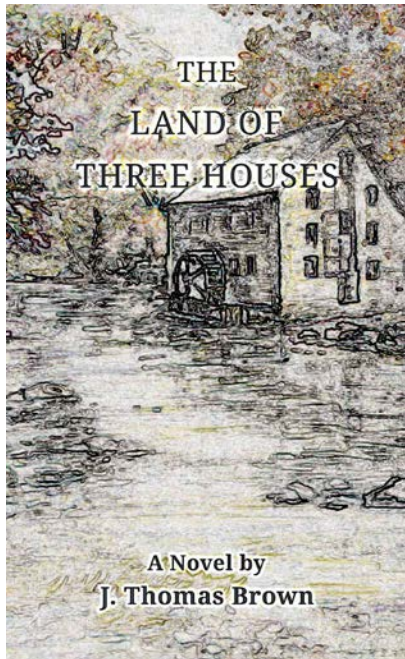


J. Thomas Brown lives and writes in Richmond, Virginia. Place is an important component of his fiction and creative nonfiction. He had moved seventeen times by his mid-twenties and lived in some unusual dwellings, including the miller's house at an old gristmill built in 1758 in the Tohickon Valley. The valley was dammed and flooded to create a recreational lake in the 1960s. The farms, grist, and sawmills, are gone. The book, a historical fiction, explores the valley beneath the lake and the innovation and industry that grew the nation during the time known as The Rage for Wheat.

His poems and short stories have appeared in several Moonstone Press collections and numerous magazines and anthologies. He is the author of Mooncalf poetry collection, Land of Three Houses and Hole in the Bone, and Saint Elmo's Light, a short story collection. His writing often visits past and future worlds in the remote places of the earth. He is passionate about social justice.



William Sterner is seeking the better life but makes mistakes along his way. The novel begins in Pennsylvania in the late 1700s, in a place called Nockamixon by the Lenape, meaning Land of Three Houses. He elopes with the daughter of a wealthy British sympathizer, Mary Bartholomew, and they run away to start a flour mill on the Wissahickon River near Philadelphia. Their mill is a success; William buys a ship, filling the hold with 800 barrels of Pennsylvania flour to sell in Livorno, Italy.

When he reaches Livorno, Napoleon had arrived just before him, and his ship and crew are captured by the French. As he negotiates to win them back, he meets the notorious writer, Madame de Staël, succumbing to her charms. Madame de Staël once said, "In matters of the heart, only the improbable is true." The improbable becomes true, and he must learn what really matters in life.