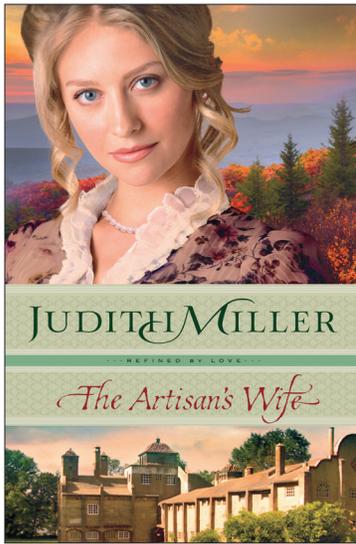




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH JUDITH MILLER



The Artisan's Wife

REFINED BY LOVE

by Judith Miller

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1. The Artisan's Wife is the third and final book in the REFINED BY LOVE series. Does this final book follow any of the McKay family members?

Yes. In this final book of the series, one of Ewan McKay's twin sisters, Ainslee, takes center stage as the protagonist. All of these books have been centered around clay deposits in the state of West Virginia. *The Artisan's Wife* depicts yet another use of those clay deposits. Ainslee McKay reluctantly takes charge of her family's newly acquired tile works. While this venture had been her twin sister Adaira's idea, Ainslee is forced to take charge when Adaira chooses love over career.

2. Has this book moved back to Bartlett or is it set in Grafton?

Neither. Readers will come along with me to the existing town of Weston, West Virginia, where they will learn a little about making tiles in the fictional McKay Tile Works. I chose Weston because there was an institution for the mentally ill in the town during the time period. The edifice is still there, but it is no longer operational. During the early years of the institution, it was considered a fine advancement in care for the mentally ill—especially since they had generally been housed in deplorable conditions in large jail cells. I wanted to reveal some aspects of this early movement through relationships with a few of my characters in the book. In addition, the area provided an excellent setting for the tile works.

3. Were you required to conduct additional research for *The Artisan's Wife*?

Each book has required some specific research. In this one, I researched the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum (that's the original name of the mental hospital). My original thoughts were centered upon portraying what a horrid place it must have been. However, I discovered that during the early years, it was focused upon helping and healing rather than warehousing. I'd like to say it was truly successful, but through the years we've learned those institutions soon became overburdened and patients were then treated poorly.

Another aspect that I thoroughly enjoyed researching was the tile-making process. I visited the Moravian Tile Works, in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, on two occasions. The tile works was founded by Henry Chapman Mercer and is a working history museum. I was treated to a private tour by the curator, who kindly answered my countless questions.

4. Are there any particular themes incorporated into this story?

As in the previous books in this series, the McKay family is confronted with issues that threaten to fracture the family. As the story unfolds, it looks at the issues of genuine forgiveness and the ability to consider change a positive factor in our lives. Ainslee's close relationship with her twin sister is threatened when Adaira reneges on her decision to go to Weston and operate the tile works. And when the family asserts Ainslee must go without her sister, she's insistent they sell the business. Yet, once she's in Weston, she experiences both personal and professional growth and comes to the realization that her family had been correct: God had a plan for her life that was greater than her own.

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