



Vol. 1, No. 11, June 14, 2019

In this issue:

- Keeping the Memories Alive
- Author Spotlight: Lindsay Shayne
- Reading Roundup: Books from the 1920s/1910s

From the Editor

Last week I was teaching a writing workshop at a local library. Over 30 had signed up, but I know that not everyone shows up. Twenty-five showed up, which is amazing. But imagine my surprise when eighteen of the students turned out to be young teens, in the 13-15-years age range. I was doing some last minute internal scrambling, trying to adapt the workshop to something that would keep their attention for three hours, while not losing the few adults that were there.

During the class, I mentioned something that a few of my writing gurus talk about, in one fashion or another. It was about sending pitches and queries to three different levels. A large portion of our pitches should be in the area where we're comfortable – places we're fairly confident that we'll nail the pitch and be able to complete the assignment without much difficulty. But we should also be pitching to those dream publications – the ones we don't think we have a chance at. We need to stretch and grow and 'reach for the stars'. And then, there are those days when we need a boost to our self-esteem. Maybe we've gotten a slew of rejections, or some painful feedback – and we need a little salve for our soul. So those days we reach for the 'low hanging fruit' – the pieces that are easy, where maybe the pay isn't much, but at that moment we need a 'Yes' more than anything.

What I'd wish I added, but I didn't think of it until after the workshop, is to talk about how it isn't all about the money. As writers, we shouldn't give our work away for free. We still have bills to pay, food to buy, gas to put in the car, ink cartridges to purchase, writing workshops to attend, etc. But, sometimes it's about the stories we need to tell. The tales that call to us from afar, the scenes and snippets we're driven to write.

I think this is especially true with historical fiction. There are characters from the past, or places, photographs, items that beckon to us. Characters – be they real or fictional – that keep at us until we write it all down. Some days it's more about the story than it is the money.

Trisha

texastrishafaye@yahoo.com

Keeping the Memories Alive

It's always fun as an author when we can use elements of our family history as part of our writing. It feels like you're keeping a small memory of your beloved ancestors alive – at least in a small fragment. Others may not realize that they've read something that was inspired by a family member past, but you as the author know.

I'm finding out that I'm not the only one that enjoys this small tribute to our loved ones. Last year, in a guest post – [Mom and Dad May Be Gone but They Live on in My Series](#) - author Lindsay Downs shared about how characteristics of his parents live on in his Upson PI mysteries. (Lindsay is the featured author in *Pages of the Past* April 19th issue)

You'd think that writing further back in time, say in the time of Mary Queen of Scots, it wouldn't be possible to include family snippets. Not true. Author Emily-Jane Hills Orford, in writing *Queen Mary's Daughter*, was able to use characteristics of her beloved grandmother as the grandmother in the tale. In the debut issue of [Pages of the Past](#), Emily-Jane shared how her grandmother was a factor in her historical interests. In her author spotlight, she shares:

"I have always been fascinated with the life and times of Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth I. Once again, this was a shared interest with my grandmother."

In my own writing, pieces of family history and characters have been used here and there. One of my *Vintage Daze Short Stories* I was working on ended up being the most fun when Grandpa Jones (deceased since 1976) pushed his way into the story.

Two small 1928 cookbooks were the original inspiration for 'Best Thing Since Sliced Bread.' One I'd purchased in an antique store and one I'd inherited from one of the elderly women that lived next door to us when I was a child. That's all I knew about the story – is that it would be set in 1928.

I researched events in 1928 to see if there was anything I could work into the story. I saw that in Chillicothe Missouri, the first loaf of sliced bread came out that year. My Grandpa Jones grew up in a small town, Dawn, outside of Chillicothe and his brother, Uncle Scott, had a farm outside Chillicothe where my mom and Aunt Ida were born. Voila! I had the place. The vague outline of a young flapper girl and her quest for cooking began to form.

I also saw that Chillicothe held a popular Chevrolet Day that year. And I read that that's the year the Hall Brothers Company, in Kansas City, changed their name to their trademarked Hallmark, and started using the new Hallmark logo on their cards. Since I work part-time for Hallmark, I knew I wanted to include this part, so the young flapper, Luetta, instantly got herself a boyfriend that just happened to work for Hall Brothers.

The story had been 'brewing' for several weeks and I was a few scenes into it when I happened to be talking to my mom one afternoon. I was telling her about the new story idea and where it was set. "Grandpa would have been a young boy in 1928 though?" I asked.

"Oh, no. He was born in 1908, so he would have been twenty years old."

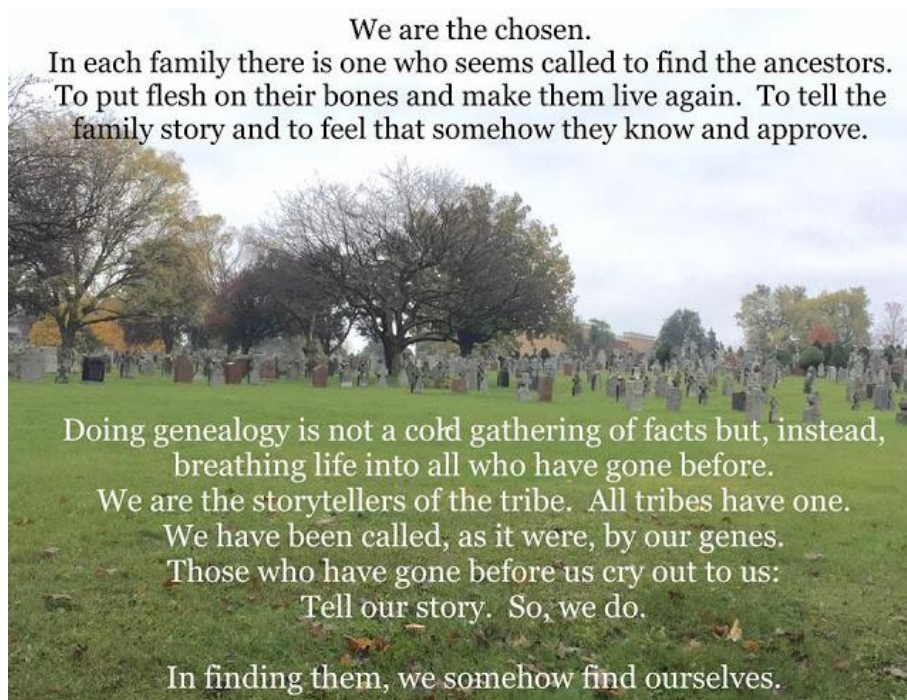
"Twenty years old? So if Chillicothe had a Chevrolet Day, he would have been there then?"

“Absolutely,” she replied. “He was a Chevy man his whole life. That’s all he ever drove. I’m sure he would have been there.” Mom continued to tell me a family story that Grandpa had repeated many times throughout his later years. He was driving through town – in a Chevy – and had one arm around the girl in the car. (Pre-Grandma Jones’ days) The constable pulled him over and said, “Casey, you need to use both hands.” Grandpa, the smart-alecky young man that he was, responded, “But, officer, I need one hand to drive with.”

Well, Luetta already had a boyfriend, but now – how to work a young Grandpa Jones into the tale? Luetta’s best friend, Amanda, had to meet Casey so I could work this family story in.

A short time later, my cousin – not knowing I was working on this story- texted me one morning about another Grandpa Jones story. Uncle Alvin had shared about when Grandpa was running a trunk load of moonshine up from Arkansas to Missouri, stowed in the trunk and covered with armloads of hay. He was stopped and the officer said his lights were out. Grandpa played dumb like he didn’t know. The officer opened the trunk asked, “What’s with all the hay?” Grandpa replied, “Why, officer, you feed animals with it.” And the officer closed the trunk and Grandpa went on his way.

Yes, that was written into the short story too. In real life, the Grandpa I knew was such a quiet, unassuming man. Yet here he is forty years later getting a little pushy from the afterlife, pushing his way into the story. No one else will know as the reader that these two parts are real-life tales, from a Grandpa’s younger days so long ago. But I’ll know and feel good about keeping a small part of his history alive.



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



Some days I moan and groan and grumble about technology and how it's invaded our lives. But yet, because of this new-fangled technology, and social media sites like Facebook, my world has expanded as an author and a reader. That's how I met many of the authors that have been featured in Pages of the Past. After reading *Seven Springs* (which I loved and never would have heard about without Facebook), I wanted to spotlight the author. Joining us this week is Lindsay Shayne. Welcome, Lindsay!



Hello Lindsay! You've mentioned that some of your family history plays a part in *Seven Springs*. Could you tell us more about that?

My family on my mother's side were settlers from Ireland. They had a homestead just south of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Throughout my youth, I was told stories of our family history, and the struggles they went through clearing the land, planting crops and contending with the dustbowl impacts of the late 1920s. When we would venture out to their lands (over 100 sections that were eventually partitioned and sold) I was engrossed by the remnants of tattered old barns and toppled fence posts. I daydreamed about the lives they lead, the struggles and hardships they

faced and what it must have taken for those families to survive. Summers in Alberta are beastly hot, and winters unceasingly cold; how people went from the wealth and comforts of the east to the survival and sacrifice of the west was fascinating to me. From those family tales, a kernel of inspiration was born. It took over 30 years to germinate, but the seed was always inside me.

***Seven Springs* is your first historical novel. Were there any surprises that you found in your journey of writing and publishing this wonderful tale?**

The biggest surprise for me was simply how difficult it was. The writing itself came naturally, and the language was something that I was akin to, having read hundreds of books from that time period and knowing films and series' like *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little House on the Prairie* by heart. At first, I tried writing on the computer, but it felt so anachronistic; I couldn't transport myself back in time unless there

was a pen in my hand. I wrote the entire first draft by hand in little moleskin notebooks and later transcribed it into digital format. I spent years researching and delving into the historical time period as much as I could. I was fortunate to have done a writing residency at The Banff Centre, which allowed me dedicated time to revise and edit. I published exclusively on Createspace and Kindle Direct Publishing, and although I tried to do most of the formatting myself, I had to contract out the final layout design because I am just not technical enough. I was also surprised that books don't magically sell themselves. There is a huge amount of effort that goes into marketing and promotion, and that effort doesn't always translate into sales.

You've portrayed the scenes so well in *Seven Springs*. As I read, I feel like I'm there in the room seeing the action play out. You must have done a lot of research to be able to be so detailed for this time period. Do you have any favorite methods you use in researching your books?

With my creative writing background, I have written a number of stage plays and scripts. I've also watched a great deal of theatre and films. When I'm writing, I tend to view the scenes cinematographically, as though there is a camera sweeping across the prairies, or peeking through the grease-splattered glass of the farmhouse window. I also think about the five senses. What do those biscuits smell like when they come out of the oven? How do the birds' wings sound as they crackle through the reeds and brush surrounding the lake? What does the evening landscape look like bathed only in moonlight?

I also have a Masters in Archival Studies, and actually fell upon that discipline due to the amount of time I was spending in archives researching. I have a great affinity for the preservation of documentary heritage and can get lost for hours scouring through old images, journals, newspapers, and ledgers.

Tell us about one of your favorite characters in *Seven Springs*.

In all honesty, they are all my favorites. I used my family for broad inspiration, but there is really so much of myself in each of the characters. As I worked through character development, I found myself thinking about how they would react in certain situations, or how past events and traumas had shaped their collective reality; so much of my own experience was drawn into that. Abigail is the rock of the family, but also fragile in her naivety and optimism. Charles' worst enemy is his pride and the depression that comes from it. Baxter is seeking companionship and treads close to impropriety out of sheer loneliness. I admire Emma's innocence and unabashed enthusiasm, while Tobias represents how I thought my great-grandfather would have felt if he were a young man left with little, forced to make his way in such a harsh environment.

One thing I love is how in our Pages of the Past Facebook group you post the best pictures of vintage objects to accompany a short snippet from your book. How do you find all the wonderful images that you use?

I am fortunate to live in Edmonton, the capital city of Alberta. The city is steeped with history, as it was a major transit point for the fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Edmonton. Portions of the original fort were moved upriver in the 1970s and it was preserved and restored into a living museum complete with costumed interpreters, historical buildings, live animals and historical artifacts. I visit several times per summer, not only to take photographs for marketing purposes, but also for research and inspiration. I look for the details that could be missed in reading reference materials. I inspect how houses were constructed, how great rooms were organized and decorated, how homes had separate

living quarters for household staff, what the transportation methods were. The photographs are also essential when I'm researching because when I look at them I feel instantly transported back to 1895. I can set the scene in my mind and it helps me contextualize what could occur within that time and place. The museum also houses some of my great-grandfather's threshing machinery, so it's great to go back and reconnect with him in that way.

Have you discovered any challenges in writing historical fiction?

Research is the most difficult part, by far. It's easy to come up with a story, to outline the plot and arc and do character sketches. It is much more challenging to understand societal norms, political climates of the time, fashion, and class structures. I spent countless months researching minutiae that most readers likely wouldn't consider: How long does it take to travel 200 kilometers by horse? Were carriages pulled by teams of two or four horses? What was the weather like in central Alberta in spring 1895? What was a day's wage for a laborer? How much did a hock of ham cost? When was the telegraph invented? When were the cables installed in Alberta? Even seemingly simple things like describing a carriage going down a street in Toronto in 1865 required immense research. I found archival maps and overlaid them with current infrastructure to see what roadways and landmarks were in existence then and what they were called. I researched industry at the time so I could describe the bustle of the main rail station, and what it would have smelled like in the midst of canning factories, horse manure, and burning coal. Yes, research is the biggest challenge – but also the most fun!

Do you have another 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 have the outline and character sketches completed for a novel about Frank's Slide. The slide occurred in 1903 when more than two-thirds of Turtle Mountain in southern Alberta sheared off and crushed half the town below. I visited the slide in my youth and was impacted by the scene (the town site looks nearly identical, as the boulders are so massive they could not be moved) but it was during my research for *Seven Springs* that I stumbled across the incident again. I began thinking about the impact of the slide on the townsfolk and wondered how individuals would have been affected if part of their family had died, but others had survived. The story developed from there.

I have no timeline, but *Seven Springs* took seven years, so it might be a while!

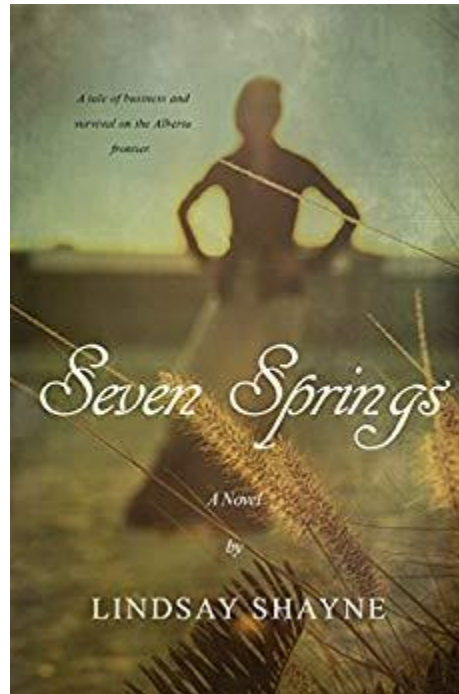
Do you write in any genres other than historical fiction?

I write short fiction, poetry, screenplays, and stage plays for my creative work. I also occasionally write essays, feature articles and advertorials for online and print media. In my day job, I write internal operational policy, training programs and technical procedures for how to manage records and information in government.

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

There's a scene in one of my all-time favorite films, *Little Women*. Jo March is describing writing and emphatically says, "Never write what you know!" I've seen this film dozens of times, but this phrase always sticks with me because I view it so differently. While there may be elements of the subject matter that are unknown to you, I feel that if you write what you know, what you are passionate about and what you

feel deep inside of you, your writing will be imbued with much more authenticity than simply picking a random topic.



You can find Seven Springs here:

Amazon.com: <https://www.amazon.com/Seven-Springs-Lindsay-Shayne/dp/1981177043>

Amazon.ca: <https://www.amazon.ca/Seven-Springs-Lindsay-Shayne/dp/1981177043>

Amazon.co.uk: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Seven-Springs-Lindsay-Shayne/dp/1981177043>

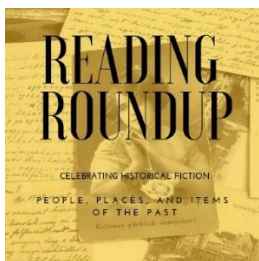
You can find Lindsay here:

Website: <http://songbirdpublishing.ca/>

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/albertaauthor/?modal=admin_todo_tour

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lindsayshayne78/>

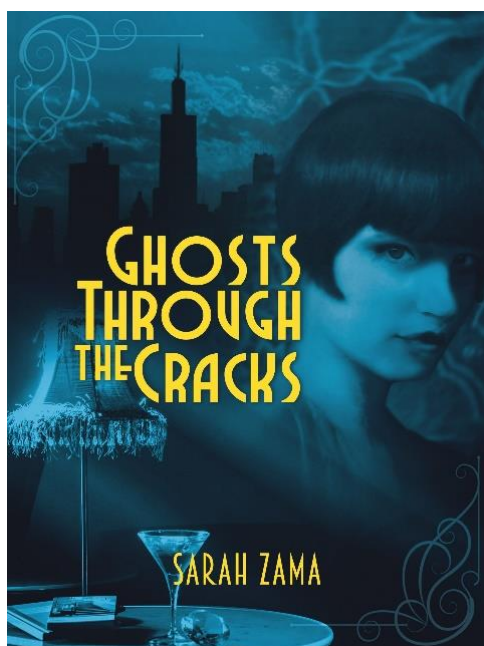
Lindsay Shayne is a writer from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Born in the River City, she has traveled and worked extensively throughout Alberta and formed a bond with its nature, history, hotels, and rails. Her family, the Toanes, were early settlers in central Alberta, and the inspiration for *Seven Springs*. She enjoys singing to songbirds, walking the trestles in Mill Creek ravine, and riding the steam engine at Fort Edmonton Park.



The 1920s

Ghosts Through the Cracks

Sarah Zama



Even in sparkling Jazz Age Chicago, spirits can trick you into believing they're men.

When Susie comes to Jazz Age America, she knows her life will change. Back in China, spirits mingle in the mists of the rice fields and trick humans into believing they're men in order to steal their souls, and the expectations of a daughter are unimportant and ignored. But in Chicago, Simon gives her the carefree life of the New American Woman, the freedom to dress daringly and do things once reserved only for men--drinking, smoking and dancing with strangers. It's an exciting life and she considers the loyalty Simon demands of her a small price to pay.

Until she meets a man called Blood.

Blood lets Susie speak her mind and listen to her heart. He commits himself to her and asks nothing in return. Through his eyes, Susie begins to see her loyalty to Simon as the bars around her "freedom". But she knows Simon will never let her go.

But even in Chicago, spirits mingle in the smoke and jazz of speakeasies and trick humans into believing they're men. They can still steal their souls. And if Susie doesn't see the spirits behind the masks of the men fighting over her, she might lose much more than her freedom.

Authors: Do you have a historical fiction book or short story that you'd like featured in Pages of the Past? Email me at texastrishafaye@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/>