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From the Editor

Hello and Happy Friday historical fiction lovers!

Authors have been busy during 2020. There's still a plethora of new books being released, many of them in our favorite historical fiction genre. Even better – many of them from our Pages of the Past members. We'll keep sharing the news of these here.

It doesn't seem possible, but here we are nearing the end of the year. Pumpkin season is upon us and we'll blink, and it will be Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations surrounding us. But, as authors, the seasons don't slow us down. I know of many books already scheduled for release in 2021, and more in the works for a later birth. Our bodies may be in the middle of October 2020 – but our minds? I think are minds are divided between planning for beyond 2020, while plotting stories set in days of long ago.

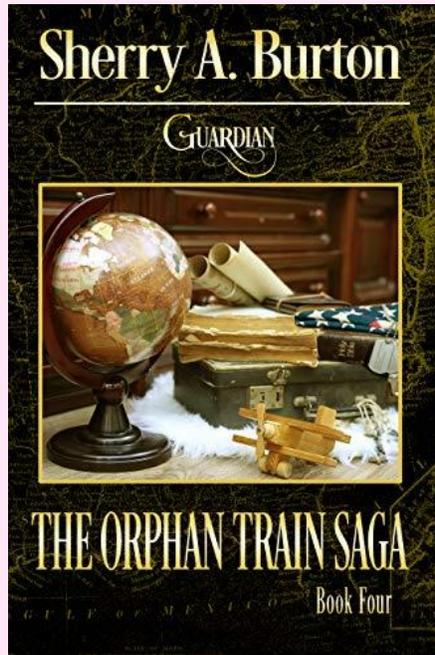
Join us this week as we chat with author Heather Osborne, the author of several different series. Stay tuned for future issues –In the weeks ahead we have author interviews scheduled with Hannah Byron, Lindsay Downs, James Conroyd Martin, Janet Oakley, Eileen Donovan and a lot more!

Trisha

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New Release



Guardian

Sherry A. Burton

Taken from his unwed mother immediately after his birth and sent to a New York Children's Asylum, Franky never questioned his life of sterile walls, strict discipline, and emotionally distant caregivers. That is, until being selected to ride the orphan trains, where he quickly discovers there is more to life than living in an institution.

Taken in by a well-educated judge who is looking to save a wayward boy, the man soon turns Franky into a voracious reader who wishes nothing more than to join the Army he spends so much time reading about. The judge succeeds in teaching Franky there is more to life than violence. That is, until the judge's past threatens Franky's very survival.

Having vowed never to return to the asylum, Franky decides to take his chances on the streets of Detroit. Working under the protection of his uncle Tobias, street name Mouse, a trusted member of the infamous Purple Gang, he gets a new kind of education, one that isn't taught in books.

Will Franky be able to handle the war raging around him, or will the ugliness of life claim another innocent soul?

Writing Advice from John Steinbeck

In 1968, a well-known author drew his last breath. I'd never even heard of him. Yet, I was ten years old and spending inordinate amounts of time with my face buried in the pages of Dr. Doolittle and his exploits. I'd graduated from *Charlotte's Web*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and *A Wrinkle in Time*. I hadn't yet progressed to *Grapes of Wrath*, a book that once I discovered it would become one of my top two favorite books of all time.

John Steinbeck was a Pulitzer Prize winner and Nobel laureate, but it would be many years before I discovered the joys of reading his written word. The 1930s is my favorite era to read and write about. I'm not sure if it's the influence of reading *Grapes of Wrath* or hearing the stories from my mom and grandmother about life in those difficult days. I'll give them equal fault.

Fortunately, in 1962, this master author shared precious writing advice in a letter to actor and writer Robert Wallsten. This, along with other letters, appears in *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters*. Thanks to the legacy he left in written form, here is some writing advice from John Steinbeck.

1. Abandon the idea that you are ever going to finish. Lose track of the 400 pages and write just one page for each day, it helps. Then when it gets finished, you are always surprised.
2. Write freely and as rapidly as possible and throw the whole thing on paper. Never correct or rewrite until the whole thing is down. Rewrite in process is usually found to be an excuse for not going on. It also interferes with flow and rhythm which can only come from a kind of unconscious association with the material.
3. Forget your generalized audience. In the first place, the nameless, faceless audience will scare you to death and in the second place, unlike the theater, it doesn't exist. In writing, your audience is one single reader. I have found that sometimes it helps to pick out one person—a real person you know, or an imagined person and write to that one.
4. If a scene or a section gets the better of you and you still think you want it—bypass it and go on. When you have finished the whole, you can come back to it and then you may find that the reason it gave trouble is because it didn't belong there.
5. Beware of a scene that becomes too dear to you, dearer than the rest. It will usually be found that it is out of drawing.
6. If you are using dialogue—say it aloud as you write it. Only then will it have the sound of speech.

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Author Spotlight: Sophie Schiller

This week Sophie Schiller joins us to talk about her many books from the past. There's so many places to visit through her pages, so many fascinating tales from days long before ours. Grab a cup of tea – or coffee or soda – and join us as we learn more about her books and her writing.



Hello Sophie Schiller! Welcome to Pages of the Past. You're the author of several historical fiction books. What drew you to write stories set in the past?

When I was a little girl growing up on the island of St. Thomas, I always wanted to know more about the history of the islands. I longed to read books set during the Danish colonial period. Since there were no books available, I decided to write my own books.

Your latest book, *The Lost Diary of Alexander Hamilton*, takes us back to the childhood of one of America's founding fathers. What a wonderful premise for a story. Can you tell our readers about your new book?

The book fills in the missing gaps of Alexander Hamilton's life, the part he tried to hide. I tried to imagine what his childhood was like based on the known facts of his life. The result is a boy's adventure story.

The *Lost Diary of Alexander Hamilton* takes place in 1765, while some of your others are set a hundred and fifty years later in 1916. In researching these two totally different eras, what differences did it make in your research?

I was apprehensive at first about working in the 18th century. I had previously resolved never to work in that era, but when I was asked to write this book, I had to push aside my fears and learn everything I could about the 18th century, life in the West Indies, sugar plantations, slavery, the triangular trade, social life and customs, smuggling, privateering and bribery.

Your books set in 1916 vary from your days of young Alexander Hamilton – *Transfer Day*, *Island on Fire*, and *Spy Island*. Can you tell us about these three books?

Spy Island is the International version of *Transfer Day*. They are essentially the same book, but *Transfer Day* has a few additional scenes, and is geared toward a different audience. *Island on Fire* is set in Martinique during the volcanic eruption of 1902 and *Transfer Day*/*Spy Island* is set during WWI. They are all basically historical thrillers set in the West Indies during the Edwardian/WWI era.

One of your first books takes off in a direction unlike any of your others. *Race to Tibet* captures a fascinating journey. Amazon says: “*RACE TO TIBET* is a thrilling tale of high-altitude adventure and survival set in the world's most forbidden country.” It does look like there’s a lot of adventure and tension in this tale of survival. How did you come about for the early nuggets of an idea for this story? How did it turn from an early idea into a full book?

Originally, I had set out to write a biographical novel about a French-Danish Princess named Princess Marie Waldemar, the wife of the youngest son of King Christian IX. She led an interesting, sad, but colorful life. But to get the kind of information I needed to write the kind of story I wanted to write, I needed permission to search through the Royal Danish Archives, which was a non-starter. So, instead, I began to search for any relatives she might have had that wrote about her, to find about the missing pieces of her life. As it turned out, the only relative she had that did any writing was her younger brother, Prince Henri d’Orleans, who was a famous French explorer of Tibet, Indo-China, and Burma. The more I began to learn about Prince Henri and his partner, Gabriel Bonvalot, the more convinced I was that their story was really worth telling. So, I spent the next three years researching and writing the story of their ground-breaking 1890 journey to Lhasa in Tibet. It turned out to be a fantastic book and a fantastic story. I’m so glad I discovered them!

You’ve covered a wide spectrum of time in your books so far. What lies ahead of you as an author?

I’m working on another WWI thriller set in the Caribbean.

What is your favorite aspect of being an author, and the greatest challenge?

I love learning new things, solving historical mysteries, putting together a page-turning thriller. I love the mental challenge of it.

We’re talking historical fiction here at Pages of the Past, but many readers also appreciate other genres, so I want to ask about one other book you have that falls outside the historical fiction them. You have a book of poetry out also, *On a Moonlit Night in the Antilles: Poems Inspired by the Caribbean*. Can you tell us about this collection, and what poetry means in your life?

I discovered by accident that I love poetry. Most particularly, the classical poetry style of the 18th and 19th century, like Emily Dickinson, Keats, Kipling, and Tennyson. My poetry collection blends my love of the Caribbean with my love of the natural world and history. There are poems about fortresses, plantations, slave revolts, slave ships, the flora and fauna, lost love, famous non-violent protesters, even a poem about Alexander Hamilton.

Thank you for joining us today, Sophie. 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.

Thank you for having me! I enjoyed reminiscing about my writing journey!



You can find Sophie's books here:

<https://www.amazon.com/Sophie-Schiller/e/B00BEHWNR6/>



You can find Sophie here:

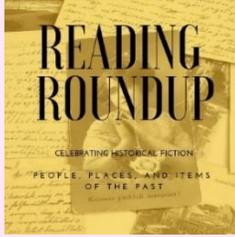
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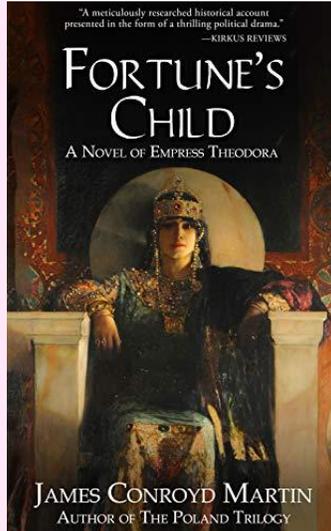
BIO: Sophie Schiller was born in Paterson, NJ and grew up in the West Indies. She is a novelist and a poet. She loves stories that carry the reader back in time to exotic and far-flung locations. Kirkus Reviews has called her "an accomplished thriller and historical adventure writer." Publishers Weekly called her novel, ISLAND ON FIRE, "a memorable romantic thriller", her novel RACE TO TIBET, "a thrilling yarn," and her TRANSFER DAY, "a page-turner with emotional resonance." Her latest novel is THE LOST DIARY OF ALEXANDER HAMILTON, about Hamilton's lost boyhood in the Caribbean. She graduated from American University, Washington, DC and lives in Brooklyn, NY.

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The 1700s & Before



Fortune's Child: A Novel of Empress Theodora (Book 1 of 2) James Conroyd Martin

Theodora: actress, prostitute, mistress, feminist. And Byzantine Empress of the civilized world. Stephen: handsome Syrian boy, wizard's apprentice, palace eunuch. And Secretary to the Empress. How does this unlikely pair become such allies that one day Empress Theodora asks Stephen to write her biography?

From a very young age, Theodora, daughter of a circus bearkeeper in Constantinople, sets her sights well above her station in life. Her exquisite beauty sets her apart on stages and in the eyes of men.

Stephen, a Syrian lad of striking good looks, is sold by his parents to a Persian wizard, who teaches him a skill in languages that will serve him well.

By the time Destiny brings them together in Antioch, Theodora has undergone heart-rending trials and a transformation, while Stephen has been sold again . . . and castrated.

Discover the enduring bond that, however imperfect, prompts Theodora—as Empress—to request palace eunuch Stephen to write her biography.

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