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Beautiful lilies in the Danbury Museum gardens, thank you as always to Danbury Garden Club Civic Committee!

Hello Friends!

We're grateful to be with you again this August as we head into the last month of summer.

We had a very successful three weeks of Cursive Camp during the month of July. Thank you to teacher Danielle BonTempo, helpers Gail Doyle, Lila Schlissel, Julia Siergie; high school volunteers Diego, Gabe, James G. and James A.,

and all of the #CursiveCamp team who made this month happen. And thank you to our state legislators--Representative Pat Callahan, Representative Farley Santos and Senator Julie Kushner--for stopping by and sharing inspiring cursive stories with our students.

We're pleased to have John O'Donnell with us this month, writing about a most interesting Connecticut connection to Captain James Cook. New to our newsletter, summer intern Drew Cousens writes about the Danbury Fair as part of a series we'll be sharing with you over the coming months. Drew has undertaken the mammoth task of digitizing our Danbury Fair ephemeral subject files, and we hope to be able to make them available digitally on our website in the near future. Thank you very much to both John and Drew!

In addition to Drew, we've had wonderful college and high school interns Max and Kaylan, respectively, who have made incredible progress with processing archival materials this summer. It's been a pleasure having them with us and they've done great work.

We know many of you are fully invested in our summer "orb hunt" that we participate in with other organizations from all over western Connecticut. (Thank you to our friends from the Merwinsville Hotel!) We have three more orbs to hide and we'll be doing the next one at the end of this week. Stay tuned to the museum's social media for the announcement that the game is afoot!

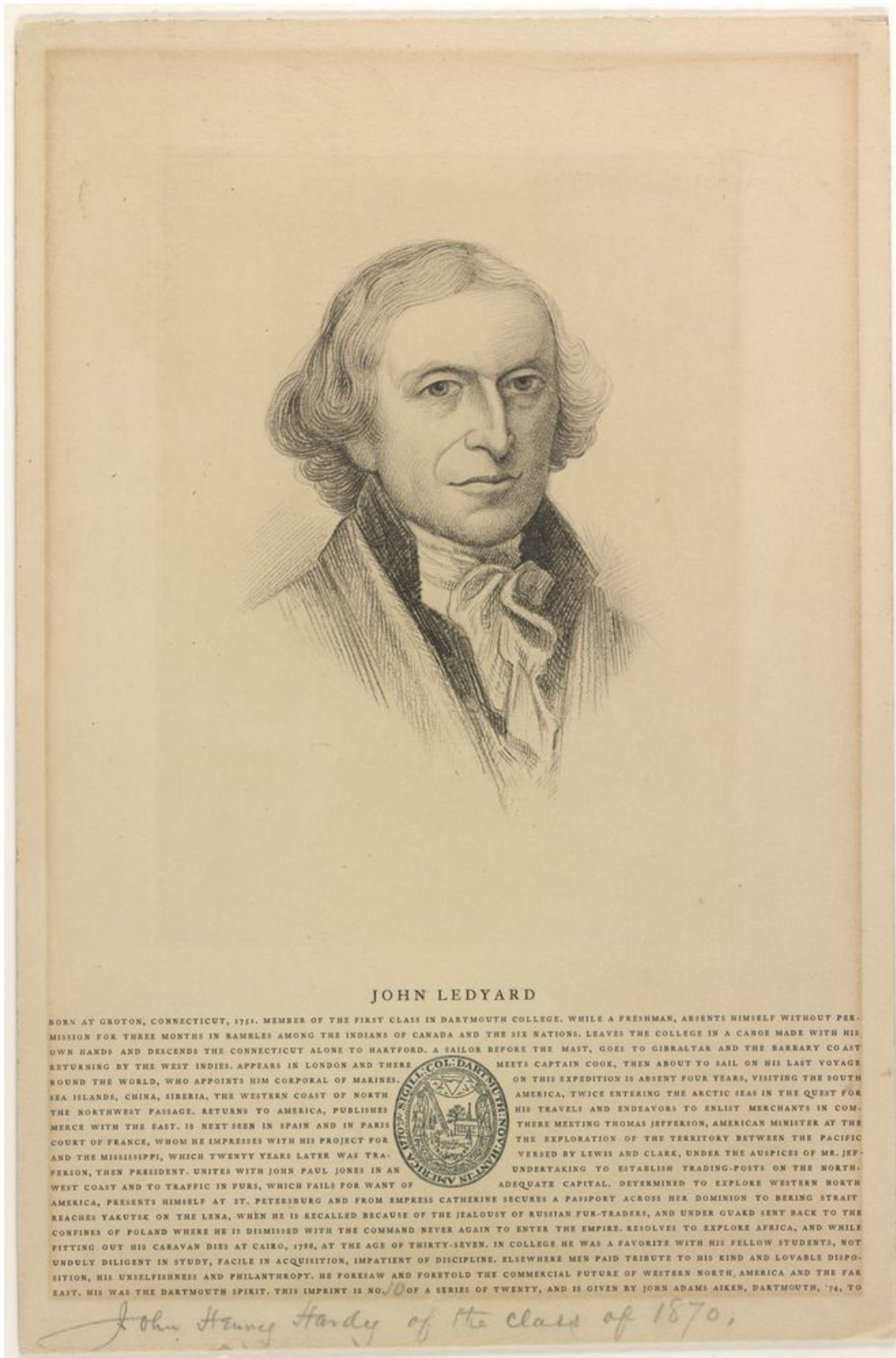
Billy Michael returns to the Danbury Museum for our final summer concert to perform his Davy Crockett presentation on Saturday, August 17, 2pm. All are welcome and this performance will be held in Huntington Hall. This event is

FREE, but donations are gratefully accepted.

There is also a new group of quilts up as part of our ongoing *The Art of Quilting* exhibit. You'll want to stop by and see this round of amazing quilts and stories.

And finally, we're working with our great friends at the Danbury Music Centre on a week of celebratory Ives programming in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of his birth. We're busy nailing down all the final details, but you will want to save the dates of October 14-27 for a plethora of Ives-related events and concerts.

We'll look forward to seeing you in September!



John Ledyard

A Connecticut Connection to Captain Cook

by John O'Donnell

Recently a friend of mine who has similar reading tastes told me about and recommended a book to me that he was reading and enjoying. The book was *The Wide Wide Sea: Imperial Ambition, First Contact and the Fateful Final Voyage of Captain James Cook* by Hampton Sides. I have been interested in the career of Captain Cook for a long time and the book immediately went on to my to be read list. As a result of this conversation, I watched a podcast by Hampton Sides of his presentation to the Captain Cook Society which piqued my interest even more in reading this book. But during his presentation, Sides mentioned a man who was part of Cook's crew that I had never heard of before. This was John Ledyard who was from Connecticut. His own story as an explorer is the story of a man who made significant contributions to the expanding knowledge of our world. We will explore his brief career and give you an idea of his fearless adventuring in the 18th century.

John Ledyard (1751-1789) was born in Groton, Connecticut, and was the first child of Abigail Youngs Ledyard and Captain John Ledyard Jr., son of Squire John Ledyard Sr. His early education took place in Hartford. His uncle was Colonel William Ledyard who was killed at the Battle of Groton Heights in 1781 after surrendering to a British officer. The town of Ledyard is named after him. John Ledyard briefly attended Dartmouth College in New Hampshire (which was then only three years old) and began his studies on April 22, 1772. His career at the college was brief and he abandoned his studies for good in May 1773. However, his exit from the college was certainly a memorable one and a precursor of his future career. He made his own dugout canoe and paddled it for a week down the Connecticut River to his grandfather's farm which was 140 miles away. (Today the Ledyard Canoe Club in

New Hampshire sponsors an annual canoe trip down the Connecticut River in his honor.) Ledyard had decided that he wanted to travel, and travel and explore he certainly did. He shipped out as a common seaman on a voyage to Gibraltar, the Barbary Coast, and the Caribbean. On his next voyage he jumped ship in Portsmouth, England, but was impressed into the Royal Navy as a marine. His first British voyage would be a monumental one.

On July 12, 1776, Ledyard set sail as a Royal Marine with Captain James Cook, the leading explorer of the age, on his third and final voyage. The voyage lasted for four years and returned to England in October 1780. During this voyage, Ledyard visited the Sandwich Islands, the Cape of Good Hope, Prince Edward Islands of South Africa, Kerguelen Islands, Tasmania, New Zealand, the Cook Islands Tonga, Tahiti, and then Hawaii. Ledyard was believed to be the first Euro-American to be tattooed. This voyage also explored the northwest coast of North America making Ledyard perhaps the first United States citizen to touch the Western coast along the Aleutian Islands and Alaska into the Bering Sea and back to Hawaii. On the return to Hawaii there was tension between the British and the Hawaiians. A cutter was stolen from one of Cook's ships and he demanded that it be returned. When it was not, he attempted to abduct the King of Hawaii. His subjects objected and Cook was killed along with four marines. Luckily, Ledyard, who was on the beach with Cook and his party, was not killed in the encounter.

When Ledyard returned to England in October of 1780, he was sent to Canada to fight in the American Revolution. Instead, he deserted and returned to Dartmouth. He wrote a book entitled *Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage* which was published in 1783. It was the first work to be protected by copyright in the

United States. It was protected by Connecticut State copyright by special act of the legislature (federal copyright was not introduced until 1790). His work was described as the first travelogue describing Hawaii ever to be published in America. Ledyard's voyage with Captain Cook had only whetted his appetite for more exploration and he embarked on more major exploration endeavors.

Ledyard went to Paris and conceived of a remarkable journey with encouragement from Thomas Jefferson, who was our ambassador to France at the time. Jefferson and Ledyard came up with the idea that Ledyard explore the American continent by going overland through Russia, crossing the Bering Strait and going south through Alaska and then across the American west to Virginia. Ledyard enthusiastically seized on this plan and left London in December 1786. He left St. Petersburg in June 1787 to travel through Moscow, Ekaterinburg, Omsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, and Kirensk reaching Yakutsk after eleven weeks of arduous travel. Here he stayed for the winter. He returned to Irkutsk and was about to resume his journey. In February of 1788, Ledyard was arrested under orders from Empress Catherine the Great--who viewed Ledyard as a threat to the lucrative Russian fur trade--and deported to Poland.

This did not deter Ledyard from further exploration endeavors. He returned to London and learned about the African Association. This was a British club dedicated to the exploration of West Africa. The club was recruiting explorers and Ledyard was ready to go. He was willing to lead an expedition from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. He arrived in Alexandria in August 1788. But the preparations for the journey proceeded at a snail's pace. Late in November 1788

Ledyard was in Cairo and fell ill. He accidentally poisoned himself with sulfuric acid. He died on January 10, 1789, at the age of thirty-seven. He was buried in the sand dunes lining the Nile River and the location of his grave is still unknown today. What remarkable adventures and exploration he crammed into his brief life after leaving Connecticut! Although he was overshadowed by Cook, he carved out an incredible place in the annals of exploration. Thomas Jefferson described Ledyard in his 1821 autobiography as “a man of genius, of some science, and of fearless courage and enterprise.” His own description of himself serves as a fitting epitaph: “The greatest traveler in history—eccentric, irregular, rapid, unaccountable, curious, without vanity, majestic as a comet.”

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!



The Danbury Fair in the 19th century.

The Danbury Fair's Background and Origins

by Drew C. Cousens

More than two centuries ago, the vast part of Connecticut was agricultural, and its economy very much the same. Local tradition states that two smuggled Merino sheep arrived from Spain in 1809, and went on to inspire every county fair in the country. Farmers were then uncertain about the sale and introduction of foreign livestock breeds, though their new owner, Elkanah Watson of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, proposed such means would spark interest from elsewhere. By 1821, the town held its first agricultural fair, and would be influenced by encroaching industrialization over the next several decades.

Danbury itself was settled and plotted primarily by families from Norwalk and Stamford, who entered Pahquioque, as it was known, by 1684. This stock, set back in the hilly interior of the county, found itself at the crossroads into New England, and retained a reclusive identity following the British raid in 1777. Close to both the New York State border and its namesake City, proximity proved vital for trade and population growth. Not long after the Revolutionary War, hatting began to take off, forefronted by Zadoc Benedict by 1780; this production dominated the region well into the next century.

In supplying the greatest number of woolen hats by the turn of nineteenth century, the issue of carrying these materials remained a challenge: as attested by Ezra Mallory (of the noted hat factory), travel by wagon to South Norwalk and by sloop to New York was not an easy venture from Danbury, potentially taking days to reach markets. White Street hatters Samuel H. Rundle and George White sought a racetrack for their horses, necessitating a half-mile tract of land to be

bought. As such, the Danbury Farmers and Manufacturer's Society was formed.

Modernization during this time could not be staved off for long. The construction of the Danbury and Norwalk Railroad was beneficial to local commerce. Originally planned in 1835 as the Fairfield County Railroad, its charter was revived in 1850 and the line was laid by 1852—expanding the reach of heavy industry which had begun along the coast—and eliminating Danbury's isolation amongst the Berkshire foothills. Ambitions of businessmen in the Pleasure Park Association and Savings Bank president John W. Bacon organized the first formal Fair in the first days of October, 1869.

A wide selection of wares, both agrarian and otherwise, rose to compete with fairs erected in Norwalk and Ridgefield, exhibiting the interests of industrialists and farmers alike; they were further promoted in premium lists, offering \$1,500, roughly \$25,000 at present. Products sold in the first five years of the Fair's existence included millinery supplies, crops, leatherwares, farm tools, livestock, and clothing. To accommodate the increasingly-popular horse races, a tent was rented from the Barnum & Bailey Circus, which was then used to house produce, instruments, stoves, quilts, flowers, and furniture. During the next five years, attendance soared to more than half of the town's population.

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of essays that Drew will be contributing to the newsletter over the coming months.

Drew C. Cousens is a History major at UCONN Stamford, and has worked as an intern at the Danbury Museum since May 2024. He has digitized thousands of documents related to the Great Danbury State Fair, in operation from

1869 to 1981.

ORB Hunt *in the hills of* Western Connecticut

Find a unique glass orb hidden at participating places - it's yours to keep! Join the treasure hunt!

What is an Orb Hunt?
The Merwinsville Hotel Restoration group is very excited to continue the Glass Orb Hunt that was kicked off in 2021 to celebrate the Hotel's 50th anniversary of the restoration project. There are 75 artisan created glass orbs that are hidden at historic sites and non-profits in the Litchfield and Fairfield County area. The rules are simple...if you find one, you get to keep it! Just be sure to register it online at www.merwinsvillehotel.org.

Participating Businesses and Organizations

Brookfield
B1. Brookfield Craft Center

Danbury
D1. Danbury Museum and Historical Society
D2. Danbury Railway Museum

Gaylordsville
G1. Merwinsville Hotel Restoration, Inc.
G2. Browns Forge
G3. Little Red Schoolhouse
G4. Washington Oak Park (DAR)

Kent
K1. Eric Sloane Museum
K2. Kent Historical Society
K3. Connecticut Antique Machinery Association

Litchfield
L1. Litchfield Historical Society
L2. Bantam Cinema

New Fairfield
NF1. New Fairfield Historical Society/Little Red Schoolhouse
NF2. Preserve New Fairfield

New Milford
NM1. Gallery 25 and Creative Arts Studio
NM2. Harrybrooke Park
NM3. Merryall Center for the Arts
NM4. Old Boardman Bridge, c/o New Milford Trust for Historic Preservation
NM5. Village Center for the Arts
NM6. The Silo
NM7. New Milford Historical Society
NM8. Pratt Nature Center

Sherman
S1. Sherman Historical Society

Warren
W1. Warren Historical Society

Washington
W1. Gunn Historical Museum

It's free and fun to be an Orbivore!

Sponsored by the Merwinsville Hotel and the New Milford Commission on the Arts

ORB Hunt *in the hills of* Western Connecticut

2024

Participating Businesses and Organizations Contact Information

B1 BROOKFIELD CRAFT CENTER - 286 Whisconier Road Brookfield. www.brookfieldcraft.org 203.775.4526

D1 THE DANBURY MUSEUM and HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 43 Main Street Danbury. www.danburymuseum.org 203.743.5200
D2 DANBURY RAILWAY MUSEUM - 120 White Street Danbury. www.danburyrail.org 203.778.8337

G1 MERWINSVILLE HOTEL RESTORATION - 1 Browns Forge Road Gaylordsville, CT 06755 www.merwinsvillehotel.org 860.350.4443
G2 BROWNS FORGE - Browns Forge Road Gaylordsville. 860.355.0351
G3 LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE - 129 Gaylord Road Gaylordsville 860.355.0351
G4 WASHINGTON OAK - Gaylord Road Gaylordsville. www.ctdar.org/properties.html

K1 ERIC SLOANE MUSEUM - 31 Cornwall Road Kent portal.ct.gov/ECD-EricSloaneMuseum 860.927.3849
K2 KENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Seven Hearths Museum 4 Studio Hill Road Kent kenthistoricalsociety.org 860.927.4587
K3 CT ANTIQUE MACHINERY ASSOCIATION - 31 Kent-Cornwall Road Kent. ctamachinery.com

L1 LITCHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 7 South Street Litchfield www.litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org 860.567.4501
L2 BANTAM CINEMA - 115 Bantam Lake Road, Bantam. www.bantamcinema.org 860.361.6066

NF1 NEW FAIRFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY - www.newfairfieldhistoricalsociety.org 203.312.5687
NF2 PRESERVE NEW FAIRFIELD - 33 CT-37 New Fairfield. www.preservenewfairfield.org

NM1 GALLERY 25 - 11 Railroad Street New Milford. www.gallery25ct.com 860.355.6009
NM2 HARRYBROOKE PARK - 100 Still River Drive New Milford www.harrybrookepark.org 860.799.652
NM3 MERRYALL CENTER FOR THE ARTS - 8 Chapel Hill Road New Milford. info@merryallcenter.org
NM4 OLD BOARDMAN BRIDGE - Boardman Road and Route 7 New Milford c/o nmtfhp.org
NM5 VILLAGE CENTER FOR THE ARTS - 12 Main Street New Milford www.villagecenterarts.org 860.354.4318
NM6 THE SILO - 44 Upland Road New Milford www.facebook.com/thesiloct 860.355.0300
NM7 NEW MILFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY - No. 6 Aspetuck Avenue New Milford www.nmhistorical.org 860.354.3069
NM8 PRATT NATURE CENTER - 163 Papermill Road New Milford www.prattcenter.org 860.354.3069

S1 SHERMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 10 Route 37 Center Sherman www.shermanhistoricalsociety.org 860.354.3038

W1 WARREN HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 7 Sackett Hill Road, Warren. www.warrenhistoricalsociety.org/ 860.503.8545

W1 GUNN HISTORICAL MUSEUM - 5 Wykeham Road Washington www.gunnlibrary.org/gunn-museum 860.868.7756

It's free and fun to be an Orbivore!

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