

Joyce's Journal

A monthly dispatch from Joyce A. Miller, Writer



MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH!

March is Women's History Month. This month serves as a time to honor the achievements and contributions that women of all backgrounds have made throughout the history of the United States, both by remembering those who paved the way in the struggle for gender equity, and by recognizing the history-makers and barrier breakers of today. **Mrs. Gari Melchers** aligns perfectly with Women's History Month themes as it illuminates the barriers women faced in the arts at the turn of the Twentieth Century, while also celebrating women's resilience and ingenuity in pushing against these limitations. My novel's main character, Corinne Melchers, represents countless real women artists who were denied opportunities, credit for their work, or faced harassment in academic and professional settings. The novel serves as both a tribute to the generations of women who fought for equality and a reminder of how recent these struggles were - making it particularly relevant for Women's History Month's goal of highlighting both women's achievements and their ongoing fight for equality.

It seems fitting in Women's History Month to celebrate the work of my friend and fellow author Ami Hicken King. **The Lawman: Lawlessness & The Law, book 2** is part of a four-book series set in Territorial Arizona. The books follow the deeply intertwined lives of Van Der Kamp and his gang of Civil War vets; two young boys "kidnapped" and raised by the gang; a by-the-book sheriff; a federal marshal; and Mack Pennington, a corrupt business magnate from the Eastern States. Their stories and convoluted connections

A GLIMPSE OF
WHAT'S INCLUDED:

**An excerpt from The
Lawman:
Lawlessness and the
Law, book 2**

navigate wanting to do the “right” thing but doing things your own way and the fine line between doing what’s right while breaking the law. Then there are those like Mack Pennington who feel they are above the law.

Jimmy Stapleton is the younger of two brothers kidnapped by the notorious Van Der Kamp gang in the Arizona Territory, and **The Lawman** is his story. Growing from a scrawny and scared preteen into a stoic and gentle giant, Jimmy is ready for justice and to defend those who can’t or won’t defend themselves. He’s developed a burning anger and righteousness, but he also has lessons to learn and buried emotions that he must manage. Ami’s book, **The Lawman** will be released on March 14.

As the bonus for March’s newsletter, I’m attaching an excerpt from **The Lawman** that shows the awkward and endearing side of the main character Jimmy. Maybe it will entice you to buy the book? If you read it, please tell me about it in an email; or post it and tag me on social media to let me know. Or even better, you can leave Ami a review!

I live in the Church Hill section of Richmond, VA with my husband and my retired racing greyhound. Before I started writing, I worked for 30 years at a nuclear physics research laboratory.

Do what you came here for!



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Josephine was in the side yard hanging unmentionables when Jimmy rode up on his jet-black devil horse. An unbelievably large dog trotted next to them. Jimmy raised his hand to wave, but instead of returning his greeting, Josephine made a choking sound from the back of her throat and scrambled to finish hanging the items she was clutching. Flustered and fumbling, she jabbed a clothespin at the apron on the outer line trying to create a shield for the undergarments. No matter how she tried, her efforts were unsuccessful. Panic set in as Jimmy's long legs brought him in direct line with the very items she sought to hide.

Unsure of what to do, Josephine froze. Politeness was in order, but she couldn't stand the thought of him catching sight of the items. So, there she remained, staring wide-eyed at Jimmy, waiting for shame's arrival. However, she was unprepared for what came next.

Jimmy wasn't focused on what Josephine was doing. Instead, his eyes roamed her face while a gust of wind blew wispy strands of hair across it, tickling her. Watching Jimmy's eyes follow her dancing hair, Josephine hesitated before brushing the offending strands aside. His eyes followed the motion of her hand. Too enthralled by the way he watched her, she was unable to move. He bore an appreciative and wistful look, mingled with something else she couldn't readily identify.

Jimmy's scrutiny coupled with her desperate need for propriety scorched her skin, a nervousness calling out for her to do something. In response, she returned to wrangling the apron. Her agitated movement and increased flush snapped Jimmy out of his observation and longing, which were replaced by a look of sudden understanding. Instead of speaking, he let out a strangled grunt. Whipping off his hat, he nodded to her.

"Miss Josephine." Jimmy gripped his hat tighter. "I'm sorry to have interrupted ..." The tips of his ears turning red, he continued. "Uh, ... morning chores ..." Josephine put extra effort into her apron fight while trying to hide the remaining undergarment in her hand. Failing miserably, the bloomers dropped to the earth with a puff of dust. They both looked down at the pantalets before looking back at each other. Their motions were perfect mirrors, right down to their tandem embarrassment and mortification. Two incredibly shy and somewhat socially awkward people stood trapped in their private hell.

Jimmy had struck Josephine as a take-charge kind of man, but this time he looked awkward and unsure, like a hesitant child. He flushed a deeper shade of red as he cleared his throat. Lord only knew what he could be thinking. Josephine's stomach churned wondering.

“I—”

Dropping his hat, Jimmy walked up to the line and gently took the apron and the clothespin from Josephine’s hand, and with concentrated focus proceeded to hang it on the line. That gave Josephine her out. She swooped down, scooping up the offending garment and tossing it into the laundry basket. She slid the basket behind her with her foot as she folded her hands in front of her. Jimmy exaggerated the motion of pushing the clothespin down in a nearly comical way, which she took to mean he was really trying to avoid looking—at anything. When he finished, he backed away from the clothesline and picked up his hat. Mercifully, he kept his eyes averted.

Josephine looked down at the ground, swiping away some wispy strands from her face again before looking up at Jimmy. Her smile faltered because he was attractive and put her on edge. Not the dangerous edge that some of the other men in town did, specifically Terrance Draper, but on edge, nonetheless. Her hands trembled slightly, and her heart picked up speed. She didn’t want to explore why that was. It just was. “Thank you.” Clearing her throat, she asked, “You’re a ways out from town. Is everything okay?”