



# The Calling of Ella McFarland

*Linda Brooks Davis*

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## **The Calling of Ella McFarland** Linda Brooks Davis

Ella McFarland sits on the precipice of her life's dream: teaching at Worthington School for Girls. But in the male dominated world of 1905, scandal clouds her family name and may limit her to grueling farm labor in Indian Territory. As hope for Oklahoma statehood rises, a new love buds in her heart, and the woman's suffrage debate rages, Ella encounters an abused sharecropper's daughter, forcing her to make decisions she never imagined about her faith, family, and aspirations. What toll will the turmoil demand of Ella's dream? And what call might God lay on her heart?

## **The Calling of Ella McFarland Details**

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Author : Linda Brooks Davis

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# **From Reader Review The Calling of Ella McFarland for online ebook**

## **Denise Hershberger says**

Linda Brooks Davis' debut novel, *The Calling of Ella McFarland*, is beautifully written. The balance between action, romance, and conflict in this book makes it a real page turner. I was pleased to also find a strong presence of faith throughout the story as well. I love it when an author writes a book that helps me remember that God is in control and all we must do is turn to him.

There were times when I felt this book was quite predictable but Davis threw in a few twists that added just a touch of mystery to the story. But my favorite part was the romance and I thought it was great that she included twists in that aspect of the story as well. I always enjoy a book more when the couple has to actually work for a successful relationship even if I know in the end there will be a happily ever after.

There were times in the story where I did feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of conflicts with the secondary characters. I didn't have trouble keeping up so much but I did at times feel distracted from the main story. There were also more themes in this book than I usually find in a book so at times that detracted from the story as well. I loved all of the topics covered but covering one or two fewer might have helped me enjoy the book even more.

There are a few topics that are meant for more mature audiences. Attempted rape is mentioned, there is a child out of wedlock, and there is an abusive relationship. None of these were the focus of the story but conservative readers and parents of younger readers might want to know ahead of time.

Overall this was a great read and Davis is certainly an author to watch and I look forward to reading more books by her in the future.

The publisher provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

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## **Ellen White says**

1900's before Oklahoma became a state. Applying to teach, the board tells her that teacher's that marry are dismissed. The initial interview had been six weeks prior and they were still at a deadlock. It was a question of the family reputation. Which gives a humorous look at their family members, one has only to remember this was in the early 1900's. Well written and gave a good account of the strict rules of proper behavior back then, which included more than just the woman herself.

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## **Christy says**

There were many nuggets of interesting writing in this book. Davis gives excellent descriptions and a little humor here and there. I did like Ella; but I never understood how Lily became such a focal point in this book. I just didn't enjoy that aspect of it. I was expecting a read that focused on Ella teaching and learning in the same; and this read more like a family drama. I will admit to becoming lost a few times as things skipped

around but I did enjoy the writing style just not the story-line.

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## **Kay says**

### **Strong Christian female lead character**

This is a fantastic book with a strong Christian female lead character. Where life, love and problems are all laid before God to be worked out in His time and His will.

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## **Kelly says**

From that first moment when Ella McFarland faces the all-male Worthington School for Girls Board of Directors with such aplomb, you realize she's a woman worth knowing. In Ella, Linda Brooks Davis has created a complex character filled with the strength of her convictions, but tethered by the same human frailties as the rest of us. I found myself transported to turn-of-the-century Oklahoma Indian Territory through Davis's meticulous attention to detail. I saw through Ella's eyes what it meant for women like her to seek to empower girls by not only teaching them to read, but also to think for themselves. Davis does a beautiful job of weaving together a lovely romance and a powerful message of God's enduring, steadfast love in even the most trying of times. The Calling of Ella McFarland is a powerful debut effort.

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## **Cindy Nipper says**

This book was about twice the length I usually read, so it seemed to be pretty long, but it has a wonderful Christian story to tell. Throughout this story run a couple of romances, a mystery, thickening plots, a historical side story about women voting and the suffragates movement. Every thread of this story is sewn with the evils of alcohol abuse and the family members who suffer in multiple ways from it as well as the grace and mercy of a loving and benevolent and omnipotent God. Just about everything you could hope for. There may be areas that would trigger certain readers who have been abused by neglect, physical, or sexual abuse.

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## **Paula-O says**

The Calling of Ella McFarland written by Linda Brooks Davis

Linda is a first prize winner of the Jerry Jenkins Writers Guild Operation First Novel Contest..  
A first but I am sure not the last of this authors books.

A calling, This is what the Bible tells us of this: Romans 8:28

~And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.~

Ella has a strong dream and has worked toward the purpose of being a teacher, she feels this is what she should do with her life and works hard toward this goal. The Worthington School for Girls is the elite place for the girls that are well off. She has always felt this is where she should teach so when they do not accept her, she is devastated. The only good thing about her visits there with the board is that she met the newest member, Andrew.

Andrew wanted to court Ella but she was sure she should have a school and teach young girls so she started with one Lily that worked in the fields. Lily was the young abused daughter of a sharecropper. She brought Lily to her home -bathed and fed her-then started helping in anyway that she could to better the girls life. This caused her fathers abuse to be even worse not wanting charity from others.

Frank was a childhood friend that she had known many years but He proved false in his doings as an adult and hurt her in many ways...unbeknownst to her -he went after her sister secretly and caused so much heartache for the family and also the community.

The early 1900's brought Hope of Oklahoma statehood and the women's suffrage debate is raging, Ella meets women working in this and feels led to make her voice heard as she speaks for those that can't. Education is her heart's desire but there is also another desire that she cannot deny, Andrew pursues her and lets her know he is willing to let her do and be whatever she feels she has to do.

God's will is so important to Ella...She is a strong determined woman that will not let personal life deter her helping those that need her.

Her sister that she loves so strongly seems to always be doing things that hurts her. She flaunts her caring for Frank and he for her in front of the family. Viola thinks only of herself and is always shirking responsibility when it comes to helping at home, leaving Ella to help so her mother won't have to do so much.

Ella is determined to teach-to work towards women's rights yet she wonders can she have more..Andrew is such a warm caring loving person that she knows they can help one another in this journey called life.

Finally she accepts his courtship and blossoms in the days to come.

I challenge you to read this story ,learn more about Ella McFarland ,the character named for the authors Grandmother and her journey in life, I loved the fiction and facts blending into a fictional story that gives us a bit of history from an earlier time. I will be looking for other books to come and am sure you will to from Linda.

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## **Beckie Burnham says**

Debut author Linda Brooks Davis draws upon family history in her historical romance novel, *The Calling of Ella McFarland*. Set in the Oklahoma Territory in the days prior to statehood, this novel has an authenticity that fans of history will love. Along with rich historical detail, the novel has well-developed characters, a suspenseful plot full of twists and turns and a romance to cheer for! This one is perfect for those who like stories about how the west was won — in this case how women shaped America as we know it today. Recommended!

Ella McFarland is a newly graduated teacher looking for a job to expand her own horizons while assisting her struggling family. But the men of the day deem her unfit to teach the daughters of rich and powerful men. As she deals with disappointment and opposition, she senses God's call on her life — a calling to educate and empower the vulnerable around her.

*The Calling of Ella McFarland* traces the fight for women's suffrage and education of girls in the Oklahoma Territory. Although women were expected to work along side their husbands in the fields and to establish

their own businesses to help their families financially, they still had little real rights in 1905. I found the historical setting of the novel very enlightening. Just 100 years ago, women faced a very different future than what we enjoy today. The characters that Davis created, both major and minor, are interesting and complex. Their motives and emotions run the gamut of the human experience. The two main characters, Ella and Andrew, compliment each other, and their slightly unconventional relationship is one of true partnership. And Ella's faith, while tested at every turn, remains a strong thread throughout. This novel, while a historical romance, will also appeal to the suspense fan — lots of danger in these pages!

All in all, I enjoyed this first offering by Davis and look forward to more stories set in the wilds of Oklahoma.

Recommended.

Audience: adults.

(Thanks to the author for a review copy. All opinions expressed are mine alone.)

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## **Beth says**

Ella McFarland has always dreamed of teaching at Worthington School for Girls. However, her sister's illegitimate child has cast scandal over her family name. Eager to live out her calling in the classroom, rather than continue with the grueling farm work that comprises her life in the Indian Territory, Ella strives to impress the Worthington board despite her humble beginnings. Coming changes force her to re-evaluate her teaching aspirations. Oklahoma statehood is on the horizon in 1905, complicated by the raging women's suffrage debate. When Ella rescues a young, mistreated sharecropper's daughter, her calling begins to morph into something entirely new. Torn by different loyalties, new love and societal pressures, Ella struggles to find God's will amidst the chaos that surrounds her.

The Calling of Ella McFarland is a well-written and engaging story. There are many details about life in 1905, and Linda uses them to ground the reader solidly within the setting. Whether it was simpler details about household chores or details about more complex events, such as women's suffrage, Linda grounds the reader solidly in the story's setting with these details. Ella herself is caught up in a time when women had few rights, but were beginning to fight for them in earnest. Her sense of duty to her family and her desire to achieve her calling has a universal appeal.

I did feel that at times the story suffered from having too many things going on in the plot. It was part search for calling, part family drama, and part romance. Certainly a story can hold several different plot elements, but there were times that it didn't flow smoothly from one element to another. Some elements of the plot appear to take Ella by surprise, as with her joining the suffrage movement. She just happened to be at the right place at the right time, and it all fell into place that suddenly she was protesting and had joined the movement. Other times, she made decisions that didn't ring true, like going on an overnight trip with just herself and the young girl in her care. Although these instances did give me pause, typically I was able to overlook them and still enjoy the story line.

Linda's writing excelled with the interactions of the McFarland family, the only exception being how they

handled Ella's spiteful sister, Violet. I found the relationship between Ella and her parents, especially her mother, to be especially endearing and heartfelt. Special details of their traditions and daily activities added a lovely depth to their characters. The exception, as I said earlier, being her sister, Violet. One thing I dislike in stories is when a character behaves badly on numerous occasions, and no one in the family calls them on it, yet the main character could make one crabby remark or have one bad day and is called on it immediately. Then it's always a surprise when aforementioned character is doing something dubious or deceitful. Despite the way Violet's character is handled, I found the family dynamic to be engaging and realistic. Ella's twin brother is a sweet yet stubborn protector, and her younger sister a day-dreamer.

Surprisingly, I did not call the romance from the beginning as I typically can. I thought perhaps there would be a love triangle, but thankfully there is not. The romance was fairly straightforward once I understood what was going on, but I felt that it fit into the story well since the focus was more on Ella finding her calling, not a husband. It was a relief to find that her calling didn't turn into finding her husband, so kudos to Linda for not taking that easy route when writing the romance! Ella is convinced that she can't live out her calling and have a husband, which at times was frustrating, but also understandable given the timeframe and how little say women had in their lives.

Although I did wish that the story had focused more on one or two plot points, overall, there is a lot to enjoy in this story. The endearing McFarland family, Ella's bravery and insightful historical elements all come together to create an engaging, well-flowing story. I recommend this book primarily for fans of historical romances.

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### **C.J. Darlington says**

A touching story from days gone by. I love the innocence and purity of these characters... which isn't to say they don't struggle just like all of us. Linda Brooks Davis has written a novel that somehow spans the generations. Anyone from nine to ninety can read this book! She places you directly in early 1900s Oklahoma (before it became a state) with lots of accurate historical details, though she never overwhelms the reader. They flow naturally out of the story of Ella McFarland, a girl with a dream and a calling who must decide whether to follow her heart or cave to the hardships she faces.

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### **Clare O'Beara says**

This tale recounts how a young aspiring schoolteacher needs to get a job from the school board or cut cotton with her family. Ella is determined but must be of good character; she is, but her sister has had a baby out of wedlock. The so-Christian board disapproves of the whole family in principle. Ella decides to occupy herself and put her own principles to good use by feeding, cleaning up and teaching a neglected sharecropper's daughter. This girl then comes in for physical abuse by her father and Ella takes over and tends her injuries. The young student becomes a firm friend.

Later adventures cast light on the issues of women's suffrage and other advances such as driving cars. I was impressed by the account of the girls fighting off a rabid dog, and there is a great deal of other physical work required as these were days before labour-saving machinery. Ella also doesn't know if she can have a relationship and still keep the prospect of teaching; a teacher was not supposed to walk out with men. Another character is a young man who has lost an arm, which would have been more frequent for the times

than we'd realise. He needs to find an occupation.

The author has based some of the story on her own family's memories.

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## **Gay Martin says**

### **This book was captivating....**

I was hooked immediately upon starting this book. The characters were portrayed in such a way that they leapt off the page and into my heart. The struggles and joys of Ella were so real and the way the Lord transformed her touched me.....read this book, you'll be glad you did!

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## **Lisa Johnson says**

Title: The Calling of Ella McFarland

Author: Linda Brooks Davis

Pages: 376

Year: 2015

Publisher: Mountainview Books

My rating is 5+ stars.

What a captivating and thrilling journey it has been in this historical novel! There are many themes one could glean such as trusting the Lord with vengeance, not worrying about the speck in one's own eyes while there is a plank to be removed first, redemption, trust, love and hope. The story tells about family life in the early 19th century with the suffragette movement and the ruin brought to many lives through alcoholism and lawlessness.

The faith of the McFarland family is steady and the foundation the parents taught to their children and grandchildren firm. While not all members embraced it or understood it at first in the tale readers will see the trust placed in the Lord, the decision to love another above self and prayer being a major comfort in life not just when trials come. The trials that Ella endures throughout the book touch the heart and draw the audience further into the book as the plot thickens.

I loved how the author had two sets of parents who loved their children, prayed for them and had to watch with broken hearts the choices they made. Yet, both sets of parents realized the responsibility for making their choices was on the shoulders of their grown children, and the friendship was strengthened. I enjoyed how the plot reveals how God uses things in our lives to bring us to a point of understanding Him along with His work in the lives of those around us.

I am astounded that this novel is a debut novel as it read more of a story from the pen of an author of experience. The author shares her love of reading and how family history was passed down through the generations. While the story contains a couple antagonists it is really the remarkable redemption in the hearts and lives of characters that portrayed both the good and evil that can be within the human heart. I loved how the author describes the reality in many ways of a person who follows the Lord including when bad, heart-breaking or evil experiences touch their lives.

I really cannot wait to see what will proceed next from this new author. She has gained a dedicated follower from this reader for sure!

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### **Mbetke says**

A touching story, well written, engaging! I enjoyed it.

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### **Becky Smith says**

This is a wonderful historical fiction that has so many wonderful truths in it. Some of my favorite lines are:

"The Lord sees what we cannot. So we trust Him." And this one:

"The cross that He gave may be heavy

But it ne'er outweighs His grace.

The storm that I feared may surround me,

But it ne'er excludes His face."

And this: "God's goodness runs through every hard place like veins of gold... Hard as it is to hear, He brings His loved ones closer through suffering."

I won this book at a FaceBook party and I highly, highly recommend it! I chose freely to leave my own honest review.

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