



Pages of the Past

CELEBRATING
HISTORICAL FICTION

Vol. 1, No. 1, April 5, 2019

In this issue:

- Catalogs of a Vintage Nature
- Author Spotlight: Lindsay Downs
- Reading Roundup: Books from the 1900s & 1910s

From the Editor

Right now I'm in the middle of reading Stephen King's *On Writing*. Goodness, the book was published in 2000 and I'm *just now* reading it? After it's been recommended to me several (many) times? This is one of those kick-myself moments for waiting until now. You don't need to read or write in his genre to learn more about the writing process.

King shares that *Carrie* "remained on the back burner for awhile, simmering away in that place that's not quite the conscious but not quite the subconscious, either." How many of us can relate to having books in that same space?

He went to talk about how he finally sat down one night to start the story. He typed three single-space pages of a first draft, didn't like them and threw them in the trashcan. The next day when he got home from his day job (yes, Stephen King had a day job too, imagine!) his wife had retrieved the pages, read them, and encouraged him to finish.

He shared that it was a difficult story to write – "as if I were wearing a rubber wet-suit I couldn't pull off." But finish it he did. He goes to write:

"...none of them taught me the things I learned from Carrie White. The most important is that the writer's original perception of a character or characters may be as erroneous as the reader's. Running a close second was the realization that stopping a piece of work just because it's hard, either emotionally or imaginatively, is a bad idea. Sometimes you have to go on when you don't feel like it, and sometimes you're doing good work when it feels like all you're managing is to shovel shit from a sitting position."

Words to take to heart. I'm guilty of the same thing. There are many partially started writing projects that I let go to the wayside because they're being difficult, the words aren't flowing, the characters are being obstinate. I need to listen to the master here and forge ahead.

What about you? Do you have stories or characters that don't cooperate either?

Trisha

texastrishafaye@yahoo.com

[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)

Catalogs of a Vintage Nature

Trisha Faye

Catalogs of a Vintage Nature

Not usually a person that spends much time perusing the latest catalog of retail delights, it amazes me how many hours I can lose browsing through old catalogs – old as in 70-80-100 years ago.

Amazingly, catalogs in the US began earlier than the well-known Sears & Roebuck vintage editions. *Collectors Weekly* reports that “Benjamin Franklin is thought to have produced the first catalog in colonial America. His 1744 publication listed 600 academic books available for purchase. Over 100 years later, luxury jewelry retailer Tiffany & Co. published the first mail-order catalog in the United States, known as the "Blue Book."

Collectors Weekly goes on to tell about Aaron Montgomery Ward, who was a traveling salesman in the late 1860s. After traveling the rural areas for many years, hawking wares for various Chicago-based dry-goods companies and seeing how much the small rural stores marked up the merchandise to the detriment of the customer, he had the innovative idea about establishing a mail-order general-goods business. In 1872 he started Montgomery Ward & Company, launching with a single sheet he published himself that described 163 available items. Customers would order what they desired and pick up the items at the nearest railroad depot.

It would be many years later before Sears got into the action. In 1888, Richard Warren Sears, a railroad station agent, purchased a discarded shipment of watches. He started his mail-order business selling the watches through a catalog. The next year, Alvah C. Roebuck joined him. In 1893, they renamed their venture Sears, Roebuck & Company and in 1894 they produced a 322-page catalog. Richard Sears illustrated the cover. According to Sears Archives, on the cover, he proudly proclaimed: "Book of Bargains: A Money Saver for Everyone," and the "Cheapest Supply House on Earth," claiming that "Our trade reaches around the World."

The first catalog included products such as sewing machines, sporting goods, musical instruments, saddles, firearms, buggies, bicycles, baby carriages, and men's and children's clothing. The 1895 catalog offered groceries, stoves dolls, and eyeglasses.

By 1905, the Sears & Roebuck catalog also featured full color and texture wallpaper samples, along with a swatch of material used in their men's suits. The next year they added paint samples and by 1904 through 1940 you could even purchase ready-to-build kit homes through the mail-order catalog.

You can read [Collectors Weekly report](#) about catalogs here.

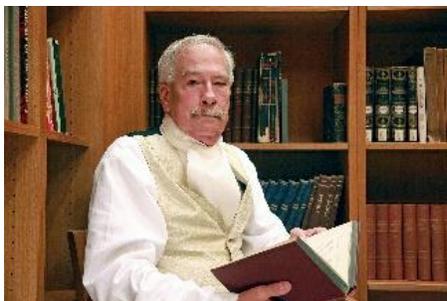
The Sears Archives ['History of the Sears Catalog'](#) is here.

For some great shots of old catalogs and pages from old catalogs, check out the [Flickr Historical Catalogs group](#).

[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)



While I learned about Lindsay Downs from reading some of his Regency writings, I've since learned that he is a master craftsman with whatever project he undertakes. His Upson Family Mysteries, set in the 1960s, are just as enjoyable. I'm happy to introduce you to Lindsay Downs this week. Welcome, Lindsay!



Lindsay, what drew you to write historical fiction?

The challenge of having to dig into the past to uncover even the tiniest fact which will bring the story to life. For example, in one of the books in the Upson PI Mystery series, the time frame includes December 7, 1941, the day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. I wanted to find something which was being broadcast on the radio that would have been interrupted so the announcer could tell the listening audience what was happening. I did, a

professional football game being played in New York City between the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants.

In the Upson Family Mystery series, I have the two main characters following the trail of a murderer to South Vietnam in 1964. Researching the weapons the American soldiers used, much to my amazement in 1964 the M14 was the one, not the M16 as I had thought. In one of the following books, I have a suspect arrested. This person, being a soldier had his Article 31 Rights read to him. However, it would take 16 years before the police could read the Miranda Rights to a civilian when they are arrested.

Got to love research.

Do you have a favorite era to write in? What do you enjoy most about that era?

Currently, I'm writing two series. The first An Upson PI Mystery starts in 1940. I'll continue this series up to the early 1960s. In these books, I have to be careful in regards to technology. The same for the cars, clothes, weapons. Not to mention questioning a suspect. They may even get tuned up in a broom closet with a phone book which leaves no marks.

The other one, An Upson Family Mystery starts in 1964 and will continue to the late 1990s. Here we have advances in technology. Fax machines. Copiers. Not to mention the cars, different clothing. Even in

the field of medicine, there were advancements compared to the other series. Then there's the Vietnam War which comes into the books. Later, anti-war protests.

Do I like one over the other? No. They both are challenging.

Do you have any favorite methods you use in researching your books?

Not really. I'll use the search engine, Bing, type in what I'm looking for then see what comes up. Sometimes one response will lead to another then another.

If I think there might be a need to use the information later one I'll print out the important parts of the search.

Tell us about one of your favorite characters from one of your books.

Singling out one of my four main characters could be detrimental to my health. You see, they are private detectives and carry firearms. If I pick one then the other three might come after me. That I wouldn't like. So let's start with Norton Upson. After college, he spent ten years in the Army before starting his detective agency. He hired his high school sweetheart, Maggie Neilson, as his office manager/secretary. Of course, they get married partway through the book, *The Case of the Boarding House Murder*. In short order, she hangs up her typewriter and picks up a pistol and becomes a private detective with Norton.

Their first son and my third favorite character, Edward, graduates college then becomes a UH-1 pilot in South Vietnam. Wounded he returns home and joins the family business. In his first case, he meets Sally Grayson, my fourth favorite, who is attending night school while working as a unit secretary at a Los Angeles hospital. In her spare time, she's trying to what happened to her older brother in South Vietnam. She, in turn, joins the detective agency and with Edward end up in South Vietnam where they close one case and start hunting down her brother.

Like I said at the beginning, how can I pick one? I love all four of them

What challenges have you found with writing historical fiction?

Being not only accurate to the year the book takes place in but even the month. Example- In *The Case of the Missing Spook* I needed to find two songs that were released in 1964 and would have been on Armed Forces Radio Service in August. After about an hour of searching, I find them-*Surfin' USA* by The Beach Boys and *I Want to Hold Your Hand* by The Beatles.

When Sally Grayson became a private detective she needed a pistol. My first thought was a Colt Pocket Hammerless .32 caliber. The problem with that, the weapon was discontinued after 1945 and we are now in 1964 so I couldn't use that one. So I made life and research easy for me. She and Edward both carry the Colt Commander 9mm.

Do you have a current historical fiction work in progress? Can you give us a little teaser about it and let us know when we can look for it?

As of today (written January 27, 2019), I sort of have an idea for the next book. This will be an Upson Family Mystery and set in Los Angeles in September 1964. Instead of Edward Upson and Sally Grayson solving the case Edward's young brother, Thomas, and his twin Norton, Jr. will be handling this one. I've chosen them for several reasons but the primary one is because the person who was assaulted is a high

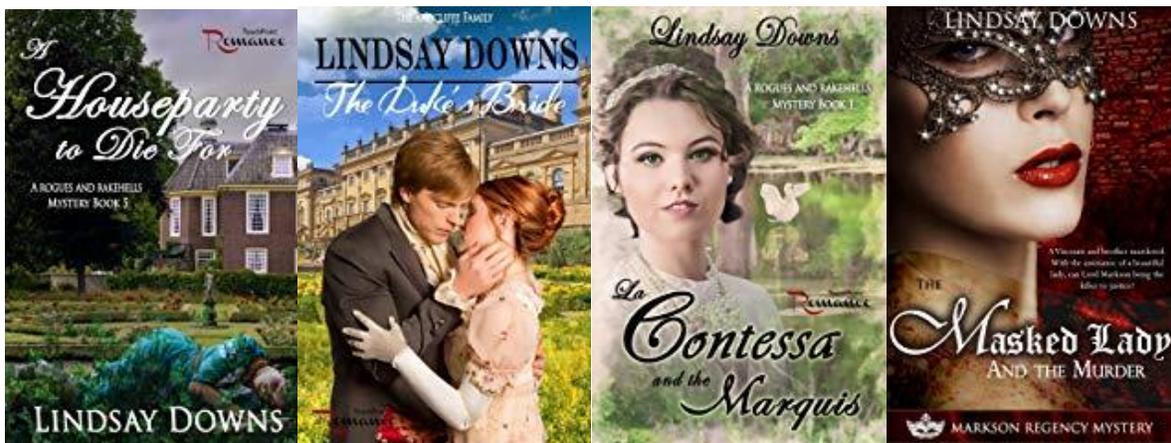
school friend of theirs. I might also include hate crime into the storyline which means the criminal could be charged under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That's about all I can say at this time.

Do you write in any genres other than historical fiction?

In the past, I had tried my hand at several different ones but never felt all that comfortable writing them. I am very comfortable with what I write now.

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

Besides the two series, I've talked about I also write Regency mystery and Regency romantic suspense. If you were to ask me which I liked writing the best, that would be hard to answer.



You can find Lindsay's books here:

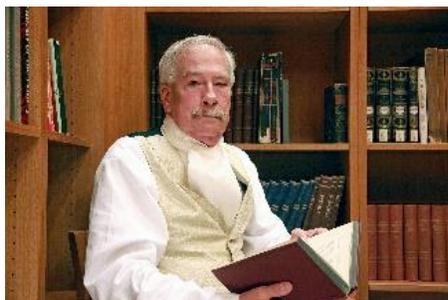
Regency romantic suspense: <https://tinyurl.com/y8uyldv7>

You can find Lindsay here:

Lindsay Downs Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lindsay.downs.7>

Norton Upson Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/norton.upsonpa.58>

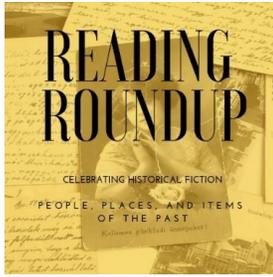
ABOUT LINDSAY DOWNS:



Who doesn't love a really good story? I sure do and that's why I enjoy writing them. I've been writing since 2006 with my first contract in 2008.

Being retired I get to spend 6 to 8 hours a day writing.

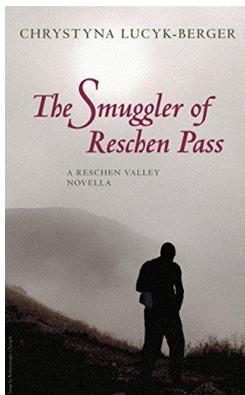
Would I trade what I do for something else? Not on your life. Just think, I get paid to kill people. On paper that is. And I've come up with some really imaginary ways.



The 1900s & 1910s

The Smuggler of Reschen Pass

Chrystyna K. Lucyk-Berger



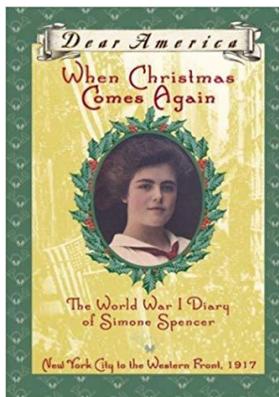
Pride goes before the fall.

1900s Austrian Tyrol. Fritz Hanny, confident and optimistic, enjoys the prestige of belonging to one of the most respected families in the Reschen Valley. When he falls in love with Cecilia, a young girl in a neighboring village, he is certain he has found his purpose in life. Already on his way to making his own fortune, Fritz pursues Cecilia only to be cut down by one external force after another. Disappointment, violence, and conflict turn Fritz into a desperate man. When the Great War ends, Fritz is trapped between two borders: on one side, the family he has. On the other, the family he wants. This is a stand-alone novella and a prequel to NO MAN'S LAND, the first book in the Reschen Valley series.

When Christmas Comes Again:

The World War 1 Diary of Simone Spencer

Beth Seidel Levine



In another very special Dear America Christmas story that crosses the ocean during WWI, Simone Spencer leaves home and keeps a diary of her life as a brave "Hello Girl" on the Western Front.

In April of 1917, Simone Spencer's world changes. Her beloved brother Will goes off to war, and Simone seeks a way to help. The passionate daughter of a feisty French mother and a rebellious upper-class father, Simone is not cut out for the society life she is meant to lead.

So, when General Pershing calls for French-speaking American girls to operate the switchboards on the Western Front, Simone becomes one of the first brave "Hello Girls" whose courage helped lead the Allies to victory. In the end, Christmas brings the Spencers back together again.

Authors: Do you have a historical fiction book or short story that you'd like featured in Pages of the Past? Email me at texasrishafoy@yahoo.com to see about scheduling your book or short story in a future issue.

[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)

Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>

Authors – Have a new release coming up?

Each week Pages of the Past features up to one new release. Authors, if you have a new historical fiction that is slated to release soon and would like to have it as the featured book, email me at texastrishafaye@yahoo to see if a spot is open near your release date.