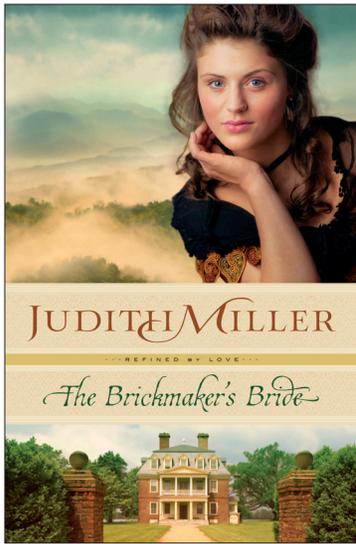




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH JUDITH MILLER



The Brickmaker's Bride

REFINED BY LOVE
by Judith Miller

Trade Paper ISBN: 978-0-7642-1255-0
\$14.99; 352 pp.

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-4412-6475-6
Release Date: October 2014

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1. Why did you choose to set a series in West Virginia?

Although I was born in Pennsylvania, West Virginia is where my father was born as well as where my mother and her family settled when she was a young girl, and some of my relatives still reside in West Virginia. As a youngster, some of my summer vacations were spent in West Virginia, and I have fond memories of those days. Some of my characters in *The Brickmaker's Bride* are Scots-Irish and came to this country to settle in West Virginia. Likewise, my father's relatives were Scots-Irish, came from Northern Ireland, settled in Pennsylvania for a period of time, and then migrated to the northwest portion of Virginia that later became West Virginia. There is a bit of a family feud brewing in this series. Since my maiden name is McCoy and we had a feuding history with the Hatfields, I decided a small family feud would be a good element to bring to this series, as well. In some ways, I believe these stories are an homage to my heritage.

2. Any interesting research tidbits you'd like to pass along?

While I wanted to write a series set in West Virginia, I didn't want my characters working in the coal mines since coal mining readily comes to mind when considering West Virginia. I set about discovering some of the other trades that were prevalent in that area after the Civil War and would have also been learned in Scotland and Ireland. One of my choices turned out to be brickmaking. Since I knew nothing about brickmaking, but enjoy learning, I decided the first book would deal with a Scots-Irish brickmaker family.

I spent a good deal of time in West Virginia and received valuable assistance from the genealogy society in Fairmont. They helped me find old sites where some of the many brickyards were located in the area. I might add that since I have no sense of direction, one of those treks took me down a very narrow path to a river bottom and I spent a fearful thirty minutes trying to locate a way out.

I always enjoy including a real person in history when possible. In this book the wife of the governor of West Virginia makes a brief appearance and is a friend of Mrs. Woodfield, the mother of the female protagonist in this story.

3. What are the themes incorporated into this story—and will they carry throughout the series?

Over the course of the three books, several themes will evolve. In this particular book, Ewan McKay's love for the woman he chooses to marry causes him many struggles with his uncle. Beyond his choice of a wife and desire for a family of his own, this series deals with the love of material possessions and the devastating effect it can have upon family and friends. Though Ewan goes to great lengths to prevent a fracture in his extended family, it proves impossible, and the family divide continues throughout the series. While each book will touch upon the family "feud," the stories each have a unique additional theme.

4. What do you hope the reader will take away from this series?

I hope readers will realize that other than their relationship with the Lord, no other relationships are more important than those we have with our families. While friends come and go, our families are linked to us through blood. Even though hurtful actions sometimes separate us from members of our families, forgiveness can eventually heal those wounds. We need only look to Jesus, who is connected to us through His shed blood. He provides us with the perfect example of forgiveness.