

# A Letter from Susan

Welcome to the Book Club Kit for The Rancher's Legacy. Thank you for choosing my book!

I'm an author from Maine, where Edith Rose in this series lives. I grew up about an hour north of Portland, where Edith, Abby, Ryland, Mr. Turner, and some of the other characters live.

I've always loved horses, and I was a history major in college. I married a man from Oregon, so western romances are one of my favorite types of stories. Besides the Maine setting, much of The Rancher's Legacy takes place in eastern Colorado, where one of my children lived for several years. It's a beautiful area.

I'm glad you found the Homeward Trails series. This is the first book of three, and it's been named a finalist in the 2022 Will Rogers Medallion contest. I hope you enjoy the enclosed resources and activities, and I can't wait for you to get started!

You can visit my website at <https://susanpagedavis.com> to learn more about me and my books, and sign up for my occasional newsletter here:

<https://madmimi.com/signups/118177/join>

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# Series Snapshot:



The Rancher's Legacy is Book 1 in the Homeward Trails series, each of which features a different Cooper sibling as the protagonist. Grandmother Edith Rose wants to see all of her grandchildren before she dies. Her daughter (the children's mother) died twenty years earlier, in the state of New York. On hearing the news, Edith wrote at once to her son-in-law, asking him to bring the children to Maine, but she never heard back from him.

Edith's husband was out to sea when it happened. On his return home, Captain Rose tried to find the children, but he was too late. Abandoned by their father, they'd been sent to an orphanage and then adopted into different families. Now the captain is dead, and Edith is determined to find them. She retains an attorney, who hires a persistent investigator, Ryland Atkins, to bring the three grandchildren home.

Book 1, The Rancher's Legacy, features Matt Anderson, born Zephaniah Cooper.

Book 2, The Corporal's Codebook, features Jack Miller, born Elijah Cooper

Book 3, The Sister's Search, features Molly Weaver, born Jane Cooper.



## The Rose Family's Cousin Coins



Does your family have a tradition peculiar to your clan? Captain Rose brought home a cache of special coins from a voyage to China. Each of his grandchildren was given one of the round coins with a square hole in the middle. To the Cooper boys, these become a symbol of the loved ones they've lost and a token of hope that they will find each other again. For little Jane, her coin is a mystery. She was too young to remember her birth family or to ever meet the captain. But the coin was with her when she was adopted, and she knows it's special.

Show or tell about something special in your own family and how you came by it.



# Character Cheat Sheet:

Below are some of the most important characters in *The Rancher's Legacy*. This information can help you keep track as you read and discuss the story.

## **Matt Anderson:**

Adopted son of John Anderson, he was originally named Zephaniah Cooper. He now lives with his dad on a ranch in Colorado. Matt served in the Civil War and was wounded at the Battle of Glorieta Pass. He's mostly healed now, and he hopes to rejoin his unit one day.

**Edith Rose:** Matt's natural grandmother. She lives in Portland, Maine, and hopes to find her three grandchildren.

**Ryland Atkins:** The investigator looking for Matt.

**Bud Lassen:** Ranch foreman at the Maxwell ranch.

**Vida Henry:** Housekeeper and cook for the Andersons.

**Jeremiah Turner:** Edith Rose's attorney; Ryland's boss.

**Ben and Catherine Cooper:** The birth parents of Zeph, Elijah, and Jane Cooper.

## **Rachel Maxwell:**

The daughter of Bill Maxwell, neighbor of the Andersons, Rachel is returning home from school in the East. She's never seen her father's new ranch, but when Matt takes her there, they find the ranch under attack and the house on fire. She doesn't know that her father and Matt planned for them to get married and combine the two ranches.

**Abby Benson:** The cousin in Maine whom Matt remembers. She lives with her grandmother, Edith.



## **Author Q. & A.:**

### **Q: How did you think of the idea for this story?**

A: The concept for the series actually occurred to me several years before I wrote it. I tucked the idea away in a file called “Find My Grandchildren.” I mulled over it for a while, during which I considered various historical time periods. I thought about having four grandchildren but settled on three. I even considered having one of them move outside the United States with his or her adoptive family, but when I settled on the Civil War era, that seemed a little too complicated. I’m glad the stories are finally seeing daylight, and I hope readers will enjoy them.

### **Q: How do you choose names for your characters?**

A: Most of the names in this book are traditional ones. For the Maine characters, I chose names I’d heard when I lived there. Maine was settled mostly by English people, so I chose names you’ll find there. Ryland was the name of a man I actually met in Massachusetts (not Maine, but still New England). It was a surname in his family tree. I loved the name and combined it with Atkins, a not uncommon surname in the area where I grew up. I often use first or last names of people I know in my stories.

### **Q: Did you have to do a lot of research for this book?**

A: Yes, most of my historicals require a great deal of research. For example, all of the Homeward Trails stories involve travel over long distances. But travel was greatly disrupted during the Civil War and grew harder as the war progressed. These books reflect the hardship people experienced then. Book 2, The Corporal’s Codebook, took the most research of the three, because it involves a lot of details concerning the military and telegraphy. I spent many hours studying on the internet and with about two dozen books dealing with the Civil War era.



## Discussion Questions for The Rancher's Legacy:

1. Did you find Rachel stuck-up in the first chapter? Was she fair to Matt? Would you advise Matt to be more forthcoming about his and Rachel's fathers' plans?
2. Did Matt make the right decision in sending Rachel off alone with the wagon toward his father's ranch?
3. Should Rachel trust her father's judgment about Matt and go along with his plan?
4. What do you think of Vida's treatment of Rachel? Considering her position and her husband's on the ranch, do you think Mr. Anderson would be wise to set some rules for her?
5. Does Matt really want to rejoin his regiment, or is he feeling guilty for leaving it? If you were his friend, would you encourage him to keep trying, or to let it go?
6. Do you think the men of the two ranches did enough to protect Rachel (and Vida)? What more could they do? Is Rachel careless of her safety? Is she too headstrong?
7. Could Rachel have succeeded in winning Vida over if she took another approach to their relationship? What would you suggest?
8. Ryland is somewhat of a greenhorn on his first journey west. Can you come up with a few simple tips that would have made his travels safer and easier?
9. Rachel can't seem to make up her mind on whether to stay in Colorado Territory or go back east and teach school. What do you think? What would you do if you were in her place?
10. Can you think of ways Matt could try to find his siblings?
11. In chapter 18, Matt recalls the battle when he was wounded. What resources are available to the military now that weren't at that time? How do the people around Matt try to help him? What else could they do to aid him mentally and emotionally?
12. What do you think of Vida's birthday observance? Do you have a difficult person in your life? How can you honor them without offending them?
13. When Ryland was captured, could he have done anything to lessen his chances of being hurt?
14. Ryland is trying to find the grandchildren before Edith Rose dies. When he learns of Matt's military service and battle wound, he realizes that even though the Cooper children are much younger than Mrs. Rose, one or all of them could already be dead. In chapter 23, he confronts the possibility of his own death and prays. What do you think of his prayer?
15. Did Matt and Rachel choose the future for themselves that you would have? If you were the author, would you end this book differently?



# Fun Facts and Free Bookmarks:

- Matt was wounded in the Battle of Glorieta Pass in New Mexico, which took place on March 28, 1862. I placed him in the 1<sup>st</sup> Colorado Infantry, which played a major role in the battle.
- The first railroad didn't come to Colorado until 1870, which means travel in this mountainous territory was slow and dangerous.
- The Colorado Territory, with the same boundaries as the present-day state of Colorado, was organized after the Pikes Peak Gold Rush. It was signed into being by President James Buchanan on Feb. 28, 1861. Before that, portions of the territory had been part of the Kansas Territory, the Nebraska Territory, the New Mexico Territory, and the Utah Territory.
- After the Civil War, statehood was sought, but President Andrew Johnson vetoed it in 1865. President Ulysses S. Grant favored Colorado statehood, though not all of Congress agreed with him. Colorado was finally admitted to the Union in 1876.
- The Rancher's Legacy is a finalist in the Will Rogers Medallion contest. This award is given for excellence in western fiction. Will Rogers was a famous humorist, cowboy, social commentator, and actor from Oklahoma. Here are a few of my favorite Will Rogers quotes:

"Never miss a good chance to shut up."

"Everyone is ignorant, only on different subjects."

"When I die, I want to die like my grandfather who died peacefully in his sleep. Not screaming like all the passengers in his car."

"When you find yourself in a hole, quit digging."

For book clubbers reading *The Rancher's Legacy*, I'd be happy to send bookmarks. These can be requested individually at [susan@susanpagedavis.com](mailto:susan@susanpagedavis.com), or, more efficiently, as a group. The leader can ask for as many bookmarks as your group has members.



**Susan Page Davis** is the author of more than one hundred Christian novels and novellas in the historical romance, mystery, and romantic suspense genres. Her work has won several awards, including the Carol Award, two Will Rogers Medallions, and two Faith, Hope, & Love Reader's Choice Awards. She has also been a finalist in the WILLA Literary Awards and a multi-time finalist in the Carol Awards. Three of her books were named Top Picks in *Romantic Times Book Reviews*. Several have appeared on the ECPA and Christian Book Distributors bestselling fiction lists. Her books have been featured in several book clubs, including the Literary Guild, Crossings Book Club, and Faithpoint Book Club.

Besides writing novels, Susan enjoys reading, cross stitch, genealogy, codes and logic problems. She's a certified farrier, but it's been a loooong time since she shod a horse.

A Maine native, Susan has lived in Oregon and now resides in western Kentucky with her husband Jim, a retired news editor. They are the parents of six and grandparents of eleven.

Find Susan at:

**Website:** <https://susanpagedavis.com> where you can enter her monthly drawing for free books and see all her books and other resources.

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# More of Susan's Novels:

## Homeward Trails Series:

The Rancher's Legacy

The Corporal's Codebook

The Sister's Search (releases July 2022)

The Outlaw Takes a Bride (western)

Counterfeit Captive

Almost Arizona

River Rest (set in 1918)

The Crimson Cipher (set in 1915)

Mrs. Mayberry Meets Her Match

Hearts of Oak Series (Co-authored with Susan's son James S. Davis, set in the 1850s):

The Seafaring Women of the Vera B.

The Scottish Lass

The Ladies' Shooting Club Series (westerns):

The Sheriff's Surrender

The Gunsmith's Gallantry

The Blacksmith's Bravery

Captive Trail (western)

Cowgirl Trail (western)

Hearts in Pursuit (western novella)

Christmas Next Door



## Echo Canyon

The Prairie Dreams series (set in the 1850s):

The Lady's Maid

Lady Anne's Quest

A Lady in the Making

Maine Brides series (set in 1720, 1820, and 1895):

The Prisoner's Wife

The Castaway's Bride

The Lumberjack's Lady

Seven Brides for Seven Texans

Seven Brides for Seven Texas Rangers

White Mountain Brides series (set in the 1690's in New Hampshire)

Wyoming Brides series (set in 1850s):

Protecting Amy

The Oregon Escort

Wyoming Hoofbeats

The Island Bride (set in the 1850s)

## **Mystery and Romantic Suspense:**

True Blue Mysteries:

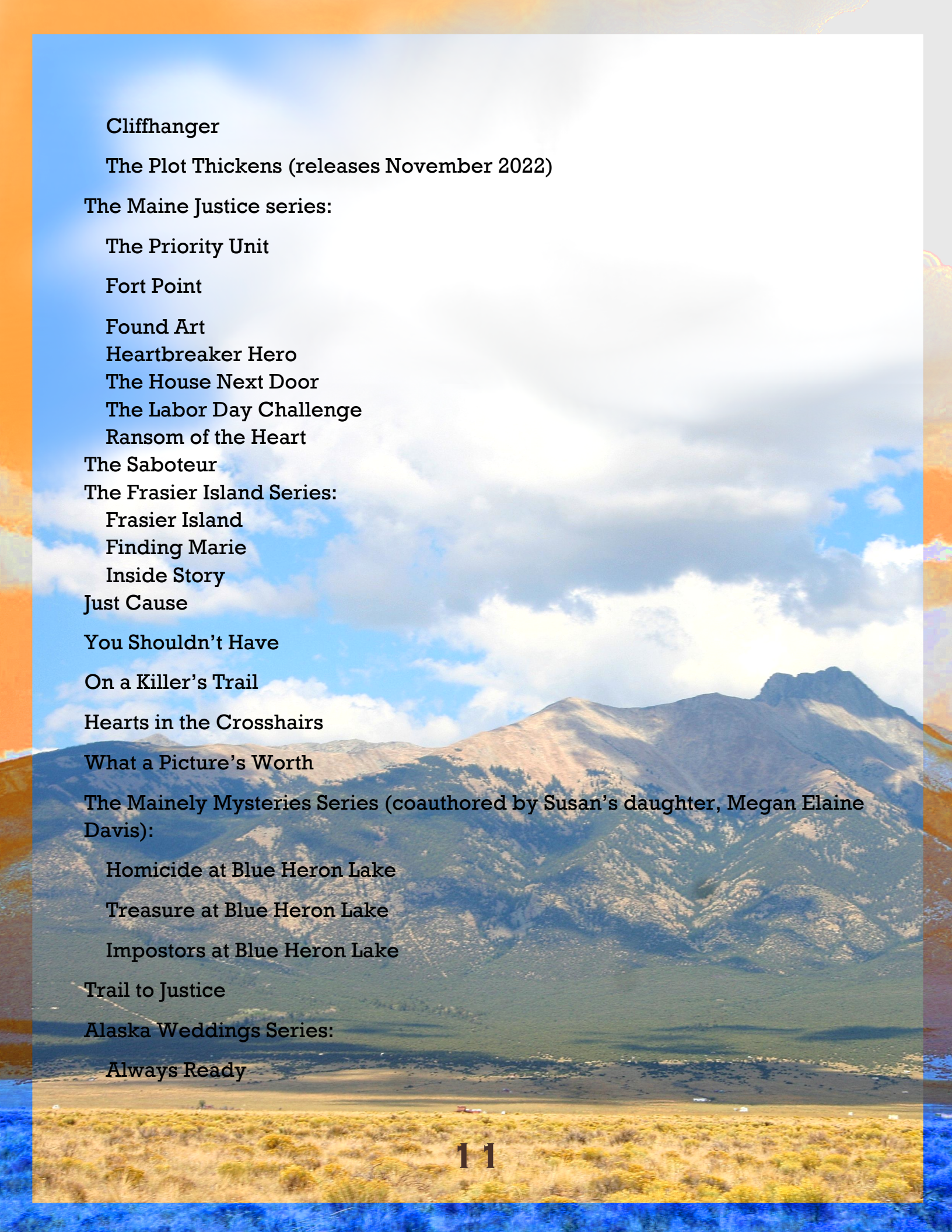
Blue Plate Special

Ice Cold Blue

Persian Blue Puzzle

Skirmish Cove Mysteries





Cliffhanger

The Plot Thickens (releases November 2022)

The Maine Justice series:

The Priority Unit

Fort Point

Found Art

Heartbreaker Hero

The House Next Door

The Labor Day Challenge

Ransom of the Heart

The Saboteur

The Frasier Island Series:

Frasier Island

Finding Marie

Inside Story

Just Cause

You Shouldn't Have

On a Killer's Trail

Hearts in the Crosshairs

What a Picture's Worth

The Mainely Mysteries Series (coauthored by Susan's daughter, Megan Elaine Davis):

Homicide at Blue Heron Lake

Treasure at Blue Heron Lake

Impostors at Blue Heron Lake

Trail to Justice

Alaska Weddings Series:

Always Ready





Fire and Ice

Polar Opposites

Tearoom Mysteries (from Guideposts, books written by several authors):

Tearoom for Two

Trouble Brewing

Steeped in Secrets

Beneath the Surface

Tea and Promises

Tea Leaves and Legacies

Also from Guideposts, selected books by Susan appear in the Patchwork Mysteries, Mysteries of Mary's Bookshop, Miracles of Marble Cove, Secrets of the Blue Hill Library, and Mysteries of Silver Peak series.

Short Story Collection:

Short and Sweet: 13 Sweet, Romantic Stories

And many more! **See all of her books** at <https://susanpagedavis.com>.