



Women of the Northern Plains: Gender and Settlement on the Homestead Frontier, 1870-1930

Barbara Handy-Marchello

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In *Women of the Northern Plains*, Barbara Handy-Marchello tells the stories of the unsung heroes of North Dakota's settlement era: the farm women. As the men struggled to raise and sell wheat, the women focused on barnyard labor--raising chickens and cows and selling eggs and butter--to feed and clothe their families and maintain their households through booms and busts. Handy-Marchello details the hopes and fears, the challenges and successes of these women--from the Great Dakota Boom of the 1870s and '80s to the impending depression and drought of the 1930s. Women of the frontier willingly faced drudgery and loneliness, cramped and unconventional living quarters, the threat of prairie fires and fierce blizzards, and the isolation of homesteads located miles from the nearest neighbor. Despite these daunting realities, Dakota farm women cultivated communities among their distant neighbors, shared food and shelter with travelers, developed varied income sources, and raised large families, always keeping in sight the ultimate goal: to provide the next generation with rich, workable land. Enlivened by interviews with pioneer families as well as diaries, memoirs, and other primary sources, *Women of the Plains* uncovers the significant and changing roles of Dakota farm women who were true partners to their husbands, their efforts marking the difference between success and failure for their families.

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