



The Little Colonel

Annie Fellows Johnston

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An old-fashioned Southern colonel has disowned his daughter for marrying a Yankee and resists all entreaties for a reconciliation until he succumbs to the charms of his little granddaughter.

During the early part of the 20th century the Little Colonel series was the most popular series for children. Published in 1895, this is the first in the series of books about Lloyd Sherman, the Little Colonel.

The Little Colonel Details

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Author : Annie Fellows Johnston

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From Reader Review The Little Colonel for online ebook

Melissa says

This book holds a dear place in my heart! A friend introduced me to the series, and now I own the whole set of Little Colonel books and the companion Mary Ware series. _The Little Colonel_ is the first in the series, and introduces the heroine, Lloyd Sherman.

Plot Synopsis (and spoiler)!

Lloyd Sherman is a young child in this book, nicknamed "The Little Colonel" after her resemblance and similar hot-headed temper to her grandfather, a Civil War Colonel who lost his arm fighting the Yankees. Because her mother married without her father's consent, the Colonel has not spoken to her since.

However, Lloyd and her grandfather meet each other by accident. He is drawn to her, initially due to her resemblance of her own mother at her age, and then because of her own winning personality, although they have some stormy interludes. Lloyd's father comes home from the West where he went to bolster their fortunes, but he is very ill with typhoid fever, and the family is even poorer now, trying to find money to pay for the doctor. At the same time, the Colonel comes down with rheumatism and wants Lloyd to come stay at Locust - his mansion, named after the rows of old locust trees on each side of the drive - because he wants her near him, and is afraid she will catch the fever from her father.

The grandfather and granddaughter become closer during her stay, but Lloyd at last returns to her family, much to her grandfather's regret. 'Papa Jack' is better, but when he suffers a relapse, Lloyd runs to the Colonel - the only one she knows to go to for help. The Colonel had sworn never to see his daughter again at her marriage, and refuses to go with his granddaughter, believing there is no danger. Lloyd leaves the house in tears and anger while the Colonel searches his heart. The love he bears for his daughter and Lloyd finally wins the battle, and he goes to the Sherman house, to find Jack revived - the relapse was only a faint brought on by exertion. A joyful reunion follows between him and his daughter, and the entire family goes back to Locust for Christmas.

Pat Jennings says

Read several in this series as a child. The writer's setting is in PeeWee Valley, Kentucky, just out of Louisville, Ky. Sweet book that for this time is totally politically incorrect. If you read for the relationship part of the story, taking in consideration for the time the book was written, it is an interesting read.

Janice says

When I was young, the Little Colonel stories were a favorite, as much for the upward call toward beauty, truth, and goodness, as for the delightful stories. In this first volume, the Little Colonel meets her grandfather, a civil war veteran who has been estranged from the her mother, his daughter, became she married a Northerner. That was not an uncommon situation after such a bitter war, and it is interesting and enjoyable to read how it all turns out.

The copyright on this book is 1895, so it not unexpected that the characters, black and white, have dialogue

that is written in the accent and dialect of the time and geographic region. I did not find it distracting, as it pretty fairly represented what my ear hears in the South, but some readers may not care for it. Obviously since it is an old book, it does not have some of the modern sensibilities that have developed over recent decades, but it seems a fair representation of life then.

I always came away from this series of books with the desire to do better and be better, though are in no way preachy or didactic. This book was enjoyable to reread even now, and I look forward to sharing it with my grandchildren.

Hannah says

I know, I know, it's like a fairy tale. And Shirley Temple played in a much revised version in her glory days.

But it's also utterly charming, and now I know why young heroines in old novels would refer to loving the latest Little Colonel books!

Sara says

Mostly I agree with Rachel. This book was too weird not to read (although I guess I would have anyway since I am teaching it). As it seemingly attempts to work as a book to show children they have agency as well as some sort of attempt at showing a North-South reunion, bizarre things abound in the background.

The Little Colonel, we are told, is a butch little girl who reassembles her dead uncle and selfish, stodgy old grandpa. There are episodes in which it almost seems like she can communicate with the dead and all the landscape of Kentucky is anthropomorphized. In many ways, you just have to see for yourself.

Melody says

Racist, twee, and saccharin-sticky. From the opening scene with the "trawbewwies" right up to the end it was torture of the most sentimental sort. I couldn't stop, it was such a twain weck!

Victoria says

These books are still a Big Deal among collectors in Kentucky. When I eavesdropped on an old guy talking about his search for The Little Colonel's Diary, I figured I should at least read the first one for free. The Betsy-Tacy books referenced them several times, too. It was a quick read and the perfect length for one bout of pregnancy insomnia. This book was basically an Elsie Dinsmore book without the Bible and with twice as many apostrophes. The main theme was grudges and pride giving way to reconciliation and love. All in all, the book was OK for what it is, but I have no desire to spend any time tracking down the rest of the series (even on Kindle).

Nancy says

The Little Colonel stories were instrumental in making me a life-long reader. I first picked one up at my small, converted-house library in West Lafayette, IN when I was no more than 9. This library had the full series in a pink moire cover - what more could a little girl want? Before the summer was over I had read every single one of the series. To this day I remember them fondly. They were so special to me in fact as a married woman with children I was reminiscing about the books to my husband and he made it his mission to find and gift to me the complete series. I display them proudly.

Behind today's values? Of course, they are. Do they contain broad characterizations that we might find a bit racist today? Yes, to that too. But the Little Colonel was a feisty, take-no-prisoners type child and served me well to become a strong, independent, know my strengths type of woman. I shall be forever grateful to The Little Colonel.

Sharon says

I read as a child and now own all the Little Colonel books. Loved every one of them.

Rachel Ann Brickner says

I thought this book was so interestingly bizarre and interesting to think about in relation to how race relations and slavery are portrayed in Civil War literature at the time. I won't be reading this children's book again anytime soon, but it will definitely be hanging out in the back of my mind as I try to answer some of the problematic social questions that it raises.

Abigail says

Originally published in 1895, The Little Colonel was the first of an extended series of children's novels that chronicle the adventures of young Lloyd Sherman - nicknamed "the Little Colonel" because her fiery temperament and stubborn disposition call to mind similar qualities in her estranged grandfather, a former colonel in the Confederate army - and her friends. In this opening volume of the series, the five-year-old Little Colonel meets her grandfather for the first time, and, despite the tensions existing between him and her parents - Colonel Lloyd, having lost his only son, Tom, as well as his arm, in the recent Civil War, had no use for Yankees, and had disowned his only daughter Elizabeth (Lloyd's mother), when she married Jack Sherman of New York - forms a bond of deep affection with him. Will the Little Colonel's love be enough to conquer his pride, however, and reconcile him to his daughter and son-in-law...?

This being a sentimental novel of the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries, there is never much doubt as to the conclusion of the tale, but the process by which that conclusion is reached is not without its charm. Colonel Lloyd is (with a few exceptions) an engaging character despite his flaws, and the Little Colonel is endearing. I did wonder a bit at the author's decision to make her speech so decidedly southern, when (according to the story) she had been raised in New York, and had only come to Lloydsborough some short

time before the opening of the story, but leaving that issue aside, her characterization - her penchant for story-telling (and evident fondness for *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*), her knack for making friends with all and sundry, her passionate temper - was well done. The conclusion itself, while easy enough to predict, is a satisfying affirmation of family love and reconciliation, as well as an oblique portrait of rapprochement between North and South, so recently divided by that bitterest of struggles, the American Civil War.

Read a certain way, The Little Colonel is really a most engaging book, making it easy to see why it (not to mention its many sequels) was so very popular in the early years of the twentieth century. There was even a Shirley Temple film made from it, in 1935. Of course, that "certain way" of reading involves turning a blind eye to the thoroughly racist depictions of all the black characters, who are happily subservient, stupidly superstitious (as witnessed by Mom Beck's conviction that Papa Jack is doomed to die, because of the "signs" she has seen), and speak in the sort of broken dialect often reserved for them in children's stories of the period. It also requires ignoring the frequent occurrence of such racial epithets as "pickaninnies," "darkies," and (to a lesser extent) "n*ggers" in the text.

That such is the way some would like to read the book can be seen by their emphatically (and defensively) glowing reviews, in which they insist either that the book is *not* racist, or that its racism cannot be held against it, because it was "of the times." I am amused to note that www.littlecolonel.com, a most informative website devoted to Johnston's books, claims that her work has fallen out of favor because contemporary readers don't value "*romantic and sentimental wholesomeness*" any more, but makes no mention of this other, far more significant objection that said readers might have, or that Johnston's fall from popularity might reflect the (thankfully!) changing racial dynamics of American society.

What then is the contemporary reader, the one who *does* value the "romantic and sentimental" (yes, yes, I admit it!), but who loathes racism, to do? Should books like The Little Colonel still be read, and by whom? As someone with an interest in the history of American children's books, as well as (more recently) the school-story genre, this is a title I've been meaning to pick up. After all, the *Little Colonel* series was once immensely popular, and it also includes an example of the school story, in The Little Colonel at Boarding-School. It documents, not necessarily a moment in American history, but a perception of that moment. Or put another way, it helped to create the perception of that moment, and seems to have been part of a new kind of romanticism about the south. All factors that give it great interest for me, as someone with a more academic interest in children's literature, and its social significance. It is also, despite its objectionable content, quite readable (hence the three stars, rather than two, although I'm still debating that point).

I think that this is a book I would recommend to older readers who are interested in the history of American children's literature, in vintage American children's series, or in the depiction of the post Civil War South (and specifically, Kentucky) in said literature and series. I don't know that I would recommend it to young readers, and am thankful that I didn't encounter it as a young person myself. Still, I'm glad to have read it at this point, as I do find it utterly fascinating, and I think I will probably read further in the series.

Carolyn Page says

I liked this book. I really, really liked it, and I'm sure I'd like to read the rest of the books in the series as well. I cried, probably because I was thinking of my Grandpa.

One thing though -- this characters constantly use racist terms. Of course! it's set in 1880s Kentucky, what else would you expect? Also --*gasp* those racist pigs aren't bad guys! they're normal (for a children's novel anyway). These books are likely to never see a reprinting because they display attitudes as common during the original publishing.

I think that's sad for two reasons. First, I'm pretty sure someone famous once said "those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it"-- painting over the past condemning otherwise normal people to be forever remembered as monsters isn't remembering the past, it's forgetting how normal people can do bad things and have society's approval. Second, it's a great teaching tool for children. The lesson? How to read and think critically. They are never too young to learn that.

Teresa says

Loved Little Women? Adored Betsy-Tacy? Wish there were more in these delightful series? Then hurrah for the Little Colonel!

A charming series of coming-of-age stories about a little girl in Kentucky at the turn of the century. Lloyd Sherman, the spunky miniature of her grandfather the colonel (hence the nickname), wins the hearts of all who meet her. She and her friends learn valuable life lessons and try to be good people, as did the March sisters of Little Women. They also have amusing adventures and stories-within-the-story, like Betsy Tacy & Tib (the Little Colonel is set about 10-15 years before Besty-Tacy, and mentioned in "Carney's House Party.")

The characters all seem drawn from real life. They are engaging and likable and distinct. Their adventures and games also seem rue to life. I couldn't put it down, and finished a book every day or two.

Series: You can download the entire collection for free or under \$2 on Amazon. Be sure to get the complete collection and read in order. It starts with The Little Colonel, then The Giant Scissors, Two Little Knights of Kentucky, The Little Colonel's House Party, and so on.

Warning: These books are set in the South at the turn of the century, so there is some unfortunate and outdated language referring to the African-American servants and townspeople. It is infrequent (much less than in Tom Sawyer & Huck Finn) and clearly meant to be true to the style of the time and not outright derogatory or hurtful. But it should be explained to young readers and given its proper context, to avoid any encouragement/resurgence of racist language.

Catherine Mustread says

First of the Little Colonel series, which were later made into a movie starring Shirley Temple, set in the 1880s in Kentucky. The (old) Colonel served in the Confederate army and disowned his daughter when she married a Yankee. When he realizes that this keeps him from his granddaughter, who is very much like him, he has to consider whether his love can overcome his pride and loyalty for the southern cause.

From LibriVox.com: The scene of this story is laid in Kentucky. Its heroine is a small girl, who is known as the Little Colonel, on account of her fancied resemblance to an old-school Southern gentleman, whose fine estate and old family are famous in the region.

Jessika says

When I picked this old book up at my grandma's house this weekend, I didn't think I would like it much. Sometimes when I stay with her, I like picking up some of the books she has sitting on her bookshelf. Call me cheesy, but I like imagining these books in the hands of someone years back, reading with eyes full of

entertainment. I mean, c'mon, us readers these days forget how spoiled we are, what with libraries and bookstores galore. We don't realize that at one time, books were scarce and the books one owned were cherished-read and re-read time and again.

Anyway, I did end up liking this story somewhat. I thought the Little Colonel was a sweet little girl. Granted, some of the racism and racial slurs were a little shocking, but it wasn't littered throughout the story like I thought it would be. As much as I didn't like the exaggerated dialect of the black characters or the way they were treated as servants, it wasn't very surprising, considering how old these books are--they were first copyrighted in 1895. Not that it makes the racism in them right, but it makes it a little less surprising? I'm not sure how to explain it. I don't agree with it one bit, but I suppose it was just the norm for that time period. I'm just glad that I read this book at an age at which I understand how wrong it is. I was even surprised that although there wasn't a lot of character development, I felt as though the characters were dear to me. Even though there wasn't much substance to this, it was a "feel good" story (minus the racism), and it was easy for me to see why the series of books about the Little Colonel have been popular among generations of women.
