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Hello, Friends!

Happy, happy SPRING! According to the daffodils, crocuses and hyacinths, spring is in full force in the museum's lovely gardens; we hope you'll drop by for a leisurely stroll in this real oasis amidst your busy day.

On April 6, the museum celebrated its 80th Anniversary and that was our opportunity to start telling everyone about our new exhibit that will open this June, *Danbury (Re)Discovered: Eighty Years :: Eighty Objects :: Eighty Stories*. We'll be bringing out some of our favorite artifacts—and some that we don't get to showcase very often—to tell numerous Danbury stories. The exhibit will encompass all the buildings on the 43 Main Street campus, inside and out, as well as the Ives Birthplace on Mountainville Avenue.

And speaking of Ives, we cannot wait to show off all the incredible work done these last months to get the Charles Ives Birthplace ready for visitors. Our #IvesTeam worked (steadily, throughout the pandemic) with local sources for carpentry, painting, printing, and refinishing, and upholstering of furniture. That means the money invested by our very generous benefactor, Savings Bank of Danbury, stayed **in** Danbury to help us open the birthplace of Danbury's Pulitzer Prize-winning composer this spring. Thank you to everyone at Savings Bank of Danbury for believing in this project and we so look forward to having you all join us at Ives later this spring.

As if the great Ives news wasn't enough, we are also welcoming Danbury Public Schools 3rd graders back to our campus this May. We're excited to share Danbury history with these youngsters on what will be, for many, their first field trip ever.

This April 24-27, you'll want to stay tuned to our social media channels as we commemorate the 245th Anniversary of the Raid on Danbury, with daily posts. Additionally, Robert Young will be giving his well-researched program, "Why Danbury?" on the anniversary, April 26, (more details to come.) We've got big plans already underway for the 250th, never fear!

We're so fortunate to have John O'Donnell with us again this month, too. He writes about the Newburgh Conspiracy, most timely considering our Revolutionary War anniversaries this month. Thanks, John!

Thank you to everyone who supported the online auction—your generosity is very much appreciated as the museum strives to be frugal and still maintain our historic buildings, collections, tours, and programs in a way that benefits both our community and visitors to Danbury. This year, the City of Danbury will hopefully continue to fund the Danbury Museum at \$89,000 in the fiscal year 2022-2023 city budget. The first \$25,000 goes directly to the mandated expenses of an annual audit and insurance coverage for our buildings, collections, and two campuses. Without an endowment, we struggle each year to reach our goal of fully funding annual museum budget of \$180,000. Raising the difference of \$91,000 is only possible with your help and we appreciate you, our stalwart donors, more than we can say.

Brigid Guertin (*Executive Director, City Historian*)

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

Michele Lee Amundsen (*Collections Manager, Newsletter Editor*)



Washington's prominent figures listen to Marian Anderson's singing. Washington, D.C., April 9. Behind Marian Anderson, the heroic statue of Lincoln; beside her, Cabinet members and Senators; before her a crowd of 75,000 listeners. Left to right – Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Mrs. Morgenthau, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Marian Anderson. 4-9-39. Photo by Harris & Ewing, 1939, April 9.

DigitalDanbury

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Saturday, April 9th, was the 83 anniversary of Marian Anderson's famous concert in Washington DC. For the next phase of our #DigitalDanbury initiative, where we are digitizing subject files from our archival holdings, we have uploaded our Marian Anderson segment. You can find it all right on [our website](#).



The Temple of Virtue (reconstructed) New Windsor, NY



The Newburgh Conspiracy

By John O'Donnell

Students of the American Revolution are all familiar with this quote about George Washington: "First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of His Countrymen." It is from the eulogy written by Major General Henry Lee (better known as Light Horse Harry Lee, father of Robert E. Lee) who was a close colleague of Washington during the war. To this quote we can add first to repel a military conspiracy as well and to assert civilian control of the military.

When we study the American Revolution in school I think there is a tendency to look at the American victory at Yorktown in October 1781 as the end of the war which is a misconception. The war did not officially end until the signing of the Treaty of Paris on September 3, 1783. These negotiations had begun in Paris in April of 1782, but the war was still ongoing.

George Washington faced a myriad of problems as the supreme commander of the Continental Army. He was fighting a very skilled opponent who usually outnumbered the American forces, were plentifully supplied, and paid on a regular basis. Things were vastly different on the American side. One of Washington's major tasks, in addition to fighting the British Army and Navy, was to keep the Continental Army from disintegrating and ending American resistance. Washington had to deal with twin major problems in keeping the army intact. These were the supplying of the American troops and having to keep on top of the Continental Congress to get the payment for his troops. Both of these problems persisted throughout the war and were never fully solved. But Washington kept the army together and was able to thwart the British enough to defeat them, in spite of these problems. Another problem that Washington had to deal with was internal dissension within his own command. This story is rarely told but it is an important issue which Washington dealt with in a masterful fashion.

This episode is called the Newburgh Conspiracy and took place in March 1783. The army was encamped in Newburgh, New York, and was mulling over the prospects of peace since the negotiations in Paris were underway. The troops were still dealing with lack of pay for their services and with promises of pensions from the Continental Congress but which had not been funded. Substantial progress had not been made on either issue. This episode points out again the importance of demobilizing an army which I wrote about in a previous essay. This process is fraught with danger and woefully neglected and needs more historical attention.

The unhappiness of the troops was exacerbated by the appearance in the camp of an anonymous letter on March 10, 1783. The letter suggested that the army should send Congress an ultimatum for resolution of their problems and called for a meeting of all field officers for the next day. Washington reacted swiftly to the danger that the letter presented. He objected to the meeting and stated instead that there would be a meeting of officers on March 15. He said that the meeting would be presided over by the senior officer present implying that he would not attend. On the morning of March 12 another unsigned letter appeared claiming that Washington's agreement to a meeting was an endorsement of the conspiracy. But Washington was well-prepared to defuse this potential mutiny.

The March 15 meeting was held in the (appropriately named) Temple of Virtue. General Horatio Gates opened the meeting and then George Washington entered unexpectedly. He asked to speak to the assembled officers and Gates deferred to him. He proceeded to address the group with an eloquent speech (called the

Newburgh Address) asking his officers to remain loyal to Congress. The capstone of his effort was that after his address he produced a letter from a member of Congress to read to them. He took a pair of reading glasses from his pocket which were new. He then said: "Gentlemen you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray, but almost blind in the service of my country."

This statement effectively ended the conspiracy. Some of his fellow officers were openly weeping. Washington left the meeting and General Knox and Colonel Brooks drafted a resolution which offered "unshaken confidence in Congress and disdain and abhorrence for the proposals earlier in the week." Historical evidence points to General Horatio Gates as the prime mover of the conspiracy. He was a bitter rival of Washington and thought he should replace him as supreme commander. The first unsigned letter was written by Major John Armstrong, who was an aide to Gates. Washington also suspected that some members of Congress, including Gouverneur Morris were involved.

A bright spot in these otherwise nefarious activities is the action of General Alexander McDougall, who was an advocate for the Continental Army and better conditions for its soldiers. In the winter of 1783 he was the head of the committee of army officers who bore complaints about pay from Newburgh to Congress. There is a plaque dedicated to him in Putnam Park noting that one of the streams in the park is named Lake McDougall. David Cobb, who was a member of George Washington's staff during the affair wrote in 1825: "I have ever considered that the United States are indebted for their republican form of government solely to the firm and determined republicanism of George Washington at this time."

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!

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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 soon.



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