

DM | DANBURY MUSEUM



Farmer John says...

Hello Friends!

As the song goes...

"But it's a long, long while
From May to December
And the days grow short
When you reach September..."

We're happy to see you all again and hope that despite the current challenges, you and yours are keeping well.

This month, as we wind up the harvest season, we've been thinking about food. Comfort food, warming beverages, and tasty treats. We'll share some recipes—new and old—including one for The White Turkey Inn's "Danbury Cocktail" as well as some 19th century delicacies from the Danbury Fair, on our [Museum From Home](#) page for your October dining and cooking inspiration.

And we've had our talented columnists write about food, too, each from their own unique perspective. Bob Young writes about feeding an army...quite literally; Dr Tom MacGregor writes about the "Year With No Leaves" thanks to very hungry caterpillars (the dreaded Gypsy Moth invasion of 1981); and John O'Donnell put us in mind of the celebratory season and no one enjoyed or wrote about it like Charles Dickens. Thank you again to Bob, Tom, and John for their contributions!

If you haven't stopped by the museum campus yet to visit the Fair that John Built outdoor exhibit (curated so beautifully by Elaine Lagarto) or the 1918 Pandemic exhibit, the weather is perfect these days for some socially distant viewing! The Legend of Johnny Appleseed story that is scattered throughout the garden is perfect to read to--or with--your kids. If you visit, please take a photo of yourselves and tag us--we'd love to see you enjoying our gardens and exhibits.

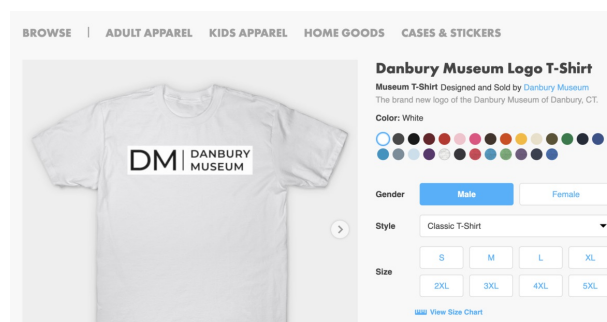
We're in the early stages of planning for The 2021 Hat City Ball. Mark your calendars for Friday, February 12, 2021, and stay tuned to social media and this newsletter for upcoming (exciting!) Hat City Ball info.

Keep well,

Brigid Guertin (Executive Director, City Historian, Fearless Leader)

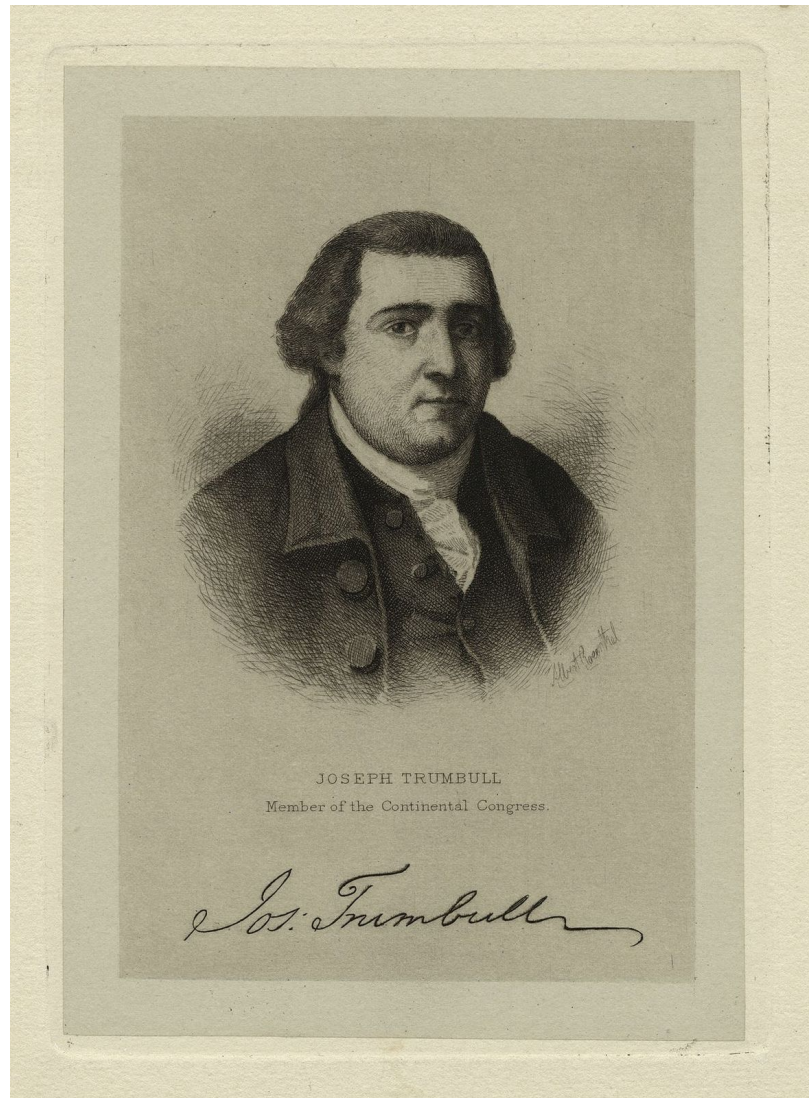
Patrick Wells (Research Specialist, Social Media Manager, Puzzle Master and Plague Doctor)

Michele Lee Amundsen (Collections Manager, Newsletter Nudge, Piano Proselytizer)



For you early holiday shoppers, don't forget that our [TeePublic store](#) has all your Danbury-themed gifts covered! Any of our designs can be put on a t-shirt, a mug, a mask...and many other options

as well. Check out our storefront—the museum gets a cut of each sale, so gift your friends and family some stylish swag, support the Danbury Museum, and sport your Danbury pride this holiday season.



Joseph Trumbull

FEEDING COLONIAL MILITIA UNITS

By Robert Young

In Colonial America, service in the militia was compulsory. Every able-bodied male within certain age limits (usually 16-50) had to bear arms and train, and could be mustered into actual military service if necessary. The previously mentioned able-bodied male reported to his designated station with his own arms, clothing, and provisions. At his station, he received his dietary ration...uncooked.

The diet of the soldier varied with the time of year, the cost of food, the value of the currency, and the location of the troops. In the opening days of the Revolution, militia units from Connecticut were the best fed troops around Boston.

Each man received three-quarters of a pound of pork or one pound of beef, one pound of bread or flour, and three pints of beer or cider. Once a week, he received rice or one pint of Indian meal, six ounces of butter, three pints of peas or beans or other vegetables. In season, he also received milk, molasses, vinegar, coffee, chocolate, and sugar. Vinegar was to accompany all troops because it was believed to stave off disease in hot weather. It was also mixed with molasses and water to make a “refreshing” summertime drink.

The commissary general for Connecticut was Joseph Trumbull, who would later be appointed commissary general for the entire army by General Washington. The cost of this “Connecticut” diet was eleven cents per man per day— equivalent to \$6.60 per day in today’s currency.

The provided diet was more than adequate for calories, protein, and minerals. It was, however, quite deficient in vitamins. As such, there was a constant problem with scurvy among the troops due to a significant absence of Vitamin C in the diet. This factor compounded the effects of other illnesses such as “camp fever,” typhus, dysentery, and wound infections.

Providing water was another major problem for the troops. It was known that water was best obtained from flowing rivers that were relatively free of impurities. Lake and pond water was unsafe unless it flowed rapidly or was replenished by springs. Most all sources of water would be considered unsafe by today’s standards.

Troops on the move created a problem with a continued supply of edible foods. Most meats were salt cured to be transported for many days. Vegetables were considered an important addition to the diet, particularly in the summer. These might include cabbage, potatoes, onions, turnips, beans, peas, and rice. Many vegetables boiled with salted meats produced an acidity that curbed the onset of scurvy. If the army went where fresh fruits were available, they were also added to the diet. A unit with plenty of fresh fruit had a significantly lower incidence of scurvy.

Harsh winter conditions proved a major impediment to procuring sufficient foods for the troops. Salted meats were in short supply and fresh vegetables were few and far between. The only reliable sources were what farmers had in their root cellars. Add to this the difficulties in transporting goods in winter and you end up with famine-like conditions such as those seen at Valley Forge.

The transporting of food to the troops was also a vital necessity of the commissary, as was the supplying of hard goods (muskets, black powder, saddles, boots, etc.) The need of the army for food played an important role in the burning of Danbury in 1777, when large quantities of food stored in the Episcopal church were dragged out onto the road and burned.

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.



Charles Dickens and Food & Drink

By John O'Donnell

The celebration of food and drink has been an integral part of our story-telling process from time immemorial. One of the greatest writers who relied on including these elements in his novels and stories was Charles Dickens. He was able to seamlessly include these elements in his entire

oeuvre, drawing his readers in and sharing the exuberance that he felt about these key elements in our lives. I will share two instances of these celebrations in his work, but his work is peppered with them. One is from *A Christmas Carol* and the other is from *The Pickwick Papers*. I will also note how these celebrations not only permeated his fiction, but were also an important component of his own lifestyle.

Charles Dickens had a very rocky start in life. His father was sent to the Marshalsea debtor's prison while he was still a very young man. He had to live on his own and was employed in a blacking (polish) factory pasting labels on cans of boot polish. He had to fend for himself and one of the first things he had to make sure of was that he had enough to eat and drink. He had a precarious existence for a good period of time, but was a very resourceful young man. He rented a room with an old family friend and had to make sure he laid in enough supplies. He later wrote about carefully secreting his supplies of cheese and bread in his room. He learned the value and celebratory nature of food and drink very early on in his life. After he had received his pay, he went to a nearby pub since it was very close to his birthday and ordered the establishment's finest ale. The publican could hardly see him from behind the bar since Charles was so short but did serve him. Dickens was certain it was not the best ale of the house, but drank it anyway. The publican's wife came out from behind the bar to talk to Charles and wished him a happy birthday and gave him a hug and a kiss. This was the beginning of Dicken's enjoyment and pleasure of partaking of food and drink with family and friends.

Dicken's enjoyment of these things naturally spilled over into his writing. I will cite two instances in his writings but the list could be expanded exponentially. The first one is from *A Christmas Carol* and has become one of the most iconic scenes in our literature. In *A Christmas Carol* (1843) we are given the story of the rehabilitation of the miser Scrooge. One of the results of publishing this tale was that Dickens revived the celebration of Christmas and became known as the man who invented Christmas. One of the key components of this revival was the celebratory nature of including food and drink in these festivities. The spirits who visit Scrooge are able to alter him from a bitter, cynical, greedy, and anti-social old man into a generous, caring, and sociable person. There are several indicators of this transformation. The first one I would note is Scrooge's insistence on waking up on Christmas morn a sending a boy to the poulterer's shop to buy the largest turkey available in order that he might send it anonymously to his clerk's (Bob Cratchit) family to enjoy for Christmas dinner. A second key indicator that Scrooge has changed for the better is that on the day after Christmas, Scrooge, who has treated Bob abominably, sits down with him to discuss his future working with Scrooge. Scrooge tells him he is going to raise his salary and they will discuss other improvements in Cratchit's lot over a bowl of Smoking Bishop. This was a Victorian drink which was popular in England at Christmas time. It consisted of port wine, red wine, lemons or oranges, sugar, and spices. The citrus fruit was roasted to carmelize it and the ingredients then warmed together. The name comes from the shape of the traditional bowl in which it was served. It was shaped like a bishop's mitre and had been served in medieval guilds and universities. It is clear that Scrooge has undergone a huge transformation by his treatment of the Cratchit family and of his wider circle of acquaintances as well.

The second example I would use as an indicator of Dicken's love of the celebratory nature of food and drink is his first novel *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836) whose main character in the inimitable Samuel Pickwick. He and a hand-picked group of his friends travel across England and London and have a humorous series of adventures. Pickwick is a host of enormous celebrations throughout the novel. One great indicator of this are the celebrations that take place at the George and Vulture Inn (a real pub in London which Dickens frequented and is still in existence today). The pub is mentioned twenty times in the novel as a great forum for Pickwick and his friends to enjoy each other's company amidst copious quantities of food and drink (frequently including barrels of oysters). Dickens surely knew how to celebrate the good life

in his fiction as well as in his own life.

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!

(Editor's note: If you'd like to make a big pot of your own Smoking Bishop, here's a great recipe with added insight! <https://toriavey.com/toris-kitchen/drinking-with-charles-dickens-the-smoking-bishop/>)



The Year With No Leaves

By Thomas MacGregor, Ph.D.
UConn Advanced Master Gardener

Every autumn, the color change of the leaves brings tourists (“leaf-peepers”) to Danbury and points north to see dazzling displays of oranges and reds. However, forty autumns ago, the colorful foliage was subdued; the gypsy moth caterpillar had summered in the Candlewood Lake area and defoliated 1.5 million acres of oaks, maple, birches, and other trees.

Female gypsy moths (*Lymantria dispar*) laid egg masses of 500 or more eggs in the nooks and crannies of tree bark and rock walls in August of 1980. The winter of 1980-81 produced half the snow amount of other years and the spring of '81 was unusually dry. These eggs hatched in early May and tiny, hairy caterpillars emerged, migrating upwards toward the tree tops looking for food. After consuming a hearty meal of leaves, the caterpillars spun long silken threads so that a strong wind would transport them to a new tree. This mode of transportation, referred to as “ballooning,” is common for many caterpillar species. Despite being introduced in the late 1860s in Medford, MA, from France for silk production, the members of this species generally produce only a single silk thread each day. They do not produce a silk web.

Once located in a favorable spot (white oaks were the preferred 5-star tree hosts), each caterpillar ate leaves voraciously at night and dropped leaf fragments and bead-like excrement called “frass” (although many in Danbury called it a more colorful name) onto decks, patios, and driveways, leaving a mess to be cleaned up each morning. Caterpillars dropped to the ground during the day but crawled back up the trunk of the tree at dusk for another feeding, getting longer and fatter as the days progressed. Taking advantage of this daily survival pattern, homeowners used sticky tape applied faced out around the tree trunks, burlap anchored with twine or aluminum foil spread with Vaseline, and later a commercial product called “Tanglefoot” to prevent the caterpillars from reaching the tree tops. This physical control of capturing hundreds of gypsy moth caterpillars every day was disgusting, but many ornamental trees were saved by these barriers. Some trees

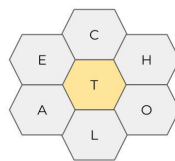
still bear the remnant bands on their barks forty years later. In the early invasion, there were few biological controls that could safely be sprayed over such a large acreage of infected trees. Also, the age of the caterpillar determined the ultimate susceptibility to any sprays. Older caterpillars (with yellow markings on their head) were not susceptible to biological controls, whereas younger ones (having just black markings) were. In the natural state in 1981, there were eventually so many caterpillars that they succumbed to a viral infection brought on by overpopulation.

Several years later, the scientists at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station discovered that a fungus, *Entomophaga maimaiga*, was a natural control for the gypsy moth caterpillar. Nature always attempts to have a balance. However, this fungus requires a wet spring through early summer. Fortunately, in 1982 and 1983 there was above average precipitation in the Danbury region, and the gypsy moths were controlled. For the past 3 years, a drought in eastern Connecticut has resulted in state foresters and home owners battling a million-acre outbreak of gypsy moths reminiscent of our battle in 1981.

Such outbreaks demonstrate the complex interplay between climate and nature even within small microcosms, such as Danbury.

After 33 years at Boehringer Ingelheim, **Dr. Tom** (UConn '85) retired to his garden and piano.

Danbury Museum "Buzzwords"



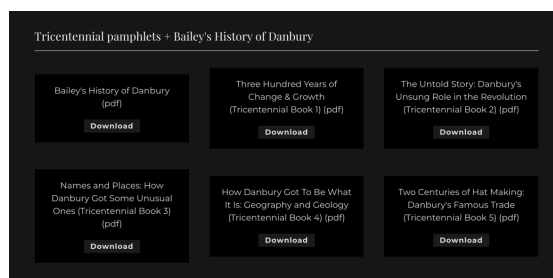
How to Play

Create words using letters from the hive.

- Words must contain at least 4 letters.
- Words must include the center letter.
- Our word list does not include words that are obscure, hyphenated, or proper nouns.
- No casing either, sorry.
- Letters can be used more than once.

Score points to increase your rating.

- 4-letter words are worth 1 point each.
- Longer words earn 1 point per letter.
- Each puzzle includes at least one "pangram" which uses every letter. These are worth 7 extra points!



Puzzlemaster Patrick has made a really great new Buzzwords puzzle on our Museum from Home Page. You'll want to check it out and see how well you do! Stimulate your brain and visit the [#museumfromhome](#) page for lots of great puzzles, activities, and PDFs of exclusively Danbury content. Our [Museum From Home](#) page is really one stop shopping for a lot of Danbury history content. From Bailey's *History of Danbury* to the Tricentennial pamphlets and more, we've got you covered.

There's also an entire page dedicated to you jigsaw puzzle fans over at [Jigsaw Planet](#) and we've put up another classic Danbury image for your puzzling pleasure.

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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.](#)

It's hardly revolutionary. . .



Thank YOU for helping to keep staff & visitors safe!

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 in October.



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