



A Memory of Muskets

Kathleen Ernst

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Curator Chloe Ellefson is happily planning to spotlight home-front challenges and German immigrants at Old World Wisconsin's first Civil War reenactment, but her overbearing boss scorns her ideas and proposes staging a mock battle instead. And when a reenactor is found dead at one of the historic site's German farms, Chloe's boyfriend, cop Roelke McKenna, suspects murder.

The more Roelke learns about reenacting, the more he fears that a killer will join the ranks. Then Chloe discovers a disturbing secret about Roelke's Civil War-era ancestors. Together they struggle to solve crimes past and present . . . before Chloe loses her job and another reenactor loses his life.

Praise:

"Veteran Ernst provides a new perspective on the Civil War woven together with a compelling mystery."

--*Kirkus Reviews*

"Extremely well-written."--*Suspense Magazine*

"Kathleen Ernst knows how to spin a tale, weave an intricate plot, and hide clues in the embroidery. *A Memory of Muskets* takes two stories separated by more than a century and knits them together into one thoroughly satisfying read."--Kathy Lynn Emerson, Agatha Award-winning author of *How to Write Killer Historical Mysteries*, *Murder in the Merchant's Hall*, and other historical mysteries

A Memory of Muskets Details

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From Reader Review A Memory of Muskets for online ebook

Nancy says

Death Stalks a Civil War Reenactment

Old World Wisconsin is a living history site devoted to telling the story of the German Immigrants to Wisconsin. The site is beautifully designed with farms showing how the settlers lived from the earliest immigrants to those after the Civil War.

Chloe Ellefson is a Curator at Old World Wisconsin and very proud of the living history museum. She is planning a major event about the Civil War and wants to highlight the lives of the individuals, but her boss has different ideas. He wants to stage a reenactment of a Civil War battle. Chloe is against it, but he insists believing it will bring more visitors. However, when a reenactor's body turns up on one of the farms and Roelke, a policeman and Chloe's boyfriend, suspects murder, the celebration becomes more complicated.

The story takes place on two levels. One is the present day celebration; the other is a tale of the early settlers Klaus and Rosina, who are Roethe's forebears. The book follows both stories weaving the plots together with the historic site.

The author knows a great deal about the technical aspects of reenactments. I found it fascinating. The historical detail is also well done. The story of Klaus and Rosina has a tragic aspect that highlights the reality of the settler's lives where marriage was often a matter of convenience rather than love.

I did feel that the search for the murderer contained too much redundant information. It seemed that the characters kept repeating the same information over and over. However, the inclusion of the Civil War love story keeps the tension high.

If you enjoy a good mystery with a historical context, you may enjoy this one.

I received the book from Net Galley and Midnight Ink for this review.

Joyce says

Love the history/mystery aspect of this series. though this particular book was not quite as good as others I've read. Despite that, I'm on a quest read all of books in this series.

Laura Reading says

Another historical mystery winner from talented author Kathleen Ernst.

The fact that I live in Wisconsin, close to the sister site, and appreciate reenactments, did not make me rate this higher than it deserves. This is an amazing book full of historical references and multiple layers. We watch the relationship between Chloe and her cop develop, and get a feel for her extra sensitive emotional perceptions, experience the antagonistic overbearing complications of her boss with political aspirations. The mysterious discovery of a uniformed body at the historical site ties all the other elements together. Kathleen is a master at inserting subtle humor and sarcasm into the script as needed to lighten the mood.

"(Det.) Goresko had sandy hair worn in a Who cares?style, as if he trimmed it himself while watching a Packers game on tv."

We get to look behind the scenes at what it takes to transform a visit into a near time travel experience. And as a bonus, the author digs deeper into ancestral research, reminding us that every family has secrets and heroes.

After reading this book I am planning another visit to my local historical sites.

I did receive this book in exchange for an unbiased review.

Mary says

Being an Ernst junkie I've read them all and this one spoke to me ... from my genealogy interests to my Pomeranian roots to Old World Wisconsin to the names that she chose for the characters -- WOW! The love story continues between the two main characters, as they get to know just a bit more about each other through Roelke's family history. Through the research and excitement, they grow to appreciate the balance that each bring to the relationship. Ernst has this awesome way of walking the reader right through the scenes, to the point where I now want to visit Old World, go to GermanFest, buy a farmhouse and plant an heirloom garden and then in my spare time research my ancestors' involvement with the Civil War. Multiple storylines flow easily through the book, each well researched and melded together like a concert. Can't wait for the next in the Chloe Ellefson series!

Jennifer says

Oh, wow. Kathleen Ernst has done it again! The Chloe Ellefson mysteries are so wonderfully engaging! I love how each one transports you to a different period of time and really brings it to life. This newest installment did not disappoint at all. Reading about the lives of the German immigrants, the hardships they faced, the love and friendships they found made me feel like I actually knew them. The mystery was well-crafted, as well! As a transplant to the midwest, I feel a little more at home with each book in this series that I've read.

Karen R says

Old World Wisconsin, a living history museum, is an interesting setting for a story with a Civil War reenactment. When an unidentified body turns up behind a barn there, local police and the curators are baffled, especially as he is dressed in a soldier's uniform.

A history mystery with a dual timeline, set mainly in Wisconsin, the story bounces between the 1860's to 1983. The author did a lot of thorough research it seemed, weaving it into the character's lives in the past and present stories. The details of what a Civil War soldier carried, wore, and what their families left behind experienced was interesting; the German heritage of the area was also. I was drawn into Rossina's story, as well as Chloe and Roelke's. I had enjoyed the first books in the series, and liked catching up with them in this one. I would have enjoyed the narrative a lot more without the swearing; it didn't seem to fit Chloe's educated background really either, but detracted. The mystery came together rather quickly at the end with a few loose ends.

Readers who like a Civil War era tale, with a modern day mystery, may enjoy this story. 3.5 stars (Warning for sensitive readers: see comment below for additional details.)

(A book was provided by NetGalley and the publisher in exchange for my honest review.)

Marilyn Watson says

Kathleen Ernst writes a multi-layered story of different members of a family, over a hundred years apart, and those they are connected to in love and work. There are two mysteries occurring in the book.

Chloe Ellefson is a Curator at Old World Wisconsin planning a big Civil War event. She is a professional at work, while mentoring and working with staff, despite her Boss being a pain. At least her love life was fine until she felt bad energy about the Cabin that her boyfriend wants to make into her private space. Roelke had bought the family farm and Chloe is slowly moving her things in... as she finds out things about his Ancestors who built it. Things she may not want to tell him. But while she debates all this... they find the body of a reenactor and death suddenly seems very close. Add to that the shooting of another and all kinds of strange things start happening.

The Book is strong on the language and flavor of reenacting as it is also on the daily workings of a historic site. The Staff who work with collections, as well as events, are well developed. Ernst builds strength into the personalities and types of people who love history and participate in these type of recreation events. The Book moves slow but layers the different time frames well.

But to me the heart of the book is the love story set right before the Civil War. I found the German settlers, who entered this country at a time of Civil War, making life and death decisions about themselves... fascinating. Their loyalties gave a slant to history I had never thought about. Marriage was often built on practical reasons alone... not love. I found the ancestor research by Chloe added a lot of emotion to the story and had a strong mystery of its own.

Thanks to Midnight Ink and NetGalley for a digital review copy.

Rachel Stansel says

Book 7 and still going strong! Curator Chloe Ellefson works at Old World Wisconsin. In this installment, she is yet again at odds with her boss as they plan the site's first Civil War reenactment. An unknown civil war reenactor is found dead at the site's German farms and Roelke McKenna, local cop and Chloe's boyfriend, suspects foul play. Then, the body count rises. What did these men have in common and how did it get them killed?

At the same time, Chloe and Roelke are struggling with moving in together to Roelke's old family homestead, just recent purchased. Chloe gets feelings of bad things from the original cabin. Why and what will they do to move beyond it? We get to learn what occurred there through flashbacks.

I love this installment and strongly recommend the series. The book stands alone, but you will miss out some but not having the character backgrounds built in previous books.

Full disclosure - I received a copy of the book in exchange for an honest review.

Maggie says

Uh, this was painful. I don't know what book the other reviewers read, but this was imho... not good. I almost abandoned and jumped ship. The huge problem? This book just keeps rehashing over and over the same information - there's a guy who died. They have no idea who he is. Here's what we found. Here's the grandma's story. She has a secret. Here's the secret. Over and over. The reader won't forget!! I might write a lengthier review later but it was so annoying I just was in pain. The only redemption was some of the Civil War information was quite good - about relics and reenactments (oh yeah, that info was repeated over and over and over) but that's my only redemption I found.

Thanks to Netgalley for an ARC of this book in exchange for this honest review.

Amy Laundrie says

A MEMORY OF MUSKETS is my favorite Chloe Ellefson mystery so far. Chloe, curator of Old World Wisconsin, is in the midst of a murder investigation after a reenacter is found dead on the property. Kathleen Ernst's descriptions helped me visualize the living museum with its buildings representing different immigrants such as the German Schulz farm.

Descriptions of the struggles to travel to America, to farm and homestead, and then to fight in The Civil War helped me imagine what it was like for my own German ancestors.

Kathleen Ernst has expertly woven together the story of Chloe and her policeman boyfriend Roelke with a parallel story dating back to German immigrants in the 1860's. Fanciful Rosina, who will let the peas burns while watching cardinals play in the snow, falls in love on board ship taking her to her intended. After one stolen night with Leopold, she becomes pregnant. She must say goodbye to join hard-working, homesteader Klaus. Leopold goes off to fight. Does Klaus know the child isn't his? Will Leopold return?

Thanks to Kathleen Ernst, master storyteller and creator of the Chloe Ellefson series, for bringing history to life.

Gail says

Kathleen Ernst is unbelievably talented. She layers her books like a set of Russian nesting dolls. Set in the 1980s, her Chloe Ellefson mysteries feature historically accurate 20th Century mysteries interwoven with mysteries from other historical periods.

A Memory of Muskets skillfully knits together Civil War history with a modern day murder mystery, using stunning detail to help the reader understand life during the Civil War and how that conflict reverberates in the lives of Americans many decades later.

We come to care about museum curator Chloe and policeman boyfriend Roelke even more as their relationship develops over the course of the series. It's a privilege to read such well-researched mysteries that give the reader insight into bygone eras through delightfully human, always slightly flawed, characters.

Full Disclosure--Net Gallery and the publisher provided me with a digital ARC of this book. This is my honest review.

Biblio Files (takingadayoff) says

This is the seventh in the series of Chloe Ellefson Old World mysteries. They follow a pattern, with the main character Chloe, who is a curator at an interactive open air museum in Wisconsin, having to solve a murder mystery with the help of her boyfriend, small town cop Roelke. Meanwhile, a parallel drama is going on in another time, involving past residents of the area, often immigrants. The drama from the past eventually sheds some light on what is happening in the present (actually the 1980s). And then there's the romantic relationship of Chloe and Roelke, who are often at cross purposes due to their intense and tightly wound natures.

Usually I enjoy the murder mystery most, followed by the relationship story, then the historical drama. This time I found the historical drama the most engaging, set against a backdrop of the Civil War, followed by the relationship melodrama, and finally the murder mystery. In fact, I find myself enjoying the parallel historical story lines more and more as the series progresses.

Can you start the series out of order? I think so -- Ernst explains enough each time so that new readers will be up to speed without giving away anything from past stories.

I also enjoyed the genealogy aspect of this novel, especially the unspoken caveat that no matter how thorough you are in your research, the past won't give up all its secrets.

(Thanks to Midnight Ink and NetGalley for a digital review copy.)

Faouzia says

Curator Chloe Elleson is working in Old Worl Wisconsin, a living museum featuring the lives of the early

German immigrants to the US, and planning a big event about the Civil War and a reenactment of the challenges the immigrant faced. But everything gets worse when an unknown Civil War reenactor is found dead in one of the farms.

I really enjoyed this book, very much and for different reasons. The first thing was that this story is told in two different periods, the contemporary period that includes Chloe, Roelke her, police officer, boyfriend, and the 1860s where we learn the story of the ancestors of Roelke, Klaus and Rosina, both German immigrants. The other thing was about the characters. The author obviously knew a lot about this reenactment thing, because all the details about the reenactors, the scenes and everything that involved them were amazing. Also, i must admit, i just loved Chloe. I felt connected to her, her love for history, her commitment to find the facts, truths was wonderful, and the way she sometimes forgets everything when speaking about some long gone people or events, i can be like that, a lot.

The other interesting thing about this book was the emotions displayed. I felt, and it can be only my imagination, that this book was about two powerful emotions: Guilt and Regret. How they really can poison the lives and memories of people, how they travel through years and even generations and never really let go of people. It was really a very touching part of this book, and it made me enjoy it even more.

All this was happening as everybody was trying to figure out who that dead reenactor was and how he died. So after all that death was only the starting point of this story, the one event that brought so many tragedies and secrets out.

I really recommend it to those who enjoy historical fictions, with a bit of mysteries and some romance all along.

I got this book through NetGalley.

LORI CASWELL says

Dollycas's Thoughts

My first experience at Old World Wisconsin was back in 5th grade for a school field trip and have visited several times since but not lately, at least in person. Through this series I have been able to visit there and some other wonderful places in the Midwest.

Our protagonist, Chloe Ellefson together with Byron Cooke, curator of interpretation, are planning a Civil War program. Thanks to their boss it turns into a Civil War Reenactment. While doing research for the event she discovers some ties to Roelke's ancestors and the family home she is planning to move into with him. It may explain the disturbing feelings she has about the place. They both get distracted away from their move when a man is found dead at Old World Wisconsin. Dressed as a reenactor, the man has no identification, and this leads the case in several different directions.

Kathleen Ernst always writes a great story with a captivating mystery and the perfect amount of history too. She gives us very detailed descriptions that make the story come alive and easy to visualize. I enjoyed the way she skips back to the past, the 1860's, and back to present time in this case, is the early 1980's. As always you can see she has deeply researched the subject matter and I like that I actually learn something while reading every story.

I found Rosina's story to be very interesting. Her traveling to the New World and making her way to Wisconsin and her life there.

Chloe and Roelke have gotten even closer but they are still building trust as their lives together starts a new chapter.

All the characters are written so well. Chloe's boss, Petty, not only pushed her buttons but mine. You know the type, my way or the highway, moving deadlines just because he can. and adding things to programs some times just to get her on the defensive. At times you could cut the tension with a knife.

The mystery itself tangled around itself at times and the clues did not always move the investigation forward but took us back to review things that were missed. I was again caught by surprise as we reached the end for that revealing moment when all the clues fell into place.

Ernst is a strong storyteller. At times I could picture all of us gathered around her listening to her tell us Rosina's story and catching us up with Chloe and all the people in her life. Kind of like the interpreters at Old World Wisconsin. Something she actually used to do. Her love for the place and the history shines bright in every one of her stories.

Cathy says

Kathleen is a master of linking the past and present into a compelling novel. I learned a lot about the daily life of German immigrants in Wisconsin during the Civil War, something I had never considered before.
