

Dating the Age of Fairyland Diary Entries

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Perhaps as much as one-third of Opal Whiteley's first book, [The Fairyland Around Us](#) (1918), is composed of diary-like entries. There are about 180 of what appear to be diary entries in [Fairyland](#), many possibly written in her ninth and tenth year about 1907 and 1908. Other diary entries may be from middle and high school – including several from age fourteen and sixteen. There could be up to 30,000 words of Opal's diaries. It's a potential gold mine for people interested in Opal Whiteley.



This article will discuss clues that point toward when a passage was written. Many entries read like they are only fragments of what may have originally been longer entries. Opal claimed that her sisters tore up her diary when she was twelve and lived at Star, Oregon. Many of these diary entries are only brief paragraphs.

There are three known texts where Opal writes that she's nine or ten years old. One of these is a diary entry in [The Fairyland Around Us](#) and two are lengthy diary entries that she gave to the [Atlantic Monthly](#) in 1919 as samples of her early writing. These three diary entries give a baseline between her young writings and her teenage writings.

Most of the entries have dates (month and day) but not the year it was written. Opal claimed her published childhood diary was written from ages six to seven (ending in Sept 1905). Some of the [Fairyland](#) diary entries may be from 1907 and 1908. The Whiteley family moved to Cottage Grove for a period of time in the Fall of 1905. However, they returned to the farm in Walden by late 1906 or early 1907.

We also have several diary texts from 1912 when she is fourteen years old and also from 1916, when she is almost 19. These were not part of her torn up diary and are whole diary entries. Several entries from November, 1914 discuss her advocacy for prohibition (banning the sale of alcohol) and issues with her sister Pearl.

Opal is in this Walden School picture (above) in March, 1907. Opal's seatmate, Mabel, is in both the 10 year old diary piece and also in the Fairyland Diaries. Opal has a female teacher in her childhood and nine year old diaries (shown in photo). She has a male teacher in her ten year old diary. A young female teacher (prob. Nellie Williamson) is mentioned twice in the Fairyland Diaries. Records for the Walden School show she was paid \$50 on March 3, 1907.

May 28 '06	J. W. H. Jones	45 00	May 28 '06	6
Oct 22 '06	Nellie V. Williamson	50 00	Oct 22 '06	12
Jan 21 '07	" "	" "	Jan 21 '07	3
Mar 4 '07	" "	" "	Mar 3 '07	12
Sept 6 '07	J. W. H. Jones	60 00	Sept 11 '07	12
Mar 2 '08	Minnie Comer	60	Mar 9 '08	16
Sept 30	Wells Fogg	60	Oct 15 "	12

Katherine Beck, a critic of Opal's, argued in her book *Opal* (2003), that she was trying to write like a young child when she was writing *Fairyland* in 1918. Beck claims these are not genuine pieces of her early diary. That may be true in a few entries and there are many diary entries where after several sentences Opal seems to turn from child diarist to an older "teacher" asking questions. Sentences in one paragraph may have been written years apart. It can make for jarring reading, but overall, Beck is wrong.

One clue for these being actual diary entries are the "Dual Dates" in several chapters. There are at least 30 duplicate diary days -- when two or more diary entries have the same date. For example, in the chapter "Along the Road", Opal has two July 2nds, two August 15ths, etc. Her text will flow in chronological order through the months and suddenly, without any explanation, switch to a much earlier month and begin the chronology all over again. A list of specific Dual Dates is at the end of this document.

Despite having the same date, like August 25th, no two entries have much in common with each other. It's possible that the second August 25th is from a later year. If Opal had written both of these at age nineteen it is likely she would have kept the dates in calendar order. These read like actual diary entries because of Opal repeating chronological order in each chapter, but she never tells the reader that it's a new year. Opal often ends one of her diary entries by asking a question of the reader like "Do you know" or "Have you ever", etc. Perhaps some of the questions were written in her original, younger diary, but it reads more like the older "teacher" is asking the question. The questions read like they were tacked onto an earlier diary entry.

On at least three occasions during the writing of *Fairyland*, Opal told important people that she began writing at age four. She sent a note to author HG Wells. Several times in *Fairyland Around Us*, Opal says she is keeping diaries for people about her animal friends. She states that her purpose in writing diaries is to observe nature and teach those observations to children. Rather than being a private, intensely personal diary as most people's diaries are, Opal's nature diary is for keeping records of the outdoors.

SIGNS OF EARLIER WRITING

We can examine the three known texts where Opal says she's nine or ten years old. Her style, and the information about her life in these three known diary entries give us a baseline from which to evaluate her child and teenage writings.

1) First, there are the names of four of her pets in the 9 and 10 year old diary that are also found in *Fairyland Around Us*. The dog, Isaiah, is in both *Fairyland* and her published childhood diary as are pets Aristotle and Pliny. Also, in *Fairyland* she rides a jersey cow named Lily (p. 195). In her childhood diary she has a jersey cow named Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Lily can be short for Elizabeth. It may be the same cow.

2) Opal frequently mentions living on the "ranch" and writes about her grandparents, aunt and uncle in the *Fairyland* diary entries. They called their Walden farm "the ranch". Many of these entries were written in Walden, the site of her published diary and is likely from Opal's ninth and tenth year when it's known she lived there.

Opal's family is portrayed as much better in *Fairyland* than in her early childhood diary. Her mother continues to spank her - but now Opal seems to understand why. One recurring theme in both *Fairyland* and Opal's early childhood diary is conflicts with "the mamma". She writes from the child's viewpoint about how hard it is to restrain yourself when you want to go out in nature - even if it's snowing and you are three. Opal definitely fits today's definitions of autism and what's called the "Strong-Willed Child".

The diaries show a rebellious (autistic or strong-willed) Opal who tries to get around her mother's rules. In one entry her mother tells her not to take milk and corn out to her pet raccoon, so she brings the raccoon into the house to feed it!

Opal's kindly Uncle Henry, a gold miner, is in eleven diary entries. He is her mentor who teaches her geology, poetry, natural sciences and even the Latin names for animals. He died in 1914. If he is alive in a diary entry it's likely she wrote it before she was sixteen.

3) There are also several entries in *Fairyland* that are almost direct quotes from the 9 and 10 year old diary pieces she gave to Ellery Sedgwick at the *Atlantic Monthly* in late 1919. Katherine Beck and others are wrong when they claim she made up these diary entries for Sedgwick, saying they were the sort of story of lumber camp life he was looking for. But, part of each entry had already been published in the *Fairyland Around Us*, showing that they were written before Opal's visit with Sedgwick in October 1919.

There is one paragraph about “this little woodland singer” in her ten year old diary and also on p 171 of FAU (in the story “In Our Cathedral”.) These same words are also on p. 39 in the Morning poem. It’s interesting that she used the same words twice in Fairyland, but the passage was probably first used in her 10 year old diary. Opal published FAU before her meeting with Ellery Sedgwick.

4) In her younger writing, Opal still has a child’s sense of wonder. When she discovers something new it’s surprising or “I don’t understand this.” She has many questions about the world. The child’s writing is more innocent - and more charming.

5) Counting. As a child Opal counts everything around her - numbers of trees - eggs - birds - she counts almost everything. She counts less as she gets older.

6) Opal writes about being with other children, guiding them in learning about the wonders of nature. However, she is more often alone when she is younger. She is guiding and teaching the children more as she gets older.

Opal sometimes uses the word “we” when she is writing about coming or going to school. There are many entries where she is walking to or from school. She does not name the children with her but it’s likely they include her sisters Pearl and Faye. Most diarists would only use the short “we” rather than write out their siblings names during a diary entry about an everyday activity such as walking home from school.

7) The older Opal writes in a more “religious” style than the younger. The very young Opal certainly has a spiritual sense, but the older Opal’s writing seems to understand more theology. “When night comes unto Fairyland, we children fear not for God abides within and his love is roundabout us wherever we go. Tonight we have been watching the stars.” Opal is confident here - she has no doubt of God’s caring for them.

Her younger writing expresses awe at the world - and she is concerned she is doing what God wants her to do. It’s very spiritual. Opal was baptized in February, 1907 and as she gets older her writing becomes more traditional as she learns church theology.

SIGNS OF TEENAGE WRITING

8) Opal’s writing as a teenager is more detailed scientifically. Her older writing is more “teachery”. What some autism researchers call the “little professor” has grown into a lecturer who teaches both science and religion. It’s called the “little professor syndrome” because young children can talk in detail about any subject they are really interested in.

I’ve written a web page about why it’s likely Opal had Aspergers (autism) rather than schizophrenia. You can read it here: <http://members.efn.org/~opal/mental.htm>

9) The presence of Fairies is another clue to the age of her diaries. Opal uses the word “fairy” or “fairies” thirty two times in her published childhood diary. Close reading of the text reveals that in almost every case she is referring to an insect with wings. None are small humanoid creatures and none of the fairies have names - unlike many of the

animals and trees in her book. Although she writes that they are "little people" she does not mean that they actually look like people. It's clear they are mostly insects. By contrast, the diary entries I found in The Fairyland Around Us contain about 225 references to fairies in less than 60,000 words of text. Her childhood diary contains about 75,000 words and has only thirty five mentions of fairies.

What could account for that large of a difference? After all, belief in fairies and elves is mostly a phase young children quickly go through. However, one big thing happened in the culture after the time of Opal's childhood diary (1904 & 1905). The stories of Peter Pan became an international hit with kids. Peter Pan was published in book form in 1911 - years after Opal's childhood diary ends. Certainly, the terms "fairy" and "fairies" were used earlier, but it was Peter Pan and Wendy who turned them into cultural icons.

10) Opal uses more Biblical language as she gets older. In Fairyland Around Us, she often uses the phrases "came unto" or "come unto". She uses "came unto" nineteen times in Fairyland Around Us. Three times they are in diary entries but she uses this expression sixteen times in the nature stories - written when she was college age.

The Bible phrase "come unto" is used sixteen times - eight in stories and eight in diary entries. These two phrases are used a total of 35 times in The Fairyland Around Us. By comparison, the phrase "came unto" does not appear in her early childhood diary at all and the phrase "come unto" appears only once.

Another Biblical phrase, "like unto" or its variation, "like unto this" or "like unto these" is found five times in her childhood diary (in about 75,000 words) but it appears nineteen times in Fairyland Around Us in just 65,000 words. The word "unto" is in the childhood diary eighty-eight times, mostly as "near unto". It is in Fairyland about 130 times.

These examples show either that Opal added more Biblical words to her writing as she got older or that she was clever enough to remember that she did not write that way when she was younger. I think the former is more likely. Opal added more Biblical terms as she aged, went to church and learned more formal theology.

Opal's use of the word "today" is interesting. She often spells it "to-day", two words. That seems more like a child's spelling. She uses the word "to-day" over fifty times in The Fairyland Around Us. However, she uses the standard spelling "today" at least seventy times. This may indicate that it was written when Opal was quite young.

There is at least one unique word found in both books. Opal's word "screwtimeyes" appears seven times in the childhood diary (learned from her teacher). She also uses the word in her ten year old diary. However, the word is spelled correctly - "scrutinize". Again, it's connected to her teacher (a different one) and being late to school.

The length of diary entries varies widely. While most of them are simply brief paragraphs (which read like they had been torn up earlier) there are a number which are longer diary entries. Some of these entries are one long paragraph, which read like

Opal was writing hurriedly to get her thoughts out. It may also indicate a younger diary writer. In each case she has gotten into trouble and got a spanking.

Opal writes over 180 diary entries in *Fairyland Around Us*. Some months are much larger than others - January has ten diary entries but June has forty. December has just four but July has forty five entries. If Opal was keeping nature diaries as she said, this pattern of dates follows nature's own seasons.

There are many photographs in *Fairyland Around Us*, some of them taken by Opal. She has pictures of some of her pets and those are from what I think are her older teenage writings. Some pets are named, like Maurine, the pet deer she raised from a fawn.

Compiling *The Fairyland Around Us* was perfect training for what Opal may have later done when she compiled her early childhood diary - cut and paste from an early diary and then write new material to complete the text. Even if every word of her published childhood diary is true, the process of its reconstruction at the *Atlantic Monthly* strangely mirrors how she constructed or wrote *The Fairyland Around Us*.

Opal's nine and ten year old entries are very different from her published childhood diary. Still, there is enough similarity between Opal's nine and ten year old diaries and her published diary to make me think that she did start keeping a diary as a young child.

It's also very possible that she changed or updated the English as a Second Language style of her early diary entries in *Fairyland Around Us*. It's quite possible to see an evolution between Opal's six and seven year old and her nine and ten year old diaries.

END OF DATING DIARY ENTRIES CRITERIA

NUMBER OF DIARY ENTRIES BY MONTH - ABOUT 180

These entries show that Opal was keeping nature diaries. There are many more entries in Spring and summer months when nature grows than in fall or winter.



*Calendar says March 27, 1907
Teacher is likely Nellie Williamson*

January	10
February	3
March	10
April	18
May	21
June	40
July	45
August	20
September	11
October	7
November	1
December	4

Total Entries 180

Over 30 Diary Entries Where Opal Uses the Same Date

These May Add Support for Early Authorship

March - Duplicate Dates begin

March 9th, two dates - pages 43 & 166

APRIL - Two Duplicate Dates

April 8ths - two dates - pages 45 & 171

MAY - 5 Duplicate Dates

May 3rd - twice

May 17th - twice

May - two May 22s - second reads older - each on page 175

May 22 (1) - She identifies a bird, the Ruby-Crowned Kinglet.

May 22 (2) - She found caterpillar eggs. -no connection between the two entries.

May 29th - twice

May 30th - twice

JUNE - 12 Duplicate Dates

June 1 - two dates p145 & 176

June 3 - two entries p 70 & 176

June 5 - two entries - p. 165 & 176

June 7th - two June 7ths - p 66 & 144

June 9th - SIX June 9ths - p 65 & 69 & 70 & 144 & 176 & 185 [rch/stream/f#page/68/](#)

June 15th - three entries - p. 66 & 69 p 156

June 16th - three dates - p 66 & 69 & 185

June 20th - two entries - p 155 & 74

June 21 - two entries - p 155 & p 156 -

June 24th - p 73 & 74 - possible they are the same day

JULY - 10 Duplicate Dates

July 3 - p 79 & 186
July 5th p 92 & 186
July 9th p 92 & 186
July 10 - p, 186 & 77
July 15 - p 165 & 187
July 17 - p93 p 159 & 186 - three diary entries with same date
July 20 - p 92 & 159
July 29 - p 187 & 94

August - 4 Duplicate Dates - Aug 15th, 17th, 20th & 25th

Pg 98 - August 15 (1) - time of the Goldenrod. Know the flowers and know their insect visitors from Opal's Botany Study.
August 15 (2) - Horned toad ate David the cricket -no connection with two entries

August 17 (1) - Scorpions ate the spiders, puzzling.
August 17 (2) - insects around ox-eye daisy. -no connection between the entries.

August 20 (1) - mourning doves on the telephone wires.
August 20 (2) - roadrunner eating pet toads, mice and a black cricket. James is mentioned - there is no connection between the two 8/20 entries.

August 25 (1) - watching the California thrashers.
August 25 (2) - House of Salome is finished. Jimmy is mentioned. -no connection

SEPTEMBER - Two Duplicate Dates

- SEPT 5 ON P 109 & 196

END OF DUPLICATE DATES IN FAIRYLAND AROUND US

DIARY ENTRIES FROM OPAL'S 9TH & 10 YEARS

*Here are three Known 9 and 10 Year Old Diary Entries Written by Opal
Using These Perhaps We can tell the Ages of other Diary Entries
Also, Below are Several Diary Entries from Age 12 and 16*

Page 74 Fairyland Around Us - Along the Road - 9 years old

https://archive.org/stream/fairylandaroundu00whit_0#page/74/mode/2up

June 20th -- "Raspberry Apartment House" that's the label I tied on to a broken twig of one of Grandpa's raspberry vines. Now he wants to know the reason why. Why -- Mother Carpenter Bee started making the inside of that twig into an apartment house in May. I watched her coming and going. I know how it is inside because it is years since I found the first one. **(I was six -- and now I am nine).**

Inside the twig in separate little apartments made by herself are little Bee folks to be. She tunnels out the twig and at the bottom places pollen and bee-bread -- and of course it is for the Baby-bee to be. After she has placed the egg in the first apartment she roofs it over with pith chips glued together -- (You see she first took the pith out in making the tunnel). Then the roof of the first apartment serves as the floor for the second apartment and there again pollen and bee bread and the egg are placed; and so on up to the top of the apartment house -- but near the door dear little Mother Carpenter Bee reserves a bit of room for herself.

Within each apartment is going on the wonderful change from egghood to grown-up bee-hood. And it is rather funny about their getting out -- the Oldest Brother or Sister Bee born in the bottom apartment can't get out of the apartment house until youngest Little Brother or Sister at the top grows up. Meanwhile, being grown-up and eager to be out he just tears down the roof over his head and kicks the tiny fragments behind him -- so on does each brother as he grows up. Then when Last Brother is grown-up they all fly out -- darling little fairies with rainbow wings. Isn't this a Wonderful Fairyland?

“ABOUT 9 YEARS OLD”

Opal Gave it to the Atlantic Monthly in Oct 1919 as a Sample of Her Writing

It is the time of goldenrod and the way is bordered with plumes of gold, bringing joy to the eyes of those who pass by. We children go unto them and catch the insects about them and upon them. We have this motto in our botany study: Know the flowers and know their insect visitors. So every day new things we learn, and sweet the joy we find in knowing the everyday things around us.

This has been quite a busy day. After part of the morning work was done the mamma and the children went a-visiting. I was left to mind the house, and told to stay and watch it all day. First I swept the floors and then I scrubbed them, then I started to clean the windows. I put Bon Ami all over those panes in the windows, then I made mottos -- helpful things that Virgil and Horace and Seneca said in days of long ago -- on the glass with my fingers. That gave the windows a proper look of inspiration, so I left the Bon Ami on -- just as a background for the mottos. I have the stove a good shine-up. Then I decided the house didn't need any more tending; it could take care of itself; so I latched the doors and went and gathered up a lot of the camp children to go on an exploration trip.

We walked along the flume and leaned over to pick leaves from the tops of the higher bushes. When we had gotten a goodly number of leaves, we played they were ships and sent them sailing down the flume with light cargoes laden. By-and-by we came to a very rocky place. A young fir tree was striving to grow up among all those rocks. It had a brave look. We children climbed down from the flume. We circled around that little tree and gave it our pledge of friendship. The children asked me to name it. I called it Theocritus because he said, "Who perseveres, succeeds at last." As we came away we noticed how cheery it looked and that it had a goodly number of pimples. Many young fir trees have pimples -- as many as some people have freckles. These pimples are sticky -- are bubbles of pitch with the skin stretched tight over them. They are very sticky and if one slides down a young fir tree that has pimples, one gets sticky all over.

As we went on we picked up rocks. They were mostly very hard rocks and some had streaks through them and some had little crystals inside them. Some were more heavy than others. When we had gotten a goodly number we started back to camp. We went around by the pond. We stopped at our beloved island Delos below the pond. We saw the water was drying up around it. Then that Delos might not develop into a peninsula and that it might continue an island, we dug deeper the ditch around it and fixed a leakhole in the pond.

On the way to the old deserted house where I keep my Nature collections, we met Mrs. Hanson. She was smiling a beaming smile. She was happy because she has her

Commented [1]: Handwritten note in Opal's handwriting. She gave this to the Atlantic Monthly Magazine as a sample of her childhood writings.

It was the publisher, Ellery Sedgwick, who asked if she had diary entries from her younger years. Opal's early diary covers her sixth and seventh year.

Commented [2]: Opal puts Bon Ami on the windows - like she does in her childhood diary. However, now she writes quotations from famous writers!

Opal gets into trouble and gets spanked by her mother in the childhood diary for using Bon Ami on the windows. Bon Ami was a cleaner mostly used in kitchens and bathrooms. It has been sold since 1886. The words are French and mean "good friend."

Commented [3]: Good example of Opal's autism or strong-willed disobedience Opal is supposed to stay home and watch the house. Her mother took the younger children (ages about 4 -7).

Opal decides that the house can take care of itself so she and the children of the lumber camps went on an "exploration trip" - which also sounds younger as she always going on "explores" in the childhood diary

Commented [4]: A flume was a channel made of wood and filled with water. It was used in logging to move logs. Opal and her friends put leaves in the flume to watch them float like sailing ships.

Commented [5]: possibly in the fall of the year - note: "a goodly number of leaves" - she uses the same phrase in the next paragraph too for "a goodly number of pimples"

Commented [6]: Opal names a tree after Theocritus the ancient Greek poet - and they pledge friendship with the little tree.

Commented [7]: Delos is a Greek island. The Greek god Apollo was said have been born there.

Commented [8]: Opal keeps her nature collections in an old deserted house - she has a nature collection at age 9! Mrs. Hanson lives nearby. She, like many people used newspapers for wallpaper. Before wallpaper was widely used people would cover their indoor walls with newspapers. They were inexpensive and easy to glue to the rough wooden walls.

bedroom all papered new with clean newspapers. She has been saving them weeks unto the day she could paste them up -- and now they are on the wall.

After we put the rocks away, we thought to go search for the Holy Grail. We went by to get little Harold. He so likes to go on searches for the Holy Grail. Then his mamma, Lela, would not let him go with us, Harold said a prayer word in not a prayer way and got his mouth washed out with soap.

Then we went on down to the lower end of the camp to get Lorelee. She was crying out by the chopping-block. Her mamma was just dead a few minutes before we got there -- she was dead of typhoid fever. The doctor looked angry looks. He said everybody in camp must boil all water used for drinking and cooking. Too -- he said -- it was a wonder half the camp was not dead with typhoid fever.

We didn't linger to hear what else he had to say, because Jenny thought if we had the rope for Lorelee to jump it would help to keep her from crying. She is so fond of jumping rope. We went over by the mill to get John to get the rope for us, but John wasn't there to get the rope for us. He has gone to catch one of the hired girls at another camp, who is running away with the husband of the sad lady who lives in the mill town and gave all we children ginger cookies one day when we were coming home from feeding earthworms to the baby birds; and being as John wasn't there to get the rope for Lorelee to jump, I thought she would like to go for comfort to the Cathedral, so we all went.

We had a short service. I didn't preach a very long sermon. We just sat still and listened to God's voice speaking to us through all the growing things around us. There were new flowers planted by the altar, and he who planted those new orchid tresses lovely by the altar in our Cathedral was no other then Sandy, he who has as many freckles as the Milky Way has stars -- he who used to work for Mortenson at Marquan -- he who when comes pay-day gets so much whiskey out of bottles down his throat that he can hardly stand up and cannot keep on the proper tunes of the songs he sings at that time. All those orchid tresses he planted by the altar spoke of God's tender care for each flower, and we all know as God cares for the flowers and birds, so He cares for us.

From the Cathedral we went to the hospital, and there in the hospital today we were short of bandages, and after a short conference we amputated our apron strings, which made suitable bandages of assorted colors. When we arrived home near dark time our mamas, holding no conference, reached the unanimous decision that they would like to remove by surgical operation that part of our brains from which came the thought to amputate our apron strings. The switches left on the hazel bush by the window are few now.

The men being late coming home from work to supper, the mamma set me to mind the baby and the stew, that it did not boil over. While I was minding the baby and the stew, I carved a motto on the potato-masher. I carved it on so it wouldn't come off like chalk-marks, or the ones I made in the Bon Ami on the window that the mamma made me rub

Commented [9]: Little Harold, son of Lela Garoutte - searching for the Holy Grail. Harold is the oldest child of Elsie and her young husband in the Diary. He was burned by hot water on the stove when he was a small child. Each time he is mentioned in the childhood diary or 9 near old diary or Fairyland he is always called "Little Harold".

Here, Little Harold has said a curse word and his mother (Lela Garoutte) washed his mouth out with soap. That used to be a common punishment for swearing or saying bad things. - also possibly means she is in Walden as they were next door neighbors in the childhood diary.

Commented [10]: One of Opal's friend's mother has just died of Typhoid Fever. It was rampant in the logging camps because of poor sanitation and polluted drinking water. Opal's mother is said to have been terrified of typhoid fever - there was an outbreak of it in Colton, Washington where Opal was allegedly born.

Commented [11]: Opal takes Lorelee and the other children to the Cathedral where they listen to "God's voice speaking to us through all the growing things".

Commented [12]: Sandy - his face has as many freckles as starts in the Milky Way - same exact phrase said about Sadie McKibben in the childhood diary.

Sandy is a man who drinks a lot planted flowers in Opal's Cathedral. He drinks so much that he cannot stand up and keep the tune while singing.

Opal was very against drinking alcohol. She was quite active in campaigning to prohibit its sale in Oregon. The town of Cottage Grove banned sales of alcohol in 1905. Prohibition was one of the first major political movements by women who were tired of their husbands drinking their paychecks away and becoming abusive.

Commented [13]: Opal's father was known to have worked for this same small logging company

Commented [14]: Lobotomy! Opal's mother says that they would like to "remove by surgical operation that part of our brains from which came the thought to amputate our apron strings." That's a good description of a lobotomy, which was just starting to become widely used in mental hospitals.

Sadly, Opal was later to have a lobotomy when she was in Napsbury Hospital (1947-1993) for almost 50 years. It's amazing to read that a lobotomy for Opal ...

Commented [15]: Opal gets into trouble and is spanked again by her mother for writing mottos in the potato masher so that they "give a helpful feel to the atmosphere when things get awfully hard, which is very often in a lumber camps".

Her mother had told Opal not to write mottos on the window with Bon Ami - so she writes mottos on the ...

off. The motto I carved on the potato masher was what Plato said long time ago about philosophy: "A striving after heavenly wisdom." Being as we have mashed potatoes every now and then, I can always take down that potato masher with a thrill. I am so fond of having mottos around. They so give a helpful feel to the atmosphere when things get awfully hard, which is very often in a lumber camp. When the mamma came in to help me put supper on to the table and saw the potato masher with the motto carved on it, she said that I had caused it not to be a good potato masher any more, but I showed her where she was mistaken, because every letter I carved into that potato masher made it have more kinkles and more kinkles in a potato masher make it mash potatoes better.

But since supper-time I have found out something which I did not tell the mamma. I found that bits of potato stick in all those new kinkles the letters of the motto make, and that makes that potato masher lots harder to get clean. Why, it takes me three times as long to wash it with the motto on it as it did before I put that motto there. I really believe chalk mottoes are better after all on a potato masher.

By-and- by, after I did get those dishes done up and put away, I went outdoors for the twilight hour with the camp children. They all sat in a row on the old log while I was telling them about Beethoven -- telling them all I could remember of what my **Angel Mother** had told me a long time ago, and Lorelee cuddled up close beside me. Tonight she is going to sleep with Pearl and me in our crib bed.

End of 9-Year Old Diary Entry

Commented [16]: ANGEL MOTHER! Opal tells Lorelee (whose mother has just died) and the other children what she could remember of her Angel Mother from years past.

This is the only mention of Angel Mother outside of the published childhood diary. The name does not appear in the Fairyland Around Us.

“ABOUT 10 YEARS OLD”

Opal Gave this to the Atlantic Monthly in Oct 1919 as a Sample of Her Diary

This day I went forth into the forest at the hour of sunrise. And within the forest I heard a sublime, bell-like voice -- it was one of his Cathedral singers. Upward and onward the song of the little singer carried my soul -- and nearer seemed the All-Wise Father as I stood there in his forest Cathedral listening. He who in his singing lifts up the thoughts of the children of men to higher realism in this fairy, Audubon's Hermit Thrush. I could not linger to listen long. I had to get a hurry on me and get myself back to the kitchen, to put the coffee on and mix the griddlecakes and bake them for the papa's breakfast, and in between times put up his lunch, for he has to be on his way to work before half-past six o'clock. While I was making the cakes the bird song I heard in the Cathedral sang on in my heart. It was a good start for the day.

After the papa went to work, the children and the mamma got up for breakfast. The mamma, not being hungry, did eat only two griddlecakes, but the children (who most of the time have appetites like unto those of young birds not out of the nest) did eat nineteen griddlecakes, which it did take some little time to bake. Then there were the chickens to feed and there was milk to deliver. We get five cents a quart for milk. When these tasks were done I learned on inspection that there was not quite enough wood split up for the day.

When I was through splitting wood I sat down on the chopping-block to comb my hair for school. By the time the wood was in its proper place in the woodbox back of the stove, it was near school time and I was in a pre dick a ment. Last eventide I was so busy with the nursery and the hospital that I did not get a certain hole in my stocking darned. The other holes didn't matter so much, but that particular hole did. It was a matter of importance because when I put that stocking on my foot that hole came in the same place where there was a hole in the shoe -- right on the right foot where the little toe was. It's coming there made that little toe look like the littlest pig, that had to stay home on market-day but peeked out of the window. I couldn't take off the shoe to mend the stocking, as that would take too much time and would make me very late to school. So I went real quick to the cellar without the mamma knowing it, and gave that toe a good coating of liquid shoe-blackening. That made it look queer. It was ghastly gray. I knew that wouldn't do at all; so when the mamma wasn't looking, I took the stove blackening off the lamp-shelf and gave that toe a generous application. That gave it the proper look.

So I put the comfort-bringing stove blackening back on the lamp-shelf -- and taking my dinner pail off the corner of the woodbox, I hurried away to school. On the way I saw twenty-one butterflies -- seven Swallowtails, nine Monarchs, three Checkerspots, a Painted Lady and Velvet Cloak. I spread my arms to sail along like all those butterflies, then I thought I had better hurry on to school. Pretty soon I found thirteen caterpillars and heard a Meadowlark sing three different songs, one after the other. The I stopped at the Redwing Blackbird nursery. While I was there Father Blackbird, he with red upon his wings, came came with a plump caterpillar and pausing a moment popped it into the

Commented [17]: School is in session and - strawberries bloom in May & June - since it's school time it must be May - also, she sees butterflies - perhaps this piece is from the early Spring of the following year? - that would make it written not very long after the 9 year old piece which was likely written in the fall.

Commented [18]: Same exact paragraph is her 10 year old diary and also on p 171 in Cathedral and in April! - it is also on p 39 in the Morning poem - 3 uses of the same paragraph!

In Our Cathedral Opal wakes up at dawn and goes into the forest to hear a bird sing. It's an Audubon's Hermit Thrush and she says the "song of the little singer carried by soul - and nearer seemed the "All-Wise Father as I stood in his forest Cathedral listening."

Commented [19]: Opal makes pancakes for her father so he can leave at 6:30 am. Opal's mother and sisters are not awake yet and she makes breakfast for them too. Then Opal feeds the chickens, delivers milk and chops wood - all before going to school!

Commented [20]: Opal used this same term "pre dick a ment" in her childhood diary.

She did not darn her stockings and her toe was sticking out of her sock and shoe. Opal does not have time to fix the stocking, so she gets liquid shoe blackening and pt it on her toe! Then, she hurries to school. - she might do a similar thing in the childhood diary

Commented [21]: "eventide" - Opalism - evening

Commented [22]: Opal counting all the butterflies and other creatures she sees on her way to school. I think the younger Opal counts everything, as she ages not so much

wide-open mouth of Christopher Columbus and then was off again for another morsel. And I was off again for school. A little farther on I found seven more caterpillars -- and in the pond by the great oak tree I found a goodly number of tadpoles. I took off my sun bonnet and took my dinner out of the tin pail and put it into the bonnet. Into the pail I put the tadpoles, then I hurried on to school.

When I did get to school I opened the door softly. I tiptoed into the cloakroom and hung my bonnet on its hook. I took the dinner pail with me to my seat, for I was afraid that something might happen to the tadpoles if I left them in the cloakroom. Just as I got to my seat teacher saw me. A lump came up in my throat and I gulped it down. Then I gave my apron a smoothout and was just going to sit down when he said "Here -- Opal - it's near recess time and you should have been in school all morning."

I swallowed another lump in my throat. Then I gave him a beaming smile and told him I would talk with him after spelling class. I thought then would be the proper time to tell him about all the things I saw and heard on the way to school this morning, because this is my day to be at the head of the class. And it would be quite thrilling to go from the head of the spelling class over to his desk and tell him all about it. I know I can do it in about two minutes. Then he will know why I didn't get to school in time, and why it is so much more interesting to go to school in the fields than to come to his school here. When I had gotten settled in my seat I looked around for Mamie. She always gives me such a kind smile when I am late to school, which is very often, and I thought I would leave my tadpoles in her care while I went up to the recitation bench, to recite physiology and geography. When I looked around for Mamie she wasn't in her seat.

Then came recess time. While I was digging earthworms for the nursery I learned from some of her cousins standing round that Mamie did not come to school this morning. She went yesterday to the town that is beyond the next town that is Eugene, and got married to a man without asking her mamma and papa. She is not coming back to school any more, either. She is going to live in a lumber camp away from here where the man she married works -- and be his wife and keep house for him -- and get his breakfast -- put up his lunch and have his supper ready for him when he comes home at night. Of course it is nice for him to have her, but her seat looks so lonesome for her here at school. I feel all sad inside about her not coming back to school any more. At noon I put the tadpoles in Judy Ann's care and came away to the hillside, to pick strawberries -- some as a surprise for the mamma and some for the folks in the hospital and nursery. I forgot to eat my lunch before I left and when I got back some one else had eaten it. Judy Ann gave me a bacon rind she had saved for Oliver Cromwell and Josephus Jacobus Benjamin Solomon Rehoboam -- my two dear pet mice -- the rind was to be divided between them. I got considerable nourishment from that bacon rind, and still there was some left for Oliver Cromwell and J.J.B.S.R.

History class was, then arithmetic, and then came spelling. When teacher called Fourth Spelling Class, I just jumped up real quick. In some way I stubbed my toe against the bucket of tadpoles and it tipped -- but they didn't spill out because I caught the bucket. Only some water splashed. I counted the tadpoles and they were all there. I didn't dare wipe the water off my foot because in wiping it off I might wipe some of the stove polish off the toe, and that would have been a calamity. I gave my foot a shake and walked

Commented [23]: DIFFERENT TEACHER - A MAN - possibly written in 1909 or 1910 - Opal is late for school again. She has a man for a teacher and says she will tell him all about the things she found in the fields on her way to school. She thinks she can tell him all about it in two minutes!

Commented [24]: strawberries bloom in May & June - since it's school time it must be May

Commented [25]: This diary entry is from the same time as entries in Fairyland are written.

Opal's two pet mice - Oliver Cromwell and Josephus Jacobus Benjamin Solomon Rehoboam are also in the Fairyland Around Us.

Commented [26]: Opalism - Great example of Opal's writing "History was, then arithmetic, then came spelling."

proudly to the head of the spelling class. Being at the head of the class means that the first word given out is for you to spell. Teacher said, "Mississippi." I spelled in clear tones "m-i-s-s-i-s-i-p-p-i." Then I smiled because I knew I had gotten it right. And I looked a look of encouragement at Mabel beside me because her turn was next, and tomorrow she would be at the head of the class if she didn't make a mistake on the word teacher was just going to pronounce to her.

Commented [27]: Mabel - Opal's seat mate - also in Fairyland along with female teacher from previous year - perhaps is also called "Mamie" in FAU

While I was waiting for him to pronounce her word to her, he said, "Opal to the foot of the class. Mabel, spell Mississippi." While he was giving her my word right over again, he did scrutinize me as I walked my way from the head to the foot of the class. His eyes came to rest on my right foot. I felt that toe with the stove polish on it grow as big as the inkwell on teacher's desk. Then Mabel, now at the head of the class, spelled "M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i." I felt I would like to hide in the pail with the tadpoles, because of course I should have remembered that "Miss" anywhere, either on a girl's name or a river, should always have a capital M put on at its beginning.

Commented [28]: Opal says the teacher "did scrutinize me". That's almost exactly what she writes in her childhood diary!

Opal misspells a word by leaving out the capital "M" at its beginning and is very disappointed.

She spills water on her toe but does not want to wipe it off because she would wipe off some of the black polish she put on her toe and "that would be a calamity".

By squirming around the other toes I got that peekaboo toe into the shoe, to keep it from reminding me that always I should sew up holes in my stockings before I come to school. Being at the foot of the class brought me so much nearer my seat that I went to it when spelling class was over instead of to teacher's desk. I decided I would tell him tomorrow why I was late to school today.

I didn't keep up with the other children on the way home from school as I was on the lookout for food for the nursery and hospital. I crossed the mill dam and went round that way. I found every one doing well, both in the hospital and the nursery, and they received with eagerness the food I carried for them. I found Oliver Cromwell and Josephus Jacobus Benjamin Solomon Rheoboam in the barn. I gave to each his piece of bacon rind. Then I went to feed the chickens, to peel potatoes and to set the table for supper and to carry in the wood.

Commented [29]: "every one" - in original book

After the supper dishes were done I went to deliver milk. With me went Aristotle, Cicero, and Oliver Cromwell. Aristotle, that beautiful toad with jewel eyes, rode in my left apron pocket. Oliver Cromwell rode in the right apron pocket, and Cicero -- the little chipmunk -- rode upon my shoulder close to my left ear. When I returned from delivering milk, I mended that important hole in my stocking and while I was about it I sewed up some of the others.

Commented [30]: Aristotle - a toad - and pet chipmunks - Cicero and Oliver Cromwell and Josephus Jacobus Benjamin Solomon Rheoboam. They are also pets in Fairyland Around Us.

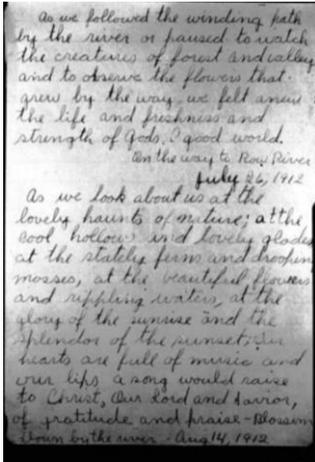
Then I went to have a little vesper service in the Cathedral. On my way I passed the chicken house. I stopped in to get Marie Antoinette. She was rather sleepy, having gone to "roost," but I felt vesper service would be helpful to her soul, so I took her along. I knelt by the altar, and she being sleepy did not bother to climb up on my shoulder but just cuddled up against my apron. The All-Wise Father is very near in our Cathedral in the forest. Vesper service is always such a help to one's soul and so prepares one for sleep and rest. And now I think I had better go to bed.

Commented [31]: Opal picks up the chicken to take her to Vesper's service. The chicken's name is Marie Antoinette - which is a great name for a chicken because they get their heads cut off, just like Princess Marie Antoinette did!

The same chicken is in Fairyland Around Us. Opal believes that Vespers will be "helpful to her soul". Opal may know that she will be killed and eaten soon.

Opal seems to know a lot about Catholic services at age 10. Vespers is an evening service, widely used in Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran churches. It is more used in Catholic services - going back to the earliest Catholic Church founders.

End of 10-Year Old Diary Entry



Two Diary Entries from 1912

Opal was Twelve Years Old

Copied from her Original Notebooks

They were Never torn up or Edited

These next two diary entries come from her original notebooks, which are in the University of Oregon's Special Collections Library. She several boxes were found on campus when she left Oregon in 1918,

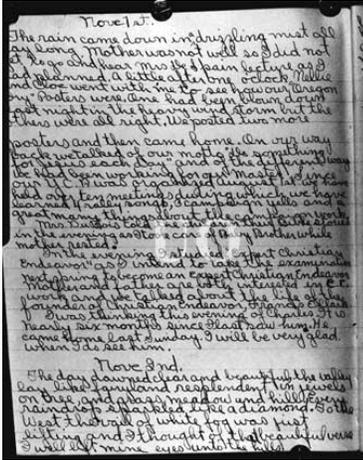
These diary entries were never torn up nor edited for publication. Unlike diary entries she published, these are untouched and may offer new glimpses into the "real" Opal Whiteley. They are from her early days in Christian Endeavor.

On the way to Row River July 26, 1912

As we followed the winding path by the river or paused to watch the creatures of forest and valley and to observe the flowers that grew by the way, we felt anew the life and freshness and strength of God's good world.

Blossom down by the river – Aug. 14, 1912

As we look about us at the lovely haunts of nature; at the cool hollows and lovely glades, at the stately ferns and drooping mosses, at the beautiful flowers and rippling waters, at the glory of the sunrise and the splendor of the sunset; Our hearts are full of music and our lips a song would raise to Christ, Our Lord and Savior, of gratitude and praise.



Opal in 1916 at Age 18 Campaigning for Prohibition

These next four entries are from 1916 when Opal was eighteen. She campaigned heavily in favor of banning the sale of alcohol. These entries are the last campaign days and election day. Oregon passed prohibition years earlier than the US, which made alcohol illegal in 1920.

Nov 1, 1916

The rain came down in drizzling mist all day long. Mother was not well so I did not get to go and hear Mrs. DeSpain lecture as I had planned. A little after one o'clock, Nellie and Cloe went with me to see how our "Oregon Dry" posters were. One had been blown down last night in the heavy wind storm but the others were all right. We posted two more posters and then came home.

On our way back we talked of our motto "Do something for Jesus each Day" and of the different way we had been working for our Master. Since our YCA was organized August 1st we have had over ten meetings during which we have learned 4 rally songs, 3 campaign yells and a great many things about the campaign work. Mrs. DuBois told the children their Bible stories in the evening as I took care of Baby Brother while mother rested.

In the evening I studied "Expert Christian Endeavor" as I intend to take the examination next spring to become an expert Christian Endeavor. Mother and father are both interested in C.E. work and we talked about the life of the founder of Christian Endeavor, Francis E. Clark.

I was thinking this evening of Charles. It is nearly six months since I last saw him. He came home last Sunday. I will be very glad when I do see him.

Commented [SW32]: Opal's mother died of breast cancer in May, 1917 – less than a year after this entry was written

Commented [SW33]: His name was Elwyn Milton Scott, born in 1915. He's about a year old here. He was only two when Elizabeth Whiteley died of breast cancer seven month after this diary entry

Commented [SW34]: Unknown man named Charles – he is older than Opal as he can vote in the election

Nove 2nd. 1916

The day dawned clear and beautiful, the valley lay like fairyland resplendent in jewels on tree, and grass meadow and hill. Every raindrop sparkled like a diamond. To the West the veil of white fog was just lifting and I thought of that beautiful verse "I will lift mine eyes unto the hills."

We did the general washing after the breakfast work was done and the children had been sent to school. Father, Mr. Fleisher, McCabe Jr Calloway and DuBois started to work this morning. In the afternoon, Pearl went with me up to Wildwood to post Oregon Dry literature. When I was ready at two Pearlie hadn't begun to get ready and was still reading a story paper. I became impatient with her but she said she didn't get ready because she didn't want me to have anything to do with that Prohibition literature. I told her I was very sorry and really I am because the temperance work is a joy to me and I do wish so much that Pearlie would find the joy in God's work that I find but I am going to be more patient with her and I'll just keep trying to show her by my own life what a happy life the service life is.

She really was ready at five after three and we started out. After posting the posters along the road (I posted the others along the railroad) we went to school. Just before school closed I gave all the children some temperance leaflets & told them how I had enjoyed my visit. They had good order; the smallest children were molding baskets, pitchers, etc. the others were all studying spelling (Nearly all but not all for two or three had grown weary & were looking around the room. The spelling class spelled every word right. The school room is cheery and homelike.

We came home and I started supper. Father returned with the mail at 5:30. He was feeling blue and told us that they guessed they would have to drop the contract as the association had sent a man after the donkeys. He's feeling down and out but I told him there's nearly always a silver lining to every cloud and I told him I'll take it to God in prayer. And then I ask him for a miracle.

And he gave me a sweet kiss on the forehead (He always kisses me on the forehead because I said that I would always keep my lips sacred for the kiss of the One Man who someday will come into my life and for whom I strive to keep myself pure in heart, mind, soul and body. For Him I am keeping sacred the dreams of my childhood and the treasures of my womanhood. And I ask of him the same purity.

And then I said to Papa "That's something nothing can take from us. And then papa said "Yes but it won't buy a sack of flour" and I replied "Yes but Loving one another is what binds the home together." Dear old Dad. We have a great many good talks together. Of course Papa really don't mind my being old fashioned.

In the evening Mother and I sang "Seeing Nellie Home", and one of the dear old Hymns.

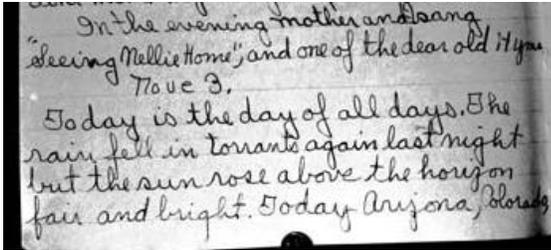
Commented [SW35]: This entry has the most detailed look into Opal and "the Papa", Ed Whiteley. Her description is very loving and caring. He has just lost his job and is worried about money.

Commented [SW36]: "donkeys were a form of petrol powered engines used in logging to haul the cut trees up the hill to be loaded onto trucks. Opal's father has just lost his job in the woods and she tries to comfort him.

Commented [SW37]: Good insight into Opal's moral character or sexuality when she was sixteen. She won't kiss her father on the lips because she is saving that for the man she falls in love with. Sadly, Opal never married nor seems to have had a steady boyfriend (or female partner)

Nov 3, 1916

Election Day: Oregon Votes for Prohibition



Today is the day of all days. The rain fell in torrents again last night but the sun rose above the horizon fair and bright. Today Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Ohio, California, and Washington are also to vote upon Prohibition.

Commented [SW38]: "The day of all days" – election day for prohibition. Opal says that the "men" go to vote but she also notes that Mrs. Harlow voted. Women's votes (and church members) helped pass prohibition in Oregon six years before it was made law throughout the United States.

Papa and Bert were talking over the different measures to be voted upon. In the afternoon Papa, Les, Bert, and Mr. McCabe Sr. went to vote in the afternoon. While they were up voting I took little Brother for a walk. When we came back Mother and I talked about starting Christian Endeavor at Wildwood. We decided to start Nov. 15 if it is not a stormy day. We are going to choose the topics till the first of the year as "Faith", love, gentleness, forgiveness, service, obedience, etc. loyalty, an aim in life "The Great Gift!"

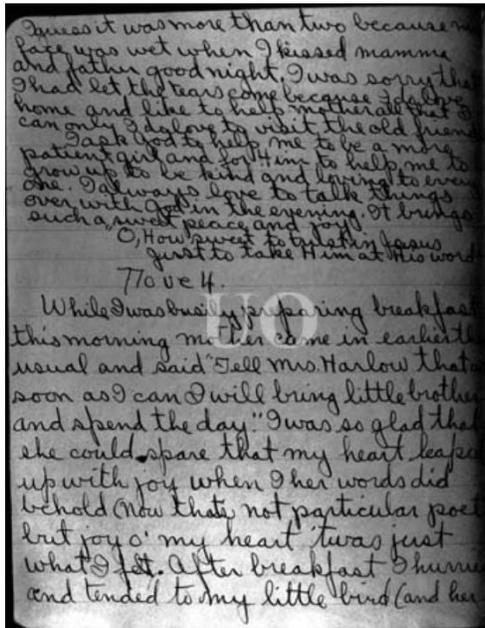
When the men returned from voting we were talking of the great temperance movement. Father, Len, and Mr. McCabe Sr. voted for Oregon Dry as I knew they would do. I am anxious to hear the returns from the election but I know Oregon will go dry for the people, the true home loving people, have worked for temperance as never before. In the evening I called up Mrs. Harlow. She and Mr. Harlow went to Dorena to vote in the morning. Mr. Joe Wicks took two wagon loads down. She said Charles went to vote in the afternoon. I told her I would try and come down tomorrow. I have not seen her for quite a long time. It will be one month tomorrow.

In the evening after I had finished my evening work when I spoke to Mother about going to Row River she said she could not spare me to go anyplace this fall not for a day. And then two tears rolled down my face.

I guess it was more than two because my face was wet when I kissed mamma and father good night. I was sorry that I had let the tears come because I do love home and like to help mother all that I can only I do love to visit the old friends. I ask God to help me to be a more patient girl and for Him to help me to grow up to be kind and loving to everyone. I always love to talk things over with God in the evening. It brings such a sweet peace and joy

O How sweet to trust in Jesus
Just to take Him at His word.

Nov 4, 1916



While I was busily preparing breakfast this morning Mother came in earliest as usual and said "Tell Mrs. Harlow that as soon as I can I will bring little brother and spend the day." I was so glad that she could spare that my heart leapt up with joy when I her words did behold (Now that's not particular poet but joy o' my heart 'twas just what I felt. After breakfast I hurried and tended to my little bird (and her name is Mary Harlow too) then made one of the beds, helped with the morning work and then we hurried and got ready.

I went over to call Mr. Woods up about returns and he said that so far they were sure Oregon would be dry. Then I went back to the house after Pearl. Before starting I carried Max and Dandy (one under each arm) back to the house & shut the doors so that they would not follow us. We had not been long on our way when I heard pat ti pat de pat at my heels and turning around saw Max, position [one ear up the other ear down, nose in air, eyes very sober looking] as he had started we let him come with us.

END OF DATING THE AGE OF DIARY ENTRIES