

## About the Author

### Paula M. Nelson

Paula M. Nelson is a child of the Minnesota prairies. She grew up in Gibbon, a town with a population of 888 in the south central portion of the state in a family with roots in Norway and Sweden. At seven, she sang a hymn in Swedish at her brother's baptismal service. History was her first love. As a child, she spent many hours playing "Homesteader." Majoring in history in college, she earned her bachelor's degree at Southwest Minnesota State (1973), her master's at the University of South Dakota (1977), and her Ph.D. at the University of Iowa (1984). Her doctoral dissertation, *After the West Was Won: Homesteaders and Town-Builders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917*, became her first book. *The Prairie Winnows Out Its Own* became her second book, detailing the experiences of the West River homesteaders as they confronted the crises of the twenties and thirties in the region. Nelson has won high respect as a historian for her work, including a variety of articles published in historical journals and for her edited volume, *Sunshine Always*, a collection of Joseph and Alice Gossage's courtship letters from Rapid City and Vermillion, published by South Dakota State Historical Society Press in 2006. In the works is a book about the early years of Canton, South Dakota.

Nelson lives with her husband and four cats on an acreage west of Platteville, Wisconsin, where she has been a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville since 1987. She spends her spare time in her more than half-acre of flower gardens and in antique stores refreshing her love of material culture.

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