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Review of *Waiting on the Bounty: The Dust Bowl Diary of Mary Knackstedt Dyck* Edited by Pamela RineyKehrberg

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Waiting on the Bounty: The Dust Bowl Diary of Mary Knackstedt Dyck. Edited by Pamela Riney-Kehrberg. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. xiv + 365 pp. \$37.95.

Thanks to Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, the University of Iowa Press, and the daughters of Mary Knackstedt Dyck, we have a wonderful new resource for studying farm life on the Southern Plains: Mary Dyck's edited diaries from 1936 to 1941. A farm woman in southwestern Kansas, Mary Dyck began keeping a detailed diary sometime during the 1930s. Although her earliest journals have been lost, her writings stretching over nearly two decades from 1936 to 1955 have been preserved by her family. Based upon the entries' historical value and their depiction of core elements of Mary Dyck's world, Riney-Kehrberg carefully selected roughly one-third of Dyck's writings from 1936 to 1941 for publication in this volume. Readers will find abundant, detailed descriptions of dust storms and their wide-

ranging impact along with rich documentation of work roles and leisure activities in the Dyck household. Entries regarding Dyck's interaction with her husband and children and references to such "larger issues of the day" as the New Deal have also been reproduced, although Dyck was more scrupulous about recording the plots of radio soap operas than developments in politics or diplomacy.

Dyck's diary is a treasure trove for historians; detailed personal accounts written by ordinary people, and especially by farm women, living in the dust bowl region during the 1930s are rare. Unlike accounts by men, such as Lawrence Svobida's *Farming the Dust Bowl*, which focus largely upon agriculture, Dyck's diary reveals the daily activities of an entire farm family and the impact of economic dislocation and dust storms upon family life. We see the importance of radio as a link to the wider world of ideas and entertainment and the ways that high winds and dust storms not only complicated work but interfered with radio reception. Dyck's sense of humor adds to the diary's charm: writing of the "dust eretation" in 1937, she quipped, "One has to take a Broom along with him to sweep his way out. When he goes to see Mrs. Northwest [the privy]." As Riney-Kehrberg notes, the diary helps readers glimpse the emotional toll of rural depopulation and out-migration for some parents who stayed behind. The diary also shows how complex the migratory wanderings of children could be: Dyck's three children moved in and out of the house repeatedly during the Depression in search of economic and educational opportunities.

Although Dyck's diary itself is a rich resource, the editor has made the document more valuable through informative endnotes explaining obscure phrases and establishing a context for many of Dyck's comments and experiences. Moreover, Riney-Kehrberg's introductory essay, "A Woman and Her World," provides a rich interpretive foundation for the diary, acquainting the reader with Mary Dyck's background, her children, her community, her

farm, and agricultural and economic conditions of the 1930s.

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