



Open Range: The Life of Agnes Morley Cleaveland: 26 (Oklahoma Western Biographies)

Darlis A. Miller

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Agnes Morley Cleaveland found lasting fame after publishing her memoir, *No Life for a Lady*, in 1941. Her account of growing up on a cattle ranch in west-central New Mexico captivated readers from coast to coast, and it remains in print to this day. In her book, Cleaveland memorably portrayed herself and other ranchwomen as capable workers and independent thinkers. Her life, however, was not limited to the ranch. In *Open Range*, Darlis A. Miller expands our understanding of Cleaveland's significance, showing how a young girl who was a fearless risk-taker grew up to be a prolific author and well-known social activist.

Following a hardscrabble childhood in remote regions of northern and central New Mexico, and then many years of rigorous education, Agnes Morley married Newton Cleaveland in 1899. The couple took up primary residence in Berkeley, California, where Agnes lived another kind of life as clubwoman and activist. Yet Agnes's ranch in the Datil Mountains always drew her back to New Mexico and provided the raw material for her writing.

Seen as a whole, Cleaveland's life story spans the years from territorial New Mexico to the Cold War, includes the raising of her four children and interactions with a wide range of national and regional characters, and provides insight into such aspects of western culture as railroads, cattle, and tourism. Her biography is a case study in the roles that wealthy and well-educated women played during the first half of the twentieth century in both domestic and political spheres and will intrigue anyone familiar with the writings of this multifaceted woman.

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