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Hello Friends!



*Danbury Museum garden, spring 2019*

We're happy to see you all here again! It's a beautiful Friday morning here in Connecticut as we're

assembling this week's newsletter. It's been another busy week of [#MuseumFromHome](#) and we've collected more great stories for you and added more fun and family friendly options to the Museum From Home part of our website, too. Don't forget, if you get three little dots or a "Click to see entire message" link at some point in the newsletter, well, **CLICK ON IT!** There's more newsletter after the message.

Executive Director (and one-time card sharp) Brigid Guertin shares some great memories of playing cards in her family and thanks to a website Patrick sourced, you can find the rules to numerous card games to be played by any number of people.

Read on to learn more from Bob Young's research into the 1918 Spanish Influenza epidemic in Danbury. Bob's article reminds us that even as history repeats, there are always new lessons we can learn.

And John O'Donnell is back with another surprising Danbury connection...this time WHALING. Danbury and whaling, you say? Read on below for a tale worthy of Melville himself.

We're pleased to add Geoff Herald to our roster of talented columnists. Geoff was Danbury's Fire Chief and is a lover of history who is also president of the Danbury Museum's Board of Trustees.

In addition to webinars (on Mondays now as well as Wednesdays!) a lot of our working from home time is spent planning--for puzzles, games, newsletters, social media campaigns, and cooperative ventures with our community partners. Next week is National Library Week and we've got a classic Main Street Danbury photo challenge opportunity in the works. You'll want to check our website and the museum's social media on Monday for all the details on how you can participate with the museum and [Danbury Library](#).

We love knowing that you all are reading and engaging with this weekly newsletter--we hope it makes the distance seem less solitary. And we love hearing from you, too, so please continue to say hello now and then.

Keep well,

Brigid Guertin (Executive Director, City Historian, Fearless Leader, Well-Known Card Sharp)  
Patrick Wells (Research Specialist, Social Media Manager, Keeper of Games and Puzzles)  
Michele Lee Amundsen (Collections Manager, Threader of Tales on Twitter, Podcast Addict)

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Hello friends,

Like so many of you, I've found that social distancing has been harder than expected. It's critically necessary, but with three active boys, sometimes a bit of a challenge. One of the many ways my husband and I have found to combat the changes of daily life has been by creating new norms for our family. One of those new norms revolves around playing card games after dinner.

I have so many awesome, funny, silly, memories of playing cards with my family. I remember my Gramps, Charlie Durkin, teaching my brothers and I how to shuffle cards the "right" way, a new skill I'm practicing with my three card sharps. We've played Spoons, Go Fish, War, and now we've embarked on Rummy 500. I can clearly remember, I think I was about 8 years old, "helping" my Nana, Katherine (Sis) Jugler volunteer in the old St. Gregory the Great Thrift Shop, which was once in a storefront down in Germantown in Danbury. On many a Saturday I'd accompany her to the Thrift Store for a several hour shift. After pricing, organizing and, of course, making a cup of tea, we'd settle down and wait for customers and always, ALWAYS play a game of cards, usually Rummy 500. My Nana never let any of us win, she was a tiny, white haired, card sharp, so victory at Rummy 500 was a true victory. At eight there weren't many victories, but there was so much laughter, joy, and FUN. My guys are enjoying Rummy 500, and I'll admit, I've lost a few times!

If you are interested in learning new games for two, for 4, or more, check out this great website by the wonderful people who make the [Bicycle cards](#). So many games, so well explained.

When the restrictions are lifted and we can get together again, we can look forward to a few card nights at the Danbury Museum, can't wait to have you join us!

Brigid

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## THE DANBURY NEWS - OCTOBER 1918

By Bob Young

Last week I began to discuss how the 1918 influenza epidemic affected the people of Danbury. Included in the discussion were some early parallels with COVID-19. Despite Danbury being only 130 miles from the "ground zero" for New England (Camp Devens in Massachusetts), the month of September was relatively quiet.

Local newspapers provided extensive coverage of the last 6 weeks of World War I to the extent that news of the spreading pandemic was relegated to interior pages.

**10/1** A relatively typical day in Danbury. The spread of influenza in other areas was being closely monitored. A lack of adequate knowledge on the spread of the influenza and a lingering lack of urgency dampened any thoughts of taking action.

-- October was Fair Month in Danbury. The Fair was due to open on October 7th and was advertised as being the biggest and best of all Fairs as it would celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Great Danbury Fair.

-- The Connecticut Health Department claimed that only 1 in 100 cases would be fatal. This also fed the complacency in town.

-- News from Camp Devens was deplorable. The base hospital had 1,200 beds and they were all filled with overflow cases. Reportedly there were 1,500 new cases daily in the various Army camps on the East Coast, with an average of 100 deaths per day. *(By the end of 1918, there would be more American soldiers dead in World War I from influenza than from all other causes combined.)*

-- There was a smattering of cases in Danbury, but no deaths yet reported. The first advertisements for patent medicines that cured or staved off influenza began to appear.

**10/2** The flu was spreading rapidly across Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The governor in Boston said that conditions were very serious in several sections of the state.

-- Trials of a possible vaccine to stop the spread of influenza began in Boston. The New York City health department warned that the vaccine will not cure the influenza but might provide an easing of the numbers infected.

-- Danbury Hospital began receiving emergency transfers from other parts of the state. A drive was initiated to collect canned goods for the hospital to help feed the sudden influx of patients.

**10/3** Influenza continued to spread unchecked across New England. Meriden, CT, was heavily



affected. The city of Philadelphia was essentially closed down.

-- Dozens of Danbury residents took an overnight train to Camp Devens to see their sick sons. A family of six on Grand Street were stricken with pneumonia. Their son died in the Merchant Marine Hospital in Boston from influenza. His body was returned to Danbury for burial.

-- The first 3 deaths were noted in Danbury, which were probably due to influenza.

**10/4** Norwalk reported more than 30 new cases of influenza in 24 hours. Influenza had affected 43 of 48 states, with the East Coast being hardest hit.

-- The Army reported over 113,000 cases of influenza across the country in military camps alone. More than 1,100 deaths were reported in a 24 hour period.

-- The City of Danbury closed all public schools. All private schools followed.

-- Questions were being raised about the safety of having the Fair this year. No firm decision was yet made.

**10/5** Influenza was now spreading through the greater Danbury region.

-- Discussion in Washington, DC, to enact a nationwide closure. The mandate was lifted when no effective means of enforcement were found. Connecticut had refused to follow this Federal mandate.

-- Norwalk reported more than 40 new cases in the past 24 hours; Norwalk Hospital was overwhelmed. Other sources for hospitalization were being sought. The Mayor and city council in Norwalk began efforts to close down the city.

-- A decision was made to cancel the 1918 Great Danbury Fair.

-- The Connecticut Health Department noted that general caution was advised but there was no need for alarm.

**10/7** The influenza pandemic broke out in Danbury. The City reported 340 new cases over the weekend. Death count remained low at this point (only 11 deaths to that point in October).

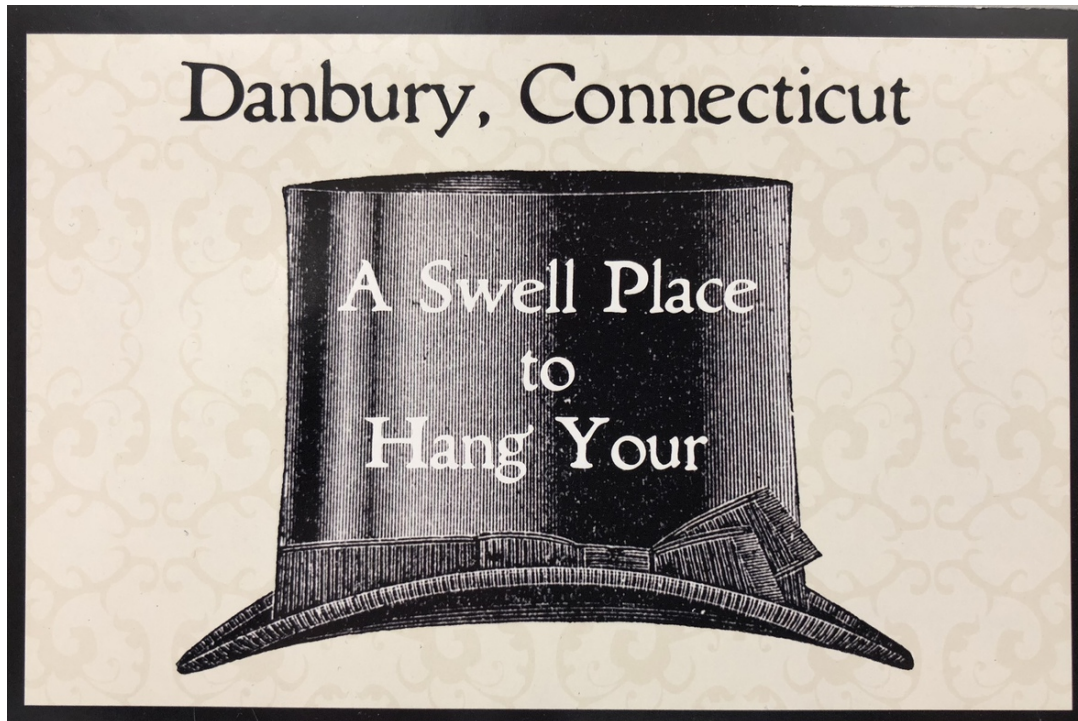
-- Bethel and New Fairfield closed their schools.

-- In spite of the rampant spreading of the pandemic, the newspapers ramped up their coverage of the waning days of World War I.

**10/8** There were 35 deaths reported in September in Danbury, of which only 7 were likely due to influenza. To this point in October, there had been 11 deaths due to influenza.

The first week of October is over. Despite closing the schools and theaters as well as canceling the Great Danbury Fair, life continues in Danbury mostly unhindered. The factories are buzzing along and the shops, restaurants, and saloons continue with business as usual. However, the influenza pandemic will begin to significantly impact the citizens of Danbury. Next week we will follow the rapidly increasing number of illnesses.

**Bob Young** has been a history buff all of his life. He was fortunate to grow up just outside of Boston, near Salem, and spent many hours exploring. He's been working on his family's genealogy since he was 18.



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## Danbury and Whaling

I know you are looking at the title and saying to yourself how whaling can be associated with Danbury since it is landlocked. Well let's look at the story of the Hamilton family of Danbury and it will soon become clear why Danbury and whaling can be joined together.

The Danbury Museum has a book in its collection which is titled *The Hamiltons of Danbury 1688-2015: Whales, Revolution, Wild West, Civil War, Printing Press* by George A. Glass (2016) which I recently read while working at the Museum. The whales in the subtitle come from the story of William Hamilton. He is said to be the first American colonist to harpoon and kill a whale off Cape Cod in the Seventeenth Century. Because many people believed this to have been an impossible feat, he was said to be consorting with the Devil and had to flee to Rhode Island. He was the descendant of Gallatin Hamilton, a physician of Glasgow, Scotland. While in Rhode Island he fathered ten children.

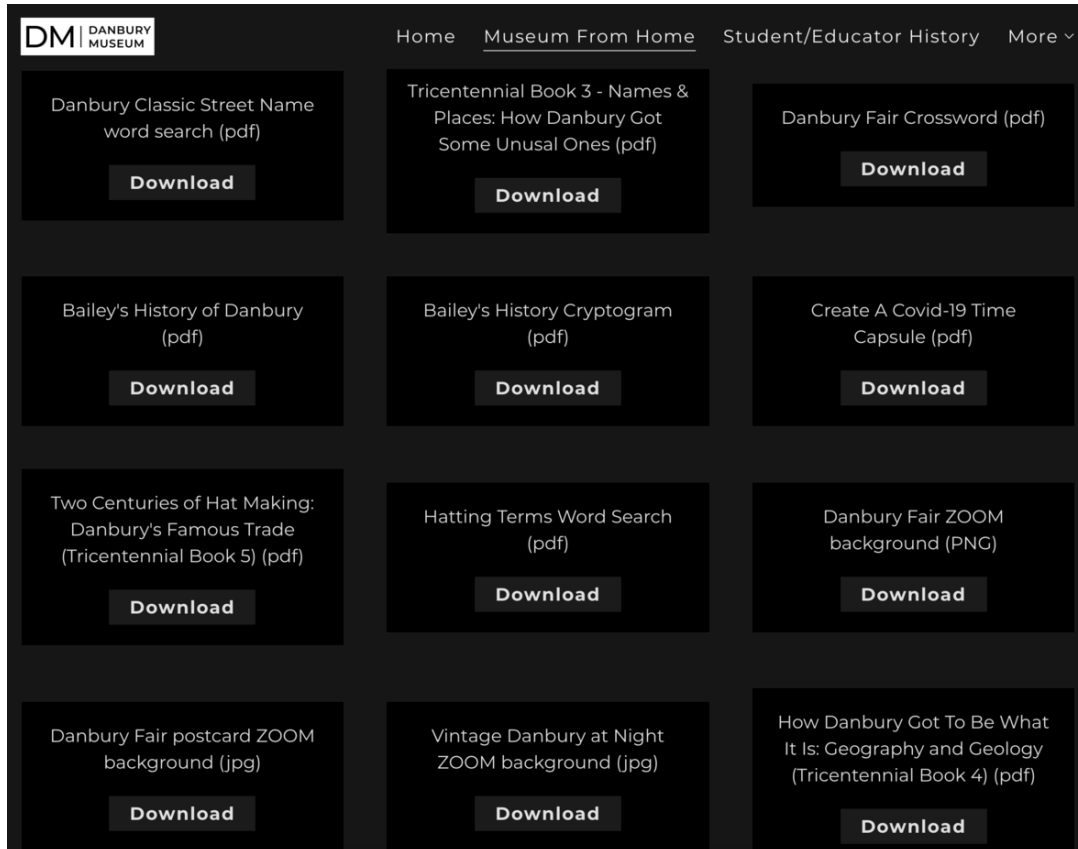
William and his family moved to Danbury and purchased tracts of land on Bear Mountain in the Pembroke district. William died in 1746 at the age of 103. But his family had a lasting influence on the history of Danbury.

One of his descendants, Joseph Hamilton, served during the American Revolution as a drummer in Captain Noble Benedict's company which was formed in 1776. During the Civil War, three of his relatives served. They fought in the Battles of Fredericksburg and Antietam which were among the bloodiest of the war. They also protested against officer corruption and the lack of supplies in their units. Unfortunately one brother was captured at the Battle of Cedar Creek. He was sent to Salisbury Prison and died of starvation and malnutrition right before the end of the war. Another descendant founded the Hamilton Press in Danbury which was in business for almost a century.

While we are talking about whaling it would be remiss of me not to mention a masterpiece of its

kind. It is titled *Why Read Moby Dick?* by Nathaniel Philbrick. He is a master historian who has written several works about the American Revolution which are well-written and very readable. His book about Moby Dick can be read in one sitting (I immediately read it again because I enjoyed it so much) but is a profound analysis of Melville and his masterpiece. Philbrick reads this book every year and profits by it with each reading. There is a lesson in that for all of us.

**John O'Donnell** first became a history devotee while in elementary school. He was raised in Brooklyn and frequently went to Prospect Park which has a Revolutionary War monument. He was hooked!



## Additional Distance Learning/Homeschooling Resources

We're continuing to add puzzles and pamphlets to the [Museum From Home](#) page of our website, so make sure you check back often. This week's word search theme is Parks, Ponds, and Waterways and we've uploaded Book 4 in the Tricentennial Book series, *How Danbury Got to be What It Is: Geography and Geology*.

If you're looking for more podcast recommendations, we've been listening to [The Bowery Boys](#). It's a rich and well-researched New York-centric podcast that has accompanying blogposts; their most recent episode is about the Polio Epidemic and it's a fascinating and timely listen. You can find the podcast at [The Bowery Boys](#), or wherever you get your podcasts.

With (fingers crossed) beautiful spring weather ahead, we've added the **Ives Trail** map and the **Museum in the Streets** map to the website as well. These are great options to get out and explore and get in some steps with your family and friends while learning (and keeping physically distant!)

A reminder, too, that we have a lot of distance learning and homeschooling resources that are also featured on the [Museum From Home](#) Page:

We've included our beloved Danbury school "newspapers" (created for third graders but appropriate for students through high school) cursive camp materials and several family based suggestions on activities and outside sources to supplement your student's social studies curriculum. The materials found here are for you all to enjoy, download and explore, with all the enthusiasm that we know our local students **always** bring to their museum field trips and museum presentations! We will be adding new digital content weekly through the spring for at home use.

If you have any questions, please reach out by emailing [b.guertin@danbury-ct.gov](mailto:b.guertin@danbury-ct.gov)



**Danbury Museum**  
@DanburyMuseum



M is for Main Street, Museums, and...our MUGS. Our mugs are personal artifacts that these days symbolize missing our friends and colleagues. We take our mug game v seriously and jealously guard our favorites.

[#MuseumAlphabet](#)

[#MuseumFromHome](#)

[#ThursdayThoughts](#)



## @DanburyMuseum Social Media

As part of our social media for the month of April, you'll remember we've been doing #MuseumAlphabet. For the most part, we've featured local landmarks and popular images. But for M, we took a different, slightly cheeky tack...M is for our Museum Mugs. Some of you know how vast our collection of coffee mugs is (we're all for sustainability!) and we each have our favorites that we guard assiduously.

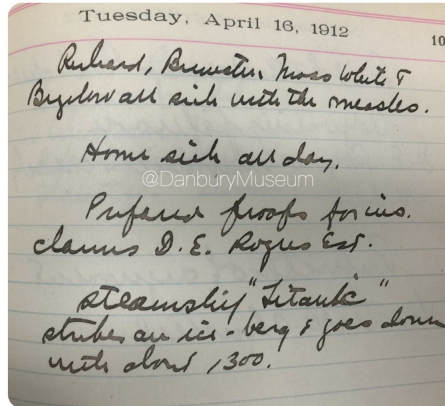
Missing out on our museum social media feeds? Click on the buttons below and we'll get you connected with us.





Danbury Museum  
@DanburyMuseum

#OTD in 1912. A page from an #ives family diary noting that the sons were sick with the measles and the steamship #Titanic had struck an ice-berg and gone down w/ about 1300. #DanburyCT #museumfromhome #hatcityhistory



Danbury Museum  
@DanburyMuseum

Day 16 of #Archive30 is #Advice. Don't discount smaller museums/archives! Everything's not digitized, so you'll have to put in the time on the microfilm, etc., but we have rich collections and you never know what or who you may find! #MuseumFromHome #ExploreYourArchive



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## So what does a Fire Department do during the COVID-19 pandemic?

By Geoff Herald

Well, during the last week area departments responded to many Emergency Medical Service (EMS) calls, calls for assistance with downed trees on sparking wires, activated fire alarms and smoke detectors, sounding carbon monoxide alarms, roads blocked by fallen trees, motor vehicle accidents, fires of various natures, and service calls across the spectrum. The fire service is the department you call when you are sure of what you have and when you don't know what is wrong.

Your fire service is a very different agency than even a decade ago. Most modern fire departments are what is known in the parlance of the industry, as an "all hazards" response agency. That means the department has trained and is equipped to respond to and address a multitude of emergencies. Besides the EMS responses, these may include below grade rescues, high angle rescues (for example removing a worker from a cell phone tower), hazardous material leaks and spills, animal rescues, ice rescues, water rescues, structural collapse, and oh yes, fires. Vehicle fires, brush fires, chemical fires, house fires, and electrical fires all require specialized training and equipment. Add in terrorism training responses and the fire service is nearly unrecognizable to that of fifty years ago. There are very few Fire departments that are purely a "fire" department today.

Fire departments in Connecticut normally respond to EMS response requests representing as much or more than 70 percent of their total response profile. Additionally, other responses such as motor vehicle accidents often have an EMS component, requiring firefighters to triage and then treat accident victims. Many fire services are first responders, meaning they are licensed under the State of Connecticut Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) to provide that first response medical service. Such departments often require their members to be certified as an Emergency Medical Technician or EMT. These departments usually work in conjunction with an ambulance service, frequently staffed by paramedics and EMTs. The higher certification of these paramedics allows them to provide a greater level of service and provide advanced care in the field.

During this pandemic, the Fire Service has adapted and evolved quickly to address the many concerns created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Three decades ago, during the AIDS crisis, the concept of "universal precautions" was a byword of first responders. That concept is now the word of the day in all of our EMS responses. Responders wearing masks, gloves, eye shields or goggles, gowns, and booties are common sights. The use of masks by the public is an outgrowth of this. These precautions are meant to protect the responders as well as the patients. Please recognize that should you request a response of first responders, these efforts are to guard against spreading the virus to any of the patients, family, or responders present.

May you all stay safe and practice "universal awareness." Wear a mask in public, wash your

hands, and stay as safe as you can. And when you hear sirens, send a quick thank you to the women and men on the front lines.

**Geoff Herald** is a 44 year veteran of the fire service. A Danbury resident, Geoff has served three departments as Fire Chief. He loves history and is currently serving as president of the Danbury Museum and Historical Society's Board of Trustees.



### Documenting COVID-19

At the Danbury Museum, we've been collecting and archiving items that document our city's past for **more than 75 years**. Our collection includes several buildings worth of archival materials as well artifacts that tell the tale(s) of our collective past, that inspire and inform the present and that we will be preserving for future scholars, researchers, students and Danburians.

We are currently living through a momentous, somber moment in our collective history. We need your help to document what is going on in your homes, at your jobs, and in communities across Connecticut. We want to hear your story. We want to know how you and your family are experiencing the current pandemic and “new normal.”

**Below are examples of what we’re looking for:**

**Writings** - letters, notes, emails, postcards, poems

**Signage** - images of window signs, directions, posted community information

**Photos** - of you, your family, your neighborhood, your street, YOUR Danbury!

Drawings, paintings, and other forms of art you’re creating and documenting

Short videos (limited to 500MB file size) for larger files please email to Patrick Wells, Research Specialist, at [p.wells@danbury-ct.gov](mailto:p.wells@danbury-ct.gov).

Please stay safe when documenting these historic times. Do not put yourself in danger when capturing photographs or videos.

**Why is this Important?**

The Danbury Museum collects material that documents the full range of our lives in Danbury, CT because...you INSPIRE us, you INSPIRE the future. Documenting our community response to COVID-19 is a way to preserve the daily struggles of our stay at home community, our work from home community, our students, our critical care and healthcare workers, our first responders and our essential workers. From every perspective, what you are doing right now matters, to us right now, and to future Danburians.

So, when you email Collections Manager, Michele Lee Amundsen at [m.amundsen@danbury-ct.gov](mailto:m.amundsen@danbury-ct.gov) or mail us your submissions to 43 Main Street, Danbury, CT 06810, please include any or all of the following information:

What else should we know about this object? Please explain who is in the photo, why you created this piece...basically all the information YOU would want to see to give context to a museum exhibition item or an archival file.

***Please know that:***

*By providing my material to the Danbury Museum & Historical Society Authority (DMHSA) I hereby give the DMHSA a royalty-free, non-exclusive, worldwide, perpetual, irrevocable, and fully sub-licensable license to copy, digitize, reproduce, edit, translate, create derivative works, distribute, and publicly display and perform certain materials described below. I agree that the DMHSA may add the material to the collection according to the DMHSA Collection Management Policy and to make it available to researchers in a manner consistent with the practices of the DMHSA. I agree that the DMHSA may utilize any medium or media now existing or that will exist in the future to achieve the above-described purposes.*

Thank YOU for entrusting the Danbury Museum with your memories, your stories, your art, your images. We take this responsibility seriously and will maintain your gift for future generations so they too may understand what it was like to be here, in Danbury, during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**other public service organizations. To help us continue doing the work we love--from home and from behind the scenes over the next few months--please consider making a donation. Your gift, regardless of size, is important to us as we regroup and continue to work toward eventually reopening to the public.**

[Donate here.](#)

[Become a member here.](#)

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**We'll keep in touch, and we hope you will, too. Be well, take care of yourselves, and we'll look forward to meeting here again next week.**



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