

# ASHLEY ENGLISH'S WINDING PATH TO THE WRITING LIFE

by Frances Nevill

Ashley English begins her days at the end of a forested lane in a house that sits atop a knob adjacent to Mt. Pisgah. Often, her mornings begin collecting eggs from her chickens, checking on her beehives, vegetable gardens and other pursuits this Candler homesteader has brewing.

But her days also begin with the ebb and flow of raising a young preschooler—runny noses, making forts, keeping up with kid activities, laundry. All that stuff that so many parents can understand. Ashley's life is kind of an amalgam of many paths combined—parent, homesteader, and writer, which is no doubt part of what makes her successful blog, *Small Measure*, and her seven books, including the popular *Homemade Living Series* of DIY homesteading books, relatable to so many people. And according to Ashley, it was that exploration of jobs and roles along with taking risks that brought her to where she is today.

"I originally studied sociology and nutrition and worked in a doctor's office as a medical assistant and nutritional consultant," she recalls. "I loved my job but I knew it wasn't what I wanted to do forever. I was thinking about doing some other things and during that time I met my husband, Glenn English (an artist and co-collaborator of Ashley's) and we got married." Glenn and Ashley had been spending time settling into country life on his property in Candler and considering bringing the farm back to life.



full-time and Ashley put in her notice at work that she would be leaving.

"At about that same time, I was contacted by a senior editor at a publishing company who had an idea for a homesteading book series. They wanted me to write about topics that I was already doing. I had the blog for about a year, and the publisher took a

gamble on me."



The success of the book became the first of four in the *Homemade Living Series* that includes books about raising chickens, raising bees, starting a home dairy as well as canning and preserving.

Her writing journey began as a teenager. "I wrote quite a bit high school," she recalls. "We moved around a lot and I ended up attending three high schools. And at each school I always served on the journalism staff. As a young adult, I worked in nonprofits and natural food stores and I didn't do a lot of writing professionally. So blogging got me back into the habit of writing."

One of Ashley's most recent books, *Handmade Gatherings*, published in April 2014, celebrates those collaborative moments where friends and food come together. The book features easy, affordable ways to entertain with friends through creative potlucks and informal get-togethers. *Quench*, published in October of 2014, takes readers through the process of making homemade beverages.

With many new books on the horizon for Ashley (she has titles set to publish over the next four years), she keeps in touch with her readers through her blog, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. And regardless of the book project at hand, she strives to keep her original message of *Small Measure* on the minds of readers.

"We are indeed homesteaders," she says, "but I don't want my readers to feel overwhelmed by that. I really want to emphasize the power of

community. For example, if I am struggling with growing particular crops, why not patronize a farmer down the road who is having success with that particular crop. Don't feel like you have to keep a flock a chickens if that isn't really of interest to you. There are ways to support farmers, growers, crafts people who are good at what they do. No one has to do it all."

Visit Ashley English [smallmeasure.com](http://smallmeasure.com). All of Ashley's books are available in bookstores and online at Amazon.com.

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