

# Salisbury Square

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Whether there was ever a barber who cut his clients' throats from ear to ear and had their flesh turned into Mrs Lovett's delicious meat pies is highly doubtful. But what is undisputed, is that Sweeney Todd, the demon barber of Fleet Street, appeared as a character for the first time in 'The String of Pearls,' published in 1846 by Edward Lloyd Ltd, of 12 Salisbury Square, just off Fleet Street.

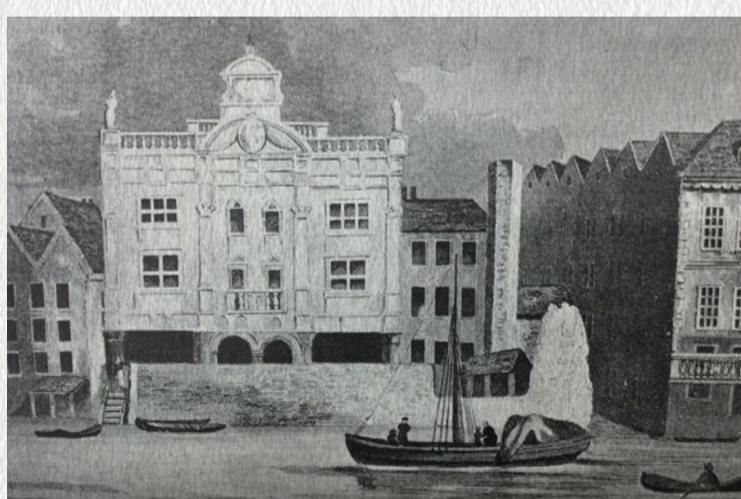
While the middle-classes read serialised Dickens, costing 6d per month, what became known as 'Salisbury Square fiction' appeared weekly and cost just one penny. The stories that streamed out of 12 Salisbury Square fed a demand from the urban masses for entertainment, indicating literacy levels were rising amongst the working-classes decades before the 1870 Education Act.

The most popular Salisbury Square serials, otherwise known as 'Penny Bloods', were 'String of Pearls' and 'Varney the Vampire'. Favoured by females were 'Ela the Outcast' and 'Ada the Betrayed.' Their addictive page-turning quality delivered escapism from lives of drudgery, making them especially popular with maids – although less so with their employers, who would discover their servants reading rather than cooking or cleaning.

Situated to the south of Fleet Street, between St Brides Church and Whitefriars Street, Salisbury Square already had a long connection with entertainment. From 1671 to 1709, on the south side of the Square, stood the Dorset Garden theatre, known for its spectacular productions including operatic adaptations of Macbeth (1673) and the Tempest (1674). Also known as the Duke's Theatre it was famous for its, large casts, dancing, instrumental and vocal music, moving scenery, and flying actors and objects.



*Close-up of Robert Waithman Obelisk*



*The river frontage of the Dorset Garden Theatre*

The only remnant from previous centuries now is an obelisk to Robert Waithman (1764-1833), Mayor of London 1823-24. Describing Waithman as a "Friend of Liberty in Evil Times" the obelisk has been put into storage. The developers promise it will be reinstated as part of the new Salisbury Square 'Justice Quarter.'



# Salisbury Square Additional notes

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Further Reading:

James Malcolm Rymer or Thomas Peckett Prest: The String of Pearls, Dover Publications (2015)

Raymond Williams: The Long Revolution, Pelican (1961)

Margaret Dalziel: Popular Fiction 100 Years Ago, Cohen & West (1957)

Louis James: Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-1850, Penguin (1963)

Ian Haywood: 'The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and the People (1790-1860) Cambridge University Press (2004)

Joseph Hatton: Journalistic London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington (1882)

[www.baldwinhamey.wordpress.com/2013/04/03/waithmans-obelisk/](http://www.baldwinhamey.wordpress.com/2013/04/03/waithmans-obelisk/)

[www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/waithman-robert-1764-1833](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/waithman-robert-1764-1833)