



Pages of the Past

CELEBRATING
HISTORICAL FICTION

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From the Editor

Hello historical fiction lovers!

The big holiday is almost here. Two more days!

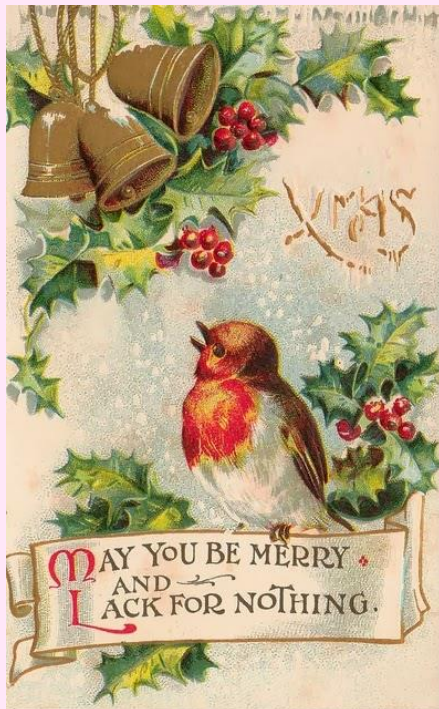
Pages of the Past usually comes to you on Fridays. But this year Christmas Day is Friday. And I really doubt that anyone will be rushing out of bed Christmas morning to see if their issue is sitting in their inbox yet.

I'm the editor and I don't intend on rushing out of bed to work on it and get it sent out to you. Christmas is for celebrating with the family and relaxing a bit (maybe! Lol) Not for reading newsletters you've subscribed to. So this week, we're coming to you on Wednesday.

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE! We'll see you in the New Year!

Stay tuned for future issues –In the New Year ahead we have some great author interviews scheduled with DS Elliston, Sylvia Broady, Gini Grossenbacher, and a lot more!

Trisha



An Enduring Legacy

An Enduring Legacy

Trisha Faye

But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round...as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.

Charles Dickens in A Christmas Carol



These words are from *A Christmas Carol*. Charles Dickens wrote and published them in 1843 - 177 years ago. The Christmas sentiment they express are just as true today. I doubt Dickens realized the legacy he left to those of us in his future.

Most people are familiar with the characters and the basic plot of this, his most well-known story. Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim, along the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge, are names known to many. The ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come are familiar parts of this Christmas tale as they work their magic to transform Mr. Scrooge into a kinder, gentler man, so different from his earlier persona.

Lesser known, is the inspiration behind *A Christmas Carol*. It wasn't the season's joyous theme that prompted him to write this beloved tale. It was a desperate need of cash. Dickens and his wife, Catherine, were expecting their fifth child. His family, most specifically his own father, pestered him for money. Dickens had a sizable mortgage on his Devonshire Terrace home. To complicate his increased financial needs, sales from his monthly installments of *Martin Chuzzlewit* were lagging.

Dickens had previously written three Christmas stories. Drawing on those earlier short stories and his thoughts about society, crime, poverty, Dickens threw himself into writing his new novella. He was so consumed with publishing it by Christmas that he wrote it in six weeks.

Dickens and his publisher didn't agree on the printing details. Dickens wanted on a design that included a gold-stamped cover and four hand-covered etchings. The publisher wanted a more economical production. Dickens insisted on the production he desired, and he paid for the production cost of the book himself. Yet, in contrast to the lavish design he desired, he set the price at a mere 5 shillings so that the book would be affordable to many.

His strategy worked. They published a first run of 6,000 copies of *A Christmas Carol* on December 19, 1843. The first edition sold out by Christmas Eve – in five days. In a world without social media. No television or radio advertisements. No press releases. No magazine or other print media ads. As an author, I find that amazing. By the end of 1844, just twelve months later, they had printed thirteen editions.

Not only was *A Christmas Carol* an instant hit in book form, it was also immediately adapted for the stage. The book released on December 19th. by February 5, 1844, three stage productions opened and ran for over 40 nights. By the end of that month, eight rival theatrical productions of *A Christmas Carol* played in London.

Many years later, in 1901, this popular Christmas story became a silent black-and-white British film and produced as *Scrooge*, or *Marley's Ghost*. In 1923, the BBC adapted it for a radio broadcast. The story has also been adapted to other media, including opera, ballet, animation, stage musicals and a BBC mime production.

Over the next four years, Dickens wrote four other Christmas novellas: *The Chimes* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *The Battle of Life* (1846), and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* (1847). *The Cricket on the Hearth* became popular as a stage production, however these four titles aren't commonly known to us so many years later.

In 1849 Dickens began public readings of *A Christmas Carol*. These performances were so successful that he continued doing them until 1870, the year he died. From 1849-1870, he completed 127 performances.

In the preface to the original edition, Dickens wrote:

I have endeavored in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghose of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.

Their faithful Friend and Servant,

C.D.

December, 1843

Since first published, *A Christmas Carol* has been printed in numerous hardback and paperback editions and has been translated into several languages. Over the past 177 years, it has *never* been out of print. Charles Dickens left us quite a legacy.

Published in *Prairie Times*, December 2020

1940s Yuletide Facts



During World War II Christmas trees were in short supply because of a lack of manpower (to cut the trees down) and a shortage of railroad space to ship the trees to market. Americans rushed to buy American-made Visca artificial trees.

In 1941, a five-foot Christmas tree could be purchased for 75 cents.

The shortage of materials—like aluminum and tin—used to produce ornaments led many people to make their own ornaments at home. Magazines contained patterns for ornaments made out of non-priority war materials, like paper, string, and natural objects, such as pinecones or nuts.

Electric bubble lights were created during the 1940s and remain popular even today.

To give their Christmas tree a snow-covered effect, people mixed a box of Lux soap powder with two cups of water and brushed the concoction on the branches of their tree.

Fewer men at home resulted in fewer men available to dress up and play Santa Claus. Women served as substitute Santa's at Saks Fifth Avenue in New York City and at other department stores throughout the United States.

"I'll Be Home For Christmas" and "White Christmas" were both written during the 1940s and quickly gained popularity with the war-weary, but optimistic, population.

Travel during the holidays was limited for most families due to the rationing of tires and gasoline. Americans saved up their food ration stamps to provide extra food for a fine holiday meal.

Many Americans threw their German blown-glass ornaments and exotic Japanese ornaments in the trash as soon as the war began. Shortly after the war, Corning Glass Company in New York began mass-producing Christmas tree balls using machines designed to produce light bulbs. Corning could make more ornaments in a single minute than a German cottage glass blower could make in a whole day.

Yuletide facts compliments of The National WWII Museum

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Victorian Christmas Traditions



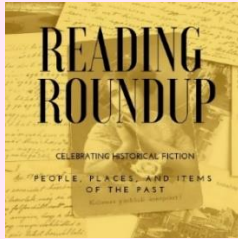
By Victorian times, America, a land of immigrants, had adopted a variety of Christmas traditions from other lands and other customs. Many of the traditions that we associate with Christmas time now, were motifs and traditions incorporated into our mainstream culture through the years. The *Writers In the Storm* blog shared a [compilation of Victorian Christmas traditions](#).

Christmas rituals first got a toehold in New York with savvy merchants who were quick to realize their commercial value. German bakeries began staying open late to decorate their windows with red silk buntings and holly. Holiday shoppers could not resist the cakes, toys and candies displayed under glittering gas-jet lamps. Nor could they ignore the smells of cinnamon kuchen (cakes) and sweet almonds paste. Also, by the 1870s Macy's department store dressed their windows with great Christmas displays. One window displayed an amphitheater of wax, rag, bisque and hand-painted porcelain dolls imported from Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, and Bohemia. In another window, scenes from Uncle Tom's Cabin were composed in a panorama with steam-driven movable parts.

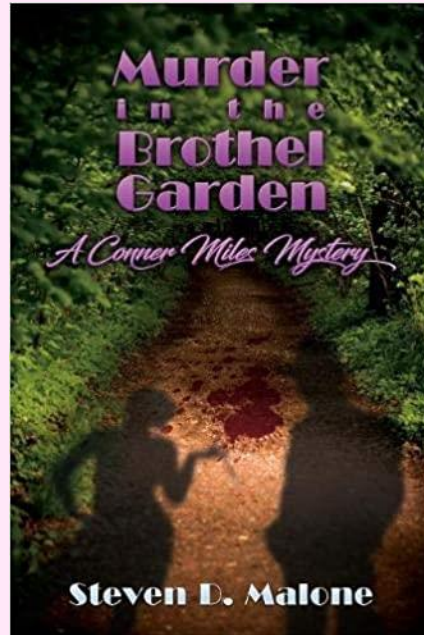
By the 1880s Christmas's conquest of the US was complete. Even Boston capitulated. Victorians now sent chromolithograph Christmas cards or painted their own. They filled silver paper cornucopias with candies. They decorated Christmas trees with apples, tangerines, walnuts dipped in egg white; strings of popcorn and cranberries; gold-foil "Dresdens" shaped as miniature stars and steamships, elves and fish and birds. Candles lit trees and many a muslin dress caught fire! Glass ornaments and icicles were introduced by the Germans around the mid-1880s. Taking the tree down was a fun activity for the children in the Victorian era as they were allowed to eat the eatable goodies on it.

Christmas preparations went beyond the stitching of new dresses, the gathering of holly and mistletoe and the stirring of the pudding. Handmade gifts, labored on months in advance, were often hung on the tree. There might be a pen-wiper in the shape of a waterlily, a knitting bag worked with silk floss and matching fringe, a red rose potpourri, quince jam, and maybe a pair of embroidered bed slippers. Christmas cards were addressed with nibbed pens and the aromas of scented paper in the stationer's shop, inks and sealing wax filled the air. Brown or white paper wrappings were used and sealed shut with sealing wax.

For more about Victorian Christmas traditions, [check out their post here](#).



The 1920s



Murder in the Brothel Garden

Steven Malone

Murder in the Brothel Garden: A Conner Miles Mystery Beach Gang bootlegger, Conner Miles, must find a murderer and protect the fiery prostitute, Livia. Conner's boss gives him a wad of hundreds to clean up a mess. You don't say no to the boss. The mess; a body piled like dirty laundry in a puddle of blood in the brothel garden. The madam wants the murderer found. She wants Conner to protect one of her girls, Livia. You don't say no to her either. Maybe Livia's a witness. Maybe she's the murderer. Livia won't say. But she smiles so pretty and promises so much. Then bullets start flying. Someone wants Conner dead. Gangsters, Flappers, Jazz, and Murder in the wide open Free State of Galveston, 1925.

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