



## **Cordelia Underwood and the Marvelous Beginnings of the Moosepath League**

by Van Reid.

Reviewed by Linda Brainerd – 1/2/2010

It is difficult to write a review of this wonderful book and its whole fascinating series - their content runs counter to many of today's most popular reads.

So perhaps I will have to start with what Cordelia Underwood lacks. It lacks sarcastic humor, steamy sex, cheap cleverness, bloody forensic work, disgusting language, twisted feminism, and horrific descriptions of murdered corpses.

You will like it if you like honest American history, good-hearted humor, lovely language, well-told old stories, courteous behavior, feminine young women, heroic behavior, interesting plots, poetic place descriptions, daring, humorous literary devises, and men.

Cordelia Underwood is the first book in a series by this author, Van Reid, a Maine resident who is self-educated with an incredible breath of knowledge of literature and of Maine and the world. His works, set in Maine in the late nineteenth century, have been compared most to Dickens, Irving, and Walpole. While each book in the series stands alone, it is best to read them in order, in my opinion, as the congeniality of the characters grow on you best that way. The book that stands outside the series is Peter Loon, which is a novel about the 'great proprietors' who owned vast tracts of land in Maine in the 1800's.

The characters of the Moosepath League are Mr. Matthew Ephram, Mr. Christopher Eagleton, and Mr. Joseph Thump; their glorious chairman Mr. Tobias Walton, and Mr. Walton's aide-de-camp, Sundry Moss. Ephram, Eagleton and Thump are a comically unworldly trio of gentlemen bachelors: Reid says he chose their names to evoke the sound of a heavy object falling down stairs!

The books of the series, beside Cordelia Underwood, are: Mollie Peer, or the Underground Adventures of the Moosepath League; Daniel Plainway, or the Holiday Haunting of the Moosepath League; Mrs. Roberto, or the Widowy Worries of the Moosepath League, and Fiddlers Green, or a Wedding, a Ball, and the Singular Adventures of Sundry Moss. Cordelia Underwood was published in 1998, and Fiddler's Green in 2004.

In Cordelia Underwood, when this young woman inherits a parcel of land in upstate Maine from a seafaring uncle, a chain of events is set in motion that involves the warmhearted, generous Mr. Tobias Walton and soon ensnares his hapless trio of friends Ephram, Eagleton, and Thump. The group finds themselves in the northern Maine woods where Cordelia's fiancé shows himself for the dastardly fellow he is. Cordelia and her shy cousin Priscilla are in danger but to the rescue comes the Maine forest guide, with the Moosepath League mopping up the damage and bringing the miscreants to justice on a train ride home.

These are books you can dip into when today's world gets too prickly. Sometimes you will laugh out loud. These books will amuse and comfort and restore your hope for the human race.

You can get Cordelia Underwood and most of the others in the series at our own library. Cordelia is ISBN 0670880973.

~Linda Brainerd

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