

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH JUDITH MILLER****1. This novel is set in Manchester, New Hampshire, one of the early New England mill towns. How did you decide on this time period and setting?**

Almost twenty years ago, I coauthored a series of books with Tracie Peterson. Those stories were set in Lowell, Massachusetts, another early mill town. My fascination with those young ladies who went to work in the mills has never subsided. I continue to read and enjoy the stories of their lives. With this particular book, I wanted to move to another town in New England where I could continue my research and discover some of the differences among these communities and the girls who played an important role in the industrial revolution.

**2. Since this book is set in Manchester, do the characters all work in the mills?**

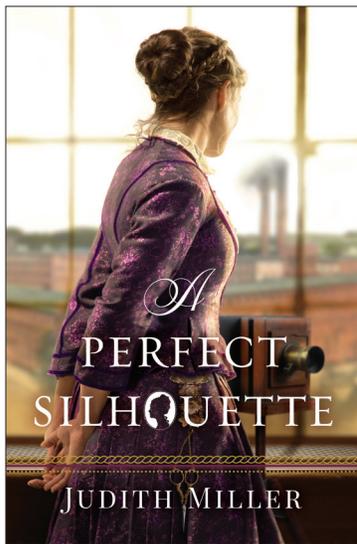
Most of the characters work in the mills, but there are also some important characters who hold other positions in the community. While the female protagonist works in the mill, she's also employed to work evenings in a daguerreotype shop where she creates paper cuttings known as *schere schnitte*. This permitted me an opportunity to include two additional professions I thought readers would find interesting.

**3. How did you decide on paper cutting as an additional profession for the protagonist?**

My mother had a silhouette made of my brother when he was about three years old. He was wearing a little sailor cap. The framed silhouette was a perfect likeness of him at that age. Growing up, I admired the skill it required to create such a likeness. Many years later, I met a woman who created paper cuttings—not just portraits but beautiful scenes depicting nature, holidays, and home life. I was so inspired that I gave it a try, but I soon learned that paper cutting is a skill requiring a lot of patience and more artistic talent than I possess.

**4. Did you conduct any research in Manchester or did you rely on the research you'd done for the earlier series set in Lowell?**

My earlier research was helpful, but this book required additional research. While the two towns have similarities, there were also unique features. I traveled to Manchester in the winter where I was stranded in a hotel for twenty-four hours due to a nor'easter. I must say that the folks in New England know how to clear snow! The staff and researchers at the Millyard Museum and the Manchester City Library in Manchester and at the New Hampshire Historical Society and New

**A Perfect Silhouette**

by Judith Miller

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Hampshire Historic Association in Concord were exceedingly helpful. I was able to see some of the original boardinghouses, and the Millyard Museum is in a portion of one of the old mills. In one room, Manchester comes to life through a Lego re-creation of the entire town, including the mills, boarding-houses, stores, and streets during the mid-1800s. What a treat it was to see this. The libraries provided me with excellent information about Manchester and the mills.

**5. During your research, did you find any surprising or unusual information that you were able to use in the novel?**

While at the New Hampshire Historical Society, one of the research assistants was kind enough to retrieve and let me read several handwritten diaries, calendars, and notes from mill workers. In a calendar maintained by one of the men, he noted the church he attended each Sunday. The mill workers were required to attend church services every Sunday, although they could attend the church of their choice. This gentleman attended a different church each Sunday until he'd attended all the churches in Manchester, and then he'd begin again. In *A Perfect Silhouette*, I use that concept with twin sisters who work in the mills, but you'll have to read the book to discover their reason. Unfortunately, the gentleman who made the rounds in real life didn't note the reason for his "circulating attendance."