



Pages of the Past

CELEBRATING
HISTORICAL FICTION

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From the Editor

Hello historical fiction lovers!

We're coming to you a few days late and not on our usual Friday. There was a glitch that needed to be worked out and I didn't catch the glitch until I went to put the newsletter together Friday morning. Since my mother passed on November 12th, I have to admit that I haven't been on the top of my game and didn't catch the problem earlier.

But, as everyone else in Pages of the Past knows, we all have storms to weather and get through. And we all do. One foot in front of the other. Despite days filled with tears, or sleepless nights from other unresolved problems, none of us are immune. And as our reading of historical fiction proves to us – the world keeps spinning and life goes on.

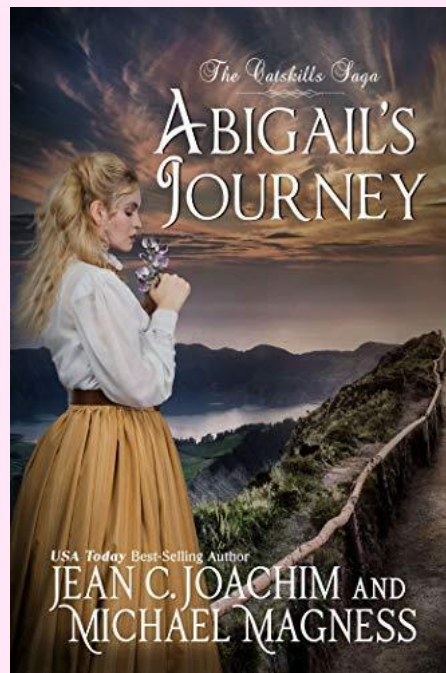
Speaking of reading, keep reading and meet Eileen Donovan, the author of a wonderful book, *Promises*, that has already won awards and been a finalist in several other places. I think this book that is so wonderfully written and well-researched is going to be one to watch.

New books keep rolling out. This week, today in fact, Jean Joachim releases *Abigail's Journey*, set in Colonial America. Jean is the administrator of a group of us that write to weekly prompts, Tuesday Tales. When I read her weekly snippets, I'm always impressed with the quality of her writing, so I'll be excited to read this newest release.

Stay tuned for future issues –In the weeks ahead we have author interviews scheduled with Angela Petch, Linore Burkard, Celia Martin, and a lot more!

Trisha

New Releases



[Abigail's Journey](#)

Jean Joachim

It's 1786, Colonial America.

Abigail Chesney has it all; a husband more loving than she could have dreamt, three healthy children, and a house on thriving farmland. She's happy in her little world until it crashes down around her.

Losing almost everything tests Abby in ways she never expected. Can she learn to accept what she can't change and trust those she loves? Relying on help from the people of Fitch's Eddy, a tiny Catskill logging town, Abby discovers her own strength. Will Fate's cruel blows crush her? Or will love give her a new reason to go on?

Abigail's Journey -- a heartfelt, sweet, historical romance, where the flavor of the past leaps off the page.

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Language and Idioms



Was It Even Used Then?

Words and phrase can be something that easily trips up historical fiction authors. Common phrases used today can easily sneak into our period writing. I was caught on this just last week. I brought a snippet from an early 1930's short story to my writing group. In it, the characters went to one of the just-released Shirley Temple movies. One of the members asked, "Would they have called it 'the movies'?" I remember my Grandma always talking about going to the 'picture shows'." Yikes! She caught a good one, one that had slipped by me completely.

Granted, some instances are fairly minor and may not raise an issue with readers. But sometimes it can be a glaring problem. I've also seen where readers report that an issue was major enough that they shut the book and don't read any further.

What do you do if you're unsure? One of my favorite sites is the Online Etymology Dictionary. You can search a word for its earliest known use. For instance, if I type in 'heebie-jeebies', I learn:

heebie-jeebies (n.)

1923, said to have been coined by U.S. cartoonist Billy De Beck (1890-1942), creator of "Barney Google."

So, I can definitely use this in my short story set in 1928. While the word most likely wouldn't have been used in 1922, if I'm writing a tale set in that year, I can probably still get by with it. It's going to be close enough to the time period that most readers would still feel as if they're in the time. However, Mittie Ann, the girl that came to Texas in the 1850s in a covered wagon would not have used that phrase.

How Much Period Language to Use

Another part of the language that becomes a balancing act is how much period language to use. M.K. Tod, on A Writer of History, speaks of using dialogue in historical fiction. They write:

<https://awriterofhistory.com/2015/03/24/7-elements-of-historical-fiction/>

Dialogue – dialogue that is cumbersome and difficult to understand detracts from readers' enjoyment of historical fiction. Dip occasionally into the vocabulary and grammatical structures of the past by inserting select words and phrases so that a reader knows s/he is in another time period. Don't weigh the manuscript down or slow the reader's pace with too many such instances. And be careful. Many words have changed their meanings over time and could be misinterpreted.

In '7 Tips on Accuracy and Authenticity', Susanna Calkins, with a Ph.D. in history, talked about how accurate her first novel, *A Murder at Rosamund's Gate*, was going to be. She wrote:

<https://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/guide-to-literary-agents/how-to-write-historical-fiction-7-tips-on-accuracy-and-authenticity>

When I was first dreaming about my story, even before I had worked out the plot or characters, I knew one thing for sure: By gum, this novel would be accurate. Every detail, every word, would be accurate. Historians everywhere would use my book in their classes and would revel in my accurate tale.

That idea lasted about two seconds.

Not only would using accurate language make my story unnecessarily pedantic and cumbersome, but many seventeenth-century words and phrases don't translate readily today. Certainly, I could say "The footpad bit the Roger, tipped the cole to Adam Tyler, and then took it to a stauling ken." But I have a feeling modern readers might not understand that I was saying that a thief has stolen a bag, passed it to a fence, who in turn sold it to a house that receives stolen goods. Unless my editor let me write a companion volume with glossary and explanatory footnotes, this isn't too feasible.

Just as in life, where sometimes an issue becomes a balancing act, so is it in writing historical fiction. We need to use enough language of the times, to help frame the time period and help the reader feel as if they're really there in the midst of the tale, without being so accurate that as Susanna Calkins says, it becomes "pedantic and cumbersome." And we also want to make sure that the phrases we're using to help set the tone of the story are accurate and of the period we're writing.

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Author Spotlight: Eileen Donovan



Hello Eileen, welcome to Pages of the Past. We're looking forward to chatting with you today and hearing more about your writing and your book *Promises*. You've said that you've been writing for most of your life in one way or another. How has writing filled your life over the years?

I've always enjoyed telling stories. I guess that's part of my Irish storyteller heritage. In the past, I enjoyed making up stories for little children I babysat for about stray stuffed animals or dolls, or the adventures of runaway fire engines and trains. Of course, as I got older, I started writing some of the stories down, but never considered them good enough to be considered for publication. After college, I worked for an advertising agency and started writing many of my clients' ad copy. Since my clients were business-to-business ones, the copy was technical and very different from my adolescent fantasies. But it showed me that I could write something that was publishable, which eventually led me to revert to making up stories again and pursuing publication for them.

In *Promises*, how did the story of 13-year old Lizzie and her 9-year old brother, Colin, come to you?

I watched a documentary on PBS, "Lost Children of the Empire" about British children who were exported from Great Britain to the British colonies in Canada, Australia, South Africa. In the beginning, this was done by private, mostly religious, groups and most of the children were orphans and homeless, living on the streets. However, that morphed into taking children away from prostitute mothers, destitute families, criminal parents, etc. Although the people in charge of these programs felt they were doing a service to the children by sending them to a better place and a better life, this was often not the case. The children were frequently abused, and some died while in the care of their new "parents." This emigration program spanned the years from the late 1800's to 1968. After seeing this program, it stayed on my mind for about three years. No one I talked to had ever heard about it so I decided I should write about it and bring it to light, focusing on when the government took over during World War II and formed the Children's Overseas Reception Board. The focus was to keep the children safe, but the abuses were the same. Of course, Lizzie

and Colin are from my imagination, but their ordeal is based on facts gleaned from extensive research into this program.

Can you tell us about Lizzie?

Lizzie is a 13-year-old girl who has been promised a wonderful experience in Canada. The government man who came to their house promised her and Colin a memorable holiday. A chance to see the Rocky Mountains, meet Canadian Mounties and real Indians, and have remarkable stories to tell her friends when she returned. And since the war would only last a few months, at most, it would be a once in a lifetime opportunity. Lizzie, adventurous by nature, always read about faraway places with dreams of seeing them one day. So, when this opportunity arose, she begged her mother to let them go.

What drew you to set *Promises* in the 1940s – early World War II time frame?

That's when the German Blitz was really gearing up and the time when parents were most fearful for their children's safety. Thousands of parents applied to have their children admitted to the program, so it seemed a logical place to set the story. There was also a lot written about this government program and the fate of the children who participated.

Your main character, Lizzie, is 13-years old. Did that affect your research? Do you think that the filter of having a younger protagonist changed the viewpoint on what was happening?

Lizzie's age definitely affected everything. I wanted her to be old enough to assume responsibility for her brother, Colin, and take it seriously. I also wanted her to be able to assess the situation once she got to Canada and be able to logically find a solution to their situation. Her age didn't really affect my research since children of all ages participated in this program and were all subject to some of the abuses Lizzie and Colin suffered. And of course, they all had the experience of crossing the Atlantic littered with U-Boats.

How long did it take you to research and write *Promises*?

I researched for about a year, then took roughly another year to write, edit, and revise.

Do you have any other historical fiction works in progress?

Absolutely. I'm currently querying agents with a manuscript set in 1944 Montana about a young cocky cub reporter who wants to write for a major metropolitan paper, but when she lands the story of the year has to decide whether to follow her dream or her heart. I'm also working on a story set in 1950's New York City about a young girl who, encouraged by Harriet Quimby's snub at conventions, decides to pursue her goal of marriage against all odds and social taboos.

Is there anything you'd like to share with us that I didn't ask you about?

Yes. I wanted to mention that *Promises* won the 2019 Marie M Irvine Award for Literary Excellence, and was one of the top ten finalist for the 2020 Author Elite Awards, as well as a finalist for the 2019 Historical Fiction Author Academy Awards.

Thank you for joining us today, Eileen. We appreciate your time. Please leave a few links where our readers can find you and your books, and we'll go follow and friend you.



[You can get *Promises* here.](#)

You can find Eileen Donovan here:

<https://www.eileentdonovan.com>

Facebook : Eileen Donovan

Twitter: @edonovan1

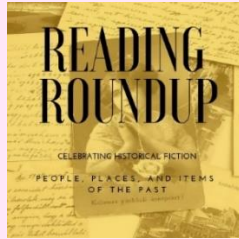
BIO: 100-200 words: Although born in New York City, where she spent most of her life, Eileen Joyce Donovan has lived in six states and visited most of the others. She earned her MA in English at Northern Arizona University. In one way or another, she's been writing her entire life, whether it was imaginative stories for friends, or advertising copy for industrial clients.

But she never felt her stories were "good enough" to be published. At the persistent urging of her late husband, she finally agreed to seriously edit and revise one of them and take the plunge. Although accepted for publication, the publishing company folded before the book went to print. However, this gave her the courage to pursue her dream of becoming a published author.

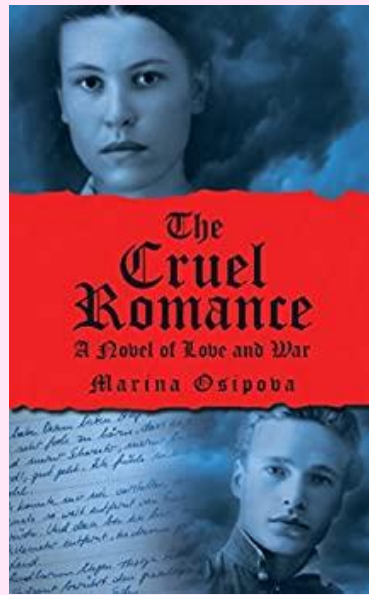
Years later, her persistence paid off and her debut historical novel, *Promises*, was published, in July 2019 from Waldorf Publishing (now a hybrid publisher) and won the 2019 Marie M Irvine Award for Literary Excellence. Her non-fiction essay, "Marley" appeared in the anthology, *Pawsome Friends*. She currently lives in Manhattan, New York and is a member of Authors Guild, Women's National Book Association, and The Historical Novel Society.

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The 1940s



The Cruel Romance

Marina Osipova

On October 1941, in a small village outside Moscow, Serafima bids farewell to Vitya, a Soviet officer going to the front. With only moments left together, she places a cross around her beloved's neck and reluctantly releases him into a cruel world where nothing is certain, especially whether she will ever see him again.

Days later, Germans invade her village and take over her tiny house. Serafima and her mother must comply with orders, endure abuse, and stay put, or their village will be annihilated.

As World War II intertwines Serafima's and Vitya's life with that of a young German violinist and a Russian intellectual, their destinies are irrevocably altered. Can they rise to the challenge of agonizing moral choices and learn to forgive and love again?

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