

SURVIVING THE SIMPLE LIFE

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DEDICATION

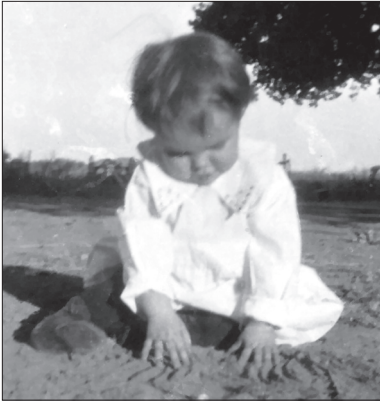
This book is dedicated to Allison Ann Snyder Schnelle with love, and the hope that she will pass it on to my most recent precious great-granddaughter, Mia Helen Schnelle.

FOREWORD

One day in a conversation with Granddaughter Allison, we discussed the differences between my childhood and hers. Her comment was, “I wish I could have lived when life was simple.” She was referring to her life that is full of a myriad of pressures. I mulled over her dilemma, and decided the simple life was not “simple” at all. I sat down to share my memories with her. What was to be a couple of pages turned out to be a ten-year project because of interruptions that could not be ignored.

In retrospect, the challenges of living without the conveniences we take for granted today actually worked to my advantage. I grew up in the quietness of rural life with a few books (the classics) and pencil and paper for my creative endeavors. Dreams coupled with determination and hard work, as well as my parents’ blessing, formed the foundation for a full life, but not one without challenges.

IN THE BEGINNING



MY MOTHER AND FATHER — THE SPINSTER AND BACHELOR IN MARRIAGE

The year was 1920.

Nationally, women had fought for and won the right to vote through the efforts of Susan B. Anthony and her resolute followers. Wyoming, however, was ahead of the laggard states, with women having gone to the polls since 1869. Prohibition had dried up the country, much to the dismay of multitudes who enjoyed a beer while watching Babe Ruth slam in home runs. In Kansas, axe-swinging Carrie Nation and her army of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), to which my mother belonged, hacked up bars from Wichita to Hayes. The power of these women greatly influenced the vote to make any sale of liquor illegal in the country. Warren Harding was elected President with a Republican sweep to victory. He made the statement shortly after settling in the White House that a real danger and threat to the nation would be if women voters united as a class.

World War I had been over for two years. Ten million men had been killed, but a far greater toll on human life would be taken by the influenza epidemic which claimed the lives of twenty million men, women, and children worldwide.

Eastern Colorado was becoming sparsely populated with settlers who had migrated mostly from Missouri and Kansas in search of their dream to own eighty acres of land, costing them nothing more than back-breaking labor under harsh unforgiving conditions in order to "prove up" their homestead, a term used to describe work that would be required by the government for homesteaders to receive a clear title to the land. After approval arrived

from Washington, the applicant could move onto the land, build a home, and farm or raise cattle. If these hardy and determined pioneers could last five years, the government would deed the land to them, free and clear.

Years later, when many of the homesteaders had been starved out and moved on, those who had fared better would buy up the abandoned eighty-acre tracts by paying only the amount of delinquent taxes. Many large Eastern Colorado cattle ranchers acquired thousands of acres in this manner.

My parents, George and Olive Sprouse, began their third year of marriage on a newly purchased sixty-three-acre farm in Eastern Colorado, for which they had signed the deed without seeing or setting foot on the place. Living in Denver since their marriage in 1917, both wanted to provide more than a rented house to call home for baby Mary, and a city day job for her father, with which to buy the necessities. George was raised on a Missouri farm and knew he could always put food on the table tilling the soil. This was the first marriage for both and each knew that this move might fulfill their hopes of raising a family on a farm located near Olive's family in La Junta.

It must have been a temptation for my parents not to be drawn into the Homestead Act. Much later I would understand that my stubbornly independent father, in spite of a fierce loyalty to his country, had a healthy distrust of the Republican-controlled Congress and could not sign on for such a deal. Instead, Olive provided money to buy the farm from her savings of three thousand dollars, which she had accumulated from her divorced father, John Schofield, who sent her monthly stipends over the years. George, who had no savings, would provide his knowledge and determination to become a good farmer. For my mother, who