



Christmas at Eagle Pond

Donald Hall , Mary Azarian (Illustrations)

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Donald Hall draws on his own childhood memories and gives himself the thing he most wanted but didn't get as a boy: a Christmas at Eagle Pond.

It's the Christmas season of 1940, and twelve-year-old Donnie takes the train to visit his grandparents' place in rural New Hampshire. Once there, he quickly settles into the farm's routines. In the barn, Gramp milks the cows and entertains his grandson by speaking rhymed pieces, while Donnie's eyes are drawn to an empty stall that houses a graceful, cobwebby sleigh. Now Model A's speed over the wintry roads, which must be plowed, and the beautiful sleigh has become obsolete. When the church pageant is over, the gifts are exchanged, and the remains of the Christmas feast put away, the air becomes heavy with fine snowflakes—the kind that fall at the start of a big storm—and everyone wonders, how will Donnie get back to his parents on time?

Christmas at Eagle Pond Details

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From Reader Review Christmas at Eagle Pond for online ebook

MissSusie says

This is a short novella about a young man's/boy's Christmas at his grandparent's farm in 1940 it is literally just a slice of life, he talks about working on the farm and milking cows and talks with his grandfather it is a nice story but I guess I kept waiting for more to happen but nothing happens it is just a snippet of time that takes you back to a slower easier time. I liked the ending and could feel the snow and smell the farm, and I too wanted a ride in the sleigh.

I enjoyed the postscript by the author of what this event in his life really was, make sure you read all the way to end the end to get the rest of the story.

A charming nostalgic tale I would recommend for a read around Christmas.

3 ½ stars

I received this from netgalley & the publisher for a fair and honest review

Terzah says

A simple, charming seasonal story, richer in description than plot, by a former Poet Laureate. As someone with my own fantasy about the ideal locale for a family Christmas (in my case, a cabin in the Rocky Mountains), I appreciated Hall's details. Maybe someday I'll be able to afford my own Christmas dream; for now, though, I might follow the author's lead and write it up from my imagination.

John Mulholland says

This book reminded me of the time I spent at my uncle Bill's farm. It was similar in that it was just a family farm that raised most everything that was eaten. I came on the scene in 1943 and went to the farm on and off the rest of my life. I remember feeding the chickens, churning butter, raking hay by hand and then pitching the hay on a wagon and then having to pitch it off from the wagon into the hay loft. Pure work!

Hilary says

We expected to really enjoy this book as we love reading about everyday lives in different places and times, and love reading about winter, Christmas and snow. The story starts off well with a young boy going to stay on his grandparents farm for Christmas. We enjoyed the detail of how Grandfather liked to recite stories and events and we enjoyed googling 'moxie' to find out whatever it was Grandma was drinking! After that we found the book which we thought was a memoir a bit flat. There were a couple of parts that were upsetting /shocking (view spoiler) My daughter thought those events were horrible and said the rest of the book wasn't very interesting.

We were interested to read the end note by the author about his grandparents and the farm and it turned out that it wasn't a memoir and he'd never even been there as a child in winter and it was just what he imagined it would be like, my daughter wondered why he didn't imagine something nicer!

Karen Witzler says

The crystalline fictional memory of this novella made me wake with tears on my face recalling my own grandparents. Reminds me a bit of *A Month in the Country* having a deeply poetic and salvific quality. Recommended for those melancholy and stress- filled days prior to the holiday.

...Days later, my mind is still filled by this book for more on the one of the characters I highly recommend Hall's book for children also illustrated by Mary Azarian: *The Man Who Lived Alone*.

I will be exploring more of the poetry, essays, and picture books of Donald Hall (former U.S. Poet Laureate) in the upcoming year.

Carolyn says

I LOVED this! What a cute little book to spend a gorgeous afternoon with during the holidays. Set in 1940 on grandparents farm, chores included, but with resounding pride in the work. Oh beautiful scenery in detailed words. What a childhood to have, but we must not romanticize the past too much. So Donald Hall does so with caution. I like his poems, but wish he had written more short prose as well during his life time. This little Christmas book is a real gem. From cover to cover, including the authors note. Donald Hall had a magic in his words.

Jenny Savage says

This was an unpretentious and delightful story full of vignettes and characters that are simple, yet remind me of the good people I grew up with and those I know now. The illustrations by Mary Azarian have the same deep quality. It is not a true story as Hall stated in the epilogue. He wrote it because it was a story he always wished had happened. And that makes it all the more poignant. This is my first Donald Hall book, but not my last.

Julie says

Brief and lovely, this story has all the ring-ting-ting-a-ling Christmas nostalgia and simplicity I love. This small volume will no doubt be given as a gift to more than one special someone on my Christmas list this year.

Ken French says

A slip of a book, but as beautifully written as anything in Hall's magnificent career.

Tisha (IG: Bluestocking629) says

What a sweet little book with a scattering a beautiful illustrations. If you want to read a book about life on a farm in the 1940s at Christmas time then this is your book. Not much else to say about this book just pure and simple.

Family
Christmas
Farm

Jessaka says

Have you ever wanted a book to not end? I felt this way about this one, but I will read it again some day.

While Donald Hall wrote about visiting his grandparent's farm in New Hampshire in the 40s when he was a young boy, he had actually never been there during Christmas time, only during the summers; instead he created this story of his taking a train at Christmas time from his home in Connecticut to their farm. So in his heart he had actually had Christmas with them. After they had passed away he actually bought their farm.

Oh, what memories he must have had. I wish that I had grown up on a farm but with an extended family. He even makes the chores sound wonderful, and for the few years that I lived on farm land, I thought that the chores were wonderful too. I loved having chickens and cutting wood for our woodstove and on and on.

His grandmother washed clothes in her wringer washer, just as I had as a child. She baked, and they made maple syrup which they used to make popcorn balls for the annual church Christmas party. She even knitted mittens on a yearly basis when it was necessary to throw away last year's. And she made homemade bread. Oh, the smell of homemade bread. And once a year she made soap. I imagine that she even made candy. As kids, my older sister Jeanette made candy. old fashioned fudge, taffy, and divinity fudge. What tastes better than old fashioned chocolate fudge, the kind without the marshmallows? And if it is burnt and sugary, sometimes that is all the better. Who does this anymore?

We have lost those wonderful days, trading books for the TV, trading woodstoves for central heat, and trading feather beds for memory foam. I slept in a feather bed once when my step-uncle and grandmother took me to West Plains, MO when I was 16. It was heavenly, even in the summer time. We have lost so much that we hardly know the love of the land. We don't even know what it is like to hang out clothes, but then again, while my husband put up a pulley clothesline for me, just because I wanted one like my grandmother's, I use our dryer. Such is life.

Christmas on the farm was wonderful. His grandfather told stories, he got a book of poetry, and they had a great dinner, and he got a ride in his grandfather's horse drawn sleigh.

Here are a couple of candy recipes:

SOUR CREAM FUDGE

2 c. sugar
1/2 t. salt
1 c. sour cream
2 T. butter
1/2 c. chopped walnuts

In a saucepan, combine sugar, salt, and sour cream. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally to a softball stage. Add butter. When lukewarm, beat until mixture loses its gloss. Add walnuts. Spread in a buttered pan.

Old Fashion Fudge

3 c. sugar
1 c. milk
3 (1 oz.) sq. unsweetened chocolate
Dash salt
2 t. corn syrup
3 T. butter
1 1/2 t. vanilla
1 c. chopped walnuts

Butter sides of a saucepan. Add sugar, milk, chocolate, salt, and corn syrup. Heat over medium heat, stirring constantly. Bring to a boil. Cook to a softball stage (234 degrees), stirring when necessary. Remove from heat; add butter. Cool to lukewarm (110 degrees). Do not stir during cooling process. Add vanilla, and then beat vigorously until fudge becomes very thick and begins to lose its gloss. Add walnuts. Spread out in a buttered pan.

Candice says

I had read some of Donald Hall's poetry and when this became available on Nook's "Daily Find" I decided it would make a nice addition to my holiday books. The way you should read this book is with snow falling outside, a fire in the fireplace, and a mug of hot chocolate in your hand. But it's still enjoyable with no snow, fire or hot chocolate. A sweet story of a long-ago New England Christmas (1940) with loving grandparents and a 12-year-old boy. The ending was predictable, but that didn't lessen the enjoyment of the book at all. After reading the book, you must read the Author's Note. I won't say why.

Jgrace says

Christmas at Eagle Pond – Donald Hall

4 stars

It's a pleasant, 78- page trip into Christmas nostalgia that ends with a sleigh ride. Donald Hall has written a memory of a 1940's Christmas on his Grandparent's New Hampshire farm. It comes complete with a train ride, homemade meals, a Christmas pageant and presents. The interesting point about this little book is that Hall didn't ever spend a Christmas with his Grandparents. He has written a memory for himself and his readers to enjoy. And I did.

The truly best part of this little book were the woodcut illustrations by Mary Azarian, They were beautiful. I'll be looking for more of her work.

Susan says

recovering just enough to sit with a pot of tea, a blanket and cat, this book which came in today's mail made me feel better for its sweet nostalgia. What I assumed was memoir turned out to be something more sad at the end. Lovely prose as always by the old master Donald Hall. Savor an hour with this small glimpse of the past.

Diane says

A lovely novella about a boy visiting his grandparents' farm in New Hampshire during Christmas in 1940. Donnie helps with the chores, makes popcorn balls to decorate the tree, listens to his grandfather's stories and gets to attend the church's big Christmas party. On Christmas Day they have a feast -- everything but the salt and pepper came from the farm -- and they share more family stories.

This book brought back fond memories of Christmas visits to my grandparents' farm when I was young, and if my grandmother were still alive, I would share this wonderful story with her.

Be sure to read the author's note at the end, for it makes the book especially bittersweet.
