

Like

Tweet

DM | DANBURY MUSEUM



Hello and Happy Holidays Friends!

It's been a most busy year for us, as it always is, and we're grateful you've been with us these past months.

Mark your calendars:

Giving Tuesday is next week and we're hoping to raise \$3000 to purchase three new staff computers that are well beyond obsolete. Any amount is gratefully received! We have the #GivingTuesday link on our website.

Looking for extra cash for the holidays? The Friends of the Danbury Museum are hosting a "Sell Your Old Gold" fundraiser on December 13 and 14. Details are in the flyer below and we hope we'll see you. Please pass the gold sale information along to your friends and family!

And finally, the museum's annual fundraising gala is scheduled for Friday, February 28, at the Amber Room Colonnade. We have some *wild* announcements to come in December with all the details.

Thanks very much to essayist John O'Donnell for his piece this month on brotherly devotion during the Civil War.

We hope you have a wonderful and safe Thanksgiving with your friends, and we offer our November newsletter as either a palette cleaner or an appetizer! We'll see you before the end of the year!



The graphic is a blue rectangular banner. At the top, the word "GIVINGTUESDAY" is written in a light blue, sans-serif font, with a stylized heart icon replacing the letter 'V'. Below this, in a smaller white font, is the text: "This #GivingTuesday the Danbury Museum is setting a fundraising goal of \$3000 to update three (woefully) out of date staff computers." In the center, there are three images: a vintage treadle sewing machine, a vintage typewriter, and a modern desktop computer setup (tower, monitor, keyboard, mouse). Each of these three images is overlaid with a large red "X" mark, indicating they are outdated. At the bottom, the word "GIVINGTUESDAY" is repeated in a larger, bold white font, also with the stylized heart icon for the 'V'.

Help Us Help You!

Working in a museum we're used to seeing all sorts of vintage technology--from treadle sewing machines and typewriters to the various pieces of hatting machinery we have in our collection. Each of these items was once a vast improvement over its predecessor.

And while we *love* old tech, (yes, actually, we **WOULD** like you to donate an old BlackBerry or Motorola or iPhone/Android for the collection) our staff needs

working tech to do research and help us keep up the many databases and spreadsheets we maintain. When your laptop or desktop will no longer update Google Chrome, you know it's time to modernize.

This Tuesday, December 3 is #GivingTuesday. Last year you all were most generous in helping us reach our goal of nearly \$2000 to buy a camera, light box, and copy stand that enabled us to digitize thousands of at-risk negatives--a project that is nearly complete! (We'll be moving on to slides soon!) Our ask this year is \$3000 to help us purchase three new (or new to us) computers for Danbury Museum staff. Staff time is valuable--faster, more reliable computers will help us to maximize effectiveness.

If you'd prefer to donate via check, please make out to Friends of the Danbury Museum and mention Giving Tuesday in the memo and mail to the Danbury Museum, 43 Main Street, Danbury, CT.

Thank you in advance for considering a donation to our Giving Tuesday initiative.

FRIENDS OF THE DANBURY MUSEUM

"Sell Your Old Gold" Fundraiser



FOR THIS FUNDRAISER,
YOUR CHECKBOOK STAYS HOME...
AND THIS TIME, YOU GO HOME
WITH A CHECK IN YOUR POCKET !!!

Please take a moment to look through your jewelry boxes at home for:

- BROKEN GOLD CHAINS AND BRACELETS
- SINGLE EARRINGS (HALF PAIRS)
- OLD SCHOOL RINGS
- RINGS WITH MISSING STONES
- OLD BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND GIFTS
- JEWELRY YOU NEVER WEAR
- GOLD NON-WORKING WATCHES
- YES, EVEN DENTAL GOLD
- STERLING SILVER JEWELRY, FLATWARE, HOLLOWWARE
- PLATINUM AND PALLADIUM

THEN BRING IT WITH YOU TO:

THE DANBURY MUSEUM
43 MAIN STREET
DANBURY, CT
203.743.5200

Friday	December 13th	10 AM to 4 PM
Saturday	December 14th	10 AM to 4 PM

There, our good friend, Bob the gold man, will buy your "old gold" and hand you a check. Then, after the refining process, over 70% of the profits will be donated, in your name, to the FRIENDS OF THE DANBURY MUSEUM !!!

Any questions, please email: bob@libertygoldct.com



William Calvin Oates in his Civil War uniform.

Two Brothers at Gettysburg

by John O'Donnell

The Battle of Gettysburg is looked upon as one of the pivotal battles of the Civil War. The second day at Gettysburg (July 2, 1863) has been extensively written about by Civil War historians. Many of them (including Michael Schaara in the *The Killer Angels* and Ken Burns in his monumental documentary on the Civil War) have celebrated the heroic efforts of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Regiment for their herculean efforts in saving the Union Army position on Little Round Top which cemented the left flank of the Union position. But I think it is instructive to look at their opponents that day. They were the 15th Alabama Infantry Regiment commanded by Colonel William Oates. The regiment included his younger brother, John. This fateful encounter would

forever change the lives of the brothers.

William Oates (1835-1910) was born in Pike County, Alabama into a poor farming family. At the age of seventeen, William believed he had killed a man in a violent brawl and left home for Florida. He became a drifter, settling in Texas for a few years before returning to Alabama at the urging of his younger brother, John. Because of the closeness of the brothers, the family had sent John to locate his older brother. William then studied law at the Lawrenceville Academy and passed the bar examination and opened a practice in Abbeville, Alabama.

William joined the Confederate Army in July 1861 as a Captain in the 15th Alabama Infantry Regiment. He became the commander of the regiment in the spring of 1863. John also served with him in the same regiment. On July 2, 1863 the regiment was ordered to attack the Union position on Little Round Top which was defended by Colonel Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Regiment. Oates and his regiment made repeated attacks on Little Round Top which was critical to the stability of the Army of the Potomac's position. Oates believed that if even one additional Confederate regiment had participated in the assault, the position could have been taken and the left wing of the Union Army wrecked, possibly winning the battle for General Lee and ending the war. But Colonel Chamberlain's bayonet charge against the 15th Alabama turned the tide in the Union's favor and the Alabamans had to quickly retreat from the Little Round Top position. In the confusion of the retreat, John Oates was wounded and left behind on Little Round Top as a prisoner of war. William Oates was devastated by this unfortunate circumstance and did not know what happened to his brother. William continued his service in the Confederate Army and fought in the battles of Chickamauga, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Courthouse, and Cold Harbor. He left the service in August of 1864 because of the loss of his right arm near Petersburg.

Oates resumed his law practice in Henry County, Alabama and had a very successful postbellum career. From 1870 to 1872, he was a member of the Alabama House of Representatives. In 1880 he was elected to the United States House of Representatives, serving seven consecutive terms. Oates married Sarah Toney in 1882, and they had one son William Jr, who eventually joined his father in his law practice. William was elected governor of Alabama from 1894 to 1896 (his old opponent, Colonel Chamberlain, likewise was governor of Maine from 1867 to 1871). President McKinley commissioned Oates as a Brigadier General in 1898, and he served in the Spanish-American War to compliment his service in the Civil War.

On the surface Oates had forged a very successful career after the Civil War, but the truth was that he was suffering from an emotional wound: being forced

to leave his wounded brother on Little Round Top and not knowing what had happened to him. This had gnawed at Oates. He wrote to his son on Christmas Eve in 1900 to tell him how (both July 2, the anniversary of the day his brother was wounded and December 24, the anniversary of his birth) that night brought forth the perennial ache in his heart. The fact that he did not know where his brother was buried and that he had died in a Union field hospital after the battle unsettled him. So he followed the Biblical injunction "Am I not my brother's keeper?" and set out to solve the mystery.

In December 1907, Oates was fortuitously appointed Commissioner for Decorating and Marking Confederate graves in the north by President Theodore Roosevelt. Oates took the job without worrying about possible political ramifications. As it turned out, he seems not to have suffered a decline in his community standing because of holding a Republican appointment while remaining a loyal Democrat. Oates had to visit cemeteries in the North several times a year plus visiting Washington, DC as well. He had a very capable assistant, Frank Nye, who provided invaluable service to Oates in solving the mystery. This new assignment helped Oates and Nye, and they learned that a team of men at Gettysburg in the 1870s had mapped Confederate graves. They had then worked with Ladies' Memorial Associations including one in Virginia. They had exhumed the Confederate dead on the battlefield and reinterred them in the Southern states. Over a lengthy period, Oates learned that John had died at the Union Army's V Corps field hospital set up in Michael Fiscel's farm, located east of Little Round Top. Then Oates received a letter from one of the team members: "It affords me great pleasure that my records of the removal of the remains of the Confederate dead show that on September 10, 1877 the remains of Lieutenant J.A. Oates, 15 Alabama Regiment, were shipped to Richmond, Virginia and there interred in Hollywood Cemetery (unofficially known as the Confederate National Cemetery)." William had indeed proved that he was his brother's keeper.

(Editor's note: If you're looking for a Civil War related holiday gift, we highly recommend Carolyn Ivanoff's "We Fought At Gettysburg" which features firsthand accounts of men from the 17th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry! And you can also view her author talk at Adams County Historical Society [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!

Follow Danbury Museum on Bluesky!

Follow Danbury Museum & Historical Society on Facebook

Follow @DanburyMuseum on Instagram



©2025 Danbury Museum | 43 Main Street, Danbury, Connecticut 06810, United States

[Web Version](#)

[Forward](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

Powered by
GoDaddy Email Marketing ®