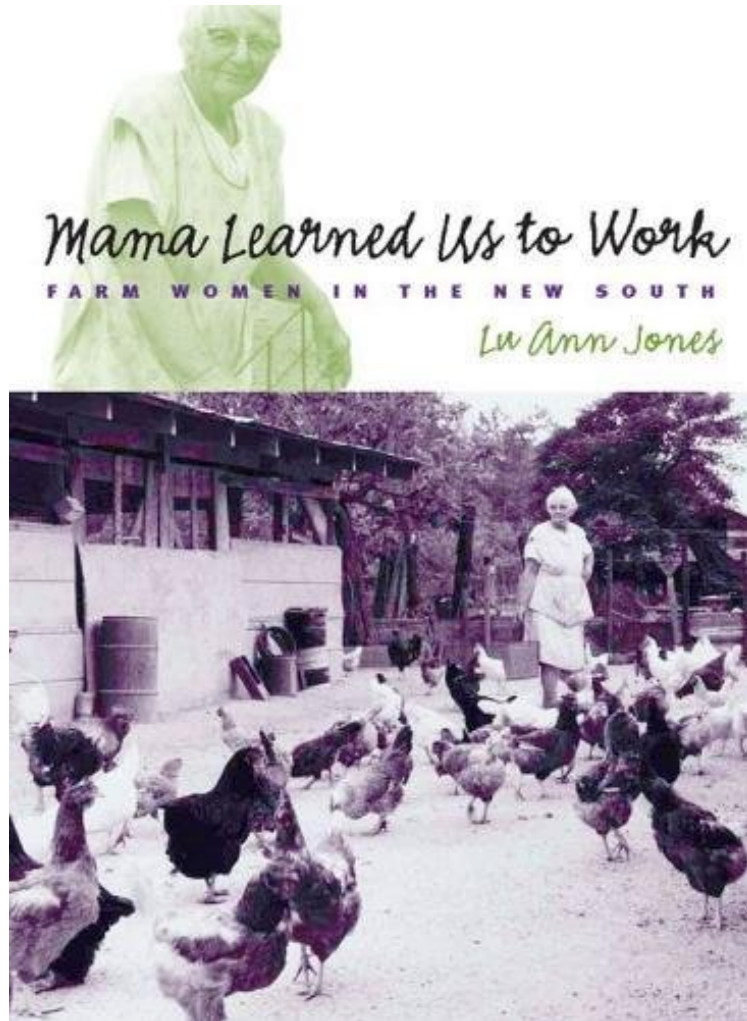


Mama Learned Us to Work: Farm Women in the New South (Studies in Rural Culture)

Lu Ann Jones

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Lu Ann Jones : Mama Learned Us to Work: Farm Women in the New South (Studies in Rural Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mama Learned Us to Work: Farm Women in the New South (Studies in Rural Culture):

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the importance of chicken raising and how it was seen as unimportant and women's work, yet it fed and clothed many families. Learn how important the traveling salesmen were to farm families.

Farm women of the twentieth-century South have been portrayed as oppressed, worn out, and isolated. Lu Ann Jones tells quite a different story in *Mama Learned Us to Work*. Building upon evocative oral histories, she encourages us to understand these women as consumers, producers, and agents of economic and cultural change. As consumers, farm women bargained with peddlers at their backdoors. A key business for many farm women was the "butter and egg trade"--small-scale dairying and raising chickens. Their earnings provided a crucial margin of economic safety for many families during the 1920s and 1930s and offered women some independence from their men folks. These innovative women showed that poultry production paid off and laid the foundation for the agribusiness poultry industry that emerged after World War II. Jones also examines the relationships between farm women and home demonstration agents and the effect of government-sponsored rural reform. She discusses the professional culture that developed among white agents as they reconciled new and old ideas about women's roles and shows that black agents, despite prejudice, linked their clients to valuable government resources and gave new meanings to traditions of self-help, mutual aid, and racial uplift.

"Lu Ann Jones's exhaustive research and careful analysis vividly recreates country life in the first half of the twentieth century. *Mama Learned Us to Work* focuses on the hopes, dreams, and immense resourcefulness of southern rural women, who were at the center of sweeping rural transformation." - Pete Daniel, author of *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* *Mama Learned Us to Work* challenges scholars to rethink how market participation is defined as well as how all producers are positioned in the southern economy. . . . [And] to reconsider how local and regional demands accommodated women's entrepreneur interests. . . . Valuable for students interested in labor, rural, and women's history.--*Journal of American History* Lu Ann Jones's exhaustive research and careful analysis vividly recreates country life in the first half of the twentieth century. *Mama Learned Us to Work* focuses on the hopes, dreams, and immense resourcefulness of southern rural women, who were at the center of sweeping rural transformation.--Pete Daniel, National Museum of American History *Mama Learned Us to Work* is exhaustively researched, beautifully written, and quietly revolutionary. By showing the crucial role women in landowning families played in shaping economic change in the rural South, Jones reconnects the region to national, cultural, and economic currents, while still remaining attentive to its distinctive regional culture. In Jones's skillful hands, rural southern women and the rural South become central to our understanding of the twentieth century as a whole.--Laura F. Edwards, Duke University Readers interested in southern women and the modern rural South should not miss Jones's warmly human narrative of gender and economic change.--*Journal of Southern History* Jones's carefully researched book is full of lively stories about real farm women. The human face is never lost in this enjoyable book. Lu Ann Jones seeks to replace our view of the downtrodden Southern farm woman who grows old before her time with a vision of an innovative producer, consumer, and agent of economic change. She does not ignore real poverty or the important differences that race made in limiting the options available to black farm women, but rather focuses on the agency practiced by farm women within the limits imposed by race, class, and gender. This important book should be required reading for anyone who seeks to better understand rural women's labor history and Southern history.--*Labor History* About the Author Lu Ann Jones is associate professor of history at the University of South Florida. She is a coauthor of *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*.