



## A Blue and Gray Christmas

*Joan Medlicott*

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*A buried cache inspires the ladies of Covington to plan an unforgettable Christmas for two families forever changed by a long-ago war.*

A rusty old tin box holding nineteenth-century letters and diaries is unearthed at the Covington Homestead, and the contents reveal a thrilling drama to longtime housemates Grace, Amelia, and Hannah. Two Civil War soldiers—one Union and one Confederate—were found dying on a battlefield by an old woman and nursed back to health. After the war, they chose to stay in Covington, caring for their rescuer as she grew frail . . . but they never contacted the families they had left behind.

With Christmas coming, Amelia is inspired. What if she and her friends were to find the two soldiers' descendants and invite them to Covington to meet? What better holiday gift could there be than the truth about these two heroic men and their dramatic shared fate? With little time left, the ladies spring into action to track down the men's families . . . and to make preparations for the most memorable, most historic Covington Christmas yet.

## A Blue and Gray Christmas Details

Date : Published November 10th 2009 by Pocket Books (first published 2009)

ISBN : 9781416597438

Author : Joan Medlicott

Format : ebook 336 pages

Genre : Holiday, Christmas, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Military History, Civil War

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## From Reader Review A Blue and Gray Christmas for online ebook

### Katie says

I don't mean to be such a complainer this year, but I can't control how I feel.

The basic concept of this story is what drew me in. I loved the idea of these women finding these lost "letters" of Civil War soldiers. I even liked the idea that they were planning on getting the descendants of the soldiers together. I liked those things.

Then I read the book. I have a lot of issues with this one:

1. I did NOT expect it to be such fluff
2. I had NO interest in the Denny-Sarina (was that her name? - I really can't remember!) relationship
3. I didn't have all that much interest in the lives of the people that were the main characters in the story
4. I actually didn't have all that much interest in the two soldiers
5. I didn't like the way the letters were written - some of it seemed like a history lesson
6. Speaking of history lessons, I was irritated at the fact that these women had conversations with one another about the war as if they were in a classroom discussing it for the first time

Now, those were the main problems. There are others that I am not going to bother pointing out. But please let me elaborate further with my unhappiness with #5 and #6 on my list. I am very familiar with the American Civil War. VERY familiar. So, I became easily annoyed at having to have bits and pieces of it explained to me (i.e. what **hardtack** is!). Now, I am willing to accept the fact that this book may have been read by many people who aren't as familiar with the war as I am. So, many things would probably have to be written in there so the reader could "understand" more about what they are talking about. Yet, at the same time, it could've been written in a more realistic fashion. As I stated above, it was like a lesson from a beginner's history class. And that was kind of hard for me to put up with.

The thing that keeps me from giving this one star is the fact that SOME of the letters were OK. And I still like the concept of the story. But all-in-all, the book was VERY unenjoyable to read. At least for me it was.

By the way, as I have stated with many books lately, there were a few editing mistakes. Are all of the people in the publishing companies asleep nowadays? That is getting pretty tiresome.

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### Donna says

As my 2013 Christmas fiction, A Blue and Gray Christmas was ok, but the story was rather predictable. The writing seemed to divert from the story at hand, with multiple side "topics" being introduced, that seemed to go no where. That being said, the readings from the found letters and diaries of the soldiers were interesting and told a good story on their own.

Unfortunately, I find it difficult to recommend this book, unless you want a quick read of a Christmas story.

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## **Audrey says**

3 1/2 stars, really.

It's hard for me to really know what to say about this book. On the one hand, the premise was wonderful and the story itself was intriguing and engaging. I found myself wrapped up in the lives of the Ladies of Covington as I read through the old Civil War letters and discovered new things about themselves and the world in the process.

The letters themselves were extremely well-written, and I really felt as if I was reading things from the points of view of these two Civil War soldiers - one a confederate soldier, one a Union soldier. Joan Medlicott did a great job of giving them separate, distinct voices.

On the other hand, there was something about this book that was only so-so for me. The writing and ideas all seemed kind-of scattered, and there were a couple back stories going on that seemed to have NOTHING to do with the main story. This could have been okay, but to me it felt unnecessary, as if she was just trying to make the book longer. It's entirely possible, though, that this is because I haven't read any of the other Covington Ladies novels, so I sort-of came into the middle of it all. That aside, it also seemed like nothing ever actually happened, and when the occasional thing did happen, we heard about it several times from several different people.

So, as you can see, I'm torn. I loved it, but at the time I only sort-of liked it. It's hard to say, though, that it was a quick, enjoyable, easy read.

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## **Cassandra says**

I joined a color reading challenge this year, one in which you have to read books with colors in the title. I searched the library catalog for "blue" and came up with this book. Since it had two colors in the title, I thought I had hit the jackpot.

When I opened the book at home, I realized that I have read the first few books in this series. I should have recognized the author's name. The other books were okay, but not ones that I would read repeatedly.

This book felt like it was rushed to print in order to be a holiday release. The plot was interesting. The writing was okay, though I was frustrated by the unrealistic letters penned by Civil War soldiers. People don't write letters to family members the same way an author would share historical details with the reader. I wish I had marked an example in the book, but I don't care enough to go back and find one.

All in all, I would have given the book three stars but for the last couple of chapters. This book needs a serious edit. The last few chapters were missing quotation marks, had misplaced punctuation, and a very curious detail confused in the setting. Chapter 30 starts with, "one evening soon after Christmas..." Then chapter 31 says that "copies of the diaries and letters... would be presented to them on Christmas Day after the luncheon at the church." Which is it? Are these events taking place on Christmas or after Christmas? It wasn't a flashback but an editing mistake.

At least I've completed one book with a color in its title...

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### **Karen says**

This book started out wonderfully but then the author seemed to not be able to decide between telling the story of the 2 men in the letters and diaries or the 3 women who are reading the Civil War stash of letters and diaries

She doesn't do justice to either and I was disappointed with the story line. It could have been so much more.

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### **Morgan Allison says**

Three ladies discover buried letters from the pov of a confederate and union solider during the Civil War and make plans to reunite their descendants for Christmas. This book had the potential to be really interesting but fell flat. The ending was disappointing.

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### **Crystal says**

I received this book for a Pocket Books Tour for December. This is a Covington Holiday novel and part of a series that I believe centers around 3 friends who met later in life and moved to Covington, NC together to live in a farmhouse that one of the friends inherited.

This was an enjoyable novel, I enjoyed the characters and getting to know them. I also enjoyed the Civil War letters from the two soldiers that were found. I loved learning about the families of the men and how people can come together after never knowing they were related and get along. The book read easily and was a great way to spend a rainy Sunday afternoon. I never lost interest in the book or in the characters.

My main complaint with the novel was the fact that there was a lot going on. There were several small story lines that were glossed over and I didn't feel like they truly added to the story. However I don't know that they weren't story lines from previous books being revisited and those that have followed this series may enjoy this book more than someone picking up this book for the first one in the series. You will not be lost if this is the first Covington novel you pick up, you may just not get as much out of it, but on its own it is still an enjoyable novel.

I will say I enjoyed the characters enough that I do want to know more about them and I will be checking out the earlier books to learn more about this series and these women that are the focus.

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### **Jen says**

This may be the dumbest book I've ever read. The only reason I read it in the first place was because my town, Newtown, CT is featured. It is a wonder of hat books like this can get published. I think the only people who would enjoy the Covington series are old ladies who like to gossip. They will find common ground with the annoying characters.

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### **Lorraine says**

I really liked this book for 2 reasons. First, I am a genealogy addict and second I was a history minor in college and found the civil war ties in this story fascinating. An old tin box is found on the property of three older ladies who live together. In it are diaries and letters of 2 civil war soldiers, one for the north and one from the south. Through their letters and diaries and with the help of genealogical digging, these ladies trace their ancestors and descendants. A great ending as the ladies bring together these two previously unknown families and the relatives find out the true story of their civil war ancestor.

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### **Marcia says**

Eh. Typical fluff series read. Might have been better if I had read others but don't think I could have stuck with them. Liked the genealogy search. Really liked the insight into the Civil War through the well written letters. Wasn't Velma hurt in the car crash? She is never mentioned again. Maybe she died!

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### **Valorie says**

Three friends, Grace, Amelia, and Hannah, come across a box once buried full of the letters and diaries of two Civil War soliders: Tom from the South and John from the North. Both soldiers were injured during the war and ended up abandoning together, hiding deep in the Appalachian mountains that they made their home. Tom felt he had nothing to go back to and John chose to leave his wife and daughter to begin a new life. The letters the three women read and share with others express friendships, fears, loves, and the dramatic after effects of war. John is left with severe post traumatic stress, so he has to completely rebuild himself after the horrors of war he experienced.

When Tom and John decided to stay in the mountains, they took on a new last name to begin their lives anew. When Grace, Amelia, and Hannah find the letters and learn about the break up of families, they decide together that it would be the perfect Christmas treat to reunite the families and share with them the letters and diaries of their long lost ancestors, believed to have been killed in the war. It is not an easy thing for the women to do, and they search through records and graveyards to find and connect people together. A lucky break happens when they meet a relative of John's, Milo, who came from the line descended from John's second marriage. The threads start coming together for the women, and it seems all too soon that they are going to get the Christmas they want.

The best part of the book is the Civil War letters. Reading about the experiences and lives of Tom and John was very emotional for me. I chose to participate in the book's blog tour because I am a student of history and absolutely love a good historical fiction novel. The Civil War is in itself a very emotional war, so being able to read about it in such a personal way was very tender, sometimes sweet, sometimes painful. I felt especially bad for John who had such a hard time forgetting everything he'd seen and done. The intimacy of the letters really made me feel like I had connected with the two men on some level.

Unfortunately, I felt that I connected very little with the story apart from the letters. While I enjoyed very much the progression of Tom and John's lives, I found some other aspects of the novel quite not to my liking. The story line moves along in a way that is not only too quick, but entirely unbelievable. Everything just seems to fall into place and the initial roadblocks are obligatory. Something about the dialogue put me off, too. But what I disliked the most was that the book is full of unnecessary detail and lacks where there should be detail. We are given a paragraph about baking and the ingredients that go in and in what order, but the actual plot itself is rushed along. I would have liked a little less unnecessary dialogue and action and a little more that had actual substance or contributed to the plot.

Nevertheless, it is a very sweet book. One of those quick rainy or snowy day reads that will leave you feeling warm inside at the end of it all.

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### **Sue says**

Title: A Blue and Gray Christmas

Author: Joan Medlicott

Rating: 4/5

No. of Pages: 336

Published: November 10, 2009

From the inside flap:

In this stunning holiday story, a cache of Civil War-era letters and diaries sweeps the ladies of Covington up into a dramatic and heartwarming historical saga that inspires them to plan an unforgettable Christmas for two families forever changed by war.

When a rusty old tin box is unearthed at the Covington Homestead, longtime housemates Grace, Amelia, and Hannah discover that it contains letters and diaries written by two Civil War soldiers, one Union and one Confederate.

The friends are captivated by the drama revealed. The soldiers were found dying on a nearby battlefield by an old woman. She nursed them back to health, hiding them from bounty hunters seeking deserters. At the end of the war the men chose to stay in Covington, caring for their rescuer as she grew frail. But while their lives were rich, they still felt homesick and guilty for never contacting the families they'd left behind.

Christmas is coming, and the letters inspire Amelia with a generous impulse. What if she and her friends were to find the two soldiers' descendants and invite them to Covington to meet? What better holiday gift could there be than the truth about these two heroic men and their dramatic shared fate? With little time left, the ladies spring into action to track down the men's families in Connecticut and the Carolinas, and to make preparations in Covington for their most memorable, most historic Christmas yet.

Mine:

A Blue and Gray Christmas by Joan Medlicott is part of the Covington Series and was the first one I read, I would have to say that it would be well worth it to read more of the series. The characters of Amelia, Grace and Hannah wonderful and developed. A box of letters from the civil war was found on the property, the women read the letters and are touched by the letters.

The authors of the letters are one soldier from the south and one from the north. The two were both injured

and were helped by Miss Ella Mae who brought them up as her own. The "Girls" decide it would be a great gift to find the family of the soldiers and invite them for a wonderful Christmas celebration. This is a delightful tale for Christmas as the generosity of spirit is shared by all.

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### **Kathleen Messenger says**

I was very intrigued in the beginning. I thought it was going to be a really good book, but as I got further in the book, I started to lose interest in it.

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### **Lori says**

I had never read anything by Joan Medlicott before and I thought this book sounded like a festive Christmas read. I loved it from start to finish.

While it is part of a series (the Covington series) the book works as a stand alone as well. The story and the characters are fresh and relatable, with the trio of housemates, Grace, Hannah and Amelia, the center of the story. And as much as I enjoyed the ladies themselves, I thought the best part of the story was the story of Tom and John, the two Civil war soldiers, one Union and one Confederate, who survived the war together and whose stories were told entirely through the letters Grace, Hannah and Amelia found buried on their property.

Historical fiction can be a tricky thing - - an author must be accurate without being overly academic and Ms. Medlicott's use of letters only to transport the reader to Tom's and John's time is inspired and immensely satisfying. Reading their letters, you feel one man's anguish at leaving his life behind and another's glimmer of hope at starting life anew.

Woven within the Civil War stories and the stories of Grace, Hannah and Amelia is also the story of Denny, the local pastor, and his desire to marry Sarina, Hannah's former daughter-in-law.

All this is set to the backdrop of the Christmas season, with the underlying theme of family and Christmas miracles.

I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a good, heartwarming tale, a true feel-good story. Enjoying historical fiction is simply an added bonus. For the discerning reader, there is no language, no sex and no violence, other than a few Civil War injuries mentioned. This is a great read for a book club or a reader of any age.

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### **Kathleen Hagen says**

A Blue and Gray Christmas, b-plus, by Joan Medlicott, narrated by Marguerite Gavin, produced by Tantor Media, downloaded from audible.com.

Another book in the wonderful Covington Ladies series.

Publisher's note:

When a rusty old tin box is unearthed at the Covington Homestead, longtime housemates Grace, Amelia, and Hannah discover that it contains letters and diaries written by two Civil War soldiers, one Union and one Confederate. The friends are captivated by the drama revealed. The soldiers were found dying on a nearby battlefield by an old woman. She nursed them back to health, hiding them from bounty hunters seeking deserters. At the end of the war, the men chose to stay in Covington, caring for their rescuer as she grew frail. But while their lives were rich, they still felt homesick and guilty for never contacting the families they'd left behind. Christmas is coming, and the letters inspire Amelia with a generous impulse. What if she and her friends were to find the two soldiers' descendants and invite them to Covington to meet? What better holiday gift could there be than the truth about these two heroic men and their dramatic shared fate? With little time left, the ladies spring into action to track down the men's families in Connecticut and the Carolinas and to make preparations in Covington for their most memorable, most historic Christmas yet.

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