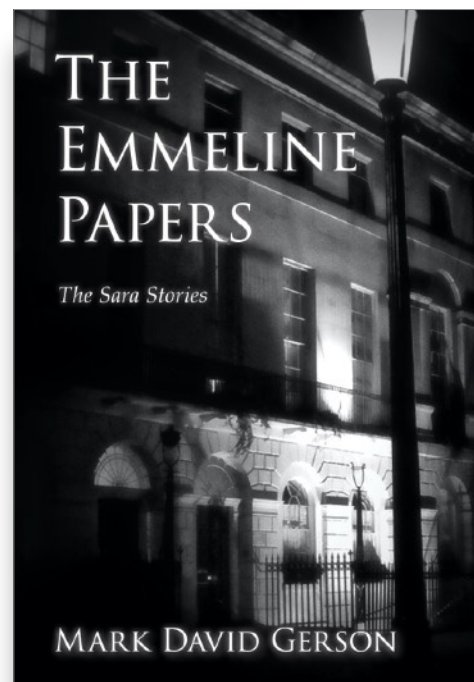
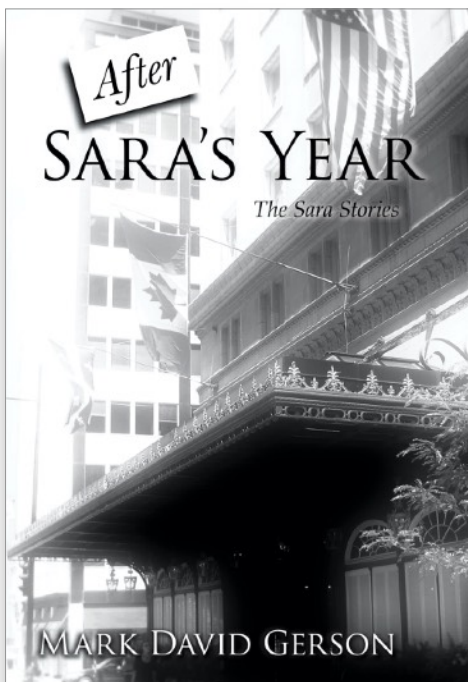


# MARK DAVID GERSON

Award-Winning Author of *THE SARA STORIES*



**“Thrilling...Bittersweet...Triumphant!”**

Dan Stone, author of *Ice on Fire*

**“A gem of a book  
from a brilliant writer!”**

Karen Helene Walker  
author of *The Wishing Steps*

**“I could not put it down!”**

*The Suburban*, Montreal



abc

FOX

npr

AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA

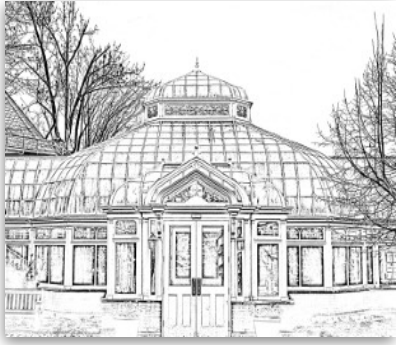
unity  
Online Radio

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY PW

**BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!**

**[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com) • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)**

# MARK DAVID GERSON AND *THE SARA STORIES*



**MARK DAVID GERSON** is the award-winning author of more than twenty books, including classic works for writers, inspirational self-help titles, compelling memoirs and *The Legend of Q'ntana* fantasy novels, which are on their way to movies theaters as a series of films based on his screenplays.

Gerson's *Sara Stories* (*Sara's Year*, *After Sara's Year* and *The Emmeline Papers*) draw largely on his years in Montreal and Nova Scotia to craft a masterful epic spanning more than 50 years from the early 1930s to the late 1980s.

Set in Montreal and postwar Halifax, *Sara's Year* tells the story of Esther Freed, Sarah Swartz and Esther's son, Bernie, all of whom must decide whether it's too late to follow their unrealized passions and abandoned dreams.

If *Sara's Year* reminds us that it's never too late to live our dreams, *After Sara's Year* shows us, through the stories of Marc-Allan Cameron and Esther's sister, Sadie, that it's never too late to embrace life. *The Emmeline Papers* expands the original storyline along with its cast of captivating characters and adds Tuscany, London and rural Nova Scotia to the series' evocative settings.

Locales familiar to Montrealers and Nova Scotians play significant roles in *The Sara Stories* — from the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Baron Byng High School and the Westmount Conservatory in Montreal to the Halifax Public Gardens, the Lord Nelson Hotel and the town of Wolfville in Nova Scotia. Long-gone landmarks, such as the Eaton's and Simpsons department stores and the Murray's restaurant chain also show up in the stories. Londoners will recognize Fitzrovia, once among the city's most bohemian artistic hubs.

Well-known historical figures are important characters in all three books. Anne Savage was an influential art educator and a founding member of the Beaver Hall Group, a female counterpart to Canada's renowned Group of Seven. Artist Paul-Émile Borduas was a leader of Quebec's avant-garde Automatiste movement and chief author the *Refus Global*, a manifesto that helped revolutionize the arts in Canada. And Pierre Elliot Trudeau was Canada's 15th Prime Minister and father of the current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, who is also mentioned. Legendary dancer Isadora Duncan and the real-life Anna of *The King and I* are key to *The Sara Stories*, as are Queen Elizabeth II and artist Keith Haring.

Mark David Gerson grew up in Montreal and attended Mount Royal High School, Vanier College and Concordia University, all mentioned in the stories. He returned to Concordia after graduation, where he was assistant public relations director. He wrote the initial drafts of his first novel, *The MoonQuest*, while living in Nova Scotia — on a fictional version of Marc-Allan Cameron's Hubbard Mountain Road.

In addition to calling Montreal and various parts of Nova Scotia home, Gerson has lived in Toronto and rural Ontario, as well as in New Mexico, Hawaii, Arizona, Oregon and Southern California.

More than an author, playwright and screenwriter, Gerson is an acclaimed writing coach and "creativity catalyst." Through his talks, workshops and one-on-one coaching, he inspires writers and non-writers alike to access their innate creativity and get their stories onto the page.

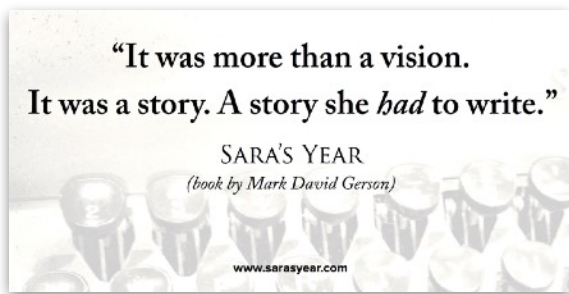
Gerson is currently planning a fourth *Sara* book and new installments in his *Legend of Q'ntana*.



**BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!**

[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com) • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)

# SARA'S YEAR: THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY



One of the first questions I asked myself, as I dealt with a series of health scares in early 2014 was, “If I’m to die sooner rather than later, what is it I want to be sure to do before I go?” To my surprise the first response that bubbled up from somewhere deep within was, “Write another novel.”

Not long after, in Los Angeles on a business trip and determined to heed that unexpected call, I parked myself in a Santa Monica Starbucks and began to write. I knew little more of the story beyond its title and a vague idea for an opening scene.

Eight months later, my health concerns resolved, my focus turned to a different book, the first edition of *Birthing Your Book...Even If You Don't Know What It's About*. I couldn't know then that I was writing it as much for me as for others: to help me birth a novel I still knew little about.

Soon after *Birthing Your Book's* release, I found myself back in L.A., this time to sign books at the Conscious Life Expo. It was there on the second day of the event that a stranger marched up to my table, scrutinized me and my book display, and with a gaze of alarming intensity, demanded my rising sign.

“Virgo,” I told him.

“When do you normally write?” he asked next.

There's little you can call “normal” about my work habits. One draft or book might write itself more easily in the morning, another in the afternoon, another late at night. That's what I told him.

“You need to be writing two hours before dawn,” he declared, backing it up with a complex astrological explanation that I pretended to understand.

“Not going to happen,” I muttered. I'm barely functional two hours after dawn, let alone before. Yet when the next morning I awoke spontaneously at 4:30, I put my visitor's theory to the test: I found the few pages of my barely started novel and continued where I had left off.

Through the months that followed that peculiar encounter (though rarely before dawn), *Sara's Year* revealed itself to me with a speed and clarity that I had rarely before experienced, often through the meaningful coincidences that Carl Jung termed “synchronicities” and that I can only describe as Muse-inspired miracles. Among the more significant synchronicities that popped up were my discovery of Anne Savage, the Anna Leonowens connection to Halifax and Montreal and the convenient alignment of story and real-life dates. There were many more, too many to chronicle here.

Through it all, I never stopped being astounded as more and more disparate bits and pieces came magically together to form the story. Even so, I struggled against its *Sara's Year* title, which never seemed to fit...until I wrote the book's closing scenes, when it finally made sense!

**Esther and Sarah share a single passion: to be the best they can be – on an epic scale. That's easier dreamed than done in Jewish Montreal on the eve of World War II.**

**Fifty years later when death takes Esther, her son and her oldest friend must each decide whether Esther's abandoned dreams will defeat them or spur them on to triumphs of their own.**

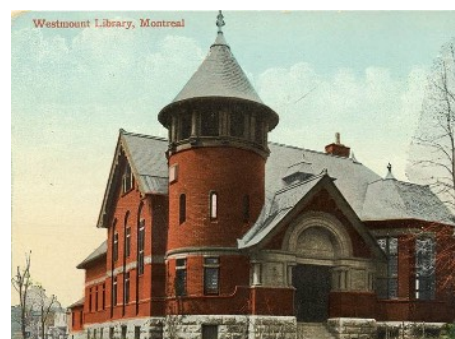
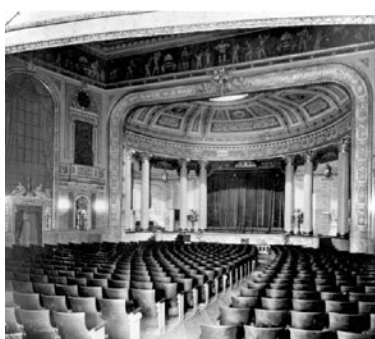
**BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!**

**[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com) • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)**

# MARK DAVID GERSON

Award-Winning Author of *THE SARA STORIES*

## Scenes from *The Sara Stories*



**BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!**

[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com) • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)

# HOW SARA'S YEAR GOT ITS "AFTER"



When the earliest readers of *Sara's Year* approached me in the days and weeks following the book's publication, they spoke with a single voice, and an unexpected one: "We want more," they cried.

Many wanted to know what was next for Marc-Allan Cameron (Mac), the celebrity artist in *Sara's Year* who turns out to be as unlucky in love as he is lucky with fame.

Others demanded to know the fates both of Bernie Freed, the young man who walks out on his mother's funeral and spends the rest of *Sara's Year* discovering all that he never knew about her and about himself, and of his friend, Erik Donnekin. And what about the title character, still others asked: What's her after *Sara's Year* story?

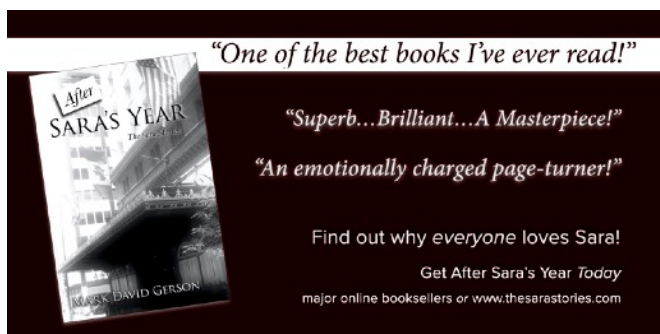
As I wrote in that book's introduction, *Sara's Year* was sparked by a series of health scares, in the midst of which I asked myself what I would want to make sure I accomplished should the worst occur. The answer was a new novel. *Sara's Year* was the result.

It was to be a one-off, but Sarah's fans had other ideas. (That's not a typo: There's a reason why Sarah the character has a different spelling than *Sara* the book.)

**Marc-Allan Cameron hasn't felt alive in 30 years.  
For Sadie Finkel, it's been more than 50.  
When life comes knocking, will they let it in?**

At first I insisted that there would be no *After Sara's Year*. I felt complete with the story and felt no call to continue the saga. But as readers continued to push and prod, I began to reconsider.

In fact, the more I thought about it, the more I had to confess that I, too, was curious about the fates of Mac, Sarah, Bernie and Erik. But the character who most intrigued me, the one that no one ever asked about, was Sadie Finkel.



If you read *Sara's Year*, you'll remember Bernie Freed's aunt as the quintessential *alteh machashaifeh*; that's Yiddish for old witch ("that's witch with a b"). Sadie was so utterly unpleasant in *Sara's Year* that the author in me wondered how she had become that way and whether there could be any hope for her.

It didn't take me long to realize that the only way I would find out what happened to Mac, Sarah, Bernie, Erik and, yes, Sadie would be to write them into another *Sara* story. So I did!

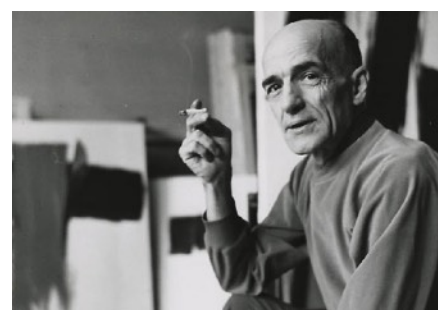
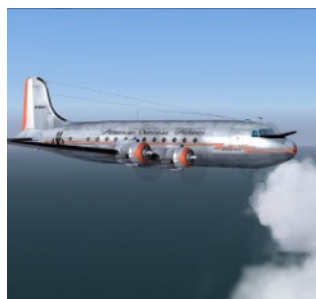
**BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!**

**[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com) • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)**

# MARK DAVID GERSON

Award-Winning Author of *THE SARA STORIES*

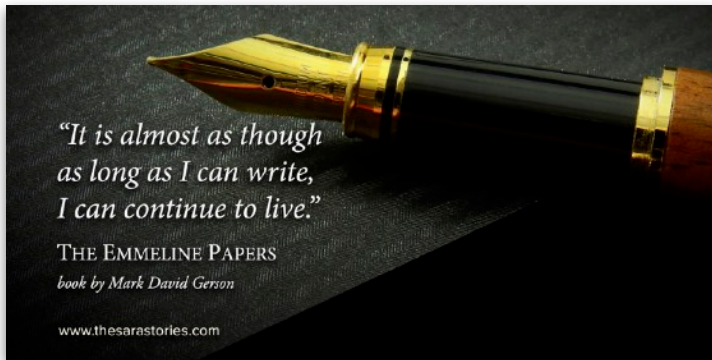
## Scenes from *The Sara Stories*



**BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!**

[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com) • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)

# HOW EMMELINE GOT HERSELF A BOOK



It's July 2015 and I'm tidying up the final draft of *After Sara's Year*, the book that completes, or so I believe, my *Sara Stories*. Suddenly, a flash of intuitive insight races through me: It's the idea for a third book in the series that was never meant to be a series.

This new book would be called *The Emmeline Papers* and it would weave two interrelated threads: the story of Emmeline Mandeville, Mac's eccentric, single-minded aunt, and the

story of how copies of her memoir happen to fall, independently, into several *Sara* characters' hands.

That was the book I started. It wasn't the book I wrote.

When I read its opening pages the morning after I began the book, they felt all wrong. The writing was fine; the premise was not.

With no idea how to proceed, I set it aside.

Then a few weeks later, a client sent me the first essays in an anthology on aging she was compiling and had asked me to edit. The more essays I read, the more I began to view Emmeline and her "papers" in a new way. It didn't take long before I realized that the book I thought I was writing was to be something else altogether — something more engaging for its readers and, for better or worse, more emotionally and creatively challenging for its author.

**When Emmeline Mandeville spends the final months of her 93rd year reflecting on her eccentric, iconoclastic past, she cannot know how profoundly her reminiscences will weave through the lives of the men and women who find themselves living in her house a decade and a half later.**

Unlike the anthology, *The Emmeline Papers* was not to be a book about aging. Aging would be a component of *Emmeline*, but the story would be more about what we all face regardless of age. It would be about hopes and dreams. It would be about mortality and death. It would be about fear and courage. It would be about loss. It would be about love and relationship. It would be about compassion and perseverance. It would be about life.

"Okay," I said to my Muse, that mischievous entity that runs my writing life. "What about the title?" If *The Emmeline Papers* was ideal for my original concept, I couldn't see how it fit this new one.

"Remember *Sara's Year*," my Muse replied somewhat acidly. (See "*Sara's Year: The Story Behind the Story*," above.)

As with *Sara*, I needed to trust that the original *Emmeline* title would still fit. It did. And as with *Sara*, the finished story turned out to be far more evocative and compelling than anything I could ever have dreamed up with my conscious mind. I'm certain the same will be true with what I expect to be the fourth and final book in these *Sara Stories*. This time, I have neither title nor concept. All I have is a character and a time frame. Who knows whether either will prove to be accurate!

**BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!**

**bookings@markdavidgerson.com • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)**

# TRIVIA FROM THE SARA STORIES



"An artist has to trust his gut, his heart, his intuition."

AFTER SARA'S YEAR  
by Mark David Gerson

- Mark David lived in Montreal until 1983; he lived in Nova Scotia in 1994-95, where he wrote most of the initial drafts of his first novel, *The MoonQuest*. He wrote the second draft while living on the real Hubbard Mountain Road, where a Rocky-like rooster with no sense of time was also resident.

- Like Bernie, Mark David graduated from Mount Royal High and Vanier College, has a Concordia business degree and once took a vocational test that suggested he be a funeral director. Unlike Bernie, he hated accounting and never worked as an accountant.

- More than thirty years ago, Mark David wrote a "Good Jewish Girls Don't" story similar to the one in *Sara's Year*. Unfortunately, the literary magazine that wanted to publish it folded. The fictional Sarah's story was lost and resurrected; Mark David's was lost and never found.

- Mark David began writing *Sara's Year* in a Santa Monica Starbucks, with a vague idea for a first scene and an even vaguer idea about the rest of the story. (He never outlines.) Only the title, which came to him as he began, made it to the final book.

- Members of several Facebook groups helped Mark David with his Nova Scotia and Montreal research on all three stories.

- Halifax's Press Gang oyster bar is the site of the fictional Leonowens-Fyshe Gallery.

- The Ritz-Carlton Hotel was where Elizabeth Taylor married Richard Burton – the first time, in 1964. Pierre Trudeau breakfasted there regularly after retiring from politics in 1984. His son Justin, Canada's current P.M. but then a teenager, is mentioned by Trudeau in *After Sara's Year*.

- Galérie Klinkhoff has been a fixture on the Canadian art scene for more than seventy years. It is still in the family and still handles the work of Anne Savage.

- Mark David was born in the Royal Victoria Hospital, where Esther dies and Sara is later hospitalized. The Royal Vic closed in 2015.

- Mark David's mother graduated from Baron Byng, studied art with Anne Savage and signed at least one of the murals. The school counted many Canadian luminaries among its students, including actor William Shatner and writer Mordecai Richler. Baron Byng closed in 1980.

- Mark David had never heard of Anne Savage until he began working on *Sara's Year*. Only when the book was finished did he learn that the mother of one of his high school friends had been Anne Savage's successor as art supervisor at a local school board.

- Anna Leonowens, the Anna of *The King and I*, lived in Halifax after her time in Siam. She later moved Montreal and is buried in Mount Royal Cemetery, not far from where Sadie and Jimmy have their fateful encounter. Anna founded what would become the Nova Scotia College of Art (now NSCAD University), where Erik studies and Mac teaches.

- Abortion was illegal in Canada until 1969, after which it was subject to legal restrictions, all of which were struck down as unconstitutional in 1988.

- The Westmount Conservatory featured on the *Sara's Year* cover may look Victorian, but it wasn't built until the 1920s.

**BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!**

**[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com) • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)**



# BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW



Need More Information, Background  
or Photos? A Shorter Bio? A Press Kit  
Geared to an Individual Book?

Looking for a Custom Presentation  
for Your Group, Audience or Event?

Seeking a Coach or Editorial  
Consultant for *Your Writing Project*?

[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com)  
[www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)

## GUEST SPEAKER

- For your group or organization
- For your association, corporate or community event
- For your expo, conference or convention
- For your book club or reading group

## FEATURED EXPERT

- On your radio show or podcast
- On your TV broadcast or webcast
- On your webinar
- On your blog or in your publication

## FEATURED OR SOLO PRESENTER

- For retreats, workshops, webinars, courses, seminars

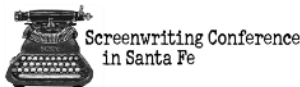
**Surpassed my wildest expectations!**

– Patricia MacInnes, Toronto

# BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!

[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com) • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)

# BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW



**BOOK MARK DAVID GERSON NOW!**

[bookings@markdavidgerson.com](mailto:bookings@markdavidgerson.com) • [www.markdavidgerson.com/contact](http://www.markdavidgerson.com/contact)