

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



Preview of *Caroline's Battle*

Caroline Abbott: An American Girl – Book Five

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Caroline's papa has barely returned home before frightening news arrives—British warships are headed for Sackets Harbor, ready to attack. Every able-bodied man, including Papa, must go and fight. Mama and Caroline are left alone to guard Abbott's Shipyard from the enemy. Caroline tells herself she will do *anything* to keep Papa's shipyard safe! But when the battle seems to be lost, Mama gives her a terrible order: They must burn the shipyard to the ground to keep it from the enemy. It's the one thing Caroline isn't sure she can do.

Chapter One – Signal Guns!

Caroline Abbott tiptoed out of her house and closed the door behind her as silently as she could. It was hard to be quiet when she wanted to shout her good news from the rooftop! She hurried to the front gate and looked up and down the lane, hoping to see someone she knew passing by. Since America had gone to war with Great Britain, soldiers and sailors had flooded into the little village of Sackets Harbor, New York, and the lane was often bustling. Now, though, not a soul was in sight.

It's a fine May day, Caroline thought, and I have no one to celebrate with! Just when she was afraid she might burst, she spotted her neighbor coming outside with a market basket over her arm. Caroline slipped out the gate and raced after the plump woman. "Mrs. Shaw!" she called. "*Mrs. Shaw!*"

Mrs. Shaw turned and waited for Caroline to join her. "Gracious, Caroline," Mrs. Shaw said sternly. "It isn't seemly for young ladies to race about—"



"Papa is home!" Caroline cried. She was ready to take her neighbor's arm and dance a jig! The British had captured Caroline's papa a year earlier and taken him to a fort in Upper Canada, across Lake Ontario. For many long months, Caroline and Mama hadn't heard a word from him.

Mrs. Shaw stared at her with wide eyes. "Heaven be praised," she whispered. "Did the British release him after all this time?"

"No, he escaped!" Caroline bounced on her toes. "He got away last autumn, but he broke his leg in the wilderness and couldn't travel all winter. He's been making his way here ever since spring came. I found him at his old fishing camp! And I helped him walk home last night."

Mrs. Shaw gave Caroline a quick hug. "Is he well?"

"He hasn't had enough to eat," Caroline told her. "And he needs to rest. He's sleeping now." Grandmother had sent Caroline outside to make sure Papa could *continue* sleeping, actually, but Caroline didn't think Mrs. Shaw needed to know that.

Mrs. Shaw pulled out a handkerchief and wiped tears from her eyes. "I had given up hope," she admitted.

"I never did," Caroline said stoutly. It had been terribly hard to wait and wonder for so many months, but she had never lost hope.

"Well," Mrs. Shaw said, "you tell your father that I will bake a pie to welcome him home."

Caroline grinned. "I'll tell him," she promised.

Once Mrs. Shaw was on her way, Caroline tried to use up some of her bubbling energy by hoeing weeds in the garden. She and Grandmother had planted seeds earlier in the spring, and tidy rows of tiny green seedlings marched across the soil. *Papa will eat some of those carrots and those peas!* Caroline thought happily. It felt like a miracle to have him home.



Hours seemed to pass before the kitchen door opened and Mama stepped outside. Caroline dropped the hoe and darted over to join her. "Is Papa awake?" she asked.

Mama smiled. "He is. After a good meal and a hot bath last night, he slept soundly. He's already looking much better. He's coming downstairs for breakfast."

Caroline bounced on her toes again. "May I sit with him?"

"Garden chores can wait," Mama agreed. She smiled and kissed the top of Caroline's head. "Let's go inside."

Caroline, Mama, Grandmother, and Papa lingered at the kitchen table as he ate breakfast. Caroline was grateful that Mrs. Hathaway and her daughters, who boarded in the Abbotts' home, had kindly gone out to visit friends. "Your family needs a bit of privacy," Mrs. Hathaway had said.

Caroline sat on the bench next to Papa. *He's home*, she thought over and over. *Papa is home!*

"It does me more good than I can say to find my family well," Papa said. He finished a second biscuit. "But—I've been afraid to ask—what has happened to the shipyard?"

"Abbott's Shipyard is doing a brisk business," Mama told him.

"It is?" Papa blinked, as if that was far better news than he'd expected. "I feared that once the war began, no one would order any new ships. I imagined I would find the shipyard closed and silent, and all the workers gone."

Grandmother chuckled. "You have a pleasant surprise waiting!"

Caroline's Battle is available as a hardcover or softcover book from independent bookstores as well as from American Girl, Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, and other vendors. Personalized, signed copies can be acquired directly from the author, Kathleen Ernst. For details, click on http://www.kathleenernst.com/book_carolines_battle.php.