

Peary Got Near Pole. Couldn't Reach Norfolk. Snowbound.

These were the headlines in the *Hartford Courant* on February 18, 1907, following Robert E. Peary's aborted attempt to arrive in Norfolk in time for his scheduled talk at Village Hall. The irony was not lost on the reporter: "Commander Robert E. Peary has reached the farthest north of any man. He has come mighty near the North Pole, but he failed last week to reach Norfolk and had to abandon his attempt, snowbound. In a letter to H. H. Bridgman he says he is determined to succeed in his Norfolk adventure even if he has to use dogs and sleds."

The following week, Peary's rescheduled appearance was announced, with reference to his myriad attempted "dashes" to the North Pole: "Peary to make another dash for this place starting from New York." This time he was successful and, following his talk entitled *Farthest North*, he was treated to an exceptionally fast sleigh ride by Norfolk liveryman John J. O'Brien to catch a train back to the city. He was said to have enjoyed the ride immensely.

This was Peary's second visit to Norfolk. Two years earlier he had given a slide lecture at the Eldridge Gymnasium, and at that time either his host Alice Bridgman, sister of library founder Isabella Eldridge, or Isabella herself asked him for his signature. It was then pasted into the Library's copy of his 1898 book *Northward Over the "Great Ice."* This copy now resides in our Rare Book Room.

In the library archives is a list of books presented to the Library by their authors, from the opening of the Library in 1889 to 1903. Many of these books were inscribed by the authors, who often had some connection with Norfolk. Charles Battell Loomis, humorist and cousin of Isabella Eldridge, presented his book *Cheerful Americans* in 1903. For a good laugh, read the chapter "Poe's Raven in an Elevator" in *More Cheerful Americans* (1904), also on the shelf.

Alice Mabel Bacon presented an inscribed copy of her book *Japanese Girls and Women* (1902), possibly when visiting

her sister Mrs. Eugene Smith, who summered on Laurel Way. The daughter of Rev. Leonard Bacon, Alice was 14 when her father took under his guardianship 12-year-old Yamakawa Sutematsu, one of a group of five young women sent by the Japanese government to be educated in this country, and the girls developed a close bond. Be sure to check out Janice Nimura's *Daughters of the Samurai* (2015) for a riveting

Continued on page 2



Robert E. Peary dressed in polar expedition gear aboard his ship, the *Roosevelt*. Photo: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

FROM | THE | DIRECTOR



As we gathered on the Village Green for the Pet Parade and Summer Reading Kick-off on a beautiful Friday evening in June, the buoyant mood was palpable. Children ran around playing games set up by the Botelle PTO, dogs barked, a baby goat bleated, neighbors greeted neighbors, and the strains of John Philip Sousa filled the air. In some ways, it felt like we had all just been released. And hopefully we have!

Unlike last summer, we are planning a variety of in-person and hybrid programs at the Library. We will not entirely give up “zooming.” The outreach of virtual programs

cannot be surpassed. But we look forward to welcoming everyone back to the Library for our summer reading special events, many taking place outdoors, on successive Monday evenings through July (see page 7). In the fall, Mark Scarbrough’s ever popular Book Group (now going on its 12th year!) will continue in a hybrid model with two sessions for each book, one in-house and the other virtual. The Norfolk knitters, anxious to return to the ambience of the Library, have had their first hybrid session here, with a group of knitters zooming in from afar.

In this issue of *The Owl* we look back at what we’ve been up to this winter and spring. Some of our programs were recorded, and you can find them on our YouTube channel. Have fun and stay safe!

Continued from page 1

account of the Japanese girls’ experience. In 1888 Alice was invited to teach at the Peeresses’ School, established in Tokyo for girls from aristocratic families. *Japanese Girls and Women* (no longer in the library collection) is based upon her experiences in Japan and the friendships she developed with Japanese women.

In 1900 novelist, literary critic, and playwright William Dean Howells gave the Library an autographed copy of his book *Tuscan Cities* (1886). Howells was American Consul to Venice for four years and fell in love with this iconic region of Italy. His son John Mead Howells was a frequent guest of his uncle Charles L. Mead, who summered in a house on Maple Avenue.

Nearby on Maple Avenue was the summer home of Charles Spofford, son of Ainsworth R. Spofford, former Librarian of Congress (1871-1897). Upon retiring from that position, Spofford wrote *A Book for all Readers Designed as an Aid to the Collection, Use, and Preservation of Books and the Formation of Public and Private Libraries* (1900), based on his experience developing the LOC collection. He

presented it to the Library, perhaps with the thought that it would be helpful to Isabella Eldridge, who continued to oversee the purchase of books for the Library.

Norfolk’s intimate connection with Yale University is reflected in the autographed copy of *The M. Steinert Collection of Keyed and Stringed Instruments with Various Treatises on the History of these Instruments* (1893), given to the Library by Morris Steinert. A musical instrument dealer in New Haven, Steinert likely visited Norfolk as a guest of Gustave Stoeckel, Yale’s first Professor of Music, who summered in a house on Litchfield Road. In 1900, Steinert donated eighty-three historical instruments to Yale, providing the core of the future Collection of Musical Instruments.

Suffragist and women’s rights advocate Isabella Beecher Hooker, sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe, presented a copy of her booklet *A Brief Sketch of the Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, written in 1896 after her sister died. For many years Isabella summered in the house on the corner of Maple Avenue and Emerson Street. We do not know to what extent she interacted with Isabella Eldridge, who was not a supporter of women’s suffrage. But they undoubtedly crossed paths in this small town, and it would have been interesting to hear them converse on that subject. For more on Norfolk’s role in the campaign for women’s suffrage, be sure to stop by the Norfolk Historical Museum this summer where the exhibition *From Solitude to Sisterhood: Norfolk Women and the Vote* is on display.

— Ann Havemeyer

NORFOLK LIBRARY STAFF

Ann Havemeyer, Director

MaryAnn Anderson

Leslie Battis

Eileen Fitzgibbons

Laurie Foulke-Green

Kelly Kandra Hughes

Chris Keyes

***Winnie ille Pu*, a Best Seller!**

When Leslie Battis came on board the staff as Library Technician last September, I asked her to begin a weeding project in our non-fiction collection. The goal was to remove books that had not circulated in years and to update our catalog. Ten months into the project, about 2,000 books have been removed. And the different look of the shelves in those weeded sections is remarkable. For one thing, we now have the space to display select books, which may have been overlooked or which sat on such a high shelf they were virtually hidden. Lest you think we denuded our shelves with random weeding, much as you might remove all weeds from a garden, I asked Leslie to answer a few questions about this project.

How did you identify books to weed?

I marked books that have not circulated in 3 years or were published more than 10 years ago. I then looked at each book on the shelf to check its condition. If it was an important title to keep, it would be earmarked for our closed stack section. I researched its title to see if it should be replaced with an updated book on the same topic.

You are proceeding by Dewey Decimal sections, where books have been classified by subject matter. What has been the most challenging section to date?

Biographies were a particular challenge. We had so many! We had 28 biographies about the Roosevelts: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt, and Eleanor Roosevelt. After researching what the best biographies are for each person, we are down to 14 biographies on the Roosevelts. I also researched the biographies for all the presidents to ensure we had the latest and greatest for each. I discovered that we had no biography on Jimmy Carter, so we added Jonathan Alter's biography *His Very Best: Jimmy Carter, A Life*.

Did you find any hidden treasures in Biography?

I found the Memorial Address for Lincoln's funeral (1866), which will be moved to the Rare Book Room. One of the more unique biographies is *Our President Herbert Hoover* by William J. Marsh, Jr. (age 11 years). In 1930, Marsh printed 60 copies of the book in New Milford, Connecticut, on his own printing press. Quite an accomplishment for an 11-year old boy during the Depression! The *Herald*

Tribune printed a story about Marsh and his book that prompted an invitation to the White House. Marsh and his brother presented a copy of the book to President Hoover. Doubleday and Doran publishing house also saw the article and bought the rights to reprint the book. The copy presented to President Hoover is in his presidential library. Our copy is from the printing by Doubleday and Doran.

Some books in our database are marked as missing. Sometimes we find them on the shelf and can update the record. Other times we determine they have indeed been lost. Did you come across a title that you wished was not missing from our collection?

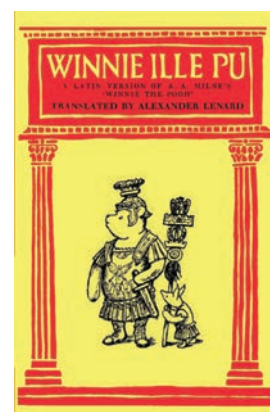
The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother by James McBride. Son of a white Jewish mother and a black father, McBride and his eleven siblings struggle with their racial identity. When he asks his mother what color God is, she replies, He is the color of water.

Conversely, which book marked as missing were you happiest to find on the shelf?

Night by Elie Wiesel. It seemed like adding insult to injury to lose a book about a person who had suffered so much in the Holocaust.

What is an example of an unusual book you found on the shelf?

Winnie ille Pu is a 1958 translation by Alexander Lenard of A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*. He was motivated by his experience in Rome teaching English to a boy by using *Winnie-the-Pooh* as an aid. The book was an unexpected hit, becoming the first foreign-language book to make the New York Times Best Sellers list, where it stayed for 20 weeks.



How about one of the oldest books?

Myths and Folk-Tales of the Russians, Western Slavs, and Magyars by Jeremiah Curtin, published in 1890. When I looked for the book, I realized it was circulating. How many libraries loan out 131-year-old books!

Zoom and Back Again: A Library's Tale

The Library's pandemic programming through Zoom had been going relatively smoothly all year, and we thought we had a good handle on the virtual video platform. Then we experienced the old adage, *you don't know what you don't know*. Although we had hosted over 75 Zoom sessions by February, with plans for many more, Zoom had a few surprises in store for us.

Our first Zoom surprise happened during Susan Grace Galassi's lecture, *Monet's Little Ice Age*, in February. Dr. Galassi is Curator Emerita of the Frick Collection and when 154 patrons registered, our largest number to date, we were excited to share her program with such a large audience. We purchased a Zoom Large Meeting License to accommodate more than 100 Zoom participants. On the day of the lecture, we sent the Zoom link to everyone and waited for Dr. Galassi to begin.

That's when the library phone began ringing! A registered patron couldn't get into the lecture. Then emails started popping up in our inboxes. Other patrons couldn't get in either. Working upstairs in the Rare Book Room, I flew down the stairs to inform Ann of the situation. Although we didn't know what had happened, she did think it a bit strange that the number of people admitted from the Waiting Room topped at exactly 100. Thankfully, Dr. Galassi was unaware of the commotion behind the scenes.

We were dismayed to discover that our Large Meeting License in Zoom had been attached to the wrong account, and thus the Waiting Room was still capped at 100! We quickly reached out to the disappointed patrons to let them know. Everyone was incredibly gracious, and Dr. Galassi even agreed to give a reprise of her lecture a month later.

Not too long after *Monet's Little Ice Age*, we were preparing to virtually host award-winning, bestselling author Sandra Cisneros (*The House on Mango Street*) from her home in Mexico. This program, scheduled on Thursday, April 8, was a collaboration with three other libraries: the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon, Kent Memorial Library, and Scoville Memorial Library. We verified that our Zoom Large Meeting License was linked to the correct Zoom account and then watched in excitement as the registration numbers grew, knowing we could host up to 500. Would that number be reached?

On the Monday before the event, we had well over 100 people registered, when suddenly the number of registrations

rapidly increased. Between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m., the number jumped to over 300. Then to 400. Soon, we were at 500 registrations. How could the number explode exponentially? When I asked one of the newly registered attendees how she heard about the event, her response was Facebook. Ms. Cisneros had shared a link to the event on her Facebook page, and she has over 95,000 followers!

After alerting the host libraries, Ann decided to upgrade our Zoom account to a webinar setting. This would ensure that up to 1,000 people could attend, and it wouldn't require us to monitor a Waiting Room or disruptive microphones and video cameras.

The program was a great success with close to 700 people registered. People of all ages from all over the world tuned in to hear Ms. Cisneros delight us with her wit and insight into life and writing.

Thankfully, most of our pandemic Zoom programming has been a lot less eventful. In the last six months, we've offered a variety of programs for children and adults in an effort to keep the Library connected to the Norfolk community and the world at large. Through Norfolk Library programming, I've learned how to juggle, play the harmonica, and make vegetable pot stickers. I've learned about laughter yoga, banking fraud, bee keeping, and gardening. Based on our animal tracks program with Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, I was able to correctly identify the tracks of a skunk in Great Mountain Forest (as confirmed by the Nature Center). Many of you came with me as I presented what I knew about life among the polar bears in Churchill, Manitoba, based on my 7-week volunteer stint at the Churchill Northern Studies Center. Then you joined us as we virtually traveled to Patagonia, Croatia, Galicia, and, closer to home, Central Park. We also Rocked the Boat together with an epic virtual production by Sandglass Theater, and we laughed together with our bilingual friends in Ireland. We watched films on kanopy, which we later discussed with their directors, and listened to poetry celebrating the Earth.

Our Zoom programming has been a wonderful and wacky ride during the pandemic, and we're grateful to have had this opportunity to reach patrons who may not be able to attend in-person events. Moving forward, we will be offering some of each, so please sign up for our e-newsletter and stay tuned!

— Kelly Kandra Hughes

SAVE THE DATE!

The Annual Norfolk Library Book Sale is back! This summer it will take place for three days on the last weekend in August, beginning Friday, August 27, at noon and continuing through Sunday, August 29 (10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.). You won't want to miss the opportunity to browse through two years worth of amazing books donated from Norfolk's private libraries, 75% of them hardcover. Proceeds benefit the Norfolk Library Associates and the Library's free cultural programs they fund. Many thanks to Bridget Taylor and the volunteers who make the annual book sale such a success.

Love is sharing
a good book.



NORFOLK LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rita Freedman, *President*
Michael Selleck, *Vice-President*
Eliza Little, *Secretary*
Steve Getz, *Treasurer*

Adam Heller
Coleen Hellerman
Ruth Melville

Janice Nimura
Susannah Wood

What's on Your Bookshelf?

A CELEBRATION OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

We are thrilled to announce our fall weekend event: What's on Your Bookshelf? The virtual celebration kicks off at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, September 24, with a keynote address by noted children's literature historian Dr. Leonard Marcus. He will give an overview of children's literature and how it has changed throughout time. Saturday webinars will feature both picture book and middle-grade book authors. At 9:00 a.m. *New York Times* best-selling author Pat Zietlow Miller and Stonewall Award-winning author e.E. Charlton-Trujillo will discuss their new co-writing partnership that resulted in *Lupe Lopez: Rock Star Rules* (Fall 2021) and other soon-to-be-published picture books. At 10:30 a.m. Dr. Rajani LaRocca, a primary care physician and successful children's book author, will speak with her agent Brent Taylor of Triada US Literary Agency. Dr. LaRocca's latest middle-grade book, *Much Ado about Baseball*, was hailed in June by best-selling author Brad Thor on NBC's Today show as "one of the best children's books I've read in the last ten years." Also scheduled to appear are children's book editors Harold Underdown (independent editor and author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Children's Publishing*) and Eileen Robinson (publisher of *Move Books*, and formerly executive editor at Scholastic). They will give an overview of everything you need to know about children's publishing for those who dream of writing children's books. The weekend will wrap up with a Q&A for anyone interested in children's book illustration.

NORFOLK LIBRARY ASSOCIATES

Jack Dillon, *President* Louise Davis, *Secretary*
Jennifer Almquist, *Vice Pres.* Paul Madore, *Treasurer*

The Associates is a group of dedicated volunteers who contribute their time and talents to support the Library. They organize monthly art exhibitions and raise funds for the free cultural programs offered by the Library. The group welcomes new members. Meetings are now held in the Library the first Tuesday of the month at noon. Please join us!

PET | PARADE

The Norfolk Library kicked off our 2021 Summer Reading Program “Tails and Tales” with a pet parade on the Village Green on Friday, June 11. Annie Gill, Hilary VanWright, and Daniel Vandiver served as the judges with Miss Eileen overseeing the festivities. It wasn’t easy to select winners from the handsome dogs, cute chinchilla, and adorable baby goat! Both animals and humans performed beautifully. Below are just a few of the photographs taken by Sonja Zinke on this joyous occasion.



SUMMER | READING

It's not too late to register for the Summer Reading Challenge "Tails and Tales," which runs through the month of July. Come to the Library to pick up your child's Field Guide and explore the various activities. Your child needs to complete 7 of the 24 challenges by July 30 in order to get a prize (they will be on display for selection). The Field Guide with your child's personal reflections will be a wonderful keepsake for years to come. Our Monday special events are listed below. It's a great time to visit the Children's Room and check out some books! Please register on the library website for programs with limited capacity.

Monday Special Events

June 11 - 6:30 p.m. Pet Parade & Summer Reading Kick-off

June 14 - 4:00 p.m. Animal Parade with Erika Crofut

June 21 - 5:00 p.m. Bookmaking Workshop with Hilary VanWright.

June 28 - 5:00 p.m. Life Between the Tides with the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium

July 12 - 5:00 p.m. Parade of Books with Erika Crofut. We are going to create a parade, one made of books! Each child will build their own book creature by folding, gluing, and painting pages from old books. We'll hang these creatures in an aerial parade inside the Library. Limited to 15.

July 19 - 5:00 p.m. "Fun Feathered Facts: Things You Might Not Know About the Birds in Your Neighborhood." In this talk, Emma Jean Sisk, a fifth grader at Salisbury Central School and avid birder, will share her enthusiasm and love for birds as she helps you build your nest of knowledge about these fascinating feathered creatures. This talk will include a simple bird craft, fun bird trivia, and a bird-inspired snack. Limited to 15.

July 26 - 5:00 p.m. Grand Finale! Live Birds of Prey with Sharon Audubon Center. Various species of live hawks and owls will accompany Sharon Audubon staff to demonstrate their beauty, power, and connection with the natural world. Through this program, children will understand why raptors and their environment should continue to be protected and respected. Ice cream will be served to celebrate summer reading!

Upcoming Events

July 5 - 5:00 p.m. "The Rabbit and the Moon" puppetry workshop with Sova Theater. Children will create their own puppets with natural materials and put on a puppet show based on an ancient Native American folktale.



For our first program, Erika Crofut guided the children in painting pre-cut wooden animals. After bringing them to life, the children set them up tail to tail parading across the library lawn.



THE OWL

The Norfolk Library
9 Greenwoods Road East
Post Office Box 605
Norfolk, Connecticut 06058

www.norfolklibrary.org
ph. 860 542-5075

HOURS

| | | | |
|-----------|----------|---|---------|
| Monday | 10:00 am | – | 7:00 pm |
| Tuesday | 10:00 am | – | 5:00 pm |
| Wednesday | 10:00 am | – | 5:00 pm |
| Thursday | 10:00 am | – | 7:00 pm |
| Friday | 10:00 am | – | 5:00 pm |
| Saturday | 10:00 am | – | 2:00 pm |
| Sunday | 1:00 pm | – | 4:00 pm |

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WINSTED, CT
PERMIT NO. 11



Local
Postal Customer



This is a view of the Library from Station Place, taken by Frank DeMars about 1915. The circular fountain in the center of the well-kept lawn was donated by Frederick Shepard, for whom Shepard Road is named. Shepard's family homestead (now known as The Frog) was next door to the Library, and in 1899 he deeded part of his property to Isabella Eldridge. This enabled the building of the Great Hall addition to the Library in 1911.