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## **Hello, Friends,**

It's cliché to say, but this year has absolutely flown by and here we all are, somehow in December.

Thank you for your support and advocacy in this past year, it has been much appreciated. We have great programming and new ideas for 2023, and we'll need your voices, your assistance, and your advocacy on our behalf more than ever. Your stalwart support of the museum's mission makes all of this possible.

We'll be hosting more Covid vaccine clinics for shots and boosters

with the [CT Department of Public Health van](#) in December, too, so please watch our social media and website for times and dates--the crew from Griffin Health has been fantastic to work with!

Closing out this year, we'd be remiss in not thanking our excellent essayists, Dr Tom MacGregor and John O'Donnell for the thoughtful and engaging pieces they've shared with us all this year--we are most grateful. John writes this month about "The Carol Philosophy" combining Dickens, WWII, and even the Mayo Clinic!

From all of us, to all of you, we wish you a very happy and healthy holiday season full of friends, family, and fun!

P.S. You can always shop (24/7! From your comfy couch in your favorite pyjamas!) online at our [TeePublic shop](#) or our [Spring shop](#) for all things Danbury.

[Brigid Guertin](#) (*Executive Director, City Historian*)

[Patrick Wells](#) (*Research Specialist, Social Media Manager*)

[Michele Lee Amundsen](#) (*Collections Manager, Newsletter Editor*)

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*Archibald McIndoe sculpture by Martin Jennings*

## **The Carol Philosophy Exemplified**

By John O'Donnell

Since *A Christmas Carol* was published by Charles Dickens in 1843, it has become an integral part of our Christmas celebrations. It can be argued that it revived the Christmas tradition and made it vital once more. It has led analysts of the story to distill the lessons of this work into what they call the "Carol Philosophy." The main elements of this philosophy are altruism, charity, and redemption. It is a potent combination of attributes

which are rarely achieved by one person successfully. But we can look at the life of one particular person who readily possessed and used these qualities in an extraordinary way.

Recently a colleague sent me a great article from *The Guardian* a new statue of Virginia Woolf specifically and about literary statues in general. One of the sculptors mentioned in the article is Martin Jennings who has done great sculptures of literary figures including Charles Dickens and George Orwell. I started researching Jennings and this led me to an earlier article about him and to a story about a World War Two figure who encapsulated the "Carol Philosophy" in his own life to an exemplary degree.

His name was Archibald McIndoe and he was born in New Zealand on May 4, 1900. He graduated from the University of Otago Medical School in 1923 and received advanced training in the United States after winning a fellowship to the Mayo Clinic. After the fellowship ended, McIndoe was appointed an assistant surgeon at the Mayo Clinic and established himself as a very competent specialist. He went to London in 1930 and through the efforts of a relative, Sir Harold Gillies (a noted plastic surgeon in World War One) he was able to join Gillies' practice and received training in plastic surgery. He quickly became a leading figure in the field of plastic surgery.

With the outbreak of World War Two in 1939, McIndoe took up a position at Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead, Sussex, where he established a Center for Plastic and Jaw Surgery. The hospital treated airmen with facial disfigurements and serious burns. During the Battle of Britain, thirty-five horribly burnt fighter pilots were sent to McIndoe for treatment. Standard treatment of the time for these types of burns was to cover the wounds with tannic acid. The theory was that this would dry out the affected area and allow the dead skin to be removed. Unfortunately, this

process was extremely painful and left the patients with extensive scarring. McIndoe came up with a better solution. He noticed that burnt pilots who bailed out in the sea were less scarred than others. He developed the practice of bathing patients in saline. This was a much gentler treatment process, with the saline solution improving healing times and survival rates for patients with extensive burns. But his contributions did not stop there.

McIndoe also developed a form of treatment which emphasized rehabilitation. He encouraged his boys to form a "Guinea Pig Club" and made sure they retained their own proud identity by wearing their service uniforms instead of hospital convalescent uniforms. Particular emphasis was placed on a patient's social reintegration back into normal life. "The Boss" or "Maestro," as McIndoe was known, would regularly join patients in social events inside the hospital, take them out for drinks and encourage them to get out into the community. The effect was amazing. Relationships between patients and nurses bloomed. Many went on to marriage. Others met women from East Grinstead, a place the "Guinea Pigs" referred to as the town that never stared.

The men called themselves "Guinea Pigs" because McIndoe had to invent plastic surgery techniques to cope with horrific injuries to the faces and hands of airmen. Black humor ruled the day: when the Club was formed, which was a social, morale-boosting and most frequently drinking society, an airman with no legs was appointed treasurer-since he could not run off with the funds. Bill "Fingers" Foxley, so called because he had none left, became secretary, ensuring that very few tedious minutes would be taken.

Now to return to Martin Jennings and his sculptures. Because of his skills, he was commissioned in 2013 to design a sculpture of Archibald McIndoe. Because of a strange coincidence this request came to astonish Jennings.

His own father was one of the terribly burned servicemen who had become a member of the "Guinea Pig Club" and was treated by McIndoe. He had been involved in a tank battle in Holland which had resulted in a terrible explosion within the tank, leaving him with serious burn injuries. McIndoe found him lying in a hospital bed bandaged from head to toe, only a hole for his mouth showing. He ordered him to be moved to his own base for treatment. Martin Jennings conducted research for the sculpture at the Queen Victoria Hospital and saw for the first time his father's medical records and was profoundly moved by this experience.

The resulting sculpture shows the surgeon as a fatherly figure placing his hands on the shoulders of a young, disfigured airman who will soon be operated on. Jennings modeled the clawed hands of the airman on the hands of his own father. His father, after years of treatment, took up teaching, married, and became a headmaster. His sculptor son is one of eleven children and he says about McIndoe: "Without Mac none of us might be here."

**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!**



*Sir Archibald McIndoe toasts a former patient and his bride on their wedding day. The photograph was taken in England in August 1947.*



*Cursive Campers creating their signatures.*

Beginning on #GivingTuesday, and extending through the end of the year, we're asking you to consider a donation to increase the accessibility of our popular and nationally-recognized Cursive Camp.

Not only are we training the next generation of historians and researchers, (very little 19th-20th century handwritten

correspondence is transcribed/digitized) but cursive writing connects generations making family recipes and old love letters available to all. If you don't write in cursive yourself, reading it is that much more difficult.

So this summer, we'd like to create equitable access to our Cursive Camp--making it free for as many students as possible. Your donations as we close out the year will help make this possible.

Donations can be made on our website at [DanburyMuseum.org](https://DanburyMuseum.org) or by check, if you prefer. Have questions about your business or company sponsoring a camper or having your child attend Cursive Camp this summer? Reach out to us at 203-743-5200!

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The Danbury Museum will be closed on December 23-24 & 28-31. We will open with regular hours on Wednesday, January 4, 2023. We wish you all healthy, happy, and joyful holidays.

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# Free Tours!

Thanks to a generous grant from the Danbury Cultural Commission, we are able to offer FREE tours of the Danbury Museum's historic buildings at 43 Main Street and the Charles Ives Birthplace.

Tours are Fridays & Saturdays, from September 10 through December 17, 2022.

Advance registration is required, please book via Eventbrite or [DanburyMuseum.org](http://DanburyMuseum.org)



*Free Tours All This Autumn!*

## Save The Date!

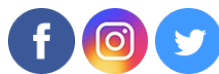


Friday, March 10, 2023  
@ the Amber Room Colonnade

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