



# **Growing Up in a Land Called Egypt: A Southern Illinois Family Biography (Shawnee Books)**

*Cleo Caraway*

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In *Growing Up in a Land Called Egypt: A Southern Illinois Family Biography*, author Cleo Caraway fondly recalls how she and her siblings came of age on the family farm in the 1930s and 1940s. Like many others, the Caraways were affected by the economic hardships of the Great Depression, but Cleo's parents strived to shelter her and her six siblings from the dire circumstances affecting the nation and their home and allowed them to bask in their idealistic existence. Her love for her family clearly shines from every page as she writes of a simpler time, before World War II divided the family.

Caraway revels in the life her family lived on a southern Illinois hilltop in Murphysboro township, marveling at the mix of commonplace and adventure she experienced in her childhood. She remembers her first day of school, walking three miles to the wondrous one-room building with her siblings; reminisces about strolling through the countryside with her mother, investigating the various plants and flowers, fruits and nuts; and recollects her fascination with the Indian relics she found buried near her home, a hobby she shared with her father. She also writes of seeing *Gone with the Wind* on the big screen at the Hippodrome in Murphysboro, of learning to sew dresses for her dolls, and of idyllic life on the farm—milking cows, hatching chicks, feeding pigs. Along with her personal memories Caraway includes interviews with neighbors and many fascinating photographs with detailed captions that make the images come alive.

A delightful follow-up to her father's popular *Foothold on a Hillside: Memories of a Southern Illinoisan*, Caraway's book is a pleasant change from the typical accounts of southern Illinois before, during, and after the Great Depression. Instead of hardscrabble grit, *Growing Up in a Land Called Egypt* offers a refreshingly different view of the period and is certain to be embraced by southern Illinois natives as well as anyone interested in the experiences of a rural family that thrived despite the difficult times. The author's lighthearted prose, self-deprecating humor, and genuine affection for her family make reading this book a rich and memorable experience.

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