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Hello Friends!

We might be rushing spring a little, but soon we'll be seeing the snowdrops in the museum's garden!

There's a very busy season ahead of us as we get ready to welcome 3rd grade students back to the Danbury Museum in April thanks to a substantial grant secured by State Representative Farley Santos --we cannot wait!

We're pleased to welcome back presenter Eric Chandler for two excellent programs, one in February and one in March. "Slaves, Freemen, & Haitians in the American Revolution" is this Saturday, February 24, at 2 pm. On Saturday, March 23, at 2 pm, Eric will present "Putting the Her in Heroics, Women in the American Revolution." Both of these events are FREE and open to the public, but free will donations are encouraged for attendees.

Every year we host programs or events to commemorate the anniversary of the British Raid on Danbury during the Revolutionary War. This year, we're bringing in author Jack Kelly to speak on his new book, *God Bless Benedict Arnold* on the 247th anniversary of the raid, Friday, April 26! We'll have refreshments and a rousing good evening--and we hope many of you will join us for this special evening. We are also seeking sponsors, so check out the sponsorship opportunities at the bottom of this newsletter!

John O'Donnell joins us again this month with a most interesting exploration of 19th century travel to the Holy Land.

We'll look forward to seeing you here in a month or so, when the days are longer and sunnier and the weather's a little warmer!



*Slaves, Freemen & Haitians in the American Revolution:
Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

Among those largely written out of the historic narrative of the American Revolution were the people of color who fought for both sides, Rebels and Redcoats, and often for the same reason – the opportunity for emancipation and freedom from chattel slavery.

Free Blacks also fought, as did White colonists, to protect their families, their homes and their livelihoods. There are estimates that at times these soldiers of color would constitute as much as 25% of General Washington's Continental forces.

Haitian troops sent over by their French masters protected Southern ports such as Savannah. But their participation in the American War for Independence would have even greater ramifications later on back on their home island.

Blacks were motivated by different social forces in the South than in the North where there was much more of a social revolution than in the slave-holding South.

Most of these people of color are anonymous, as were many of their White comrades in arms. But some have had their stories memorialized for future generations. Those are who we will introduce to you in this program. Perhaps the next time you have the happenstance to view artwork commemorating the American Revolution you will bear in keep in mind who is missing as well as those portrayed.

Presenter bio:

Eric Chandler is retired from a 30+ year career as an underwriter for a leading land title insurance company. He has been involved in American Revolutionary War Living History since 1974. He has portrayed infantry, light infantry, whale-boat raider, and mounted and dismounted dragoons. He is currently serving his third term as a member of the Norwalk Historical Commission and sits on the Norwalk Historical Society Board of Directors.

His artistic endeavors included writing and recording a comedy CD, and decades as a musician playing Saxes in area Rock & Roll and Blues bands. To his credit, or shame, he had his likeness used in an issue of MAD Magazine. Eric is enjoying retirement with his wife Catherine, taking classes, giving lectures on historical topics and continuing to live history.



Eric Chandler is back at the Danbury Museum!

We're so pleased to be welcoming back Eric Chandler for two programs in the coming weeks! Join us on Saturday, February 24, at 2pm for "Slaves, Freemen, & Haitians in the American Revolution" and on Saturday, March 23, at 2pm for "Putting the Her in Heroics, Women in the American Revolution." Both these programs are FREE and open to the public.



Women in the American Revolution: Putting the 'Her' in Heroics

George Washington, Paul Revere, the Marquis de Lafayette are all names we were taught in school as having been heroes of the American War for Independence. *Molly Pitcher* is a name we see given to a rest stop on the New Jersey Turnpike. But who was Molly Pitcher? Was she one person or a composite of two or even three women who performed similar acts of courage?

Whether one, two or three, "Molly" was not the only example of women who served the cause of independence between 1775 and 1783.

Have you ever heard of Anna Maria Lane? Or Sally St. Claire? How about Elizabeth Zane? I didn't think so.

Women in the American Revolution: Putting the 'Her' in Heroics will introduce you to some of the women who risked their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to lift the yoke of British control of the 13 Colonies. Women who are missing from our history books, their stories as soldiers and spies left untold.

There are many tales of courage to be revealed in this power-point illustrated talk about these largely unsung heroines of the American Revolution.

Presenter bio:

Eric Chandler is retired from a 30+ year career as an underwriter for a leading land title insurance company. He has been involved in American Revolutionary War Living History since 1974. He has portrayed infantry, light infantry, whale-boat raider, and mounted and dismounted dragoons. He is currently serving his fourth term as a member of the Norwalk Historical Commission, sits on the Norwalk Historical Society Board of Directors as well as the Board of Directors for the recreated Sheldon's Horse, 2nd Regiment Continental Light Dragoons for which he also serves as lieutenant and adjutant.

His artistic endeavors included writing and recording a non-selling comedy CD, and decades as a musician playing Saxes in area Rock & Roll and Blues bands. To his credit, or shame, he had his likeness used in an issue of MAD Magazine. Eric is enjoying retirement with his wife Catherine, taking classes, giving lectures on historical topics and continuing to live history.

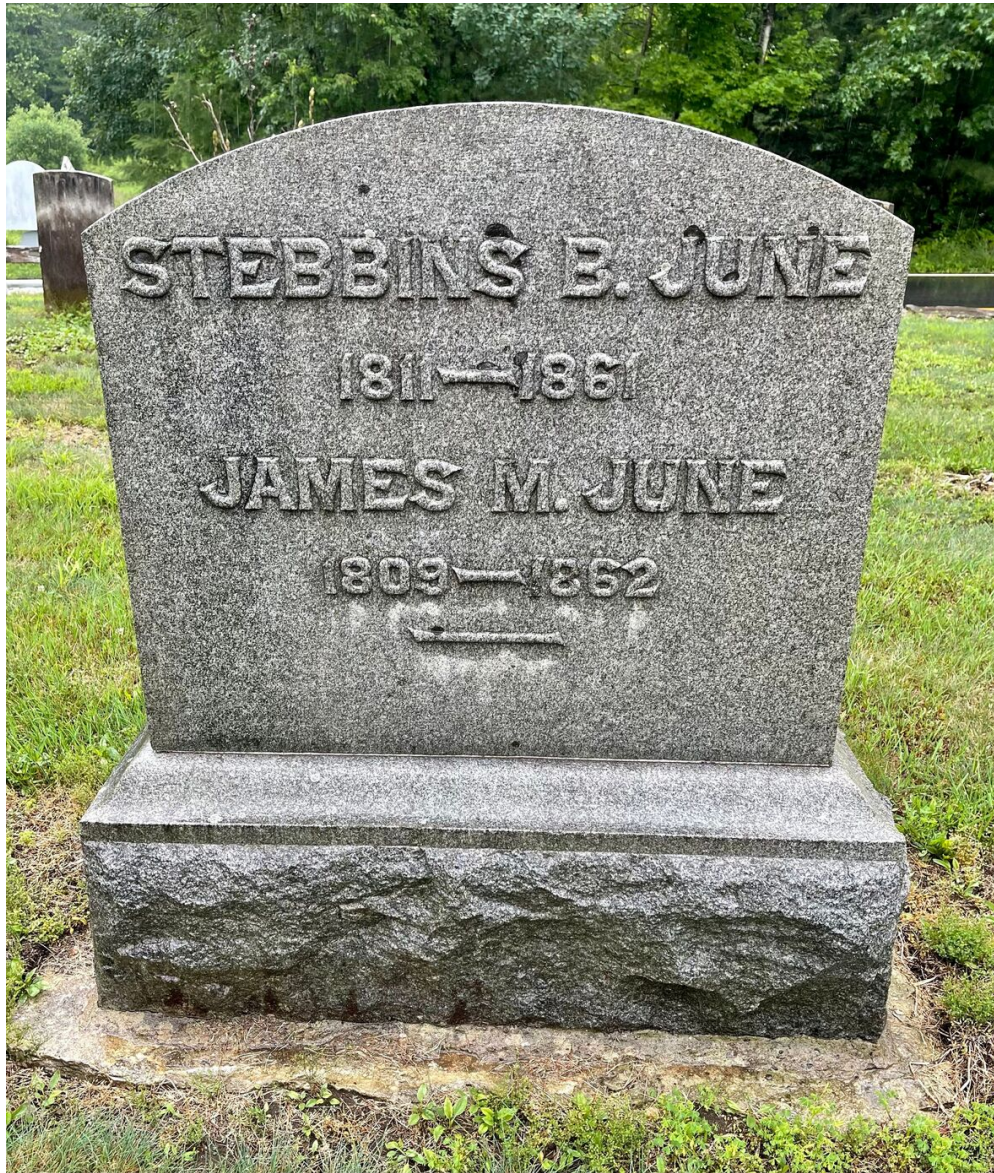


Eric Chandler is at the Danbury Museum again on Saturday, March 23!

**“Wonder Women: 1920-2024”
Celebrate Women’s History Month
Find out who they were and what they do.**

**Saturday, March 9, 2024
1:30 - 3:00 P.M.**

Join the League of Women Voters of Northern Fairfield County for a program celebrating Women's History Month on Saturday, March 9, 2024 from 1:30-3. This program is FREE and open to all.



Stebbins B June headstone via Find A Grave, photo by tbyvci.

Three Journeys to the Holy Land

by John O'Donnell

One of the highlights of volunteering at the Danbury Museum & Historical Society is the possibility of exposure to original documents. This is one of the magical moments for an historian. To be able to read and analyze an original document and then to identify people mentioned in the document and understand the writer's motivations is a boon for an historian. Then to work on contextualizing the document and understand the reverberations of the document in the wider historical narrative is a vindication of the study of history and an unmatched pleasure. I am happy to report that this recently happened to me and suggested an essay about this wonderful experience.

Interestingly this topic that I came across had never been studied by me in any deep way. I knew some superficial facts about journeys to the Holy Land. For millennia, travelers have been undertaking this arduous journey for a number of wide and varied reasons. Of course the religious aspect of the journey seems to have been the predominant one.

While working at the Danbury Museum, I was told by one of our vital researchers, Patrick Wells, about a manuscript that he was reading that he thought I would also be interested in reading. The manuscript is the record of the journey of an American citizen to the Holy Land in 1839. We had some difficulty identifying the author of the manuscript. But Patrick did some great research and was able to identify the author as Stebbins Baxter June who is called "Uncle Stebbins" in a note added to the manuscript. Once this identification was made the story behind the manuscript became much clearer as to why it was in our collection.

I have started reading the manuscript but am only in the early stages of this process. Uncle Stebbins is a very powerful writer. There is a great deal of descriptive prose that gives the reader a feeling that they are accompanying him on this momentous journey, and we feel the immediacy of his ability to bring us with him. We are early in our researches on Stebbins Baxter June, but we have already found out some pertinent details of his life. We think he was born in North Salem, NY, in 1811 and died in 1861. He is buried in the June Cemetery in North Salem. His family owned the property on which the famous landmark, the Balanced Rock, is located. His family was also connected to the company that organized the first traveling circus in the United States. This was June, Titus, Angevine & Company. He may also have been involved in going abroad and procuring animals for the circus. And the reason we have the manuscript in our collection is that he was the uncle of Laura B. Scott (nee June) who married John Fanton. They traveled extensively throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas and collected artifacts from each country they visited. Some of their collections ultimately became the Scott-Fanton Museum which is our predecessor.

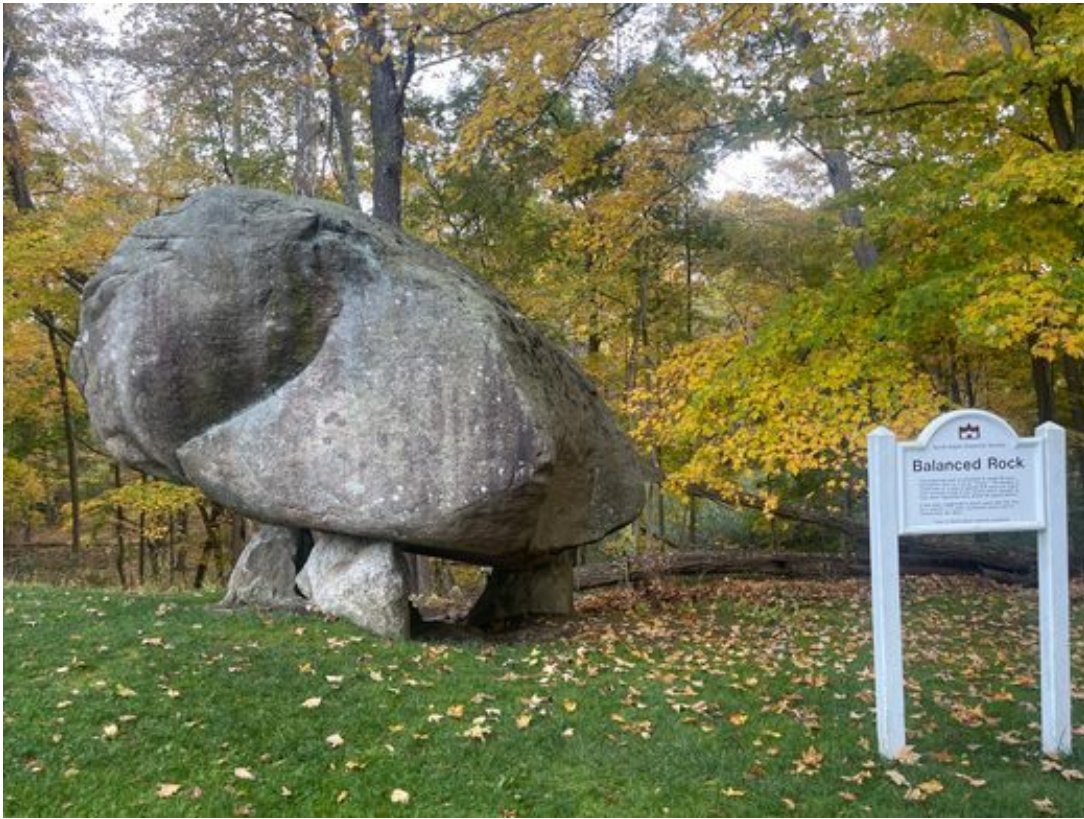
During the same week I was introduced to the manuscript about June's journey to the Holy Land, I watched a movie about the stories of O. Henry which was introduced by John Steinbeck, the great American novelist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. I was doing some background research on Steinbeck and came across the following story about Steinbeck's paternal grandfather, Johann Großteinbeck (the name was shortened to Steinbeck when the family came to the United States). His grandfather emigrated from Prussia to Palestine in November 1849. He was a cofounder of a farm in Jaffa called Mount Hope. He and his family members had lived in Jerusalem first before moving to Jaffa in 1851. The motivation for the founding of the farm and their journey to Jerusalem (they were Millennial Protestants and the United States) was to train the Jewish citizens of Palestine to farm and thereby accelerate the Second Coming of Jesus. In 1854, another family led by Walter Dickson, his wife Sara, son Henry, & his daughters Elmira, Marie & Caroline, came to the farm from Groton, Massachusetts. In June of 1854, there was a double wedding on the farm: Johann Großteinbeck to Elmira Dickson & his brother Friedrich to Marie Dickson. Then the Mount Hope community was shattered by an attack on the farm which has gone down in history as the Outrages at Jaffa.

Mount Hope had repeatedly been plagued by harassment from the nearby Arab community. But none of this had been violent until January 11, 1858. On that day five Arabs attacked the farm and created an international incident in the process. They murdered Friedrich Großteinbeck and raped his wife Marie and her mother Sarah Dickson. Under pressure from the United States and Prussian consulates, the Ottoman authorities arrested four of the attackers and sentenced them to life imprisonment. In June 1858, the farm's remaining residents left the colony and emigrated to the United States. On January 30, 1966, John Steinbeck made his own journey to the Holy Land and one of his stops was a tour of the Mount Hope site.

There was another visitor to Mount Hope who preceded the attack on the farm. In January 1857, Herman Melville, arguably the greatest American novelist of the nineteenth century, came to the farm. Melville

was in the Holy Land as part of a Grand Tour of Europe. The journey to the Holy Land resulted in Melville writing an epic poem titled, *Clarel: A Poem & Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* published in 1876. This poem, at 18,000 lines, is probably the longest in American literature, and is longer than the *Iliad*, *Aeneid*, or *Paradise Lost*. The poem concerns a character named Clarel on a pilgrimage through the Holy Land with a group of companions who question each other as they pass through Biblical sites. Melville uses the poem to explore his own spiritual dilemma, his inability to either accept or reject Christian doctrine in the face of Darwin's challenge. Melville used the Outrages at Jaffa as a model for a character's death in *Clarel*; John Steinbeck also alluded to the Outrages in his novel *East of Eden*. The Outrages at Jaffa certainly reverberated through American literature. These journeys to the Holy Land, all close together chronologically, had somewhat different motivations. The Mount Hope experiment grew out of a Millennial determination to speed up the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Melville's own Holy Land Journey grew out his desire to reaffirm and restore his Christian faith. We are still working to determine what motivated Stebbins Baxter June's own Holy Land Journey.

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!



Balanced Rock in North Salem, NY. Via Atlas Obscura.

Photo by ChiChi Ubiña



MARCH 10
2 PM
Danbury High School

A Journey

Musical One-Woman Show
Written & Performed by Kimberly Wilson

Running time: 75 Minutes
Followed by a Brief Talk Back



Tickets are free and available to the public by scanning the QR Code above
This event is generously sponsored by:



ABOUT THE SHOW

A Journey is an intimate and powerful exploration of history and the Black Woman's experience. Kimberly Wilson tells of the struggles and influence of Black Womanhood with courage, dignity, faith, hope, and strength in perfect lockstep with the history of the United States.

Follow eight women in eight pivotal generations as she presents their stories through song, movement and monologue.



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43 Main Street, Danbury CT 06810
DanburyMuseum.org



God Bless Benedict Arnold A Revolutionary Evening

Friday, April 26, 5:30-7 @ The Danbury Museum

Join us for a truly revolutionary evening on the 247th anniversary of British Raid on Danbury. Historian Jack Kelly will speak and then read from his new book, *God Bless Benedict Arnold*. Enjoy light refreshments and a rousing introduction by Danbury City Historian, Brigid Guertin.

\$1000 Presenting Sponsor:

Your business logo/graphic on all the evening's promotional materials and social media posts about the event. Prominent placement on museum's Upcoming Events website page through April 26.

\$250 Advertising Sponsor:

Your business logo/graphic featured with other advertisers on the Upcoming Events webpage for the the event and featured on event related social media through April 26. (The museum website receives 4500-7000 visitors per month.)

\$100 Friend of the Event Sponsor:

Your business name featured on signage in the exhibit hall.

For all sponsorship opportunities and questions please contact Michele Lee Amundsen at m.amundsen@danbury-ct.gov.

We're excited to welcome author Jack Kelly to the Danbury Museum on April 26, 2024, the 247th anniversary of the British Raid on Danbury. It'll be a truly *revolutionary* evening, and we're seeking sponsors to cover the cost of the speaker and the refreshments for the event. Interested? Let us know and we'll be happy to start that conversation with you. In any event, we hope to see you for a night of historic fun on Friday, April 26th!

FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY STORE

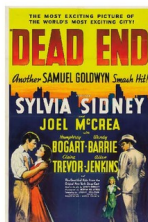
CELEBRATE WILLIAM WYLER

Multi Oscar-Winning Film Director

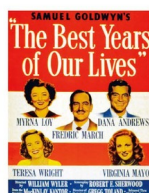
Four Film Screenings with Special Guests
and Film Memorabilia

6:30 P.M. | FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY STORE
SECOND FLOOR

1499 POST ROAD, FAIRFIELD, CT



MARCH 12
Dead End (1937);
Special Guest:
Joel McCrea's son,
Peter McCrea



APRIL 9
The Best Years of Our Lives (1946)



OCTOBER 1
The Desperate Hours (1955)



NOVEMBER 19
The Liberation of L.B. Jones (1970)

All screenings will feature light refreshments and will be followed by Q&A with Prof. Jay Rozgonyi and William Wyler's daughters, Catherine and Melanie

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