

The Authors Corner by Dutch Rhudy

Happy Valentines Day, and Welcome to The Authors Corner.

Last months issue of The Authors Corner gave a highly condensed overview of our new opening novel for the Roaring Falls Series. Like my other restarts, each stepping further back in time, this new draft must also undergo an extensive developmental edit.

I apparently misunderstood some of the questions posed the month before last, and in an attempt to answer all of them collectively, I failed to address them properly. I apologize for this oversight, and try to answer in a more meaningful way.

The majority of questions posed appeared to ask about the building of a series, but instead, they were more concerned about the long time line world building process. One of the primary questions was how one keeps track of a single location through over a century of growth.

Although there are many aspects to consider when speaking of a town and its growth. The easiest way to approach long time span world building is by working in fixed decades, rather than maintaining ongoing plat changes as time moves forward. In some cases, a specific event or series of events will define the plat map for a time period.

Studying the history of your own home town is an easy way to understand world building. An author would pick the time frame for their story, and use archived maps of their chosen towns development for the setting. Their town has a history which becomes part of the backstory element of for the novel.

For a story which covers a long time span, the plat maps change with each setting era. Starting a story before the town is founded can be quite complex, as the town incorporates newer amenities as they become available. The older a town becomes, the less detail is needed about the towns growth, because most of the basics are already in place. When speaking of a large town, it can be assumed it has all the necessary utilities to support the town or city.

One thing about writing fiction is we have an author's prerogative to do almost anything we want in our fictitious city. Your setting may be futuristic, make believe, or located on another planet.

What gets hard is when we are writing in real time, past or present, based on current events, as found in historical novels. Our stories must align with what is true, and the events which affected the towns growth patterns cannot normally be altered.

The story itself can be entirely fictional, or a true story placed in a different location setting at in a changed time frame, which makes keeping the time lines aligned with true history much harder. Because building such a displaced world is the hardest, I will address the questions based on how I developed the Roaring Falls location setting.

What may be appealing to me, may not be appealing to you, or our readers. When I first began developing Roaring Falls, I began with an existing town, set in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, to cover the mysteries of the detective agency. I wanted features in this town I knew most readers would love at least a few of them.

With this in mind, my town had to include first and foremost, a beautiful waterfall and lake, followed by a lush green forest filled with wildlife, mountains and foothills. Each area required both an idyllic setting as well as the common problematic areas. There is no such place where you do not have the good with the bad, the pristine without the blight.

I used the developmental history of my own home town for the backstory. This was all well and good until I relocated my town one-thousand miles further west, then everything changed. The style of architecture, the methods of construction, and national events which prompted changes in the town were suddenly all out of kilter.

This meant I had to completely rewrite the history of the town, based on its new location, while keeping the events in accord with national events. This drastically changed when things happened and how they came into play. The further west you traveled, the slower the pace.

My intended time frame also shifted out of necessity. 1920s events in the east, could not possibly occur in an area still in the 1890s stage of growth. After restarting my second opening novel set in 1890, I ran across numerous problems which needed addressed. This cause me to keep stepping back in time all the way to 1807 for the backstory.

The latest opening novel starts in 1820 with minimal backstory, and a whole new world to build from scratch. Studying the development of my home town and neighboring towns, including the largest old city, there were many changes in their early years. To incorporate their growth in my story in a western setting, key periods of growth had to be triggered by other national events.

I sat down with a drawing paper and began sketching attractive areas I wanted in my town, each on a separate sheet. For there to be waterfalls, there must be a plateau or foothills. I chose to use both. A plateau in the center, the waterfalls to the left, and a mountain range to the right. For a new town to prosper, it must likewise be located on a large river.

Since I am starting from scratch, the first riverside city must grow huge, then decline somewhat, making way for later urban sprawl and suburbia to develop from farmland to subdivisions. Because of this, I needed to set aside suburban areas which would eventually become major shopping and entertainment hubs. Especially during the decline of the large city, before it spurns new regrowth later in the century.

A simple pioneer settlement which continues to grow and develop, bringing in all the amenities over time. Stage Coach, Railroad, Telegraph, Water, Sewers, Telephone, and Electric. Dirt roads become gravel roads, and later tar and gravel, concrete, etc.

Old cabins are replaced with modern frame construction, which are replaced by current day buildings. Keeping a few older home as historical sites within the ever growing city. Western style shopping areas become strip malls, and eventually razed for larger and taller stores.

The easiest way to begin a world building project of this magnitude is to begin at the beginning with the first pioneer or settlers to occupy a territory. Don't limit yourself to a single small area during your planning stages. My little town of Roaring Falls in later years encompasses nearly the entire county in which they first became established.

Where this is one county, there must be more counties around it, and so on and so forth until you wind up with an entire state filled with counties. Let's not forget the bordering states, nor the rest of the country. People move to you town from everywhere, and visit many locations.

On this Roaring Falls website, you can find the early Roaring Falls reference maps. Due to removing spoilers, most of what was originally published on-line has since been removed. I will restore each page after its associated novel is published.

Think Big! In the "Reference Maps" section you will find a 'State Map' for the 'State of New Clemons.' This is the fictional state the city of "Roaring Falls" resides. A little further down the page you will find a list of 'County Maps.' The only currently linked county map is 'Yarnell County.' An 1808 and 1848 map of Yarnell County is currently displayed.

Because of the many changes in the early growth of Roaring Falls, rather than maps a decade apart, I chose to use maps covering major growth periods. In the early years, these maps are only a year or two apart. The first settlers in 1851, followed by the 1852 settlers, where settlement halted because the territory did not open until settlement until 1862, which is long after my opening novels time line. I included the 1854 railroad right of way map in this collection even though it is not mentioned till the opening of the third novel

What remains on the current website is sparse. The homes of the first settlers were removed along with their character sketches. Primarily because the new first opening novel predates their introduction to the story. What started out to be a Mystery Series, after stepping back in time to find the perfect starting point, will open as an Historical Series.

The story will build through the founding of the town, its growth to the point of needed a detective agency to solve crimes. The forming of a Mutual Protection Association, and Law and Order Society will led to the establishment of a detective agency which grows to become the worlds largest detective agency.

With the towns growth attaining the status of a large metropolitan city, the Series will transition from Historical to Mystery, as the detective agencies hardest cases unfold. A stand-alone series will be an adjunct to the above as a Romance Series, with stories set anywhere along the 175 year long time frame for the Roaring Falls Series. Upon completion of the series itself, it will transition once again into stand-alone episodic novels by other authors.

Next month, I will explain in greater detail the development of natural features which become a major part of world building. Touching on how you may want the land to rise slowly to prevent flooding of some areas, shallow rolling hills, and the most logical paths through an area, which may later become dominant established roads where businesses flourish.

Respectfully submitted
Dutch Rhudy