

# *Some Melodious Sonnet*

Eyes to the Hills  
Book One

**JENNIFER Q. HUNT**



# Some Melodious Sonnet First Chapter

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Blue Springs Books

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# A Few Notes to Aid 21st Century Readers

*Cairstine* is a Scottish name pronounced *Care-STEEN*.

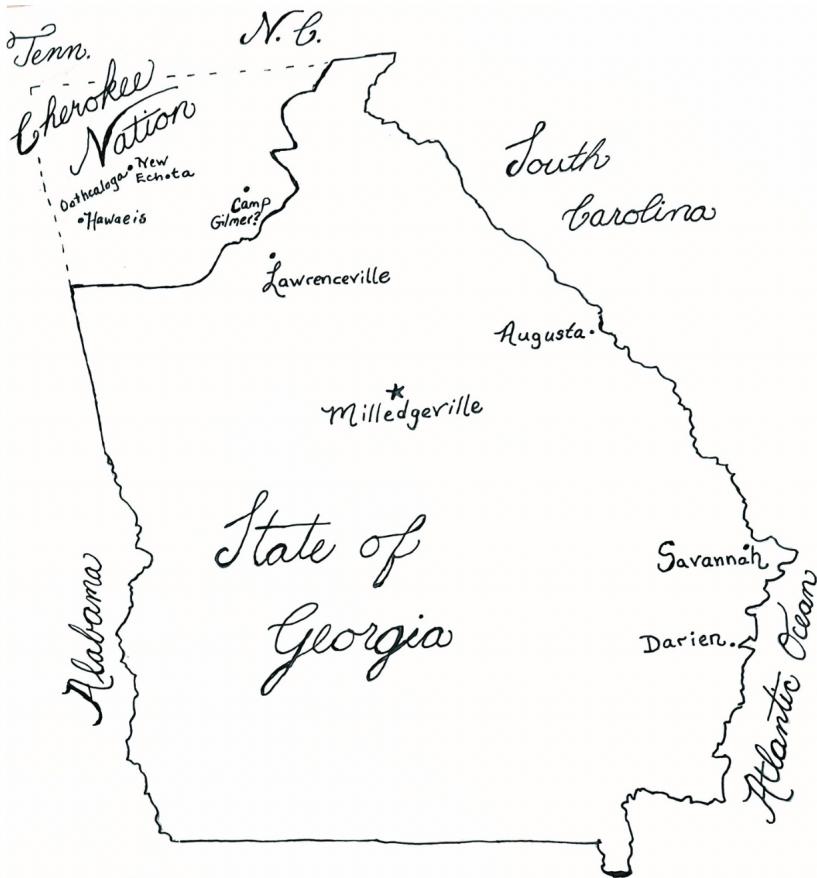
*Hydrophobia* is what is now known as rabies. *Locked jaw* (not lockjaw as it was later written) is now known more commonly as tetanus.

The term *Congregationalist* as used by the New England missionaries of the 1830s would best align with the conservative Presbyterians of today. The missionaries for the ABCFM were Calvinists who held many ideas from their Puritan heritage.

Oothcaloga (there are several alternate spellings) was an early name of what is now modern day Calhoun, Georgia, in Gordon County. This settlement was about 4 miles southwest of New Echota, the capital of the Cherokee Nation. There was also an Oothcaloga Mission Station run by the Moravians that was about six miles south of New Echota.

Milledgeville was the capital of Georgia, and Atlanta did not exist, even by its first name of Terminus.

For further insight into which parts of this story are true, be sure to read the Author's Note at the end.





# Chapter 1

*“It may be regarded as certain that not one foot of land will be taken from the Indians without their own consent. The sacredness of their rights is felt . . . in America as much as in Europe.”*

—Thomas Jefferson, 1786

**Saturday, November 13, 1830**

**Rutland, Massachusetts**

Though possessing scant enthusiasm for the idea, Jeremiah Harrison knew his duty lay in offering a graveside proposal to the Widow Miller. With a lift of his chin and a clearing of his throat, he approached her, beaver-felt hat in hand.

Tabitha Miller was nearly as tall as his own six feet and almost as spare. The white handkerchief in her palm and the white day cap over her dark hair provided the only relief to the harsh black of her mourning attire and the dark soil freshly mounded over the coffin.

“Mistress Miller, a word?”

She nodded. Her gray eyes were rimmed with red, but she remained composed, considering her circumstances. An infected wound had led to locked jaw and stolen the life of the man they'd both admired most.

“Ephraim was my dearest friend in the world,” Jeremiah began. “And his death a shock from which I have not recovered. I would not in any way diminish your loss, as I myself feel it keenly.”

She met his eyes and nodded at his condolences. He needed to get to the point before she dismissed him. He swallowed and waited for a noisy flock of ducks to pass overhead on their way to Muschopauge Pond.

“I know how much the missionary calling means to you. Ephraim often spoke of his satisfaction in finding a partner as devoted to the ministry as himself. While the focus of my work will be different than his would have been, I am going to the same field. The Board would prefer I had a spouse, and I suppose they will be even more reluctant for you to go unmarried.”

She looked at him, weighing his words, probably guessing where he was headed with this speech he had rehearsed till it was memorized.

“I am offering you marriage, so you may continue in the ministry to which you have been called.” He shuffled his feet a little and tried to maintain eye contact. He half expected her to turn on her heel and walk away without a word.

Ephraim had been an ordained minister and a doctor of theology. Jeremiah’s own training was in law and languages. He would be an assistant to the missionaries, not one himself, and his assignment at present was for but one year, to help with the current legal dilemmas of the Cherokee natives with their Georgia neighbors.

Mrs. Miller stared at him, and he forced himself not to squirm. Ephraim had spoken of “his Tabby” in terms of glowing affection, but Jeremiah had at best experienced courtesy from the young woman. Still, her grasp of languages and sharp intellect rivaled his. He thought they could get along amiably, and perhaps their shared grief could draw them together until some measure of fondness grew between them.

Finally, she spoke. “I will consider your offer, Mr. Harrison.” She smoothed her dress front, revealing a rounded middle beneath the slightly high waist and

full skirt. “I carry Ephraim’s child. There are yet three months. I will make no decision until I see if the Lord spares the babe to me and what constitution the child has.”

Her tone was crisper than a fresh pippin.

“Aye. ’Tis wise. Ephraim knew about the child?”

“He did.”

What had his friend thought? Eph would have been a tender and careful father. It pained Jeremiah to realize his friend would miss this blessing too. He glanced down at the grave. The headstone had already been inscribed.

*Ephraim James Miller*

*1800-1830*

*Faithful son, brother, husband, friend*

*With his missionary zeal unabated,*

*he departed this world for the heavenly realm.*

*Let others take up the calling he longed to fulfill.*

Jeremiah was of too thorough Puritan stock to ask God *why*, but the question did itch at the edges of his consciousness. Why, when Ephraim had been surrendered to the Lord’s work, suited for the ministry, and on the verge of leaving their native state and journeying to work among the Cherokee . . .

He thought of the words from Cowper’s “God Moves in a Mysterious Way” and sang softly:

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
but trust Him for His grace;  
behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.”

Tabitha Miller’s face was not smiling. She cleared her throat and pierced him with a look. He thought of his sister Gracie’s advice: “When a young lady indicates

by her severe expressions that she is no longer desirous of your presence, take your leave politely and graciously.”

No young ladies had ever been desirous of his presence. Ephraim’s wife was the only young woman, other than his sister, with whom he’d ever been able to even have a serious conversation, and he suspected she tolerated him solely for her husband’s sake.

“I would consider it a great honor to care for Ephraim’s child as if he—or she—were my own.”

“If I accept your offer, Mr. Harrison, I will join you in six months.” With that, she turned and walked toward where the minister and his wife stood, leaving him alone at the grave. The wind shifted, assaulting him with the scents of soil and damp, rotting leaves. The current swept across his face, drying the moisture in his eyes and sending a few more crisp leaves swirling from the trees to the cold earth beneath.

Though Tabitha’s back was to him, Jeremiah nodded before replacing his hat, then turned to walk back down the hill to the white clapboard church, needing to say a few more farewells. Inside, he found Mr. Evarts waiting for him. The older man was the Corresponding Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and to Jeremiah, his mentor in the law and the man who had filled the place of a father after his own had died.

“Are you ready for your journey?” asked Mr. Evarts.

“I am, sir,” Jeremiah replied. “I would have already embarked two weeks ago but for this sad business with the Millers.”

“It is a blow, to be sure. A grief to us all.” Evarts shook his head. “Remember, your times are in the Lord’s hands. He’ll have you there exactly when you should be. By the by, some members of the Board think that after the Cherokees’ legal dilemmas are resolved, you should consider ordination for yourself to take Miller’s place.”

“I could never take Ephraim’s place,” Jeremiah replied. “But do *you* think I should pursue the ministry?” He tried to picture himself as a Congregationalist minister, but though he held tenaciously to their Calvinist doctrine in the face of

the recent attacks by the Unitarians, he could not imagine preaching or pastoring on a continual basis.

Evarts coughed. The lines on his gaunt face had deepened and his hair grayed as he spent himself in Christian service, especially his recent crusade against the Cherokee removal. Jeremiah hoped his time in the man's service had offered true help and relief to him.

"A question I pondered long and hard for myself after my conversion in college. I think you should do as the Lord leads you and take the opportunities He gives you. If, as with myself, your gifts lie in other directions, know that those can glorify God also." Evarts clapped him on the shoulder. "I shall look forward to your reports. And Mrs. Evarts and I will both miss you. You can be sure of our faithful prayers on your behalf."

"Thank you. I shall miss your ready counsel and depend upon your letters to make up for the lack of your presence."

They shook hands, and Mr. Evarts took his leave, joining two other members of the Board who had journeyed there together. The church was almost empty now, but his sister Gracie came over from where she had been praying in a back pew. "Come and eat the noon meal with Jonathan and me," she urged.

"I do not wish to keep taking my leave of you and make the parting more painful than necessary."

He had already said farewell last month, then had to make the trip back when news came of Ephraim's impending death. Thank God he'd made it in time to say good-by to his friend, though his extreme suffering in his final days had been horrifying to behold. The dying man had been unable to speak or receive comfort as with the other deathbeds Jeremiah had been present for.

"Nonsense. I treasure any time I can spend with you," Gracie assured him. "I wish you would stay one more night at least, but I know you too well to expect it."

Jeremiah nodded his agreement, and they met up with her husband, Jonathan, outside. The three of them walked the half mile to Jonathan and Gracie's two-story saltbox house. Of all the homes he'd designed and built, this surprise for his

sister was his favorite. A large birch tree arched over the left side, its leaves gilded in the midday sun that broke through the dreary clouds.

What would it be like in the Cherokee country? Did they experience the glory of color in changing foliage, a riot of crimson as bright as ripe apples and orange deeper than the fairest pumpkins, decorating the world before the grays of winter? Would he ever witness a New England autumn again?

Jonathan was delayed in coming in by a neighbor at the fence. Jeremiah pulled the latch at the door. “Uncle ’Miah!” hailed three-year-old Charity, running over and clinging to his leg. He picked her up and kissed her plump cheek, then handed her a lump of maple sugar from the small tin he kept in his coat pocket. She ran back to her grandmother in the kitchen, and Jeremiah followed Gracie into the parlor.

“I saw you conversing with Tabitha at the grave,” his sister prompted now that it was just the two of them. “How does she fare?”

“I couldn’t say. It wasn’t much of a conversation. I made her an offer of marriage.”

“Jeremiah!” Gracie took her fussing nursling from the cradle and bounced on her feet to still him, though to no avail. Her eyes, the same light blue as Jeremiah’s own, narrowed in dismay. “Why, when you have no feelings for her?”

“She desires to go to Georgia, and we both are in need of a spouse. She carries Ephraim’s child, who will need a father if, Lord-willing, the babe survives.”

“What did she say to your proposal?” Gracie settled in the rocking chair and covered her chest to nurse her frantic babe.

“She will consider and perhaps join me in six months.”

“Perhaps? So, are you engaged or no?”

“I—not exactly. It’s not as if I’ll go to Georgia and find a suitable partner there. If the Widow Miller decides not to come—”

Gracie clucked her disapproval but said no more as her husband stepped in. Jonathan Abbe personified *amiable*, such a contrast to his and Gracie’s own austere father that Jeremiah still marveled to see the man romping with his young daughter or patiently answering the child’s ceaseless questions. Gracie smiled at her husband, and he bent to kiss her cheek.

Despite the sorrows of the day, Jeremiah relaxed over the simple noon meal of rabbit stew, corn cakes, and mugs of new cider. Gracie and Jonathan kept the conversation uplifting, speaking with anticipation of his upcoming work with the missionaries and the excitement of his journey. Jonathan's mother, who lived with the family, promised her prayers as well, and little Charity covered his cheeks with farewell kisses.

He had almost forgotten the muddle with Tabitha Miller, but as he was taking his leave, needing to get the fifteen miles to Boylston before stopping for the night, Gracie pulled him aside.

"Jeremiah. I know you feel unsure in wooing a woman—"

He snorted. *Unsure* was a gross understatement.

Undeterred, Gracie laid a hand on his arm. "I believe God has a partner for you who will be more than a laborer beside you. One who will love you and care for *you*."

He shook his head. In his younger years, he had fancied one girl or another. Nothing had ever come of his inclinations, for while agonizing over polite conversation or the proper way to initiate his suit, another man, who wasn't a blundering idiot, would lay claim to her affections. He'd long since married himself to his studies, figuring his only hope of a family, at now twenty-nine years old, lay in finding a woman in need of financial security and fidelity more than fine words and fiery passion.

"I will pray it for you. You and Tabitha have much in common in some ways. But your hearts do not seem knit as one. It is not ungodly to be happy in one's mate, you know."

He nodded, doubting he would ever convince his sister that he did not need such. Gracie was suitably named. She moved through life with an ease and pleasantness Jeremiah envied. He would let her have her prayers for his happiness, and once he and Tabitha were wed, he would write his sister reassurances of his marital bliss. Since all he knew was loneliness, he would doubtless find reason to be glad of a wife, even one who did not love him.



## About the Author

As a native Georgian, Jennifer Q. Hunt loves learning local history through reading and exploration. She lives in the North Georgia hills with her husband and four children. As a homeschool mom, she's happy to inform her kids on the real stories of American history. Besides her work as a writer and developmental editor, Jennifer enjoys reading good books, drinking tea with cream and sugar, baking pies, listening to worshipful Christian music, and wandering aimlessly through antique stores.

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