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Hello Friends!

It's good to be with you all again—we trust you are keeping safe and well.

2021 has well and truly begun! We're kicking this year off newsletter-wise with two of our regular contributors--John O'Donnell and Thomas MacGregor--writing about Ebenezer Baldwin and January snowflakes, respectively. We're so pleased for their continued contributions to our monthly newsletters.

For all of you looking ahead to Valentine's Day, don't forget our [online shop](#) is *always* open. There are tees, socks, totes, mugs and more and the museum gets a cut of each and every sale.

Additionally, there's still plenty of time to gift your Valentine--or yourself!--with a lovely dinner as part of our 2021 Hat City Ball. The details are below and we are MOST grateful for everyone who has already purchased tickets--the support is very much appreciated. The Hat City Ball is our signature annual fundraiser and as the pandemic continues, we are, like so many other organizations, in great need of your continued support.

Stay warm and keep well,

Brigid Guertin (*Executive Director, City Historian*)

Patrick Wells (*Research Specialist, Social Media Manager*)

Michele Lee Amundsen (*Collections Manager*)



2021 Hat City Ball Tickets Make GREAT Valentine's Day Gifts!

Our 2021 Hat City Ball will look very different, to be sure. But

we've teamed up with Doug and his stellar Amber Room staff to bring you the best part of the Hat City Ball, (the delicious meal) for you to enjoy in the safety and comfort of your own home on Friday, February 12—the perfect kick-off to Valentine's Day weekend.

This year, the Friends of the Danbury Museum are honoring the work of the New American Dream Foundation and the Amber Room Colonnade with our Hat City Award for Preservation Excellence.

As Brigid Guertin noted in her award letter: “Your combined efforts to preserve our local, multi- generational immigrant story, as well as your outstanding pandemic efforts to feed the ‘storytellers’ and story-keepers’ whose long lives have contributed to our community success and whose critical needs for food and community support/love are among the many reasons we choose to highlight and recognize your good works.”

To that end, for every ticket sold, a meal will be donated to Danbury seniors for the 2/13/21 meal delivery outreach by the Amber Room and the New American Dream Foundation.

Your ticket purchase is a great gift, a support to the Danbury Museum, and a small way to pay it forward for our senior population.

All the details are available [here](#) and tickets can be purchased via our [website](#).



Ebenezer Baldwin

By John O'Donnell

The early history of Danbury is studded with figures who are important in its early history for a number of reasons. One of these is Ebenezer Baldwin. He was a key figure in Danbury for a rather brief period of time, but his legacy can be found in its religious, cultural, and military history. He had a major influence in all of these areas and made key contributions to the resilience and very survival of Danbury itself.

Baldwin was born on July 13, 1745, in Norwich, Connecticut. He was the eldest son of Captain Ebenezer and Bethiah Baldwin. His mother's brother was the Reverend Nehemiah Barker, a 1742 graduate of Yale University, and Ebenezer was prepared for his education at Yale under his auspices. The younger Ebenezer graduated from Yale in 1763. He received an excellent classical education and knew Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. He was a very popular tutor and religious figure at Yale from 1767 to 1770.

On September 19, 1770, Ebenezer Baldwin was ordained pastor of The First Congregational Church of Danbury. The sermon of ordination was preached by President Naphtali Daggett of Yale (when the British attacked New Haven in 1779, Rev. Daggett took up arms but was taken prisoner & forced to serve as a guide. He was bayoneted by his captors and died in 1780). So we can see the Baldwin's ties to Yale remained very strong. He was a scholar of noted ability and famous for his sermons, of which 200 are collected in his papers at Yale. In addition to his sermonizing he married 68 couples, baptized 113 children, and presided over 149 funerals during his tenure at the church. He also was dedicated to what we would describe today as life-long learning. One volume about his dedication has this quote : "He never lost the spirit of learning and was much interested in the general education of the people." One manifestation of his dedication to learning is evidenced by him spearheading the foundation of a public library in Danbury that should be free to all denominations. He donated many of the books which became the core of the collection. But when the British burned Danbury in April of 1777, the books were destroyed in the conflagration and the progress that Baldwin had brought was temporarily stymied.

I alluded above to Baldwin's power as a sermonizer. Now I would like to describe some of the highlights from his most famous one. The short title is *A Sermon Preached at Danbury, November 16, 1775 by Ebenezer Baldwin, A.M.* (long title: *The duty of rejoicing under calamities and afflictions, : considered and improved in a sermon, preached at Danbury, November 16, 1775. A day set aside for thanksgiving in the colony of Connecticut.*) Her preached a fiery sermon designed to awaken the spirit of his flock to the perils and dangers of the struggle they were engaged in. The calamity of war was affecting the whole land. He also discussed an outbreak of pestilence in Danbury which had caused 62 fatalities in the summer. He described the American Revolution as a war with our parents and unnatural. He reassured his

parishioners that they were waging a just war. Even though the outlook is bleak, Baldwin's theme is one of rejoicing and he tried to rally the flagging spirits of the colonists: "Have we not abundant cause for Thanksgiving on this Nov. 16th, 1775." He looks into the future and sees the American colonies as the foundation of a great and mighty empire founded on the principles of liberty and freedom, both civil and religious. He predicts a population growth to 192 million people and an American Empire that will be at the height of its glory in the year 2000!

Baldwin practiced what he preached and became a volunteer chaplain for Colonel Cookes's 16th Regiment which was composed mostly of his own parishioners and participated in the defense of New York City. Sadly he contracted a fever and returned to Danbury and died October 1, 1776. His loss was greatly lamented by Danburians. He was only 31 years old but had packed major achievements into this brief span. He had been an energetic pastor, powerful sermonizer, scholar, and instrumental in bringing the benefits of a library to the citizenry of Danbury. He is buried in Wooster Cemetery.

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!



January Snowflakes

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

Snowflakes are formed in the cold, upper atmosphere by the freezing of water around an extremely small particle (called a “mote”), like dust or pollen. A water molecule forms hydrogen bonds to other water molecules to create a hexagonal structure. As each water molecule is added, the resulting structure freezes into a six-sided snowflake. Each typical snowflake contains around 10¹⁹ water molecules by the time it hits the ground. Although two snowflakes may look similar, molecularly they are not the same. Therefore, no two snowflakes are identical.

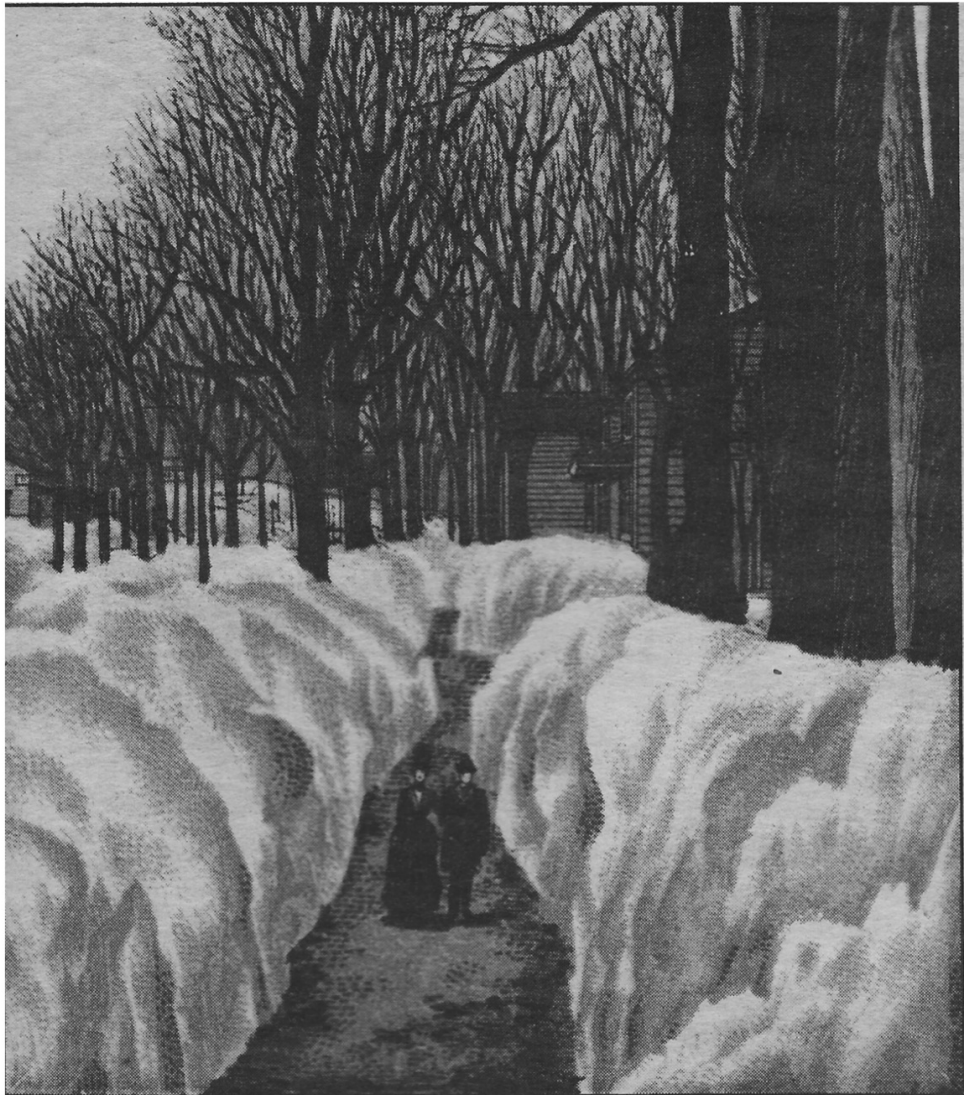
A snowflake’s size and shape are dependent on the humidity and temperature as it forms and during its descent to land. Very cold and dry conditions produce powder (loved by skiers), whereas humid conditions with a high vapor content near the freezing point will produce large, wet flakes (perfect for making a snowman). A large, 15-inch snowflake collected in Montana in January 1887 holds the Guinness World Record. Once on the ground, accumulating crystalline snowflakes are subject to wind and freeze-thaw conditions. During a snowstorm, when winds are above 35-miles-per-hour over a 3-hour period and producing poor visibility, the falling and drifting snow is termed “a blizzard”. The notorious blizzard of March 10-12, 1888, in Danbury shut down the city for three days and resulted in drifts over 20 feet high. According to the daily newspaper, published on the evening of the 12th, “The wind was so fierce and the snow in such small particles and so icy that the breath of the pedestrian was in danger of flying away with the wind.” For the first time since its inception, the *Danbury Evening News* was not published in the aftermath of the next day.

When the accumulation of snowflakes exceeds yearly melting over many years or centuries, a glacier is formed. Glaciers

become very heavy due to accumulated snow and ice and begin to move under their own weight. As they slowly move, they push and abrade rocks into hills and crevices. The passage of huge ice sheets across southern New England 10,000 to 20,000 years ago produced a rocky soil that drains slower than soil in many other parts of the country. The result is seen in the abundance of marshes and ponds that dot the Connecticut landscape. The soil following the melting of the icy glaciers consists of sand, silt, and clay. If these three components are present in equal amounts, the soil formed is loam. (Loam is ideal for vegetation because the sand particles provide drainage whereas the silt and clay particles retain moisture for the plants.) If clay is in excess, as in the Danbury area, the land will retain too much moisture. In recognition of this phenomena, when the Benedicts settled in the future town of Danbury, they named the area "Swampfield."

Since the ideal growing conditions for vegetation in Connecticut, on average, require an inch of water every week (approximately 48-52 inches of rainfall per year), it is important to have snow in January and February. If the winter months are dry, drought conditions can occur during the growing season. This has been the situation in some parts of the state for the past several years. Ideally, winter snowfalls with large, wet snowflakes followed by a light rain to aid absorption into the ground work best to supply reservoirs, trees, and perennial garden plants with much needed water during the upcoming, dry summer months.

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



Courtesy Agnes E. Mancuso, Danbury

An after-storm view the blizzard of 1888, looking north on Main Street from Franklin Street. During the blizzard, possibly the worst in the city's history, Danbury was completely "given over to the elements."

Danbury Fair Entrance T-Shirt

Danbury T-Shirt Designed and Sold by [Danbury Museum](#)



Valentine shoppers!

There are always new designs being added to our online [TeeSpring](#) shop including Danbury Fair, Danbury street scenes, Durkin's Diner, and Charles Ives. And yes, there's still John Oliver Memorial Sewer Plant merch, too!

Take a look (there is so much more than just t-shirts, there are socks and mugs and more!) and remember that the Danbury Museum receives a cut of each sale!

[Follow @DanburyMuseum on Twitter](#)

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Give the Gift of History. Your Membership Matters!

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. A monthly, sustaining membership via PayPal has the most impact and is an easy way to support the museum for as little as the cost of a cup of coffee each month.

Thank you for helping us to be here as your home for Danbury history in the post-Covid world.

If you're in a position to make an end of year contribution, [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 in February.



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