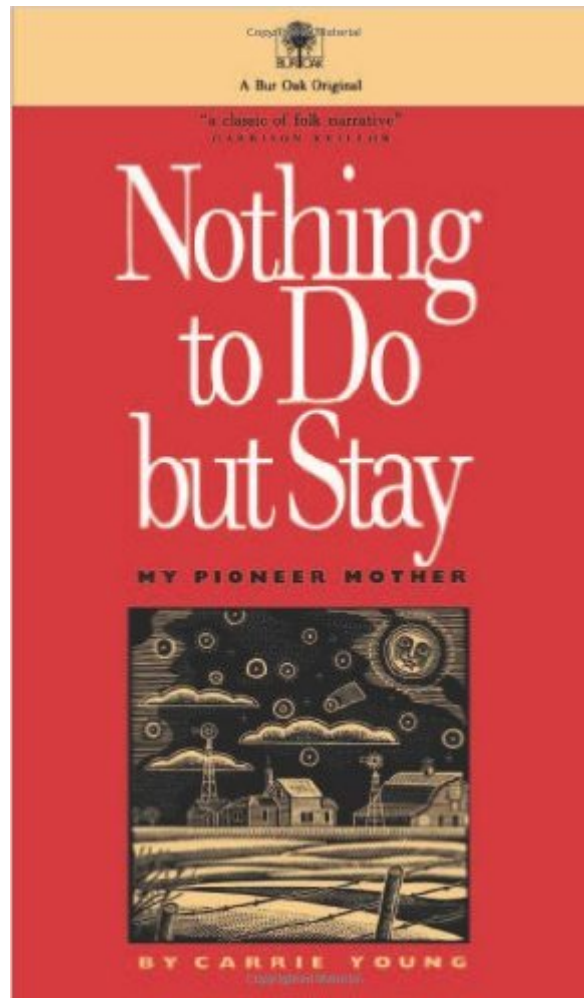


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# Nothing To Do But Stay



## Synopsis

This folk narrative by Carrie Young is a collection of essays that reminisce on her mother's North Dakota pioneering days.

## Book Information

Series: Bur Oak Book

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: University Of Iowa Press; 1 edition (January 1, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0877453292

ISBN-13: 978-0877453291

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (27 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I loved this book. It took me back to my childhood. So many of the events described in this book were familiar to me as a native of North Dakota, the threshing crews, the meals, the clothes frozen on the line in the winter. It is a hard and demanding place to live. Nothing came easy in North Dakota. I loved the people in this book. They worked so hard to pull a living out of this land and to see that their children were educated. They were honest and true friends to their neighbors, paid debts, persevered against years of hardship. I always told my mother she should have written a book. Well she never did. I think this is as close as I will ever get to that wish. I hope everyone will take a look at this book to get a glimpse, true and untarnished of what people in North Dakota and life in North Dakota was like in the first half of this century.

I stumbled on this book in a used book store. It is the amazing story of the author's parents and their life in rural North Dakota. The book has adventures, anecdotes, and gives the reader a real sense of how families existed in the early 20th century. This was a very entertaining story, although perhaps you can't tell from this review. None of us who have read it could put it down, from my 78 year old mom to my sister who is reading it to her 7 year old daughter.

I loved this book. Its a compendium of short pieces about the author's mother, who was a frontier woman with a wonderful outlook on life. I also loved the descriptions of her husband, who had to drive the children through snow, to get to their respective schools, and the descriptions about how the kids were settled in the schoolhouse overnight, while wild mustangs banged against the door. I don't know about you, but I'm not sure I would send my children to a schoolhouse way far away, with food for a week. Can you imagine what they did after school let out... all by themselves? I wanted to hear more about this. The descriptions of quilting are wonderful. It is a great book if you are in the mood to feel cold, hungry, and in North Dakota with the snow beating down upon you. Also if you enjoy descriptions of sumptuous meals at holidays, replete with Norwegian recipes!

There's no plot here and certainly no white knuckle drama. The book is a series of essays, each chapter relating an event or way of life experienced by the author as a child growing up on the North Dakota plains during the early 1900s. From education to farm life to holidays, each was covered with love and humor. I felt like I was getting to know my own grandmother as a child. My only wish was that there were more photographs, but considering the time period it was wonderful to have a few.

It often happens that our own stories are intimately entwined with someone else's story, and that to understand who we are, we have to tell another person's story first. This is true for Carrie Young, who has written a marvelous memoir of her mother. This warm, hopeful testament to a woman's courage tells the story of Carrine Gafjken, who--all alone, and with the single-minded, strong-hearted independence that is often obscured in men's stories about women--homesteaded 160 acres of North Dakota prairie. That was in 1904, and Carrine Gafjken spent the next eight years working for money in the winter and returning to her homestead in the summer. By the time she was thirty, she owned 320 acres of productive land. In 1912 she married Sever Berg. They sold his homestead and took up residence on hers, and over the next decade she bore six healthy children, the last of whom has told us her story in a style that is as strong, clear, and direct as Carrine herself. This is story with no frills or fancy lace, a story of hard work and tough times, but through it all runs hope and love for the land and a firm belief that perseverance will win out in the end. To my mind, the best books are like this one, valuable in ways too many to count. I not only learned important things about life on the Dakota prairie, but I learned some very good ways to tell a story, to give voice to someone who can no longer speak for herself and who must live--if she continues to

live--chiefly in the words of a writer and the heart of a reader. Carrie Young is a fine teacher for any aspiring writer, and her stories about her mother's life are instructive examples of story-telling at its best. by Susan Wittig Albert for Story Circle Book Reviews[...] reviewing books by, for, and about women

Did you grow up in touch with the sky and reality, but you're afraid your city-kids only know about TV, ads and computer games? Read them this book. Christopher Gray, New York City

The author is the youngest of six children of hard-working Norwegian-speaking parents, and the account of the struggles her parents went thru is awesome. Sometimes I thought the author indulged in hyperbole, and I would have appreciated a little more exactitude, but it no doubt is true that life during the twenties and thirties in northwestern North Dakota was a hard and demanding one. The first part of this book is the best, as the author relates the fantastic efforts necessary for the kids to be educated. There is a lot of discussion of Norwegian food, and those of you who are of Norwegian descent will gobble that talk up, but for me I could not get too interested in how her mother went to extraordinary lengths to prepare, under primitive conditions, the food she was so good at concocting. There is less talk of the interesting political events during the time than I would have liked. Appam, North Dakota, which was apparently a home town to the family during these years, has, according to my 1958 atlas, a population of 18. I would like to have learned whether it was a bigger place when the author was a child. But the upbeat attitude to her childhood was a real plus for this book--not the dreary catalog of hardship one sometimes gets from depression sagas. I liked this book.

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