

[Ebook pdf] Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains

## Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains

*Rachel Calof*

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#130289 in Books 1995-09-22 1995-09-22 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .55 x 6.00l, .64 #File Name: 0253209862176 pages | File size: 76.Mb

**Rachel Calof : Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. True GritBy CustomerExcellent. A translation by the son of a Russian Jewish 18 y/o woman who contracted to marry a rooky pioneer and homestead on the North Dakota prairie. The winters were every bit as grueling as the first storms of 2016 and perhaps worse considering they were living in an

overcrowded 12 x 14 ft shack ( a frame and no insulation ). It gives meaning to the phrase "true grit".0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well written and opened up the terrible conditions the settlers dealt withBy kate johnsonWell written and opened up the terrible conditions the settlers dealt with. I also grew up in this area so was of great interest to me.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Rachel Calof's Story--amazingBy Kindle CustomerI have an entire bookshelf and Kindle full of women homesteader's stories. Rachel arrived about 10 years before my relatives arrived, and because of our similar backgrounds, her story caught my attention immediately. I cannot believe what she and thousands of other women went through on the lonesome plains of America. Bad enough to have to try and raise a family on an isolated farm but she had to endure the constant presence of a fanatical mother-in-law and indifferent and often callous in-laws. I have nothing but admiration for this amazing woman.

Calof's [story] has the 'electricity' one occasionally finds in primary sources. It is powerful, shocking, and primitive, with the kind of appeal primary sources often attain without effort.... it is a strong addition to the literature of women's experience on the frontier." ?Lillian SchlisselIn 1894, eighteen-year-old Rachel Bella Kahn travelled from Russia to the United States for an arranged marriage to Abraham Calof, an immigrant homesteader in North Dakota. Rachel Calof's Story combines her memoir of a hard pioneering life on the prairie with scholarly essays that provide historical and cultural background and show her narrative to be both unique and a representative western tale. Her narrative is riveting and candid, laced with humor and irony.The memoir, written by Rachel Bella Calof in 1936, recounts aspects of her childhood and teenage years in a Jewish community, (shtetl) in Russia, but focuses largely on her life between 1894 and 1904, when she and her husband carved out a life as homesteaders. She recalls her horror at the hardships of pioneer life?especially the crowding of many family members into the 12 x 14' dirt-floored shanties that were their first dwellings. "Of all the privations I knew as a homesteader," says Calof, "the lack of privacy was the hardest to bear." Money, food, and fuel were scarce, and during bitter winters, three Calof households?Abraham and Rachel with their growing children, along with his parents and a brother's family?would pool resources and live together (with livestock) in one shanty.Under harsh and primitive conditions, Rachel Bella Calof bore and raised nine children. The family withstood many dangers, including hailstorms that hammered wheat to the ground and flooded their home; droughts that reduced crops to dust; blinding snowstorms of plains winters. Through it all, however, Calof drew on a humor and resolve that is everywhere apparent in her narrative. Always striving to improve her living c

From Publishers WeeklyIn 1894, the 18-year-old Calof, a Russian Jew, was shipped to the U.S. to marry an unknown man and stake a homesteading claim with him in North Dakota. She later set down her memories of that time in fluid prose that occasionally reveals a biting sense of humor. Although her circumstances were often pathetic, Calof never is. She writes matter-of-factly about her 12'x 14' dirt-floored shanty, her husband's unappealing family and their unsanitary living arrangements. Each winter, her husband Abe's parents and brother would join them in their home in order to save fuel-an arrangement revealed only on her wedding day. There are pleasurable moments here too, like an impromptu supper of wild garlic and mushrooms (Calof does a taste test to see whether they are poisonous-"It didn't burn or taste bad, so I swallowed it"). Childbearing is particularly difficult: Calof seems to be constantly pregnant, and her superstitious mother-in-law keeps her secluded after the birth of her first child until she begins to hallucinate about demons. An epilogue by Calof's son, Jacob, picks up the courageous author's story in St. Paul, Minn., in 1917, while an essay by J. Sanford Rikoon on the phenomenon of Jewish farm settlements provides fascinating background. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalAlthough Calof published her life story in 1936, it deals mostly with her time on the prairie between 1894 and 1904 and the hardships she encountered.Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.From BooklistIn 1894, 18-year-old Rachel Calof left a Russian shtetl to marry a man she had never seen and to begin a new life homesteading in North Dakota. Four decades later she wrote this memoir, which serves as a powerful and often inspirational tribute to the human spirit. The grinding monotony, drudgery, and deprivation of the first years on the prairie are recounted here in numbing detail; the filth, vermin, and constant threat of disease suck out any pretense of romance from her story. Yet, she and her family persevered and carved out an acceptable life for themselves; perhaps they did so because their previous circumstances in Russia were even worse. Calof is far from a polished writer, and her insistence on recording even trivial details can be tiresome. Yet, the strength of her will and the nobility of her struggle come shining through. Her story is a quintessential American story, and one that all of us can benefit from reading. Jay Freeman