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Bookends

MYSTIC & NOANK LIBRARY

From the Director's Desk

Chris Bradley, MNL Director

I will never forget Friday the thirteenth, 2020, the day the libraries closed.

The public library is a uniquely American institution. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses" may be inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, but it could just as well be written over the doors of public libraries across our country. Tales abound of people young and old, accomplished and down-on-their-luck, who have found refuge behind those doors.

Mystic & Noank Library quickly set to work to find a way to open those doors that we had to close in March and again in October. We welcomed people to browse through our catalog online, order a book, and pick it up contact-free. We welcomed adults and children to attend library programs online, and offered tech help to those who would download eBooks, audiobooks, and movies from our website. In January, we opened our doors by appointment only so people could use the computers, copiers, and WiFi.

This April 5th, the start of National Library Week, is another day I will never forget, the day we unlocked the Library doors. We are still reopening slowly but safely, and we will continue contact-free pickup and online programs, but the doors are open!

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Photo: Architectural detail of Minerva on the south-facing side of the MNL.

**“A circulating
library in a town is
as an evergreen
tree of diabolical
knowledge.”
— Richard
Brinsley Sheridan**



Albert Einstein famously said, “The only thing that you absolutely have to know is the location of the library.” You have been welcomed to the Mystic & Noank Library at 40 Library Street since 1893. Due to the constraints of COVID, you have also been welcomed to Mystic & Noank Library at another location, at www.mysticnoanklibrary.org. Welcome to your library!



Welcome to Your Library

Judy Munro, Board of Trustees President

Welcome to your Library, what a great theme to accompany the slow but safe, full reopening of our Library. The board of trustees could not be more proud of the staff who have innovated ways to continue to provide our services and created new and imaginative opportunities for our patrons throughout this past year. Our hats are off to all staff and to the leadership of Chris Bradley and Roberta Donahue who have really dug in to find ways to serve the community.

The board has been working hard this past year as well. Our work may not be viewed as interesting but it is important. Our role is to ensure the proper policies are in place to help protect the Library, staff and patrons. Work continues as we update our bylaws and policies to ensure we reflect current best practices and laws.

This is budget season and this year we created a Government Relations Committee to aid Chris Bradley in ensuring we get lots of community support for our funding from the towns of Groton and Stonington. We know from past years' experience that hearing strong support from the community can really impact decisions by the towns. Please watch for those opportunities to help the Library. You may recall that the Library only receives about 27% of our operating costs from the two towns. This includes a very modest amount from the state, so every dollar is important so we can continue to say “Welcome.”

Upcoming Events

Spring Fair

Saturday, June 5

9:30 am - 2:30 pm

Will include Mystic Garden Club Plant Sale, White Elephant sale, and a book sale, all outdoors! Please check our website for any changes due to COVID restrictions.

Roode Memorial

Concert Series:

Thor Jensen

June 17 @ 6:30

Thor Jensen blends classic rock and roll with bluesy American roots music.

Roode Memorial

Concert Series:

Craig Edwards

July 15 @ 6:30

Craig Edwards plays a broad range of American roots music, swing and solo and group singing.

Roode Memorial

Concert Series:

Anna May

August 19 @ 6:30

Anna May is a folk singer-songwriter, dancer, and ex-circus performer.

2020 In Review

557

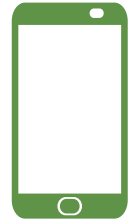
We held 557 programs (both in-person and virtual) with over 6,500 attendees.

5,700

We facilitated over 5,700 computer sessions on our patron work stations.

43,000

We circulated over 43,000 items including curbside pick-up items.



Need help using your computer, smartphone, or tablet?

Uncertain of where to find information about health, jobs, or that new computer program? Book a librarian for free, accessible, and helpful guidance on these and other research topics.



“Access to knowledge is the superb, the supreme act of truly great civilizations. Of all the institutions that purport to do this, free libraries stand virtually alone in accomplishing this mission.” - Toni Morrison



Ann Augusta Murphy

Joanna Case, Friend of the Library and Former MNL Director

During my tenure as Head Librarian and then Director of the Mystic & Noank Library, I had always been told that the Library was originally on the second floor and that the Librarian sat up in the balcony area where she could keep an eye on the whole floor. While the fact that the Library was originally on the second floor is true, it does not appear that her office was up in the loft area. In *The Day*, the local newspaper, January 23, 1894, it is stated that “At one part of the library room just over the entrance, is the office of the Librarian, Miss Annie Augusta Murphy, and it is a model.” The article continues, “There is a sort of gallery where books could be put in case they were crowded for room, just along the corridors on the second floor.”

If that is the case then her office is where the Local History and Genealogy collection is stored today. It makes much more sense since Miss Murphy would have been more accessible to answer questions and retrieve books. There are the remnants of the pocket door that opened into the office from the top of the stairs. That would have given her access to her office without opening the Library. A picture stored in the locked cases upstairs does show book display cases up in the loft, so perhaps it held special collections.

Miss Murphy came with “experience in the library business, having had a circulating library.” This may have been gained locally at a commercial rather than a public enterprise. She was listed as a teacher in the 1870 and 1880 censuses and living with her parents, William and Sally A, in Mystic River, the Groton side of Mystic. Her term at the Library was from 1893-1902. Annie died 1902 and is buried in Elm Grove Cemetery.

I hope to find out more about Ann Augusta Murphy and the other Librarians who preceded me and will share this with you in future issues. If anyone has any information I would love to hear from you.

A Captain, a Sunbeam and a Mystery: A Secret at the Mystic and Noank Library

Chris Kepple, Development Director

It is no secret that the Mystic & Noank Library was founded by a ship's captain on a section of the Connecticut coast famous for pirates, rum runners, whaling, and buried treasure. Captain Spicer, the Library's founding patron, chose to immortalize some of the poetry of his ocean life in his original library building. In its architecture, there is evidence of his maritime legacy and at least one secret.

Look to the windows for the first clue. The elegant circular windows in the old building, and the rounded details within the stained glass, refer to port lights on a ship. Also look up at the ornate ceiling. The wood rises high and curves inward. The ceiling was designed to resemble the hull of a ship. To get the full effect of this ship's hull ceiling, come to the Library, lie down on your back in the old building, and look up. When a librarian comes in and asks if you are feeling quite well, let them know you are on an architectural tour inspired by Captain Spicer, and not to worry in the least.

Spicer, although he never lived to see the room finished and opened in 1893, designed a secret capability into his grand reading room. Once a year, sometime in the afternoon or early evening, the sun aligns perfectly with the large round window on the west side of the Library. For a few moments, the sun fills the round window and casts a targeted beam directly onto the great fireplace. Even though we know this annual light show happens, when it happens is something of a mystery. His design for the Mystic & Noank library was one of hope and perennial renewal. In a way, with this architectural feature, Spicer relights the fires of his library dream each year.

No doubt Spicer used the sun and the stars to navigate his sailing ship. So it is no surprise that he included a signal from the sun within his library. He also fixed a bust of Apollo, God of the sun, onto the building to watch over all who visit the Library. Was Spicer a sun worshiper like some of the ancients? Probably not. But is this beam of sunlight a clue in a bigger mystery? Was Spicer hinting at buried treasure? Did he have a brick mason secret away a treasure map within the great fireplace? It's likely that only Apollo has the answer. What we do know is that each year, at a mysterious moment, when the sunlight gleams on the fireplace, focused through the circular glass, we see a library that is the treasure it was designed to be.



Friends of the MNL Report

Sally Salancy, President

The Friends of Mystic & Noank Library are still here!

The Friends of Mystic & Noank Library are a group of people who hold events to raise both money and enthusiasm for our Library. We've been at it since 1978, but like everyone else, we had to halt our regular meetings, cancel our fundraisers, and even give up our friend-raisers, because of the pandemic. The Mystic Irish Parade was cancelled last year - and again in 2021 - so we haven't entertained a crowd with our Library Cart Drill Team's maneuvers since March of 2019! Now, for the second year in a row, we've cancelled our Indoor Yard Sale, usually our first fundraiser of the new year. Last spring, and again this year, we had to let go of our Silent Auction, which always opened at the beginning of May, and ended at 2 pm on Fair Day, the first Saturday of June. The Fair is our biggest fundraiser - and friend-raiser. Of course, it was also cancelled in 2020.

We don't usually have programs in the summer, but in September, we hosted our "Craft Exchange," a chance for people to donate their leftover craft supplies and exchange them for new projects or materials from other crafters. It was cancelled last year, along with our two programs in October, the "Art Silent Auction" and the children's Halloween program, "All Things Pumpkin." Finally, and not surprisingly, the Friends finished 2020 by NOT having our "Like-New Booksale," our last fundraiser of the year.

The good news? The Friends received some generous donations in 2020, we've been holding our monthly meetings on Zoom since the summer, and best of all, we may be able to have a one-day, outdoor Spring Fair this year, on the first Saturday of June. Until then, we hope to see you soon, in and around the Library. In the meantime, Happy Spring!

Memorial Donations

Mary Anderson	Cynthia Mason
Ken Bitting	Nancy McKay
James Burbank	Michael Meyer
Gloria Clark	James O'Neill
Ann Conti	Jordan Pecile
Dave Dahlgren	Mary Katherine Porter
Nancy Denison	Ward Ritchey
Ed Eckelmeyer	Marcia Robinson
Barbara Flora	Leonard Sawyer
Chuck Glaza	J. Donald Simpson
Mary Anne Gregory	Martha Sproul
Dorothy Hanna	Barbara Sullivan
Delores (Dee) Harrell	Ken Steere
Rhona Heyl	Barry Thomas
Winnie Kenyon	Mary Turner
Doris Lamb	John (Jack) Washburn
Robert Leeney	Jennifer Welch



Dispelling Myths About Joining a Writing Group

Erik Caswell, Adult Services Librarian

Organizing library writing groups over the last few years has been my favorite part of library programming. A writing group is more than a place you can receive meaningful feedback about your fiction, essays, or poetry; it's also a place to meet new people, and to hear sides of their lives you would probably never otherwise encounter. Forging these connections in an increasingly fast-paced, discombobulated digital world is more important than ever. We could all stand to slow down, tune in, and listen to someone's stories in real time.

But, more often than not, there are lots of mental barriers to people feeling comfortable sharing their writing. I wanted to respond to a couple of those blocks. If you've been jotting down notes, chipping away at small stories, typing up chapters, or even "just" journaling, take this as a sign to join a writing group!

1. "I'm not a good writer."

Like everything else, writing is a skill you can learn and improve. Some of the ways you do so are by practicing, learning from others, and believing there is value in continuing to write! Not everyone has to be a bestselling author to call themselves a writer.

2. "I don't have time to write."

Nobody really does! Or at least, not a perfectly chiseled block of several hours they can sit down to write in picturesque solitude. That's why many authors take years, sometimes even decades, to fully finish and publish a book. Even making a half hour in the morning to write a few hundred words adds up over time.

3. "I don't have anything important to write about."

Anyone who has lived a life and tried to make sense of it has several stories to tell. They might be about their professional life, struggles they went through during particular years, or something they witnessed. Or they might be entertaining mystery, sci-fi, or romance plots. Someone out there wants to hear it!

More of these myths exist, but these are some of the more common ones. Each of them is a kind of sabotage: an internalized belief that the life we have lived, the people we have met, or the imagined realities we dream about are not worth expressing, rendering into a narrative, and sharing with others. We never know the impact of our stories until we try to tell them.

The value of writing groups goes far beyond helping you to improve your writing. It's a place for people to get real about their lives, what they've been through, and how they managed to confront, and have been transformed by what they've experienced. Even if you never publish a page, participating in that space, as a reader and a listener, has so much to offer.

The Library's Book Writers Group meets every first and third Wednesday at 6PM. We welcome new people at any point in their writing process to join. Why not give it a try? Tell your story.

"MNL provides so much enrichment to me and the community that I'm glad to support its many and varied services..." - A MNL Donor

**Make a Gift to the Library today online at mysticnoanklibrary.org
or by mail addressed to 40 Library Street in Mystic, CT 06355**



40 Library Street
Mystic CT 06355
Phone: 860-536-7721
Fax: 860-536-2350
E-mail: info@mysticnoanklibrary.org

Visit us on the web at
www.mysticnoanklibrary.org

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram: @mysticnoanklibrary

Sign up for our monthly eBlast!

We are open
Monday & Wednesday: 10 to 7
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday: 10 to 4

The Library will be closed
Monday, May 31 in observance of Memorial Day

Want to receive BookEnds electronically?
Email friends@mysticnoanklibrary.org and include your name, address and email address.



Mystic & Noank Library
40 Library Street
Mystic, CT 06355

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