

DM | DANBURY MUSEUM



Happy Independence Day!

Hello Friends!

Welcome to summer 2023! We're ready to dive in with events, camp, and more!

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the opening of our new photographic exhibit. It was lovely to see visitors enjoying and spending time looking at and discussing the photos. The additional online component, this month featuring photos by Ruth H Mallory, is up on our [Exhibit Extras](#) page.

If you see a few new faces around the museum, it's because we have four college interns and two high school interns for the summer to help us with tours, archival and material culture projects, video archiving, and more.

Having the assistance of these very capable young people is so important for us during the summer as we are incredibly busy with camps, programs, walk-in visitors and researchers, and other museum work; they really lighten the load for museum staff.

Summer events to look forward to:

We have a full slate of outdoor concerts this year (Fridays June 30, July 28, and August 25) featuring the musical stylings of Billy Michael. We're so excited to welcome such a popular and talented performer. On Friday, June 30, the concert will be at 5:30 and the theme will be "part of the 4th of July universe--patriotic music from 1776 right up through the Korean War!" Bring your friends and your lawn chairs and enjoy an alfresco concert in the museum gardens. (And if you haven't been in our gardens recently, you'll want to visit while everything is at its peak and vibrantly colorful. We are always grateful for the work done by the Danbury Garden Club Civic Committee.)

As with the past couple of summers, we're participating in CT Humanities "[Summer at the Museum](#)" program. This additional funding allows us to open up our tour schedule and have more availability throughout the summer months. We'll be offering tours (of both the Historic Buildings on the Main Street campus and the Charles Ives Birthplace) Wednesday through Saturday through September 2. We appreciate booking in advance, and ask that everyone register via [Eventbrite](#). All tours are FREE and available to all.

Some of you missed out on Eric Chandler's last visit, and we're so pleased to welcome him back to present his program "The Intolerable Acts" on Saturday, July 8, at 2pm. The program is FREE and open to all, it will be held in Huntington Hall.

All of us are very excited to have Cursive Camp back this summer and we'll be busy with camp and campers the week of July 17-21.

The last day of camp, Friday, July 21, will also feature a meet and greet with one of Connecticut's most famous pigs, Gilbert the Party Pig! Join us from 11-12 and take pictures with Gilbert and his sister Meadow and learn all kinds of fun pig facts, too.

And once again we are pleased to have John O'Donnell writing an essay this month, showcasing some of the stories of the amazing photographers whose work we are featuring in our new exhibit. *"Of a Place & Time: The Art of Danbury Photography."* Thank you again to John for his thoughtful contributions.

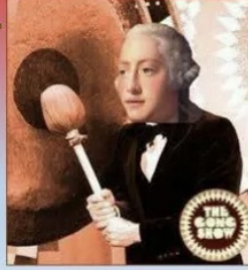
Stay cool and we'll look forward to meeting again next month!

Brigid Guertin

Patrick Wells

Michele Lee Amundsen

The Intolerable Acts: The 'Gong Show' of British/American Colonial Policy



“Be a king,” said Princess Augusta of Saxe-Goethe to her son George, newly crowned George III of England in 1751. In that, as in many matters, George listened to his mother. She, in turn, listened to advice from Lord George Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville, and Secretary of State for the Colonies. As did so many who had held that position before him, George III misunderstood the nature of the transplanted Englishmen who populated England’s New World colonies. A long history of heavy handedness and punitive measures on the part of Crown and Parliament set into motion a series of diplomatic and commercial blunders that finally drove the 13 breakaway colonies to declare for independence.

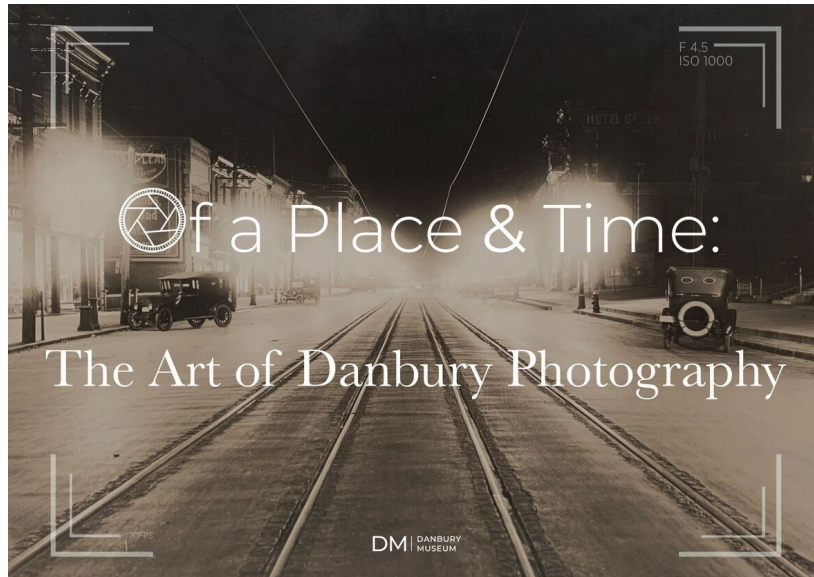
Talk and power point. Gong not included.

Presenter bio:

Eric Chandler is retired from a 30+ year career as an underwriter for a leading land title insurance company. He has been involved in American Revolutionary War Living History since 1974. He has portrayed infantry, light infantry, whale-boat raider, and mounted and dismounted dragoons. He is currently serving his fourth term as a member of the Norwalk Historical Commission, sits on the Norwalk Historical Society Board of Directors as well as the Board of Directors for the recreated Sheldon’s Horse, 2nd Regiment Continental Light Dragoons for which he serves as lieutenant and adjutant.



Popular presenter Eric Chandler returns to the Danbury Museum! We know some of you missed his last program (due to an error by the newsletter editor!) but he's coming back with another great program. Join us at 2pm on Saturday, July 8, for a FREE program that is open to all!



New exhibit open Wednesday through Saturday, 12-4. And visit the online extra, too!



African American Baseball Team by Edward Ritton

A Photographic Exhibition and a Trinity of Danbury Photographers (Plus One)

By John O'Donnell

The Danbury Museum & Historical Society is currently having an exhibition entitled *Of a Place & Time: The Art of Danbury Photography*. This exhibition, which will run until December, is

showcasing the Danbury Museum's incredible collection of photographs. Each month we will be adding an online component that will explore a separate facet of our photography collection. I first became really aware of the range and power of this collection when I was working at the Danbury Library as a reference librarian who specialized in local history. A very frequent issue was that a patron needed a brief introduction to the history of Danbury. I would recommend several sources but the first would always be *As We Were: A Pictorial Remembrance of Old Danbury*, edited by Evelyn Durgy (1977) which was published by the Danbury Museum. The book is a superb blend of text and photographs as it takes you through the various periods of Danbury history. It was a powerful lesson for me of the importance of adding a photographic component to text which enriches and gives a greater context to the history that you are seeking.

Danbury has been blessed with a great group of men and women who were particularly adept at the art of photography. We will look at a trinity of immensely gifted photographers who were able to capture and record for us the people, places, and history of Danbury from the 1850s on. It behooves you to come and see these photographs as well as following the online component. These photographs are magnificent and will lead you to a deeper understanding of the history of your city.

The first photographer we will look at is Edward Ritton (1823-1892). After graduation from school, he became a teacher himself. Next, he took up the study of landscape painting and later portrait painting to add to his income. He moved to New York City and became a full-time artist there. He had been a painter for twelve years when he became interested in the daguerreotype process in portraiture which was an incredible

advance. This led him to become a photographer and he achieved great success. He came to Danbury in 1844 and opened one of the first galleries in the city and stayed there for the rest of his life.

He quickly established himself as a very competent photographer who was admired by the community for his evident abilities in the photography business. Here is an 1851 advertisement for his business:

Edward D. Ritton, Daguerreotypist

Rooms over Wm H. Clark's store, Main St. Correct likenesses taken in clear weather from a large sky-light window; at all hours from 8 AM to 5 PM. Children taken in clear from 10 till 12. No likenesses but good ones allowed to be taken from this room. Landscape views, sick or deceased persons, taken at short notice. All pictures warrantied.

One of his most famous photographs is of an African American baseball team which was taken around 1880. This photograph shows twenty-three men wearing suits, sitting and standing, one holding a baseball bat. This photograph is included in the [Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Collection](#).

Ritton was spectacularly successful and served as a Justice of the Peace for one year as well as being a prominent member of the Masons and the Odd Fellows. Asthma began to trouble him, and he had to give up his business. He died on December 10, 1892, from asthma and was described, in his *Danbury News* obituary as the oldest active photographer in the United States. In Danbury, and in his business, he had witnessed many changes. From a sparsely populated hamlet, Danbury had grown to be a city of importance, politically and

commercially. He photographed these changes for us.

Next in our triumvirate of great photographers is Frank H Baisley (1876-1944). He was born in Bethel and was a hatter as a young man. He then entered the photographic field and had a studio in New Rochelle, New York. He then moved to Danbury in 1910 and had a studio at 197 Main St., then the upper floor of the Wooster Block at Main & White Streets and finally a studio in the Schwartz Block at 286 Main St. He also took pictures for the International News Reel Company. He was warmly welcomed in the Hat City and his expertise in photography earned him the nickname of “Danbury’s famous photographer.” His skills enabled him to become the official photographer of the Danbury Fair. His photographs appeared ubiquitously in historical articles and feature stories about Danbury. Many Danburians will remember that his photographs could be easily identified with his well known trademark BAISLEY upon it. Just as Edward Ritton’s photographs illustrate Danbury’s early years of urban growth, the many photographs taken by Baisley document the town and its life between 1910 and 1944 when Danbury was the proud center of the nation’s hatting industry. Baisley’s photographs give us an artful and detailed insight into the life of Danbury during this crucial period of development. Sadly, Baisley had heart condition and died from this ailment on June 5, 1944.

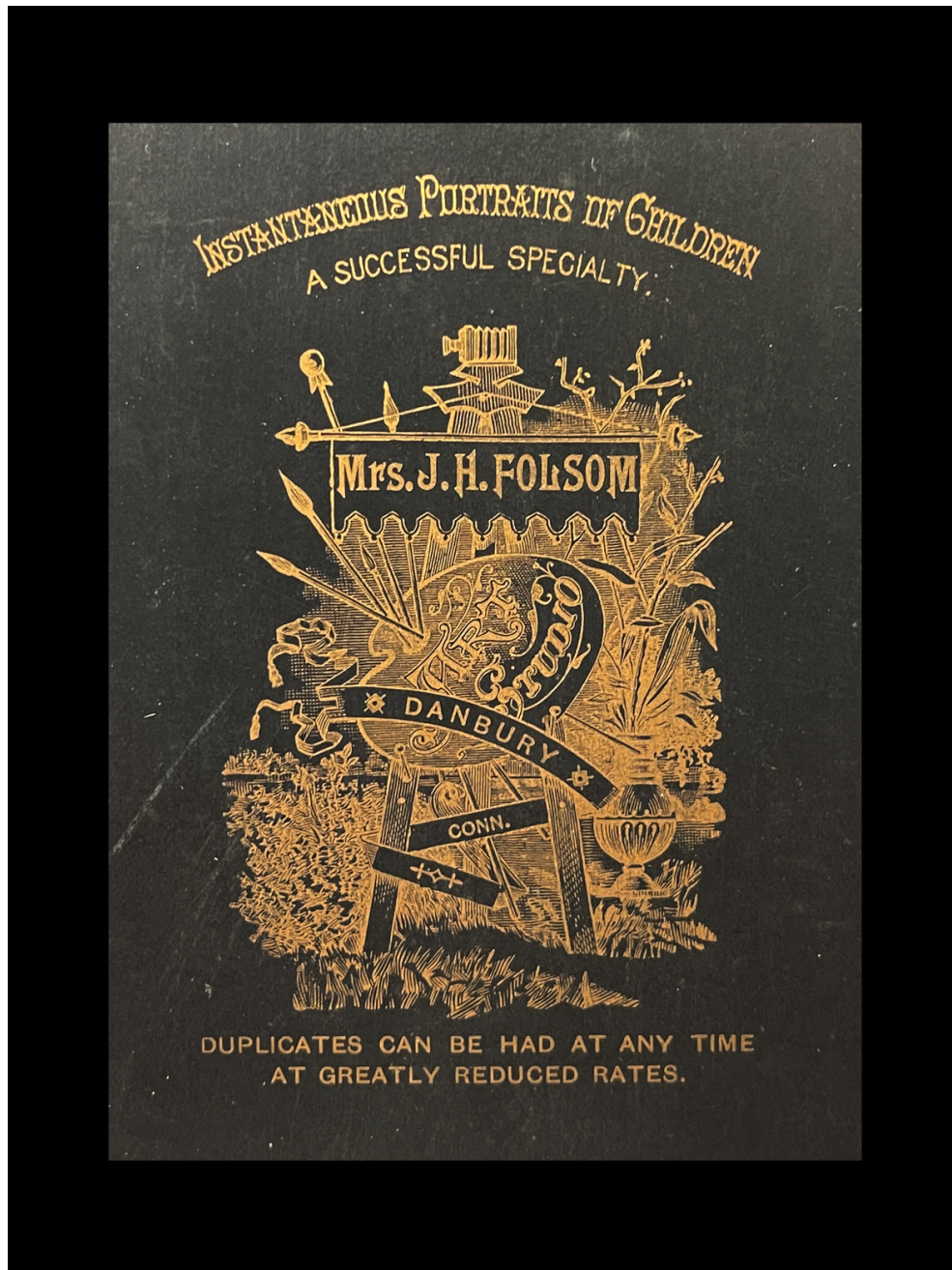
The last member of the trinity of photographers is Joseph Folsom (1841-1883). He was born in New York City and was an apprentice photographer there. He moved to Brewster, New York, and set up a gallery there. In 1872 he set up a branch studio in Danbury and was warmly welcomed into the city and very successful in establishing a thriving photography

business. As a photographer, he was an artist of unusual talent, his work comparing favorably with the best in the country. He was assisted in the business by his wife, Sarah, who was also an expert photographer in her own right. She was also a very astute businesswoman. When her husband passed away in 1883 from the effects of malaria, she took over the business and kept it on its very successful arc. This was a very unusual occurrence in the business world of that period. When the Danbury National Bank building was erected, she moved to a studio on the third floor of the building. Mrs. Folsom continued her successful run with the business until she sold it in 1897. She moved to Albion, New York, where she resided with her daughter until she passed away in 1927.

There is a great photograph in the exhibition of the breaking ground ceremony for the new Danbury City Hall in 1968. The current mayor at that time, Gino Arconti, is flanked by a bevy of former mayors of the Hat City for the ceremony. This photo was taken by Arthur Rickerby (1921-1972) who was born in New York City and became one of the most important photographers of his era. He had an international reputation for his World War Two photographs, his sports photography, and his numerous photographs of President John F. Kennedy right up to the day of his assassination in Dallas. He moved in the 1960s to Bethel and kept up his photography career but also added a civic component to his resume. He worked on the Bethel Zoning Committee and the Fairfield Litchfield Environmental Council. He did yeoman work in those areas and led a successful fight against constructing a power line through Bethel.

Don't miss this great exhibition. Join us in person and follow the online component as well. You will not be disappointed!

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!



Cabinet card verso, Mrs JH Folsom



**Music in the Museum
Gardens with
Billy Michael!**

Friday, June 30 5:30 pm

Friday, July 28, 6:00 pm

Friday, August 25, 6:00 pm

Bring your friends and lawn
chairs and join us for music under
the tent in the museum's garden.

DanburyMuseum.org

Join us under the tent for music with Billy Michael!



FRIENDS OF THE DANBURY LIBRARY

SUMMER CLEARANCE SALE

**THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY
JULY 6, 7, & 8 – 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

ALL INVENTORY INCLUDING NEW ARRIVALS \$1 OR LESS

**ADULT & CHILDREN'S BOOKS, CDs, DVDs
(EXCLUDES RARE & COLLECTIBLES)**

FRIENDS LITTLE RED HOUSE BOOK STORE
15 MAIN STREET, DANBURY

Access the Book Store via the entrance to South Street School
Parking is behind the Little Red House

ACCEPTING CASH, CHECKS or CREDIT/DEBIT CARDS

REGULAR STORE HOURS THURS., FRI., & SAT. 10 – 3 PM

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR EVENTS AND CLOSURES

203-794-7477 * danburyfriends.org * Danburyfriends@gmail.com

PROCEEDS BENEFIT LIBRARY PROGRAMS



Summer at the Museum 2023!



©2023 The Danbury Museum & Historical Society | 43 Main Street,
Danbury, Connecticut 06810, United States

[Web Version](#)

[Preferences](#)

[Forward](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

Powered by
[GoDaddy Email Marketing](#)®