

APRIL MUSINGS

SHARON VIRTIS



Temporary Measures

From Taxes to Tariffs: How 'crisis' policies become permanent—and why history reminds us to notice

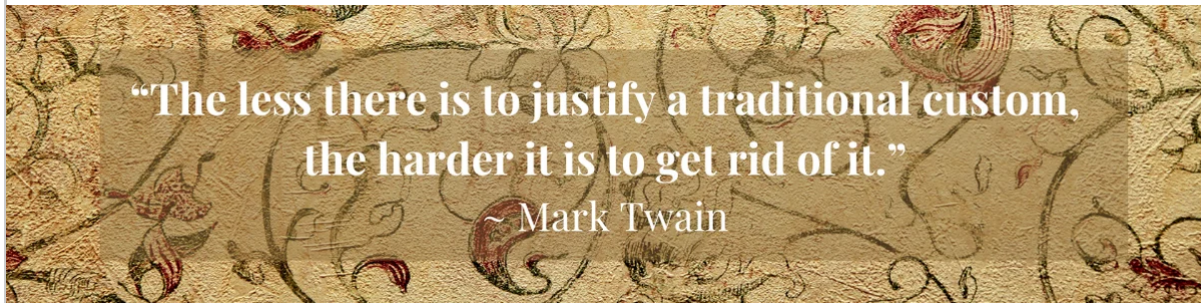
In moments of crisis, nations rarely believe they are making permanent choices. They speak instead in the language of necessity—"for now", "until stability returns", "in light of extraordinary circumstances." History shows us that these phrases are almost always sincere. They are also almost never accurate.

The United States has a long habit of treating emergency as temporary while quietly building institutions meant to endure. The Civil War offers perhaps the clearest early example. Faced with an existential threat, the federal government expanded its authority in ways previously unthinkable: suspending habeas corpus, dramatically increasing executive power, and—most consequentially—establishing the first federal income tax in 1861 to finance the war effort.

The tax was repealed after the war. The crisis, it seemed, had passed. And yet the idea had been introduced, normalized, and debated. When the Sixteenth Amendment was ratified in 1913, authorizing a permanent federal income tax, it did

not arrive as a radical innovation but as a familiar solution, one already tested under duress. Emergency had become precedent.

This pattern repeats... [READ MORE](#)



April 29 – May 6

For a limited time, the *Masque of Honor* eBook is on sale for \$0.99!

If you love historical fiction rich with drama mixed with a little romance, this is your moment.

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Between the Lines on Midday Maryland

April 2026: Genealogy and Storytelling Come Together

In this April 2026 episode of *Between the Lines*, I shared with Elsa how genealogy shapes the heart of my historical storytelling.

By tracing family origins, relationships, and social dynamics, I am able to build rich, authentic characters that bring the past vividly to life. I also shared surprising discoveries from my research and the challenges of uncovering forgotten stories, especially those of women whose records were often lost to time.

I recently wrote a [Genealogy Guidebook](#) that offers practical advice for anyone interested in exploring their own family history. From lost census records to unexpected historical connections, my guidebook highlights how understanding where we come from can deepen both personal identity and powerful storytelling.

Download My Genealogy Guide Here!

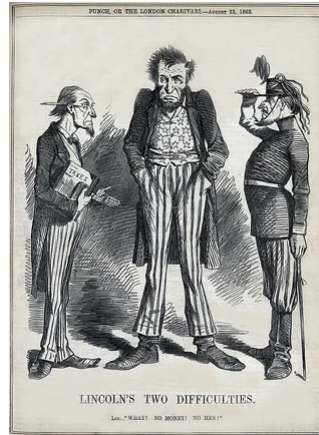


The worlds of my novels are rooted in moments when history had not yet made up its mind. In this monthly column, I explore the real events and figures who lived in that uncertainty, and whose choices still echo through my stories.

The Civil War and the Birth of the Federal Income Tax

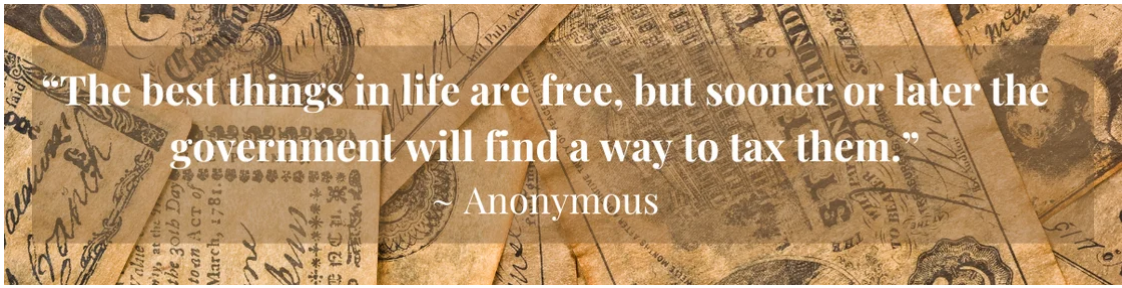
Born of war, normalized by time

Before the Civil War, the idea of a federal income tax would have struck most Americans as unnecessary at best, dangerous at worst. The federal government was small, its reach limited, and its revenues drawn largely from tariffs and land sales. Direct taxation by the national government was viewed with suspicion, a relic of the very tyranny the Revolution had resisted.



War changed that calculus almost overnight.

By 1861, the Union faced expenses on a scale it had never known. Armies had to be raised, equipped, and fed; railroads and supplies secured; debts managed in real time. Tariffs alone could not sustain the effort. In response, Congress passed the Revenue Act of 1861, introducing the nation's first federal income tax as a temporary measure to meet an existential crisis. The language surrounding the tax made its purpose clear. This was not a philosophical shift about the proper size of government or the nature of citizenship. It was an emergency solution—exceptional, provisional, and justified by necessity. Few imagined it would outlast the war itself. And, in fact, it didn't... [READ MORE](#)



On June 28, we'll celebrate the launch of *Bargains of Fate* with a garden party at Selma. The flowers will be in full bloom, creating a beautiful backdrop for an exciting afternoon gathering.

Your ticket is simply a copy of the book, and I'll be signing throughout the event. It's a chance to step into the world behind the story and share in a summer afternoon filled with history, beauty, and good company. I hope you'll join us.

Get Your Ticket for the Launch Party Here!

A Question to Leave You With

Last month, I asked you to ponder: If the house YOU grew up in could talk, what historical moment would it remember? **Bernice Brown** sent me her thoughts in this patriotic response:

During World War II, my mother and I moved into my grandmother's home in Boston. She had nine children; four of her five sons, along with my father, went off to war. Soon my Aunt Tess and her four children joined us. Twelve of us lived together in that two-story house, yet it never felt crowded. We shared meals, gardened, shopped, and lifted one another's spirits. I still remember the scent of lilacs in the backyard. It wasn't the house I grew up in, but it always felt like home. Together, we lived out our patriotism through sacrifice and unity.

This month's question to ponder: Which of today's "temporary" measures do you suspect future generations will inherit without remembering why they began?

[Click here to send me your thoughts.](#)
I'll share them in next month's newsletter.



#ReadWithSharon

Historical Fiction Book Club

Next month our book club will meet a week earlier than usual due to Memorial Day. Author Donna Everhart will join us on **Thursday the 21st at 7pm eastern** to discuss her book *Women of a Promiscuous Nature*. It will be a great discussion!



The #ReadWithSharon book club only reads current-release historical fiction, and I do my best to pre-read every selection before making the pick. Most months, the author joins us via Zoom, and you are able to ask questions during the discussion. You can sign up for free [HERE](#)



P.S. I am writing this from Egypt ... I'll have more to say about the trip, including photos, in next month's newsletter!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Sharon'.



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