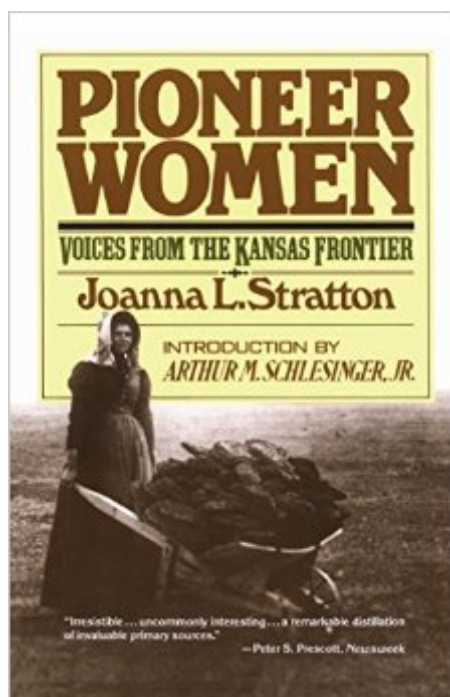


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Pioneer Women: Voices From The Kansas Frontier



Synopsis

From a rediscovered collection of autobiographical accounts written by hundreds of Kansas pioneer women in the early twentieth century, Joanna Stratton has created a collection hailed by Newsweek as "uncommonly interesting" and "a remarkable distillation of primary sources." Never before has there been such a detailed record of women's courage, such a living portrait of the women who civilized the American frontier. Here are their stories: wilderness mothers, schoolmarms, Indian squaws, immigrants, homesteaders, and circuit riders. Their personal recollections of prairie fires, locust plagues, cowboy shootouts, Indian raids, and blizzards on the plains vividly reveal the drama, danger and excitement of the pioneer experience. These were women of relentless determination, whose tenacity helped them to conquer loneliness and privation. Their work was the work of survival, it demanded as much from them as from their men—and at last that partnership has been recognized. "These voices are haunting" (The New York Times Book Review), and they reveal the special heroism and industriousness of pioneer women as never before.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s says in his forward to Stratton's *Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier* our historical record is built upon "important" people. People who leave records of their lives. For years, women, for the most part, left no such records (Unless of course, they were infamous, Americans seem able to recall the names of Lizzie Borden and Typhoid Mary without trouble.) In *Pioneer Women*, Stratton attempts to rectify this historical oversight by presenting

scores of memoirs written by women who inhabited and helped push Kansas along from being a synonym for a luckless hardship filled land (We need to look no farther than Baum's using it for the earth-bound, twister-prone setting for his book, *The Wizard of Oz*) to a state whose women urged farmers to "raise less corn and more Hell" politically (13). Stratton's introduction to her book is excellent, providing us with an unusual example of proto-womanism: a rich woman, Lilla Day Monroe (Stratton's grandmother) worked to preserve the words, thoughts and experiences of the hard-scrabble settlers who were the first Anglos to arrive in Kansas. Monroe, publisher of *The Kansas Woman's Journal* and the first woman in Kansas to be admitted into practice before the Kansas Supreme Court in 1895, began collecting the stories of pioneer women in the 1920's. It was a job that soon mushroomed into an almost insurmountable task. Monroe kept with the project, even at the expense of her health, using the women's experiences to document the growth of Kansas from frigid forbidding land to birthplace of the Temperance movement and stronghold for Suffrage. The tone of the memories is jarring.

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