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Tulips in the museum garden, spring 2020.

Hello Friends!

TGIF! We're happy to see you all at this mid-point of May.

The Danbury Museum starting lineup of Guertin, Wells, and Amundsen continued their working from home winning streak this week. (Some of us might be missing baseball...) The webinars seemed to multiply in number, but once again they provided us with the seeds of good ideas for the coming days and months. And as with all challenges, opportunities have arisen during these uncertain days as well. In the coming weeks we have some exciting announcements and partnerships that we'll be sharing with you. We are so fortunate to have so many greater-Danbury community partners. Stay tuned...

This week, Bob Young shares the first piece in his series about Danbury and the Revolutionary War, setting the stage for why the British raided Danbury in 1777. And focusing on a different war, John O'Donnell's essay this week is on Danburian, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, and WWII historian, John Toland. Thank you, Bob and John, for your always informative and interesting contributions!

We know that many of you have been busy putting together puzzles at home and printing off and completing the puzzles Patrick has been creating. This week there is a Jumbled Streets puzzle up over at [Museum From Home](#) and we've also set up a [Jigsaw Planet](#) page so you can have all the joy of putting a puzzle together (on any digital device) without having one take over your dining room table! We'll add more iconic Danbury images over the coming weeks, so check back now and then and see what's new.

A couple of other reminders--great Dad and Grad gifts can be found at our [online shop at TEEPUBLIC](#)! The museum gets a cut of everything purchased, so you not only get some swell Danbury merch, you're supporting the museum, too. If you know of a student interested in a Virtual Internship at the museum this summer, please direct them to our [Museum From Home](#) page where all the info is available.

We know you know the drill, but if you see the three little dots or get the *view entire message* prompt, please click so you don't miss anything!

Keep well,

Brigid Guertin (Executive Director, City Historian, Fearless Leader, Headmistress of The Guertin School)

Patrick Wells (Research Specialist, Social Media Manager, Denizen of the Digital Realm)

Michele Lee Amundsen (Collections Manager, Twitter Tattler, Tough but Fair Newsletter Editor)



The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, 17 June 1775. (John Trumbull)

Danbury and the Revolutionary War

By Bob Young

To understand why the British felt compelled to sack Danbury in 1777, we first must look back to 1775, 180 miles to the north and 180 miles to the east.

Lexington and Concord battles occurred in April 1775, and they are still considered the opening battles of the American Revolution. After successfully defending the stores in Concord from the British, (and harassing them all the way back to Boston), the colonists decided to press on while they still had the British on the run. The following month, Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys succeeded in capturing Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York. Despite being a rag-tag band of local militias, the colonists now felt empowered to tackle the problem of the British occupation of Boston.

In June 1775, the British were occupying some of the highlands to the north of Boston, in present-day Charlestown. Upon hearing this, the colonists planned to halt the British at a place called Bunker Hill.

On the night of June 16, 1775, a force of 1,200 colonists occupied Bunker Hill as well as Breed's Hill. They chose Breed's Hill as the point to build their redoubts and guard against attack. The next morning the British, realizing that the colonists now occupied the two hills, attacked the fortifications. Although the battle was technically a British victory it helped to galvanize the colonial militia.

During the winter months, the British established firmer control on Boston and its residents. Gathered colonial militia in Roxbury and Cambridge were unable to mount an attack on the British and Washington was now in charge of the militia. Through the existing spy network, it was found that the British did not occupy the hills of Dorchester, apparently assuming that they stood between the colonists and this high ground.

In one of the boldest and most strenuous moves of the colonial army to that point, a number of cannon—complete with carriages, cannonballs, and powder—were removed from Fort Ticonderoga and hauled through the dense forests of upstate New York and western Massachusetts. Washington's men, led by Henry Knox, moved the cannon to the south of Boston then up to Dorchester Heights. On the morning of March 19, 1776, the British awoke to the sight of many cannon on the hill, aimed at Boston. After deliberation, British General Howe decided to leave Boston for the safety of Nova Scotia.

Once in control of Boston, Washington moved a large part of his troops to New York to defend the port, realizing that it would be excellent anchorage for the British. Apparently General Howe thought the same thing for in July 1776, the British fleet arrived in New York harbor and over the next two months proceeded to force Washington and his troops further and further north until the decisive British victory at White Plains in October. Washington and the remnants of his army were forced into Pennsylvania.

Morale among the troops was at its lowest after the multitude of defeats. To add to their problems, with the British now occupying New York and the lower Hudson River, there were minimal supplies arriving, including very little food. It became quite apparent to Washington that he had to establish a secure supply line to and from New England. With the routes involving the Boston Post Road being under British control, there needed to be a crossing point established on the Hudson River to once again get the flow of supplies moving.

It so happened that the Army established a military hospital in Danbury during and after the Battle of White Plains. There existed a road network from Hartford to Danbury, as well as from Danbury to Fishkill. Washington determined that Danbury should be a major collecting point for supplies, and it was this decision that set the stage for the British attack in the spring of 1777.

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. Bob has been working on his family's genealogy since he was 18.



The Battle of Bunker Hill by Howard Pyle, 1897.



Conference on Research on the Second World War

John Toland, Danburian

By John O'Donnell

In the aftermath of World War II, there was a great surge in what may be described as popular history works which proved enormously successful with readers. There were three major figures in this movement: William L. Shirer, Cornelius Ryan, and John Toland. These men all started in journalism and had no formal training in history, but each took their journalistic experience and parlayed it into phenomenally productive authorial careers. William L. Shirer, who was in Germany in the late 1930s and early 1940s reporting from Berlin, ultimately wrote an historical work in 1960 entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. The book was a bestseller and I read it when I was quite young and was entranced by his telling of this story. It kindled in me a lifelong devotion to the study of World War II history. I have kept reading books of this genre and I never tire of the subject. Cornelius Ryan came from a similar background and wrote *The Longest Day: 6 June 1944 D-Day* in 1959 to great acclaim and made into a movie in 1962. Ryan is buried in Ridgebury Cemetery.

Now to the third member of our triumvirate. John Toland likewise came from a journalism background. He was born in La Crosse, Wisconsin, in 1912, but soon came to Connecticut and worked at the Norwalk Tire Factory to earn enough money to attend Phillips Exeter Academy. After graduating from Williams College, Toland attended the Yale School of Drama. During the Great Depression, he rode the rails --along with drifters and hobos--for about three years. He wanted to be a writer, but his success was delayed until much later in life. He wrote plays about the hobos he had travelled with, but these were not performed. He kept writing plays, though none of them were produced. But when he came to write his histories, his drama training stood him in good stead: he wrote, "I look upon each of my histories as a drama." This was one of the cornerstones of his appeal to the public. He served in the Army Air Corps during the Second World War.

He wrote prodigiously after the war with plays, short stories, and novels being part of his output, but he did not sell his first story until 1954. As you can see, he was not a man who was easily discouraged. Toland's life took a major turn for the better when he wrote a story about dirigibles for *LOOK* Magazine. The article was well-received and he decided to expand it into a book titled *Ships of the Air* (1957) and this volume launched his career. In 1961 he described himself as being about as big a failure as a man can be. He certainly turned his life around in spectacular fashion.

Toland's popularity was largely due to the methodology that he employed in researching and writing his works. His research involved interviewing the many men and women who were still alive and had played key roles in the events he wrote about. He was a very persuasive man and was able to convince reluctant people to talk to him. It made a major difference in his work and people really responded to it. He won the Pulitzer Prize for his work *The Rising Sun* in 1970, and was the first historian to include the Japanese viewpoint. As an added bonus, he wound up marrying (his second wife) Toshiko Matsumara who had served as his researcher and interpreter for this work. He moved to Danbury in 1968 and lived on Long Ridge Road until his death in 2004. I had the great pleasure of turning the tables on him when I worked at the Danbury Library and interviewed him in 1997. He was charming, gregarious, intelligent, and as you would expect, a great storyteller. It was one of the great pleasures of my life to be able to talk to him.

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!



Winslow Homer, *The Fog Warning*, 1885 (MFA Boston)

Museums From Your Couch

Comfy loungewear? Check. Bevvie of choice? Check. Shall we decamp? We thought we'd stay closer to home this week and look over some places we could visit one of these days.

First stop, Boston. The [Museum of Fine Arts Boston](#) has such a wide-ranging collection--there's literally something for everyone. Check out their collections and immerse yourself in art, fashion, and sculpture.

While we're in Boston, how about a visit to the [Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum](#)? You probably know it from the infamous Gardner Art Heist in March of 1990 (and that's an engrossing yarn all by itself), but the museum's interior is such an oasis, and you can "walk through" without any of the crowds!

It'd be a shame not to visit [Harvard Art Museums in Cambridge](#)--we're so close! And we can visit the Fogg, the Sackler, and Busch-Reisinger all without leaving the comforts of home.

It's amazing to have these virtual tours and resources to remind us of places we will visit when we're able. We miss museums, and galleries, and exhibits, and you can bet we're looking forward to being actual visitors again.

And if you're interested in more John Toland, here's [John Toland on C-Span Booknotes with Brian Lamb](#).

Do any virtual touring? Are you reading up on John Toland or watching *The Longest Day*? Let us know! We'd love to see what you're exploring.

Danbury Museum Social Media

We always enjoy getting to engage with our colleagues at the National Archives when they host #ArchiveHashtagParty events on Twitter. You would not believe the paperclip, cellophane tape, rubber band, and glue horrors that were shared during #ArchivesHorrorStories. (We offered our own cellophane tape nightmare into evidence.) We also celebrated Mother's Day with a small piece on Mary Bull and her work with Danbury's children. And we remembered Frederick P Ellis and all fallen police officers for National Police Week.

Not following us? C'mon, we promise some good stories...click one of the buttons below!



Danbury Museum
@DanburyMuseum

Excuse us, but do you have a moment to hear about our nemesis and archenemy, the evil-doer ((cellophane tape))?

#ArchivesHorrorStories

#whywecannotnovenicethings

#museumfromhome #MuseumWeek



Danbury Museum
@DanburyMuseum

On #MothersDay 🌸 we also honor Mary Bull. The “Danbury Home for Destitute and Homeless Children” was built in the 1850s by Mary Bull whose lifelong concern for her cause started when she took destitute youngsters into her own home. #MuseumFromHome #hatcityhistory





Danbury Museum
@DanburyMuseum

#TBT for #NationalPoliceWeek to May 24, 2018... We honor the memory of Danbury Constable Frederick P Ellis. He served our community in WWI, returned home, and became a career Danbury Firefighter. 1/2 #MuseumFromHome #haticityhistory @DanburyFireDept @Danbury_PD



When Ellis retired, he took an active role as a Danbury Town Constable. Tragically, he died in 1964, while engaged in Constable duties, serving his community at the scene of a massive hat factory fire. #NationalPoliceWeek #MuseumFromHome



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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.

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 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.

The COVID-19 health crisis has had a strong impact on the Danbury Museum, not unlike 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.](#)

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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