

A GUIDE FOR BOOK CLUBS

including an author's note, recipes, and more!



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

DEAR READER,

I started my journey in genealogy around ten years ago. At the time, I barely knew the names of my ancestors beyond my grandparents. Some people don't have even that much. If we are fortunate enough to grow up hearing stories of our families' past, we still have but a glimpse of their vibrant lives. My dedication to learning more revealed many gems: how my great-great grandfather was in a deadly gunfight over his philandering wife in the 1880s, how my ancestors left Virginia post-slavery to make a new life in the Midwest as coal miners, and most especially, how my sixth great-grandmother, Amy Bowles-Farrow, created a safe place for her family of free Blacks in post-American Revolution Charlottesville, Virginia.

After I discovered Amy Bowles-Farrow's story, I couldn't help but imagine the Virginia woods as they were in her life, with their nearly pristine wonders as well as the inherent dangers of slavery and racism. Folks in that time possessed the resilience needed to carve out a life for themselves, and I hungered to capture that strength and reveal the lives of those who *could've* lived on that land. The curse of time travel should've ended the Bridges, but if you think about it, if they'd survived on land surrounded by plantations, thriving during times when the Virginia slave codes reared their ugly head, they would've wanted to make life better for their descendants. With such foresight, they would've developed tools to protect their kin and given them the means and opportunities—as we do today—to persevere and uplift generations yet to come.

I hope that as you turn the pages of *The Fallen Fruit*, you'll be transported to the Virginia woods where my ancestors lived, worked, and loved. I hope you'll feel their struggles and triumphs alongside them, even though that time has long since passed. As we explore their lives, let us not forget the lessons they learned: how to hold onto hope in the darkest of times, how to find strength in each other's company, and how to persevere against all odds.



SHAWNTELLE MADISON

EXPLORE FREE STATE

DISCOVER THE REAL LOCATION

The Fallen Fruit is a work of fiction, but many of the places and events did occur as described. One of those facts include the Bridges' property called "Free State." This location is real. The idea for the Bridges' story was initially about a family of freeborn Blacks in Charlottesville, Virginia—namely mine. The time travel aspect emerged a bit later.

Back in 1779, a free Black woman named Amy Bowles-Farrow bought land from a local merchant named William Johnson. Although eighteenth-century free Black Virginians could vote and own property, once the tobacco industry (and later cotton) boomed, slavery became enshrined in American society. Plantation owners in Virginia utilized slave labor, and over time the option to buy or earn one's freedom disappeared.

During this time, many communities created laws limiting Virginia's free Black population, and forced their citizens into poverty. Others were driven out of the state altogether. Amy Bowles-Farrow, who was my sixth great-grandmother, managed to carve out a life for herself. The land she bought became Free State many years later. Free State residents farmed and practiced trades, accumulated personal property, and did business with local whites.

The small community expanded after the Civil War, and by the early twentieth century, it was home to the Free State Colored School and the Central Relief Association, a local benevolent society. The residents of Free State were just as fascinating as Bowles-Farrow. One of her sons, Zachariah Bowles, was a soldier in the American Revolution, and his wife was Crita Hemings, a former slave and the sister of Sally Hemings from Thomas Jefferson's Monticello plantation.

With such a rich history to draw upon, I tapped into my family's story while writing this book, in particular for Luke Bridge's time as a private during the American Revolution. I based him off Shadrack Battles, another distant relative of mine, who fought in the 10th Regiment during the American Revolutionary War. Shadrack is listed on the Valley Forge muster rolls, and he was ill, along with many of the other troops, from January to March of 1778. It was quite the challenge to explore Shadrack's service, but bringing his experiences to life was an honor.

FALL DOWN YOUR FAMILY TREE

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR GENEALOGY

1 TALK TO YOUR ELDERS, NOT ONCE, BUT MANY TIMES

Searching online and at your local libraries and historical societies will only get you so far. Take the data you have compiled and speak to your elders. Ask about the family stories, even the rumors. You will be surprised what you learn.

2 BUILD YOUR FAMILY TREE WITH CAUTION

Proceed with caution when adding people to your family tree. Search for primary sources like census records and verify the ancestors given your genetic matches.

3 BE PREPARED TO DO RESEARCH OFFLINE

There's a wealth of information online, and you could spend endless hours searching, but most genealogists take their search offline to hunt through the endless mounds of non-digitized records. Once you determine you need more information, be prepared to travel, or you can hire a professional research to help.

4 BE PREPARED FOR DATA, DATA, AND MORE DATA

At the beginning of my own genealogical research, my data was manageable, but I quickly accumulated extensive notes as I attempted to untangle family relationships, birthplaces, and places of residence. Each of our ancestors has a story to tell, maybe even a mystery to solve. I recommend mind mapping software or timelines to track people and their interactions.

5 TAKE A DNA TEST

Learning your the composition of your ancestry can be fascinating and eye opening, but that's only the first step. You can learn a lot more from your genetic matches. Check every tree, and for ancestors who lived in similar locations, check to see if there are any potential relationships.

Book Club Discussion Questions

1. What themes or messages did you take away from the book?
2. Time travel plays a central role in *The Fallen Fruit*, causing the Bridge family to experience their lives out of chronological order. How does this unique narrative structure affect your understanding of the themes of fate and free will in the novel?
3. Luke's time travel during the American Revolution leads to moments of joy, tragedy, and confusion. How does the author use his time-traveling condition to explore the fragility of the human existence and the impact of choices on our lives?
4. The novel raises ethical questions about changing the past and influencing the future through time travel. How do Cecily, Luke, and Emily grapple with these moral dilemmas, and how did it make you reflect on the consequences of your own choices?
5. Sabrina's relationship with Luke is doomed to failure, given his fate as Addy's husband. Did you root for them anyway?
6. Cecily asks Amelia to change the timeline in the hope that Cecily might be reunited with her family. If you faced the same situation, would you alter the past to be with your loved ones?
7. When Cecily reveals the truth to her husband, Winston, he is upset and confused. What would you have done to convince him?
8. If you knew you would fall through time like the Bridges, what would you do to prepare?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Black women's roles in society have evolved significantly over time. How did the characters in the book navigate the expectations and limitations placed on them during their respective historical periods?
2. Consider Rebecca Raley-Bridge's dilemma in the story. She wants to protect all of her children, but she doesn't understand the family curse. What would you have done in her place?

FALLEN FRUIT PLAYLIST

SOUNDTRACK FOR THE BOOK

Let's set the mood with The Fallen Fruit playlist on Youtube Music! Each protagonist has their own list.

Cecily's Playlist

This playlist is a blend of music from the 50s-70s featuring The Ronettes, Otis Redding, and more!

[VIEW PLAYLIST](#)

Amelia's Playlist

This playlist is a variety of heartfelt hits from Stevie Wonder to Donny Hathway!

[VIEW PLAYLIST](#)

Sabrina's Playlist

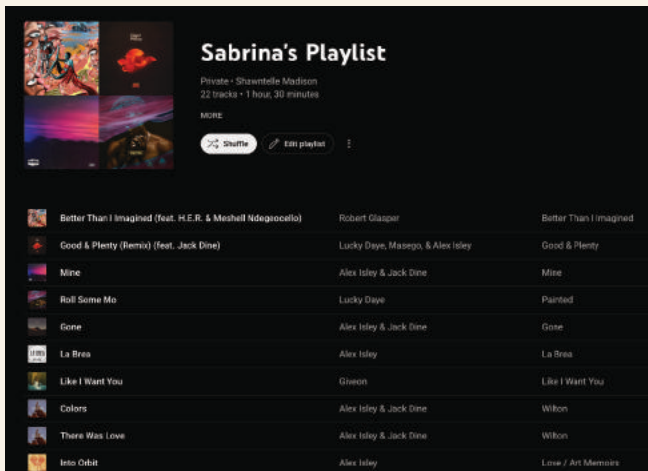
Talent singers and soothing sounds fill Sabrina's playlist. In particular, Alex Isley, Giveon, and Lucky Daye were huge inspirations for this list.

[VIEW PLAYLIST](#)

Reba's Playlist

Reba's playlist features a lot of Stevie Wonder and focuses on the joy and pain of love and loss.

[VIEW PLAYLIST](#)



Emily's Playlist

This list features a lot of love, loss, and empowerment music to set the mood for falling in love.

[VIEW PLAYLIST](#)

Book Club Menu and Recipe

PARTY LIKE IT'S 1799



The Fallen Fruit is the perfect novel to host during your teatime book club or a cocktail hour. The following are some menu item ideas and a few recipes!

If having a brunch or teatime book club, I would suggest enjoying Emily's Nutmeg Maple Cookies (like Emily and Matthew did!) or blackberry jam and croissants (like Grandpa Zachariah Bridge did!), and of course, your favorite tea.

If having an evening get-together, enjoy (alcoholic or nonalcoholic) apple cider (like Sabrina or Rebecca did!) with a charcuterie board.



CHECK THE NEXT PAGE FOR THE RECIPE FOR
EMILY'S NUTMEG MAPLE COOKIES!

Emily's Nutmeg Maple Cookies

MAKES ABOUT A DOZEN TWO-INCH COOKIES



Ingredients

- 1 cup butter at room temperature
- 1 cup sugar, plus some for sprinkling on top
- 1 egg yolk
- ½ Grade B 100 percent maple syrup
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- plus some for sprinkling on top
- 2½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt

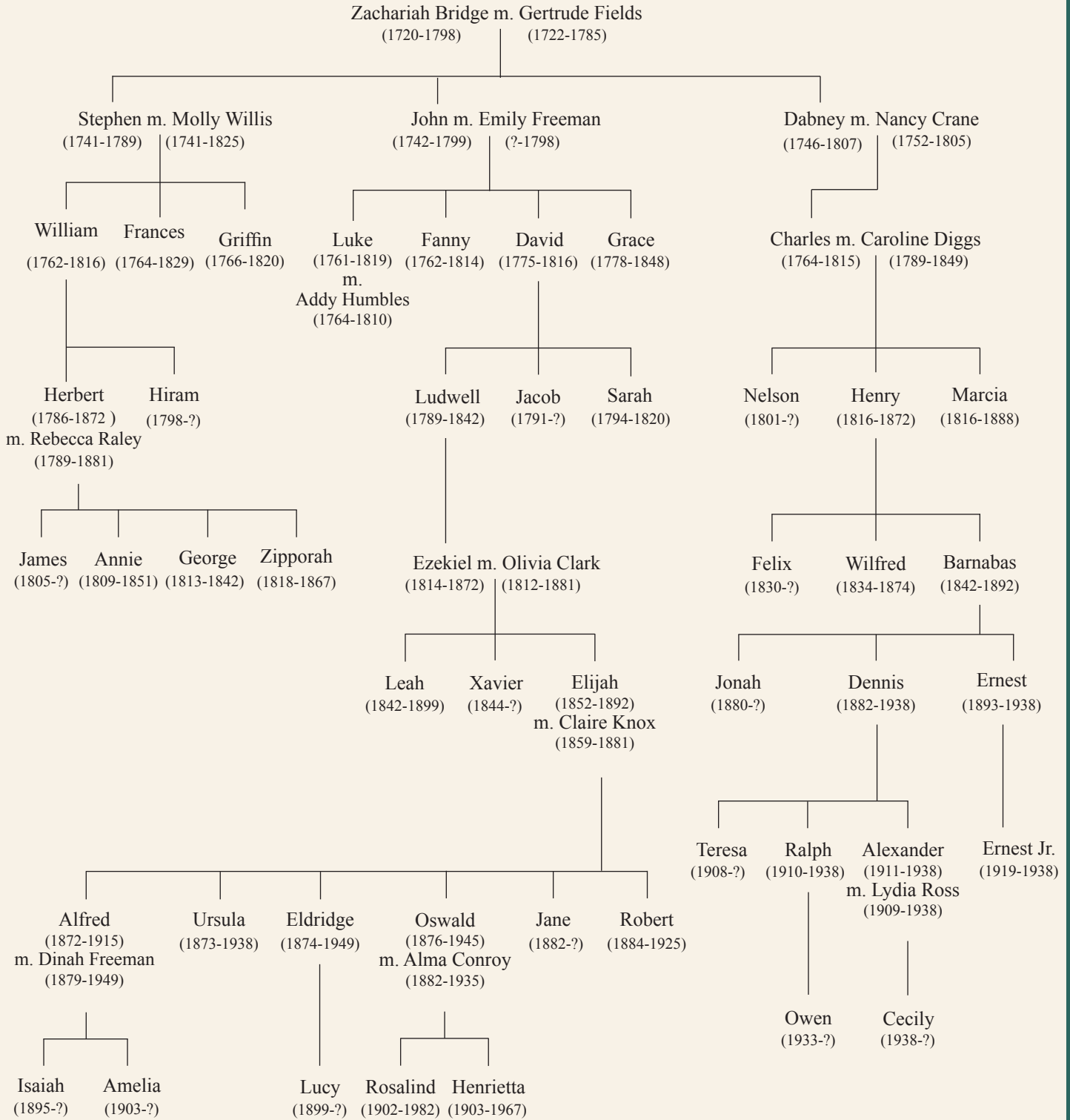


Directions

First, mix the butter and sugar in a large bowl until fully combined. Next, stir in the egg yolk and maple syrup. Mix everything together until well blended. In another bowl combine the nutmeg, flour, and salt. Add the dry mixture to the butter/sugar bowl in two batches. Next, shape the final dough mixture into a flat square and chill for two hours. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Add more flour to a clean surface, then roll out half the dough. Cut out the shapes and place the cookies on a baking sheet. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes. The cookies are done when the edges are light brown. Sprinkle a little bit of nutmeg and sugar on top for a dash of love.

BRIDGE FAMILY TREE

FALL DOWN THE TREE TO THE ROOTS



BOOKMARKS

Get ready to mark your place in style with our exclusive book club bookmarks! There are not one, but two beautifully crafted bookmarks for you to print out and enjoy. Choose from the classic black and white design or the vibrant, full-color option - both are perfect for tracking your progress through *The Fallen Fruit*. Simply print out this page and cut out your bookmark.

THE FALLEN FRUIT

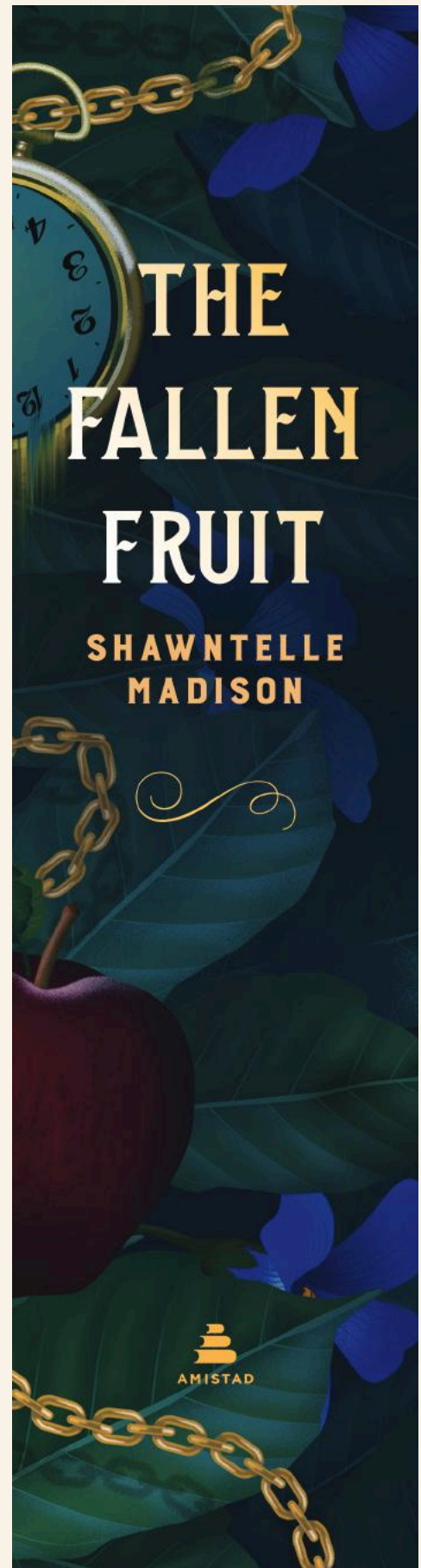


SHAWNTELLE
MADISON



"A mesmerizing tale of a family bound by an extraordinary curse...I wish I could go back in time to read it again for the first time."

— Jamie Ford,
New York Times
bestselling author of
The Many Daughters of Afong Moy





THE FALLEN FRUIT