

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

1994

Review of The Adventures of The Woman Homesteader: The Life and Letters of Elinore Pruitt Stewart

Sue Hart

Eastern Montana College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Hart, Sue, "Review of The Adventures of The Woman Homesteader: The Life and Letters of Elinore Pruitt Stewart" (1994). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 868.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/868>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

The Adventures of The Woman Homesteader: The Life and Letters of Elinore Pruitt Stewart. By Susanne K. George. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. Illustrations, preface, afterword, bibliography, index. xiv + 218 pp. \$25.00.

"My dear, My dear," Elinore Stewart wrote to longtime correspondent Maria Wood on 27 April 1925, "the longer I live the greedier I am for life. I dread inactivity." How fortunate for readers who enjoyed the recounting of her varied activities in the collections of letters describing her life on a Wyoming homestead, *Letters of a Woman Homesteader* and *Letters on an Elk Hunt*, and for those who will come to know her—or know her better—through George's absorbing book!

George wisely leaves the previously unpublished letters she shares intact, resisting the editorial urge to clean up the spelling or grammar, and the result is a delightful introduction to—or reacquaintance with—an Elinore Stewart who comes across as a real person. Stewart describes herself in various letters as a "fat person" who is "too homely" to have a picture taken; she tells stories "on" herself as well as about others. In one instance, she tells of having had "that perfectly satisfied feeling that always precedes disaster"—and then recounts the hilarious outcome of a "company dinner" she was giving for some distinguished guests.

In a 1915 letter to Miss Wood, Stewart explains that she began writing the letters that were eventually collected and published to

entertain her "Beloved" Mrs. Coney, a friend and benefactor during her Denver stay. "She was always so interested in evry [sic] thing that it was a pleasure to share adventures with her," she says. Much of Stewart's correspondence was meant to entertain older people who did not know the West firsthand; Miss Wood, for example, lived in Missouri. That Stewart's feelings for Mrs. Coney were sincere, and not just literary contrivance, is borne out by her annual March letter to Mrs. Coney's surviving daughter, her way, she writes, of "keeping our day," remembering her dear friend's birthday.

Stewart tells her own stories in this wonderful, very readable addition to scholarship on the lives of frontier/homestead women; George's brief commentaries do not intrude, but do enlighten and explain when explanations are needed. In her thoughtful afterword, George examines Stewart's works in light of their place in the American literary canon and interprets Stewart's life as "the personification of the unconquerable democratic spirit of the times."

SUE HART

Department of English and Philosophy
Eastern Montana College