

MAY MUSINGS

SHARON VIRT



The Telegraph, the Typewriter and Artificial Intelligence

Why Every Generation Thinks the Machines Are Coming for Us

Recently, while preparing to submit my latest manuscript, I encountered a curious new requirement from the publisher: a disclosure asking whether artificial intelligence had been used in the creation of the work. Did AI assist with editing? Research? Drafting? Brainstorming?

The question felt unmistakably modern, the sort of thing born from our sudden age of chatbots and machine-generated prose. Yet the more I considered it, the more I realized historians have seen this anxiety before. In fact, Americans have been worrying about machines replacing human skill for well over a century.

The 19th century was filled with technological revolutions that unsettled people just as profoundly as artificial intelligence unsettles us today. The telegraph collapsed communication time itself. Messages that once took weeks could suddenly travel

across the country in minutes. Newspapers marveled at the speed while critics worried the pace of life had become unnaturally fast.

Then came the typewriter.

Today it seems quaint, even charming, but the typewriter was once viewed as a disruptive technology that threatened the very nature of writing. Critics feared it would mechanize thought, diminish individuality, and replace the elegance of handwritten correspondence with cold uniformity. Some even argued that typed words lacked personality because every page looked exactly the same.

Writers, clerks, and businessmen all wondered whether technology was quietly transforming human expression into something more efficient—but less human.

Sound familiar? ... [<Read More>](#)



At noon on June 28, we'll celebrate the launch of [Bargains of Fate](#) with a garden party at Selma. Step back into the 1820s with an open-air picnic beside the koi pond and river, complete with classic 19th-century fare, frosty old-fashioned lemonade, and my signature mint juleps. As you wander the grounds, you'll encounter characters from the series tucked throughout the gardens—your challenge is to decide who's who!

If you haven't read the first novel ***Masque of Honor*** yet, you're warmly welcome. ***Bargains of Fate*** stands entirely on its own, so you can dive into the story—and the festivities—without missing a beat.

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!



Between the Lines on Midday Maryland

May 2026: The Hidden Truths of *Bargains of Fate*

In this May 2026 episode of *Between the Lines*, Elsa and I explore the scandals, courtroom drama, and hidden truths woven throughout *Bargains of Fate*, the second novel in the *Fields of Honor* series.

I shared how the era's Chancery Court cases, social expectations, and family secrets inspired pivotal moments in the novel, revealing that the world of America's early republic was often far more dramatic than fiction.

I also offered a glimpse into the emotional and moral struggles facing Jack McCarty as he navigates reputation, loyalty, ambition, and fate in the aftermath of tragedy.



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 Invention That Shrank the World

Before the telegraph, news traveled no faster than a horse could run.

It is difficult for modern Americans to fully grasp just how isolated cities, towns, and even entire regions once were from one another. In the early 19th century, communication moved at the speed of transportation. A letter mailed from New York to New Orleans might take weeks to arrive. News from Europe often crossed the Atlantic aboard ships carrying newspapers that were already outdated before they reached shore. Then came Samuel Morse's telegraph.



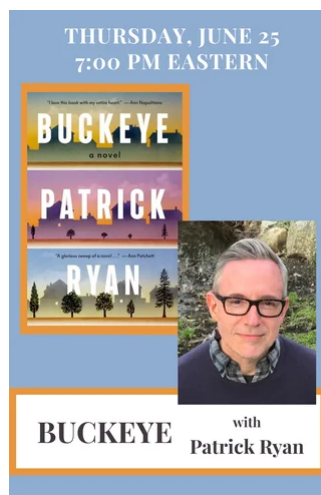
In 1844, Morse sent the first official long-distance telegraph message from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore. The message, chosen from the Bible, was both simple and prophetic: "What hath God wrought?" [<Read More>](#)



#ReadWithSharon

Historical Fiction Book Club

On Thursday, June 25 at 7pm eastern, we will discuss, ***Buckeye*** with author Patrick Ryan. *Buckeye* is a sweeping multigenerational novel that explores love, loyalty, sacrifice, and the lasting impact of wartime secrets.

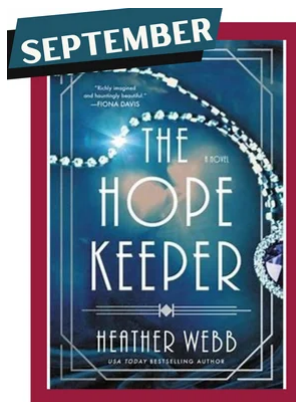
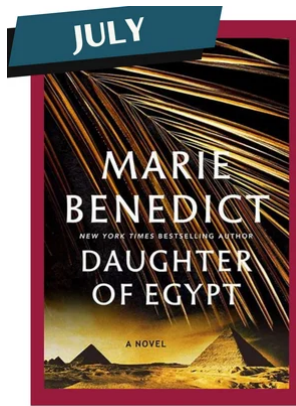


Set in the fictional town of Bonhomie, Ohio, the story follows two couples whose lives become deeply intertwined from the 1940s through the close of the 20th century. As hidden truths from World War II slowly surface, generations are shaped by choices made long ago. Rich in emotional depth and historical detail, this powerful novel examines identity, family, and the quiet ways history echoes through everyday lives.

Enter below to win a copy of *Buckeye* and a signed copy of *Bargains of Fate*!

Enter Here to Win!

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](#)



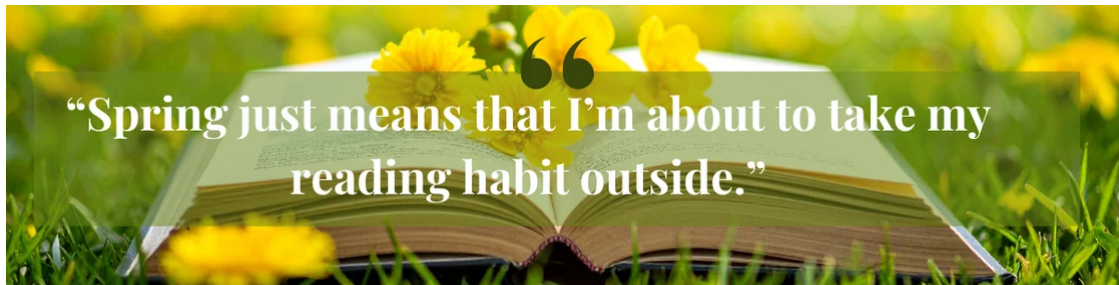
A Question to Leave You With

Last month, I asked you to ponder: Which of today's "temporary" measures do you suspect future generations will inherit without remembering why they began? I received a number of responses related to the "temporary" redistricting initiative in Virginia, but my favorite reply comes from **Hunton M.**

“Most political measures are called temporary for the same reason children promise they’ll only keep the puppy for a week.”

This month’s question to ponder: Which modern technology do you believe future generations will look back on the way we now view the telegraph?

Click here to send me your thoughts.
I’ll share them in next month’s newsletter.



Take time from each day to enjoy what’s left of this very, merry month of May!



WWW.SHARONVIRTS.COM



Sharon Virts, Selma Mansion, Leesburg, VA 20176, United States, www.sharonvirts.com

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