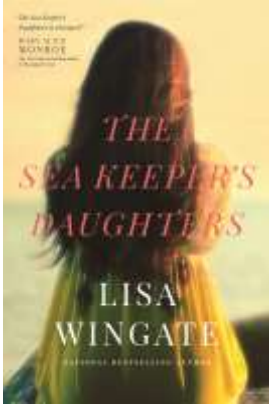


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Lisa Wingate's, *The Sea Keeper's Daughters* Unearths Lost Roosevelt-Era Treasures

It's 1935. First lady, Eleanor Roosevelt cajoles her husband into signing an executive order creating what will become Federal Project Number One. The results will touch every corner of a vast but struggling country, yet eighty years later will be virtually forgotten.



“Those involved in Federal One were far ahead of their time. They were the beginning of the Civil Rights movement before there was a Civil Rights movement. They pushed toward equality for women before anyone was talking about equal opportunity,” says Lisa Wingate, whose new novel, *The Sea Keeper's Daughters*, follows the struggles of a young woman hired into the Federal Writer's Project, a subdivision of Federal One.

“Roosevelt's Federal Writers faced incredible challenges. They were told to document the stories of real lives and real people struggling to survive the Depression. Their mandate was to be all-inclusive, to break down hard and fast societal boundaries, much like Kathryn Sockett's character does in *The Help*, when she interviews black maids in the South. The Federal Writers not only documented the natural wonders of the country, but the hidden lives of minorities, working women, immigrant laborers, sharecroppers, and others typically ignored by the history books.”

While Wingate's tale is fictional, the experiences of a Federal Writer are vividly brought to light when a modern-day woman discovers the letters of a great aunt who was disowned by her wealthy family after signing on with the WPA as a Federal Writer. Through Alice's letters, Wingate describes the experiences of a woman traveling into the unknown, all for the sake of a story

Like Alice in Wingate's novel, the Federal Writers often found themselves on the wrong sides of local powerbrokers, special interest groups, and eventually Congressional committees hunting for communists at the dawn of the Red Scare. As political fortunes changed, thousands of stories documented by the Federal Writers were quietly hidden away in filing vaults.

Now, thanks to the Internet and the Library of Congress many of those narratives are available for the first time since they were written. “These stories show us where we come from as a country and as a people. They inspired novels like Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, yet so many of us know little about the Federal Writers themselves. I wrote *The Sea Keeper's Daughters* to bring to light not only the lives of the people on the pages, but the lives of the people behind the pens.”

Through Wingate's novel, eighty years of dust are whisked away and the Federal Writers are finally given a bit of long-overdue but well-deserved recognition.

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