

Kathleen Ernst
WRITING AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THE PAST



Preview of *Ghosts of Vicksburg*

An American Civil War Novel

Written by Kathleen Ernst

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Jamie Carswell's happiest childhood memories are of summers spent in Mississippi with his favorite cousin, Althea Winston. When he joins the 14th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment, he is horrified to find himself campaigning in Mississippi—and to see firsthand the impact of war on local women and children. Althea, meanwhile, is struggling to keep her family intact and safe. She is also haunted by a past mistake that took a terrible toll on her family.

When the Union army settles in to besiege Vicksburg in 1863, Jamie is in the entrenchment and Althea is trapped inside the city. As the endless days and nights of bombardment unfold, the two cousins struggle to make peace with the past and to cope with the present. *Ghosts of Vicksburg* is the compelling story of two young people struggling to find their way during one of the most dramatic campaigns of the Civil War.

This book contains a period map, photos and illustrations, author's note, glossary of historical terms, and list of additional resources.

August, 1862

Near Corinth, Mississippi

Jamie swallowed hard as sudden perspiration beaded on his forehead. Drat this fog! He was lost. The suffocating gray mist obscured any landmark. And concealed whatever—whoever—was making the hairs on the back of his neck stand erect.

He stood still, clenching his Union Army-issued rifle, and strained to hear the faint sound again. He'd never known that dense fog not only cloaked sight, but muffled hearing as well. Fog like this was rare in northern Wisconsin,



where he'd mostly grown up. He was not a stranger to Mississippi; he'd spent every sultry summer near Vicksburg, visiting cousins. But his slight knowledge of the terrain only made his skin prickle. Mississippi was home to more than the Confederates who'd run him through with a bayonet if they got the chance. Mississippi slithered and crawled and buzzed with creatures unknown in the cool dry forests back home, all just as dangerous as the enemy soldiers.

Jamie hated picket duty. Hated it. Tromping a lonely line in the wee hours of night, while his pards snored safely in their tiny tents, tied his belly in knots. But this choking dark fog—this was the worst yet. One wrong step and he'd lost sight of the last Union campfire. A careful step back in what he thought was the right direction had not provided the comforting glimmer he craved of his army. Nor another step, or another. Now he was hopelessly lost. Was he two steps away from the Union encampment? Half a mile? His best pard Elisha slept like the dead, and wouldn't wake to wonder why Jamie hadn't returned when expected.

The damp night smelled of rotting vegetation. The 14th Wisconsin Regiment had skirted a slimy maze of bayous and swamps before making camp. Wetness oozed through the seams in Jamie's army brogans.

A tiny splash pricked the night. What direction had it come from? Goosebumps rose on his skin.

Then a breath of damp air brought the sound of a voice. The snatch of words were unintelligible. But they were unmistakably Southern. He'd spent too many hours arguing with his cousin Althea to mistake that drawl.

"Who's there?" Jamie demanded, his voice ripping open the night.
"Who goes there?"

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Silence. Heart thumping, Jamie eased the rifle to his shoulder. Eased back the hammer with a trembling finger. Gritted his teeth. Waited.

Crack! A footfall snapped a stick.

And then the night exploded.

What Others Are Saying

Winner of the Arthur Tofte Juvenile Fiction Book Award
— **Council for Wisconsin Writers**

"A first-rate book."

— **Lance J. Herdegen**, Author of *The Men Stood Like Iron:
How the Iron Brigade Won Its Name*

"Ernst realistically shows us the sorrow, hatred, agony, and confusion that the War Between the States caused"

— **BookPage**

"An especially recommended addition to school and community libraries."

— **Midwest Book Review**

"...a heartwarming, intense book..."

— **Civil War Book Review**

Ghosts of Vicksburg is available as a paperback book from local independent bookstores as well as from Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, and other national vendors that sell books. Signed and personalized copies can be acquired directly from the author, Kathleen Ernst. For more information, click on http://www.kathleernerst.com/book_ghosts_vicksburg.php