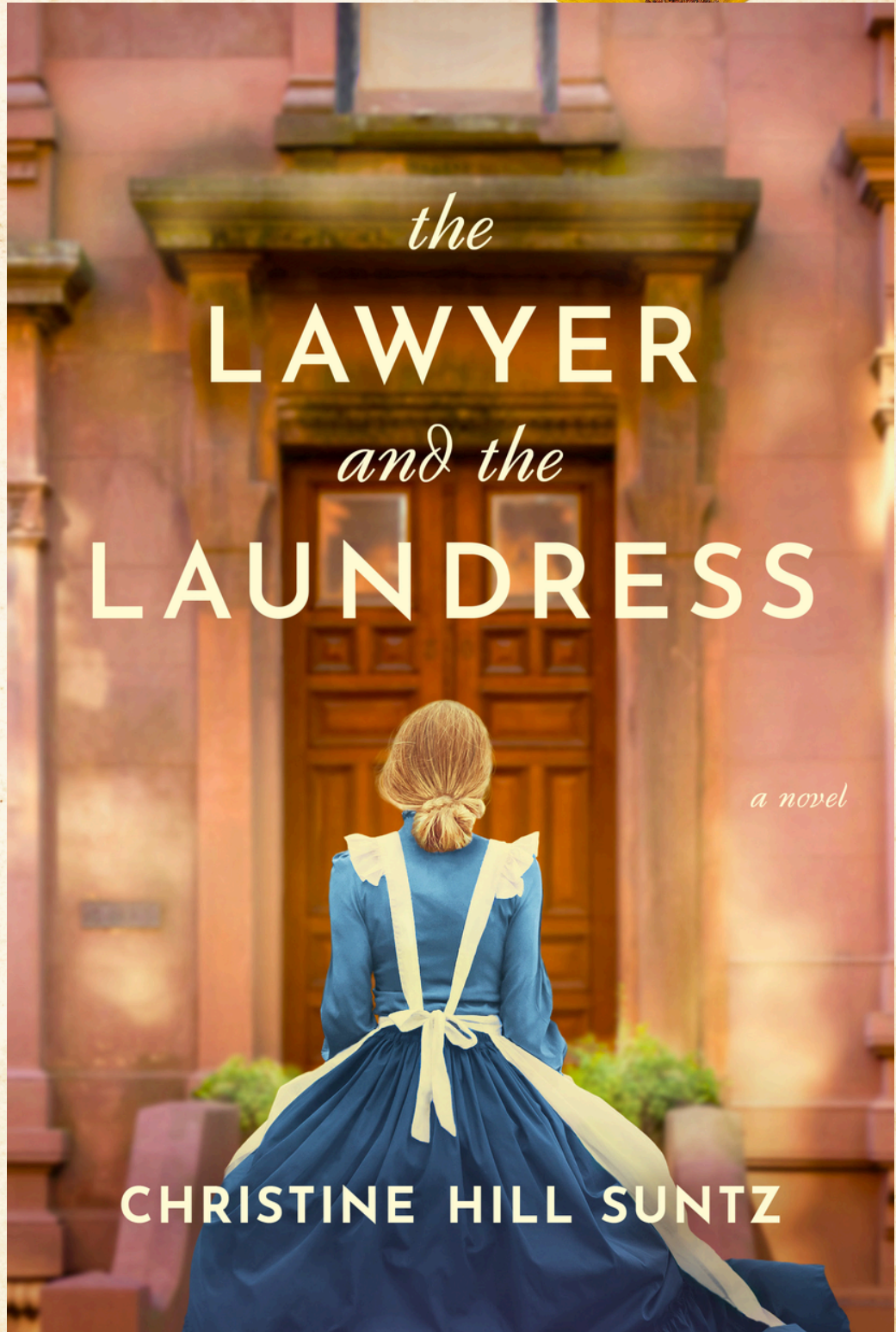


The Lawyer and the Laundress

BOOK CLUB KIT



the
LAWYER
and the
LAUNDRESS

a novel

CHRISTINE HILL SUNTZ



About the Author

CHRISTINE HILL SUNTZ

I can't remember a time when I didn't love to escape into a book. I finished *Anne of Green Gables* when I was 9, and I decided then that I wanted to be a writer. My love of language led me to study French and German and to pursue a graduate degree in Comparative Literature before finding a home teaching high school French.

I live in Ontario on a hobby farm with my husband and three children, a flock of nosy hens, one attack rooster, and a herd of entitled goats. When I'm not writing or teaching, I love to try out historical recipes on my (mostly) willing family.

FOLLOW ALONG ONLINE:



christinehillsuntz.com



[christinehillsuntz](https://www.instagram.com/christinehillsuntz)



[Christine Hill Suntz Author](#)



Dear Reader

On January 1, 2021 I made a resolution. This was the year I would finally write the story that had lived in my heart and imagination for the past five years.

Do you remember 2021? We were in the thick of COVID-19. We faced challenges we never imagined. Many of us rethought our lives and goals and decided to try something new. I decided I didn't want to spend my life wishing I'd tried to write a book. I wanted to write it.

Little did I know how much work was ahead of me.

After three years of rejections and rewrites, my story found a home with Tyndale. I'm so thrilled to share James and Sara's story and the fascinating slice of Canadian history they lived in.

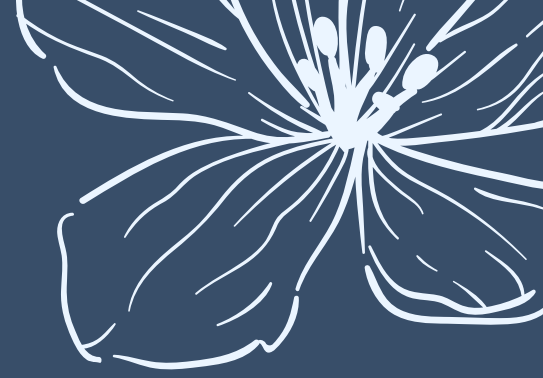
These are challenging times for the relationship between America and Canada. I so appreciate the readers who take the time to read about this little-known slice of Canadian history. It's through conversations like this that we learn about each other. I was recently chatting with a good friend from Virginia, and she said something that really stuck with me. "I believe even more strongly than ever in the need for people to stay connected to one another."

I hope this story can help us stay connected. Happy reading!

Christine

Q&A

with Christine Hill Suntz



1. How did you come up with the idea for *The Lawyer and the Laundress*?

Every Canadian child learns about the Upper Canada Rebellion in school, and it has lived in my imagination for years. It's always seemed like such a momentous and tragic part of our history. I felt for the idealistic rebels who tried to bring about positive change in all the wrong ways. They were idealists and dreamers, not soldiers. Ultimately, many of them paid a steep price for daring to stand up to an unjust social order that favored the rich and influential and aimed to keep the poor in their place.

2. Tell us about the audience you envisioned while writing this book. For whom would you say you wrote this book?

This book is for readers who love unique historical settings with a dash of danger and a generous slice of romance. For me, romance isn't an escape from reality. It's a reminder that love, relationship and connection are the most important gifts God has given us.

3. How did you conduct research for this story?

My chief inspirations were Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie, two sisters who emigrated to Canada in the early 1830s and wrote about their experiences. Among other works, Catharine Parr Traill wrote a guidebook for newcomers called *The Female Emigrant's Guide*. In 2021, I launched a weekly challenge based on this book. For example, I made lye and tallow, the two key ingredients in soap. Then I used this soap to do my laundry. It did not go as planned (my soap was a disaster!) but the tasks immersed me in women's daily life during this period.

4. Which of the characters in *The Lawyer and the Laundress* was the most challenging for you to create? Which character developed the most naturally for you?

Evie was challenging for me. This is the first time I wrote a child as a central character and I really had to work at the dialogue to make sure she didn't sound older than a nine-year-old. I spent a lot of time imagining what was going on in her head. It helped that my children were around this age when I was drafting the book.

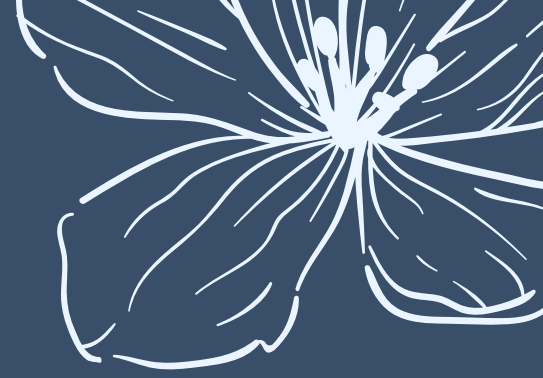
Sara was easier. Though I've never been disowned by a parent or lost a spouse, I identified with her. Perhaps because I, too, like to keep my head down and work hard in a quiet corner, especially when I'm feeling vulnerable. I'm not one to make my voice heard in a crowd unless it's a matter of conscience. The moments when Sara found her voice and spoke up for Evie were very satisfying to write.

5. Do you have a favorite character in the book? If so, why is he or she so special to you?

Granny was a favorite. I have learned so much from older generations. They know what's truly important in life. The gentle guidance of aunts and mentors led me through some challenging times in my life. Our society favors youth, and it's easy for us to ignore the wisdom of the older generation. I hope Granny can remind us to listen to the elders God has placed in our lives to teach, guide, and encourage.

Q&A

with Christine Hill Suntz



6. What was your favorite scene to write in *The Lawyer and the Laundress*? What was the most challenging scene to write?

My favorite scenes to write were the ones between Evie and Sara. They flowed so easily, perhaps because I'm a teacher in real life. I understand this dynamic and I love sharing my passion for language learning, literature and history.

Action scenes were much more challenging for me. (The scene at Montgomery's Inn as the rebellion begins, for example). To put these scenes together, I read first-hand historical accounts of the night to get the 'vibe'. At first, the scenes felt blurry. I had to close my eyes and picture each step my characters took. I inhaled and imagined the smell and 'hear' the surrounding sounds. Bringing these scenes to life was certainly a challenge.

7. What do you hope readers will take away from the story?

The power of second chances. This sounds like a cliché, but I really wanted to portray characters who have seen something of the world and faced hardship and grief. Out of their experiences comes a deeper empathy for others, an openness to differing outlooks, and a willingness to embrace people from different walks of life.

As I researched and wrote this story, the rhetoric of both rebels and loyalists struck me. It reminded me of things I read and watch in the world today. It was so important to me that James and Sara were people who could see both sides of an issue and who understood how to lead with compassion. Compromise, shared experience and understanding are still the way to move forward in peace and love.


8. What messages, themes, or symbols are included in *The Lawyer and the Laundress* and why are they important to you?

I mentioned two works by Sir Walter Scott, his novel *Ivanhoe* and his ballad, *Lochinvar*. It was important to me that Evie and Sara bonded over their love of *Ivanhoe*. Great literature has the power to bring people together by highlighting our shared human experience. When I was young, books meant so much to me. They were my escape from the petty meanness of middle school, my chance to travel and experience the world, and the way I learned about the variety of human experiences and the courage of conviction. *Lochinvar* is a nod to my dad who passed away in 2019. He loved poetry and he would often recite this ballad to wake me up in the morning. I miss him so much and I wish he could have read this story.



Discussion Questions

To start your group's conversation about *The Lawyer and the Laundress*, read through these questions with your book club and share your responses together.

1. At the beginning of the novel, Sara feels rejected by God and has turned away from her faith, while James—who has also faced adversity—continues to seek God's guidance and provision in his life. Why do people react so differently to life's hard circumstances? Which comes more naturally to you when you face challenges?
 2. Mrs. Hobbes suggests that Sara's father might regret the impulsive words he spoke in anger. Did this seem realistic? Have you ever experienced something similar, either as the speaker or the recipient of words spoken in anger?
 3. Granny tells Sara, "There's a time to mourn and a time to rejoice, says so right in the Scriptures. Mayhap your time of mourning is done. Might be time to live again." Was Granny was right to suggest this? How can we know when it's time to start living again after a tremendous loss?
 4. The poverty of Irish Town stands in stark contrast to the extravagance of Ballantine's mansion or even James's comfortable home. Have you ever been in a situation where you saw wealth and poverty right next to each other? How did it make you feel?
 5. Sara thinks the portrait of Evie's mother may bring Evie comfort, and James says he thinks it would make her sad every time she sees it. Do you enjoy seeing photos of loved ones who have died, or do they make you feel the loss all over again?
 6. Granny urges Sara to go in her place to help the sick Leary child. She tells Sara, "It's time you were using the gifts God gave you." Why do you think Sara is hesitant to believe in herself and her gifts? Do you sometimes feel hesitant to step forward confidently and bravely?
- 

7. James and Andrew were once very close but have grown apart. Have you ever had a relationship drift apart like this? Did you try to do anything about it? Do you agree with the way James handled it?

8. Granny tells Sara, "You figure God abandoned you, but you know deep down that's not true. He was there all along, holding you up until you was ready to stand again." Have you ever felt like God had abandoned you, but you realized later he had actually been holding you up the whole time?

9. Was there a certain point in the story where you began to suspect who Sara really was? How did you feel about that revelation?

10. The historical novel *Ivanhoe* is read and loved by several characters in this story, inspiring them to bravery and adventure. Are there any books you loved as a young person that have stayed with you and inspired you?

Your book group questions:

Jot down some questions you want to ask in your book club.



About the recipe:


When Evie invites Granny to visit her, she mentions Mrs. Hobbes' delicious lemon biscuits. I was inspired by Mrs. Beeton's *Book of Household Management* (1861). Luckily for me, Kitchen Historic created a modern version of this recipe, tested for the modern kitchen. The resulting cookie is tender and dense with a nice lemon flavor. Enjoy!

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper.
2. Rub the butter into the flour as if to make a pastry dough. It should resemble wet sand.
3. Add the sugar and lemon peel to the flour and mix well. Add the beaten eggs and lemon juice and stir together until it forms a sticky dough (I used my hands to make sure everything was completely incorporated - you don't want chunks of egg).
4. Drop the dough by teaspoons onto the prepared cookie sheet. Bake for about 10-15 minutes (mine took 13).



Lemon Biscuits

 Recipe courtesy of Kitchen Historic

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds (20 ounces) FLOUR
- 6 ounces UNSALTED BUTTER
- 3/4 pound (12 ounces) SUGAR
- 4 EGGS, beaten
- 1 ounce LEMON PEEL, or the ZEST of two LEMONS
- 2 teaspoons LEMON JUICE

Recipe Notes:

If the dough is crumbly and isn't coming together, let it sit for a bit, to absorb the eggs.

Laundry Soap

In 2021, I challenged myself to complete a weekly living history experiment to complement my research and immerse myself in the time period. Most of my experiments involved cooking, but since I was writing a book about a laundress, I definitely wanted to try to make soap.

Most early settlers made soap from lye and tallow (rendered beef fat). Spoiler: it's really hard to do. I tried these 19th-century instructions first:

"Soap is made from a union of lie (lye) of wood ashes, and any sort of grease ... Some say three pounds of grease to a pail of strong lie is the proportion, but experience is the best teacher. (...) So much depends on the size of your pot, and quantity of grease, that it would be difficult to tell you how much to put in." (The Female Emigrant's Guide, 1855)

With instructions like this, how could I go wrong? Of course, I had no idea what I was doing, and my first attempt was a dismal fail. I added my homemade lye to melted tallow (which I rendered from beef fat) and used an immersion blender. I ended up with a gloopy, separated mess.

Thanks to Bumble Bee Apothecary, I tried this modern tallow soap recipe to great success. I bought lye (Sodium Hydroxide) online and it worked like a charm. Much easier than making my own!

My homemade (and ineffective) lye



***Hardwood
fire
to collect
ashes
(the base
for lye)***



Tallow Soap



Ingredients:

- 32 oz. tallow
- 4.2 oz. lye
- 12.16 oz. water
- 1.5 fl. oz. essential oils (optional)

Directions:

1. Weigh tallow and put into a crockpot. I find it is easiest to melt the tallow before weighing it. If the tallow is below 100 degrees F, turn the crockpot on low to gently heat the tallow.
2. Weigh the water in a heat-safe container or sturdy plastic bucket, and weigh the lye separately.
3. Check the temperature of the tallow. You want it to be 100 degrees F. Let tallow cool if necessary.
4. Once the tallow is 100 degrees F, take the lye and water outdoors. Wearing gloves and safety goggles, carefully and slowly pour the lye into the water. Stir gently.
5. Once the lye water has turned from cloudy to clear, leave it to cool for 10 minutes.
6. Carefully pour the lye water into the tallow.
7. Use an immersion blender to mix the soap. After a few minutes, it will grow creamy, and start to thicken. Mix until it has reached "trace," the light pudding consistency.
8. Add the essential oils (if using) and blend again to incorporate.
9. Pour soap into molds, top with wax paper, and wrap molds in towels.
10. After 24 hours, remove soap from the mold and slice it into bars. Let cure in an area with good airflow for 4 weeks.



Laundry the old-fashioned way

I was excited to discover a Canadian company producing washboards on original machinery, the Canadian Wooden Ware Company. I loved the look of this washboard, and it's very effective at getting clothes clean. I'm going to keep using it. (For spot cleaning, NOT to do all my laundry!).



Catharine Parr Traill provides a few tips for soaking, boiling, and scrubbing "to such as have been unused to the hard work attending washing for a large family".

Here is her "Labour-Saving" method:

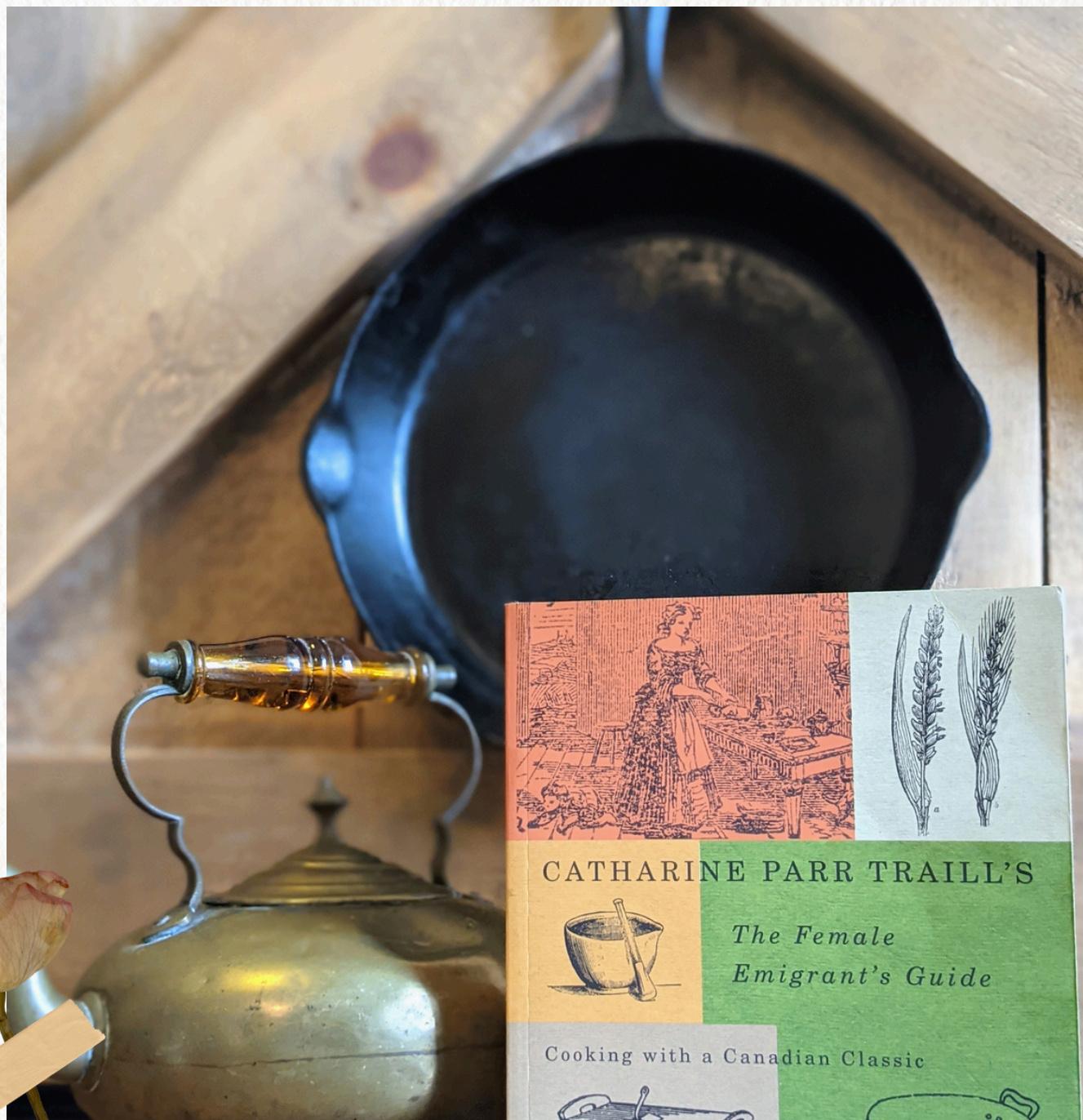
"(M)elt a piece [of soap]...and stir it into as much warm water as will be sufficient to soak the clothes., which may be done over night...pound them a little and wring out; lay on a clean board, and put them into your boiler with a piece of soap dissolved; let them boil for half and hour...drain, wring the clothes into another tub of clean water; then wring again in blue water." (p 175)

Wow, no wonder kids in old books are always getting in trouble for getting their clothes dirty! It took me about half an hour to clean 2 shirts (not including an overnight soak in washing soda.

My homemade tallow soap seemed to do the trick for mud and ketchup, though I'm not sure how it would hold up against a protein stain.

I love hanging my clothes outside to dry, but I sure appreciate the convenience of a dryer when the weather is bad.

Want to learn more about life in 19th Century Canada?



Life in the 1800s with...

The Female Emigrant's Guide

Two culinary historians created an annotated version of this Canadian classic that taught me so much about early Canada.

Cooke and Lucas, 2017

The rebels march on Toronto

*The 19th century
laundress*



*King Street,
Toronto,
1830s*



*Vision
Board*



Photos courtesy of

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:D%C3%A9sir%C3%A9_Fran%C3%A7ois_Laug%C3%A9,_1882_-_Le_linge_de_la_ferme.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_side_of_King_Street_from_Toronto_to_Church_Streets.jpg

The March of the Rebels upon Toronto, C.W. Jeffries, Government of Ontario Art Collection

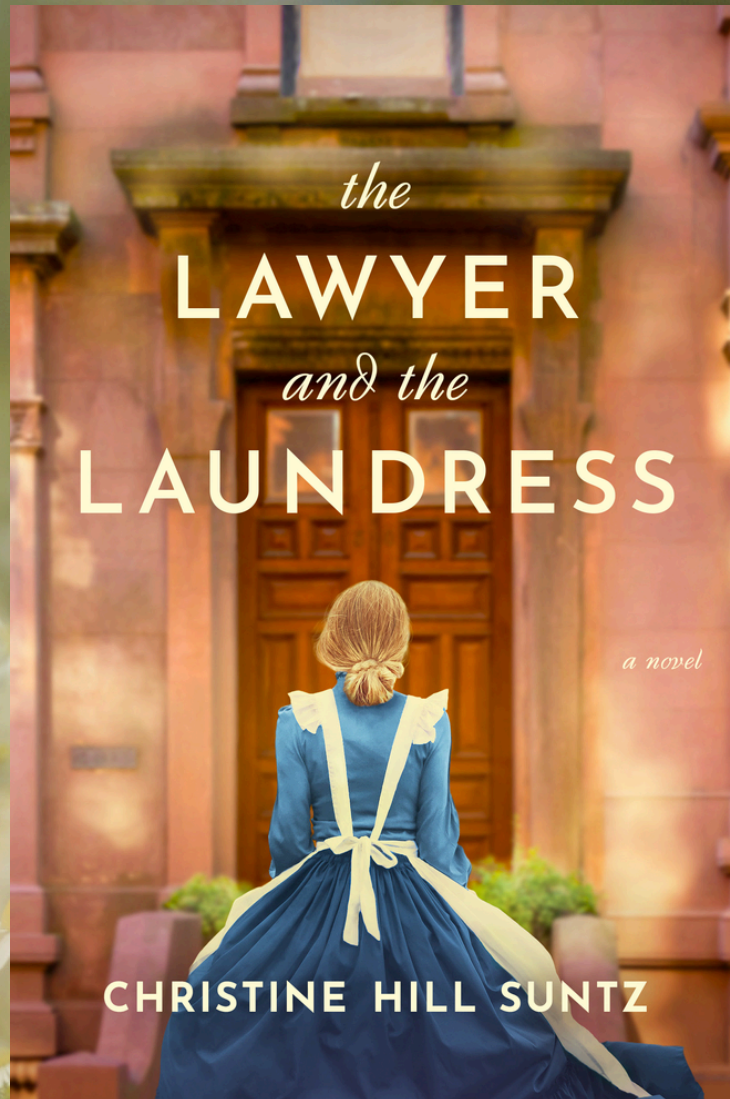
Evening Dress, British, The Metropolitan Museum of Art




Sara's Wedding Dress



Thanks for Choosing



for Your Book Club!

The background is a light beige, textured surface resembling aged parchment. Three daisies with white petals and yellow centers are scattered across the page: one in the top right, one in the bottom left, and one partially visible in the top right corner.

Watch for the next historical romance novel from Christine Hill Suntz!

Coming in 2026 from
Tyndale House Publishers

[Join the conversation at](#)

**crazy4
fiction
.com**