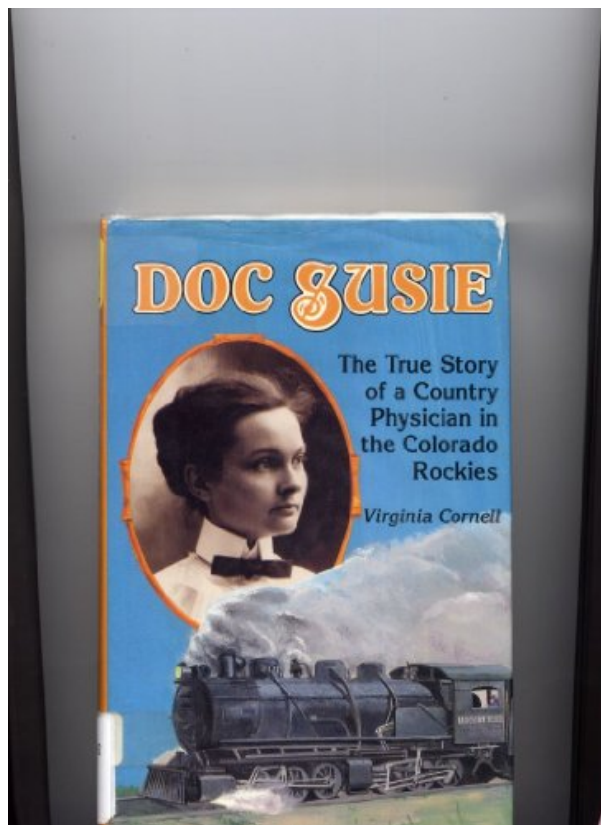
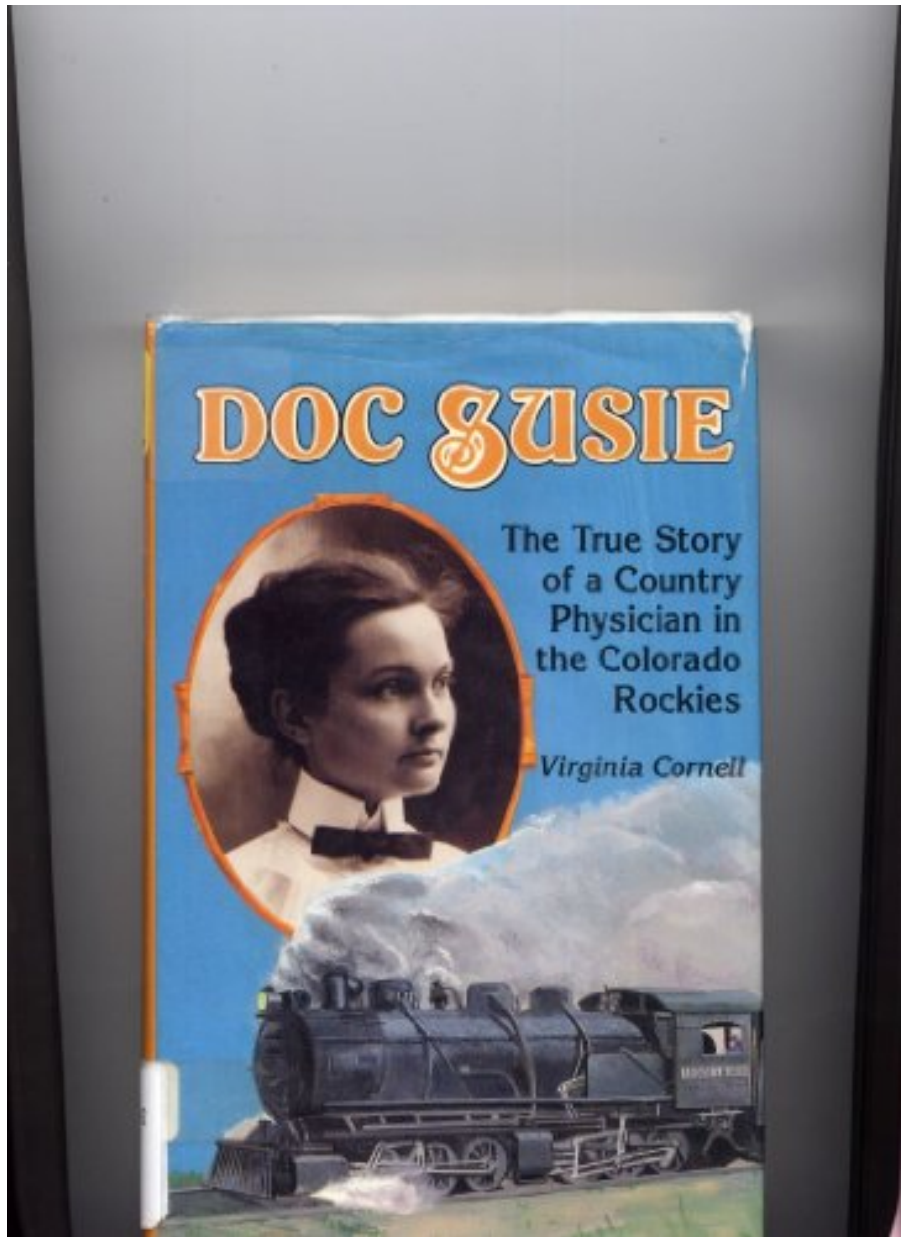


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From The New Yorker

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Compelling Biography

By Colorado

While Doc Susie's story is interesting and inspiring in itself, author Virginia Cornell's narrative approach is what makes the biography so compelling. Cornell grew up in Hideaway Park, two miles from Fraser where her parents established Miller's Idlewild Inn near the West Entrance Portal to the Moffat Tunnel, which figures so prominently in the book . After she received her PhD in Renaissance English Literature from Arizona State University, she returned to manage her family's ski resort as well as own and edit a small newspaper, the Winter Park Manifest. This fusion of Rocky Mountain resident, research scholar, and popular journalist combines to make Doc Susie one of the most readable and authentic biographies that I have encountered in a long time. First, Cornell knows firsthand the flora, fauna, climate, and personalities that make up small mountain communities, so the setting through which she moves her protagonist comes refreshingly alive. In this description, Cornell describes a barn dance. "Carrying baskets of fried chicken and potato salad into the bright interior of the barn she [Doc Susie] admired the clean-scrubbed pine floor, sprinkled with corn meal so the dancers could spin and shuffle even faster than if the floors had been newly waxed. Evergreen boughs and wildflowers were strung between stall braces. At one end, a planked platform for the musicians had been laid over tree stumps. Walking across the crunchy barn floor Doc enjoyed successive waves of smells: fresh pine, hay, rotted manure, neat's-foot oil used on tack and harnesses, cinnamon cookies, lemonade"(118).

Cornell's scholarly background taught her admirable research and writing skills, so she is able to weave into her narrative extensive investigation into early railroad history, pioneer doctors and their medical practices, the lumber industry, and the lives of women in early twentieth century along with personal interviews with residents of Fraser, family letters and photographs, and even a diary by Doc Susie herself. The Moffat Tunnel near Fraser played an important role in the town's history, and nursing the injured as well as serving as Coroner kept her informed of the dangers of the work: "the 'official' count of men killed so far, kept by the Denver newspapers, lulled the public into thinking that construction on the project was relatively safe. Only when accidents were spectacular did they excite the interest of the press. Doc Susie knew that the tunnel death toll was, in fact, much higher. . . .Reading in the Denver Post or Rocky Mountain News about serious accidents to workers--accidents almost invariably attributed to 'their own carelessness' or 'unpredictable circumstances'--Susie could not repress a bitter smile" (191) .When Cornell states in her "Author's Note" that she wound (literally) her way through miles of microfilm of the Rocky Mountain News and the Denver Post, I felt an immediate kinship because I had researched those same microfilms for almost those same years for my biography of Elinore Pruitt Stewart. Rounding out her credentials is her journalism

background, for she made what could have been a dreary, scholarly work into a life story that appeals to a wide audience.

To read the whole blog, visit [...]

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Less a Biography, More a Novel

By Richard Jackson

We haphazardly follow Doc Susie from her arrival in the Colorado timber country (1905) to the end of her life. It reads like fiction, with much detail and reported, verbatim speech which has to be invented by the author. No dates are provided, and as her life progresses we have to guess from minimal clues what year we are in. Early in the story she lectures a young woman on the need for vitamins -- the first vitamin was discovered in 1913 and it looks to me to be an author's invented anachronism. The book DOES give a good picture of the people and times in that location.

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A GREAT BOOK ABOUT A GREAT DOCTOR.

By VALERIE TOWNSEND

BOY, WHAT A TRULY WONDERFUL BOOK TRUE STORY OF ONE VERY SPECIAL LADY DOCTOR AND CORNER. SUSAN ANDERSON WAS A SMART PRETTY STORNG WOMAN I JUST LOVED THIS BOOK ABOUT HER LIFE I WANT TO READ ANOTHER BOOK ABOUT .HER I WILL GO AND LOOK ANOTHER BOOK BY SOMEONE ELES SO I CAN COMPAIR THE TWO OF THEM. I LOVE THIS SERIES OF BOOKS ABOUT WOMAN OF THE WEST. AND YOU WILL LOVE THIS BOOK ALSO.

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