

Days on the Family Farm

From the Golden Age through the Great Depression

by Carrie A. Meyer

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A story both intimate and epic that paints a vivid picture of Midwestern farm life

From the beginning of the twentieth century to World War II, **Rockford area farm wife** May Lyford Davis kept a daily chronicle that today offers a window into a way of life that has all but disappeared. May and her husband Elmo lived through two decades of prosperity, the Great Depression, and two World Wars in their farming community just east of Rockford, IL. Like many women of her time, Davis kept diaries that captured the everyday events of the family farm; she also kept meticulous farming accounts. In doing so, she left an extraordinary record that reflects not only her own experiences but also the history of early twentieth-century American agriculture.

May and Elmo's story, engagingly told by Carrie A. Meyer, showcases the large-scale evolution of agriculture from horses to automobiles and tractors, a surprisingly vibrant family and community life, and the business of commercial farming. Details such as what items were bought and sold, what was planted and harvested, the temperature and rainfall, births and deaths, and the direction of the wind are gathered to reveal a rich picture of a world shared by many small farmers.

With sustainable and small-scale farming again on the rise in the United States, and another great recession upon us, *Days on the Family Farm* resonates with both the profound and mundane aspects of rural life—past and present—throughout the Midwest.

Carrie A. Meyer grew up on a farm in Illinois and served as a Peace Corps volunteer before completing her Ph.D. in economics at the University of Illinois. She has published two previous books, *The Economics and Politics of NGOs in Latin America* and *Land Reform in Latin America: The Dominican Case*. She teaches economics at George Mason University.

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