

JUDITH LANKESTER

## ALSO BY MARJORIE HILL ALLEE:

*Susanna and Tristram*

*The Road to Carolina* (sequel to *Susanna and Tristram*)

*Jane's Island*

*Ann's Surprising Summer*

*A House of Her Own* (a Lankester family story)

*Off to Philadelphia* (a Lankester family story)

*The Great Tradition*

*Little American Girl*

*Runaway Linda*

*The Camp at Westlands*

*Winter's Mischief*

*The House*

*Smoke Jumper*

# Judith Lankester

BY  
MARJORIE HILL ALLEE



ILLUSTRATED BY  
HATTIE LONGSTREET PRICE

BETHLEHEM BOOKS • IGNATIUS PRESS  
Bathgate San Francisco

Originally published by The Riverside Press, 1930

Cover art by Margaret Rasmussen

Cover design by Melissa Sobotta

Slightly revised by the Publisher

All Rights Reserved

First Bethlehem Books Printing June 2014

ISBN 978-1-932350-44-9

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 2013957545

Bethlehem Books • Ignatius Press

10194 Garfield Street South

Bathgate, ND 58216

[www.bethlehembooks.com](http://www.bethlehembooks.com)

1-800-757-6831

Printed in the United States on acid-free paper

TO  
BARBARA  
THAT SHE MAY NOT FORGET THE LONG ROAD  
HER ANCESTORS TRAVELED

## AUTHOR'S NOTE



I CAN IMAGINE my grandmother regarding Judith Lankester with a certain suspicion that the picture might be intended for herself. They are not the same, but they are so much alike that I think they must have been relatives, and I intend to claim Judith for a cousin. And so may you, if you take to each other.

Then, like me, you will meet her not only in these pages, but perhaps looking out of an old daguerreotype, with dark eyes at once haughty and wistful; or you may catch her voice in the quaint phrases of an old recipe for corn pone or pound cake; or she may come to you as you sit dreaming on an old railroad embankment long since deserted, and, with you, dream over the stories of ninety years ago.

# CONTENTS



I. Eight Granddaughters .....	1
II. The Road that Began in England.....	20
III. The Weaving-Cabin .....	34
IV. David and Denny.....	52
V. Dan's Dream.....	70
VI. A Secret .....	82
VII. The Play-Party .....	96
VIII. At the Bridge .....	111
IX. The Flood .....	123
X. To Meeting and Back.....	145
XI. A Letter from Virginia.....	162
XII. Judith's Decision.....	176
XIII. Journey's End.....	196



## EIGHT GRANDDAUGHTERS

THERE WERE eight girls and five grown people eating noon dinner, but the long table was very quiet. Grandfather Holloway had scarcely said a word since the silent grace, and no one else spoke except when it was necessary, and then in hushed, respectful tones. Grandmother Holloway and young Uncle Jesse saw that all the girls had enough of the plain, abundant food, while Grandfather sat at the head of the table, wrapped in thought.

His fifteen-year-old granddaughter, Judith Lankester, grew impatient. For three whole days now they had been at Grandfather's house. They had been most cordially welcomed, beds had been improvised all over the farmhouse for the eight girls and their mother, and they had been urged to rest after the tedious, rough journey with their covered wagon over the Virginia mountains, down the Kanawha and Ohio rivers, and through the woods to eastern Indiana. But what they were to do next no one ventured to advise or suggest until Grandfather Holloway came home from a business trip to the nearest sizable town, some thirty miles away. This morning he had come riding in, had greeted them all around, and then had led his horse away to



water and pasture in a manner as matter-of-fact as if a visit from his oldest daughter and her family were quite in the usual routine.

Judith had not seen him again until he sat down at the head of the dinner table, a plainly dressed farmer, whose sixty-odd years had stooped his big frame, grizzled the hair combed down over his forehead Quaker-fashion, and left his hands cracked and weather-beaten. Judith stole sideways glances in his direction with increasing disappointment. The only men she had seen with hands like his were the poorer farmers up in the Virginia hills, who could not afford to own even one slave.

All the long journey their mother had talked about Grandfather Halloway, half to her daughters, half to herself. She had not seen him for twenty years and more, not since she had married and gone to Virginia to live, and Grandfather Halloway, fearful that some other child of his might also marry into a slaveholding family, had left Carolina for the newly opened lands of Indiana; but, now that they were to see him again, she recalled an unending number of stories that showed his shrewd wisdom. When the girls tired of the rough muddy road and asked discouraged questions about the new country to which it led, their mother had always one confident answer.

"Your grandfather will know what to do," she said stoutly over and over.

Judith had her own doubts. John Lankester, her handsome, laughing father, had never made decisions for his family. When it must be decided who was to make their new carriage, or how broad the terraces were to be leveled across the steep back yard of their Lynchburg house, he looked to his wife or Grandmother Lankester to give him

orders. And as for the warehouse on the banks of the James River, his partner was not slow in telling every one after John Lankester's sudden death that he had always run his half of the business and Mr. Lankester's too.

If her father, who was obviously so much more a man of the world than Grandfather Halloway, proved of so little use in practical matters, it did not seem likely to Judith that Grandfather's homely advice was worth waiting for. Her mother might as well make up her mind, as she usually did, what was to become of them, now they had reached Indiana as poor as church mice. Judith herself could think of nothing so delightful and sensible as to return straightway to the comforts of Grandmother Lankester's Virginian home.

In spite of these thoughts, as soon as Grandfather rose from the table Judith found herself promptly on her feet and waiting in her place as if for orders. Grandfather paid no attention to her. He said, "Well, Charity, come into the other room. We had better talk over thy situation." And Judith's mother followed him into the adjoining parlor and closed the door.

Grandmother Halloway, plump and fresh-faced, still sat at the table. She had taken up a half-finished stocking, and was knitting so briskly that the flying points of the steel needles could hardly be seen. Over her silver-rimmed spectacles she looked down the length of the table at her eight granddaughters, stair-stepped evenly down from twenty-one to five, with an extra long step between nine-year-old Ann and little Polly.

To her young daughter-in-law, Uncle Jesse's wife, she said, "I don't think thee needs to clear the table to-day. We have plenty of help. Start cutting the carpet-rags, if

thee wants to. Take young Charity and Catherine to help. Judith, thee and Phebe can wash the dishes to-day."

There was a little pause. The other sisters looked curiously at Judith. Judith said politely, "I'm not very good at dish-washing, Grandmother. Phebe and Eunice know how."

Curly-headed Polly, clinging to Judith's hand, explained importantly, "Judith never washes dishes. Her dresses are much too fine. And besides, she lives with our other grandmother, and Grandmother Lankester has slaves to do all that work."

Grandmother Halloway looked hard at both Judith and Polly, her knitting needles flashing steadily on; then she glanced at the door that had closed behind their mother, but she did not insist. Phebe and Eunice, like the good girls that they were, carried out the plates, and Martha, next younger, found a dish towel without being asked, while Ann swept up the crumbs.

Judith said, "Come on, Polly, let's go out to our tree."

Hand in hand they went out into the late May sunshine, across the uncut blue-grass of the yard to the foot of a wide-branched beech tree. A little store of playthings between two of its high roots showed that they had already spent some time here. Polly took out the bits of broken china and set each on its separate dainty maple leaf, provided by Judith. Her china doll, Melinda, was established in comfort with her back against the tree to stare glassily at her dinner of dandelion-blossom cornbread and sheep-sorrel greens, while Polly herself gazed at Melinda in rapturous admiration.

In the five weeks of their journey Melinda's wardrobe had grown under Judith's skillful hands beyond her most extravagant dreams. While the other sisters had helped

with the supper at night, or unpacked the bedding, Judith had made doll clothes for Melinda from her older ribbons and handkerchiefs. She had even cut without a qualm into a riding habit that had not a sign of wear, so that Melinda might have a suitable blue traveling dress with cloak to match. Polly had loved the long trip, watching Melinda's beautiful costumes grow at night, and through the daytime listening to Judith's stories of Grandmother Lankester's house. She would be ready to start out again at any time.

As she sat contemplating Melinda's billowing skirts and fashionably tight bodice, her little fair head nodded; Judith put an arm gently about her, and Polly, snuggling down beside her beloved sister, was asleep in two minutes. Judith sat as still as the doll, shading Polly's flushed face from the little sun-flecks that sifted down through the beech leaves. Through the open window she heard the steady flow of her mother's and Grandfather's voices without distinguishing a word they said.

How poorly the plain substantial frame house before her compared with Grandmother Lankester's red-brick house with its beautiful white doorway, its finely proportioned windows, its setting of boxwood hedges and tall poplar trees! And yet the Halloway house was as large and well planned as most of those that Judith had seen since they left behind them the older settlements in the valley of the Ohio. It was certainly as pretentious as any of the houses she had seen in this neighborhood, even in the little near-by town where they had walked to meeting the day before.

She wondered whether her mother would persuade Grandfather Halloway to build a house for them. He must have some money. Judith thought she would like a little

eight-sided house like that which President Jefferson had built at Poplar Forest, his estate near Lynchburg. Grandmother Lankester considered it a very fine design for a small place.

Nine-year-old Ann came scurrying across the grass to her before she had time to spend any more of Grandfather Halloway's money.

"Grandfather says for us all to come in. Right away!"

"Polly's asleep," Judith returned, not stirring.

Ann hesitated, on the point of tears. She was a thin, plain little girl, standing in awe of her older sister, whom she did not know very well; but she was even more afraid of not carrying out Grandfather's orders than of incurring Judith's displeasure.

"Grandfather *says* so," she quavered.

"Well—" Judith answered reluctantly. "Take Polly's head while I get up. Be careful! Don't let her bump against that root!"

She lifted the heavy child out of Ann's awkward arms, and carried her expertly indoors, while Ann trailed timidly after.

The others were already assembled in the long parlor. Grandmother sat in her high-backed rocker with her knitting, absorbed in narrowing the ankle of the stocking. Opposite her, Grandfather was planted in a little straight chair, with his big hands firmly clasping its worn arms. His shoulders were straightened, and for the first time since Judith had seen him he appeared thoroughly interested in what was going on about him. Beside him sat Charity, his daughter, her usually busy hands for once unoccupied; and ranged around the walls in the best stiff walnut chairs were Judith's sisters: young Charity, named

for her mother, her grandmother, and her great-grandmother, Catherine, Phebe, Eunice, Martha, and now Ann and Judith, with Polly sleeping on her shoulder.

Grandfather Halloway nodded with satisfaction when they were all seated, but he said nothing at all for a full minute, until Eunice and Ann began to wriggle on their chairs in dreadful anticipation, and even young Charity and Catherine found carpet-rag ravelings that must be flicked from their laps.

He said at last, "Well, Charity, will thee do the talking?"

"If thee thinks best, Father," she answered, and addressed herself to the wide-eyed girls.

"I have been telling your Grandfather about our circumstances, children. You older girls understand something about them already. You know that when your father died, freeing his slaves by will at my earnest request, I felt it was the right thing to place them in free territory with a little land to live on or with some other means of support. And I felt, too, that we ought to leave Virginia so that you would not grow up accustomed to slavery, and perhaps come to regard it as a natural and inevitable system.

"It was a great expense to provide for these freed people. Your father left certain debts to be paid, and the journey here took some of the little money I had left. And I must admit," she added, with an apologetic glance at Grandfather Halloway, "that I sold the business at a loss. John's partner knew I wanted the money at once, and he was willing to take advantage of my haste."

"I took a loss when I moved up," Grandfather Halloway remarked briefly.

She threw a grateful smile at the old man. "I knew your grandfather would help us to make arrangements for our

living here," she went on, "and he has done so. He is going to give us the use of the little log cabin down the lane; he says there is a loom already set up there that I may have, and I am going to weave and do what tailoring I can get.

"He has offered to do more than that, but I do not want my family to be dependent on the bounty of any one, no matter how kindly it is offered."

"Is thee sure thee wants to stick to that, Charity?" interrupted Grandfather. "Thee's had servants and plenty of house room and good clothes and thy own carriage these twenty years now. I didn't want thee to marry into a slaveholding family, thee knows that well enough, but that's a long time back. Thee's lived in the ways of the world so long that thee may find it hard to come down to a two-room cabin."

A red spot grew in either cheek of his daughter.

"Father, I want peace of mind more than anything else in the world now. I would buy it at any cost for myself and the children, and I know that I could never rest content while I lived on the fruits of slave-labor.

"And thee need not think that we are helpless, lazy creatures. There has always been a loom set up in my Lynchburg house and it has seldom been quiet since the older girls grew up. They know how to spin an even thread, flax or wool, and how to cut a pattern and sew a stout seam. There were always poor people in the town who needed clothes and bedding even if we had plenty for ourselves."

Surprise and admiration crinkled Grandfather Halloway's weather-burnt face. "Well now, what did Lynchburg think of that? Lynchburg is quite a city for such country goings-on."

Charity Lankester smiled a little. "They said it was an amusing employment, I believe; 'quaint and old-fashioned for a woman in your position.' But I noticed that they used to take pains to send their children around to our house; one mother said she thought her children got into less trouble there than down on the river, playing around the warehouses and over the bateaux with the rivermen. I thought so, too," she observed demurely. "Her little girl learned to knit as fast as any child I ever taught."

"Well, well, we'll agree thee knows thy own mind," admitted her father. "Go on."

"I count," said she, "that with a garden and chickens and a pig, that I can earn a living by weaving and sewing. Father tells me that there is still a demand for coverlids and blankets and carpets home-woven, in spite of his new woolen mill in town; and he says that a reliable tailoress can always get work. The younger children I can keep with me for a while, but you older ones will have to help. We want to talk about that now."

"Charity—" She looked across at her oldest daughter and paused, while young Charity promptly blushed a becoming pink between the two smooth bands of brown hair brushed low over either ear.

"Charity," said her mother gently, addressing Grandmother Halloway this time, "Charity has an understanding with a young man back in Virginia. He is a solid young man and I did not discourage their interest in each other; but I told him that I did not think it would be for Charity's happiness to live in a slave state. I told him to think the matter over, and if he was still of the same mind half a year hence to arrange his affairs so that he could follow us and settle in the North."