



Pages of the Past

CELEBRATING
HISTORICAL FICTION

Vol. 1, No. 20, August 16, 2019

In this issue:

- New Releases: The Whistle Stop Canteen
- Timelines
- Author Spotlight: Jennifer Wells
- Reading Roundup: Books from the 1940s

From the Editor

There's so much continued learning in the world of writing. Especially in the world of historical fiction where our world-building happens in a place and time of long ago. Keeping all the dates and events straight and in order can be a bit complicated at times. This week we take a look at timelines. Are they a necessary evil of our genre?

Joining us as our guest this week is Jennifer Wells, author of *The Liar*, *The Murderess*, and *The Secret*. She shares some of her historical fiction journey with us this week. In her interview, she writes:

All historical novelists are natural geeks. It is so easy to get sidetracked – we can go on a website to check one fact and not come up for air until two o'clock in the morning! I now have an encyclopedic knowledge of early home cinema projectors, the invention of the vacuum flask, kerosene lamps, tuberculosis treatments, Edwardian contraceptives, the electrification of the railways, gramophones, twentieth-century ballerinas and cures for a lame horse. I could go on...

Join us and read what else Jennifer has to say. And if you like reading books set in the World War 2 era, check out Barb Warner Deane's new release – *The Whistle Stop Canteen*.

There's lots of 1940s talk this week. Thanks for joining us!

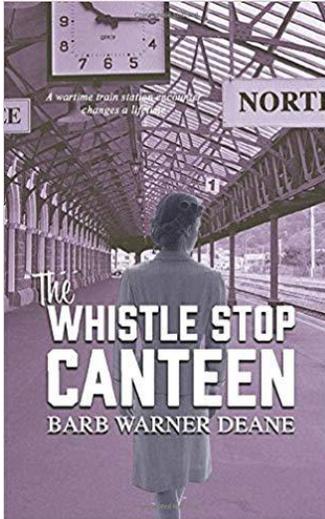
Trisha

texastrishafaye@yahoo.com

New Release

The Whistle Stop Canteen

Barb Warner Deane



A wartime train station encounter changes a lifetime...After losing her fiancé in WW1, Margaret Parker settled into a quiet, lonely life as the town librarian in North Platte, NE. After the US enters WW2, Margaret volunteers as the historian for the Servicemen's Canteen organized by the women of North Platte. When Captain Tom Carver strolls into the Canteen, he's immediately drawn to Maggie and works hard to woo her, via letters, as he heads off to war. While reluctantly falling in love long-distance, Maggie also opens her heart to the teenaged girl she supervises and the townswomen working beside her, while fearing for the lives of the servicemen and women she meets at the Canteen. When Tom springs a surprise on her and then winds up MIA, Maggie must come to grips with her fear of another loss. Relying on her new family and friends, she must take a chance on love, if she wants to make a life for herself after the war is over.

Timelines

Do you need a timeline for every story? Not necessarily. A lot depends on the complexity of the project, how many plots and sub-plots, how many major characters there are, and what type of writing style you have. Are you a plotter or a pantster? Do you have everything laid out precise detail before you begin, or do you have a general idea and you jump in and start writing?

No. Not everything requires a timeline. However, in the world of historical fiction, most stories need one, even if just a simple few ideas jotted down on a piece of paper.

On a post, ['How A Timeline Helps You Plot A Novel'](#), Writers Write says:

A timeline helps us choose what to include in our story. It also gives us a map to follow. It is the big picture of a novel – a place where we get the chance to see the overarching storylines and how they intersect.

When writing a piece in the historical fiction genre, having a timeline as an anchor becomes even more important. A timeline can help us keep track of dates, times, events (plot events or historical events), ages, journey times, and other pieces that can easily get lost and threaten to destroy our carefully crafted world down the line.

Even on my Vintage Daze short stories, I find I need at least the few key dates and scenes jotted out on a single sheet of paper. When I found that I really needed a timeline was when I was writing *Fat and Sassy*, a fictional tale based on family stories of my mom and her siblings growing up. I had two legal pads filled with memories and snippets to use in writing the tale. However, memories don't appear in chronological order. The snippets I had jumped all over the place, most covering a span of twenty-some years. I also

needed to tie these pieces in with historical data from Glendora, California that I would weave in with the family stories.

I ended up creating a simple table with three columns. In the first, I had the month and year of the period I was writing. Then I went through my legal pads with all the notes. I numbered each story, and then put each Memory # in the appropriate Mo/Year row. In the third column, I inserted the historical notes for the city/state/nation that I wanted to include as part of the story.

Peter Jones has a terrific post, [Managing Your Story's Timeline](#), where he shares about when he discovered he needed to use a timeline. He writes:

I was having one of those rare writing moments when (it felt like) everything was going well – words were pouring out of me. I was bashing out scene after scene with unparalleled delight. Never mind that most of those scenes seemed to start with the phrase “*the next day*” or words to that effect. That could all be dealt with in the edit. The edit which would happen when I’d *finished* the WHOLE book. I’d learnt that much about writing: Write first. Edit later.

Although, as I wrote “*the next day*” for about the fiftieth time that evening I started to realise that I might have a problem that couldn’t wait until the grand ‘fix-everything’ edit. And the problem was this; in my head the chapter I was writing was supposed to span roughly a month, sometime in the summer, a year or two before the turn of the millennium. But as I scrolled through my manuscript and counted the number of times that dreaded phrase appeared I realised I’d successfully created a month with 47 days. And given that most of the action was supposed to happen during office hours...

Jones offers a free Excel spreadsheet that he created to use for timelines. It has three pages, one for word count, timeline, and characters and ages. It’s full of formulas that can calculate dates and ages and looks to be handy, although I haven’t had a call to use it yet.

One of the fellows in my writer’s group swears by Scrivener. I’ve never used that particular program myself, so I can’t talk about its merits. There is a post, [Building and managing story timelines using Scrivener](#) that discusses how to use that program to create a timeline.

I think I was most impressed though when someone in another group pulled up a screenshot of a page of one of [J.K. Rowling’s pages for Harry Potter](#). If she can fit the necessary information for twelve chapters on one page, then I may stand by my old school method. However, to keep my dates and events in order, especially in one of my newest projects where I have to factor in the number of days travel between each stagecoach stop, I continue doing a brief timeline, even if it’s simply notes jotted down the length of a legal tablet.

[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)

Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>



As much as I grumble about how technology has invaded our lives and often moan and groan about how life was better in ‘the good old days’, I have to admit that it does have its advantages. First off, I can’t imagine typing up this newsletter, my short stories, or my manuscripts on a vintage typewriter. Secondly, when I’m at work and my mind is belaboring a plot point as I work on the tedious tasks, when I have a question about when a certain item came into use, or what city a certain event happened in, I can pull out my phone and within a minute or two have an answer. That wouldn’t be possible if I were living out on the farm without phones or electricity in the post-Depression years. But lastly, why I’m thankful for our current technology is that ten-fifteen-twenty years ago, I wouldn’t have fun across Jennifer Wells and her books. When I saw her in one of the other historical fiction groups on Facebook, I invited her to be our guest. Here today with us is Jennifer Wells, with some fascinating tidbits that I think you’ll enjoy reading. Welcome, Jennifer!



Jennifer, your three books - *The Secret*, *The Liar*, and *The Murderess* - are all set from 1920 to 1942. What drew you to write in this era?

Firstly a confession – I never set out to write a historical novel. Like many authors, my first inspiration most often comes from one powerful and dramatic scene that pops into my head while I am daydreaming, and the rest of the story develops around that.

In the case of my first novel, THE LIAR, the scene which inspired me featured a grieving mother who glimpses a face in a crowd – that of her daughter, a child she had believed dead. So was the child really her daughter? Well, I did not want to write a tedious story about the complexities of DNA analysis and court cases, so my story had to be set in a time before genetic testing and even the widespread knowledge of blood groups. I settled on 1935 and once

I got there I had a funny feeling that I had found home!

I am 43 years old yet I feel as if I was born into a much earlier time than the 1970s. My early childhood was spent on a restored narrowboat on the Grand Union Canal, near London. We had no television, a wood-burning stove and gas mantles for light. My nappies (diapers) were hand-washed in the canal and I won't mention the toilet! I think my writing comes from some sort of nostalgia and I often feel an alien in the modern world.

It was my publisher that forced me on to social media only four years ago. Before that, I had one old computer for my writing and a push-button analog phone. These days I agonize whether I have used the wrong emoji on WhatsApp. I hate promoting my work on social media but it is a necessary evil. By writing historical fiction I can escape to a simpler time. Don't get me wrong, I know that the majority of us are much better off these days, but now and then going back in time gives me the refuge I need.

Of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s – which is your favorite decade to write about and why?

I love the first half of the 20th century and this is where I tend to settle although, unlike many authors who write about this period, I don't structure my plots around the wars. Readers often tell me that my books are unlike any others they have read (hopefully in a good way!), and I agree that my stories are a little different to most. I love the challenge of the plot being ruled by my own imagination rather than the structure being determined by historical events.

1935 was the year that my current house was built and coincidentally the same year that saw the construction of one of the narrowboats my family owned when I was a child. A lot of the past is still with us if we know where to look. One of the people who sparked my interest in the 1930s was not a historical figure, but a builder who was insulating my loft. He told me that the house was drafty because it had been built in the 1930s when lots of vents were installed to reduce the risk of tuberculosis which was widespread at the time. This fascinated me, and tuberculosis went on to feature heavily in THE LIAR.

In the UK we do not have so much of the Hollywood glamour or edgy noir that seems to typify this era in the US – for us the 1930s are often viewed as a beige era of suburban expansion and modest respectability. However, it was also an era which saw the depression and the gathering storm of war – there was a definite undercurrent which threatened this time of ordinariness, and I love exploring this in my work.

What challenges have you found with writing historical fiction?

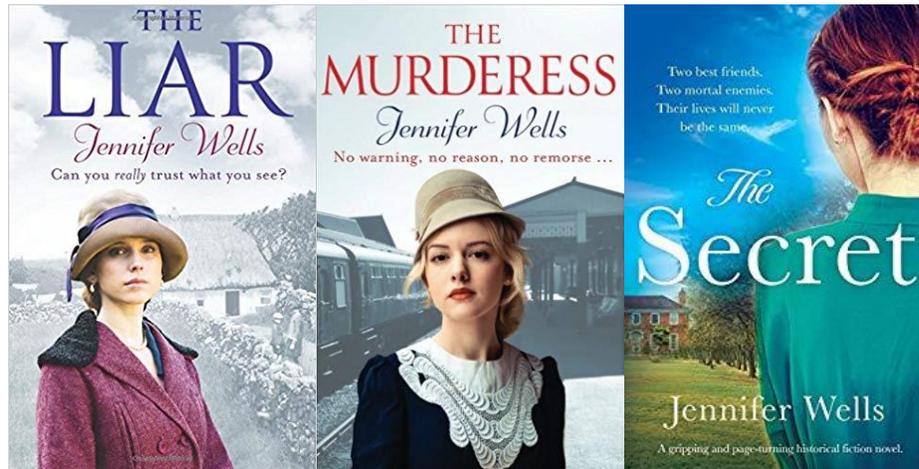
I know that this will resonate with a lot of historical fiction authors, but research is the biggest joy as well as the biggest pain.

Sometimes I cannot even complete a sentence without having to stop and check a few facts. I woke in the night with cold sweats last year on holiday when I realized that I had mentioned a teabag in a scene set in 1942 (I managed to edit it out in time!). It was a pretty obvious mistake but this kind of thing is surprisingly easy especially if you have more than one narrator and each is speaking from a different time period.

All historical novelists are natural geeks. It is so easy to get sidetracked – we can go on a website to check one fact and not come up for air until two o'clock in the morning! I now have an encyclopedic knowledge of early home cinema projectors, the invention of the vacuum flask, kerosene lamps, tuberculosis treatments, Edwardian contraceptives, the electrification of the railways, gramophones, twentieth-century ballerinas and cures for a lame horse. I could go on...

Do you have a current historical fiction work in progress? Can you give us a little teaser about it and let us know when we can look for it?

I have just submitted my fourth novel to my publisher and I am pausing to draw breath. I am hoping that it will be published towards the end of the year. It combines domestic noir with a family mystery and centers on the disappearance of a village May Queen and the repercussions across the 25 years that follow.



Buy links:

THE LIAR: https://www.amazon.com/Liar-gripping-story-dangerous-obsession-ebook/dp/B01HQ6ZT4C/ref=cm_cr_arp_d_product_top?ie=UTF8

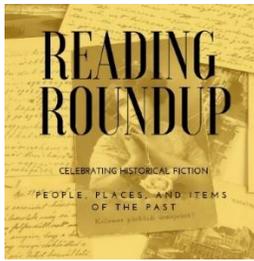
THE MURDERESS: https://www.amazon.com/Murderess-heart-stopping-family-passion-betrayal-ebook/dp/B0742MQ7QK/ref=cm_cr_arp_d_product_top?ie=UTF8

THE SECRET: https://www.amazon.com/Secret-captivating-read-which-guessing-ebook/dp/B07GBFP1JX/ref=cm_cr_arp_d_product_top?ie=UTF8

Jennifer is the author of THE LIAR, THE MURDERESS and THE SECRET published by Aria Fiction. Her novels involve the themes of family, betrayal, and love and are set in the home counties in the early 20th century. Jennifer lives in Devon with her young family and cats. She is busily working on her next novel.

[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)

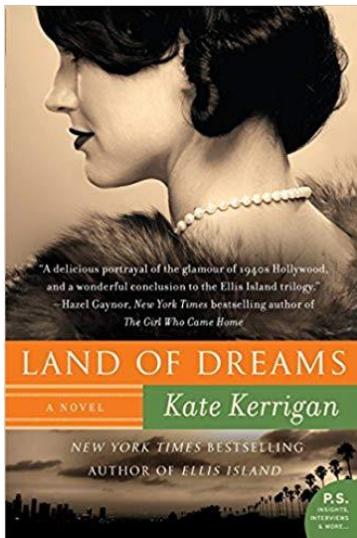
Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>



The 1940s

Land of Dreams

Kate Kerrigan



Set in 1940s Los Angeles, the compelling final installment in *New York Times* bestselling author Kate Kerrigan's sweeping immigrant trilogy begun in *Ellis Island* and the *City of Hope*—a story of family, love, danger, and ambition in Hollywood during World War II.

Irish immigrant Ellie Hogan has finally achieved the American Dream. But her comfortable bohemian life on Fire Island, New York, is shattered when her eldest adopted son, Leo, runs away, lured by the promise of fortune and fame in Hollywood. Determined to keep her family intact, Ellie follows him west, uprooting her youngest son and long-time friend Bridie.

In Los Angeles, Ellie creates a fashionable new home among the city's celebrities, artists, and movie moguls. She is also drawn into intense new friendships, including talented film composer Stan, a man far different from any she has ever met, and Suri, a beautiful Japanese woman and kindred spirit, who opens Ellie's eyes to the injustices of her country.

While Leo is dazzled by Hollywood's glitz, Ellie quickly sees that the golden glamour masks a world of vanity and greed. Though she tries to navigate them around the dangers of their new home, she will not be able to protect them from an even more terrifying threat: war.

Authors: Do you have a historical fiction book or short story that you'd like featured in Pages of the Past? Email me at texastrishafaye@yahoo.com to see about scheduling your book or short story in a future issue.

[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)

Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>