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Danbury Museum garden, spring 2019

Hello Friends!

TGIF! It's very good to be here with you all again.

In this week's work from home update, the satellite work stations of Guertin, Wells, and Amundsen have been busy. You'll think we're joking, but many days it almost feels busier and more hectic than a "normal" day at the museum. For each day of the week there is a webinar, some more applicable than others, but there's also much useful discussion amongst our museum colleagues that sparks ideas for our own #MuseumTeam meetings. We keep learning, keep engaging, and endeavoring to bring you a little distraction along with news of what's happening at your home for local history.

This week we celebrated teachers and nurses across our social media platforms--both essential

frontline workers in different ways. Danbury is indeed fortunate to have so many gifted and skilled teachers and caregivers who have worked tirelessly during these difficult and uncertain weeks. We are most grateful.

With all the weekly (and sometimes daily, even), changes to our world, both John O'Donnell and Bob Young are thinking and writing about revolution. John's essay looks at the American Revolution through the lens of two different perspectives--books on financing the war and the role of French forces; Bob is embarking on an exploration of Danbury's importance in the Revolutionary War and he sets out some of the questions he'll be answering in coming weeks.

Don't forget that the [Danbury Museum has a shop online at TEEPUBLIC!](#) You can have the designs printed on stickers, mugs, totes, caps...just about anything. Check out the shop and the fun options Patrick has designed. The museum gets a cut of everything purchased, so you not only get some swell Danbury merch, you're supporting the museum, too. And tees and mugs are great gifts for dads and grads, even if the celebrations are virtual.

Wily puzzler Patrick Wells has also made another word search, this time it is Danbury schools themed and it's on the Puzzles section of the [MuseumFromHome](#) page.

Please note that we are looking for interns for the summer. The internships will be virtual and all the details are available at the [MuseumFromHome](#) page of our website. To apply, please submit a letter of interest and your resume or personal impact statement to: Brigid Guertin, Executive Director, b.guertin@danbury-ct.gov

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, Purveyor of Positivity)

Patrick Wells (Research Specialist, Social Media Manager, Czar of Zoom)

Michele Lee Amundsen (Collections Manager, #TeamTwitter, Ink-stained Newsletter Assembler)



"Siège de Yorktown" by Auguste Couder, c. 1836. Rochambeau and Washington giving their last orders before the battle.

Revolutions

By John O'Donnell

My reading lately has taken me back to the realms of revolutions, specifically the American and French Revolutions. This reading has deepened my historical understanding of some aspects of these revolutions that I had previously not paid enough attention to.

The first book I would like to share with you is *Robert Morris: Financier of the American Revolution* by Charles Rappleye. It is an excellent biography of a man who, although not a soldier, was a pivotal figure in the success of the American Revolution. Morris was a financial genius of the first order. He had an extraordinary career prior to the American Revolution as a merchant trader and was rumored to possess the largest fortune in the colonies prior to the war. During the conflict, he was relied upon by all parties from Washington on down to procure the money necessary to supply the army with food, uniforms, transport, and to keep the fledgling government supplied with ready funds for all operations. He was under constant pressure from all sides to keep the funds flowing, frequently using his own credit resources to keep the army and the government afloat. Morris was an extremely creative man who constantly had to think ahead to supply deficiencies in credit and funding. He was the driving force behind keeping the American forces with enough logistical support to prevent the army from disbanding at several crucial points. He was not, however, able to get enough funds on a regular basis to pay the soldiers in the army, though the soldiers generally ignored this and kept serving.

One of the most crucial steps that Morris took was to seek financial help abroad. He was able in

1778 to secure funding from France which ultimately played a key role in the decisive victory in the Yorktown campaign in October 1781. Morris not only secured financing but was also able to persuade the French monarchy (with the help of Benjamin Franklin) to send a French army and fleet to assist the American war effort.

The second book that will enable you to understand this complicated campaign and the decisive role that the French played in it is Nathaniel Philbrick's *In the Hurricane's Eye: The Genius of George Washington and the Victory of Yorktown*. Philbrick has written extensively on the American Revolution and is always a delight to read. The war was in a stalemate situation in 1781 with neither side holding an advantage. But the French had sent an army under the command of the Comte de Rochambeau (who is always overshadowed by Lafayette, of course) to aid Washington. They likewise sent a fleet under Admiral de Grasse which also contained an additional 3,000 troops. The key question that the allies faced was how to use these resources effectively. Washington, Rochambeau, and de Grasse came up with a risky plan to try to win the war. The plan was known as the *Special Expedition*. Washington had planned to attack the British forces in New York City but was dissuaded from doing this by Rochambeau who championed a march of the combined forces south to Virginia to attack the British under Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown.

The plan worked magnificently. The combined army and navy cooperation trapped Cornwallis in the Yorktown area, forcing him to surrender after a siege. This proved to be the decisive battle of the war, after which, Rochambeau returned to France. He became caught up in the tumult of the French Revolution. (Their revolution was vastly different from ours. It led to a bloody reign of terror in which Rochambeau was almost executed.) The French Revolution did not lead to a republican form of government as ours did, it led to the Emperor Napoleon. The French Revolution was described as devouring its children by a French journalist. (Read Dicken's *A Tale of Two Cities*!)

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!



Major General David Wooster

Danbury and the Revolutionary War

By Bob Young

Yes, we all know that the British sent 2,000 men to Danbury in April of 1777 for the sole purpose of destroying the military equipment stored here. And yes, they destroyed a great quantity of

equipment as well as food items. And yes, they left Danbury in shambles only to be harassed by the Colonists in Ridgefield as they tried to return to their ships.

But this was not the only involvement of Danbury during the Revolutionary War. Over the next few weeks we will look at the happenings around Danbury from early 1776 through to 1782.

Some of the topics will include:

Why did the British decide to venture to Danbury?

What was the true objective of the British raid?

What did the British actually destroy?

Where was the military hospital in Danbury?

Where was Camp Danbury? Where was Camp Redding?

Who were some of the patriots from Danbury? (Hint: there are almost 3,000 that have been identified.)

Who was Berthier and why did he draw a detailed map of Danbury?

Who was Comte de Rochambeau and why was he important to Danbury?

Be sure to check in here next week as we begin tackling some of these questions and sharing other interesting facts.

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.



Surrender of Lord Cornwallis by John Trumbull, depicts the British surrendering to Benjamin Lincoln, flanked by French (left) and American troops. Oil on canvas, 1820. (US Capitol rotunda.)

Museums From Your Couch

Who has their daytime pajamas on and is ready for more virtual touring and traveling? Set yourself up with a cup of tea or your favorite potent potable--maybe a Colonial Milk Punch?--and let's visit some Revolutionary War battlefields, learn about our Colonial landscape, and enjoy some 18th century fashion in this week's **Museums From Your Couch**. (And if you're interested in making your own Colonial-era cocktails, [The Splendid Table](#) has recipes and inspiration!)

[The American Battlefield Trust](#) has both Civil War and Revolutionary War virtual tours. John O'Donnell's essay above discusses Rochambeau and Yorktown, so let's start with the [Battle of Yorktown](#). If you want to really immerse yourself, the Battlefield Trust also has multiple [Zoom Goes the History](#) discussions with leading historians that you'll want to check out.

Google Arts & Culture has some great contributors, like the [Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History](#). [The American Revolution through the Eyes of Hamilton](#) is most interesting and takes us to multiple sites important to both Alexander Hamilton and the American Revolution.

It's difficult, sometimes, to imagine the 18th century landscape in America, and [The Library of Virginia](#) (via Google Arts & Culture) is hosting a beautiful online exhibit called [Representation of the Beauty of Nature: Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Scenes from Virginia and Europe](#).

And finally, FASHION. The [National Gallery of Art's](#) virtual exhibit, [Fashioning a Nation](#), features drawings of American costume from *The Index of American Design* which is an incredible collection of more than 18,000 watercolor renderings of American decorative art objects that was produced between 1936 and 1942. This exhibition provides a brief survey of American fashions from 1740 to 1895. Most of the costumes represented are formal or "fine" garments of the kind that were preserved and handed down in families from one generation to the next.

If you do some virtual touring this weekend, take a screenshot or selfie and share it with us on social media--we'd love to see where you "travel" to.

Danbury Museum Social Media



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@DanburyMuseum

"When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece." John Ruskin
We are indebted to the courageous men and women [#HealthcareHeroes](#) for their herculean efforts. On [#NationalNursesDay](#) we say [#Thankyou!](#) (@DanburyHospital nurses ca 1894) [#MuseumFromHome](#) [#hatcityhistory](#)



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Born November 28, 1866, Miss Adella Fanton was educated at Balmforth Ave school and she became a second grade teacher in 1887. 🍎
[#TeacherAppreciationWeek2020](#)
[#TeacherAppreciationDay](#)
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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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