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From the Editor

I just returned from a quick trip to Arizona for my grandson's ninth birthday. When I travel, I always take a writing project with me – either a first draft of an essay, editing a WIP, or brainstorming an article or query letter. So, there I am – walking through the airport with a folder stuffed full of plenty of work to keep me busy on the plane, and...books! And of course, even though I don't *need* any new books, one simply can't walk past the tables and shelves teeming with new volumes.

Yes, Mama came home with a new book. *Fly Girls: How five daring women defied all odds and made aviation history*. While biographical and not a historical fiction, there was one part in there that spoke to the historical fiction author in me. It mentions Raymond Orteig, who offered a prize of \$25,000 to the first aviator of any allied country crossing the Atlantic, in one flight, from Paris to New York or New York to Paris. That's a lot of money in 1919 dollars and this Orteig Prize "sparked air fever and the aerial competition that would come to consume Americans during the next decade."

What was most interesting to me was Orteig's history. "...He was a shepherd's son, raised in a small town in the Pyrenees, near the Spanish border. More important, perhaps, he was an immigrant. At the age of twelve, he came by ship to the United States because it was his best hope of a good life. Go to America, his grandmother had told him, bidding the child farewell. "And see what you can do."

It was a success story in the making. After arriving in New York with just a few francs in his pocket, over the next twenty years he worked his way up from bus boy and waiter to general manager and finally owner. In 1902, twenty years after arriving in America, he owned the Hotel Lafayette on Ninth Street and the Brevoort Hotel on Fifth Avenue.

With this snippet, I realized that while researching the past and using facts to incorporate into my historical tales, I don't always get the attitudes and the sentiments of the times. Twelve years old and you're sending your grandson off across the ocean on a ship full of strangers to a new land?

In today's age, that thought is unfathomable. We keep our twelve year olds close to home and under a watchful eye. For their own safety – there are far too many horrific stories of situations with young children that have ended in tragedy. But, I see that I tend to use my current day perception of how we

treat children and transfer that attitude to my tales of a hundred years ago. Facts and attitudes – two entirely different areas when it comes to writing historical pieces. I have some learning to do still.

Trisha

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Elements of Historical Fiction

Trisha Faye

Five or seven? Or more? How many elements of historical fiction are there? It's said that the five main elements of a story are:

- Setting
- Plot
- Characters
- Conflict, and
- Theme

'A Writer of History' wrote that there are seven elements. To the five listed above, they added two other elements:

- Dialogue
- World building

And then, they went on to add that historical fiction has one additional challenge. They write:

All writers of fiction have to consider seven critical elements: character, dialogue, setting, theme, plot, conflict, and world building. While every story succeeds or disappoints on the basis of these elements, historical fiction has the added challenge of bringing the past to life.

You can see their excellent post at [A Writer of History](#).

[Help Teaching](#) has a fun little video clip about the elements of historical fiction. It's geared towards students, but I still enjoyed watching it. It's only a minute and a half. Check it out. See if it prompts any ideas for you.

<https://youtu.be/2EpSrNHQOGU>

Now I'm off to go contemplate about how I can put more effort into making sure that my writing brings the past to life.

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I've known Sarah MacTavish for several years and have been a spectator during the birth of her first book, *Firebrand*. It was even more exciting to see book two follow, *Paladin*. Sarah is a conscientious author, both with her diligent research and her passionate telling of the tale. I'm honored to introduce you to Sarah, to share a little about her writing experience with her two Civil War era books.

Sarah, what drew you to write historical fiction?

My fascination with history started as a kid wanting to know everything about the Victorian Era, probably because of my American Girl doll, Samantha. And a lot of my favorite books to read were historical--*The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi, *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Sarah Bishop* by Scott O'Dell, to name a few.

What I love about historical fiction is its ability to empathically transport you through time, put you in the shoes of someone who lived (or could have lived) in another era. It connects us to the past in a way that simple facts, names, and dates never could. I also believe that in order to make sense of the present, we have to know how we got here, and historical fiction is a great way to do just that.

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

My primary focus is the American Civil War. To say it was a defining moment in our history is a massive understatement. The conflict left such deep scars that its legacy still directly affects us today, and yet it's still misunderstood by so many people. But what I love most is that writing in this era, especially for teens, because it's a perfect backdrop for writing about characters who are searching for identity and asking themselves age-old questions like "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?"

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

At one time a few years back I was in a Union reenacting group. I got the uniform, put my hair up, spent a weekend in a tent and "fighting" in mock battles. Only a couple men in our company knew who I really

was! It was probably the most immersive research I'll ever get to do, and I learned more in one weekend about the life of Civil War soldiers than I did in all my years in school.

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

The main protagonist from my Firebrand series is Saoirse (Seer-SHA) Callahan, a 15-year-old Irish American abolitionist. She's passionate, principled, and incredibly stubborn. In the first book, Firebrand, she's caring for her broken and grieving family while trying to fight for freedom in pro-slavery Texas during the summer before the Civil War. In the most recent novel, Paladin, she goes on to enlist in secret as a boy in the Union Army.

I love writing about the same sort of characters I loved to read about as a kid--strong girls (or boys) who do things that frighten them, stand up for others, and fight against injustice, especially when they have so much to lose. I love Saoirse in particular for her courage, her compassion, and of course, her sass!

What challenges have you found with writing historical fiction?

Just wading through research is always tough, trying sift through a mountain of information to find the right facts for the specific time, place and people you're writing about, or deciding how much research to include, or where you can get away with taking liberties and bending the historical facts to fit the story. But the most interesting one is when the historical facts challenge the verisimilitude of the plot--when what *actually happened* stretches the suspension of disbelief for the reader. Because truth is often stranger than fiction, as they say!

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?

I actually just finished the second book, and I'm taking a small break before I dive into research for the third. The Firebrand series is going to be four books total, and hopefully the next installment will be available by the end of 2020. Fingers crossed!

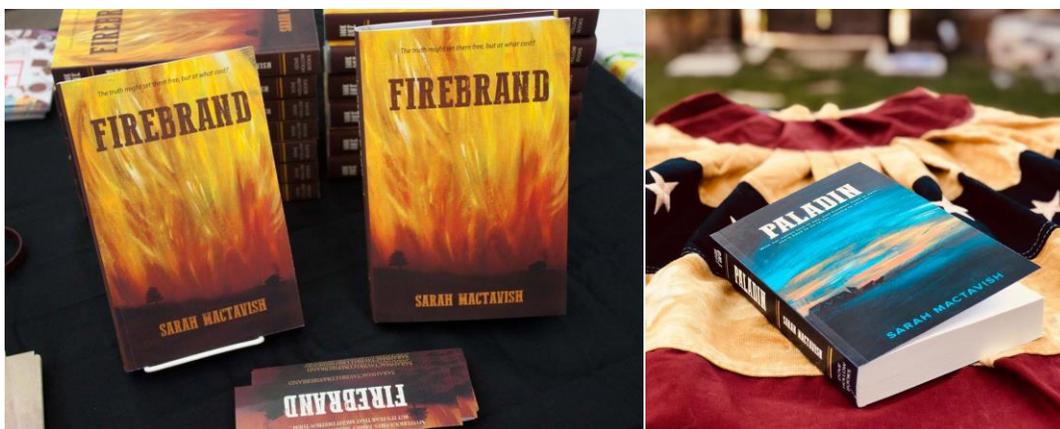
Do you write in any genres other than historical fiction?

Not yet, but one day I'd love to try my hand at Fantasy/Science Fiction, so I can *make everything up!*

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

Even though I write primarily for young adults, readers of all ages are always welcome.

Thank you for letting me share with you today!



You can find Firebrand and Paladin here:

[Firebrand](#)

[Paladin](#)

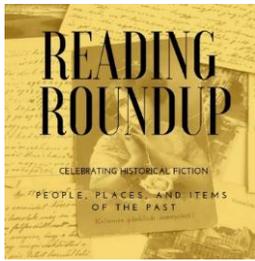
You can find Sarah MacTavish here:

[Goodreads](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

BIO: Sarah MacTavish is a librarian-author who writes historical fiction for teens. Her first novel, Firebrand, was recently described by Self-Publishing Review as “a moving, expertly written, and entertaining work of young adult fiction.” She also leads two weekly writers’ groups for teens and adults at the library she has called home for the past fifteen years. When Sarah isn’t writing, she’s either gaming, working on the family tree, or reading Star Wars novels.



1930s

Bolzano: A Reschen Valley Novel Part 3

Chrystyna K. Lucyk-Berger



In the process of understanding who you are, more often you discover who you are not.

1937. Northern Italy. New international conflicts loom on the horizon, and Italy must feed its war machine. Angelo Grimani has a plan to keep the Reschen Valley reservoir out of his father's hands but he needs a local front to succeed. He faces his past and seeks an alliance with Katharina Steinhauser.

They share a teenage daughter, Angelo discovers. Annamarie. And she is convinced her future lies beyond the confines of the valley. When an Italian delegation arrives to assess the reservoir, Annamarie believes she has found her ticket out...in the form of

Angelo's son and a Fascist uniform.

Love, betrayal, and deception explode in this next instalment of the Reschen Valley. This is the third book in the series and can be picked up as a stand-alone.

Fargo Women Plot and Plan (ebook only)

Trisha Faye



The women of Fargo, Texas band together to create a church cookbook. Even though 1935 was a difficult year for most of the country, the women are determined. Extreme heat, drought, dust storms – they are nothing compared to the wake of women on a mission. But will the force of the worst dust storm in history derail the women's project? Take a step back in time in this Vintage Daze Short Story. This historical fiction is inspired by actual women and their 'How We Cook Down on the Farm' cookbook created for the Fargo Baptist Church.

Seventeen recipes from the 1935 cookbook are included with this short story.

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

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