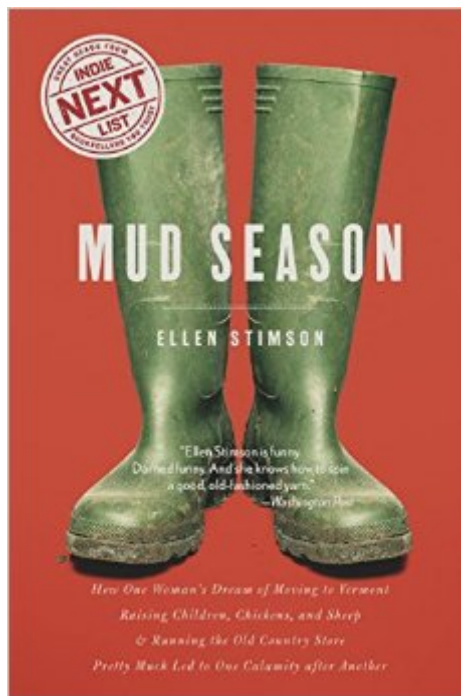


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Mud Season: How One Woman's Dream Of Moving To Vermont, Raising Children, Chickens And Sheep, And Running The Old Country Store Pretty Much Led To One Calamity After Another



Synopsis

Living the dream of the endless vacation In self-deprecating and hilarious fashion, *Mud Season* chronicles Stimson's transition from city living to rickety Vermont farmhouse. When she decides she wants to own and operate the old-fashioned village store in idyllic Dorset, pop. 2,036, one of the oldest continually operating country stores in the country, she learns the hard way that "improvements" are not always welcomed warmly by folks who like things just fine the way they've always been. She dreams of patrons streaming in for fresh-made sandwiches and an old-timey candy counter, but she learns they're boycotting the store. Why? "The bread," they tell her, "you moved the bread from where it used to be." Can the citified newcomer turn the tide of mistrust before she ruins the business altogether? Follow the author to her wit's end and back, through her full immersion into rural life—swapping high heels for muck boots; raising chickens and sheep; fighting off skunks, foxes, and bears; and making a few friends and allies in a tiny town steeped in history, local tradition, and that dyed-in-the-wool Vermont "character."

Book Information

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[Entertainment > Humor > Rural Life](#) #157 in [Books > Travel > Specialty Travel > Family Travel](#)

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Customer Reviews

On a vacation trip to Vermont, Ellen Stimson and her husband John so fell in love with the state that they made a vow: they would move their entire family from St. Louis, Missouri to what the author describes as the most naturally beautiful place she has ever been, and she says she has been to a lot of places. In due season the family consisting of dad, mom, three children and two dogs and a cat sold a business and house in St. Louis, packed up their belongings-- I knew I loved these folks when they moved 158 boxes of books-- and, some by air, others by automobile, made their journey

and lit down in Dorset, Vermont-- according to the 2000 census-- population 2,037-- with no bill boards and no street lights. What happens when in following your bliss, you get a lot of blisters? Ms. Stimson's MUD SEASON is her outrageously written account that never ever even thinks of being dull of all the things these novice pioneers did wrong and, yes, they did some cleverly wonderful things right as well. From making the first mistake of hiring a "foreign" contractor from St. Louis with a crew from Alabama that the Dorset townspeople groused about and apparently never forgot or forgave anyone for to purchasing a lovely quaint country store, Ms. Stimson covers it all in glorious singing prose: On the store that she and her husband John eventually labeled the HQCS (horrible quaint country store) she gushes with beginner's enthusiasm: "We would stitch ourselves into the fabric of this historic place. . . The right family could really make it sing and dance. We had that notion that maybe we could even franchise these stores out to other places all over the country, bringing a bit of Vermont happiness to folks who's never experienced this little slice of heaven.

Ellen Stimson's new book, Mud Season, is an entertaining yet puzzling story of her family's move from St. Louis to Vermont. With our family having uprooted and moved many times, I could relate immediately to the humor and disaster of packing up a lifetime of belonging and trying to recreate a home and fit in in a new place. Ellen and her husband buy a lovely old historical house and then the town's general store, and revel in the beauty and quaint, small-town charm of their new surroundings. However, they realize almost immediately that being too "different" and trying to change the way things have always been done alienates you from the locals. Using an out-of-state contractor for the remodeling of their house put them on bad footing with their new neighbors. Changing everything in the country store outraged a lot of people who liked things the way they had always been. I wondered as I was reading why she and her husband didn't just slow down a little and get a feel for what's acceptable and normal before proceeding. In all our many moves (overseas, too), we kept a low profile until we understood the local culture and then made an effort to fit in. It takes time, tact, and an investment in the community to finally be accepted. I enjoyed Ellen's sense of humor when she told of runaway goats, falling roof ice, environmental disasters, and surprise visits from the local historical house touring club. A lot of people would have packed up and left in the night after some of the things her family went through. She also has a gift for describing the beautiful New England seasons, mud and all. Her touch-stone through the tough times was a waterfall near her house, and her descriptions of its effect on her soul is enough to make anyone want to move to Vermont.

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