

Kay Smith

Virginia Sorensen: Utah Writer, Newbery Winner, and Woman of the Mountains

From the quaint and rural community of Manti, Utah, came the seemingly omniscient voice of Virginia Sorensen, Western woman and writer. Born in 1912, Virginia lived her youth in a Jack-Mormon home in a city of stalwart Mormons: Manti, Utah. From the social fabric of the times to the smells, the people, the situations, the drama, the comedy, and the travails of ordinary life, this woman of the mountains recalled “histories” which stand as delicious examples of creative non-fiction. As a Utah writer, and particularly as a woman writer, Sorensen captures and confronts the myths of the West, and in so doing, uses the fresh voice of a female to examine the commerce and backdrop of a powerful male society. Her profound sense of place, purpose, and location provide her vision, and in her visualization, she rhetorically fashions the West and her country town in the center of the mountains as a current and present habitat for today’s readers. Her remembrances are gathered and recovered in an atmosphere of “nothing is long ago,” and although generations have indeed passed, Sorensen welcomes readers into an extinct yet tangible world which shapes and enriches in many ways.