



House of Fields: Memories of a Rural Education (Great Lakes Books Series)

Anne-Marie Oomen

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Anne-Marie Oomen uses a wealth of vivid language and personal details to bring scenes from her childhood on a family farm to life in *House of Fields*. Yet the focus of this book shifts away from the daily activities of the farm, which Oomen presented in *Pulling Down the Barn*, to life outside its boundaries, as she explores the complex meaning of "education" in all of its rural forms. From reading lessons to shattered windows, from dynamite to first kisses, from lost underwear to confirmation names, these stories depict the spiritual and emotional journey of being educated by family, fields, and church-as well as by traditional schools.

Oomen's description of the farmhouse where she grew up becomes the central image for this collection of essays. This once-grand home, filled with memories and the physical wear of family life, is the soul of her family's farm, and its sense of nurturing and protection is reflected in the author's relationships to her mother, her teachers, and her mentors. Within this context, Oomen examines memories from her formal education, which began during the final years of the one-room school era then shifted to the "consolidated" schools of the late 1950s and 1960s and to a parochial school system. Struggles with reading, first friendships, early loves, and contradictory educational models are coupled with the challenges of coming of age and the ups and downs of an emotional education between mother and daughter. Fans and teachers of creative nonfiction, as well as anyone with roots in a rural community, will enjoy this lyrical and revealing volume.



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