

DM | DANBURY MUSEUM



Opening July 1!!

Hello, Friends!

Summer at the museum means a very hectic tour and research season which we welcome. We've missed seeing the genealogists and researchers and tourists these past two years, so it's good to be able to welcome them back.

In person onsite research is free at the Danbury Museum, but we do have limited space so we ask that you book your

research appointment in advance. It's easy to do via [Eventbrite](#), and then just email us with the details of your inquiries and we'll have materials ready for you.

We're thrilled to announce that beginning July 1 and running through September 3—both at the 43 Main Street campus and the Ives Birthplace museum—tours will be FREE thanks to a generous CT Summer at the Museum grant from CT Humanities and Connecticut Office of the Arts. The past couple of years have been particularly trying for us financially, but this grant allows us to make our tours more available to all and create a level of access equity which we have been hoping to be able to do.

To that end we are also excited to announce that, inspired by CT Humanities and the Summer @ the Museums initiative, the Danbury Cultural Commission is providing financial support so that we can extend this equity of access to the museum and its tours and exhibits through December 17, 2022. Thank you to Cultural Commission! All tours are on Friday and Saturday and are booked via [Eventbrite](#) and must be booked 24 hours in advance. We can't wait to see you all!

More than [130 other museums around the state will also be participating in this initiative](#) via CT Humanities & Connecticut Office of the Arts, so check out the website and plan to take advantage of this great opportunity to visit Connecticut's many fabulous museums.

Our **Danbury (Re)Discovered** exhibit, featuring (more than) 80 objects, 80 stories, and celebrating the museum's 80 years, opens on July 1. We hope you'll stop by and see the exhibit in Huntington Hall as well as the outdoor exhibit panels around the campus!

It's looking like we might luck out again with excellent weather for our First Friday Music in the Museum Gardens concert. If you missed Duo Montagnard last month, you won't want to miss this month's concert under the tent! Smokin' Joe West and the Creative Force Band will be playing from 4-5 and all are welcome and the event is FREE. Bring some snacks and your lawn chairs and then plan to visit one of Danbury's dining establishments after the concert and you've got yourself a perfect start to the holiday weekend. You're encouraged to visit the Danbury Museum gardens (as always, with a big thank you to the Civic Committee of the Danbury Garden Club) and enjoy our outdoor exhibit panels before and after the concert.

We're so pleased to have excellent essays once again from both Dr. Thomas MacGregor and John O'Donnell. Tom writes about 31 years of the Danbury Library Book Discussion Group (and invites new attendees for the series beginning in the autumn) and John introduces us to a mostly forgotten World War I war correspondent named Alice Schalek.

We hope you'll join us for a tour, visit our new exhibit celebrating 80 years of the Danbury Museum, or enjoy a contemplative walk in the museum gardens.

We'll look forward to seeing you here again in early August.

Brigid Guertin (*Executive Director, City Historian*)

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

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

Music in the Museum Gardens

Join us on Fridays
July 1 & August 5
from 4pm - 5pm

featuring
Smokin' Joe West &
the Creative
Force Band.

BYO snacks and lawn chairs and
enjoy music amidst our beautiful gardens!



DanburyMuseum.org

43 Main Street

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MUSEUM

Danbury Library

Book Talk 2022-23 5:30-7 pm



~ Points of View ~

September 26	Ross King, <i>The Bookseller of Florence</i>
October 24	Margaret Atwood, <i>Hag-Seed</i> , and William Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i>
November 28	Edna O'Brien, <i>The Little Red Chairs</i>
December	HOLIDAY -- no meeting
January 23	Scott Borchert, <i>Republic of Detours: How the New Deal Paid Broke Writers to Rediscover America</i>
February 27	Christine Coulson, <i>Metropolitan Stories</i>
March 27	Eley Williams, <i>The Liar's Dictionary</i>
April 24	David Michaelis, <i>Eleanor</i>
May 22	Claire Vaye Watkins, <i>Battleborn</i>
June 26	Anthony Trollope, <i>Doctor Thorne</i>

*Complaints accepted, improvements welcomed -- let me know how you think it is going: catherine.riordan@gmail.com, 203-984-7303.

The Danbury Library Book Discussion Group

by Thomas MacGregor

In 1991, a group of avid bibliophiles met in the basement (now the Farioly room) of the Danbury Public Library to discuss the first novel of author Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*. Since that time, this group, under the leadership of facilitator Catherine Riordan, has met nine times a year for 31 continuous years to discuss a non-fiction or fiction book assigned for the month. The group meets on the fourth Monday of the month except during July, August, and December. When a fire decimated the library in 1996 the group moved off-site to Wooster School, and during the current COVID pandemic the group has been meeting in a hybrid format, in-person and via a virtual Zoom link option.

The following year's books are chosen during the Spring and, since there usually are more titles than months, the group

winnows down the readings to nine books around a theme that appears nebulous at first, but seems to make sense by year's end. Examples of some specific themes included, "Myths in Marriage" (1992), "Once Banned, Now Classic" (1994), and "World War I" (2013). Although, "Books We Want to Read Now 1, 2, 3" (1999 – 2003) sounded vague at first, there were familiar literary threads in the end. During the year, it is common to read a book that you might never have selected while just browsing through the library stacks and find it a fascinating and worthwhile read. Many times, when a classic, such as Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, is re-read as an adult, one discovers new perspectives that were missed when it was first read in high school. Additionally, discussing your opinions and perspectives with many others who read the same book presents unusual insights and overlooked plot developments.

Over the 31 years this group has read 277 books comprised of 192 novels, 84 non-fictional accounts, and one book of criticism. I have placed "memoirs" in the non-fiction genre; however, the group has consistently felt that a one-person perspective should be considered non-fiction with a hefty dose of fiction added. Needless to say, memoirs usually get pared prior to the annual ninth selection. The span of writings has included ancient classics like Homer's *The Odyssey* to modern tomes still on the best-seller's lists. When the group enjoys a particular author, it is not unusual for a subsequent book by the same author to make the cut several years later. Examples of such authors are Jane Austen, William Shakespeare (or a derivative such as a biography), Charles Dickens, and Anne Tyler.

Although the group has added and lost members over the years, it welcomes anyone that reads that month's book to

attend the discussion. While meetings have been smaller some months than others, e.g., due to a time conflict, a planned vacation, or a snowstorm, other meetings have needed extra chairs especially if the book was particularly popular, such as, Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Spring of 2002). Some of the best discussions are when the group is split among individuals who hated the book and others who thought it was superb. On many occasions the group thinks a book is well-written in parts, but not a page-turner. Rarely does everyone dislike a book.

One of the first books the group read in 1991 was Helen Hooven Santmyers's novel about a literary group in the fictional town of Wayneboro, Ohio, that spanned decades. The book titled *And Ladies of the Club* looks at changes that took place for members of the club, the town and its politics, and the larger world over 64 years from 1868 though 1932. The fictional literary club eventually included children and grandchildren until the death of the last surviving member when the club and town commemorated the end of an era.

The Danbury Library Book Discussion Group is now 31 years old and some of its current members were born after it started and a lot has happened since 1991. The books for next year have been selected with a theme of "Points of View." I urge you to browse the library listing and read a few (or all) of them. Remember, all are welcome at the monthly meetings for interesting discussions. Please join us on September 26th as we discuss Ross King's *The Bookseller of Florence*, regarded as "an engaging study of a time when books were considered essential to a meaningful life."

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



Alice Schalek from the Jewish Women's Archive

A Groundbreaking War Correspondent

By John O'Donnell

As readers of my previous essays know I have been a student of World War Two for most of my life. Recently I have made room for World War One as a topic of interest. I am trying to shore up the gap in knowledge of my World War One history. One of the books I am using to do this titled *The Kaiser's Army* by military historian David Stone. It is a comprehensive analysis of the German Army (and its allies) in World War One. While reading it I came across the story (in a brief synopsis) of the career of Alice Schalek who was an Austrian war correspondent and whose entire career merits our attention.

War correspondents are a critical resource for the study of the history of warfare. A simple definition for a war correspondent is a journalist who covers stories first-hand from a war zone. This job is inherently dangerous since these writers attempt to get close enough to the action to provide written accounts, photographs, or film footage. It is considered the most dangerous form of journalism. I am familiar with many of the war correspondents of World War Two. The importance of the work done by these journalists is two-fold. They provide a contemporaneous account of war action from the front lines for the people on the home front. Subsequently their works can provide a resource for historians to write their accounts of wars.

In World War Two, Ernie Pyle (who was killed by a sniper in 1945 during the Battle of Okinawa), Richard Tregaskis, who wrote about the Battle of Guadalcanal and Ernest Hemingway are among the most famous of the correspondents who covered the war. There was also a large contingent of female war correspondents who distinguished themselves in their coverage. These included Margaret Bourke-White, Dickey Chapelle, Marjory Collins, Ruth Cowan, and the incredibly talented Martha Gellhorn. Although she was the third wife of Ernest Hemingway, she carved out an incredible saga of her own during World War Two. She was able to beat her husband (they were rivals as writers in addition to their battles as husband and wife) ashore on D-Day. She hid in a hospital ship bathroom and impersonated a stretcher bearer to gain access to the first day of the battle. She had also goaded her husband to come to the European theater and report on the fighting himself. He had stayed in Cuba for most of the war. These women did an incredible job reporting on the action they witnessed. Let us now look at Alice Schalek and her impact as

a war correspondent in World War One.

Schalek was born on August 21, 1874, into a liberal Jewish family in Vienna, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. She was educated at a very good secondary school for girls and proved herself adept at writing. She started publishing novels and novelettes in 1902. Her early success in publishing was surely helped by her family connections. Her father, Heinrich Schalek, ran the first newspaper advertising agency in Austria. Alice became a writer and editor for the *New Free Press* which was a major newspaper in Vienna. She also became very interested in traveling and writing articles and books about these travels. She went to Egypt, Palestine, India, Southeast Asia, Japan, and Australia. She became interested in photography and held lectures in Austria accompanied by photographs. We can see that she was a multitalented woman who had wide and varied skills. Then came the thunderclap of World War One.

Austria was an ally of the German Empire and proceeded to throw her armies against Serbia, Galicia, and Italy with rather poor results. Alice Schalek wanted to help her country at this critical juncture and became the first woman reporter in the Austro-Hungarian war information office. She intrepidly undertook journeys to the fighting in the Tyrolean Mountains, the Isonzo Front, interviewing soldiers and taking photographs as well. She wrote articles about her journeys but also lectured to large audiences upon her return from these fronts. She received a major medal from the Austrian government (Golden Cross with Crown or the ribbon of the Medal for Bravery) for her work. Then her career was effectively destroyed by the intervention of Karl Kraus who bitterly resented her success.

Karl Kraus was a towering figure in the world of Austrian

literature and thrice nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature. He was a journalist, satirist, essayist, aphorist, poet, and playwright. He took a huge dislike to the success of Schalek and roundly criticized her war reporting. In his scathing critique of World War One, *The Last Days of Mankind*, Kraus vitriolically attacked Schalek whom he considered the worst example of a war-mongering journalist. He referred to her as a “hyena of the battlefield.” Schalek sued him for libel in 1916 for calling her a “Jourjudin” (Jewess-journalist) which is very surprising as they were both Jewish. She withdrew the lawsuit but was dismissed from the war information office in 1917 as a result of Kraus’s attacks.

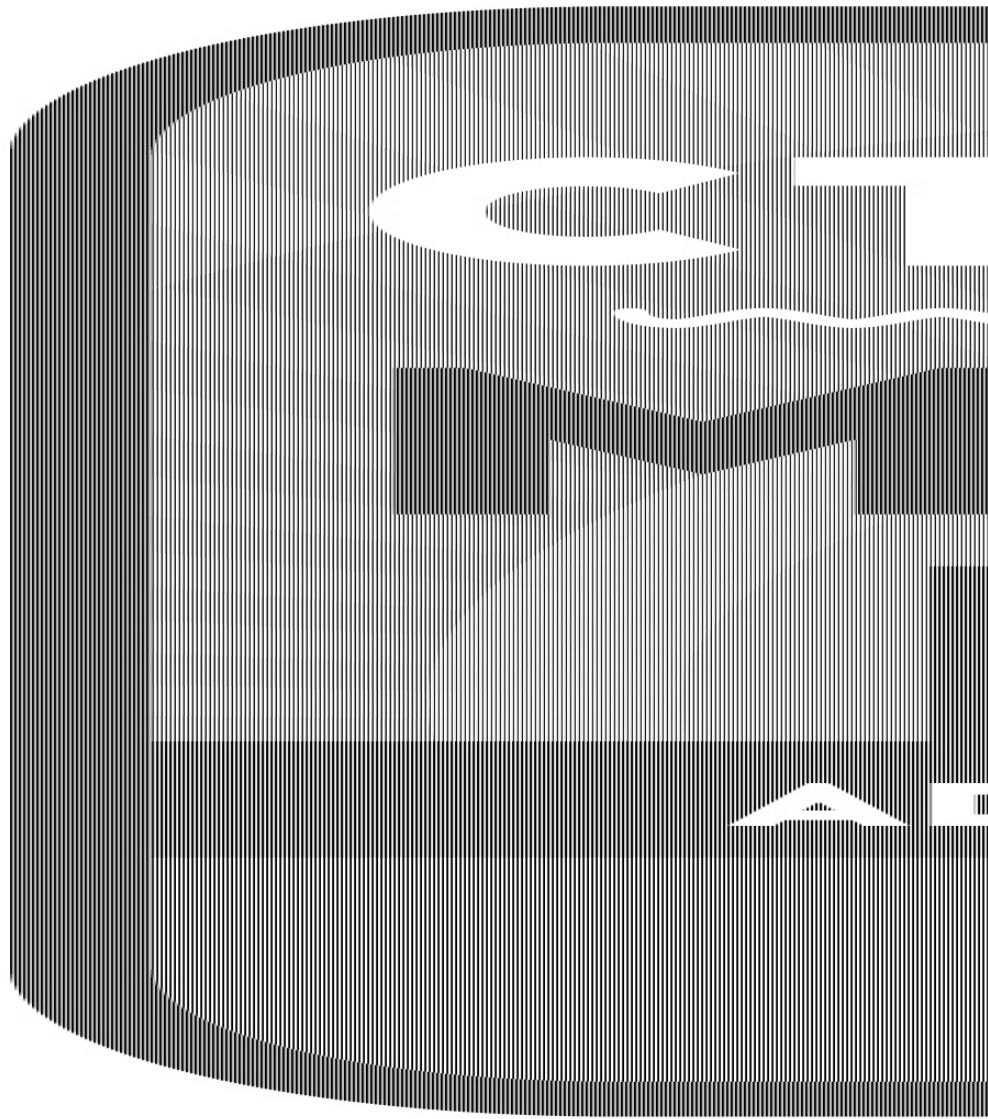
Schalek’s career was derailed as a result of this and it never regained the momentum it had during the war. In 1939 she was arrested by the Gestapo and went into exile in London and then New York City. She died there in obscurity on November 6, 1956.

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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