



The Women of Magnolia

Marlene Mitchell

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In the mid eighteen hundreds, Mississippi was one of the richest states in the union. The wealthy plantation owners enjoyed an opulent life during this golden age of prosperity. The Vine family owned one of these vast plantations. Hundreds of acres of lush cotton plants covered their property and was home to over three hundred slaves. When Evan Vine's father dies suddenly he is summoned home from France to manage Vine Manor: a task that he does not relish. It is only when he meets Mary Elizabeth Cates that his life changes forever. She returns his love and accepts his proposal of marriage. As a wedding gift he presents her with a magnificent summer home called Magnolia. Mary Elizabeth begins the legacy of women who inhabit Magnolia. In this novel written in a unique style, you will meet and explore the lives of Mary Elizabeth Vine, her daughter; Hallie Vine Simmons, and granddaughters; Mary and Lydia. You will meet the prostitutes who come to Magnolia to seek refuge and the black slave women who have endured the wrath of their masters. Their compelling story will endear itself to you in the detailed profile of the women. Witness the early years when life is good, only to change at a moment's notice by an outbreak of cholera or a slave uprising. There are the middle years when the civil war tears apart the south leaving tragedy and desolation in its path. Finally, the restoration when everyone attempts to find a new life.a new life at Magnolia.

The Women of Magnolia Details

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Melodie says

The Women of Magnolia revolves around a group of women before, during and after the Civil War. Magnolia is the name of the estate they lived in on the Mississippi coast. At its heart, it is a romance. And I found it interesting and important that one of the romances was a biracial relationship. I have wondered through all that I have read about the Civil War and its aftermath just how many of these relationships existed, thrived and/or survived the volatile racial climate that was the South during and after the Civil War. The women in the story were realistically portrayed with all their virtues, prejudices and foibles in full display. I easily identified with the characters and their individual stories.

I really enjoyed this story. I felt like it dragged a little in places and skimmed over others especially toward the end of the book.

Melissa says

Overall I enjoyed The Women of Magnolia. The first part of the book shares the background information of the characters who end up at The Magnolia House. The first part was not the best read. Too much happens within a paragraph, or even a sentence. However, the second part makes up for it! So don't stop reading. I found myself wanting Aden, a quarter slave living the life of a white man, and Hallie, the widow whose husband survived the Civil War and reunited with his family to be murdered by renegades, to fall in love. Through years of additional turmoil, Aden and Hallie find happiness again. I wanted the ending to be different than what is was. But it works for the story.

Pam says

The Women of Magnolia is by Marlene Mitchell. It takes place in pre-Civil War Mississippi and Ohio as well as during the Civil War and during post-civil war construction. It follows one family as they do the best they can to survive. It has many humorous sections as well as very sad ones. It is a great book of Southern Mississippi life.

Evan Vine was the heir of Vine Manor as he was the only child. He would rather forfeit the Manor and the Southern plantation life for a life in France. He lived there after graduating from college and loved every moment of it. He was a shy boy and a loner as he grew up in Mississippi. He stayed away from all social engagements that he could. He never quite grasped the social grace of other young plantation men. He covered up his lack of grace with arrogance. He was uncomfortable with Southern women who were after nothing but marriage and a successful one. Life in France kept him from always being identified as belonging to the Vine family of Vine Manor. He was happy in France but left when he received a letter telling of his father's illness. Unfortunately, his father died before he got home and now he was the owner of the plantation and the slaves.

He really didn't want to run the plantation and he didn't like having slaves although he saw the need for them. He purchased his first slaves as personal servants. He purchased Nona and her husband Jasper and they became his loyal servants and friends.

His life changed again when he hosted a friend of his father's from Charleston. Alston Handmaker wanted to visit and to purchase Vine Manor. He came with his wife and her niece from England. Mary Elizabeth Cates

was quite unusual and she didn't always follow the rules of society. She didn't intentionally break them, she just got involved with other things. She was talkative where Evan was silent, lively where he was a little dull, and didn't always follow the rules. She was a perfect match for Evan and stayed when her uncle left. They married and he gave her Magnolia, a place on the coast of Mississippi for a wedding gift.

What was their life to be like now that the clouds of war threatened? What would Magnolia mean to the family? What would happen to the family?

Mallory Moran says

An excellent story

I purchased this book due to my deep love of the history of south during the 1800s. While I found some parts of the story to be a little far-fetched for the time period in which the novel takes place, I still found it captivating.

Also, the grammar-Nazi in me found a few grammatical errors, mostly with punctuation and accept- except mix ups. I was able to overlook them because I was so engrossed in the story, and think all but the most strict of high school English teachers will be able to as well.

Gigi Williams says

I don't even know where to begin with this story. I know I've said it before, but this is definitely my FAVORITE yet in the 19th Century genre. The characters are so well written, they are on my mind frequently throughout my day. I would have proudly stood beside Hallie and defended Vine Manor and Magnolia faithfully. Sometimes it hard to fathom all the hardships and triumphs this family can have. My momma is currently reading it. She started Tuesday (this is Thursday) and she's over 50% done. With the quilt that has all her free time tied up, it appears she can't put it down. lol

Jenna says

Don't be fooled by the cover of The Women of Magnolia. At times, this book was sweet and idyllic and then it would become harsh and almost disturbing. The narration went back and forth like that the entire novel! Overall, it was an enjoyable and interesting read, although it could stand a good editing.

Kathi says

I wasn't sure I was going to finish this book. The first half was way too fluffy and simple for me; I was expecting something deeper and with more well developed characters. The story jumped ahead several times with no explanation of the intervening years. However, I persevered and when the author introduced a completely new story line at the halfway point, I became more interested and wondered how she was going to tie in the new characters and story to the earlier part of the book. The tie-in was a surprise (I hate when I

can figure out what's going to happen way too early in the book); however, the ending was predictable. I'd have preferred a surprise there, as well. Overall I enjoyed the book. I read this right after reading "The Kitchen House" by Katheen Grissom (see my review), which really sucked me in and affected me deeply. Perhaps if I would have read this book first, I'd have enjoyed it more.

Tamika Small-Clough says

The ending sucked

Some characters were unnecessary but I persevered. Just when the story was coming to nice turn of events it ended...we are left to assume things I would rather be spelled out. what happened when she got to Tahiti. did she get a welcome from Adens son, did Aden have another lover? I guess the answer is yes and no...I guess...the book had good bones but needed good editing.

Renee says

When I first started this book, I wondered if I would even finish it. The writing was mediocre at best. No beautiful prose, no searing character study, no quirky lyrical southern literature....I begin to think it is possible that I secretly like these "simple" stories. Hey, at least it's not a bodice ripper, haha.

I found myself staying up late to read this book, and ultimately really enjoying the entire thing. This book is more about the story and plot, than any literary masterpiece. If the reader can forgive the sometimes obvious writing, following along with the story can be engrossing.

The book has a good cast of characters. The black slaves are not anymore stereotyped than in other books of this nature. Probably a bit rose-colored overall, but not as unbelievable as The Help (which I was decidedly ambivalent about). The Vine family was likeable, somewhat believable, the supporting character stories were probably some of my favorite parts, especially Lola's story.

The main plot focuses on the Vine family, their life as rich plantation owners, their part in the civil war, and what they go through to rebuild their lives after the war. I identified mostly with the fact that the book focused on the women of the family. I was also surprised, and pleased, to see the women who make the choice to become "courtesans" (read: prostitutes) were treated as real women - not just sluts (and therefore villainized throughout).

The ending had some unbelievable parts... but, as this is ultimately what I would consider a book for women, I cannot really see how it could have turned out any different.

All in all - for \$2.99 from Amazon, I am not disappointed in the least.

LaSonya says

Don't know what it was with this book. Seems like the first part of it was interesting and from that point on, it became tedious to try and finish even though I continued with it so much so that I literally had to push

through the last chapters. Good try but not as good as Silent Voices, in my opinion.

Debbi says

I really enjoyed this book but then I am a sucker for books about the old south and during the Civil War period. The story is about three generations of the family's women and takes place before, during, and after the Civil War. It was a good read even with a couple of plot twists in the second half that had me wondering for awhile.

Trudy says

Well this story claimed most of my weekend. Eventhough the writing was fair, the story was very good and I couldn't wait to see how all the different story lines would connect. However, there was a point where I almost stopped reading. The author's characterization of one of the slaves was almost offensive to me. Once again, I decided to accept this as a work of fiction and move on. If not for this, I would have given this book four stars.

Stephanie says

This book needed both a proofreader and a copy editor.

Dee Dee says

I didn't think I was going to like this book when I first started. It took place in the south pre and post civil war. I especially liked Aden's story, who's grandmother was captured in Africa and sold into slavery. Raped by a white man and gave birth to a baby girl. At fifteen her daughter got pregnant by the plantation owner and gave birth to Aden. Aden being only one quarter black, looked white. He becomes educated and excepted as a white man. The Magnolia house was a refuge to those who were trying to survive post war struggles. I wish I could give it 3 1/2 stars. Lots of feminine courage!

Laura says

Though Ms. Mitchell could've benefited from a better editor (grammatical and spelling errors) the story itself was so enchanting. I kept wanting to know what would happen to each of the characters and their descendants and I felt their pain and loss. Great story and the price for kindle was even better!
