

Joyce's Journal

A monthly dispatch from Joyce A. Miller, Writer



SEPTEMBER ADVENTURES!

My big news for September is that I have a wonderful vacation planned. Three of our French friends, whom I met when they came to the States to do their physics' experiments at Jefferson Lab, will be joining my husband and me. We plan to spend a few days in New York City seeing the Broadway show **Wicked** and eating at Le Bernardin. We're then driving to Portland, ME to see the Cape Elizabeth Lighthouse and the Wooden Trolls at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens. Then a few days exploring Acadia National Park's Thunder Hole and Sand Beach. Of course, we will eat some lobster while we are there, but I also want to visit Maine's biggest bookstore, the Big Chicken Barn in Ellsworth. We'll finish up the trip in Connecticut at the Abbey of Regina Laudis where they make Bethlehem cheese, American counterpart to St. Nectaire, which is a famous cheese from the area in France where our friends live.

On August 14th I traveled with my cellist friend, Juliana Soltis, to New York City for the day. It was a whirlwind trip, but I managed to leave a copy of **Joe Harris, the Moon** and **Look! You're Dancing** at the Bryant Park Reading Room. There is a selection of books, periodicals and newspapers to read under the trees. I also got some inspiration when I visited the AKC Museum of the Dog. Artist Matilda Lotz may become the main character of a future novel! Born in 1858 near Nashville TN. Matilda loved to draw with anything she could get her hands on—pieces of coal, pencils or charcoal. She did a 6-year curriculum at the San Francisco School of Design and then went on to study in France as one of the first female students

A GLIMPSE OF
WHAT'S INCLUDED:

The History Lesson

to do so. She became known for animal paintings of sheep and cattle; and had her work shown at the Paris Salon. She didn't marry until she was 55 years old to a Hungarian count. They lived and worked together in Algeria painting camels and caravans in the desert. Doesn't that story sound fascinating? Her painting of a lurcher (greyhound/terrier mix) titled **At the Garden Gate** is what pulled me in!

One of my connections has been with Malanna Henderson, whom I met while she was working as a docent at Belmont during my **Mrs. Cari Melchers** research. What started as conversations about the Melchers' estate has grown into a relationship with a fellow writer and now theater producer! Malanna founded Somewhere in Time Productions in Fredericksburg, VA, and after a successful debut with two plays in June, she's preparing to stage her own original work, **The History Lesson**. She's also the author of the historical novel **On the Wings of Freedom**—proving that creative spirits tend to find each other!

As the bonus for September's newsletter, I'm attaching a poster and a synopsis of Malanna's next production. Keep an eye out for it in Fredericksburg, VA and they're doing auditions for the play right now! You can make a weekend out of it, visit Belmont and see the play!

I live in the Church Hill section of Richmond, VA with my husband and my retired racing greyhound. Before I started writing, I worked for 30 years at a nuclear physics research laboratory.

Do what you came here for!



JOYCE A. MILLER, WRITER

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The *History Lesson* by Malanna Henderson is set in 1860 at a slave cabin on a plantation in Richmond, Virginia. Frank Turner, like Solomon Northup, is kidnapped into slavery to round out a chamber music quartet. At curtain rise, Turner is waiting to administer a test to Hattie Rose, a young, enslaved woman, who he has been educating in secret. While she is tested on her knowledge of academia, he will be tested on another matter. Can he maintain his ironclad will to suppress his feelings for a woman who could jeopardize his plans to escape? Danger of discovery that he is breaking the law lurks in suspected places and unsuspected places.

