



**SQUARE CIRCLE PRESS LLC**  
137 Ketcham Road  
Voorheesville, NY 12186  
(518) 432-6657  
[www.squarecirclepress.com](http://www.squarecirclepress.com)  
[bookinfo@squarecirclepress.com](mailto:bookinfo@squarecirclepress.com)  
*Media inquiries please use this contact info*

**FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE ON**

**3/10/2010**

**ONEONTA HISTORY PROFESSOR WEAVES UPSTATE HISTORY,  
MURDER, AND CAMPUS INTRIGUE INTO DEBUT NOVEL**  
*Author to be interviewed on WSKG Public Radio's "Off the Page"*

When SUNY at Clinton Falls professor Peter Langley dies in an apparent drunk-driving accident, his teaching assistant Tom Flanagan becomes suspicious, knowing full well the professor didn't drink. Flanagan pursues the details of the accident while leading us on a journey through murder, campus politics, political deceit, and 200 years of upstate New York history. Bill Jaker, host of WSKG Public Radio's book show, "Off the Page" will interview author Thomas Pullyblank to explore writing, history, and his most recent book, *Cornflower's Ghost: An Historical Mystery*. The book was released in October by Square Circle Press.

The show will air live from 1:00-2:00 pm on March 16th, and will be rebroadcast at 7:00 pm that same evening. The episode will be audio-streamed live and later archived at the station's web site, [WSKG.org](http://WSKG.org). In regards to the independent publishers of Pullyblank's book, Bill Jaker commented that, "Square Circle Press is certainly making an impact on our literature."

Set in a fictionalized upstate New York, the thriller is based on actual locations across the region. "I invented a university town and placed it in central New York along the south banks of the Mohawk River," said Pullyblank, a professor of history at the State University College at Oneonta and an Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church. "Clinton Falls, its campus, local taverns and difficult winter weather, as well as the characters in the story, should all be recognizable to the residents and students of upstate New York."

Two prominent characters, Cornflower, an Iroquois woman, and Revolutionary War hero Theodorick Crane, are fictionalized mosaics of people who lived in central New York two hundred years ago. "The novel originated from a ghost story I told to a group of friends gathered at Collins Lake in Scotia over a decade ago." Pullyblank, a lifelong resident of upstate, found it natural to write about the people and places he knows. "Upstate New York is one of those places that deserves to be written about because of our unique and interesting heritage, and because of the fascinating characteristics of its people." The novel also contains important scenes set in the Thousands Islands, along the St. Lawrence River.

The drama involving the historical characters becomes integral to the life and death of the fictional professor, as he was closely tied to the descendants of Theodorick Crane. The modern-day characters of an ambitious university administrator and her Congressman husband employ political manipulation to try and create an upstate resort park based on the patriots of the Revolutionary War. "Through the characters of Martha and Harold Radisson, I wanted to address the question of how our past should or should not be used to address contemporary concerns. At that heart of that plot line is the state of the upstate economy," explained Pullyblank. "It firmly places the question of heritage tourism in front of the reader."

A major sub-plot to the story is the campus politics surrounding the protagonist Tom Flanagan. "I witnessed some inter-departmental intrigue when I was a student at the University at Albany," Pullyblank said. "I was completely fascinated by how the whole situation began, developed, and was eventually resolved. The campus politics, the events portrayed, and indeed the whole story are well-anchored in historical reality."

The book has received excellent advance reviews from academic and cultural historians alike. More details about the novel and where it can be purchased are available at [www.squarecirclepress.com](http://www.squarecirclepress.com) or through the following information.

**BOOK SUMMARY:**

After grieving the loss of his parents and brother, graduate student Tom Flanagan returns from a lengthy sabbatical to his winter-locked SUNY upstate campus to begin life anew in the spring semester, only to learn of the "accidental" death of his history professor, Peter Langley. Puzzled by the accounts of the accident, Tom is driven to pursue the facts of the case—and is immediately drawn into the intrigue surrounding another death—that of the Revolutionary War hero Theodorick Crane—

Langley's obsession throughout his entire academic career. Putting his historical research skills to work, Tom pursues the two mysteries and soon becomes intimately involved with Crane's descendants: a manipulative college administrator, her even more manipulative Congressman husband, and their captivating niece—all of whom have vague former connections to Langley. Standing in the shadows behind it all is the ghost of Cornflower, an Iroquois woman executed for treason by Crane, who seems to be the key to unlocking the secrets of the past. But as the semester progresses and Tom delves deeper into Langley's life and death, he and those close to him become tangled in a dangerous web of political ambition and academic deceit, the unraveling of which threatens to disrupt the lives of all involved.

#### **ADVANCE REVIEWS:**

"*Cornflower's Ghost* is a vastly entertaining novel, replete with mysterious deaths, romantic intrigues, political deceptions and historical schemes covering more than 200 years. Implicated in these antics are professors and graduate students at a modern university, 1960s radicals, leaders of the American Revolution, 18<sup>th</sup> century politicians, and the specter of an Iroquois ghost. Thomas Pullyblank weaves this tale with a keen eye for detail and a storyteller's gift. But there's more than just a good story here: at the center of *Cornflower's Ghost* is history itself, and how we use the past to define ourselves and give meaning to our current struggles. Amid all the intrigue and suspense, Pullyblank's characters are fighting to claim the past and to understand it, since only history can reveal the answers to the secrets at the heart of *Cornflower's Ghost*. It's a novel that pulls you in and keeps you thinking long after you've turned the last page."

—Brian Carso, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of History, Misericordia University

"Pullyblank's intricate tale of love, betrayal, lies, and murder cleverly weaves past and present in ways that will change the way we think about history. In fast-moving episodes full of plot twists and turns he deftly explores a fascinating region of the country—upstate New York—and the characters that have had parts both major and minor in the unfolding drama of the state's history. Importantly, *Cornflower's Ghost* is a vivid reminder that the past is always with us, and it profoundly affects how we live in the present and how we shape the future."

—Paul D' Ambrosio, Ph. D., Vice President and Chief Curator, New York State Historical Association

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Thomas Pullyblank was born and raised in rural upstate New York. Having earned degrees in history at the University at Albany and a Master of Divinity degree from the Boston University School of Theology, Pullyblank now teaches history at the SUNY College at Oneonta and serves as a United Methodist pastor near Cooperstown, New York. He lives on a small working farm with his wife and son. This is his first novel. He is currently working on a second upstate New York historical mystery featuring Tom Flanagan.

#### **EVENT INFORMATION:**

**What:** Radio interview with author Thomas Pullyblank

**When:** Tuesday, March 16, 2010 @ 1:00 pm

**Where:** WSKG Public Radio (WSKG.org)

**Info:** Rebroadcast at 7:00 pm on March 16th; live audio stream during the live broadcast; archived for listening at WSKG.org

#### **BOOK INFORMATION:**

The book is available in paperback, and is for sale both online and through retail bookstores. For more information about how and where to purchase *Cornflower's Ghost* or other titles, products and services available from Square Circle Press, visit the publisher's web site at [www.squarecirclepress.com](http://www.squarecirclepress.com).

**Title:** Cornflower's Ghost: An Historical Mystery

**Author:** Thomas Pullyblank

**Publication Date:** October 3, 2009

**ISBN-13:** 978-0-9789066-5-8

**ISBN-10:** 0-9789066-5-9

**LCCN:** 2009934094

**Retail Price:** \$19.95

**Physical:** 5.25" x 8"; 232 pages; softcover; perfect binding

**Retail Distribution:** Ingram, North Country Books, Square Circle Press

**Library Distribution:** Baker & Taylor; Square Circle Press

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