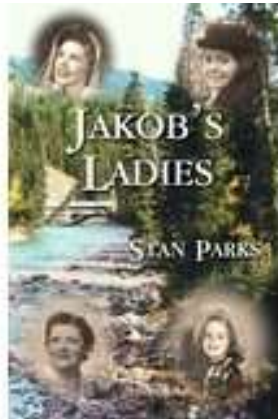


Jakob's Ladies

(Western Historical Fiction)



By Stan Parks

Reviewed by E. J. Deuber

The book cover of *JAKOB'S LADIES* gives a curious view of the story and complements the information in the blurb on the back cover giving an accurate impression of a story.

SUMMARY:

Even though, his mother had already had his life planned as well as had chosen his bride, young Jacob Miller, a graduate of dental college leaves his home in Milwaukee for Sheridan, Wyoming. His first office located in a back room of the local MD's office seemed a bit dreary, but he felt grateful to have any place to work. He and Doctor Kelly become great friends. Assisting Doctor Kelly in many surgeries, Dr. Miller DDS discovers he's also a good surgeon.

As his clientele grows in Sheridan, he travels once a year to a nearby town and offers his service. He also provides dental care to the local Indian Nation. About the time he rents an office of his own, he realizes he's in love with Liz, the local schoolteacher. They marry against his mother's wishes. (Have Conflict with religious preference.) When their baby, Beth Ann is born about a year later, they expect to live happily ever after. Real life intervenes. On Beth Ann's second Christmas, Liz succumbs to cough and fever.

"Jakob was emotionally broken, numb, as he received mourners."¹

Although struggling with Liz's death, Jakob continues to take loving care of Beth Ann with the help of the housekeeper. When members of the community convince him to participate in community affairs, he becomes a well respected community servant, and leader in the annual *Sheridan Fair*.

At seven years old, Beth Ann begs her daddy for a pony. He thinks about buying her a pony. At the perfect time, Jakob runs into an old acquaintance, Geraldine Widicker. Jakob and Liz had met James and Geraldine Widicker several years before at a birthday party for Oliver Henry, the owner a large ranch that was an overnight ride from Sheridan. At their first meeting, Geraldine discovers Jakob is a widower and Jakob learns she's a widow who now owns the Oliver Henry ranch and raised horses on it.

¹ JAKOB'S LADIES. PAGE 203

EVALUATION:

Kudos to Stan Parks. This story seems more like a memoir than a novel. The style used in introducing and developing characters is believable and charming, but sometimes too sweet. The plotting timely. This Western novel is unusual because the hero is a dentist rather than a sheriff, or marshal, and it replaces the theme of lawlessness with one of late 1800 early 1900 dentistry.

The vernacular dialog interrupts the story sometimes, but the clichés identify the period. Unable to know what year this story began until page 116 was frustrating; I kept flipping pages to find out. I would have like to have seen Beth Ann have a closer relationship with her maternal grandparents.

Gary Cooper strutted along the streets of Sheridan, Wyoming as Dr. Jakob Miller. I recommend Stan find a professional writer of western movie scripts.

Reviewed by Robert G. Hildahl

Jakob Miller arrived by stagecoach in Sheridan, Wyoming in 1895, just having graduated from the Chicago College of Dental Surgery. Sheridan was a frontier town expecting the railroad to arrive within a few months. Then Sheridan would really start growing.

The last Sheridan dentist had died four years ago. The local doctor, Doc Kelly, rented Jakob his storeroom for a dental office. Later, Jakob found an old barber chair in need of repair to use for his dentist chair. After doing a few more things to get his office ready, Jakob was ready for business.

Zeke, Jacob's first patient, walked in, grinning his toothless smile. He wanted to buy *some of those store bought teeth*, but he didn't have enough cash to pay for them. So he offered to take Jakob elk hunting in the Bighorn Mountains in exchange for his teeth. Jakob agreed.

On their hunting trip, Jakob was able to shoot a large elk. But later he was attacked by a big grizzly bear. Zeke shot the bear, but not before it shredded Jakob's right arm.

Jakob met his wife-to-be, Liz, the local schoolteacher, who helped take care of him as he recovered from his injury. Eventually they were married and moved into a small one room cabin. They were both very happy.

As time went by, Liz gave birth to a daughter, Beth Ann, and they were able to move into a much larger house. Then their happiness took a tragic turn when Liz became very ill and died, leaving Jakob and Beth Ann, who was only two years old at the time. With the help of his housekeeper, Chucha, Jakob was determined to raise his daughter by himself.

However, five years later, Jakob fell in love with Geraldine, one of England's aristocrats living in Wyoming. Beth Anne loved her, too. Before they were to be married, they traveled to England so that Jakob could meet Geraldine's family, which they did. But due to circumstances, Jakob returned home alone.

Will this be the end of their relationship? Will Geraldine ever come back to Wyoming? Will they ever get married? Read and find out.

I enjoyed reading *Jakob's Ladies*. It tells a very good story. It's never boring, and I recommend it to one and all.

This story begins in the 1890s when Jakob Miller, a recent graduate of the Chicago College of Dental Surgery, and against the advice of his parents, arrives by stagecoach in the frontier town of Sheridan, Wyoming. He sets up his temporary office in a storeroom rented from the town's only doctor, Doc Kelly. A repaired barber chair becomes his dentist chair. After putting an ad in the local newspaper announcing that he is open for business, his career as a dentist begins.

Being the only dentist in town, he has lots of patients. He helps anyone who comes to his office needing dental care, including the Indians that live outside of town. Some of his patients can pay and some cannot. Zeke, one of his first patients, can't pay for the "store-bought" teeth he wants, so he makes a deal with Jakob to take him elk hunting in the Big Horn Mountains in exchange for his teeth.

The hunting trip is successful until the end when Jakob is attacked by a grizzly bear and his career as a dentist almost comes to an end. However, one good thing comes out of this experience and that is that he meets Liz, the local schoolteacher, who helps nurse him back to health. They fall in love and get married. After a while they are blessed with a baby girl that they name Beth Ann.

The railroad comes to Sheridan and the town grows and becomes more prosperous. Jakob loves Sheridan and grows with the town, becoming more involved with its local government. When business slows down Jakob decides to go to Buffalo, a town about forty miles from Sheridan, to make some extra cash fixing teeth. They don't have a dentist there and he has many patients, but he waits too long to come back and gets caught in the first winter blizzard. Snow is everywhere and he barely makes it back home.

Doc Kelly is Jakob's best friend and they help each other out, even doing complicated surgeries together! Liz spends much of her extra time teaching adult education to those who want to learn how to read and write. Eventually, Jakob and his family move into a larger house.

When Beth Ann is two years old, the family's happiness is shattered when Liz becomes very ill and dies. Jakob is heart-broken but determined, with the help of his housekeeper, Chucha, to raise his daughter by himself.

Five years go by. Then Jakob discovers love again with Geraldine, an English lady, currently running a ranch in Wyoming. Beth Ann loves her, too, especially after she gives Beth Ann a horse and teaches her how to ride. Jakob and Geraldine speak of marriage and go to England to meet her aristocratic family.

But things happen beyond Jakob and Geraldine's control, and Jakob comes back home to Sheridan alone. He doesn't hear from Geraldine and is left wondering if he will ever see her again.

I enjoyed reading *Jakob's Ladies* and was very impressed with all the work that went into it to make it the great story that it is. I liked that Parks told the history of dentistry at that time. It was very interesting and made me realize, being a person who has had lots of dental work done during her lifetime, that I am so thankful that I didn't have to go to the dentist in those days! Also, the characters were well written--very believable. And after reading this book, I really feel that I know what the town of Sheridan was like in the 1890s.

I recommend this book for anyone who likes a little history, a love story, adventure, and humor.

Reviewed by Joyce Caudel

Jakob's Ladies is a delightful story about a young dentist trying to establish his dental practice in Wyoming in the 1800's. Mr. Parks has a way of describing the hardships of the early west that is very believable. The book is full of colorful characters both male and female.

Jakob's Ladies are as follows: Margaret, his mother. Alice, an old girlfriend, his mother won't give up on. The beautiful school teacher, Elizabeth, who nursed him back to health after a bear attack and later became his wife. Lillian Massey, better known as Diamond Lil, a patient. At her request, he put small diamonds in several of her front teeth. BethAnn, the daughter that gave him a reason to live after his dear wife, Liz, passed away. Chucha, the Polish housekeeper, whom Jakob soon learns he can't manage without. Lady Geraldine, an English aristocrat and owner of a near-by ranch, steals the heart of BethAnn and soon steals Jakob's heart also.

Jakob's Ladies is a fun read. As a modern-day dentist, I'm sure Stan enjoyed writing about dentistry in the early west.