

# Eva Emery Dye: Romance with the West



By Sheri Bartlett Browne

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Writing in the early years of the twentieth century, novelist Eva Emery Dye captured the imagination of American readers with her epic accounts of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Oregon Trail, and the conquest of the American West. Brimming with adventure, drama, and romance, her books helped to shape an entire generation's understanding of American history and Manifest Destiny.

In this first biography of Dye, Sheri Bartlett Browne chronicles the life of one of Oregon's most successful early writers. Drawing on previously unknown letters and diaries, Browne examines Dye's determination to write historical fiction, the history of her involvement in the suffrage movement, and her lifelong promotion of education through the Chautauqua movement.

Dye is best remembered for *The Conquest*, one of the first fictional works to popularize (and romanticize) the Lewis and Clark Expedition, in which she introduced a new American heroine, Sacagawea. Although the book's portrayal enhanced the young Shoshone's role, it was Dye's later efforts to memorialize her with statues and speeches that turned Sacagawea into an American icon.

Dye's most extensive project was a historical novel recounting the achievements of nineteenth-century American missionaries in Hawaii. Completed in the 1920s but never published, her manuscript promoted a controversial view of American influence in Hawaii. Dye wrote one last book, *The Soul of America*, which examined the accomplishments and perseverance of pioneer women.

*Eva Emery Dye: Romance with the West* offers a fascinating look at a figure once prominent in literary and suffrage circles in the Pacific Northwest, and highlights the significance of family and education in women's lives at the turn of the twentieth century.

“Eva Emery Dye was a woman of remarkable abilities, who played a major role in the construction of the persona of Sacagawea, in the Oregon suffrage movement, and in the development of popular culture in the Pacific Northwest. Sheri Bartlett Browne's biography brings to center stage a major figure in the literary life of the first half of the twentieth century in the Pacific Northwest.”

—Stephen Dow Beckham, Pamplin Professor of History at Lewis & Clark College

### **About the Author**

Sheri Bartlett Browne is Assistant Professor of History at Tennessee State University.

Eva Emery Dye (1855 – February 25, 1947) was an American writer, historian, and prominent member of the Women's Suffrage movement. As the author of several historical novels, fictional yet thoroughly researched, she is credited with "romanticizing the historic West, turning it into a poetic epic of expanding civilization." Her best known work, *The Conquest: The True Story of Lewis & Clark* (1902), is notable for being the first to present Sacagawea as a historically significant character in her own right.