



## The Daughter's Walk

*Jane Kirkpatrick*

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**The Daughter's Walk** Jane Kirkpatrick

**A mother's tragedy, a daughter's desire, and the 7000 mile journey that changed their lives.**

In 1896 Norwegian American Helga Estby accepted a wager from the fashion industry to walk from Spokane, Washington to New York City within seven months in an effort to earn ten thousand dollars and save the family farm. She brought along her eighteen-year-old daughter, Clara, and the two made their way on the 3,500-mile trek by following the railroad tracks. After returning home to the Estby farm more than a year later, Clara chose to walk on alone, leaving the family and changing her name. Her decisions initiated a more than twenty-year separation from the only life she had known.

Historical fiction writer Jane Kirkpatrick picks up where the fact of the Estbys' walk leaves off to explore Clara's continued journey. What motivated Clara to take such a risk in an era when many women struggled with the issues of rights and independence? And what personal revelations brought Clara to the end of her lonely road? *The Daughter's Walk* weaves personal history and fiction together to invite readers to consider their own journeys and family separations, to help determine what exile and forgiveness are truly about.

## The Daughter's Walk Details

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Author : Jane Kirkpatrick

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## **From Reader Review The Daughter's Walk for online ebook**

### **Erin Cataldi says**

I'm not going to lie this book was depressing as hell. It starts off following a mother and daughter in 1896 as they make a 7,000 mile journey on foot across America in hopes of getting \$10,000 to save the farm. From there nothing works out as planned, the farm is lost, Clara loses two siblings to diphtheria while she and her mother are trekking North America, and she learns some dark family secrets. All of this happens in the first fourth of the book. The rest is even more depressing as Clara tries to justify their journey, forgive her family, and find herself. It's based on a true story which in itself is even worse. The feat accomplished by Clara and her mother is impressive for that era and for now, God knows I couldn't/ wouldn't walk 7,000 miles. Unfortunately, the rift it causes in the family seems to negate any good that could have came from it. Read at your own peril.

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### **Tara Chevrestt says**

Pros: Though classified as Christian fiction, it's not in any way preachy.

Cons: I didn't find this woman strong at all, really. Granted she started a fur business, but everything she did was partially controlled by two old ladies. The family is horrible. I would have left the horrid mother and sister and stepfather a long time before and never gone back. The mother endangered her daughter, the sister is a bitch who is spiteful, mean, and bitter, and the stepfather is a jerk who always treated her different.

I had a very hard time with this family.

I grew very bored, too, with all the business talk and furs.

Just wasn't for me.

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### **Sandi says**

This book was so intriguing. Knowing that this was a true story, and that two women accomplished a walk across America during this time period was just astounding, to say the least. It also made very grateful for women who were brave against staggering odds, paving the way for future generations of women. I know I am reaping the rewards of women who lived before me. Many of them faced enormous hardship, but didn't give up, making huge sacrifices for the good of their families. It was a very humbling book.

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### **Cafelilybookreviews says**

If you are familiar with Jane Kirkpatrick's books, then you know that she is a master at taking historical facts and weaving them into captivating stories. Each time I read her books, I not only learn something about history, I enjoy the journey. Jane's books are one example of why I adore historical fiction. Her stories center

around real people and she researches her subjects well before putting pen to paper.

The Daughter's Walk is based on the true story of Norwegian born Helga Estby who accepted a \$10,000 wager to walk 3,500 miles from Spokane, Washington to New York City. This was a very bold move in 1896, but Helga was determined to win the money and save her family's home from foreclosure.

The story is told through the eyes of Clara Estby, the daughter who reluctantly joins Helga on her journey. If Helga and Clara are able to make the treacherous journey, they will win the money and go down in history as the first women to travel unescorted across the country. The pressure is on with the newspapers documenting their every move and the family farm hanging in the balance.

This book moved at the perfect pace for me and I enjoyed reading about these two courageous women who gave their all and risked their own lives to save their family home. This adventure changes these women in ways they never anticipated and Clara discovers a hidden family secret along the way.

If you're looking for something fresh in historical fiction, I urge you to give Jane's books a try.

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### **Michelle says**

Do yourself a favor and read, "Bold Spirit: Helga Estby's Forgotten Walk Across Victorian America" by Linda Lawrence Hunt before even thinking about reading this book. I hate to admit that I only got 10 pages into this book before I became so disgusted with the author that I have no intentions of ever reading anything else by her again. Extreme much? Why yes..yes I am. First of all the book reads like it took place in 1996, not 1896. The wording sounds like the same dialog that takes place between my daughters and I now. Secondly, and this is what I had a hard time getting past, was that the story immediately went into making Helga look like she was some sort of tyrant who brushed away anything her family said to her as if they were annoying her. Maybe it became a little different deeper into the book, but this really rubbed me the wrong way since this story was almost lost because Helga's family was angry with her. There were a few other inaccuracies that I caught, but I find it pointless to even speak about.

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### **Narita says**

I know I have said it before but I will say it again, Jane Kirkpatrick is one of my favorite writers! She finds historical women figures that I have never heard of and their stories are so interesting! I find it incredible the way she weaves the historical facts with fiction to the point that every novel seems like a detailed true account of the person's life.

A Daughter's Walk is about a young woman, Clara Estby and her mother, Helga who in 1896, walked 3,500 miles from Spokane Washington to New York City. They did so in an effort to save their family farm that was about to be foreclosed and earn \$10,000; quite a tidy sum back then.

Helga's accepted the challenge from a wealthy group of sponsors. The purpose was to promote the "new reform" dress which was shorter, showing the ankles and worn without corsets. The new fashion was publicized for busy, active women. Two women walking cross country alone was shocking enough in the Victorian Era, but in such risqué clothing too?! This was exactly the reaction the sponsors wanted. Helga and Clara would be given \$5.00 to start out but they must earn the rest of their money along the way to meet their needs. They could accept no rides and they had to be in New York City in 7 months.

Olaf, Helga's husband and children, including Clara, were totally against the trip. Helga refuses to listen. Her husband is injured and unable to provide for their large family. As Scandinavian immigrants, she cannot bear the thought of losing all they have worked so hard to obtain. Their walk began on May 5 and was end December 13th. Goodbyes were hard, leaving her 8 children and husband behind to care for each other. Even with Helga's determination and strong faith in God, she was not prepared for the hardships they would face, or the price the trip would exact when they returned. They were robbed, struggled through rain and snow storms, blistering heat, harsh terrain, and bitter cold. Not to mention facing mountain lions, rattle snakes, hunger, illness and many times no shelter to sleep in. They arrive 2 weeks short of the deadline and lost the wager.

Their story does not end with the walk. Upon their return home they find two of the children have died and their family will never be the same again. They forbid either of them to talk about the trip. In bitterness, Clara's family rejects her for supporting her mother in her endeavor. She ventures out on her own, with the same determination and courage that gave her mother the strength to make the walk. She is blessed when two rich business women take her under their wing, give her a job, mentor her, educate her, support her, and love her. It is no surprise that in time they become her new family. No matter what her accomplishments or the unconditional love she receives, she always longs to be reunited with her family. From beginning to end this is a story of a woman's indomitable spirit to overcome tragedy and heartache. The combination of Ms. Kirkpatrick's meticulous historical research and incredible writing talent make this an unforgettable book! I would like to thank Jane Kirkpatrick for the opportunity and privilege to review this book.

I received this book free from the author. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own.

Here is a link to her web page. I hope you will go and check out her other wonderful books.

<http://www.jkbooks.com/>

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### **Jenni says**

Jane Kirkpatrick is very skilled at taking actual historical events and weaving a story into them. She is also very skilled at creating strong independent female characters, often portraying them in a time where that wasn't acceptable. I enjoy reading her novels because I often learn a bit of history. The Daughter's Walk is no exception. In it, Jane Kirkpatrick takes a little known historical event...Helga Estby's walk cross-country from Spokane to New York with her daughter Clara in 1896. But from there, she follows the rest of Clara's life, and how the arduous journey and their family's scorn afterwards, affected the two women.

The characters are honestly portrayed, flaws and all, and at first, I wasn't sure I liked either character. But I learned to love them. I did feel the book was perhaps a bit long. Towards the middle, it seemed to drag a bit, but the ending was very satisfying. Themes in this book would be what family really means, listening for God's voice, instead of your own.

Note: the only true history is the part with the walk across country. That all actually happened, and the family's response. Clara did actually separate from the family (but we don't know the circumstances), and went into the finance business.

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### **Barb says**

I love reading about historical people! Her dilemma confused me as I can't imagine how I would feel in her shoes nor what I would do. But I would not wait to contact my brother for years nor would I allow my sister to keep my mother from me!

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### **Lisa says**

I really liked this book. I love historical fiction & this was very interesting. In the beginning I thought the characters were well written and the historical aspect of the book was very interesting. It was based on a true story, which I knew going in, but the author pieces together what happens to the main character later on in the book. I felt it fit together well, but I also can see where the details that were unknown or made up had some gaps. That at times left me a bit frustrated in understanding parts of the book. Overall, I did enjoy the story and the characters and the information on that time period and place in history is very interesting.

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### **Jill Porter says**

This book of fiction based on actual events was fascinating!

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### **Cheryl Olson says**

“We are going to walk to New York City, Clara, you and I”- not exactly the words that you would expect to come out of your own mother’s mouth. And did I mention this walk was to originate in Spokane, Washington and that the time was 1896? Two women unaccompanied by a man and out to “save the farm” literally in an effort to earn ten thousand dollars provided by sponsors of the walk to pay off their mortgage on their farm. Not your everyday undertaking I must say, but then neither is this book. Jane Kirkpatrick’ offering of The Daughter’s Walk: A Novel is truly historical fiction at its finest, as this book is based on a true story. The tremendous amount of research helped to make this story truly come alive and to ring very true to the reader.

Clara Etsby starts off on what proves to be an incredible journey with her mother Helga to walk across the country wearing the new reform dress- a garment meant to symbolize “freedom for busy, active sturdy women” and to show that women did indeed possess endurance. A walking advertisement if you will to promote Women’s suffrage. Along the way they meet much adversity and I don’t want to give away anything there, but as a result of these two taking the walk, and much tragedy at home, there is a “family schism” that last for years. The story continues to follow Clara’s story and her life “after the walk”- the people she meets, challenges she faces and her growth as she reaches for reconciliation with her family. The characters are very real and the depth in their development is definitely there.

I must say that it is apparent to me that Jane Kirkpatrick put much time, energy and imagination into this story of Clara Etsby and later Clara Dore’. She obviously did her homework as it comes through in flying colors in the story. Might I suggest that the reader takes the time to read the Author’s notes and acknowledgements at the end of the book? It is truly fascinating to follow her research trail and see how she pieced this story together based on interviews with relatives, historical documents and experts on the time. I must admit a small bias as the story largely takes place in the Spokane area- I’m very familiar with this area being from Washington State so I really personally enjoyed all the geographical references. If you like a

good historical novel with very real characters, I highly encourage you to pick up this book.

This Book was provided by Waterbrook Press through the "Blogging for Books" program in exchange for an unbiased review. The opinions expressed were my own.

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### **Michelle John heckle says**

Wow was this a long book... I generally enjoy historical fiction, but the story to me seemed long and drawn out. Written from the main character point of view, Clara, in my mind was a whiny teenager who really didn't grow up—her life experiences were many for a girl of her day and I did enjoy reading about the navigation of her life circumstances. Fictionalizing conversations and speculation around actual events made this story bad for me as a reader.

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### **Louise says**

Story Description:

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A mother's tragedy, a daughter's desire and the 3,500 mile journey that changed their lives.

In 1896 a Norwegian-American, Helga Estby, accepted a wager from the fashion industry to walk from Spokane, Washington to New York City within seven months in an effort to earn \$10,000. Bringing along her nineteen-year-old daughter, Clara, the two made their way on the 3,500-mile trek by following the railroad tracks and motivated by the money they needed to save the family farm. After returning home to the Estby farm more than a year later, Clara chose to walk on alone by leaving the family and changing her name. Her decision initiated a more than 20-year separation from the only life she had known.

Historical fiction writer, Jane Kirkpatrick, picks up where the fact of the Estby's walk leaves off to explore Clara's continued journey. What motivated Clara to take such a risk in an era when many women struggled with the issues of rights and independence? And what personal revelations brought Clara to the end of her lonely road? The Daughter's Walk weaves personal history and fiction together to invite readers to consider their own journeys and family separations, to help determine what exile and forgiveness are truly about.

"Kirkpatrick has done impeccable homework and what she recreates and what she imagines are wonderfully seamless. Readers see the times, the motives, the relationships that produce a chain of decisions and actions, all rendered with understatement. Kirkpatrick is a master at using fiction to illuminate history's truths. This beautiful and compelling work of historical fiction deserves the widest possible audience." (Publisher's Weekly Starred Review)

My Review:

In 1896, Clara Estby, nineteen, is forced by her mother, Helga, on a 3,500-mile walk from Spokane, Washington to New York City. The women of this era wore long dresses and skirts that covered their ankles

and most of their shoes. The dresses would be caked with mud or soaking wet at the hemline from inclement weather. Even in good weather, the long dresses accumulated a lot of dust and debris. Now the fashion icons are searching for women to promote their new, shorter dresses and Helga needs the \$10,000 prize money for completing the walk on time in order to save their family farm from foreclosure.

This is actually a true story with fictionalized story lines interweaved into the narrative to fill in the blanks where research was not available or complete enough. Helga Estby was real – a Norwegian-American immigrant most noted for her walk across the United States in 1896. Helga arrived in Manistee, Michigan in 1871 and in 1876 she married Ole Estby who was an immigrant from Grue, Norway where his daughter, Clara would one day visit later on in the book.

The farm Helga was trying to save from foreclosure was located in Mica Creek, Spokane County, Washington. Ole, Helga's husband had had an accident and couldn't work so they couldn't pay the taxes or the mortgage.

Clara did not want to go on this walk with her mother but she wasn't given any choice. The only thing that Clara could see in the shorter skirts and absence of corsets: "...was that we could run faster from people chasing us for being foolish enough to embark on such a trek across the country, two women alone." Helga had wanted Clara to join her on the walk to also prevent her from getting involved with men.

Ole was furious that his wife, Helga was taking on this walk and made his disgust and anger well-known. It would also mean that Helga would be away from her other 7 children – Lillian, Johnny, Billy, Arthur, Bertha, Ida, and Olaf – leaving the childcare to Ida and Olaf for a year!

During Helga and Clara's walk, many family secrets were divulged and one in particular would change the course of young Clara's life forever and cause her to change her name and initiate a twenty-year separation from her family, even her mother, Helga.

The first half of the book is dedicated entirely to the historically factual walk and the second half is dedicated to Clara after she leaves the family and becomes a businesswoman bent on creating her own family and becoming financially self-supporting.

It is glaringly obvious that Jane Kirkpatrick has done an amazing amount of research before writing this book. I was so enamoured with the story that once I was done, I did some research of my own and found her facts to be historically right on.

The Daughter's Walk is a book that everyone should read and I'll be recommending it to anyone and everyone. It was well-written and seamless. Kudos to Ms. Kirkpatrick. I think this is my "4th" favourite book I've read this year out of the 192 books I've read so far. This will definitely be part of my permanent collection. Excellent!!

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### **Rachel M says**

Kirkpatrick unearths some of the most amazing untold stories from the foundations of American history, and this is one of them. Clara, the "daughter" of the title, begins the story angry with her mother for her

impulsive decision to walk across the continent for a dubious prize of \$10,000, taking Clara along. As the journey progresses, Clara comes to understand her mother's intentions, but the journey creates alienation and estrangement within their family as a whole.

Clara returns from the journey and finds that her family will not forgive her or her mother unless they never speak of their trek again. The mother agrees to stay silent and humbled, but Clara refuses and goes forward to make her own way.

For the greater part of the book, Clara becomes a savvy business women, and her life increasingly revolves around business and risk. Near the end, she feels that something is missing, and recognizes that, after 20 years, she must make peace with her family.

Because the story was true to life, it lacked the even, familiar contours of a fictional plot. Cause didn't always lead to effect in the inevitable way that a fictional story does. The inner dreams, potentials, and yearnings of the young Clara were not fully realized in her later life - in fact, her life seemed rather empty through most of the book.

Kirkpatrick's *A Gathering of Finches* is written in much the same way - true to the real events of life. I can't decide why such a narrative style appealed to me in that book and not in *The Daughter's Walk*. Maybe because the lesson Clara learned from her life was not fully developed, and seemed to come too late. It is a story about forgiveness, and yet Clara's family also harbors deep resentment which they never seem fully able to let go of. The final result of Clara's return to her family is cheapened somewhat by the lack of a full reconciliation on their part. It seems more like, "well, I guess you're back now, and I might as well serve you some coffee."

The fact is, that most of our lives do not proceed by tidy exercises in cause and effect. Some reconciliations do come too late, or are half-hearted. Many lives are not lived to the full. Many of us do not achieve those mountaintop moments of glory which shed light on the themes and morals of our own stories. Why, then, did I so badly want this novel to show me something that I do not see in real life?

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### **Teresa Lukey says**

Jane Kirkpatrick's historical fiction novel, *The Daughter's Walk*, appealed to me because the thought of walking from Spokane, WA to New York sounds damn near impossible. I believe the author must have gotten her inspiration for this book from *Bold Spirit: Helga Estby's Forgotten Walk Across Victorian America*, which does its best to document the true story Helga Estby and her daughter Clara's 3500 mile trek across the US with little more than pepper spray, a revolver and \$5 in the year 1896.

Helga was a suffragette, who took the chance to promote the new shorter dress length and walk to 3500 miles in a given time in order to win \$10,000 and save her family farm. There are few surviving documents pertaining to this walk available today and I'm sure the author did her best to fill in the gaps, but the actual walk is only about the first 25% of the book.

When the ladies return home from the walk, the story talks a surprising turn after what they went through to try and save the family farm. It goes in to the effects the walk had on the family that was left behind as well as its long-lasting effects on the relationships within the family. As I'm sure many people know, a woman

was not meant to save the family farm or do anything that was perceived to be a mans' responsibly.

Personally, I wish there would've been more focus on the walk itself, rather than the after effects on the family, hence the 3-star rating. I think this would be an excellent read for a young teen to a mid-twenties girl who doesn't know much about a women's place at the turn of the 20th century and what she had to do to fight for the right to vote.

I also noticed the cover art seems to be a popular design choice, as I came across a few other books with similar designs, including:

Little, Big  
Ghost Light  
The American Heiress

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