

Former Owosso woman pens novel about Thumb murders

Former Owosso resident and Owosso High School class of 1962 graduate Jacki Howard has published her first novel, "The Thumb-Pointed Fingers."

Howard, currently of Virginia, said she didn't intend to write a book, but when researching her family history, she found a story she felt needed to be told.

"I started out writing down the things I'd been told as a child - the stories that had been passed down to me. Then I did some digging to find facts. With each new piece of information I uncovered, I became convinced that this story needed to be told," Howard said.

The story involves Howard's relatives, who lived and farmed in the early 1900s in the Thumb. John Wesley Sparling, a distant cousin to Howard, married Carrie Boddy and together they had five

children. Sparling's tragic death in 1908 was mourned by the small, close-knit community. But sadness quickly turned to suspicion as three of his grown children followed him to the grave in only three years.

"The incredible thing about the case is that the deaths just kept happening - this isn't a case where a family is murdered in their sleep overnight, these people died one by one in a very short time period- each one dying in a similar manner; each one dying a painful and prolonged death," Sparling said.

The mystery was referred to as "The Case of the Dying Sparlings," and received national attention.

Howard will return to the Thumb to sign books and field questions.

More information can be found at www.dyingsparlings.com.