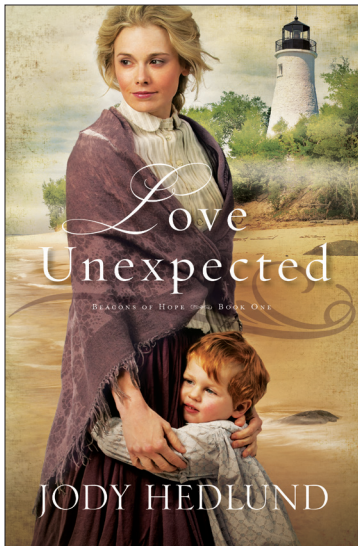


**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH JODY HEDLUND**



**Love Unexpected**

BEACONS OF HOPE #1

by Jody Hedlund

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**Media Contacts**

FICTION PUBLICIST: **Amy Green**

952-829-2596

agreen@bethanyhouse.com

CANADIAN MEDIA: **Ellen Graf-Martin**

519-342-3703

ellen@grafmartin.com

Please send tear sheets to:

Amy Green

11400 Hampshire Ave. S.

Bloomington, MN 55438

**1. Why did you write this novel?**

I wanted to write a series about lighthouses for a number of reasons. First, my state of Michigan is home to the greatest concentration of lighthouses in the U.S. And today more than 120 remain, compared to 500 total for the rest of the nation.

Second, I was drawn to lighthouses because I'm fascinated by the women keepers, who have largely been forgotten by our modern world. During the prime lighthouse era, 1800s to early 1900s, most lightkeepers were men. But occasionally women were appointed to the head keeper or assistant keeper position.

Michigan has the distinction of having had the most women lightkeepers. During my research, I was thrilled to find a resource that centered on those women keepers—a book by Patricia Majher titled *Ladies of the Lights: Michigan Women in the U.S. Lighthouse Service*. I loved reading about the approximately fifty women who served as either principal or assistant keeper in Michigan lighthouses. They inspired me to bring their stories to life.

**2. Did *Love Unexpected* involve any special research?**

Since I live in the middle of Michigan, I'm within only a few hours' drive from many of the state's lighthouses. So of course I couldn't pass up the opportunity to do hands-on research.

Accompanied by my two teen daughters and my mom, we drove up the coast of Lake Huron. We stopped first at Sturgeon Point Lighthouse and climbed all the way to the top of the tower. The view over the rocky isthmus and great lake was stunning.

Our second stop of the day was at the Old Presque Isle Lighthouse. This forty-foot tower and unattached keeper's house provided the backdrop for my novella *Out of the Storm*, as well as my novel *Love Unexpected* (BEACONS OF HOPE series, Book One). The remote wilderness setting drew me to this picturesque lighthouse, along with the stories behind some of the women lightkeepers who lived there in the past.

Next, we made our way to the New Presque Isle Lighthouse, which was built farther north to replace the old crumbling one. Thankfully both the old and new structures have survived the passage of time and the harsh weather and now remain as testaments to their once-important role in saving lives.

**3. What are the historical landmarks and events you incorporated into your novel?**

In addition to the Old Presque Isle Lighthouse and its keeper cottage, I also used many of the other historic landmarks that existed in the area during the mid-1800s. For example, Burnham's Landing was an actual place near the Presque Isle Harbor. Starting in the 1850s, the Burnham family acquired large tracts of Presque Isle County's rich timberland. They provided shelter to ships during foul weather, and sold cordwood for fuel to passing steamers. In its early days, the harbor consisted of nothing more than a couple of docks, a general store, a log barn, and several shanties for fishermen.

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**4. You like to base your main characters on real people. Who inspired the characters in *Love Unexpected*?**

Yes, the story focuses on Mary Chambers Garraty, a real woman from Michigan history who's known as "Mother to a Lighthouse Dynasty." Mary settled on Mackinac Island, where she met and married Patrick Garraty in 1859.

Patrick Garraty didn't become keeper of the Old Presque Isle Lighthouse until 1860, so I took some license with the dates in my story, having him as keeper a year earlier than he really was. I also took the liberty of having Mary meet Patrick while already a lightkeeper at Presque Isle rather than on Mackinac Island.

Mary was an assistant to her husband for ten years at which time one of her sons took over as assistant. Patrick and Mary had seven children. Four of them eventually became keepers, including one of their daughters, Anna. In fact, Mary and Anna have earned the distinction of being the only mother-daughter keepers in Michigan.

**5. You also like to base your villains on real Michigan criminals. Who inspired the villain in *Love Unexpected*?**

While there isn't as much recorded about freshwater pirates compared to the epic stories of ocean-faring pirates, we do know that pirating was a problem on the Great Lakes. I based the villain around one of the most infamous pirates, Dan Seavey, who terrorized the Great Lakes during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Dan Seavey and his two-masted schooner, the Wanderer, would silently slip into ports in the dead of night and would carry off anything of value, including venison, timber, and fish, and pluck cargo off other boats. Sometimes he would extinguish lighthouse lanterns and replace them with fake lights, which would cause unsuspecting ships to wreck, allowing the pirates access to their cargo.

Seavey's life as a pirate was a long and dangerous one. He's said to have stolen millions of dollars as an outlaw, though no one is sure what happened to his treasure because he didn't take it with him to the grave. He later died a penniless pauper while staying in a Wisconsin convalescent home.

**6. What's the take-away message you want readers to receive after reading your book?**

The heroine, Emma, has lost hope in God due to some horrific experiences in her past. Although she "knows" God is still there, she doesn't have hope that he hears or cares about her personally anymore. My prayer is that readers will find hope, like Emma, that God truly cares. We may not understand how he works or how he answers prayers, but he never abandons us.

No matter where we've wandered, no matter what we've faced, he's there as steady and constant as a lighthouse, bringing us safely into his harbor where we can find rest.