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Dogwood and tulips abloom in the Danbury Museum gardens, April 2023.

Hello Friends!

We're ever so close to the merry merry month of May already--and the sunny days and colorful blooms that accompany it. The museum's gardens are so beautiful already, you'll want to stop by and take a breather in this oasis on Main Street. The gardens are available 7 days a week for your enjoyment, and of course, we are grateful to the Danbury Garden Club Civic Committee for all their hard work.

With summer getting ever closer, a reminder that we have a full slate of outdoor concerts this year (Fridays June 30, July 28, and August 25). There's a very special concert, though, that will kick off the season and this one is co-hosted by our friends at the Danbury Music Centre. See the graphic and info below, but mark your calendars and plan to join us at the Ives Birthplace on Saturday, May 13, at 3pm as

we celebrate American musical icons of the past and present.

Our nationally-recognized Cursive Camp is BACK this summer. There are two sessions and all the information is up on the [Cursive Camp](#) page of our website.

And one more programming note--Revolutionary War re-enactor and presenter Eric Chandler is with us this Saturday (tomorrow, April 29) at 3pm with his program, "In the beginning..." about the roots of the Revolutionary War. This event is FREE, open to all, and will be held in the museum's Huntington Hall.

We'll remind you all that the museum's social media and website are always the best places to see what we have going on. There are buttons for easy follows on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at the bottom of the newsletter, and our [Upcoming Events](#) page has a calendar and more info about coming attractions.

As many of you know, the museum had a massive influx of material culture items (3-D artifacts, clothing/costume, furniture, toys, hats, etc.) during the pandemic as people downsized, cleared out attics, or moved. Many of you also know that we have been running out of space for the last few years. (As we like to say, by budget and staff we are a very small museum, but by collection size and with our multiple historic structures, we are solidly a mid-size museum.) At the last Board of Trustees meeting in April, the Board voted to make the difficult decision to take a thoughtful and temporary pause on collecting any material culture/3-D items while we carefully assess our collection, and consider our critical and immediate storage and space needs. We will spend the next few months planning and figuring out what is best for the long-term health of both the collection and the museum. In the interim, we will continue to accept donations of photographs, documents, diaries, etc--anything ephemeral! We've updated the [Donations](#) page of our website to reflect this change and there's a place to reach out with questions as well.

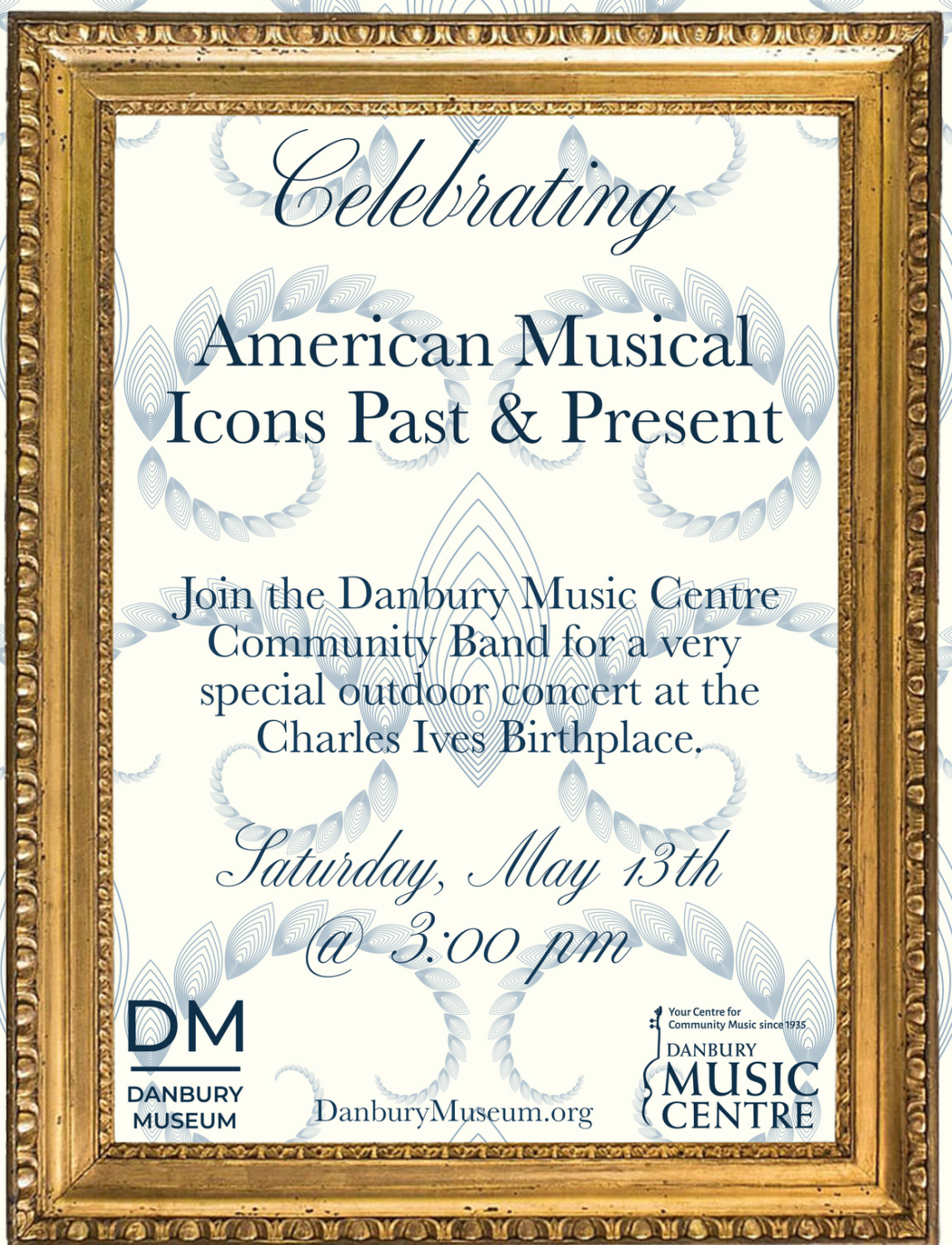
We are, as always, so fortunate to have informative essays from John O'Donnell and Dr Thomas MacGregor. The Civil War makes an appearance in both their pieces for this month--John writing about the Siege of Port Hudson and Tom writing about the beginnings of the land-grant colleges and the Cooperative Extension Service. And Happy Arbor Day--which is today. Thank you both for your contributions.

Thank you all for joining us this month and we'll look forward to seeing you here again in about a month.

[Brigid Guertin](#) (*Executive Director, City Historian*)

[Patrick Wells](#) (*Research Specialist, Social Media Manager*)

[Michele Lee Amundsen](#) (*Collections Manager, Newsletter Editor*)



Celebrate American Musical Icons!

We are so very pleased to be hosting another summer of outdoor concerts, starting off with our friends at the Danbury Music Centre and the talented musicians of the Danbury Music Centre Community Band. What could be more perfect than a concert in the shadow of the Charles Ives Birthplace? George Edward Ives, Charles's father, was the Danbury town bandmaster and so this concert, with the modern iteration of the community band, is a full circle moment for the Charles Ives Birthplace.

Please join us for this very special concert that celebrates American musical icons of the past and present with pieces by Richard Rodgers, Louis Armstrong, George Gershwin, Charles Ives, and more, played by the Danbury Music Centre Community

Band under the direction of Albert Montecalvo. The FREE concert starts at 3pm on Saturday, May 13, next to the Charles Ives Birthplace on Mountainville Avenue and we'll have the big tent up, so just bring your lawn chairs and your friends!

Prior to the concert, from 1-2:30, the Ives Birthplace will be open to the public for walk-through tours.



Contemporary newspaper view of the Union fleet passing Port Hudson published by Harper's Weekly April 18, 1863.

Port Hudson

By John O'Donnell

April is a month studded with crucial dates in Civil War history. April 12 is the date of the first shots fired in the Civil War with the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1861. April 9 is the anniversary of the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Robert E. Lee, to the Army of the Potomac led by General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia in 1865. April 14 is the date that President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth while attending a play at Ford's Theatre in Washington, DC in 1865. This is a good reason to look again at the Civil War because of its historical importance to the history of the United States.

The topic that I have chosen to write about was determined by recent research undertaken at the Danbury Museum & Historical Society. I was delving into a local

resource that is invaluable for the study of the Civil War in Danbury. It is a commemorative book that was published by the James E. Moore Post of the Grand Army of the Republic. The GAR (as it is commonly abbreviated) was the largest of all Union Veterans organizations and the most powerful single-issue political lobby of the late nineteenth century. James E. Moore was a captain in the 17th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry who was killed in action at the Battle of Gettysburg on July 1, 1863. This commemorative book is a goldmine for a Civil War researcher. It contains capsule biographies of many of the local men who served the Union. Some of the entries were written by the veterans themselves while the majority were written by the secretary of the Post. These brief biographies are a joy to read and many of the veterans are very modest about their exploits in battle but very patriotic in saying what motivated their service. In reading these brief biographical sketches one battle kept recurring in them. The battle was named Port Hudson. I have studied the Civil War for a lengthy period. I had heard of this battle but had never researched it. I decided that I needed to educate myself about it.

The Siege of Port Hudson took place from May 22 until July 9, 1863. One of the reasons that it is not better known is that it took place in the shadow of two other much more famous battles. These were the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1-July 3, 1863) and the Battle of Vicksburg (March 29-July 4, 1863). These two battles were arguably the most important victories for the Union forces in the Civil War. Port Hudson was part of the greater Vicksburg Campaign conceived by General Grant. Vicksburg was in Mississippi while Port Hudson was farther south in Louisiana. Grant besieged Vicksburg while General Nathaniel Banks was ordered to capture Port Hudson which was on the lower Mississippi River.

General Banks had a much larger force of 35,000 men while the Confederates under General Franklin Gardner fielded only 7,500 men. Banks at first tried two frontal assaults on Port Hudson. The heights at the port had been fortified by General Pierre G.T. Beauregard who was the Confederacy's master of fixed defensive fortifications. According to the historian John D. Winters who published a book about the siege "Port Hudson, unlike Baton Rouge, was one of the strongest points on the river, and batteries placed upon the bluffs could command the entire river front." It was a position like that of Quebec City on the Saint Lawrence River in the French and Indian War. Banks's initial frontal assaults, despite his numerical superiority and the assistance of naval gunboats, failed miserably. These failed assaults caused Banks to change tactics and he settled in for a siege. Both sides used different techniques to subdue their opponents during the siege. The Union forces used large siege guns and mines while the Confederate forces used trench raids and reused spent ammunition. Banks settled in to a forty-eight-day siege which was at that time the longest siege in the history of the United States Army. The siege grew increasingly desperate for the Confederates who resorted to eating mules and rats because of their dwindling food supply. When General Gardner learned of the Confederate surrender at Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, he officially surrendered Port Hudson on July 9, 1863. These twin victories ensured the Union of complete control of the Mississippi

River and the Confederacy was cut in half.

I also discovered why Port Hudson figured so prominently in the biographies of the veterans in the GAR book. The besieging force at Port Hudson was the XIX Corps of the Union Army. It contained the following regiments in its ranks: 26th Connecticut, 9th Connecticut, 28th Connecticut, 24th Connecticut, 13th Connecticut. Although Connecticut was a small state, a major portion of the XIX Corps consisted of its regiments. One of the members of the 28th Connecticut was Ransom Perry Lyon, a surgeon, who died on August 6, 1863, and is buried in the Center Cemetery in Bethel. So far, I have found only a scant amount of information about him, but the research is ongoing. If you want to know about the Civil War, I think you are committing yourself to a lifetime of research. It is a worthy endeavor!

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!


::Editor's Note: The GAR book that John mentions has been digitized and is up on the [Archival Resources](#) page at the very bottom of the Civil War resources column::

Cursive Camp @ the Danbury Museum!


The Danbury Museum's nationally recognized Cursive Camp is BACK.

The ability to read and write in cursive is a valuable skill set—whether for reading old family letters and recipes or simply mastering the mechanics—and our weeklong camp this summer is the perfect place to start.

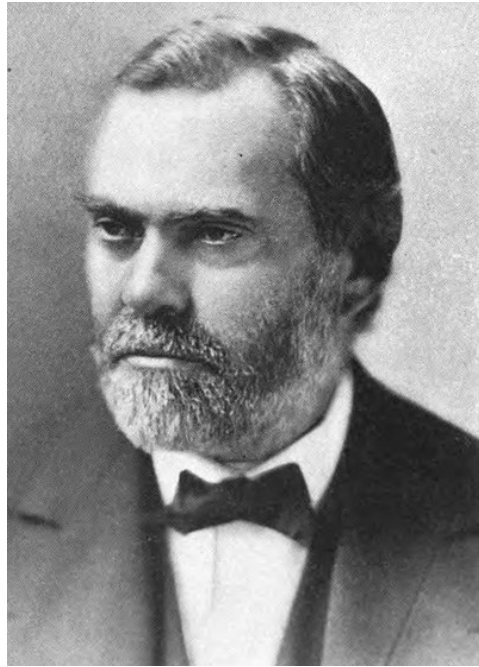
Session I July 17-21 Session II July 24-28



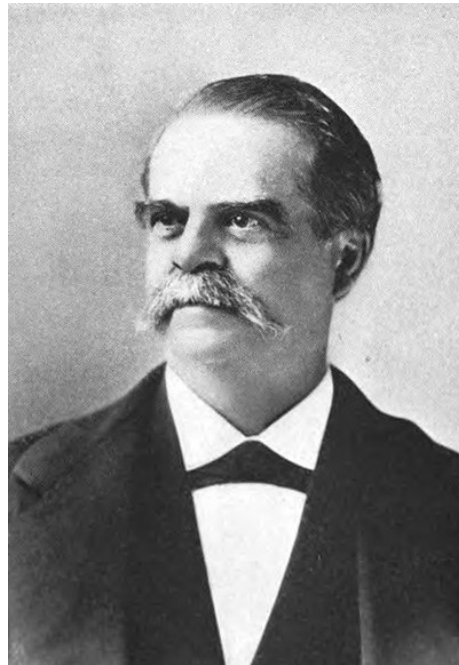
Full details available at
DanburyMuseum.org
or 203-743-5200.



Cursive Camp returns!



Charles Storrs



Augustus Storrs

Cooperative Extension Service

by Thomas MacGregor

In the midst of the Civil War, Congress passed the Morrill Act of 1862 establishing the first public colleges by donating over ten million acres of expropriated lands for “the benefit of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts.” The goal was to provide food for an expanding nation using scientific methods of farming. Sponsored by Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont, this Act under President Abraham Lincoln, marked the first federal aid to higher education. The lands, obtained primarily via treaties, agreements, and

seizures from Native Americans, were divided into six-mile square blocks, and a one square-mile section was reserved for the support of public schools. Each state or territory was granted 30,000 acres in the form of “land scrip” certificates to their congressional representatives. After the war, the Second Morrill Act of 1890 was passed to cover the South and Black colleges, as well as to encourage every state to have a land-grant university. According to the National Archives, the land from the first Morrill Act was rarely used for schools but was instead sold off to support school programs. This led to misuse by opportunists and the need for the second Act.

Meanwhile, in Connecticut, Charles and Augustus Storrs, who grew up on a farm in Mansfield, decided to go into business selling Mansfield-made silk to Hartford manufacturing firms. Eventually, they accumulated a small fortune and in 1881 donated land to found the Storrs Agricultural School. Included in this land-grant were 170 acres, some buildings, 800 books, and \$6,000. By using funds from the Second Morrill Act, Storrs Agricultural School became a land-grant public college. In 1939, it became the University of Connecticut.

At roughly the same time as the Storrs gift, the Hatch Act of 1887 (named after Congressman William Henry Hatch of Missouri) required state land-grant colleges to create agricultural research stations for passing along new information from scientific research, especially regarding soil health and plant growth. Congress allocated \$15,000 of federal funds to each state to establish connections with the community for the dissemination of information from land-grant institutions. These agricultural research stations eventually became the foundation for state cooperative extension services under the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), established in 1875, is considered the first agricultural experiment station in the United States and served as a model for other states. The CAES is located on Huntington Street in New Haven and has an excellent website for information on many land, plant, and bug topics (<https://portal.ct.gov/CAES>).

As authorized in the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, Congress has been able to establish a system of cooperative extension services, connected to land-grant universities, with the intent to inform citizens about useful, current developments in agriculture, uses of solar energy related to agriculture (amended in 2008), home economics, and rural energy. Authored by Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia and Representative Asbury Lever of South Carolina, the Smith-Lever Act was the culmination of years of advocacy by farm groups and others who believed that rural Americans needed more opportunities and education to sustain a vibrant American economy and democracy. The Act helped farmers and home gardeners learn new agricultural techniques by the introduction of home instruction, i.e., outside the University campus.

Eventually, cooperative extension centers in Connecticut were established in all eight counties for the purpose of easily disseminating information and permitting knowledgeable extension agents to address current problems observed in fields,

homes, and rural gardens. The Fairfield County Extension Council was established in 1955 and relocated to Stony Hill Road in Bethel in 1957. The Extension Council houses 4-H youth development, nutrition education, urban agriculture, and, since 1978, master gardener services. The national Master Gardener program was brought to Connecticut to help extension agents reach more people with gardening and horticulture questions.

Arbor Day (April 28th) has arrived heralding the start of a new growing season for backyard gardeners. One can visit the Fairfield County Extension offices at 67 Stony Hill Road in Bethel to get expert advice for your garden or landscape and help with identification of that unusual bug on your patio. If you don't want to capture that strange bug, take a picture with your smart phone and email it to a Master Gardener at fairfield@uconn.edu. Happy Gardening!

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



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