



Pages of the Past

CELEBRATING
HISTORICAL FICTION

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From the Editor

Hello and Happy Friday my historical fiction lover friends!

Are we already into October? Where has the year gone to? It seems like I blinked, and it was just March and my company was shutting down for several weeks and we were spending time at home and I was taking lots of walks around the empty blocks. And here we are closing in on the end of the year. It's been a very disjointed time and I must admit that even with all this extra time at home over the past six-plus months, I haven't accomplished near what I had planned writing wise.

But that's okay, because there's many writers out there that have put this time to productive use and we've had a lot of new releases over the past few months. We're highlighting two more this week, and more are on the way.

Join us this week as we chat with author Edith Maxwell about her historical series – Quaker Midwife Mysteries. Stay tuned for future issues –In the weeks ahead we have author interviews scheduled with Riana Everly, Heather Osborne, Sophie Schiller, Hannah Byron, Lindsay Downs, and a lot more!

Trisha

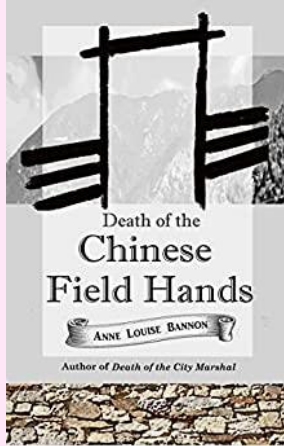
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New Releases

Death of the Chinese Field Hands

Anne Louise Bannon



A night of chaos leads to more murders

Physician and winemaker Maddie Wilcox has always despaired of how violent Los Angeles is. But one night, in October 1871, the pueblo explodes in a riot and eighteen Chinese men are lynched. Shaken to her core and frustrated that she couldn't have done more to stop the violence, Maddie throws herself into her work, grateful that her three Chinese field hands were safe on her rancho that most terrible of nights. Until one of them is found strangled in her vineyard.

At first, the murder seems like a random act against the scapegoated Chinese. Then a second of the three Chinese hands is murdered in the same way. Is the killer acting out against the Chinese, in general, or only those working on Maddie's rancho? And if the latter, what does the killer expect to get?

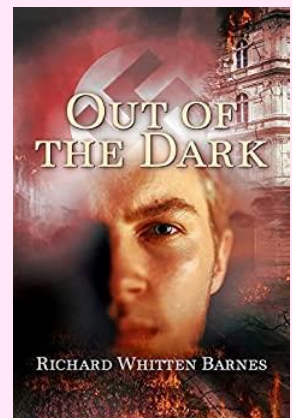
A distinctive boot print and a bit of jewelry are all Maddie and her friends have to go on, as Maddie continues to battle the usual panoply of injuries and rampant diseases that plague the pueblo. Surrounded by prejudice, daunted by her own limitations, Maddie's hold on her passions starts slipping. Can she keep her temper in check long enough to find the killer?

Out of the Dark

Richard Whitten Barnes

Erich Jäger has it all. From the time he began school in 1933 Berlin he was tall, athletic, and popular, a natural leader. Erich rises through the youth programs of the Nazi government; the Jungvolk and, later, the Hitlerjugend.

Events come to a head in 1943 when Erich turns eighteen and is awarded the choice to serve in a volunteer SS Panzer Division. His service takes him to the hedgerows of Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, and the oil fields of Hungary. Wounded and left for dead in his last battle, he finds a way to make it back to the people he loves, and to a new realization.



The Underground Railroad



I laugh when I think back to my high school days. I remember stepping out of my last history class, vowing that I'd never spend any more of my precious time on days of the past. And now, forty years later, who is the one spending countless hours researching these same days of the past?

The Underground Railroad is one of those subjects that I know was covered in-depth in school. Yet, years later all I have is a vague knowledge of what it was and that slaves escaped using this secretive system. I know the name Harriet Tubman, and that she was instrumental in helping many slaves escape to a life of freedom in the 'north.' Another vague memory is how my mind connects the Underground Railroad with the Civil War period.

In these current days with a seemingly infinite amount of knowledge available with just a few mouse clicks, I sit at my desk and willingly look up countless pieces of information, despite my long-ago vow to never look at history again. And by diving into just a shallow bit of research on the Underground Railroad, I see that this is a fascinating subject with many more layers than my feeble brain retained from those days of required history class.

WHEN THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD WAS USED

Although the peak of the Underground Railroad was in the years from 1850-1860, the need ended at the end of the Civil War when slavery was abolished. But this secretive escape route was used for much longer than I remembered. It actually began being used in the late 17th Century.

WHERE THE ESCAPE ROUTES LED

Although I have a general knowledge that the slaves escaped 'to the north' where they could be free, somehow, I always thought in the vague terms of our northern free states. However, what I didn't know was that many of the slaves fled clear to Canada. Per Wikipedia, "One estimate suggests that by 1850, 100,000 slaves had escaped via the "Railroad." Another source claims that more than 30,000 former slaves settled in Ontario during the 20-year peak period.

Another surprise to me was that other escape routes led to Mexico or overseas locations. And an early escape route actually ran south towards Florida. At the time Florida was a Spanish possession (except from 1763-83) and many slaves escaped via this route. However, in 1821 when Florida became a United States territory, this ended the southern migration.

TO QUILT OR NOT TO QUILT

Whether or not quilts were used as codes to pass along information of routes and safe havens is a subject under debate. Folklore claims that quilt designs were used “to signal and direct slaves to escape routes and assistance.” However, quilt historians and scholars have disputed these legends. I’d have to do more thorough research on this theory, relying on the expert opinion of the scholars that have conducted even more research than I’d be willing to devote to this issue.

WHERE THE RAILROAD PART CAME FROM

While the railroad played little, if any, part in the escaping slave’s journey to freedom, it came to be called the Underground Railroad because of all the railroad terminology in the code.

- People who helped slaves find the railroad were “agents”
- Guides were known as “conductors”
- Hiding places were “stations” or “way stations”
- “Station masters” hid slaves in their homes
- Escaped slaves were “passengers” or “cargo”

WILLIAM STILL’S PARTICIPATION

While hundreds, if not thousands, of empathetic individuals, assisted with this noble feat, many names such as Harriet Tubman or John Brown tend to be more well known for their assistance. One man, William Still, played a huge role. It’s said that he helped hundreds of slaves to escape, sometimes as many as 60 a month. He kept a diary of notes and biographies of many of the people he helped escape. It’s reported that he maintained correspondence with many and sometimes became the middleman in the communication between the escaped slaves and their families and loved ones left behind. In 1872, he published a book [*The Underground Railroad: Authentic Narratives and First-Hand Accounts*](#) that detailed many aspects of how the system worked, along with stories about many of the individuals and families that escaped with his help.

For my own personal writing, since I rarely write during this time period, I probably won’t be using any of this for any writing projects. However, my curiosity is whetted, and I want to learn more. The people and the many lives that were impacted over the slavery/freedom debate and the many Americans – black and white – that helped so many thousands of people escape to a life of freedom is something I’d like to delve deeper into, not necessarily as research for my writing, but to grow as a person and to deepen my own compassion for the people and the times past.

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Author Spotlight: Edith Maxwell

Today Pages of the Past welcomes acclaimed mystery writer Edith Maxwell. Edith writes five different mystery series, along with other crime fiction. As Edith Maxwell she writes **Local Foods Mysteries**, **Lauren Rousseau Mysteries**, and the **Quaker Midwife Mysteries**. As Maddie Day, she writes the **Country Store Mysteries** and the **Cozy Capers Book Group Mysteries**. Since this group and newsletter is interested in historical fiction, today we're going to be chatting with her about her **Quaker Midwife Mysteries**.

(Side note – Even though we're talking historical fiction here today, if you enjoy contemporary mysteries, go check out the books written as Maddie Day. I recently finished *Nacho Average Murder*, her latest book in the **Country Store Mysteries**, and really enjoyed it!)



Welcome Edith! I've seen a tremendous number of different themes in the mystery book world, but I don't think I've ever seen a Quaker midwife as a protagonist and series theme. How did you come up with that idea?

First let me say thank you so much to Trisha for featuring me in your wonderful spotlight! You asked some great questions here, and I'll do my best.

I am not sure when the idea of midwife Rose Carroll popped into my writer's brain. I knew I wanted a Quaker protagonist. A few decades ago, I was immersed in the childbirth world, teaching classes, and working as a doula. I had midwives for my sons' births and it's a world I love, so it made sense for Rose's job to be helping women before, during, and after they give birth. Also, in her amateur sleuthing, she can go places a nineteenth-century detective can't – women's bedchambers – and hears secrets among circles of women. Victoria Thompson does have a long-running Gaslight Mystery series featuring a midwife, but it's very different, taking place in NYC a decade or two after mine.

Your Quaker Midwife series is set in Amesbury, Massachusetts in the 1880s. Being set so many years ago in the past, how has that impacted the research you've had to do for this series?

I've done extensive research on the period, of course, in areas like language, clothing, transportation, cooking, Quakers, and much more. But I also live in Amesbury. The former mill and carriage-factory town is rich in history, with many original buildings still standing (in fact, Rose lives in my house in the first five books...). I walk everywhere, and often am plotting a book as I go, finding abodes for new characters and peering at historical plaques. We have several active historical museums here, too, and a fabulous local reference librarian.

To launch the first book in the series, *Delivering the Truth*, you dressed as an 1880s traditional Quaker and gave a walking tour of some of the Amesbury, Massachusetts locations that are referenced in your book. (There's a short video clip of the tour on Maxwell's web site and [you can watch it here](#).) That was a fabulous way to launch your book and garner interest in your new series. Can you tell us about the tour and what it was like to present?

The tour was the idea of a marketing person I hired to help me launch the new series (the only time I've done that). I had a Quaker dress from the period made by a historical seamstress, and the marketing person drew up a wonderful illustrated map of the route. My adult sons came to help (one of whom is experienced at leading tours), and sixty people showed up! I stopped a few times and read short bits of scenes that took place at that spot, we sold a bunch of books, and it was overall a wonderful day.

My goodness, you're gathering up the nominations and awards for this series. *Delivering the Truth* won an IPPY Silver Medal for mystery, was nominated for both a Macavity and an Agatha Award for Best Historical Fiction, and was named Amesbury, MA's 2-16 All-Community Read. *Called to Justice* was a 2018 Agatha Award nominee. *Turning the Tide* was a 2019 Agatha Award nominee. And *Charity's Burden*, won the 2020 Agatha Award for Best Historical Novel and is nominated for a Macavity Award for same. How do you think your research and attention to detail affected these nominations and awards?

I certainly have received praise for the historical details in every book in this series. My devotion to research pays off. But I also think readers are fascinated with learning new things, whether it's about the Society of Friends, about unmedicated home births in the era, about daily life. The late 1880s was a huge time of change. Telephones, electricity, gas stoves, pre-made goods, even window screens were all becoming more commonplace for some but not for all. And much remained the same as it had been - the lack of antibiotics or a cure for tuberculosis, the police not having fingerprinting or blood typing available, all the hard work of cooking and doing laundry by hand. Automobiles were looming in the future but not there yet. And so much more. I try to make readers feel how it was to live in those times.

Being a Quaker, and having been an organic farmer, and a childbirth instructor, and a doula in earlier years, it appears that much of your real-life experience makes its way into your books. Can you share with us how these experiences, and others, give your storylines plot and depth?

It can help to write what you know, and those are certainly areas I am or have been immersed in. But it's also good to write what you *want* to know. Research is fun!

I see that you're a member of Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America. What are your thoughts about how writing groups help a writer on their journey?

I wouldn't be published if not for what I learned from Sisters in Crime, from the opportunities by mentored by more experienced authors, from courses I took. I was also in a local critique group that helped immensely during my first two years. One of the things I always tell aspiring authors (other than write the best book you can) is, "Find your tribe." In whatever genre, other people are also writing and looking for connection. Joining Sisters in Crime, plus the New England and Guppies chapters, is the best thing I ever did for my writing career. I met my fabulous blogmates, the Wicked Authors, through the New England chapter, too.

Your newest book in the series (#6), *Taken Too Soon*, just released last month. Has Rose Carroll's life path changed or altered in any way since the first book, *Delivering the Truth*, was written?

Much has changed. Rose and her beau David have been trying to get married for about three books, with obstacles thrown in their path by Rose's own faith community (he is not a Friend) and his mother (who doesn't approve of the union). This book opens minutes after they are wed! At the end of the book they go home to Amesbury to start their life together in a new house. Rose will continue to practice midwifery and assist the police with investigations, though, so that is a constant.

With all the differences in your many series - contemporary versus historical, foodie versus organic farmer, Indiana versus Massachusetts – what is it like for a writer juggling all these various components?

My settings and characters are so real to me, I don't mix them up. Juggling schedules can get more complicated, but I do my best to focus on one book at a time.

Thank you for joining us today, Edith (sometimes masquerading as Maddie). We appreciate your time. Please leave a few links where our readers can find you and your books and we'll go follow and friend you.



Click on each book cover to go find out more about it!



You can find Edith/Maddie here

[Facebook](#)

[twitter](#)

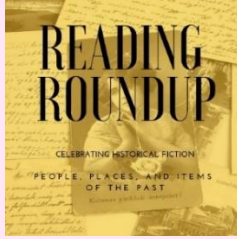
[Instagram](#)

BIO: Agatha Award-winning author Edith Maxwell writes the Quaker Midwife Mysteries, the Local Foods Mysteries, and award-winning short crime fiction. As Maddie Day she pens the bestselling Country Store Mysteries and Cozy Capers Book Group Mysteries. She's a member of Sisters in Crime, having served as a past president of the New England chapter, and Mystery Writers of America.

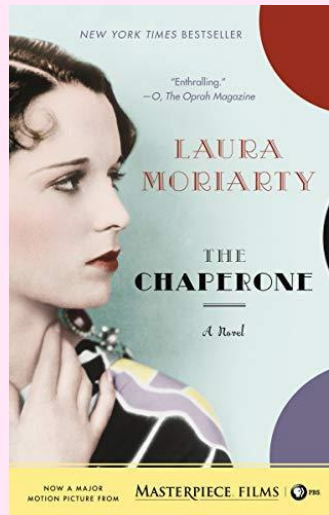
Originally a southern Californian, Maxwell lives with her beau and Energizer kitten north of Boston, where she writes, gardens, cooks, and wastes time on Facebook. Find Maddie and her at EdithMaxwell.com, at wickedauthors.com, and on social media.

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The 1920s



The Chaperone Laura Moriarty

Only a few years before becoming a famous silent-film star and an icon of her generation, a fifteen-year-old Louise Brooks leaves Wichita, Kansas, to study with the prestigious Denishawn School of Dancing in New York. Much to her annoyance, she is accompanied by a thirty-six-year-old chaperone, who is neither mother nor friend. Cora Carlisle, a complicated but traditional woman with her own reasons for making the trip, has no idea what she's in for. Young Louise, already stunningly beautiful and sporting her famous black bob with blunt bangs, is known for her arrogance and her lack of respect for convention. Ultimately, the five weeks they spend together will transform their lives forever.

For Cora, the city holds the promise of discovery that might answer the question at the core of her being, and even as she does her best to watch over Louise in this strange and bustling place she embarks on a mission of her own. And while what she finds isn't what she anticipated; she is liberated in a way she could not have imagined. Over the course of Cora's relationship with Louise, her eyes are opened to the promise of the twentieth century and a new understanding of the possibilities for being fully alive.

Drawing on the rich history of the 1920s, '30s, and beyond—from the orphan trains to Prohibition, flappers, and the onset of the Great Depression to the burgeoning movement for equal rights and new opportunities for women—Laura Moriarty's *The Chaperone* illustrates how rapidly everything, from fashion and hemlines to values and attitudes, was changing at this time and what a vast difference it all made for Louise Brooks, Cora Carlisle, and others like them.