

Book of the Week

***Band of Sisters* by Lauren Willig**

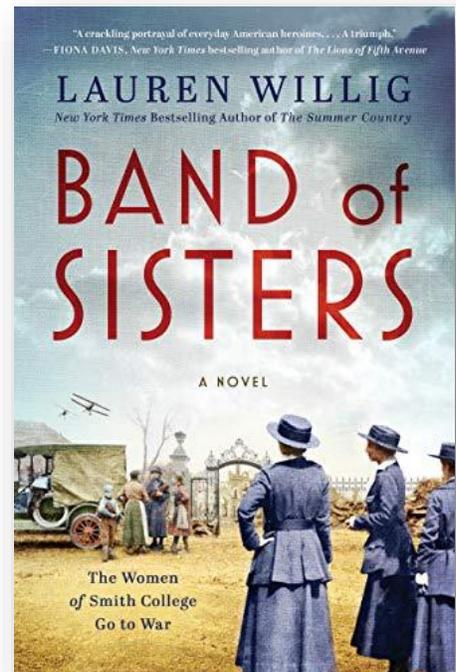
Book Review by Maureen Lang

One of the new books at the library that I read recently was *Band of Sisters* by Lauren Willig. This was a very intriguing look into what it was like for women during the World War I era. The book starts out in April 1917 with a group of alumni from the elite women's college called Smith College, in Northampton, Massachusetts. They have volunteered to go to France as the Smith College Relief Unit to help refugees in an area of France that was formerly occupied by the Bosch. After having collected funds from their wealthy friends and alumni to provide aid; they are set to take off from Boston. They sail to France and set up a refugee distribution center, assisting through replanting, rebuilding, schooling, medical care, and just general help getting people back to living in a relatively normal way again.

The primary characters are Emmi, of the blue blood Van Alden family, which dates back to the Mayflower, Julia, her snippy cousin, who is a doctor in training, and Kate, Emmi's college roommate and lone alumni of the group who went through college on a scholarship. Kate is very aware of the gap in her social economic standing with those around her and views herself as a charity-case. It really takes a lot of challenges before everyone recognizes that she is the lynch pin that holds them together and makes them effective.

This is a many faceted story that deals with class attitudes, women's suffrage and bias about the value of women, how to best to help those in very great need, and wartime dangers being so close to the front. It is also just very a touching interaction between old college friends.

Band of Sisters is a great book for anyone who loves historical fiction. There really was a group of Smith College alumni who did go to France and much of the book is based on their letters home. It is also a book who for those who love to sit on the edge of their seat in suspense and excitement. A touching romance also runs throughout between Emmi and a British soldier.



This book is so engaging that you may find yourself putting off tasks you had planned to do or even delaying your bedtime to see how it ends! Just be prepared for a heartwarming adventure when you pick up Band of Sisters. You will not be disappointed.

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