

Something Wicked

this way comes... 2024 • Vol 5 • Issue 1



Upcoming Events At-A-Glance

March 13 - 16

St. Patrick's Day Sale

March 27 - 30

Craft Month Sale

April 24 - 27

Independent Bookshop Day

May 11

iScream for Mysteries Event • See page 2

May 22

PROMM* - See page 3

June 10

Craig Johnson - See page 4

June 15

Yard / Used Books Bag Sale

June 26

PROMM* - Details pending

July 14

Mindmapping with Misty • Book Launch / Book signing - See page 4

July 24

PROMM* - Details pending

August 3

Murder As You Like It - See page 4

***Peculiar, Random, Odd, Mysteries and More**

St. Patrick's Day Sale

Books with mostly green covers, or are based in Ireland, are part of a 15% off sale this week. In-store only.

Craft Month Sale

We are offering 15% off craft-themed mysteries.

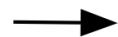
Stop by our shop for an in-store only sale on craft themed mysteries, and to participate in a small craft.

Independent Bookshop Day

Join us for our MEGA Sale (in-store only) April 24 -27. **Up to 50% off!**

Our shop will be arranged a little different during this week as we will have various book titles, on designated tables, at different discounts. Not only will we have both hardcovers and paperbacks included in this sale, but we will also have some books that our shop does not normally carry throughout the rest of the year.

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Our First Ever iScream for Mysteries Event!

iScream for Mysteries

What's your flavor of mystery? Register online at www.MysteryBooksOnline.com

M MECHANICSBURG MYSTERY bookshop

Date:
MAY 11, 2024

From:
11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Join Us For:
Author Round-About
Book Signings
Ice Cream
Fun Games

Location:
Shiremanstown United Methodist Church
125 E Main St,
Shiremanstown, PA 17011

Presented by:
M MECHANICSBURG MYSTERY bookshop

MOON
Mourning Moon Candles will also be there!

Refer a friend, and get a coupon to be used on a book of your choice at the event.

FREE Swag Bags included!

Attending Authors:
R.G. Belsky/Dana Perry
Olivia Blacke
Michael Bradley
Mollie Ann Cox/Maggie Blackburn
P.J. Burgy
Matty Dalrymple
J.T. Kunkel
Don Helin
James McCrone
Allison Montclair/Alan Gordon
Katherine Ramsland
Lisa Regan
Stephen Spotswood
Lane Stone/Cordy Abbott
Grace Topping

From Cozies to Thrillers, and more!

Parking is FREE.
Registration is \$6 per person.
Late fee applies at the door

So many folks really enjoyed our "Cozy Mystery Fete" last Fall, that we decided to try it with all kinds of mystery categories. These authors write police procedurals, traditional, psychological suspense, historical, crime, spy, legal thrillers, supernatural, horror and, yes, a few cozies.

So...which mysteries are the most popular? Here are the most to the least.

Mystery and suspense is the most popular genre for books... except for Romance. Romance tops the list for the genre with the most sold books. (Yeah, I don't get that either.)

This information comes from a 2020 study based on how many books sold in each category or "sub-genre." Keep in mind, what's "in" and what's "out" shifts constantly. And, some mysteries can fall into several categories.

For example, in 2020 psychological thrillers topped the list. The "boom" for these mysteries started back in 2012 with *Gone Girl*.

Cozies are next...although, in our shop Cozies lead the pack. What is a Cozy? Think "Murder She Wrote."

continued on page 3

So...which mysteries are the most popular? • continued

Historical mysteries and some other categories, are frequently crossed over with other genres. An example is Eliot Pattison's "Mystery of Colonial America" series. This is solving crimes in a different century.

Spy thrillers...you've probably already guessed Ian Fleming, Catherine Coulter or Len Deighton to name a few.

Police Procedurals follow a police detective or detectives, as opposed to an amateur detective. James Patterson and J. D. Barker are two in that category. On the other hand, Private Detective stories follow right after Police Procedurals in popularity. The most famous Private Detective? You guessed it...Sherlock Holmes.

The least favored is the supernatural...which isn't true here in my shop...but then, they didn't ask me. Matty Dalrymple's "Lizzie Ballard" series which is also a thriller is popular here in our shop. Another example of mysteries colliding with another genre is the "Harry Dresden" series. Harry is a Detective who also happens to be a wizard and a bit of horror. Cleo Coyle's "Haunted Bookshop" series is mystery and supernatural...but is a cozy without horror. (Also a shop favorite.)

Our First PROMM for 2024! May 22 • 7:00 pm

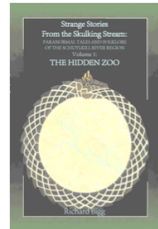
Program: Strange Stories - The Hidden Zoo

Speaker: Richard Bigg

Fee: \$3.00

Cryptozoology is the study of secret or hidden animals. In Volume 1 of *Strange Stories from the Skulking Stream*, investigator Richard Bigg takes readers on a tour of eastern Pennsylvania and its mysterious creatures. Explore the links between folklore and real-life encounters with strange animals. From Native American creation stories to modern sightings of mythical beings, *The Hidden Zoo* describes such incredible stories as: How a Schuylkill County discovery changed the story of life on land, Giant snakes of the Appalachian Mountains, and their connection to mankind's oldest legends, Mysterious black panthers, known to early naturalists as the "Cougar of Pennsylvania," The screaming black beasts that appear once a generation to terrorize communities around the Schuylkill River, Wild men of the woods, bigfoot, and strange giants who lurk in the commonwealth, The ghost werewolf of Northumberland County, and sightings of half-canine creatures.

A native of eastern Pennsylvania's Anthracite Coal Region, Richard Bigg has decades of experience in the field of paranormal research and investigation. Formerly the director of Pennsylvania Paranormal Research Team (PPRT), he's spent the last 4 years compiling local tales into his first book series, *Strange Stories From the Skulking Stream*.



Craig Johnson • June 10 • 7:00 pm

Craig Johnson will join us on June 10 at 7:00 pm to discuss his newest mystery *First Frost*. The location is:



Shiremanstown United Methodist Church
125 E Main St
Shiremanstown, PA 17011



**IMPORTANT...PLEASE note the date.
Craig's book is out early this year!**

Bag / Yard Sale • June 15

We will be hosting our popular Bag / Yard Sale event earlier than we have in the past.

For the price of \$5 (and 30¢ sales tax) you can fill the bag with books from the sale tables. This year, we will be including sci-fi and western books in our sale.

The yard sale portion of this event will be held outside. If you are interested in having a table at the Yard Sale, please let us know. There is no charge. You do need to bring your own table(s) chair and tent or canopy if you want to have one. Please call 717-795-7470 to secure a space.

Mindmapping • July 14

This event is for authors and readers alike, who are interested in learning more about a process called "Mind-mapping."

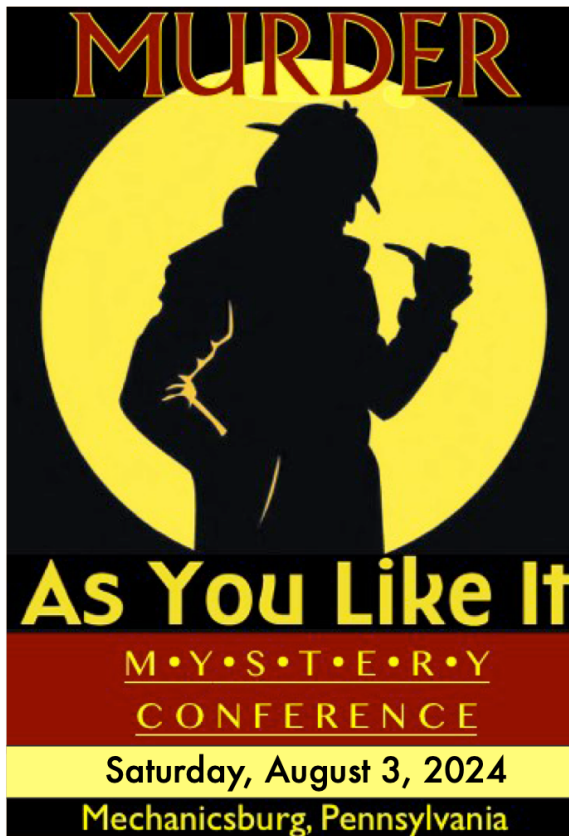


"Mind-mapping" is helpful in laying out a plot for writing a book. Cozy mystery author, Misty Simon, will be teaching this event in the classroom style, where all attendees will help in creating the outline to a story in fun exercises.

There is a \$12 per person admission fee to participate in this event.

Book Launch and Signing take place 4:00 to 4:30. FREE to attendees.

Please register by contacting us at: 717-795-7470



Book Reviews

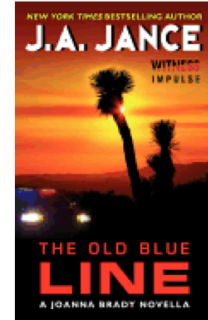
These books are available for sale on our website
or by stopping in at the shop.

The Old Blue Line - Joanna Brady Mystery Novella

Random Acts - Joanna Brady and Ali Reynolds Mystery Novella

by J. A. Jance

Type: Thriller | Suspense | Police Procedural - Novella - \$4.99 each



I used to read J.A. Jance, but unfortunately have wandered away for a bit. I recently stumbled upon some wonderful novellas that she wrote with some of her established characters from full length novels. *The Old Blue Line* supplies a great back story to Butch Dixon, who is a main character in the Sheriff Joanna Brady series. The story is 73 pages long and kept my attention. I loved the different characters she introduced from Grandma Hudson, to Tim O'Malley, to Tim's friends, who are retirees that have the time, skill, and abilities to help those in need. Butch was definitely a man in need. He was being railroaded for a crime he did not commit, but looks certain for. I did not suspect the true culprit and that made the book even more enjoyable. Well worth the smaller price tag, and great when you don't have the time to read a full novel, but desire great characters and great writing. This book is thicker than the other novella I had gotten because it includes a preview of *Remains of Innocence* (a full-length novel). Numerous blank pages at the back of the book provide space for notes or sketching, if one likes writing in their books, but otherwise serve no real purpose. However, they do not detract from the story.

Random Acts is another novella, 76 pages in length, written by J.A. Jance within the Joanna Brady series. Joanna gets the bad news that her mother, Eleanor, and stepfather were involved in an accident. After Eleanor supplies an important clue, Joanna teams up with another one of J.A. Jance's characters, Ali Reynolds, and some local police to solve an accident that wasn't really an accident. The ending was realistically unsatisfying, as some crimes do occur in this fashion, but...I won't give it all away. At the end of the novella, the reader finds a nice addition, a preview of *Downfall* (a full-length novel in this same series.)



Now I have two novellas involving J.P. Beaumont, another great character by this same author, waiting for me to read. I find these novellas to be good reads, while also providing you a glimpse into some of the author's other novels.

..reviewed by Sher

Book Reviews - continued

The Lost Library

by Rebecca Stead and Wendy Mass

Type: YA - Hardcover - \$17.00 (20% off for those under 18)



Though this book's target audience may be marketed for 8-12 year olds, it is a beautifully developed story which hosts a profoundly deep message for any age to read and enjoy. At first, I must admit that I was a little unsure on how I was going to like it, but as the story progressed, I found myself losing track of time and becoming engrossed within the three main characters from which the storyline is told. Like a narrator of a theatrical performance, Al helps to fill in the details as her own life's story begins to take on a twist you may or may not see coming, as a little boy unknowingly unearths a major secret.

Evan is about to embark on the terrifying transition from being a fifth grader to being a middle schooler at a new building, with different teachers and more kids. During the last week of attending elementary school, a free little library pops up overnight with an old orange cat to guard the books within the homemade structure. He pulls the two smallest books from the shelf and later realizes something peculiar about them. One of them has his dad's name written on the circulation card from when the old library burned down years before he was born. Not only that, but all the cards say they were due the night of the fatal fire.

While Evan and his best friend, Rafe, begin their investigation into the mysterious circumstances surrounding the tragic event, the town's reception to the new little library is better than Al had expected. Much to the satisfaction of Mortimer, the orange cat, more books are appearing by the day with even more visitors taking and leaving a book under his careful watch. But when Al, Mortimer, and Evan cross paths, their journey will change them forever. Who was Ms. Scoggin and Mr. Brock? Why do the mice call Mortimer "Six-Toed Grouch?" What does Al stand for? Did a famous writer used to live in Evan's hometown? And most importantly...who started the fire twenty years ago?

Personally, I would consider this work alongside that of Natalie Babbitt, one of my favorite writers and one who was skilled at weaving fun tales in with deeper meaning. From me, that is one of the highest compliments I can bestow upon a book. I hope that you will take a chance to help Evan figure out How to Write a Mystery Novel, and perhaps meet a few ghosts while you're at it.

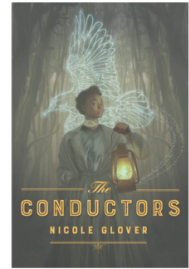
..reviewed by Sarah

Book Reviews - continued

The Conductor - Murder and Magic 1

by Nicole Glover

Type: History - Trade Paperback - \$15.99



Have you ever imagined how history may have been changed if, perhaps, there was a bit of magic involved? This author has taken a major historical event and added a power that few held to change the event into a “what if” happening. The term “sigil” is used often – you may want to look this word up prior to opening the book.

It is the 1850’s and slavery is at its peak. The Underground Railroad is fully running with Hetty Rhoads and her husband, Benji, acting as conductors. It is a dangerous job as one might expect, and they find themselves running and hiding and getting out of some challenging situations. However, Hetty has a gift that helps to safely deliver slaves into free territory – the gift of magic.

The story initially focuses on Hetty looking for her sister. History tells us that enslaved families were often split up as family members were sold and ultimately lost to their families. However, ads, samples of which are included in the book, would run in various papers as family members tried to find each other. News of lost family members was carried through churches and friendships. In 1858, Hetty’s friend, Charlie Richardson, is found dead in an alley with a sigil carved into his chest. As Hetty searches for her sister, she is also searching for Charlie’s killer, and at the same time, helping slaves to freedom.

Spaced throughout the book are “Interlude” chapters. These short chapters jump years ahead into Heddy’s life, and let the reader know some of the characters that survived their escapes. All of the chapters are headed with a constellation, a symbol important to the magic carried out in the story.

This story is quite an interesting insight into the author’s “what if a few slaves possessed magic?” thoughts. Although the story is purely fictional, the reader can easily visualize the life of those who worked on the underground railroad and the lives of those they helped.

...reviewed by Sherry M.

Book Reviews - continued

The Serpent's Star - Murial Robertson 1

by Sarah Ickes

Type: Historical / Traditional - Mass Market Paperback - \$6.99



Don't let the size of this small book fool you – it is filled with action, twists, suspense, and all other interest-holding aspects of any good book. The characters are fully developed, and the reader is quickly drawn to the protagonist, Murial Robertson, a beautiful duty-bound daughter who is completely out of place in the western town of Conestone in the 1880's.

Murial arrives in Conestone to pave the way for her father, a senator seeking statehood for the territory now known as Arizona. There is unseen danger as Murial struggles to ensure the safety of her father as he travels to various towns seeking supporters. There are gunfights, a kidnapping, an explosion, a few killings, a mystery stalker, and even some romance.

The author has created some fascinating characters. Walter is the cousin that everyone would enjoy having in the family. Congressman Robertson is the father that every daughter would despise having. Deceased Uncle Seb is loved like a father by Murial. Jack Fulton, the town sheriff, is the wanna-be boyfriend that makes Murial's life interesting. Clive Johnson is the senator's campaign manager that any candidate would cringe at having. Add to this mix of characters some minor ones including a poor woman at the dry well, and the result is an engrossing story.

This is the beginning of a series, but not everyone will survive to make it into the next book, *Angled for Revenge*. This fast-paced captivating book is well worth reading.

..reviewed by Sherry M.

Shop Hours

Wednesday and Thursday	12:30 am til 6:00 pm
Friday	12:30 am til 5:30 pm
Saturday	12:00 pm til 5:30 pm
Sunday through Tuesday	Closed except for special events.

Book Reviews - continued

Pride, Prejudice, and Peril - Jane Austin Tea Society 1

by **Katie Oliver**

Type: **Cozy - Mass Market Paperback - \$8.99**



It is a truth universally acknowledged that a book paying homage to Jane Austen to some degree will immediately grab my attention. I am so glad I read this one! Jane Austen enthusiasts, or even admirers of a Jane Austen-related TV show or movie, should check out this first in the Jane Austen Tea Society cozy mystery series.

Oliver writes a promising start to a series, featuring professor Phaedra Brighton and sprinkles so many Austen references and sidebars of humor that had me laughing and appreciating her play on Austen's characters.

Readers who have no prior knowledge of Austen will still find a very entertaining story, with interesting characters, a charming setting in a college town, a mother who gives Mrs. Bennet a competition for "Mother Most Worried about Her Unmarried Daughters' Relationship Status" award (I had to include an Austen reference, specifically to *Pride and Prejudice!*), and a cat, who is so appropriately named Wickham.

While the Tea Society parts are limited in this story, it is the introduction of the characters, specifically Phaedra, that is worth the read. Phaedra is strong and independent and proudly shares her passion for Jane Austen and Regency history and English literature with anyone and everyone.

If you enjoy this, check out the next two in the series, *A Murderous Persuasion* and *Cyanide and Sensibility*. And, for another fun Austen-related series, Claudia Gray's "Mr. Darcy and Miss Tilney" mystery series, featuring characters from Austen's novels and their children, is amazingly well-executed and fun; the first in this series is *The Murder of Mr. Wickham*.

...reviewed by Jessica

Tigers have striped skin, not just striped fur. The stripes are like fingerprints—no two tigers have the same pattern.

from *WTF*

Book Reviews - continued

Mystery in Rocky Mountain National Park

by Aaron Johnson

Type: Juvenile Fiction - Trade Paperback - \$13.99



The first book in the "National Park Mystery Series" was a great start to a fun and well designed storyline. Jake, a teenager whose grandpa has passed, and with whom he was really close to, embarks on a journey with his cousin Wes and friend Amber throughout Rocky Mountain National Park. A traveling scavenger hunt set up by Jake's late grandpa, takes the kids and their respective families on an extended vacation trip that soon makes them realize the serious side to their adventure. It is not all fun and games as possible danger looms over them by unknown people watching their movements with questionable intentions of their own.

The characters and their situations are presented very realistically and the author, Aaron Johnson, describes the Rocky Mountains National Park in a way the reader can picture in their mind; making you feel as though you are riding along with the kids. Jake, Wes, and Amber are all intelligent children portrayed with realistic self-doubts, and I found them to be highly relatable. I also like his own hand-done illustrations that are periodically placed within the story for a nice touch of added interest.

If you, like me, enjoy travel, codes, mysteries, scavenger hunts, and our National Parks, then this book is perfect for your next read! Aimed for the youth, all ages can read this delightful tale and feel like they are a part of the fun. As I have been to a number of our country's wonderful parks, I look forward to reading about the Sand Dunes and Grand Canyon installments to this series, as I have fond memories of visiting them both. (and a fun story about the fabulous Great Sand Dunes National Park, a landscape so out of place in my opinion).

Currently, there are four books in the series: *Mystery In Rocky Mountain National Park*, *Discovery in Great Sand Dunes National Park*, *Adventure in Grand Canyon National Park* and *Danger in Zion National Park*. Although, there are ten planned in total and I can't wait!

...reviewed by Sher



Book Reviews

Dead and Gondola - Christie Bookshop Mystery 1

by Ann Claire

Type: Cozy - Trade Paperback - \$17.00



For this Agatha Christie inspired mystery series debut, I found it only fitting to write this review in a prim and proper, though fun, manner. The book loving main heroine, Ellie Christie, may not descend from the Dame of Mysteries herself, but she certainly tries to bring her own set of detective skills to the table in this snowed-in chalet murder. As the bookclub commences, the actress-turned-media influencer, named Morghan Marin, discards Ms. Ridge's schedule for an impromptu séance. During their "communication," a strange man silently enters the Christies' family bookshop with very little to say. Apparently in search of "someone special," the man inadvertently leaves his bag on a table later in the day, only to be found that evening in a gondola, dead. Last Word is left in a snowstorm of lies and deceit as the investigation not only leads to a break-in at the Book Chalet, but also unearths a can of worms reaching into many of the suspects' pasts. Ellie, along with her relatives Meg, Rosie and Gram, take up the search to locate a missing friend while the police have their hands full with the murder of an ex-con. Will Agatha, their shop's famous cat, and the Christies find Ms. Ridge before she is charged for murder, or will they possibly discover that the killer has been right under their noses this entire time?

This "Marpling" family of Christies are a delightful cast of characters who tend dutifully to their shop and discover clues to the mystery along the way. I do find that the storyline occurs at a slow pace, and would be best suited for readers not looking for a lot of action scenes, as I found it consisted mostly of talking and walking around from place to place. For those of you who look for the murder to occur in the beginning, I am pleased to report that the dastardly deed happens on page 29.

And even though I do not find the front cover of this book to be of my aesthetics, it does accurately portray elements from within the storyline and capture the winter setting through its chilly color scheme. The chapter names are fun and add to the whole dramatic flair of it all, attesting to the theatrical display that Morghan uses at will. So, I guess dear fellow readers, the only thing left shrouded in a puddle of darkness would be, is this the next book for you?

...reviewed by Sarah

Cryptozoology Word Search

M P I A J K X Q R I M A B S E L Y O G R A G
Q B A R G T A C J H Q S W H J B B F M Y P P
D B I R O Q M F E T A G I T S E V N I E S L
M Q L G A N S L Y G O L O O Z O T P Y R C M
O C Y Q F N N L L T E Q H D I P B B Y P A L
T A F G E O O T V N H C T A U Q S A S H O R
H F F I S W O R W F L I G O H A W K L C E S
M K L V X L R T M O W I I T G C D G H E H D
A A R S A T Y R S A X R V X B U R N N A X D
N V O X O S R W U H L Z D E K F E A P I R D
C X H I R W E N V K I A S X D S D E E C V A
H R S D Y X E W R J Q D O J S Y S S L S B U
U O O K Y S N O G A R D X M O H E F O N E X
P F H K O C W O U I U G O F I Q E S P U S R
A K W Q B U S E B O S N N F I P C R R T Q Q
C C N Y W W R R Y D S R T M O S Y Y D E D Z
A Y Z H G O E H I T C E U L N U E B K S J D
B T Y K L D T A E Q R P A H E X R I V G O N
R A F K N G M R V S E K H D D E T X R B U L
A R L U T R U T Z F C N R B V F D T T I E H
D O H G E I K C Y A H W O Q D E T Q H B A B
F T G M D L V O J E I H M J D N F Z E C S F

ALIENS

BIGFOOT

CHUPACABRA

CRYPTOZOLOGY

DRAGONS

FAIRIES

FOLKLORE

GARGOYLES

INVESTIGATE

JACKALOPE

JERSEY DEVIL

LOCH NESS MONSTER

MERMAIDS

MOTHMAN

PARANORMAL

RESEARCH

SASQUATCH

SATYRS

SHAPESHIFTERS

THUNDERBIRDS

