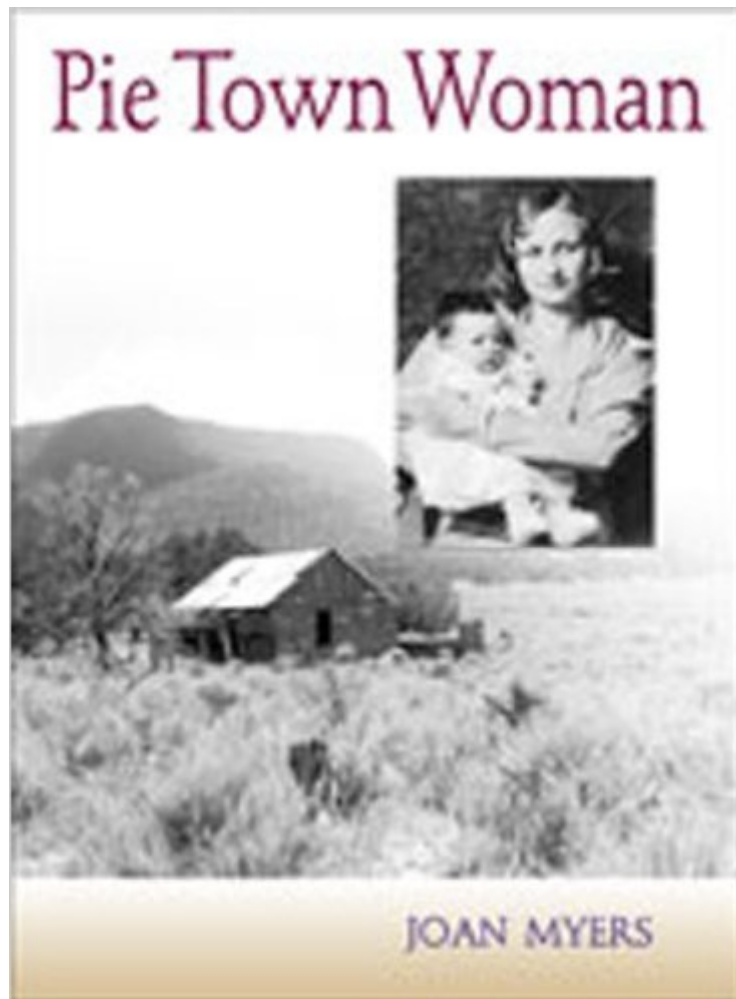


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Pie Town Woman: The Hard Life And Good Times Of A New Mexico Homesteader



Synopsis

Pie Town, New Mexico, was immortalized in 1940 in the photographs of Russell Lee, who documented life in the high, dry farming community as part of the Farm Security Administration's New Deal survey of American life. This book tells the story of one of the women photographed by Lee. Doris Caudill lived on a homestead with her husband and daughter, who was six years old when Lee made his famous photographs, many of which show Doris planting her garden, canning vegetables, and milking cows. Now, more than sixty years later, Joan Myers, herself a distinguished photographer, introduces us to the woman behind the pictures. Raised in West Texas, Doris first came to Pie Town on summer trips as a teenager. Faro Caudill courted her in Pie Town and brought her as a young bride to live in a dugout on a homestead in nearby Divide. Money was as scarce as water in this desert community, and a trip to Albuquerque, 180 miles away, was unimaginable. The Caudills went there only once while they lived in Pie Town, to buy a radio at Montgomery Ward. The nearest doctor was 60 miles from Pie Town, so babies were born at home and mothers had to be vigilant against accidents and snakebites. Although the Caudills and their neighbors lived in poverty that is hard for twenty-first-century Americans to imagine, Doris's memories of those Great Depression days are the happiest of her life. She was a lively young woman in the 1930s, and her sense of fun and the pleasure that the people in the tiny community took in each other's company more than made up for the hardships they endured. Joan Myers tells Doris's story and recounts the experiences of Russell and Jean Lee during their stay in Pie Town. Woven through Myers's narrative are her musings on the relationships among memory, photographs, and actual events. Included are a selection of Lee's iconic photographs, Doris's family snapshots, and photographs taken by Myers herself showing the visual residue of those bygone years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was the most interesting book I've read in years. As a photographer with a minor interest in history of the Western US, I found this book to be an intriguing mix. Initially I was uncertain that a book written by a photographer (from a photographer's point of view) could really go beyond simple observations, but Joan Myers does a great job in doing just that. Though the title of the book and much of the subject matter refers to a woman who grew up in the 1930s & 1940s - it is a history of a way of life gone from most of the country, it is about Russell Lee, a photographer in the 1940s, it is about the modern West, and it is about Joan Myers herself. The great thing about this book is that with great photographs from the early 1900s to 1940s mixed with the author's own wonderful modern photographs (which give the feeling that not much has changed in the Pie Town area since the 1940s) mixed with a text which reads much like a journal- the book becomes a history lesson even for people who aren't fans of reading history. It should also appeal to fans of early 20th C. photography because it gives insight to photographs well beyond the typical "this is what was happening then" caption.

This is a fascinating account of a vanished place and attitudes that explores the use of photography to tell a story and create a point of view. This is both a honest unvarnished look at a hard life and an exploration of the manner in which pictures make their own reality. The structure of the book is excellent and the narrow focus on an isolated part of New Mexico expands to shed light on the entire country,

Those of us who live in or near Pie Tow, NM love this book and it is nearly as apropos today as it was in-the-day. We all suffer many hardships just to exist here....and we wouldn't give it up for anything! The pictures alone will make your heart cry as well a make your soul sing.

Pie Town Woman is a look at American History during/just past the dust bowl years. A good look at what it takes to settle a new area of this country and the people that made the hard choice to do it. It follows a woman and her family and the struggles they faced, yet the love they had for each other extended beyond any hardships. It was a simple life yet a full life.It is also a look at the documentary

photographer that captured this era and the people of Pie Town and Divide New Mexico. It leaves you with the thought that photographers only capture a single moment in ones life. And there is so much more than that one moment in time. It is a reflective story about this woman, her family, the photographer, the era and the impact they all had on each other and America. I found this book a fascinating read. Especially so if you like history or, like me, having just moved to New Mexico and making our own way in the wilderness.

My husband gave me this book many years ago, because of my love of women's history. I've given it to many people since as a gift. Knowing the area where it takes place makes it more of a treasure.

.Very pleased with this book because there is some family history in this book. Fast read, passing it around to all my family.

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