



## The Homestead Brides Collection: 9 Pioneering Couples Risk All for Love and Land

*Mary Connealy , DiAnn Mills , Erica Vetsch , Kathleen Y'Barbo , Darlene Franklin , Carla Olson Gade ,  
Ruth Logan Herne , Pam Hillman , more... Becca Whitham ...less*

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Through nine historical romance adventures, readers will journey along with individuals who are ready to stake a claim and plant their dreams on a piece of the great American plains. While fighting land disputes, helping neighbors, and tackling the challenges of nature the homesteaders are placed in the path of other dreamers with whom romance sparks. And God has His hand in orchestrating each unique meeting.

### The Homestead Brides Collection: 9 Pioneering Couples Risk All for Love and Land Details

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Author : Mary Connealy , DiAnn Mills , Erica Vetsch , Kathleen Y'Barbo , Darlene Franklin , Carla Olson Gade , Ruth Logan Herne , Pam Hillman , more... Becca Whitham ...less

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## From Reader Review The Homestead Brides Collection: 9 Pioneering Couples Risk All for Love and Land for online ebook

### Kav says

Nine authors equal nine stories in this wonderful collection that celebrates the pioneer spirit. I understand that novellas aren't every reader's cup of tea but I love the opportunity to meet new authors in this unique way. So this was definitely a win/win read for me. Not only did I get to bask in the glory of tried and true authors I can always count on to deliver a spellbinding story, but I'm thrilled to have new authors to add to my 'must read' arsenal.

I will confess to finding nine novellas a bit daunting -- I usually prefer novella collections to be four stories or under -- but I wasn't about to miss some of my favourite authors' stories so I braved it out and am glad I did.

It wouldn't be practical to review each individual novella so I'll just give my overall impression. Think the Little House books for grownups. Gave me the same kind of thrill and fascination with a lovely dash of romance added in. I'm amazed anew at the backbone and courage of pioneer women and these stories are a lovely tribute to that heritage.

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### Elizabeth says

Homestead Brides Collection

By; Mary Connealy, Darlene Franklin, Carla Olson Gode, Ruth Logan Herne, Pam Hillman, DiAnn Mills, Erica Vetsch, Becca Whitham, and Kathleen Y'Barbo.

These are nine different historical romance by nine different authors. They bring us stories of individuals who stake their claim in the great American Plains and Risk all for Love.

Homestead on The Range

by: Mary Connealy

I enjoyed this sweet historical romance story about Colin Samuelson and Eleanor Winter. Colin lost his wife and he packs up land him and his children move to Nebraska Frontier Town to stake a claim and start over. He knows nothing about the rugged frontier land. Eleanor (Ella) husband has been dead for five years and she is trying to raise their children. This is a sweet romance novella of two families starting over.

Priceless Pearl

by: Darlene Franklin

I really enjoyed this short novella about America and Rick. There is the Barton family that picks up and moves to Oklahoma to settle on some land after the store he managed closed down. This The Barton's knows nothing about farming. Rick knows about farming , but can't read.

Proving Up

by: Carla Olson Gode

I loved this short novella about Nils Svensson who's wife left him several years ago and he still looks for her to return home. He has land in Nebraska and grows trees. Mrs Lindstrom (Ella) stole the land right next to him that he had been wanting to get. How will the land that both are wanting be settled? Will his wife come back home?

### Prairie Promise

by: Ruth Logan Herne

I loved this sweet novella about two woman in the Nebraska Plains trying to keep two farms going by themselves. We have an older woman , and then the younger woman is pregnant and everyone calls her crazy. How does these two women make out by themselves?

### This Land Is Our Land

by: Pam Hillman

This is a very good inspiration fiction historical romance. Molly , a young lady who has lost both of her parents and trying to keep her family together in a covered wagon and is caught in a huge snow storm on the way to Nebraska.

### Flaming Starr

by: DiAnn Mills

This is another beautiful novella by DiAnn Mills. I really enjoyed it. Starr Matthews a young woman who paid men for her services won a Texas homestead plot in a card game. Forced to leave town and go and find this land she won and start over. There is a lesson in this novella , treat others as you would wan't to be treated.

### A Place on The Plain

by: Erica Vetsch

I enjoyed this novella and the two characters, Julie and Cyrus. All Julie ever wanted was a place to call home and someone to love her. Cyrus is a war veteran, father, widower, and a homesteader. You will love reading about these two characters.

### Waiting on A Promise

by: Becca Whitham

I had not read anything about Becca Whitham before, but I throughly enjoyed this novella. The story and the characters are easy to follow. Karl left his father's clock shop to become a farmer in the Oklahoma Territory for homesteading.

### The Bogus Bride of Creed Creek

by: Kathleen Y'Barbo

I really enjoyed this novella. I had not read anything by Kathleen Y'Barbo before , but she has won me over. Cara , a young woman is headed out to reclaim the land her father had lost. What will she find when she gets there?

I was given a copy of this book by Darlene Franklin, One of the authors, for my honest review, which I have given.

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## **Anna Hurtt says**

I absolutely loved this novella collection! Each story was unique and had great characters, conflicts, and themes. When I read novella collections, sometimes I find myself skimming the stories for the good parts, but each one grabbed hold of my attention from beginning to end. I truly enjoyed each author's take on life for the early settlers.

(I received an e-copy of this book from Barbour Publishing, Inc and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review, which I have given.)

## Britney says

The Homestead Brides Collection is a wonderful collection of novellas by some of my favorite authors! Each of the nine novellas features pioneers working hard to achieve their dreams of land ownership. I loved the strength and determination of these early settlers and the hope they all clung to was inspiring! This collection boasts rich, historical details, engaging storylines, and tender romances. I loved The Homestead Brides Collection and highly recommend it to fans of historical romance!

My thanks to Darlene Franklin for the digital copy of this book. All thoughts expressed are my own and no monetary compensation was received.

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## Heidi Robbins (Heidi Reads...) says

This is an enjoyable collection of stories about pioneers homesteading and falling in love :) I learned A LOT about sod houses since almost every story featured one and a few even described the building process which is far more extensive than I had previously assumed. The romances are sweet and each story line is unique. I thought most of them were 4 stars, with a few 3 stars mixed in. My favorites were the ones by Mary Connealy, Darlene Franklin, Ruth Logan Herne, Pam Hillman, and Erica Vetsch. They incorporated themes of grief and hardship as well as strength, hope, and family loyalty.

(Thank you to Barbour Books for a copy of the book in exchange for my honest review)

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## Gina Hott says

### Homestead on the Range

Widower Colin Samuelson has his first pangs of feelings when he runs into his new neighbor Eleanor Winter. Until he finds that she has more children than he does! Now he's avoiding her like the plague. Eleanor has been on her own with four children since her husband died five years ago. When she sees the poor doctor moving in she can't help but to help.

Will the plains drive him away before he changes his mind?

Review: Adorable! With Mary Connealy's usual wit and irony this cute novella is the perfect afternoon read. Don't miss it!

Author: Mary Conneally

Grade: A

Ages: 18+

### Priceless Pearl

America Barton met ?Rick Eady just moments before the start of the ?Cherokee Strip Land Rush and he ended up on the plot next to her family. Can her well-to-do parents ever see that Rick's faith and hard work? are more important to America than his lack of formal education? Will Rick be able to keep her parents from killing themselves in this harsh wilderness??

Review: This is a beautiful love story. There are times that it seems a bit long, but it's just right.

Author: Darlene Franklin

Grade: B+

Ages: 16+

### Proving Up

?Nils Svensson hasn't seen his wife for years. So he's shocked and excited when he sees her walking through his trees. It's not until he kisses her that he realizes his mistake — it's Elsa Lindstrom, not his wife.

No matter, Nils only has one objective to prove up on this land and buy the adjacent property. Except, it's now owned by the very beautiful Elsa.

Review: ?I really enjoyed Proving Up. It only was this a sweet romance, but I learned a lot about Nebraska, the Timber Culture Act, and Swedish Immigrants. I also loved how, even though raised with the same GOD Elsa and Nils saw Him so differently.

Author: Carla Olson Gade

Grade: A

Ages: 15+

### Prairie Promises

?“Pay heed to the land and the good Lord, son, and everything else will fall into place.”

Following his grandmother's advice has given Jack O'Donnell a firm foundation and money in the bank.

Well, at least that part about the land. Jack abandoned the Lord on a battle field years ago. He's only left his holdings in order to bring his mother, Mary, back east from her Nebraska plains home before the land kills her.

Not only is she refusing to join him but her neighbor, Bridget Murphy, is dependent on his mother. How is Jack to take Mary home when Bridget looks ready to give birth any moment?

Review: ? So sweet. A beautiful reminder to trust God with each moment.

Author: Ruth Logan Herne

Grade: A

Ages: 14+

### This Land Is Our Land

?As the oldest of the seven Jameson children, Mollie is at her wits end when she encounters Lasso McCall at the beginnings of a Nebraskan snow storm. With just get siblings and her grandfather in their small wagon and no shelter in site she'd given up.

Fortunately, Lasso knows of a shelter nearby that should get them through the worst of the weather, but does he know a way to release them from the dire circumstances in which they've found themselves?

Review: ?I loved reading This Land is Our Land. Not only was it a beautiful romance but, it was so heartwarming to watch Mollie's siblings grow up in this short story.

Author: Pam Hillman

Grade: A+

Ages: 16+

### Flaming Starr

?Starr Matthews won a hundred and sixty acres outside of Texas in a contested had of cards. Sneaking out in the middle of the night to escape the shameful life she's lived and the cheating gunslinger that refuses to believe he's lost.

Starr arrives at her amazing new property only to find Aaron Conrad and his family with a properly sealed Texas deed.

It looks like Starr will be starting over once again...

Review: ?I think my favorite quote is “Seems like life is a progression of always starting over.” It really sums up the story. As does wondering whether you'll stay over alone or with the Lord by your side.

Author: DiAnn Mills

Grade: A

Ages: 16+ | ?Starr's status as a soiled dove is discussed and remembered. Not detailed.

### A Palace on the Plains

?Hired to sew up a trousseau as a wedding for a newly engaged couple, Julia Farrington is shocked when she's delivered to the home of Cyrus Haskell, brother of the gifter. Do they really expect her to work in a soddy? She'll be living in a house smaller than her father's parlor!

Review: ?I really enjoyed this but what I loved most was the advice Nan gave on marriage. It's perfect and beautiful.

Author: Erica Vetsch

Grade: A

Ages: 16+

### Waiting on a Promise

?Patience is overrated! Marta Vogel had been waiting practically forever for Karl Reinhardt to propose and she's not waiting any longer.

Karl left Marta more than fifteen months ago to claim property in the Oklahoma Territory. Sure she's gotten letters. Letters that are missing something. Letters that aren't explaining what's really wrong. So, Marta is going to find out. She's not waiting any longer.

Review: ?Awesome! I loved this novella. It was great to see how Karl and Marta needed each other. Plus, watching their lack of trust in the Lord and their redemption was awesome.

Author: Becca Whitham

Grade: A

Ages: YA

### The Bogus Bride of Creed Creek

Cora Duncan survived a lot to bring herself here. Finally, she can reclaim the land her father lost – their ranch in Creed Creek, Texas. The owner, Isreal McBride is deceased, and Cora has a letter, however fraudulent? that she's his wife. Perfect. Until Isreal's son appears...

Review: This was a fun novella. It would have been better as a full-length novel though. Too much detail was missing because of the restraint.

Author: Kathleen Y'Barbo

Grade: A

Ages: 16+

### Hott Review of The Homestead Brides Collection:

OH! I'm so sad it's over! It's definitely going on my re-reads pile! I really enjoyed each of the stories and can't wait for more from each of them!

More...

Source: Barbour Books via Netgalley

Overall: Grade: A+

Overall Steam: Mature YA

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## Wendy says

### BACK OF THE BOOK BLURB

Promises of free land lured thousands to venture into the vast American plains. They built make-do homes and put all they had into improving the land. Very often romantic thoughts took a back burner to priorities having to do with the land.

In these nine novellas, individuals are forced to encounter romance when neighbor helps neighbor, when land ownership is debated, and when natural disaster blows them off course.

Homestead on the Range by Mary Connealy  
Priceless Pearl by Darlene Franklin  
Proving Up by Carla Olson Gade  
Prairie Promises by Ruth Logan Herne  
This Land Is Our Land by Pam Hillman  
Flaming Starr by DiAnn Mills  
A Palace on the Plains by Erica Vetsch  
Waiting on a Promise by Becca Whitham  
The Bogus Bride of Creed Creek by Kathleen Y'Barbo

Travel along through the Great Plains on romantic adventures as God helps each land prospector find someone with whom to share the dream--the work--and the love.

#### MY REVIEW

I love these collections books, they are short stories and the authors do such a great job of pulling you in yet the don't disappoint with them not being a full length book. Some of my favorite authors have included stories in this book and there are some new ones that have done a wonderful job and I will be looking for more of their work. Thank you ladies! ! !

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#### Rebecca says

Reading a set of novellas is a bit of a gamble for the serious reader; on average the shorter stories are "fair" at best, but occasionally a collection is surprisingly good. "The Homestead Brides" falls into "really good" category; written by a variety of seasoned authors and sprinkled with stories from new-to-me writers, this book provided a nice diversion from full length novels and a renewed appreciation for women who followed their men into the vast unknown territories of historically uncivilized America.

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#### Anne says

Rich in historical detail, Proving Up is a fascinating story. We're introduced to two Swedish families that traveled to the Nebraska Plains in hopes of becoming landowners by participating in the Timber Culture Act of 1873. I didn't know much about this time period in history, especially involving the Swedish community. Facing unimaginable hardships, they persevered through many challenges before they could actually own the land they had been homesteading. After five years, they had to provide proof that they had lived and worked the land raising trees, hence 'proving up'.

Gade has done her research and brought a moving tale of determination to succeed, while showing a great love of the land, the trees, and the people. The focus of the story is on Nils and Elsa, neighboring tree farmers but there is much included about community and the importance of supporting one another through tough times. I especially liked Elsa's brothers.

The story kept me glued to my chair, not because of any suspense factor but because of the plot, dialogue and heart of the characters; their faith and rock solid belief that God was with them no matter what. I thought the end wrapped up a little too quickly but it didn't detract from the overall enjoyment of the story.

This novella is worthy of high marks and I highly recommend it to any fan of historical fiction. It was reminiscent of reading a Janette Oke book, only shorter.

Proving Up by Carla Olson Gade is part of The Homestead Brides Collection recently released by Barbour Books on Feb 1st. I was provided a copy from the author in exchange for my honest review of her novella. No compensation has been received.

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## Noela says

The Homestead Brides Collection is a gathering of nine inspiring tales telling of the adventurous pioneering folks of the bygone 1800's. These brave pioneers battled the land and forces of nature in their quest to improve their land and build a secure future. When love came their way, often it was as unpredictable as the land. Ultimately, their lives were enriched far beyond their dreams. Each outstanding story in this collection gives its own reward to the reader. Highly recommended!

Homestead on the Range  
by Mary Connealy

When the new homesteader Colin Samuelson meets Elle Winter, there is an immediate chemistry... that is until the father of three discovered this pretty woman had four children of her own! Considering himself a poor father of his own three, he was ready to run for the hills. That wasn't about to happen however because his land adjoined Elle's, leaving them both fighting their attraction to each other along with the forces of nature, and their children's antics. Absolutely loved this entertaining novella... It was amusing, romantic, informative, and beautifully illustrated how God is with us in the storms of life.

Priceless Pearl  
by Darlene Franklin

What happens when an inexperienced family leaves the city to make the run for land in the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma? Will this family survive the harsh winter with their inadequate knowledge and a tendency to be impractical from their days living comfortably in St. Louis? Or might their neighbour who has his own deficiencies be able to trade off? This is a sweet story of hard work, hope, and love, with a future that promises to be as priceless as Grandma's irreplaceable pearl!

Proving Up  
by Carla Olsen Gade

Swedish Nils Svensson was ready to expand his lumber business and build a timber mill, and the property bordering his land was part of that plan. Discovering that the beautiful Elsa Lindstrom held the deed to the land he thought could become his, dispersed his dreams upon the prairie winds. Elsa had her own plans and when Nils despite himself, grew feelings for her, she accuses him of only wanting her land. Will it be possible for them to find a way to prove up on their land as well as their hearts? This is a wonderful story containing a fascinating forest of facts on the Timber Culture Act of 1873 that's grafted into a blossoming love story!

Prairie Promises  
by Ruth Logan Herne

Philadelphia city boy Jack O'Donnell arrives at his widowed mothers Nebraska homestead, to a startling

reception from a young pregnant woman that's residing with his mother. He's not sure whether to admire this pretty woman or be wary of her? Regardless, he means to take his mother home with him as he can't leave her to this barren prairie and its harsh winter. How can he get his stubborn mother to agree to give up her land and more importantly, how will her plucky young widow friend that's due to give birth soon, survive alone in a thatched soddy no less? A descriptive and beautifully told story that was refreshing, thoroughly engaging, and a delight to read!

This Land is our Land  
by Pam Hillman

Mollie Jameson, orphaned and caring for a brood of siblings and a Grandpa with memory lapses, hasn't much time to spare to reach Lincoln, Nebraska if she wants to lay a claim to the land her father had homesteaded. They'll all be homeless if she can't make it in time, and when a blizzard sweeps in and slows them down, it seems that will be the case. Unless she can trust the cowpoke that they've only recently met who has no home or responsibility, to hightail it to the land office with their deed. Will the overburdened Mollie lose everything or gain more than she bargained for? This was a truly enjoyable and heart-warming story with endearing characters!

Flaming Starr  
by DiAnn Mills

With anticipation swelling the closer Starr Matthews draws to her recently acquired homestead, she is relishing the thought of finally owning her own place to begin a new life. But her hopes were scattered like the tall grass prairie seeds when she discovers widower Aaron Conrad and his children have already claimed ownership. Although Aaron's children would benefit from a mother and Starr's soul heal from love and a new beginning, her pride and tainted past produce formidable barriers towards any happy outcome. Will Starr find her forever or the end in the town named Last Chance? Not too many novella's touch me deeply enough to bring on tears, but this touching and memorable novella did. Loved it!

A Palace on the Plains  
by Erica Vetsch

Hired as a seamstress for Walt Haskell's upcoming wedding, Julie Farrington has arrived from the city to stay with Walt's brother, Cyrus. The widowed Cyrus is none too happy having her and her ridiculous amount of luggage move into his tiny dugout that already houses his mother and two young sons. Julie wonders what she's gotten herself into! She hadn't figured on encountering such a primitive dwelling with no space or privacy, or the gruff though admirable man she's dwelling with. Julie's true mettle is put to the test however, when she has to deal with sickness, arduous work, and extreme weather. Will Julie also find her happy ever after? I truly enjoyed this absolute gem of a story, and found the incorporated information on building Soddy's, completely fascinating!

Waiting on a Promise  
by Becca Whitham

Marta Vogel is anxious that it's taking so long for her fiancé to give her the go ahead to join him in Oklahoma. Ignoring his last letter again urging her to trust him and wait, she hops aboard the next train to Oklahoma Territory. But Karl Reinhardt had good reason to keep her away. He's dealing with a land dispute and sabotage while trying to work on his land. When she arrives, he is fearful for her safety, especially when she makes friend with the enemy. Wow, what a great story! It's not always easy to capture so much intrigue in a novella, but Becca manages to do that along with suspense, humor, and romance, in the talented strokes of her pen.

The Bogus Bride of Creed Creek  
by Kathleen Y'Barbo

Iz McBride returns home to his Texas ranch in Creed Creek to discover a pregnant wife! Which is very strange seeing how he's never met her before. And everyone in Creed Creek seems to love Cora McBride, even his traitorous dog. So does he evict her from his ranch or marry her proper? I loved the unique plot, and it was fun trying to figure out how this mixed up tale of deceit and truths was going to unfold. The charming characters in this western tale strive to change past wrongs for future generations. A very sweet ending to this novella and to this wonderful book!

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**Kathleen E. says**

Thursday, March 19, 2015

Proving Up, A Novella by Carla Olson Gade, © 2015

I love the texture of the collection books with the rippled page edges!

The Homestead Brides Collection: Nine Pioneering Couples Risk all for Love and Land by authors Mary Connealy, Darlene Franklin, Carla Olson Gade, Ruth Logan Herne, Pam Hillman, DiAnn Mills, Erica Vetsch, Becca Whitham, Kathleen Y'Barbo.

Timber Culture Act

March 3, 1873

"An Act to encourage the Growth of Timber on the Western Prairie"

Many hoped that giving settlers deed to public lands in return for growing trees would reshape the environment of the West, giving the claimant possession of 160 acres of public land for no cost in exchange for making improvements to the land if a person planted and nurtured the growth of trees on forty of their 160 acres for ten years, they could claim the land.

In 1878, the Timber Culture Act was amended again. This time, the amount of land that had to be covered in trees was reduced from forty acres to ten and also made exceptions for trees that had been destroyed by harsh climate or grasshopper plagues. --statistics reference

~\* Review of Carla Olson Gade's Proving Up \*~

"Proving Up" by Carla Olson Gade ~ ~ Elsa Lindstrom applies her scientific theories to growing trees on the Nebraska plains, intruding on a handsome homesteader's hard work and experience. Will their dreams come to ruin, or will love prove their success?

Swedeburg, Nebraska, April 1885.

"I'm read to prove up, Nettie." Nils Svensson spoke out loud, his only audience his grove of trees...and God. The hearty cottonwoods, with their leafy branches, reached into the sky above in agreement.

--Proving Up, 107

With trees on 30 acres, triple the claim requirement for his 160-acre section, Nils has been hard at work beneath the Nebraska skies.

This is a sweet story of hope and love beyond all that could be imagined! Join these homesteaders as their hearts blend into all that is waiting for them.

~\*~

\*\*\*Thank you to author Carla Olson Gade for sending me a copy of The Homestead Brides Collection for review of her novella, Proving Up. This review was written in my own words. No other compensation was received.\*\*\*

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

--Isaiah 55:12

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## Angela says

### The Homestead Brides Collection

First things first, this is a collection of super short novellas (about 45 pages each). The romance is like a hallmark movie ~ clean, simple, fresh, and sweet. Solid Christian themes encouraging the reader to love thy neighbor, not be judgmental, be consistently faithful in your walk with God and trust Him to work everything out in your life are clearly expressed in each story. Each novella stands alone and can easily be read during your lunch break or morning commute. Some of the authors are well known while others are brand new to the publishing world making this a great opportunity to be introduced to new writers and their particular story-telling style. I have discovered many new favorite authors thanks to these lovely little novellas.

### Homestead on the Range

Mary Connealy

Elle with her four children has been widowed for the last five years but settled into a prosperous homestead on the lone Nebraska plains. She meets Colin Samuelson and his three children, also widowed for a little over a year. He's a doctor. He's wealthy. He doesn't know diddly squat about homesteading. Initially, Elle and Colin are attracted to each other but when Colin realizes that between the two of them, they have seven children, he finds that to be a tad bit overwhelming and does everything he can to avoid Elle and her family. More easily said than done considering they share a property line and he needs all the help he can get! Time passes, the two families help each other including surviving a tornado and the more obstinate the parents become in being attached to each other, the more persistent the children become in getting them attached! This was a wonderful story!!

### Priceless Pearl

Darlene Franklin

America Barton and her family have experienced significant financial misfortune. Their last hope is to secure a Homestead during the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1893. While they manage to stake a claim, none of them have the skills or natural inclination to make a real go of the new life they want. Thankfully their new neighbor Rick Eady has years of experience growing up on a family farm, working the land, and carving out a living. Both the Bartons and Rick are Christians and show an eager spirit to be neighborly and helpful! At first the help appears very one-sided as Rick helps the Bartons build a soddy, plant a garden, make farm tools, and prepare for the oncoming winter. He teaches them to hunt, fish, trap, and even cook. But then we learn that Rick can't read and write and despite all his survival skills, he wants to be able to send letters home to his family and read the Bible for himself. America begins teaching Rick to read and write along with her two younger brothers. Despite the hard work of creating a homestead, a gentle romance develops between Rick and America. This was a very sweet love story.

### Proving Up

Carla Olsen Gade

Norwegian immigrant, Elsa is fascinated by science, botany, and horticulture, which makes a Timber Cultivation Homestead Claim ideal for her new life in America. Newly widowed, she purchases prime timberland right out from under Nils whose been proving up his claim and saving up to add on. Their love story develops very sweetly and I enjoyed it very much. I also found Elsa's brothers to be charming. My favorite thing about this story was all the little tidbits about trees, growing trees, and the Timber Cultivation Homestead Claims in Nebraska. I didn't know anything like that existed and I enjoyed learning about it! There were wonderful bits of Swedish language sprinkled throughout the story also, which I enjoyed!

#### Prairie Promises

Ruth Logan Herne

When Jack receives word that his father has passed away out on the frontier leaving his mother all alone, he races to Nebraska intent on packing his sweet Momma up and bringing her back home to Philadelphia. What he doesn't expect is for his Mother to refuse to leave her Homestead or her lovely gun toting pregnant widowed neighbor! Bridget's had a hard life but when her and Jack's mother, Mary each lose their husbands to the harsh frontier, they come together for survival and healing. Bonding like a mother and daughter, both still want to continue to carve their dreams for a bright new future out of the lonesome prairie. Jack realizes rather quickly that his plans aren't as straightforward as he initially thought and with some gentle encouragement begins to recognize the beauty of the untamed wilderness around him as well as the beauty both inside and out of his mother's pretty little neighbor! Another sweet little romance with nice elements of trust, compassion, and faith mixed in.

#### This Land Is Our Land

Pam Hillman

Lasso is an independent cowboy looking to settle in for the winter and work as a ranch hand when he comes across a wagon full of an orphaned family trying to make it to their Nebraska Homestead Claim before a specific deadline. A nasty blizzard forces everyone to hold up in an abandoned cabin before slowly limping their way through the rugged countryside to Lincoln. Lasso is enchanted by the oldest sibling Mollie and is impressed by her efforts to keep her struggling family alive. Eager to help, Lasso offers to ride ahead to Lincoln to see that their claim is documented in time and Mollie has to decide how solid her trust is both in God and Lasso. I love Pam Hillman's writing style. There are multiple characters in this story and they are all wonderful. There are also some extra warm and fuzzy surprises that made my heart smile!

#### Flaming Starr

DiAnn Mills

Starr is a soiled dove. This is one of the few prostitute stories I've read and actually liked. In many other stories, the main characters are so obsessed with their guilt and shame that they almost can't experience any other emotion and every decision they make is based on their guilt. The author handled Starr's story differently, and I liked it. Starr was born and raised in a brothel with a prostitute for a mother and put to work at a very young age. She wins her freedom in a card game and runs for her life. She realizes that the life she led was wrong but she is so desperate for a fresh start and respectability and willing to starve to death if that's what it takes to not return to the imprisoned lifestyle she grew up in. Other stories tend to focus on the struggle that the character goes through to avoid returning to what is considered a "lifestyle" of prostitution. Starr doesn't struggle with that at all. She sees it as a prison and does everything to avoid it. For such a short novella, this story makes a great character out of Starr. The relationship she develops with Aaron and his children is charming and the romance is sweet. There are some other wonderful characters as well. I particularly liked the Preacher's Wife. She's an excellent example of real Christianity and loving someone despite their past.

#### A Palace On The Plains

Erica Vetsch

Julia is a very talented seamstress, hired to make a wedding trousseau for a bride out in the middle of the Nebraska prairie. Her arrival on the train is met with a very frustrated brother of the groom who thinks all

these frivolities are a waste of money and clearly finds her profession disdainful. Cyrus is still grieving the loss of his beloved wife while trying to raise his two young sons. Viewing Julia as a weakling, he tries to convince himself that any attraction he might have for her is a complete waste of time. Though Julia is every inch a “city girl” and unaccustomed to the harsh homesteading life, she settles in for the next six weeks doing her job and making herself useful as much as possible. Several interesting and surprising events occur that offer for Julia and Cyrus to get to know and develop a quality respect for each other. This was another very sweet romance!

#### Waiting On A Promise

Becca Whitham

The first thing I love about Marta and Karl’s relationship is that they have history. They’ve been friends for a decade – a relationship that developed from childhood. They’ve made promises to each other and Karl has gone on ahead to Oklahoma to prepare a homestead for them. He takes too long and Marta, impatient, packs up and arrives on the next train despite Karl’s protests that he’s not ready for her. Upon her arrival, Marta learns that Karl is being bullied, his home vandalized, and he fears for Marta’s safety. Sparks fly but their love for each other encourages them to come together to solve their problems. This is a great story encouraging the characters to trust that God will work things out for them despite the difficulty of their problems and no matter how horrific their circumstances become.

#### The Bogus Bride of Creed Creek

Kathleen Y’Barbo

Cora has a messy past and a lot of secrets but she genuinely believes that the documents in her possession offer her a new home, freedom, security, and a fresh start in life. Needless to say, she’s pretty surprised when the man she believes herself to be the widow of shows up on her front porch! Demanding that the ranch is his alone and insisting Cora vacate immediately, Iz McBride is pretty surprised to discover that Cora’s documentation just might be legitimate, despite the fact that he knows he’s not married to her! This is an interesting story, with some equally interesting twists and a great mystery!

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### **Dana Kamstra says**

Marriage of convenience stories are among my favorites. Especially when they are set against the hardships of pioneering. I was thrilled about this collection of novellas. There were a number of "new to me" authors in this collection and it was wonderful to get a sampling of their styles.

Love Stakes a Claim on the Great Plains Promises of free land lured thousands to venture into to the vast American plains. They built make-do homes and put all they had into improving the land. Very often romantic thoughts took a back burner to priorities having to do with the land.

In these nine novellas, individuals are forced to encounter romance when neighbor helps neighbor, when land ownership is debated, and when natural disaster blows them off course.

Homestead on the Range by Mary Conneally

Priceless Pearl by Darlene Franklin

Proving Up by Carla Olson Gade

Prairie Promises by Ruth Logan Herne

This Land Is Our Land by Pam Hillman

Flaming Starr by DiAnn Mills

A Palace on the Plains by Erica Vetsch

Waiting on a Promise by Becca Whitham

The Bogus Bride of Creed Creek by Kathleen Y'Barbo

Travel along through the Great Plains on romantic adventures as God helps each land prospector find someone with whom to share the dream--the work--and the love.

Overall: I really enjoyed this collection. Most of the stories involve pretty sweet romances all surrounded by a variety of hardships. Some stories offer a bit of humor and others a bit of mystery. Together, this was a collection that I loved reading, and I certainly discovered some authors I'll be sure to look into reading more from.

Homestead on the Range by Mary Conneally

Widower Elle Winter meets new homesteader Colin Samuelson on the Nebraska prairie, but the attraction between them is soon dampened by the discovery that they have seven children between them. Soon their children are working against them to bring the two families together.

My Review: This was a fun story with all the antics of a large group of children. It was like The Brady Bunch meets Little House on the Prairie in many ways. The novella was quickly paced with some big moments.

Priceless Pearl by Darlene Franklin

Rick Eady grew up knowing how to make do with little, while America Barton grew up having plenty. When they secure claims near each other in the Oklahoma Land Rush, Rick often comes to the aid of the inept Barton family and their pretty daughter.

My Review: This sweet story captured the peril that many pioneering families faced when they were ill-equipped for this adventure. But the subtle emotional attachment that forms between Rick and America make for a very sweet story set in Oklahoma.

Proving Up by Carla Olson Gade

Elsa Lindquist applies her scientific theories to growing trees on the Nebraska plains, intruding on a handsome homesteader's hard work and experience. Will their dreams come to ruin, or will love prove their success?

My Review: For a novella, this one was sure full of a number of surprises! I can't say too much or else it will be spoiled, but this one was a fun read. I even learned a little bit about how the government used incentives to get homesteaders to plant more trees on the Nebraska plains.

Prairie Promises by Ruth Logan Herne

Jack O'Donnell storms onto the Nebraska homestead determined to take his widowed mother back East with him. But he finds her fit and determined to stay; plus she has taken a pregnant widow--rumored to be crazy--under her wing who wouldn't survive without his mother's help.

My Review: Living on the frontier took a lot of gumption and willpower. Jack's mother and Bridget both demonstrate their own share, plus the love of the land that they have. Jack clearly becomes attached to the wild land and the "crazy" woman his mother has partnered up with. Again, this one was a fun story to read.

This Land Is Our Land by Pam Hillman

Caught in an early blizzard, orphan Mollie Jameson is frantic to make it to Lincoln, Nebraska, to claim land her father homesteaded six months ago. If she can't get there in time, her family will be homeless. Then in

steps a foot-loose and fancy-free cowboy willing to help them along the trail, but can they trust him to race for the land office with their deed?

My Review: I honestly could not move through this story quick enough. It seemed like the family was always in some sort of peril and a deadline for their dreams that looms ever closer add a hint of tension to the story. Against all that, romance blooms between Mollie and Lasso. I adored this novella!

Flaming Starr by DiAnn Mills

Starr Matthews arrives at her Texas homestead only to find it already claimed by a widower and his children, who have been praying for a mother. Starr has money, but she has no skills; while Aaron Conrad has the homesteading skills, but no money for supplies. Can they work as a team?

My Review: God will always turn things to work for good is the theme of this story. Starr and Aaron both have a number of hardships in their past but they can each off something to the other that makes them better off together. This was definitely a sweet story with three little kids who are charming.

A Palace on the Plains by Erica Vetsch

Julie Farrington arrives at a Nebraska homestead as hired seamstress for an upcoming wedding. Cyrus Haskell is content being a widowed father and doesn't need to be distracted by who he considers a high-falutin' city girl--until a natural disaster puts her worth to the test.

My Review: This was probably my favorite story of all in this collection. The characters were wonderful and the story beautiful. There was definitely a theme concerning things being how they appeared in this story.

Waiting on a Promise by Becca Whitham

Marta Vogel's fiancé left over a year ago to claim land in Oklahoma, and she is tired of his excuses that keep her from joining him. Karl Reinhart is locked in a bitter land dispute. When Marta arrives uninvited and unannounced, her presence is more than a trifling distraction. She just may cause him to lose everything.

My Review: There was definitely a bit of mystery in this novella as there were a lot of troublesome things happening to Karl. Marta's arrival certainly complicates things. Both characters need to have a heavy dose of patience and trust in God for everything to work out for them.

The Bogus Bride of Creed Creek by Kathleen Y'Barbo

The last thing Iz McBride expects to find when he returns home to his Texas ranch is a pregnant wife. Apparently, his pregnant wife. Yet everyone in Creed Creek seems to love Cora McBride. The only trouble is, she's an imposter. Now Iz must decide whether to evict the woman or marry her.

My Review: This was the most difficult story for me to get interested in. But once I got most of the way through, my interest was certainly piqued by who actually owns the ranch and how everyone was connected.

\*\*I received a copy of this book from Barbour Publishing and NetGalley in exchange for my honest review. All opinions expressed are my own.\*\*

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**Barb says**

Published by Barbour Publishing, “The Homestead Brides Collection” is a book with nine different print offerings. The authors represented are: Kathleen Y”Barbo, Becca Whitman, Erica Vetsch, DiAnn Mills, Pam Hillman, Ruth Logan, Carla Olson Gade, Darlene Franklin, and Mary Connealy.

I very much enjoyed reading the novelettes by these authors. The short submissions were easy to read and kept my interest throughout. It was easy to pick up the book, read one and then be ready to read a new one right away. Most were very well thought out and well presented.

I was sent a free Kindle copy of this book from NetGalley.com in return for my honest review.

You can find this review on my blog at <http://wp.me/p2pjIt-e8>.

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## **Carrie Schmidt (Reading is My SuperPower) says**

Novella collections aren’t normally my cup of hot chocolate (I don’t drink tea) but this one had so many great authors that I had to give it a try! As with any compilation like this, some of the stories were outstanding and some just didn’t do it for me. In my opinion, the best ones are right in the middle of the bunch!

My three favorites were *Prairie Promises* by Ruth Logan Herne, *A Palace on the Plains* by Erica Vetsch, and *Waiting on a Promise* by Becca Whitham.

In *Prairie Promises*, Jack O’Donnell travels from Pennsylvania to the Nebraska frontier to convince his widowed mother Mary to return with him to their “safe” and comfortable city home. His brother has already given up on his own farm and returned to civilization; many other families in the area are following his example. But his mother is not quite as amenable to the suggestion as he had hoped, insisting that she wants to remain on the homestead she started with her late husband. Bridget, the young pregnant widow who shares his mother’s humble soddy complicates matters further. As the two women struggle valiantly to keep three farms afloat in the harsh Nebraska plains, Jack wrestles with what he should do. I loved how spunky and resilient Mary and Bridget were – even without Jack’s help. They totally could have saved their own day :) Jack could just sit there and be eye candy lol. (Just kidding – he does provide much appreciated help while he’s there but I like the fact that they really were doing just fine without him!) Ruth’s writing voice is so smooth and natural, effortlessly sweeping you into the flow of the story and carrying you along at a steady pace. Historical facts are woven seamlessly into the plot without turning into a textbook excerpt, and you are left with a greater appreciation for the trials and celebrations of the early settlers.

I wanted Erica Vetsch’s *A Palace On The Plains* to keep going and going and going. I could easily have taken this one out of the collection and wrapped it up in a novel all its own and been perfectly happy – you know, as long as Erica added tons more of her fun chapters in between the beginning and the end :) Her writing voice is hilariously droll at times, sweet at others, and always sharp and on point. For example, a character saying “Thanks for the help. That went great.” – when clearly it did not – is indicative of the kind of dry wit that had me chuckling throughout her story. And the two little boys – Cotton and Titus – oh my stars! SO STINKIN’ ADORABLE!!! I wanted them to be real so I could cuddle them up and smother them with kisses. They were responsible for the majority of my grins during the entire book (not just Erica’s novella). And the romance? \*dreamy sigh\* My favorite out of all the stories! Honestly, when I finished the whole book, I re-read this story just because I enjoyed it that much.

*Waiting on a Promise* is Becca Whitham’s first published novella, and I cannot wait to read more by her! Full of mystery, suspense, romance, and heart, this one had all the elements I look for in a short story. In a novel too, for that matter. When Marta Vogel tires of waiting for her fiance Karl Reinhardt to invite her to join him on his Oklahoma homestead, she takes matters into her own hands and takes the next train out to

find him. Instead of being glad to see her, Karl seems angry that she's there. Hurt by his rejection, not to mention the other woman clinging to him at the station, Marta accepts a ride to Karl's homestead from a local businessman and his wife. She doesn't know this man is Karl's greatest enemy, and when she finds out about the land dispute – and the reasons Karl wanted her to stay away – she decides to remain in town to do what she can to help. I loved the mystery, I loved the friendships, and I loved the sweet gentle romance.

Mary Conneally, Diann Mills, Kathleen Y'Barbo, Darlene Franklin, Carla Olson Gade, and Pam Hillman also have novellas in The Homestead Brides Collection.

Bottom Line: Packed with stories that highlight the tough and enduring spirit of those who struggled to prove up their claims to land in the western frontier, you will also be treated to gentle romance and an occasional bit of humor to sweeten your day. An additional treat is the opportunity to be introduced to a variety of authors that you might not otherwise read. In fact, I requested this collection for one particular author and ended up liking that story the least lol.

Rating a novella collection is always a bit tricky. There were only a couple of stories I didn't care for as much as the others, and I gave those each a 3 star rating. The rest of the novellas I easily gave 4 or 5 stars. So, I think overall I would give The Homestead Brides Collection 4 out of 5 stars!

(I received a digital ARC of this book from the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for only my honest review.)

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