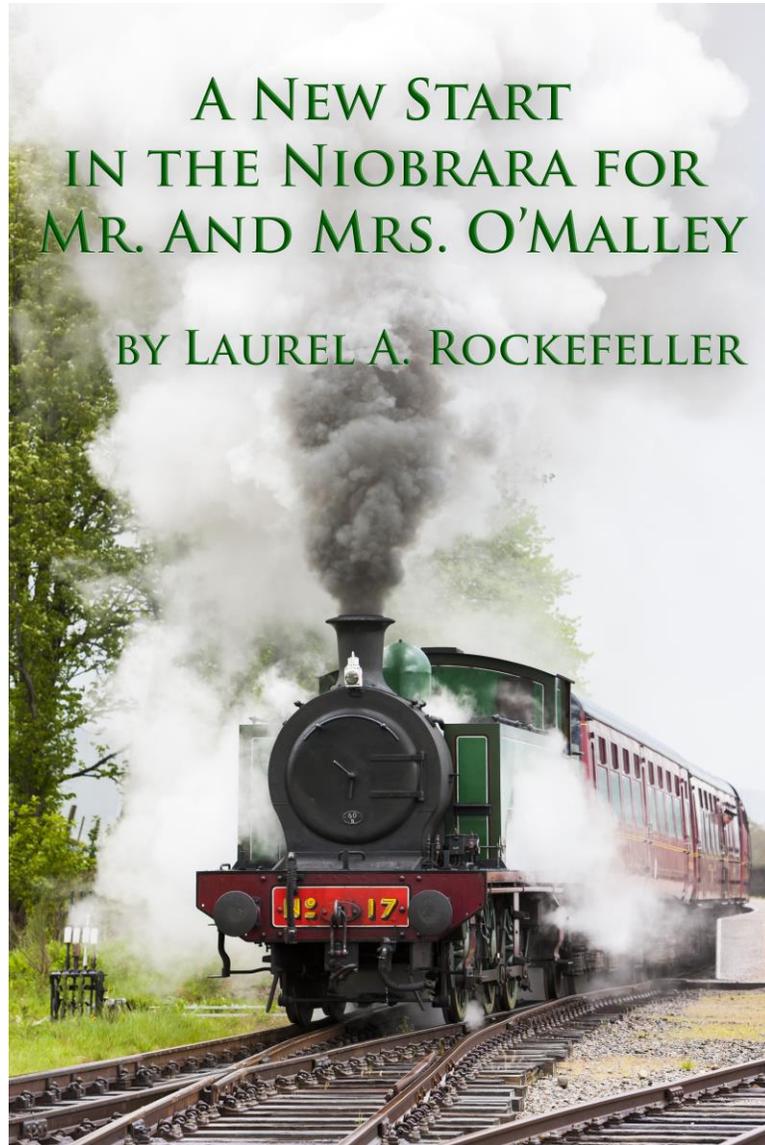


A New Start in the Niobrara for Mr. And Mrs. O'Malley

By Laurel A. Rockefeller



This book is a work of fiction based on the early Irish settlement of northeast Nebraska in the 1880s. Interpretation of source material is at the author's discretion and utilized within the scope of the author's imagination, including names, events, and historical details.

Brigit and Darcy eagerly watched the ground speed by through the window. Thunder rolled through the north Nebraska sky. Horizontal rain began to pour. Uncertain what to expect, they clasped each other's hands tensely as the brakeman entered the car. Brigit raised her voice to the brakeman as he passed through the car, her thick, County Mayo accent distorting her voice, "Pardon me, Good Sir, but can you be telling me when we will be pulling into the station?"

"It's no more than a mile down the track Missus..." replied the brakeman.

"O'Malley, Brigit O'Malley. This be mi husband, Darcy! Our boat arrived in New York a few days ago and we've been a riding more trains than I can count, lookin' for this place...Randolph! We hear it is a fine settlement, a good place to be startin' a family!"

"You won't find no Irish nor no Catholics out here in Nebraska, Mrs. O'Malley. Maybe you should head back to Ireland where you belong!" snubbed the brakeman.

Brigit lowered her head, "Yes, Sir!" Despite her submissive external demeanor, she clutched her green, white, and yellow plaid dress with anger.

As the brakeman finished his work, Brigit and Darcy felt the train slow. The conductor walked through shouting, "Randolph! Randolph! Arriving at Randolph!"

Brigit and Darcy grabbed their bags. Carefully, Brigit stepped down from the train, the huge smoke stack bellowing black smoke and cinders from the American Standard locomotive, the letters C St. P M & O on the passenger car shining in gold next to her face. Across the street, Brigit and Darcy noticed simple wagons rolling down the dusty streets. A church bell rang. Brigit and Darcy crossed the street towards the bell.

As they reached the well-tended wood sidewalks that lined the rows of shops, a man in black strode up behind them, "Good morning! You must be Mr. and Mrs. O'Malley!"

Frightened, they stopped and stared at the man, then felt a sigh of relief as they noticed his clothing. Darcy smiled, "Father! What a relief to see another Catholic face. We dinna think there were any from the old country in this land!"

Father Fitzpatrick extended his hand to Darcy, "Oh yes...many more from the old country arrivin' everyday! By the Blessed Virgin, our people are a comin' safe and sound to this beautiful fertile land. I hear there's even a new town a formin' made up of good families from across the Blessed Isle. Maybe out East and out West they a not wantin' us any more than the English...but here, in the Niobrara Valley, the luck o we Irish prevails!"

"Thank the Blessed Virgin for that, Father!" exclaimed Darcy. "But one thing puzzles me. On the train, the brakeman told me wife that there were no Irish here...."

"He dinna want ya to be a stayin', Mr. O'Malley. Not ev'ryone likes the Irish here. That bein' in part why that Mr. John O'Neill started a settlement just for we Irish. If it donna work out here, I can certainly introduce ya to some folks out there. The town's at the end of this train line, ya know!" explained Father Fitzpatrick.

"We'd be a most obliged, Father!" winked Darcy.

"Anything for an Irish lad and lass!" winked Father Fitzpatrick. "So...would you like a fine bit of bread and ale before we find you a place to stay?"

"What's the vintage?" asked Brigit.

"1884...a good year for Nebraska ale!" laughed Father Fitzpatrick.

"I'll drink to that!" chuckled Brigit. Together the trio found a nice table in the café and dined with the luck of the Irish. Brigit and Darcy knew that life in this new place, Nebraska, would certainly not be easy, but with the help of Father Fitzpatrick, at least they just might have a fighting chance at making a home of their own. What more could they want?