**Press Kit for Sheila Myers, Author**

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*“History, like love, is so apt to surround her heroes in an atmosphere of imaginary brightness.” James Fenimore Cooper, The Last of the Mohicans.*

1. **Author Bio:** Sheila Myers is a professor at a regional community college in Upstate New York where she lives with her husband and three children. Her first foray into writing, Ephemeral Summer, was a novel that explored her own passion for the environment in the beloved Finger Lakes region. In the trilogy on the Durant family, Myers tackles the complicated history of the development of the Adirondack Wilderness and the pioneers that pursued their vision of what some called ‘A Central Park for the World’. She has kept a blog about her research journey as well as fastidious notes on her sources for historic characters portrayed in her novel. “Blogging about where I have gone, what libraries and museum archives I have visited, as well as the people that I have been researching has been the most interesting part about writing this novel on the Durant family and their connections.”
2. **Website** address is <http://www.wwdurantstory.com/>
3. **Author** website: <http://www.sheilamyers.com/>
4. **Possible Questions:**
	1. What made you decide to write this historical fiction on the Durants?
	2. Where are these ‘Great camps’ you write about in the Adirondacks?
	3. Where did you start with your research and what has been the most difficult part of your research journey?
	4. What is the most interesting thing you have found out so far?
	5. What are your plans for another book in the saga?
	6. What resources are you accessing for your research?
5. **What makes this story unique?**
	1. For me the story of the Durants took on many interesting twists as I started to get into my research. I began writing a story about a man and his mistress sequestered away in a cabin in the woods, not realizing myself the historical significance of the Durant family. William’s father, Dr. Thomas C. Durant has been the subject of a PBS series on the building of the Transcontinental Line, and an AMC t.v. series, Hell on Wheels. I discovered this months into my own research on the book. There have been a few biographies about William (the last one done in 1980) but no fictional accounts of his life. William was made famous because of his influence on the rustic architectural style in the Adirondacks. Three of his ‘Great Camps’ still survive today. But most intriguing to me is his relationships with his father and his sister Ella who was an artist as well (author). Ella sued William for her share of the inheritance and William ended up bankrupt in the later part of his life. All of the family drama behind these facts make for great story-telling.
	2. Another interesting aspect to the story is the history of the land use policies in Adirondack Wilderness itself. This area of New York that was in many ways like the wild west during the early-mid 1800s. Many settlers were squatters, there were few enforced regulations on game hunting and trapping, and as a result, many animals such as the beaver, wild cats, and wolves went extinct, and major lumber and mine companies were able to buy the land cheaply, strip it of the resources, and abandon it without paying taxes. This was an area ripe for land speculation after the civil war. It wasn’t until 1894 that New York State started passing legislation to buy up and protect the forests from development, over-harvesting of lumber, and general degradation of the habitat and wildlife. Even then, the state authority was weak and wealthy businessmen of the time: the Vanderbilts, Morgans, Webbs, etc. were buying up large land holdings as private preserves in an attempt to keep everyone else out.
	3. Finally, I have uncovered some interesting new pieces of information about the Durants and the historical figures they interacted with. The friendship between Ella Durant, a famous writer, and Poultney Bigelow, a journalist, I discovered, lasted decades and at one time they were in love with each other. Why they never married is the mystery I am trying to unravel. The divorce between William and his wife Janet is another mystery I am working to uncover and have had some luck finding information that was never available before. The process of historical research intrigues me I think because it is in so many ways like scientific research. The quest for information never ends. That is one reason I dedicated the first book in the saga: [Imaginary Brightness](http://www.sheilamyers.com/books.html) to librarians.