

Times Recorder

NEWS

Novelist featuring early Zanesville visits for research, book signing

Christine Holmes Zanesville Times Recorder

Published 2:45 p.m. ET Aug. 26, 2021

ZANESVILLE — The descendant of one of Zanesville's earliest residents is spending retirement learning about her Putnam roots and writing novels.

This week, she will be in town for a public book signing.

Trana Mathews, who writes under the name Diane Hildebrandt, is working on the third installment of her novel series on her third great grandfather, Dr. Increase Mathews.

The doctor's home is the oldest structure in Zanesville and currently serves as a museum on Woodlawn Avenue, operated by Muskingum County History.

He is the nephew of Rufus Putnam, the founder of Marietta.

Increase Mathews served as the founder of Springfield, which later became known as Putnam before the community was annexed into Zanesville, and he was the first physician in Muskingum County.

Although she lived in Indiana and then moved to Arizona when she retired, Mathews has always taken interest in her Ohio lineage.

"My aunt was always the genealogist. Every family reunion, she would pass out descendants of Increase Mathews lists. The history was always there," Mathews said.

With many of her family's documents and letters preserved, she's been able to learn much about their lives.

"The one thing I remember as a child, I had to do a family tree," Mathews said. "When I was working on this, my mother came out with a little pamphlet that was a limited edition, printed in 1932 that had Increases journey from Massachusetts to Ohio and then

back to Massachusetts in 1798."

That pamphlet intrigued Mathews to learn more.

"When I read his words, I was fascinated," she said.

She noted that he didn't use first names when he wrote about people, which has been her challenge to identify who he was talking about as she writes her books.

"To put it together when I started writing my novels, it was such a relief," Mathews said. "It felt like I was bringing his life back to life."

Her books tell the story of Increase Mathews' life, starting from his birth in 1772.

"I felt like he has guided me to learn things that I wouldn't have found," she said.

She uses primary sources of information, such as letters penned by Mathews himself, to guide her writing and then uses her imagination to fill in the blanks based on what she believes would reflect the time period.

The third and possibly fourth books in the series are inspired by a Supreme Court case she recently discovered over a land dispute between the doctor and John McIntire.

She hopes to release the next novel around January.

Those who'd like to meet Mathews can do so Friday at the Increase Mathews house located at 304 Woodlawn Ave.

She will be there to sign books at 11 a.m., followed by a luncheon and another signing.

Author copies of her novels will be available for purchase.

More about Mathews and her novels can be found online at www.tranamathews.com.

cmholmes@gannett.com

740-450-6758

Twitter: @cmholmesgannett