing, after a bone

jarring twelve to fourteen-hour journey, although there were just three stores, five saloons and it was reported, only one bathtub when she arrived.

According to family records, Marcia Wing was a prim and proper young woman raised in a culturally rich environment. She endured the journey to her new home and soon met and married a young man who was also raised in a calm and cultured setting, Edwin Clement Payne. Married in 1885, the Paynes lived on a cattle ranch in Williamson Valley, then moved to South Cortez Street in Prescott where Mrs. Payne remained the rest of her life.

The Paynes were married in the First Congregational Church, in which Mrs. Payne was active throughout her life. She was involved with the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Woman's Club. She worked tirelessly throughout her life to establish a high moral climate in Prescott.

The Paynes raised five children, and although her husband was away a great deal in making a living for the family, both Marcia and E.C. remained true to their upbringing and to each other, creating in the wilderness an exemplary family which grew with the church and the town they helped create.

Marcia Anna Payne died in Prescott in 1928 after a long life, to the end a well bred lady, revered by all who knew her