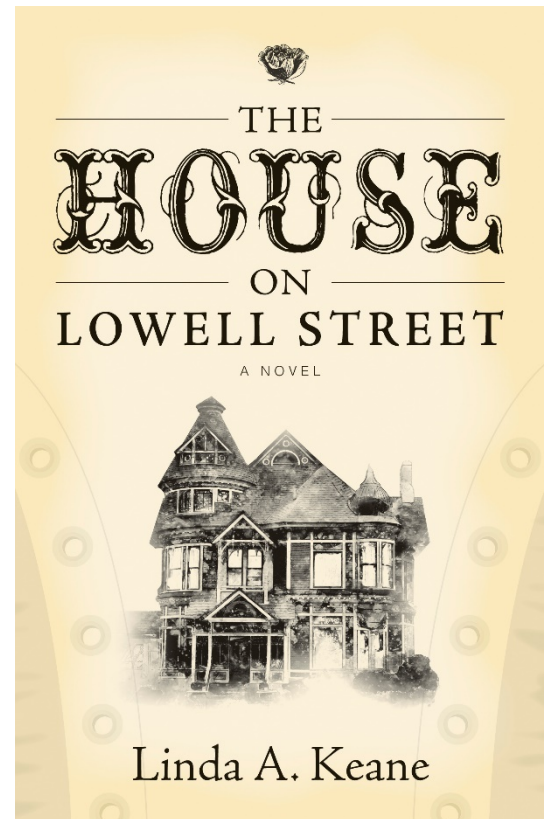


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THE HOUSE ON LOWELL STREET

A NOVEL

Linda A. Keane



Rose Morrison's comfortable life as a banker's wife is

upended when her husband dies suddenly. His secret and formidable debts are now hers to somehow pay. To support herself and her son, Rose takes in boarders—but only women with impeccable references. Eventually, though, she reluctantly lowers her standards and boards two seamstresses from the corset factory, who help her clean.

Trouble is brewing at the factory, where a union contract is about to expire. A charismatic organizer arrives from New York to lead the talks and draws Rose into the conflict between the workers and a factory owner bent on killing the union. As Rose's affection and sympathy grow for her boarders, she is confronted with confusing moral choices. It is not enough to care; one must also act. Based on a true event: the strike of the Kalamazoo corset workers in 1912.

Anyone who has struggled to do the right thing, even when the cost was high, will be heartened by this story of perseverance against all odds. History buffs will enjoy an insider's look at a little-known strike that reveals the challenges faced by union workers before legislation protected them.

For more info please contact media@deeperiverbooks.com

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About the Author

LINDA A. KEANE

Linda A. Keane left the structured world of business communications to let her imagination fly and create this tale of intrigue in a corset factory in her hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan. *The House on Lowell Street* captured the Grand Prize of the 2018 Deep River Books Writer's Contest. Linda is also an award-winning journalist (Maryland Delaware Press Association) with a BA and MSJ from Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University. An editor in corporate communications for the Wrigley Company, she traveled widely to report on new markets and products.



Linda thrives on the diversity of Chicago, where she lives with her cat. She welcomes visits from her daughter Alex, granddaughter Phoebe, and son Marty. A lifelong Methodist, she is a member of 1st United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple and United Methodist Women. Linda shares her love of reading with third graders at a neighborhood school.

For more info please contact media@deepriverbooks.com

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What Others Are Saying About

The House on Lowell Street

Rose is a courageous spirit who transcends the limitations of her times in order to support herself and her son and to save the house on Lowell Street. Remarkably, she also finds the courage to fight for women's dignity and equality in the workplace—an inspiration to all who carry on that struggle today.

— **Mary Hutchings Reed, Author of *Courting Kathleen Hannigan***

Linda A. Keane tells the story of a privileged woman who learns what it means to be poor and what it takes to fight injustice. In enthralling scenes, she gives us a protagonist who must make herself into a more empathetic, shrewder, and wiser person, not only to survive as a widow, but to stand up for righteousness. *The House on Lowell Street* is deep and memorable, a novel to share with friends.

— **Sandra Scofield, Author of *The Last Draft and Mysteries of Love and Grief: Reflections on a Plainswoman's Life***

In precise and elegant prose, Linda A. Keane has succeeded in capturing the social, economic, and political climate in a small midwestern city more than one hundred years ago. Her primary concern is with the lives of women and the obstacles they faced, at home and in the workplace. She has imagined her way deeply into the minds and souls of her characters, and because of her tender and unceasing honesty, we cannot help but love them.

— **Fred Shafer, writer, editor, teacher, Professional Study Program, Northwestern University**

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Suggested Interview Questions

For Linda Keane, author of
The House on Lowell Street
A Novel

Q: For those who haven't read the book yet, what is the story about?

A: *The House on Lowell Street* is about a widow who owns a boarding house and becomes enmeshed in a labor strike when she takes in two sisters who are seamstresses at a corset factory.

Q: The strike is central to your story, was it based on fact?

A: The strike of the Kalamazoo (Michigan) corset workers occurred in 1912 when the International Ladies Garment Workers Union struck the Kalamazoo Corset Company. The company fought back with injunctions and continued to operate with strike breakers for over three months, until a boycott of their product finally forced the company into bankruptcy.

Q: How did you discover this footnote in labor history?

A: On a visit to my hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan, I stopped by a new museum with an exhibit of local industry. I was drawn to a 1912 photograph of women picketing in front of the Kalamazoo Corset Company. Who were these stern-faced women who dared to challenge the largest employer in town?

Q: The survivors of a 1912 strike are long gone; how did you bring them to life?

A: Lots of research. I started with newspaper accounts of the strike, which often included quotes from people on both sides. The factory owner had a blustery, egotistic tone; the organizer's confrontational; the strikers, often young girls, brave to indignant when things went wrong.

Q: You mentioned having to research extensively, what did that entail?

A: Since my novel takes place at the turn of the 20th century, I had to research everything for authenticity: language, food, fashion, transportation, use of electricity, entertainment, police uniforms, milk processing, stethoscopes, home

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styles and furnishings, street paving and Kalamazoo buildings. For the details of the strike, I read 1912 newspaper accounts and research papers. I am thankful for the help I received from the staff at the Kalamazoo Public Library and the Western Michigan University Archives and Google search engine.

Q: As a historical fiction, where did you strike the balance between fact and fiction?

A: I stayed true to the basic issues and actions of the strike. However, my characters are both imaginary and loosely based on historical figures. Sometimes I had actual language from newspaper accounts that I could incorporate, but other times I used my imagination to create dialogue consistent with what I knew about the actual people such as the union organizers.

Q: The protagonist of your novel is Rose, who owns the boarding house. Why not one of the seamstresses?

A: Rose was the better opportunity to show character development. She represents women of this era who were completely dependent on their husbands for support. What happens when that support is suddenly torn away? Rose wants above all else to keep her house on Lowell Street. Her solution is to take in boarders, who expose her to the realities of working women. How will Rose react? Will she plunge into uncharted territory of a looming labor strike or will she cling to the safety of her life on Lowell Street?

Q: How do we see Rose's faith change through the events of the narrative?

A: She questions God's presence when the women are jailed for praying outside the factory. Later she gains a deeper understanding of prayer when she realizes God has different ways of answering prayers.

Q: Is this your first book?

A: Yes, although I'm not new to writing. I have a journalism degree from Northwestern University and wrote for newspapers for about ten years. After taking time out to raise two children, I took a job writing for a union and then ended up in business communications for the Wrigley Company.

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Q: That's interesting that you chose to write fiction instead of non-fiction given your background. What was your reasoning behind that?

A: I've always loved reading historical fiction, and I relished the challenge of writing a story of my own. The strike of the corset makers allowed me to draw on my experience working for a union. One thing I had observed from this experience was that women tend to be more risk adverse. You can see this in my novel when the union has a really hard time convincing women to join.

Q: Who should read this book?

A: Anyone who enjoys historical fiction, especially those with an interest in the early years of organizing women workers. The book is also a fast-paced "whodunnit" mystery that will keep readers in suspense right up to the end.

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