



A Family Place: A Hudson Valley Farm, Three Centuries, Five Wars, One Family (Excelsior Editions)

Leila Philip

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One woman's journey to uncover her family's history and understand the ties that bind us to a particular place.

After her father's death in 1992, Leila Philip and her family faced the imminent loss of the Hudson River Valley Farm that had been home to the Philip and Van Ness families since 1732. Taking an unpaid leave from her job, Leila set out with her mother to save their farm and the family home, a sprawling Federal period mansion called Talavera. After fifteen generations of Philip and Van Ness men, it would be up to these two determined women to hold off the twin threats of bankruptcy and urban sprawl.

Returning to Talavera led Leila on an unexpected journey into the past even as she and her mother sought to chart a future for their commercial fruit orchard. Stumbling upon family letters, belongings, and secrets, Leila discovered a past that was inextricably woven into three centuries of U.S. history. In *A Family Place*, Leila Philip brings to life the people and events that shaped her family and Talavera. Across the generations we meet colonial Dutch farmers, Revolutionary Generals, Civil War heroes, freed slaves, ambassadors, and a cast of wonderfully renegade aunts who fled Talavera in search of adventure around the world. Set against this background of land and people are the day-to-day elements of farm life at Talevera, from horticulture and beekeeping to art history and Romantic-era landscape gardening. It is in this quest to uncover and understand life at Talavera that Leila inevitably finds a place for herself, as she and her family and their farm embark on a new century in the Hudson Valley.

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