

*The Seamstress of New Orleans*, Diane McPhail

The interesting title and cover of this book originally led me into taking it home to read. The year is 1900, and both Constance and Alice find themselves missing a husband, and both with a child on the way. Alice, a seamstress self-taught with much instruction from her mother, had moved to the city of Chicago and found a position altering suits and clothing in a large department store. There she meets Mr. Butterworth and soon after marries. He travels a great deal and at one point, does not return home. After reporting his absence to the police with little effect, Alice decides she must search for Mr. Butterworth herself, following the vague comments he had made about a mother and his job in Memphis. When Alice hears little to help her in her search in Memphis, she continues her trip to New Orleans.

Constance lives with her husband and children in New Orleans. She feels a deep secret in her marriage, and secretly follows her husband, Benton, to work one morning. Constance has no time to absorb the shock of what she sees before Benton is killed, and the men who killed him are not content with knowing he is dead, they want what he owed. Both women will be drawn to their own conclusions, and a third woman will draw their lives together as she encourages Constance to engage Alice in the creation of a costume, a ball gown for Mardi Gras.

Eureka Public Library has a copy of *The Seamstress of New Orleans*, and a copy of *The Abolitionist's Daughter*, McPhail's first novel.