



The Red Heart

James Alexander Thom

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The Slocum family of Northeastern Pennsylvania are the best of the white settlers, peace-loving Quakers who believe that the Indians hold the Light of God inside. It is from this good-hearted family that Frances is abducted during the Revolutionary war.

As the child's terror subsides, she is slowly drawn into the sacred work and beliefs of her adoptive mother and of all the women of these Eastern tribes. Frances becomes Maconakwa, the Little Bear Woman of the Miami Indians. Then, long after the Indians are beaten and their last hope, Tecumseh, is killed, the Slocums hear word of their long-lost daughter and head out to Indiana to meet their beloved Frances. But for Maconakwa, it is a moment of truth, the test of whether her heart is truly a red one.

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The Red Heart Details

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A.M.G. says

Rating: 3 / 5

Having read and loved James Alexander Thom's *Follow the River*, I expected to love equally as much, if not more, *The Red Heart*. Following the plot-line of a white child taken by Native Americans and raised as one of their own, eventually to become a full-fledged member of their tribe and not want to go back to the world of white men, I was prepared for this to become an instant favourite of mine, like *Ride the Wind* by Lucia St. Clair Robson.

Unfortunately, unlike Ms. Robson, Mr. Thom was not able to make me care about the heroine's fate. This, at first, was surprising to me, as I cared a heck of a lot what happened whilst reading *Follow the River*. The world was vivid, the events were exciting, and the heroine was truly unique and made me care about her and her circumstances.

In this novel though, even though the heroine is a child, she has little to no personality at all--and no, being a child is not a valid excuse for this, because in *Ride the Wind*, same situation, the heroine has a lot more personality and interesting characteristics. Now, to be clear, I would be *okay* with this, if only Mr. Thom set his focus elsewhere--say, on the Revolutionary War and its aftereffects, or the Native Americans' relations with the Americans and British and French. All of these are interesting topics, and touching base on them now, I'd be interested in reading some fiction novels on the American Revolutionary War.

However, at best, Mr. Thom just references these are far-off events, occurring, but not in direct relevance to the heroine. And, again, as she herself is not a compelling character, I really couldn't seem to find a focus on what was important in the novel, what I should be paying attention to and why I should be invested in where the story goes. As such, about a third of the way through the novel, I set it down, prepared to move on to my next big read.

I might return to it at some point for curiosity's sake, but, for now, I think I'll set it aside unfinished.

LemonLinda says

What a story! This is a novel based on the true story of Frances Slocum (AKA Good Face, Little Bear Woman, Macanawka). As a five year old Quaker child living in the Susquehanna River Valley area, Frances was abducted by Lenapeh warriors and given to an Indian woman whose child had been killed by the "Long Knives" (American colonists in the midst of the American Revolution). Even though Frances was a red-haired "wapsini" (white person) and they were much feared, resented, and even hated by all of the natives of the area, Frances was accepted, beloved and was close to her adoption ceremony when soldiers descended and her new native mother was killed. She, however, had been sent to her "grandparents" who did adopt her. She grew to greatly love and respect her new family and their ways became her ways and those of the Slocum family grew dimmer and dimmer.

The Indian wars caused many displacements as her town was burned, her people were hunted and persecuted and the distrust for the wapsini increased. But Frances always felt connected to her former family and would

say from time to time that Quakers were peace loving and not like other wapsini. With the years that passed she married, had children, had many heartaches and joys, but grew more and more "red-hearted" and felt less of a connection to the unknown wapsini world.

Her family, however, never gave up a hope for finding her and a conviction that she remained alive. Her mother lived for many years and made the trek several times into Indian country searching as she was so determined to find and return her daughter. Before dying Mrs. Slocum made her sons promise to continue the search. And they did indeed find Frances when she was 63. Three of the four remaining siblings alive went to her and learned of her life as they told her of theirs in the years following her abduction.

This novel was told from two perspectives of Frances throughout her life and of the Slocum family as they continued the search. The author is well versed in Native American customs and practices and their reasons for actions which were often misinterpreted and seen as justification for annihilation and/or at the very least physical removal. It was an amazing story.

Pam McCombs says

This is a must read historical fiction. It was eye opening as to how the native Americans were treated from the beginning. I read this book because my cousin's father was a Miami Indian and was directly related to the main character Francis Slocum/Good Face/Maconakwa. Thom does a great job of weaving historical information into Maconakwa's tale.

Nanci says

This book appealed to me in so many ways. It deals with Indians in the general area where I live so I recognized various places that were mentioned. It happens in a time I wasn't well informed about so I learned some valuable history of the Indians and the Whites. Lastly, I loved the characters in the book and it is based on a true story - always a plus in my book (bad pun).

Ann says

Our family has held a number of family reunions at Francis Slocum State Park, but I never knew for whom the park was named. Likewise, I have never fully realized the horror inflicted upon native Americans by white settlers and by the government. This book brings it all "up close and personal" and it is written so well (in my opinion) that The Red Heart will tinge the reader's own heart, even if just a little. I admit to an inordinate number of tears during the reading of this book. I believe this country has much to answer for during our history, the slaughter and degradation of our first citizens being a prime example.

Rhonda says

After reading this novel, I came to truly respect, admire and love Frances/Good Face/Little Bear Woman. A fiery red headed Quaker who at the age of 5 was captured by Indians and taken from her large family. A

book based on true events told by a master storyteller, one I'll want to read again. 5+ Stars!

Ashley says

This is my favorite book. Words cannot express how good it is. Read it!

Herman says

Very excellent book:

To my way of thinking the American Indians Wars were this nation's longest running war, it ran over 300 years from the 1500's to nearly the 1900's. It came in three major phases the early explorers and settlers marked by De Soto's invasion of the Southeast, King Phillips War and the Pueblo uprising of 1680, that was the end of the first phase nearly a draw slight advantage to the Europeans. The next phase the clearing out of the native tribes in the Northeast and along the river and forests of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee started around the time of French-indian war and the defeat of General Braddock forces in 1755 to the trail of tears and the Indian removal act of 1830. This book "The Red Heart" deals with the native home front the price paid by women children and the elderly during part of this second phase of the Indian wars. The final phase of the wars is what most American's think of if they think of America's longest war and that is the conflict with the Northern Plains tribes the wiping out of the California natives and the Apache wars of the late 1800's. I think if I were to recommend one book to read for each of these phases I might say Coming of the Storm (Contact: The Battle for America #1) by W. Michael Gear, Kathleen O'Neal Gear for the early explorer/settler phase, then this book The Red Heart for the second expanding settler phase. I have no recommendation for the final phase so far still searching for that but The Red Heart is a really emotionally moving book and a great read both from a historical point of view and just as a nice piece of literature.

Lisa N says

3.5 stars - I've lived in Indiana my whole life but did not know the story of Frances Slocum. This book was long and descriptive (and very small type) and took much longer for me to finish than most books. But it was a very interesting account of Indian life and I learned some local history so it was worth the read.

Daniel Mendizabal says

"The Red Heart" cuenta la verdadera historia de Frances Slocum, una niña blanca que fue criada por los indios americanos en los siglos XVII y XIX.

Es una historia llena de conflictos y detalles muy específicos. Y nos enseña el valor de la perseverancia, la familia y el amor a los demás.

El hogar no es donde se nace si no donde se crece. El amor es incondicional y arde en los corazones de las personas que aman de verdad, al igual que las fogatas que calientas en las noches invernales.

Peter Kafer says

Uplifting at times and inspiring. Also heartbreaking. A well researched story about a shameful part of America's history. A must read

DaveS says

Thom does something very difficult here by telling this story from the perspective of a female American Indian. By doing his homework, he pulls it off big time. Great historical story. Well written page turner.

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

What a story!! And it's true!

This is serious historical fiction. Long and descriptive and SO worth the effort to read. I am in awe of James Alexander Thom's dedication to authenticity and his exquisitely detailed storytelling. Last year when I read Panther in the Sky, I figured none of his other books could be as good. I was wrong, lucky me. :)

The Red Heart details the life of Frances Slocum from age five until her death at age 74 in 1847. Frances was a Quaker girl in the Susquehanna Valley of Pennsylvania. She was stolen by Delaware (Lenapeh) Indians when she was five years old. To us it sounds barbaric, but many Indians felt justified in taking white children as replacements for their own children who were killed by white soldiers.

Frances quickly adapted and was assimilated into the Lenapeh life, and later, through marriage, the Miamis. She had numerous opportunities to come forth and be taken back among the white people. Instead, she carefully covered her bright red hair and avoided contact with those who might suspect who she was. Her skin was white but her heart was red, and she chose to stay with her adopted people.

The Slocums, her birth family, never stopped looking for her no matter how many years went by. Their efforts are an amazing part of the story as well. Her brothers went on numerous lengthy treks searching for her, and followed up every lead and rumor. It took real courage to travel unarmed among hostile Indians, as dictated by their Quaker beliefs. It's easy to get caught up in Frances' new life among the Indians, but the author always takes you back and reminds you that she had a wonderful family who loved her and suffered from their loss.

I just can't say enough good things about Thom and the way he brings these stories to life while remaining true to historical records. He provides detailed Author's Notes at the end of his books, where he gives his sources and clearly explains how much is fact and how much he had to fill in with his own store of knowledge and imagination.

Lynn says

This was a great book, it just got a little long for me. I would give it 4.5 stars.

Gus says

What a terrific book! I must be the only person on the planet who didn't know about Frances Slocum, so I was pleasantly surprised and intrigued by her story. What an incredible woman! Now I want to visit the State Park in Indiana and the gravesite.

I enjoy historical fiction books that teach about life in those times. In this book, the amazing ways of the Indians survival, in peace and in war times, is fascinating. I was particularly the concept of the "Three Sisters", i.e., seeds for corn, beans and squash. One of each were planted in a mound. The corn grew, the beans used the corn stalk to climb on and the squash covered the ground to protect the roots. The comparison to western ("wapsituk", white man) planting is such a stark contrast and says so much, I think, about the cultural differences.

I've read other JAT books and enjoyed this one as much as the others. I admit I read the authors notes first learn what happened to her and her legacy - just made it better while reading it.

I would recommend this book to any lover of historical fiction or anyone who has an interest in the Indians life (and plight) in the 19th century.
