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The Prescott Girls - A Letter from Philadelphia

Historical Fiction Inspired by Real Samplers from
1830s Maine

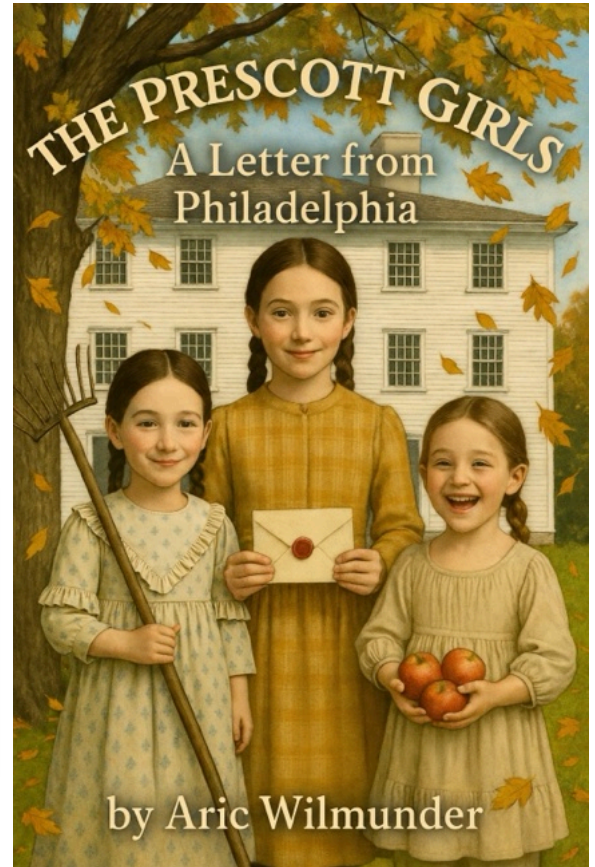
Genre: **Middle-Grade Historical Fiction**

Recommended Age: **8-12**

Author: **Aric Wilmunder**

Publisher: **A Well-Regulated Press**

Website: theprescottgirls.com



Book Overview

The Prescott Girls is a middle-grade historical novel set in Maine during the 1830s and inspired by the lives of three real sisters whose needlework samplers survived for nearly two centuries.

After the death of their father, Beckie, Louisa, and little Sallie Prescott leave their home and travel by wagon to the Old Pownalborough Court House in Dresden, Maine, where their family must begin again. The former courtroom becomes their bedroom, the river below the hill carries news from distant towns, and the sisters slowly discover how courage, kindness, and conscience shape the choices they make.

The story draws on real historical artifacts, including samplers stitched by the Prescott girls in childhood, and explores themes of family, resilience, and moral responsibility in early American life.

Illustrated in the tradition of classic works such as the Little House series and The Wizard of Oz, with artwork inspired by nineteenth-century engravings, historically accurate clothing, and a period map, reproduced with permission from university and museum collections.



Historical Background

The story behind *The Prescott Girls* began with the discovery of several early nineteenth-century needlework samplers at a California auction during the pandemic. Research revealed that the samplers had belonged to members of the Prescott family of Maine and were connected to the extended family of Betsy Ross.

Further investigation traced the lives of the girls who stitched them—Rebecca Goodwin Johnson Prescott, Caroline Louisa Prescott, and Sarah Augusta Prescott. The samplers were eventually returned to the Old Pownalborough Court House in Dresden, Maine, the place where they had originally been created nearly two hundred years earlier.

The novel imagines the childhood experiences of these sisters during the 1830s, combining documented historical details with fictional storytelling.

The discovery also led to ongoing historical research and an article exploring the samplers' history titled “**Six Stitches Through Time.**”

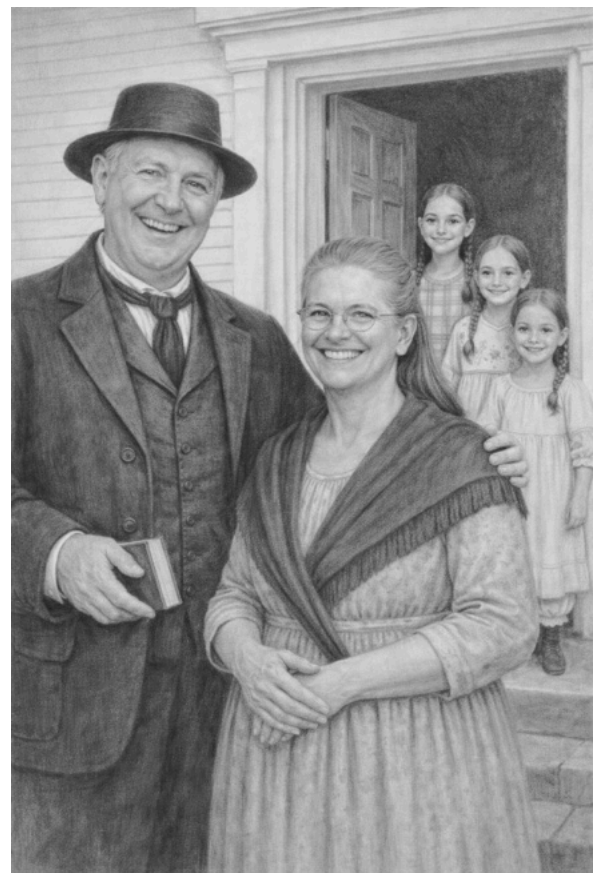


About the Author

Aric Wilmunder is a writer and historical researcher whose work explores the intersection of storytelling and artifact research, revealing how small discoveries can illuminate the past.

The Prescott Girls grew out of collaborative historical research conducted with his wife, Lori, an award-winning needlework historian. Together they traced the provenance of the Prescott samplers and worked with historians and museums to better understand their significance.

Inspired by illustrated classics from childhood, Wilmunder created the artwork for the novel using a process that combined digital tools with historical research. Textile experts helped ensure that clothing and visual details accurately reflect garments worn during the 1830s.



Events and Presentations

Aric Wilmunder is available for:

- School visits
- Library readings and discussions
- Historical society presentations
- Museum talks on research and artifact discovery

Possible presentation topics include:

The Discovery of the Prescott Samplers

How a group of early American needlework samplers found at auction led to historical research and a novel inspired by the lives of the girls who made them.

Turning History into Story

How real historical artifacts can inspire fictional narratives while remaining grounded in documented history.

Life in Maine in the 1830s

An exploration of daily life, education, and family life in early nineteenth-century New England.

Presentations can be tailored for **students, general audiences, or historical organizations.**

Teacher Resources

The Prescott Girls website provides downloadable educational materials for classrooms and homeschool groups, including:

- Discussion questions for the novel
- Historical study guides
- Maps of Maine in the early nineteenth century
- Background on needlework samplers and girls' education

These materials are available at:

theprescottgirls.com/teachers.html

Resources & Study Guides

An Overview - Using the Study Guides

Start here. A guide to selecting and using the study guides together in your classroom.

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The Prescott Girls - Facts and Fiction

A reference guide distinguishing historical facts from fictional elements in the story.

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Study Guide - Discussion Questions

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Study Guide - Beckie's Sampler

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Study Guide - Needlework and Girls' Education in Early America

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Study Guide - The Sugar Boycott

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Study Guide - How Historians Trace Artifacts

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Study Guide - Life in 1830s Maine

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Study Guide - Letters and Communication in the 1830s

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Study Guide - Family Trees

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Study Guide - Creating the Illustrations

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Study Guide - The Old Pownalborough Court House

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Study Guide - Geography of The Prescott Girls

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Printable Maine Map (1833)

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Images for Media Use

The following images are available for event promotion and media coverage:

- Book cover for *The Prescott Girls*
- Author photograph
- Historic Prescott family sampler (1835)

Images may be used freely for event promotion with attribution.

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