



# The Wartime Sisters

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## **The Wartime Sisters** Lynda Cohen Loigman

Two estranged sisters, raised in Brooklyn and each burdened with her own shocking secret, are reunited at the Springfield Armory in the early days of WWII. While one sister lives in relative ease on the bucolic Armory campus as an officer's wife, the other arrives as a war widow and takes a position in the Armory factories as a "soldier of production." Resentment festers between the two, and secrets are shattered when a mysterious figure from the past reemerges in their lives.

## **The Wartime Sisters Details**

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Author : Lynda Cohen Loigman

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## From Reader Review *The Wartime Sisters* for online ebook

Melissa says

**\*3.5 stars\***

Although marketed as WWII fiction, readers looking to satisfy their craving for a historically rich storyline should think twice. The composition of the *The Wartime Sisters* is much more women's fiction than anything else. Sibling rivalry the focus of the shot, while the war itself remains a mere blur in the background.

Through her lens, Lynda Cohen Loigman captures the dynamics that often haunt sisters—namely the resentment, jealousy and feelings of inadequacy that have the tendency to creep in when comparisons are made.

From the moment of her little sister Millie's arrival, Ruth is blinded by jealousy. Considered the uber-smart and dowdy of the two Jewish girls, Ruth spends their childhood holding other people's appraisals of Millie's beauty against her. As the years pass, Ruth's resentment only grows, perpetuated by her mother's insistence that Millie will one day marry well. More than anything else though, it's the unprovoked attention Millie garners from men that creates the biggest rift. Ruth allows her own insecurities to dictate her approach with Millie.

It's not only Ruth who struggles with feelings of inadequacy. Being seen as little more than a pretty face leaves Millie feeling unintelligent. Connecting with people comes easily, except where her sister is concerned. Ruth's stern nature and judgment are a constant in their relationship. Left parentless and devoid of a sisterly connection, it's no wonder Millie falls into the arms of someone less than deserving.

Fast forward to 1942—with her husband now gone, and a young son to take care of—Millie decides to take Ruth up on her offer. One that entails moving from Brooklyn, New York to Springfield, Massachusetts to join Ruth—now an officer's wife—at the armory. Having been estranged for five years, neither sisters is sure how the arrangement will work.

In her *Author's Note*, Lynda Cohen Loigman explains her inspiration behind the story—mainly the armory and the real life accounts of those who worked there during the war. The Springfield armory provides the backdrop for much of this story but it's far from pivotal; there is little else that plays into the WWII aspect. Meaning, this story could have taken place *anywhere*, during *any* time period. So again, if historical fiction is what you're after, I'd suggest looking elsewhere.

The author is successful at capturing the heart-wrenching internal struggles that both sisters grapple with. Where I think she misses the mark a bit is in solidifying Ruth and Millie's connection in the end. Loigman's big chance to right the wrongs and ultimately bring the sisters together feels inadequate somehow. The ending would have been more redemptive had she injected a strong heart-to-heart—something deeper and meaningful shared between the two. Sadly, the friendships forged along the way felt more sincere than anything that transpired between Millie and Ruth.

Despite my lack of emotional investment, I liked the story. The historical aspects are absent, but a noteworthy takeaway lurks—*never make assumptions about what someone else is thinking or feeling, chances are you have no idea.*

*\*Thank you to St. Martin's Press for sending a copy my way.*

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## Erin says

3.5 stars

**Thanks to NetGalley and St. Martin's Press for an e-Arc in exchange for an honest review.**

My sixth WWII era narrative featuring strong female protagonists in a two week period and suprisingly I don't seem to be tiring. In *The Wartime Sisters*, I found myself on the Home Front, specifically in Springfield Mass, at the Armory campus. The sisters in question are Ruth and Millie, two Jewish girls from Brooklyn that act more like high school rivals than sisters. Both women bounce back in time to their upbringing and the present, showing readers all the reasons for their estrangement. Sandwiched in between these narratives are chapters led by armory cook, Arietta, and Lillian, the wife of a Colonel. Both of these women also give us insights into the Ruth and Millie relationship and had interesting back stories as well.

My rating of 3.5 stars is at the forefront an echo of many other reviewers including my Goodreads pals, Melissa and Martie. *The Wartime Sisters* feels more in the women's fiction category than in the historical fiction. Although Millie has a job at the armoury, Lynda Cohen Loigman doesn't really get into the details of Millie's work. Secondly, I grew really weary of Ruth and felt that little Elsa chick needed to visit her and sing "Let It Go." So your sister was born better

looking- GET OVER IT and work on your UGLY HEART. Although books like this are important because as much as we hear about everyone doing their part for the war effort, it's a human story that even during times of war- people can be petty.

All in all, a good addition to the growing library of WWII era tales.

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## Esil says

I can be a real suck when it comes to books and movies. Crank up the emotions, and the tears start flowing. *The Wartime Sisters* had that impact on me. The writing isn't special and the plot is a bit predictable, but the story and the characters got to me and had me all choked up. The story is set in the 1930s and 40s, focusing on sisters Ruth and Millie. Ruth is older and jealous of her younger sister's good looks and more endearing personality. It turns out that being the younger good looking sister is no walk in the park for Millie. Part of the story takes place in Brooklyn in the 1930s when the girls are in their late teens living with their parents. The other part takes place several years later when Ruth and Millie live in Summerfield, Massachusetts, working at the armoury during the war. I don't want to say too much about the plot, because there are a number of buried secrets that are revealed as the story progresses. This wasn't a literary masterpiece, but it had me fully engaged and the way the author deals with her characters' emotions is not trifling or simplistic. People can be horribly cruel, spiteful and self centered, and people can be generous and gain strength through friendship and empathy. This book runs the gamut of those emotions and behaviours. The tears are welling again... Thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for an opportunity to read an advance copy.

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## **Diane S ? says**

Two sisters, discrimination that begins in the home, and how this affects their relationship in the future. Ruth, the elder, responsible, smart but convinced she was dull looking, and the younger Millie, the beauty of the family, expected to make a brilliant marriage.

The Armory in Springfield, the 1940s, where the sisters will once again find themselves in the same place . WWI, and almost half of those working in the armory on the manufacturing assembly lines. Many for the first time find themselves head of their households, jobs, children, now their sole responsibility. The atmosphere and tone of this novel does an excellent job drawing the reader into this time period. The story follows the two sisters, but also two other interesting women also at the armory, though their positions are very different. We see as the women, the two sisters grow and change. Grow stronger within themselves, and come together in a very different way from the past.

The author's note shows how true to life she portrayed life at the armory during this time, though changing a few dates to benefit her story. I enjoyed reading about this time, the changes that occurred, the differences this made in the women's lives. A strong story, with a strong historical background.

ARC from St. Martin's Press.

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## **Liz says**

What a great start to my 2019 reading!

As an only child whose husband brought four daughters to the marriage, I am fascinated by sibling dynamics. How can those with the same set of genes and family setting turn out so different? So kudos to Loigman for doing such a great job of capturing the dynamics and sibling rivalries. Also for capturing how the way we are treated by parents works to harden our opinions of siblings and affects our own future family dynamics.

Within pages, Ruth had captured my heart. She seemed like my twin. Steady, disciplined and composed, happiest with a book in her hand. "The more responsible Ruth proved to be, the more it was held against her." Her sister, Millie, on the other hand, is forgiven all her faults because of her beauty and "sensitive nature".

So, it was interesting when the next chapter switched to Millie's POV and I found her equally sympathetic. Loigman doesn't play favorites, she wants you to understand and appreciate both.

In addition to Ruth and Millie, we meet Arietta and Lillian. Each character is fully fleshed out. The women all have secrets. The book keeps your interest as it moves from one to the other of the four women. Loigman captures the times, the social chasms and the prejudices perfectly. Set during WWII, you totally feel the time and place. Make sure to read the Author's Note, which does a wonderful job explaining the historical significance of the Springfield Armory. An enjoyable read that I can recommend.

My thanks to netgalley and St. Martin's Press for an advance copy of this book.

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## Bkwmlee says

4.5 stars

2019 hasn't started off too well for me, as I've been sick since the end of December and have been dealing with some issues at home the past few days -- all that plus the usual "busy-ness" with work and a bunch of other things going on in my life -- have managed to put me in a not-so-pleasant mood as of late. Whenever I encounter these types of "dark periods" in my life, I turn to books as my solace, as the one source that allows me to escape from my problems, even if only briefly, and immerse myself into another world entirely. In keeping with the goal I set for myself this year to make a stronger effort with staying on top of my ARC list, I picked up Lynda Cohen Loigman's sophomore novel *The Wartime Sisters* to read, though given my mood, I will admit that I was a bit apprehensive with this choice, as I knew from reading the brief synopsis that the story would be set during the WWII time period, so I was expecting an emotional, heart-wrenching read that would leave me feeling even more sad and depressed. Fortunately, this book didn't turn out that way at all -- in fact, I found the story to be an uplifting one that actually helped brighten my mood a bit.

The story starts off with Ruth and Millie, estranged for 5 years, reuniting at an armory in Springfield, Massachusetts -- Ruth lives an idyllic life at the armory with her officer husband and twin girls while Millie, penniless and desperate, arrives there as a war widow with a young son. The sisters have a rocky relationship, harboring jealousy and resentment toward each other going back to their childhood growing up in Brooklyn, under the tutelage of parents who loved them but treated them very differently. There are also secrets, things that neither sister wants the other to find out, as it would put further strain on their relationship. In alternating chapters, we are taken back to the 1920s and 30s in Brooklyn, to the sisters' childhoods, and as the story evolves, we learn the many (and at times complicated) reasons why the two of them were driven so far apart. Interspersed between the sisters' narratives are those of Lillian, the wife of the armory's commanding officer, and Arietta, the cafeteria cook with a feisty personality and a previous career as a singer -- these two wonderful women became my favorite characters in the story.

I really enjoyed this excellent, well-written work of historical fiction that centered on strong yet flawed female characters, with a story that didn't have a lot of fanfare, but was still engaging and kept my attention from beginning to end. Though set during WWII, this was a story where the war played more of a periphery role to the main, in-depth, absorbing character-driven story of sibling rivalry and the impact of family dynamics in shaping both past and present, while at the same time, highlighting the importance of friendship and standing together in times of adversity, giving each other hope and the will to survive. The historical aspect was also well-depicted, as was the sense of time and place, both in the past timeline with the sisters growing up in Brooklyn as well as the present one with them living together again at the armory. I also enjoyed reading through the Author's Note at the end of the book and understanding the differences between the real life events and where liberties were taken in depicting armory life and other historical events.

In the way that this book portrayed strong women contributing to the war effort in their own ways through an ultimately uplifting, inspirational story, this reminded me of Jennifer Ryan's *The Chilbury Ladies' Choir*, which I had read 2 years ago and had enjoyed just as much. After finishing this book, I realized that Loigman is the same author who wrote *The Two-Family House*, which has been on my TBR for awhile and I even own a copy of the book, but never got the chance to read it -- looks like I should rectify this sooner rather than later!

## **Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says**

**This author is one of my favorites for depicting the nuances of sibling relationships. I have recommended her first book, *The Two-Family House*, to more people than any other book, and it has been received with so much love. I'm pleased to say I feel the same love for *The Wartime Sisters*!**

Two sisters, both raised in Brooklyn, are feeling the distance from one another. They each have burdens to carry when they meet up at the Springfield Armory just as World War II has begun.

One sister is an officer's wife and lives a relative easy-appearing life there on the Armory campus, while the other is a widow of the war and has to work on the production line in the Armory factories.

As one can imagine, that rivalry between sisters causes feelings to be hurt as their divide deepens, and also, as someone from their past comes back into both of their lives.

The heart of this story is the dynamic between these two sisters. It's Millie and Ruth's story above all else. The jealousy and swirl of other emotions is palpable, and anyone with a sibling can surely relate to some of those feelings we don't want to admit to. The historical backdrop with the Armory setting solidifies the plot.

Overall, *The Wartime Sisters* is a dynamic and intriguing story of sisters, second chances, and hopes for mending relationships. Once again, Lynda Cohen Loigman nails the nuances in these sibling relationships and delivers another engaging and emotional novel.

I received a complimentary copy. All opinions are my own.

My reviews can also be found on my blog: [www.jennifertarheelreader.com](http://www.jennifertarheelreader.com)

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## **Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says**

Sisters who didn't get along because of jealousy.

Sisters who didn't get along because of different ways of looking at things.

Sisters who just didn't get along or agree about anything.

Ruth and Millie were sisters who fit into those categories. Ruth was older and more reliable. Millie just couldn't focus on anything and was not reliable but earned the favor of their mother and could do no wrong in her eyes.

THE WARTIME SISTERS focuses on relationships between the sisters, between a mother and her

daughters, between other women, and on how everything affected their daily lives.

We follow Ruth and Millie from their childhood to the Springfield Armory in Massachusetts during WWII. We see the friction between the sisters during both time periods in their lives. Nothing had changed over the years for them.

THE WARTIME SISTERS held my interest because of the well developed characters. Each one had something interesting about themselves and something that truly added to the story line.

Lillian was a favorite character for me. She was very nurturing. Ruth was likeable, but a bit too strict and unforgiving. Millie was a bit pitiful because she knew she had made a bad mistake by marrying Lenny, but I liked her. Arietta was the best...I just loved her singing and her cooking.

Ms. Loigman's writing is very detailed and pulls you in with the beautiful way she has the words simply grab you.

When a small comment was slyly dropped in one of the chapters about a truth Ruth kept from Millie and then a truth Millie had kept from Ruth, the interest definitely was upped.

THE WARTIME SISTERS is a beautiful, warm, marvelously researched read.

A truly enjoyable book. 5/5

This book was given to me by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Elyse Walters says**

I finished this emotionally engrossing novel yesterday....a particular moment in history - against the backdrop of Springfield Armory in Massachusetts.

It's a wonderful novel that untethers within it the impact of universal forces: discrepancy of treatment in childhood/parental favoritism, family disharmony, self-esteem, resentments, rivalries, withheld communications, lies, betrayal, assumptions, secrets, friendships, marriage, motherhood, sisterhood, patriotism, ambition, desire, religious differences, jealousy, classism, loyalty, and love.

Ruth, invites Millie, (her sister who is 3 years younger), to bring her 2 year old child, Michael, to come live with her in Springfield. The sisters had been exchanging letters. It's how Ruth learned Millie was alone. Millie had once written Ruth that her husband, Lenny ( thought of as the 'bum' in the sister's mother's eyes), had enlisted many letters back - then a letter saying he was missing. A final letter saying he was gone. Not 'all' was the truth ( suggested beliefs lived)...but the news Ruth received from Millie opened her heart up ( just enough) to offer her sister & nephew an extra room in the house she shared with her husband Arthur and their twin girls, Alice and Louise ( 4years of age at the time). There were reasons the two sisters - both young mothers - had not seen each other - not once in 5 years. Their parents were dead - and there was much to worry about with the war.

Ruth and Millie grew up in Brooklyn, New York. They had nothing in common even as small children. Ruth was composed, disciplined, neat, enjoyed reading, and her studies. She was also insecure about herself - ( her



mother didn't offer an 'ounce' of help). Father was much more kind - yet didn't hold the power in their family.

Ruth was often frustrated - unhappy & socially lonely. Ruth's target of anger pointed toward her sister....usually unfairly.

Her mother, constantly highlighted Millie's physical beauty'. Ruth was aware of how critical her mother was of her.....yet Millie could do no wrong. Millie was actually sensitive too ...only nobody took interest in her 'feelings'. Mother had high dreams for her to marry a rich Prince. Ruth thought she should focus on education and work.

Ruth observations of her mother: (rather accurate):

"To their mother's discerning eye, Ruth's wrinkles were conspicuous. But her sisters stains were overlooked and hastily".

Lynda Cohen Loigman did an exceptional job portraying the complexities between Ruth and Millie during every stage of their development: early childhood, teenage years, and adult years as young mothers. I'm still thinking about their relationship—( the underline reasons for choices they made - appointed blame - shame-hurt - miss opportunities for years of closer bonding & understanding, etc.)

There are two other standout women in this book. It's no accident that Lynda wrote their characters the way she did. Inspiring contrasts - to 'both' Ruth and Millie.

These women 'must' be mentioned. - Their strength in this novel shines!!!

\*Lillian Walsh\*: Her husband, Patrick, was a commanding officer. They had 4 children.

Lillian was a community leader - She inspired the military wives to get involved. With men at the frontlines it became necessary for women to work in the factories. The manufacturing buildings were on the other side of the armory from the family homes.

One side of the armory was where more than 10 thousand civilians worked — the other side had manicured lawns, nice homes with ancient trees, tennis courts, and community swimming pool.

Until Lillian arrive - the wives with young children didn't work — even though there was childcare available for them at the factory. Most of them spent their time exchanging recipes, gossiping, boasting about their children, complaining about their husbands, - and none of them followed the news or read a book.

Lillian changed things!!! They put together packages for children overseas - clothes & supplies - started a book club - held concerts - etc. Lillian's background is sad - parts of it - yet she demonstrates what's valuable in life and what's not. She's my personal favorite character.

The other inspiring female is Arietta Benevetto- Her story is awesome and she's such a 'love'. She cooks. She sings... makes killer yummy macaroni and cheese - and to die for lasagna. Most - she's a great friend.

The Springfield Armory in Massachusetts depended on women workers during WWII. We take childcare services for granted today at large corporations- but childcare during this period of history was relatively new and grew out of need. The great thing is - most woman-after WWII, realized they had other options other than just being a stay at home mother. They could work for a living while day nurseries provided for their children.

It was a thriving community for women at the Armory. A joy stepping back in time.

As for the men - you'll meet a few worth reflecting on.

Mr. Schmuck - ( not his real name)—but you'll figure out 'which' male I'm referring to soon enough, makes for great storytelling drama!

Great character development- and a marvelous satisfying story!

Thank you St. Martin's  
Thank You Lynda.... \* congratulations on this wonderful book!!!

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## Crumb says

### **Complex Relationships and Secrets Abound..**

*Beware, turbulence ahead... (Cue Jaws Theme) ?*

**This ride is going to get a little bumpy, ya'll!**

***A historically accurate representation of a WWII armory and what life is like for those working there .</i> </b>***

What's interesting about this story is there is a war obviously being fought and is referred to frequently in the peripherals. With that being said, the ultimate war is the one being fought between Millie and Ruth. Millie and Ruth are sisters who have always had a contemptuous relationship. Ruth wants so desperately to have Millie's beauty and blames Millie for every relationship of hers that has foiled. In this book, we see the ebb and flow of Millie and Ruth's relationship. Secrets are revealed and trust is destroyed. The bonds of sisterhood are tested again and again.

I very much enjoyed discovering the reasons behind Millie and Ruth's fractured relationship. Whenever there is a book about familial relationships and secrets I am always going to dive right in. I thought it was interesting how the story unfolded throughout. This is definitely a testament to how strong the bond between sisters can be, even in the face of adversity. I would recommend this to anyone who enjoys a family drama with a splash of historical fiction blended within.

*I was given this as a courtesy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review*

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## Angela M says

There is so much to appreciate about this book. Lynda Cohen Loigman does a fabulous job of depicting the times about which she writes, and she has also created characters that the reader comes to know in depth, as their story and secrets are gradually revealed. Through multiple, alternating narratives, moving back and forth between two time frames and two places, the main focus of the story is on two sisters growing up in Brooklyn 1919-1932 and then ten years later to the present in Springfield, MA at an armory during the war. Ruth and Millie couldn't be any more different. Ruth is smart, steady, responsible and not blessed with the beauty of her younger sister Millie. It is this difference in their looks that is the basis for a rift between them that keeps them estranged for years. It isn't really the difference itself, but it's the different way they are treated by their parents. Millie, the beauty is more deserving in their eyes of making a wonderful marriage and having a perfect life while Ruth, no matter how well she does in school is not recognized as being deserving of the same perfect life. So of course, there is jealousy, resentment, things said and done and then secrets kept until they eventually come to the surface. At first it's very easy to feel for Ruth as she endures

embarrassment and hurt, but then it's hard not to like Millie, especially when we get a sense of who she is especially when she so lovingly takes care of a neighbor's children when the neighbor is dying of cancer.

While their lives have taken different paths and they have been estranged for years, circumstances bring Millie and her two year old son to Springfield to live with Ruth, her twin daughters and her husband who is an officer at the armory. Interspersed between the sister's narratives are the stories of two other women, Lillian, the wife of the commanding officer and Arietta, the cafeteria cook who also entertains with her singing. Both are wonderful characters with their own pasts that influence the relationship of the sisters when the past catches up with them. This is about how families and things that happen to us as children can have a significant impact on who we are, how friendship and caring of others makes such a big difference in people's lives. I don't want to forget the time in our history and the reflections on of how the war impacted men and women left on the home front and the role that many played as workers that we come to know at the Springfield Armory. This is a well written and developed story that held my interest from beginning to end .

I received an advanced copy of this book from St. Martin's Press.

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### **Marialyce says**

The book *The Wartime Sisters* is really a story about two girls raised in the same Jewish household where one has been treated differently than the other. One sister, Millie, seems favored over the other sister, Ruth, because she possesses looks, allure, and the mother's desire for her to marry up in society, while the other daughter is treated like she is not even a close second to being what her sister is. As you can imagine, this causes a huge chasm to open in the girls' relationship that carries them into their future with anger and resentment.

The girls grow and both marry, Ruth to a scientist assigned to the Springfield Armory, which was an actual place, established by George Washington in 1794. The other sister, Millie, marries as well, assigned to a life that is the exact opposite of what her parents wanted or wished for. Eventually, through fate, they wind up together based at the Springfield Armory where tensions seethed as they both learn the secrets and the duplicitous nature that each has.

This was not particularly a story of wartime, although there are some references to it. It is a story of how resentment grows and destroys relationships between siblings that should be solid and loving. It was a sad story for lost years, lost opportunities, and the harm at times a parent does in seeming to favor one child over another. Some can recover and form a familial relationship, while others continue to feel and live the great divide that exists between them. How these two sisters relate and perhaps resolve the things that have driven them apart over the years is what makes this book an engaging story.

Thank you to Lynda Cohen Loigman, St Martin's Press, and NetGalley for an advanced copy of this book due to be published on January 22, 2019.

My reviews can also be seen here: <http://yayareadslotsofbooks.wordpress...>

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### **Jennifer Blankfein says**

Grabbed me from page 1! Lynda Loigman knows how to tell a compelling, fast moving story...rich with realistic relationship complexities- sisters, parents, colleagues and friends... set at the Armory in Massachusetts in the 1940s. Loved it!

I loved Lynda Cohen Loigman's debut, *The Two Family House*, and she has written another emotional family story, this time taking place in Springfield, Massachusetts. Filled with detail and charm, she clearly knows how to use research to create an authentic atmosphere in her latest novel, *The Wartime Sisters*. Her fully formed characters seemed like real people to me, and thanks to her skilled storytelling, and unique use of music to create scenes, I felt like I was living at the Springfield Armory during the war.

This is a story of sisters. Ruth is the older, smart one; she likes to read and do math. Not a looker, but is capable and given responsibility in the family. Millie is three years younger, gets away with everything, and receives all the attention because she is the pretty one. Now adults, parents gone, Millie has a young son and her husband has gone off to war. She cannot support herself and her boy so they go to live at the armory with her older sister Ruth and her family. Ruth has two children and works at the armory, and her husband is an officer and has gone off to war. Bad blood and secrets between the sisters linger while they learn to co-exist at the armory, but with the tragedy of war and loss, and the importance of family, the gift of time often heals wounds.

Music was an important part of this book, and Lynda Cohen Loigman shares:

#### HOW MUSIC HELPED TO SHAPE THE WARTIME SISTERS

Early on in my research, I read a line in a book about the Springfield Armory that mentioned an opera singer who worked as a cook at the Armory cafeteria. When I read this line, I knew I wanted to create a character like that – a woman who would work behind the stove preparing food for the factory workers, but who would have another, more creative and outgoing side to her. From that one line (and a lot of subsequent research), I shaped the character of Arietta. She is the daughter of an Italian immigrant, a former vaudeville singer who performed in theatres owned by Sylvester Poli in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Unlike Arietta, Sylvester Poli was a real person – an immigrant himself, and the owner of several vaudeville theatres throughout the northeast. He started in New Haven, and built his theater empire from there.

In the story, Arietta has a big personality and an even bigger heart. She is a wonderful friend and support for Millie, and very protective of her.

I had the best time listening to 1940's music, trying to come up with the songs I wanted to include in my story for Arietta to sing. My favorite was a song called "A Pair of Silver Wings," originally performed by Kay Kaiser, and later sung by Dinah Shore.

One of the pivotal scenes in *The Wartime Sisters* takes place during a concert that was held on the Armory grounds, put on by the Victory Parade of Spotlight Bands radio show. This scene was modeled on a real concert that occurred at the Armory in September of 1943. Benny Goodman performed for a crowd of thousands on Armory Hill, and the radio show was broadcast throughout the country.

Of course, in my version, I had to move the date slightly, and also make sure that Arietta had the opportunity to perform. The last song she sings at my fictional concert is one that helped to shape my character, Lenny. It's called "Why Don't You Do Right," and Peggy Lee recorded it with Benny Goodman in 1942. It has a particularly haunting and almost ominous melody, perfect for my scene. There were so many additional

songs I wanted to include, but I was only able to add a few more to the story. I hope you enjoy them, and I hope you get a chance to listen to them too!

Research is a huge part of writing a novel and here Lynda shares:

#### THE RABBIT HOLE OF RESEARCH – BALANCING THE “HISTORICAL” WITH THE “FICTION”

Immersing myself in research can be tremendously rewarding. But after a while, there is a fine line (at least for me) between research and procrastination. I could research forever, and never stop to develop my characters or think about my plot. In many ways, knowing when to stop is the most difficult skill to develop.

In researching *The Wartime Sisters*, my goal was to create an accurate picture of daily life at the Springfield Armory, from the perspective of both the residents and the workers. I spoke many times with the curator of the Armory museum to try to get all of the details right. But there were two questions that gnawed at me, for which I couldn't find answers. At the end of the day, one of the answers mattered, and one really didn't. And I had to force myself to let go of the question that I knew wasn't going to further my story.

The question that mattered had to do with the Armory's "On To Victory" dance that occurred in February of 1943. There was an article about the dance in the Armory Newsletter, full of photographs and all kinds of information about the evening. I learned how many tickets were sold, the refreshments that were served, and the name of all the musicians and entertainers who performed. There were detailed photos of various people in attendance so I could see what they were wearing. I read about the war bond raffle and the jitterbug contest. There was, however, one crucial piece of information missing: the article didn't mention where the dance was held. The curator of the museum had no idea, and neither of us could believe that the venue wasn't mentioned in any of the articles we found. Finally, after seeking additional help from the Springfield Museums, we found the answer through a ticket advertisement in an old edition of *The Springfield Republican*. The dance had been held at the Springfield Auditorium.

Knowing the location was crucial to getting the description correct in my story. I wanted to be able to picture the hall, to see where one character stood and where another stopped to rest her feet. I wanted to know what it was like to enter the venue, to walk up the auditorium steps, and to set foot inside. This was a piece of information very worth the time and energy that went into its discovery.

At another point, however, I became fixated on a historical detail that wasn't nearly as relevant. For whatever reason, I became obsessed with learning how it was that armory residents received their mail. They didn't have mailboxes, so where was it delivered? Was there a separate mail room? Mail slots in the doors? I never found the answer, and the curator couldn't help me. Ultimately, I had to let go of that small detail. I knew in my heart that writing about the specific path of a letter from the post office to the postman to my character's hands wasn't going to move my plot along. And, to be honest, it probably wasn't going to be interesting for readers either.

So, there you have it – two tiny mysteries, but only one solved. The mail question continued to bother me for a while, but I forced myself to stop thinking about it. Instead, I focused on my writing and the contents of that letter I had been worrying about. Ultimately, what the letter said about my character was much more important than how it got delivered.

Writing historical fiction is not an easy task, the research alone is endless and the commitment to accuracy seems like it could be a draining process. I admire Lynda and so many others who put in the time to write such wonderful, creative and fulfilling stories, creating opportunity to learn about a specific time in history.

## Christine says

4.5 stars rounded to 5 stars

I have not read many historical fiction books, but I picked up *The Family House*, Linda Cohen Loigman's debut novel, a couple of years ago basically on a lark. I was surprised by how much I loved it. Since that time I have been more open to historical fiction reads. When I heard Ms. Loigman had completed her second novel I ran to Net Galley to see if it might be there, and lo and behold it was. I grabbed it immediately.

Like her first book, this one is set in the 1930s and 1940s. Again the protagonistic family is Jewish with roots in Brooklyn. *The Wartime Sisters* is written from the point of view of four women: very different and estranged sisters Ruth and Millie; Lillian, the wife of a commanding officer; and Arietta, the singing armory cook. At the crux of the story is the relationship between Ruth and Millie from their childhood through young adulthood. The timeline goes back and forth, but is easy to follow. I found the main characters to be very well written; the reader really gets to know them.

The tale is almost totally character-driven. There are no battle scenes or European settings though WW II is underway. The setting for the most part, however, is military as much of the story takes place at the Armory factories in Springfield, Massachusetts. Though I loved the plotline involving the four women, I was just as impressed by Ms. Loigman's portrayal of life on the homefront. As I read the intriguing details of the composition of the armory setting and life on the base, in my mind I was congratulating the author on the thoroughness of and the spirit she brings to the book with her research. After reading the acknowledgements it is clear how extensive her research is. I read books for the feelings they give me. If I learn something in the process, as I did with this book, the novel is even more special.

My one tiny complaint is that the story wrapped up a little too quickly for me. I wanted more time to savor the ending.

If I had to compare Ms. Loigman's writing with someone else's, I think of Diane Chamberlain. She's that good. I have added this author to my growing list of those I wish to read everything they write. I also thank Ms. Loigman (along with Kristin Hannah) for kindling my desire to read more historical fiction. I strongly recommend *The Wartime Sisters* to all historical fiction fans and everyone else looking for a wonderfully written character-driven novel.

Thank you St. Martin's Press for inviting me to read an advanced reader's copy of this novel. Thanks too to Net Galley for supplying the ARC and to Ms. Loigman. Opinions are mine alone and are unbiased in any way.

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## Katie B says

World War 2 historical fiction is a genre I just keep coming back to especially when it features strong female characters. While the war and military community in Springfield, Massachusetts certainly are parts of this

story, the main focus is on female relationships particularly the one between sisters Ruth and Millie.

I was hooked from the very beginning as you really sympathized with Ruth and how she felt like she was the "lesser" sister. But because the story switched back and forth between Ruth and Millie's perspectives it was also easy to relate to Millie. Throughout the book whether you agreed or not with some of the choices the women made, you could at least understand their motivations. This might seem like such a simple thing, but I've had some bad luck recently with books with underdeveloped characters, so this was a breath of fresh air.

I'll admit I wasn't as interested in the story lines of the other women featured in the book. While Lillian and Arietta were each given a backstory, to me they just came off as a little too perfect. I think I just gravitated more towards the sisters who had flaws but were much easier to relate to. I do think though the author nailed the camaraderie that exists on military bases as well as some of the backbiting that goes on. Grace Peabody might seem like some horrible caricature but in my experience as a military spouse there really is at least a few of those gossipy, cruel types on every base. Thankfully, there are also the mother hen type of people like Lillian who make everyone feel welcome.

Despite this being a book with some drama, it was really a relaxing read. The type of book you curl up with on the sofa with a blanket and some tea and just enjoy. I loved how the author included a note about the history of the Springfield Armory and her process in writing the book. Definitely recommend even to those who feel like they have read too many historical books about World War 2. The real strength of this book is the female relationships.

Thank you to St. Martin's Press for sending me an advance readers copy! I was under no obligation to post a review and all views expressed are my honest opinion.

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