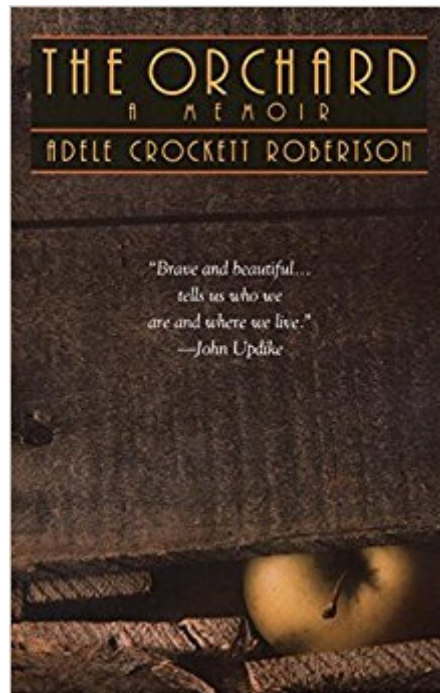




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The Orchard: A Memoir



Synopsis

The Orchard is an exquisitely beautiful and poignant memoir of a young woman's single-handed struggle to save her New England farm in the depths of the Great Depression. Recently discovered by the author's daughter, it tells the story of Adele "Kitty" Robertson, young and energetic, but unprepared by her Radcliffe education for the rigors of apple farming in those bitter times. Alone at the end of a country road, with only a Great Dane for company, plagued by debts, broken machinery, and killing frosts, Kitty revives the old orchard after years of neglect. Every day is a struggle, but every day she is also rewarded by the beauty of the world and the unexpected kindness of neighbors and hired workers. Animated by quiet courage and simple goodness, The Orchard stands as a deeply moving celebration of decency and beauty in the midst of grim prospects and crushing poverty.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The manuscript of this memoir of a young woman's losing battle to save her family farm during the Depression was discovered by her daughter after her death. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Robertson, a Radcliffe graduate, left a comfortable life in Boston during the Depression to grow apples in the family orchard near Ipswich, Massachusetts, from 1932 to 1934. This remarkable woman survived near poverty; cold winters; faulty plumbing; frozen pipes; the specter of unsold,

spoiled apples; and harassment from the local bank. She describes her experiences learning how to operate and repair a tractor, digging a well, packing and storing apples, and other tasks involved in running a successful orchard. The loyal workers who helped her run the farm and the university purchasing agent who bought her apples and introduced her to new clients helped make her lot bearable. In the epilog, written by her daughter, we learn that although the farm was later sold, Robertson continued to live in the house, married, and became active in the community as a shop steward, local radio reporter, historian, and journalist and did a stint in office as a selectwoman. This absorbing tale is recommended for all collections focusing on the contributions of women or American agriculture. Irwin Weintraub, Rutgers Univ. Libs., Piscataway, N.J. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

After a gap of two years, I just finished re-reading *The Orchard*. This is a true, powerful story of honesty, courage and human decency. The writing is hardly noticeable, so clearly does Robertson convey each scene of her story. The challenges she faces would be too great for one person and a great dane, yet again and again she rises to meet them. And each poignant moment is conveyed with the simplicity of a master craftsman. Never does she miss a step. She carries us along with her feelings and the feelings of her characters, even those of the great Dane, Freya. Sometimes when you finish reading a book you want to say "Thank you" from the the heart. In this case, I want to say Thank you both to the Adele Crockett Robertson, and to her daughter, for the Forward and Afterword that provide a setting for this gem of a book. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

This book tells the story of Kitty Robertson, a single woman trying to keep up an apple and peach orchard to help pay the bills and avoid having the bank take over the familyhome during the Great Depression. Her work ethic is admirable. She lives in a home she can barely afford to heat, puts up with frozen and bursting pipes and learns how to manage a tractor, caustic chemicals, and a questionable group of peddlers (she used her father's target pistol). Kitty's story of the difficulties of managing the farm moves at a quick pace, and I found myself absorbed in the telling of her story. If she had written more volumes, I'd have purchased all of them. At one point in the story, after she worked frantically to pick apples to keep them safe from a pending storm, she falls asleep in the house and wakes to find the thermometer outside reading 19 degrees below and worries that the apples stored and packed in the basement might be freezing. She slides down the basement chute in the barn around 2:30 in the morning to avoid letting in the cold air from the basement door and finds the temperature at 24 degrees. Some of the apples have frozen and have gone from \$2.00 a

crate to being worth no more than a dime per bushel. Kitty's manuscript was discovered by her daughter years later, under a pile of papers and a phone book. This story seems to parallel some of what is happening with the economy of the United States now, with the foreclosure crisis and the loss of jobs. Kitty was a Radcliff graduate who gave up her job at the Hartford Museum to take over the family farm. Later, she would find herself employed at the Sylvania factory as an assembly line worker. Kitty said, "I never felt hopeless unless I was hungry or cold or had nothing to do." She always had something to do, which made her life rich, earning her a great deal of personal and public respect from those that knew her or learned of her years later.

The Orchard, a Memoir, is a great book. Last week I was on a long flight back to San Luis Obispo from Omaha and I had this book with me, a gift from my mom. I started reading it and totally forgot about the flight, never noticed the movie they were playing. A good number of times tears were just pouring down my face and I'd wipe them away, wondering if the people on the plane around me thought I was a bit crazy. But I tell you, I'm crazy about this book! Honestly, I read a good deal and this is easily one of the most interesting, deepest, most powerful books I have read in years.

Although true, a memoir, it reads just like a fine novel. I was so totally absorbed reading this rare gem of a find, that it was difficult to realize that the author had died some 20 years ago--she, Adele Crockett Robertson, seems so real, so full of life, so gutsy, so immediate. Briefly, this is the story of a young girl, a smart, educated girl with a good head on her shoulders, who loses her job in the great Depression, and goes back to the family farm to try and save it from the bank. The many people in the book all come to life perfectly and there are surprises aplenty. I am a gardenwriter (author of Allergy-Free Gardening) and have farmed myself, and I appreciate what Adele went through. I would also add that this is no doubt the best picture of life during the Depression I've ever come across. I plan to review this book every place that I can, because to my mind, this one is so good, so readable, so well worth reading, so enjoyable, so satisfying, that it completely deserves to be a best seller. Do yourself a favor and read this marvelous book!

This book is a gem. Ever read one of those books that you don't want to end? Lost to know what to read next because all you want is more of what you just finished?? The author, Adele Crockett Robertson, writes movingly and beautifully about her lone struggle as a young, single woman to keep her family's orchard farm on the Cape during the 1930's. Her prose is about a simpler and harder life (the depression) and is heartachingly poetic in her description of the beauty of her farm, her loyalty and memories of her father, and her appreciation of the farm as her heritage. It is also

about grit, determination and the personal rewards of hard work. The only disappointment is that the author, Ms. Robertson, failed to continue her memoir. I was bereft when it came to an end.

Thanks

I picked this book up during a discouraging, lonely period in my life, and it really helped me put it all in perspective. The beautifully clean, understated writing paints a gripping picture of the enormous challenges Kitty Crockett faced and met during the Depression as she struggled to save her family's apple farm from repossession by the bank. It's a tale of true heroism. It gives a real feeling for the hardships that people faced and for the reserves of the human spirit that people drew on to endure these hardships. Can you imagine having to do grueling physical labor from sunup to sundown without having enough to eat, never being really warm in the winter, being constantly in debt, and yet getting up each day and doing what has to be done? Kitty Crockett is one of the most memorable characters I've ever met in a book.

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