



THREE RIVERS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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The Current is written, edited, and designed solely by students. If you would like to contribute to The Current email submissions, responses, and ideas to: [trccnewspaper@gmail.com](mailto:trccnewspaper@gmail.com) or [kamenta@threerivers.edu](mailto:kamenta@threerivers.edu).

Cover photo by: **Maiquynh Truong**

Photo by Kimberlin Stanford



# Experiencing the Spring 2020 Three Rivers Virtual Visual Fine Arts Graduate Exhibition

## In Person to Online

Story by **Joseph Victorino**

The Virtual Visual Fine Arts Program Graduate Exhibition of Spring 2020 was the solution to the closure of Three Rivers Community College last semester. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional exhibit in the art gallery was canceled. Through the use of the official TRCC website, the four Visual Fine Arts graduates were able to upload their prized work for all to enjoy.

Their pieces have been on display on [threeivers.edu/gallery](https://threeivers.edu/gallery).

Although this does provide an opportunity to admire and showcase work to an otherwise canceled gallery showing, the traditional sense of discussion and explanation by the graduating artists are completely gone.

The information provided on the TRCC website for each art piece only extends to the name of the creator, the name of the piece, the medium, and sometimes the dimensions.

There is a significant lack of detail left out from the creators.

This article interviews three of the four graduates and showcases brief biographies about themselves as well as their commentary on art pieces.

### Artist: **Ariana Bradley**

Ariana Bradley, 19, from Norwich, says that she was initially a little sad that the exhibit had to move online. She says that now she is fine with it, so that people can still admire her and her peers' art.

"It stinks being in the COVID class, but we still made it work," Bradley said.

She says that she began taking art seriously during her sophomore year of high school, at Norwich

Free Academy. She says that she was in the art program there.

Currently, Bradley is still at Three Rivers taking extra classes. She graduated in Spring of 2020.

She says that she is still trying to figure out what field of art she wants to go into. She is thinking either art education or digital art.

She says as a last resort, she would like to be an emergency medical technician (EMT) or to join the coast guard.

She says that she was actually thinking about giving up on art until here great grandmother, Cassandra, passed. She says that she told her to never give up.

"I wanted to honor her by doing my art," Bradley said.



Ariana Bradley



Ariana Bradley, "Split Image," acrylic, 18" x 24"

She says that she has two numbers in her life that are also featured in her art: "3" and "7".

She says that she has "3" represents the three most important people in her life: her great grandmother, her mom, and either her brother or sister.

She says her other lucky number, 7, is important because her great grandmother died seven years after her first great grandmother died. She says that she died after 7 deep breaths.

Bradley also says that her great grandmother died on the 17th of May. She additionally says that her great grandmother has 7 great grandkids.

She says that its more of an unlucky number now that she thinks about it.

Bradley says that she loved her time in the art program. She says that the professors were incredibly supportive.

"I love Sandra to death, she has helped me challenge myself to the furthest extent," Bradley said.

She says that he professor, Mathew Best, provided honest feedback, but was not too harsh.

She also says her past teacher Ian Pollack pushed her to draw more.

She says that Brian Dimmock is a brilliant teacher in 3D art and helped her expand her art variety.

Bradley says that she had a tight knit group of friends at Three Rivers Community College (TRCC) that helped her get through her time at the school and in life.

For students unsure whether they want to, Bradley says to always go with your initial thoughts. She says that people should know that there is a strong support system in the art program as well as a fine staff.

Ariana Bradley, "Inhale, Exhale," acrylic 18" x 24"





Artist: David Fontaine

David Fontaine, 21, from Voluntown, says that he is really grateful that Three Rivers did a virtual exhibit as opposed to not doing anything. He says that it does feel anticlimactic after three years.

“It’s a weird, but it’s not the worst ever,” Fontaine said.

Fontaine says that his professor, Sandra Jeknavorian, is keeping the door open for him and his fellow graduates to future shows to give them the opportunity to show their work.

He says that his exhibit was set up more to show off more of his experimental content, such as the *Void*, and the other animation pieces he’s created. He says they’re pretty experimental because working within a limited timeframe for watch assignment, he had to work within the limitations.

“Animation takes a long time, so it was hard to create something as fully developed as I wanted to,” Fontaine said

Fontaine says that he has been seriously practicing art since he was 12, however, overall, he says that he has been creating art his whole life.

Fontaine says that once he started attending public school, he began taking art classes and taking art seriously. He says that he had been homeschooled until he was 11.

“I was super try-hard in art class, even in middle school,” Fontaine said.

He says that he was lucky to be part of the NFA art program in high school. He says he learned so much during his time there.

“I wouldn’t be half the artist I am now without the NFA art program,” Fontaine said.

Fontaine Says that he thought the TRCC art program was great. He says that he made some excellent friends.

He says that the program was important to his artistic exploration.



David Fontaine, “Self Portrait,” acrylic, 18” x 24”

Fontaine says that he was all set up and ready to start attending his next four-year school, Lesley University. He says that after a couple long conversations with his family and even himself, however, he will take the year off because of the pandemic.

“Lesley’s in Boston, so to be in a city like Boston during a pandemic... I didn’t feel good about that,” Fontaine said.

He says that it would be incredibly risky.

Fontaine also says that it would not be the same experience otherwise. He says that they have all sorts of restrictions now.

He says It would not be the same kind of community and that that studio space usage would be restricted.

“Is it event worth the thousands of dollars it would cost?” Fontaine said.

Fontaine says that he is holding on to the hope that Fall in 2021 will have everything sorted out.

He says that for now he is just taking a break even though he really did not want to.

Fontaine says that he would have been studying 2D animation at Lesley had it not been for the pandemic.

He says that he wants to be a full-time animator.

Fontaine says that knew that he wanted this as his career since he was 15. He says that around that age, he started paying more attention to movies and cartoons more seriously.

“I realized how fantastic of a story telling medium they could be,” Fontaine said.

Fontaine says that Over the Garden Wall was the show that he watched that made him decide he wanted to become an animator.



David Fontaine, “Obstallum,” Mixed Media Animation on a painted background



**Artist: John Witherly II**

John Witherly II, 23, from East Haddam, says that he is disappointed in having an online exhibit for his senior expo.

Witherly says that over past semesters had built up to this, but once he got to this point, the virus took over.

"I would say everyone was bummed about it," Witherly said.

Witherly says his art group talked about the state of their exhibition a few weeks after quarantine has started. He says they were not sure it was going to even happen.

He says it was not until a month after that their professor, Sandra Jeknavorian, sent out an email saying that their portfolios would be going online.

He says that he and others were annoyed. Witherly says that his group thought they were all going to be having fun, being able to hang up their work in the art gallery.

Witherly says it was not that they could not show off their work, it was that they could not see the other artists' friends and family enjoying their art.

He says that they missed out on the interaction. He says you can not really discuss with people the same way you could in person.

"It is what it is," Witherly said.

Right now, Witherly is taking online classes at Eastern Connecticut State University. He is studying digital illustration.

He is planned to graduate by 2022. He says he aims for a future in animation and potentially getting an internship to learn as much in the field as possible.



John Witherly II

He says he has been trying to make new art. He says he is done a few digital pieces and started a couple traditional pieces, but has not finished any yet.

Witherly says that overall, the work he featured in his exhibit are his favorite. He says that there were only two or three pieces that he could not get a picture of for the show because his mother has them.

He says that most of the art posted were pieces he made that spring semester.

Witherly says he was going for a bird theme, with every piece being bird related. He says the deeper meaning to it all is that birds are free.

He says that he too is very free spirited and open.

"I'm not really a closed book, everything is out there. If people ask me questions, most of the time I'm going to be straight up and honest," says Witherly.

Witherly says that it is hard to pick an all-time favorite art piece. He says that he has a favorite at the moment that a piece is made, but after about a month, he'll feel like, "aw that's terrible."

He says that it depends on what he is working on at the moment. He says it is because most of the time when he is working on something new, he ends up liking the new one over the older piece, since the quality would be better, and he learned more.

Witherly says that it is a constant struggle, but that his current favorite would be his piece "Raven".

Witherly says that his least favorite piece is the lower angle perspective piece that he did. This piece is not featured in the gallery.

He says that the anatomy was good and the perspective was great, but when it got to the face, the piece is thrown off. He says with the foreshortening, the face does not look right.



John Witherly II, "The Backyard View", acrylic on canvas

Witherly says, at the time of its completion, he did not see anything wrong with it. He says after it got back to him post grading, he knew it could use a lot more work.

Witherly says that there are even pieces in his exhibit that he feels could use some touching up. He says that none of the featured work have been touched up yet as since the pandemic, he has not felt the energy to do so.

Witherly says he enjoyed his time at Three Rivers and liked the art program.

"Over the last two semesters, it just had been the most fun I've had in a while," Witherly said.

He says that at the start of those two semesters, his old friends had graduated, but then he took two-dimensional design and became friends with everyone in the class. He says that these new friends were in all his classes since then.

Witherly says that it felt like one long party, with something always going on and friends always around.

He says that especially now that he is at Eastern and talking with the professors and students there, they are saying that the art program at Three Rivers

was way more welcoming compared other ones in larger schools.

Witherly says that people were saying that critiques they went to were exceptionally aggressive and were just tearing people down.

He says Three Rivers was the opposite, saying that they were all kind and supportive of each other, and that critiques were incredibly positive.

"We were all about bringing each other up," Witherly said.

He says that at Three Rivers, everyone is open and honest about everything.

Witherly says that this is partially because Three Rivers is a community college. He says we are all part of the community, working together closely.

He says it is not like we are in a class with 50 people, instead it is smaller so we get to bond with each other on a more personal basis.

Witherly says that with other colleges with these bigger classes, critique is more about the technical aspect of the piece rather than the person behind the artwork.

He says that because of these smaller classes, we do realize when another classmate puts a significant amount of personal detail on a piece, to be kind and respectful.

"Overall, all the critiques are very uplifting, you never leave a critique and feel awful," Witherly said.

Witherly says that he advises others is to definitely join the art club if you have time to spare. He says that there is a lot of good people in there, and that they are extraordinarily welcoming.

"Even if you're not an artist, it is still worth it," Witherly said.



John Witherly II, "Raven", acrylic on canvas



Story and Photos by *Maiquynh Truong*

**N**ORWICH - During the beginning of March, before Governor Ned Lamont issued a state-wide shutdown due to Covid-19, Three Rivers Community College (TRCC) closed its doors to all students and non-essential staff.

In-person classes were converted to online and all communications went virtual. Despite theses abrupt changes, staffs and students learn to cope with the unprecedented.



*Nursing students taking written exam*

Beginning on July 20, the TRCC campus officially re-opened with restrictions for those in need of registration assistance for the Fall 2020 semester. To visit the campus, students are required to make appointments online or by phone.

All visitors must check-in at the main entrance and must wear a mask when entering the building. Students with physical school IDs are asked to scan them at the reader or provide security staff with legitimate reasons as to why they are on campus.

Despite the change in routines, security officers remained vigilant and helpful, making sure to direct students and visitors to where they needed to go and connect them to the appropriate staff on sight.

“It’s different... things change every day,” said Jessica Orum, TRCC’s security staff. “We sort of have to be the middleman for everything.”

The school store is currently open with limited capacity. Students can visit to pick up textbooks, school apparel, and stationaries. However, due to heavy restrictions, business is not what it used to be.

Thomas Lyon, the store’s cashier commented on the vacant state of the campus wherein six hours shift, would probably encounter one or two customers in comparison to a more robust intake on any given day before the pandemic.

Down the corner from the bookstore, the crucial A-Wing remained in operation for those who need academic and financial services. However, appointments are required, and the offices are open from Monday to Thursday, from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm.

For a campus that is often quiet on Fridays, it feels even more desolated after the limited reopening was instated. Hallways are empty and classes not in use are shuttered behind locked doors and dimmed lighting.

In a spacious rest area by the second floor of the clock tower entrance, a handful of unoccupied blue

chairs are cluttered tightly together like a community of massive Lego blocks. Noises and children’s chatter can be heard from the TRCC children daycare which had resumed operation with safety measures in place for adult students who require this much-needed service.

Few classes remained in session for the Fall semester, these include laboratory sciences, mechanical studies, and the nursing program. Thus, amidst the silent backdrop of an otherwise empty campus, nursing students with masks sit six feet apart as they take tests while others donned full PPE to perform practical duties.

Students who are not able to physically attend classes for the full college experience took to online social media to voice their complaints and disappointments. Many were unhappy that they are required to pay full tuition despite not being able to utilize the school’s facilities.

To provide an outlet for students but still adhere to the safety guidelines set by the State, the Student Programming Offices (SPO) reinvented their approach after planned events are canceled and every aspect is moved online.

Alysia Ziegler, TRCC Director of Student Activities and overseer of SPO is confident in the team’s ability to offer students new, innovative events and activities through the virtual platform. “In a time when everything around us is changing, the one thing our office can do is to provide as close to a sense of normalcy as possible,” said Ziegler.

Before classes resume at the end of August, SPO has been reaching out to students through emails and social media to promote a virtual welcome week and invites them to attend various upcoming future events.

Ziegler said the “biggest challenge we have seen has been the turnaround

time for creating and hosting virtual events. In the in-person format, events are much easier to put together since all of the pieces are sitting within reach but with virtual programming, that is not always the case.”

To find out more about what SPO offers, Ziegler suggested students visit Three Rivers’ main webpage at [trconnect.threerivers.edu](http://trconnect.threerivers.edu) and follow the team’s Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Tik Tok, and YouTube pages to receive the latest updates.

As classes and student activities strive to adapt to the new environment, Ziegler and all of TRCC staff are doing the best they can to provide an optimal educational experience to every student in this trial time.

Ziegler said “We are always up for new event ideas, feedback, and ways to better serve our students.”



*Security officer Jessica Orum in the security office*



If you're feeling daunted by a history requirement, consider taking World Civilization I with Professor Gina Arnold.

World Civ. I covers human history from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages. In between, the course introduces students to Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, as well as the Vikings.

You won't be bored taking World Civ I with Prof. Arnold. Arnold doesn't lecture. Instead, she poses questions. She allows students to voice their opinions but not without an explanation. Students are encouraged to think critically and thoroughly about the material and their own ideas about it.

Professor Arnold's class revolves around classroom discussions. She presents information through videos online and handouts from reliable websites like JSTOR, TIME, and History Encyclopedia. The videos run for 45 minutes to an hour at most and the rest of class time is spent discussing what was viewed.

Rather than speeding through multiple periods of history, Arnold's World Civ I course focuses in detail on a few major periods and civilizations, covering everything from architecture to religion, from law to love. This centralized, detailed focus provides students with the most important thing a history class can offer: interest.

Most periods on her syllabus are mandatory to cover, but Arnold allows students the option to add to the content covered if there is another area they want to learn about. Although there is so much

history that cannot be included in the course, the depth of study on what is included gets students to think deeply about each culture and period.

Arnold involves many primary sources in her course, which help students see the world through the eyes of the cultures being studied. Reading ancient writings on love, or from an uncle to a nephew, grants students fresh perspectives on people of the past.

Students are assigned weekly to bi-weekly writing assignments, designed to help them understand the readings and to form their own thoughts and views on them, explaining why the information is important and why they find it interesting, or why they love it, or even hate it.

Original thought is stressed. The class discussions were often lively, but never heated. Arnold is genuine and always injected each class with a good dose of humor.

The final assignment for the course is a 5- to 7-page research paper, standard for a history course. However, Arnold isn't strict about options. Students can pick any topic relating to anything covered in the course, so it is not hard to find something that interests you.

This course helped remind me to consider myself as part of a long chain of human history, filled with people whose experiences were as rich and full as ours today. If you think you have no interest in history, give World Civilization I with Professor Gina Arnold a try. You might surprise yourself.



Professor Gina Arnold

Story and Photo by Sarah Walsh



World Civ I with Prof. Arnold covers all aspects of life in Ancient Egypt



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# African-American Inventors

## The Significant Contributions of These Little-Known American Inventors

Contributions of African American Inventors have almost been lost to history. One reason for this is slave masters often took credit for their slaves' inventions. Also, little or no recognition was given to the slaves for their ingenuity. But, abolitionists wrote letters and publications which cited Black inventors and their inventions.

Inventions like the light bulb, the traffic light, and the self-lubricating device for engines have changed the world. These inventions and many others invented by black inventors.

Some notable, but certainly not all, inventors include:

**Lonnie G. Johnson (1949 – Present).** This Aerospace Engineer for NASA who also worked on the Galileo Jupiter probe and Mars Observer project invented the Super Soaker.

**Garrett A. Morgan (1877 – 1963).** Invented the first automatic traffic signal in 1923. In 1911, he invented the gas mask. The mask proved to be effective when he and other three other volunteers successful rescued workers trapped in a tunnel explosion while wearing the masks.

**Jan Matzeliger (1852 - 1889).** Vastly improved the shoe industry by inventing a

Story by **Kimberlin Stanford**

shoe-lasting machine. The machine automatically stitched shoe leathers to shoe soles. A completed shoe took hours by hand to finish only took approximately one minute with his invention. Since this machine could make up to 700 pairs of shoes a day compared to 50 pairs made by hand, this invention lowered shoe prices around the world.

**Andrew J. Beard (1849 – 1921).** His most famous invention was the Jenny coupler. It automatically locked train cars together when they bumped into each other. This greatly reduced the horrific accidents that resulted from the dangerous work of manually inserting metal pins to link the train cars as they came together.

**Marie Ban Brittan Brown (1922-1999).** This nurse is responsible for the development of the close-circuit television security. Modern surveillance, home security systems, and traffic monitoring foundation was started by Brown's patent.

**Dr. Percy Lavon Julian (1899 – 1875).** Synthesized large amounts of cortisone which



Dr. Shirley Jackson



Elijah McCoy

is used for rheumatoid arthritis from soybean oil. He also discovered the chemical foam used in fire extinguishers.

**Elijah McCoy (1844 - 1929).** Before 1872, trains had to stop frequently so the engines could be hand lubricated. He devises a lubricating cup that automatically dripped oil when needed. Demand was so great for McCoy's invention, when imitators tried to sell their version, companies insisted they wanted "the Real McCoy."

**Granville T. Woods (1856 -1910).** He is well known for his electro-magnetic concepts. These inventions significantly improved the telegraph, telephone, and electric-railway communications. One invention enabled moving trains to communicate with each other – a vast improvement in safety that transformed the railway industry. Woods won two court cases protecting his inventions from Thomas Edison.

**Dr. Shirley Jackson (1946 – Present).** Besides being the first African American woman to earn a doctorate in nuclear physics at MIT, she has invented several telecommunication advancements we use today. The touch-tone telephone, the portable fax, caller ID, call waiting, and the fiber-optic cable are attributed to Jackson.

**Lewis Howard Latimer (1848-1928).** This runaway slave created the incandescent light bulb with a carbon filament in 1881. The on/off switch is also his invention. He also worked with Alexander Graham Bell to design and patent the telephone. His work also includes an early air conditioning unit.

Imagine life without some of these inventions:

- Switching device for railways – William F. Burr, October 31 1899
- Guitar – Robert F. Flemming, March 30 1888
- Street Sweeper – Charles B. Brooks, March 17 1890
- Refrigerator – John Standard, July 14, 1891
- Letter Box – Philip B. Downing, October 27, 1891
- Rotary Engine – Andrew J. Beard, July 5, 1982
- Lawn Mower – John Albert Burr, May 9 1899
- Automatic Gear Shift – Richard B. Spikes, December 6, 1932
- Bicycle Frame – Isaac R. Johnson, October 10, 1899
- Mop (Thomas W. Stewart 1893)
- Ironing board (improved the design) (Sarah Boone 1982).

Visits these sites for more information on black inventors.

- <https://thinkgrowth.org/14-black-inventors-you-probably-didnt-know-about-3c0702cc63d2> and
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/article/african-american-inventors-19th-century/>

Special thanks to Kevin Chappell for writing "How Black Inventors Changed America" for Ebony magazine.



Lewis Howard Latimer



Marie Ban Brittan Brown



Garrett A. Morgan



## APPLES, PUMPKINS, AND MORE!

### A Review of Treworgy Family Orchards

Story and Photos by *Elizabeth Exley*



*Treworgy Apples*



*Treworgy Pets*



*Treworgy Balloon*



*Treworgy Maze*



*Treworgy Pumpkin*

Ever think about taking a trip to Maine during fall? Well, a perfect place to visit that will check off almost everything off a fall fun list. After picking the perfect pumpkin, apples, and even a bouquet of flowers, Treworgy has a corn maze and some furry friends waiting for a visit! Do not be intimidated then walking up to the entrance if unfamiliar with the orchard, there are people at the information table right out front who are incredibly friendly and will help with any questions. Start with a bag for your apples and a map for where everything is. After passing the check-out tent there are paths to each part of the orchard.

There are several varieties of apples and all the rows are labeled. Although the first few trees were pretty picked through, Treworgy placed a big red balloon high in the sky that could be followed to the biggest and best apples to pick.

Once the bags are filled, head towards the flower garden where sheers and a bucket are provided. The orchard has a few varieties of flowers to choose from - sunflowers, snapdragons, and zinnias to put together a colorful bouquet. Picked flowers can be put together in a plastic bouquet sleeve with water after everything is purchased.

After picking flowers, grab a wagon to go out into the pumpkin patch. If unable to walk or no inclination to do so, there are a bunch of pre-picked pumpkins laid out by the entrance to grab and go.

Although there is a great selection at the entrance, there are a lot more to choose from in the numerous rows of pumpkin patch to find the perfect one(s).

When heading to the secondary check-out line, baby goats, chickens, a donkey, and a rabbit pleasantly greet visitors. A small barn housed the baby goats, while the rest were fenced in outside where these animals could be feed and pet. To keep everyone safe and sanitary, a wash station is provided to clean off hands after visiting the animals.

A stunning pallet of reds, yellows, and oranges surrounded the orchard as the trees have changed with the cool weather. Out in the distance passed the forest were shadows of rolling mountains. Even if all these fun activities do not stir the Fall mood, the view definitely will.

Do not forget to pick up apple cider and apple cinnamon doughnuts - these are must have from Treworgy Orchard. The check-out tent is filled with the sweet smell of fresh doughnuts and cold crisp apple cider, making it hard to leave without any. Once the pumpkins, apples, and flowers were loaded up into the car, enjoy the tasty treats.

With the vibrant colors, crisp air, and wonderful people, this a must do trip to Maine in the fall. For something a little different, Treworgy Family Orchard in Levant, ME is a great place to go. It is pet friendly as well, so bring the whole family!

## LGBT HISTORY MONTH

### Twenty-Six Years of History and Evolution

Story by *Danielle Branch*

June is widely known as Pride month, which began in 1969 to commemorate the Stonewall Riots. October, on the other hand, is LGBT history month. A month dedicated to learning about and celebrating LGBT history.

In 1994, a Missouri High School teacher, Rodney Wilson, took the first steps to make it happen. But why October? Wilson chose October for two specific reasons. The first was because school was in session. He found it important to create an opportunity to connect with students on this platform. The second reason was to coincide with other existing traditions, including National Coming Out Day and the first two marches on Washington for lesbian and gay rights in 1979 and 1987. All of which were in October.

There are several instances throughout history, like the Stonewall Riots, that are important to recognize but are too often left out of conversation. This includes acknowledging figures throughout

history, such as Alan Turing, who broke the Enigma code the Nazis used in WWII. The goal is to open the floor for conversation and to help those who may face oppression to find inspiration and continue doing great things.

Erin Cardente, a recent College graduate and part of the LGBTQ community expressed her appreciation for the recognition and celebration of LGBT history. "People need to understand the challenges and events that lead to us having rights" she said, "even though I knew there was a ton of support for me on campus, it was hard for me to feel comfortable because of past bullying experiences". A feeling she believes could have been eliminated if people were being exposed to the history of it and felt more comfortable asking questions.

History continues to be an essential part of our growth, culture, and evolution. A greater understanding of history can lead to a greater appreciation for our present.

*Photo by Kimberlin Stanford.*



# DANBURY LIBRARY HOSTS VIRTUAL AUTHOR TALK BY STATE HISTORIAN WALTER WOODWARD

*Dr. Woodward's New Book Reveals Connecticut In New Ways*

Few people know that election day in Connecticut was once incomplete without an election cake.

The little-known tradition of the Connecticut election cake is one of several pieces of rare and important state history which State Historian, Walter W. Woodward, shares in his new book *Creating Connecticut: Critical Moments That Shaped a Great State*.

Dr. Woodward is the State Historian of Connecticut and an Associate Professor of History at the University of Connecticut. On Sept. 17, the Danbury Library in Danbury, CT, hosted a virtual author talk by Dr. Woodward on his recent book.

The event was free to the public through online registration. It was hosted on Zoom and began at 6 p.m. and ended at 7 p.m.

Dr. Woodward discussed his book with a virtual audience and read a selection of passages for participants.

"It's most personal to me," Dr. Woodward said. "When I finished this book, I was excited about presenting it to the public because this was written for people who aren't history buffs about Connecticut."

Woodward became Connecticut's third state historian on July 1, 2004, succeeding Christopher Collier. He



State Historian Dr. Walter W. Woodward

Story and Photos by Sarah Walsh

was born in 1949 in Vienna and lived in Europe, mostly Germany, for the first 10 years of his life. After his parents' divorce, he settled in Florida where he attended the University of Florida.

Dr. Woodward graduated with a degree in English and went on to compose advertising jingles, and started his own jingle business, called Perfect Pitch, as well as his own advertising agency.

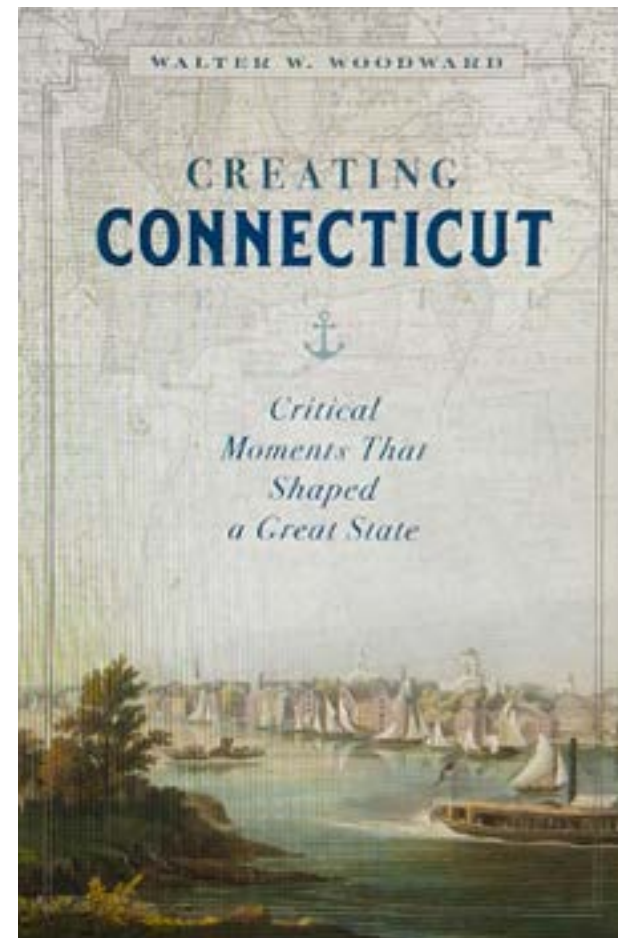
After finding success in advertising, Dr. Woodward decided to pursue history. He earned a master's degree in history at Cleveland State University and studied for a doctorate at the University of Connecticut. He received his Ph. D. in 2001.

*Creating Connecticut*, published in May 2020, by Globe Pequot Press, contains 24 stories about influential people and events in Connecticut's past. It is Woodward's fifth book.

"Why does anyone think any topic is so important to write down on paper?" Dr. Woodward asked his virtual audience.

*Creating Connecticut* explores stories of people and events, both famous and lesser known, to excite and enlighten readers about how these people and events changed Connecticut.

"I think it's so important that we know our state's history and we make sure our children know our state's history," Dr. Woodward said.



*Creating Connecticut, Critical Moments That Shaped a Great State book cover*

In *Creating Connecticut*, Woodward shares stories about figures like Nathan Hale and Mark Twain, and events like the Pequot War, Connecticut's witch hunts, and the influence of the Irish in the state.

During the author talk, Woodward read a passage on Connecticut's fiercest witch hunter, and the state's first executed witch, Else Young, as well as the stories of generations of Irish who faced discrimination, helped build railroads, and in the second generation, dominated police and fire departments.

John Dempsey, Connecticut's first Irish governor, was one of the most influential and popular governors Connecticut has had.

"The very people we fear at one moment can sometimes turn out to be the source of a society's greatest strengths," Dr. Woodward said.

*Creating Connecticut* also includes light-hearted stories, like the time Mark Twain bought 2000 cheroots and, in the middle of a public talk, sent

his manager to get 1500 more, as well as the story of the election cake tradition, one that dates back to the Puritans.

A royal charter by King Charles II granted Connecticut puritans the right to elect leaders and make laws, and so they celebrated their election day with a cake. The election cake was a big, rich fruit, spice, and yeast cake. Colonial records show that making an extraordinary cake was a great honor, and the tradition continued into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

"Perhaps this is exactly the right time for the Connecticut election cake to make a comeback," Dr. Woodward said.

In case readers want to revive state historical traditions, *Creating Connecticut* also includes a modern recipe for an election day cake.

*Creating Connecticut: Critical Moments that Shaped a Great State* is available online, as well as in public libraries.

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*Creating Connecticut Table of Contents from Dr. Woodward's virtual talk*



## Generation Z

### The Upcoming Election Will Be The First Time Many Gen Zers Vote, Who Will They Vote For?

According to Pew Research, about 10 percent of the United States electorate is part of the new generation of Americans, Generation Z. Soon, this generation will be a majority as they start turning old enough to vote. But why does this matter?

Generation Zers are like Millennials in many aspects when it comes to political issues. Pew Research noticed that only about 30 percent of Gen Zers and 29 percent of Millennials approve the way President Donald Trump is handling his job.

Similarly, when it comes to racial views, both Gen Zers and Millennials are more likely than older generations to accept that black people are treated less fairly than white people in the United States.

The Generation Z will be more racially and ethnically diverse than previous generations. Approximately 52 percent are white, 25 percent are Hispanic, 14 percent are Black, six percent are Asian, and 5 percent are categorized as other or of two or more races. Gen Zers are less likely to be immigrants but more likely to be children of immigrants, Pew Research reported.

In terms of education, Gen Zers will soon be one of the best-educated generations yet. Pew Research mentions that they are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to enroll in college. Among 18- to 21-years-old no longer in high school, 57 percent were enrolled in either two year or four-year college. Compared to the 52 percent among Millennials in 2003 and the 43 percent among members of Gen X in 1987, this shows a positive trend towards educational values within Gen Zers.

Gen Zers have been witness to many different events since they were born. An 18-year-old would have been weeks old when the September 11 events occurred, they would have been starting elemen-

tary school when the Great Recession hit in 2008 and just starting high school when Donald Trump became President.

Lately, Gen Zers are dealing with the effects of the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic. They are witnesses to wildfires and global warming. They are a generation that has been exposed to media due to the ease of accessing it. Pew Research also pointed out Gen Zers are one of the most distrustful generations; 73 percent of people between 18 and 29 say "most of time, people look out for themselves."

This year, those 18-year-old Gen Zers will have the opportunity to vote for the first time and we are yet to see the boom of this generation coming. It is interesting to see and understand that Gen Zers have a diverse and broad way of seeing things. *VICE Magazine* reported that in 2018 a Gallup poll found most Americans age 18 to 29, no matter their party affiliation, had a positive view of socialism. Americans in the same 18 to 29 group are less likely to view capitalism favorably.

Marie Solis' *VICE* article posted on May 2020, closed with a quote that might give perspective on what the future generations policies and interests will be:

"Many zoomers may still find individual socialist policies more attractive than the broader socialist politics that lie underneath. And many more will find little attractive about either. But students who belong to the country's flourishing Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) chapters are not demanding their peers' political purity—mostly, they are asking their classmates to keep an open mind and learn alongside them."



Photo by Kimberlin Stanford

## Trump's Ban on TikTok

### Why is the President After TikTok And What Can Users Expect?

Story and Photo by **Francisco Loreda**

On August 6, 2020 President Donald Trump published executive orders targeting the popular app TikTok and the messaging app WeChat. The orders stated that the two apps would be blocked from processing transactions for U.S. citizens and from being downloaded from app stores within the U.S. after 45 days, due to security concerns, the Associated Press (AP) reported. The AP stated TikTok will not face the most drastic sanctions until after the election on November 3, 2020.

President Trump has pressured TikTok's Chinese owner to sell to a U.S. company to satisfy concerns over data collection issues. The World Street Journal reports the concerns about data collection derive from fear of Beijing tapping the social-media platform's information to gather data on Americans. This leads to the question; what kind of data does TikTok collect from American users?

According to TikTok privacy policy, TikTok users agree to share their location and their internet address, TikTok tracks the type of device it is installed on, stores the users' browsing and search, as well as the content of messaging exchanging within the app.

Terms and conditions mention that TikTok can collect users' phone and social network contacts, GPS position and information such as phone number, age along with photos and videos. It can also store payment information and behavioral information such as videos that you like and content that you are interested in.

The Wall Street Journal mentioned that a TikTok spokesperson said the app collects less data than American social media apps, like Facebook or Google. Meanwhile, TikTok also called on its close to 100 million American users to express their opinions to their elected representatives, including the white house.

What does this mean for TikTok users around the United States?

Currently, there will be no significant change for the American users of the video sharing platform. So far, we know that Judge Carl Nichols of United States District Court of the District of Columbia granted an injunction against the ban, the Judge however, did not block the entire ban coming on November 12 in the U.S.

The ban to TikTok is expected to take place on November 12, 2020





## NOTEABLE WOMEN OF CONNECTICUT SERIES:

### *Sara Lee Brown Fleming*

Story by *Kimberlin Stanford*



*Sarah Lee Brown Fleming*

**L**ong before women were able to vote, women have fought tirelessly for equal rights including the right to vote. One such woman was Sarah Lee Brown Fleming (January 10, 1876 – January 5, 1963).

She was born in Charleston, South Carolina. When she was two years old, her family moved to New York. While living in New York, she became Brooklyn's school district first Black teacher. On November 5, 1902, she married Richard Stedman Fleming. They had two children. Dorothy born in 1903 and Harold was born in 1906.

Although not born in Connecticut, by 1910, Sarah Lee Brown Fleming lived in New Haven. She is known as Connecticut's Clubwoman. She was a leading civil rights activist. She organized African-American women in Connecticut for social welfare, suffrage, and equality reform.

She and her husband Richard were well known in elite Black society. Shortly after moving to Connecticut, she joined the oldest and largest Black women's club, the Twentieth Century Club which was founded in 1901. She continued her career as an educator who was devoted to the African-American community in New Haven, especially women and girls. Her husband became the first black dentist in Connecticut.

Fleming is well known for her activism but not as much for book writing. She was part of a group of pioneering literary critics who defined the Harlem Renaissance. In 1918 she wrote her first novel "Hope's Highway". This novel, based in the South, balances being an activist and artist with racial discrimination and the newness of being free.

In 1920, she released "Clouds and Sunshine" a collection of her poems. Then she published "Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction" in 1926 being her last known work.

Her club alliances introduced her to African American women pioneers and suffragists like Mary McLeod Bethune and Mary Church Terrell. Fleming became a leader for women's rights and suffrage. Using her club associations to raise female concerns, especially the right to vote.

Even with the passing of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment (women granted the right to vote). She continued her suffrage work 19<sup>th</sup> Ward section of the League of Women Voters. The 19<sup>th</sup> Ward stood out because of its mixed-race membership as the League of Women Voters was plagued with white supremacy throughout.

While with League of Women Voters, she hosted the meetings at her home while serving the executive board as secretary. Her focus was voter education.

Since her focus was voter education, she continued this path when she joined the Colored Republican Women of Connecticut in 1924 and delivered her lecture entitled "Education in Politics."

Continuing with her mission, she worked with leaders of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) including the president of NACW, Mary McLeod Bethune. While with this organization, she served an associate editor for the National Notes, the NACW's official publication.

In 1933, she organized Black women's leagues and associations in Connecticut to form the Connecticut State Union under the NACW.

The Connecticut State Union worked to advance African-American women's and girls' rights across class lines. While with this organization, she was the Honorary President who led in lobbying efforts, political training and advocacy for women's rights.

In 1935, her commitment to women and girls was further evidenced when she founded the Phillis Wheatley Home for Girls, a place for young Black migrant women new to New Haven.

She became the first African-American woman to be honored with Connecticut's Mother of the Year in 1952.

In 1955, she was awarded the Sojourner Truth Scroll Award by the National Association of Negro Professional and Business Women's Club. During the same year she testified before Congress discussing her commitment to civil rights, equal education, and social welfare of women and children.

She was politically active until her death on January 5, 1963.

Even in trying and dangerous times, women like Sarah Lee Brown Fleming' dedicated herself to the advancing women's rights.

Visit <https://chs.org/sarah-lee-brown-fleming/> for more information.



## VOTING BY MAIL, A NECESSARY AND SAFE OPTION

### The United States Should Consider Universal Mail-In Ballots for Our Upcoming Elections

According to the Bipartisan Policy Center, “mail-in ballots that meet eligibility and validity requirements are counted in every election. The law requires all valid votes to be counted in every election regardless of how they are cast.”

Despite President Donald Trump’s continuous verbal grievance against wide-spread mail-in voting fraud, there has yet to be any major fraudulent activities in the history of the United States.

There have been isolated incidents where some ballots were discarded or sent out twice but none of those has had any substantial impact on the elections because they were either quickly resolved or removed.

With less than a month to go until the primary election amidst a looming pandemic that has no end yet in sight, it may be time for the United States as a whole to adopt the practice of universal mail-in ballot.

Many countries have already implemented or considering implementing this process for their own election this year without any report of major fraudulence or mishaps.

In Switzerland, no matter how citizens chose to vote, all eligible voters will receive a ballot in the mail. According to The Washington Post’s research, it is the country’s most popular method where 90% of counted votes are mail-in ballots.

In the United States, mail-in voting is a legitimate process practiced since the Civil War, where those serving in the army can submit their ballot without being physical at the poll.

Five states had already implemented what was considered to be primarily vote-by-mail election years before the pandemic outbreak. These states are Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Utah, and Hawaii.

Story and Photo by *Maiquynh Truong*

According to NPR “About a quarter of all voters voted by mail in the 2018 midterms, more than double the rate of mail voting from 20 years ago.”

As of September 28, four more states including California, Nevada, New Jersey, and Vermont converted to universal mail-in voting states.

Connecticut and 35 other states adapted to automatically send residents mail-in ballot—or absentee ballot request form starting mid-September. The form allows voters to choose “Covid-19” as a legitimate reason to request an absentee ballot.

To ensure the security of the process, the Connecticut mail-in ballot package contains one ballot, one return envelope, and an inner envelope that will disqualify your ballot if not properly signed and dated.

In an interview with the New York Times, Attorney General William Barr mentioned his concerns

about foreign and domestic threats that will attempt to make counterfeit U.S. ballots. However, as of now, no evidence of mail-in voting interference had been discovered.

It is extremely difficult to tamper with the ballot or commit voter fraud in the United States thanks to the thorough and strict verification process. If an individual, a group, or even a nation plans to commit voter fraud, there are a lot of hoops to jump through with near-zero chance of success and high chances of being caught and prosecuted.

For example, if the attackers plan to create fake ballots, they must be able to match every aspect of the mail-in ballot paperwork exactly for the processing system to read and accept it. However, that is no small feat since ballots are uniquely created for each election and each jurisdiction. The ballot and envelope’s style, size, and even weight are changed based on every election cycle.

In addition to perfectly mimic the ballots, they would also have to match the information to each voter and be able to successfully copy their unique signatures. A daunting task to pull for hundreds of votes to have any significant damage to the election cycle.

The chances of a voter’s ballots being counted more than once are near impossible. In cases where an individual sent in their ballot through the mail and show up to vote physically at the poll on election day, only one submission will be counted.

The system will recognize the first qualified ballot from that individual and automatically dismiss any consequence submissions.

Based on the study performed by the CEO of the National Vote at Home Institute and the director of MIT Election Data and Science Lab for the past 20 years, from 250 million mail-in ballots only 143 were cases of criminal convictions for voter fraud. That resulted in a fraud rate percentage of 0.00006% or one case per state every six to seven years.

Also, there are numerous felony convictions on both federal and state-level for fraudulent activities. The convicted will be forced to pay heavy fines and even spends a consequential amount of time in prison, a cumbersome price to pay for one fake vote.

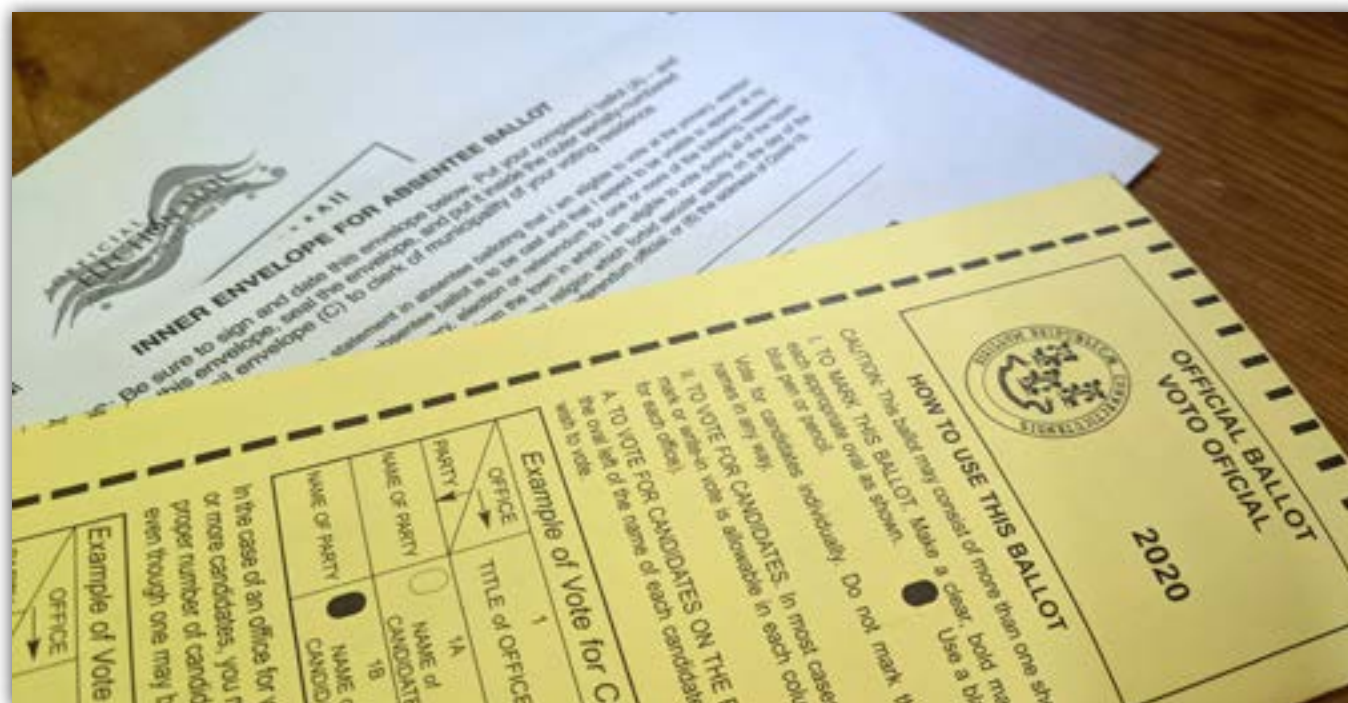
Therefore, despite the President or many high-ranking Republicans’ out-cries about the risks of mail-in voting, there has yet to be any substantial evidence of voter fraud. And with no end yet in sight for the Covid-19 pandemic, it is time for the U.S. to consider mail-in voting on a national level.

It might be too late now to convert the whole country into using a universal mail-in ballot system for the upcoming November election because of time constraints. Local states and jurisdictions will not be able to update their systems and expand mail-in ballots processing capability in time.

However, national/ universal vote by mail is a safe and low-risk process that the U.S. should eventually adapt. Under this regulation, every citizen will receive a mailable vote for each future election which they can choose sent back by using the post office or drop-off at any secure polling locations.

This does not mean that the act of physically showing up at to vote at polling sites will be admonished or replaced, but in a time of ongoing natural disasters and livelihood uncertainties, it is a convenience and necessary option to have.

But no matter which direction our country will take, one thing remains crucial to our democracy and that is for every citizen who is eligible to vote are registered and submit their ballot by the day of the election.



CT mail-in ballot, security envelope and post office envelope



# NATIONAL MAIL-IN VOTING: A CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY

## National Mail-In Voting Would Leave Millions of Votes Uncounted

National mail-in voting is not a dependable alternative to in-person voting and would leave a large percentage of ballots uncounted in the 2020 election.

Concerns about health and safety surrounding in-person voting amid the COVID-19 crisis have unfortunately resulted in a push for nation-wide voting by mail. But the United States is not prepared to handle mail-in voting on such a grand scale, and the pandemic will not be a threat if proper procedures are followed.

Although fears about coronavirus are not unfounded, voting at polling places can be done just as

Story and Photo by **Sarah Walsh**

safely as many other activities already being done throughout the country, such as grocery shopping or attending necessary appointments. The guidelines already exist, and we are already following them daily.

President Donald Trump has cited mass fraud as the main reason mail-in voting would be a catastrophe for the U.S., and even though evidence does not support claims of large-scale fraud, fraudulent activity is more likely to occur in mail-in voting operations.

For example, during the May 12 municipal elections in Paterson, New Jersey, four men were charged with voter fraud. 16,747 vote-by-mail ballots were received, but only 13,557 votes were counted, reported NBC New York on May 20.

Over 800 ballots in Paterson were invalidated for being incorrectly bundled together in mailboxes. One mailbox contained over 300 ballots, and they were in the wrong town.

The more prominent problem with voting by mail is not fraud, though. It is inefficiency. Mail-in voting is most likely to result in millions of uncounted ballots.

Often, ballots are uncounted because states tell voters they can wait until election day to drop their ballots in the mail, when in reality this is not enough time at all.

"Missing the deadline for ballots to be delivered to election officials was the main reason one percent of all mail ballots were tossed in 2016," reported the Los Angeles Times on September 11.

And, according to NPR, more than five percent of mail-in votes were tossed during this year's primary in Virginia. In Wisconsin, two percent, 23,000 ballots, were discarded. That is a bigger slice of votes than Trump won by in 2016.

Ballots are also frequently rejected for missing or defective signatures. Others have been tossed for missing a postmark.

Other errors, like voters mistakenly choosing too many candidates, or circling a candidate's name instead of filling in the circle beside it, can cause a mail-in ballot to be accepted at first, only to end up not counted later.

"Those mistakes are avoided when you vote in person," said Daniel Smith, a political scientist at the University of Florida. "You have seven, 10 people who can assist you in terms of making sure that you know about the ovals having to be filled out."

Another problem with national mail-in voting is perhaps even more troubling. It will almost certainly disenfranchise significant groups of voters, like communities of color, and people with limited access to mail, like those living on tribal lands.

Many Black Americans distrust mail-in voting because of a history of uncounted ballots.

"I would never change my mind," about voting in person, said Victor Gibson for an interview with the Associated Press. Gibson is Black, and a retired teacher. "We've heard so many controversies about missing absentee ballots," he said.

Multiple studies show that ballots from Black voters and other people of color, like Latinos, are

rejected at a higher rate than those of white voters. In Florida's March primary, Smith found that Black and Hispanic first-time mail-in voters were twice as likely to have their mail-in ballots rejected than white first-time mail-in voters.

Young voters are also more likely to have their ballots tossed than older voters.

Furthermore, many elections officials warn that states do not have the current resources or capacity to accommodate a sudden surge of mail-in voters. In particular, states with smaller mail operations that do not have experience verifying signatures against digitized signatures will struggle not to be overwhelmed. Especially with a short staff and a small budget.

Over 550,000 mail-in ballots were discarded in the primaries. Imagine how many more will be rejected in the national election, especially with many places scrambling to prepare operations, and many voters left uncertain and unassisted.

Mail-in voting should remain an option, but it cannot become the national standard if we want a democracy that is as equal and just as possible.



Ledyard resident, Hannah Walsh, recieved an absentee ballot application from the Town Clerk

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# RESTAURANT REVIEW:

## The Mariner - Mystic, CT

Story and Photo by *Danielle Branch*

### A gem in downtown Mystic

The Mariner in Mystic is nestled in near the drawbridge and has a charming but laid-back vibe. There is the option to sit inside, on the sidewalk, or on the patio out back. Inside was cozy and bright. Since downtown Mystic can be busy, opting for the sidewalk can make for some interesting conversation.

### The food

The Mariner is open for lunch and dinner and offers mostly seafood and steak and vegetarian options are. The arancini and bruschetta is one of the starter options. The seafood was well seasoned, tender, and the oysters were delicious and just melt in the mouth.

### The experience

The Mariner delivered all around with a quick turnaround time, attentive and personable waitstaff, and an inviting atmosphere. The waitress assigned to the table was witty and attentive to every need especially since being outside was away from most of the action. Overall, the service was excellent. With a nautical themed menu and restaurant - the Mariner is worth checking out!



The Mariner

# FIFTEEN HALLOWEEN MOVIE CLASSICS

## Top Movies to Watch During Spooky Season

Story by *Elizabeth Exley*

It is that time of year again! Spooky season is here, and everyone is gearing up to get ready for Halloween. A great way to get into the spirit of things is a movie countdown until the big night. Anything from thrillers and jump scares to family friendly and spooky, there is a wide variety of Halloween movies to choose from. Here are fifteen of classics to add to the countdown list:

1. Scream (1996)
2. Sleepy Hollow (1999)
3. Ghostbusters (1984)
4. Edward Scissorhands (1990)
5. Beetlejuice (1988)
6. The Silence of the Lambs (1991)
7. The Addams Family (1991)
8. The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993)
9. The Shining (1980)
10. Saw (2004)
11. The Conjuring (2013)
12. Hotel Transylvania (2012)
13. Halloween (1978)
14. Corpse Bride (2005)
15. Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974)

# SOUR CREAM COFFEE CAKE

## A Recipe Passed Down Through Family

Story by *Elizabeth Exley*

One of my favorite memories growing up is baking with my Grandmother, especially around the holidays when she'd make her famous Sour Cream Coffee Cake. I hope sharing this recipe will allow you to make some of your own new memories. Enjoy!

### BATTER

- ½ lb. Butter
- 2 cups Sugar
- 4 Eggs
- 2 tsp. Vanilla
- 2 tsp. Baking Powder

- 2 tsp. Baking Soda
- 4 cups Flour
- 1 pt. Sour Cream

### TOPPING

- 1 tbsp. Cinnamon
- ½ cup Sugar

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven at 350 degrees
2. Cream butter & sugar
3. Add eggs 1 at a time
4. Mix in vanilla
5. Mix flour, baking powder, and baking soda in a separate bowl
6. Pour flour mix into the batter alternating with the sour cream
7. Pour half the batter into a pan
8. Sprinkle ½ the topping over it and pour the rest of the batter over it
9. Add remaining topping
10. Bake for 1 hour



Coffee Cake image from Shutterstock.com



## TAKE A HIKE

### Get Out And Get Moving With These Scenic Hiking Trails

Here today, gone tomorrow. That is how many people feel about fall in New England! Here is a compilation of some scenic trails in eastern CT for varying skill levels.

#### Easy:

##### Mount Archer-Old Lyme

Length: 3 miles, approximately 80 minutes - gain 206 feet.

Highlights: Clearly marked, maple tree tapping, mixed terrain.

Tip: This trail can get particularly muddy, wear boots!

##### Gillette Castle at Eagle Landing State Park

Length: 1.9 miles, approximately 55 min - elevation Gain 223 feet.

Highlights: Views of the Connecticut River and castle.

Tip: Be sure to check their Facebook page for trail closures!



Pachaug Trail

#### Moderate:

##### Devil's Hopyard State Park - East Haddam

Length: 2.2 miles, approximately 72 min - elevation gain 462 feet.

Highlights: Waterfall, mixed terrain, dog friendly.

Tip: Check the Facebook updates to see

Story and Photo by **Danielle Branch**

if the bridge is open or check out the Chapman Falls loop which is just 0.4 miles!

##### Machimoodus State Park - Moodus

Length: 2 miles, approximately 57 min - gain 216 feet.

Highlights: Trails are clear, wide, and well maintained. Nice views of the Salmon River.

Tips: Sometimes the trees block the views, this is the best time to visit! Some steeper parts so wear the right gear!

#### Advanced:

##### Upper and Lower Chatfield Trail-Killingworth

Length: 7.4 miles, approximately 3.5 hours - elevation gain 974 feet.

Highlights: Walk your way through mixed forests and parts of Cockaponset State Forest and Forster Pond State Park. Maneuver through a mix of boulders, brooks, the "fat man squeeze", and along rocky ledges.

Tips: Be prepared! While fun and challenging, be sure to bring necessities and watch your step!

##### Mattebessett Trail - Middlefield

Length: 13.9 miles, approximately 7 hours - elevation gain 2500 feet.

Highlights: Great for bird watching and has lake views.

Tips: Best hiked spring - fall, bring bug spray!

It is always best to hike with a partner and be prepared with water, basic first aid supplies, and bug spray!

## DRONE 101

### A First Time Drone Buyer Guide

Story and Photo by **Francisco Loreda**

Seeing all those cool pictures taken from drones can be breathtaking. As a photographer, wanting to capture those amazing images filled with details and angles will most likely lead to buying a drone.

It is important to realize that there are lots of different drones out there, and while a lot of them are awesome, this article is written from experience with the brand DJI and the experiences had with a drone from that brand.

First, owning a drone is a responsibility and flying it around aimlessly can be troublesome. DJI's app will have areas where it would be required to sign a special permission waiver to fly. These areas are generally close to airports or military bases. It is not recommended to fly the drone around those areas, since the risk of hitting an airplane, helicopter, or getting the drone shot down for trespassing into military areas is higher.

The drone must be registered if it weighs more than 0.55 pounds. (250 grams). To register, go to [www.faaregisterdrone.com](http://www.faaregisterdrone.com) and follow the instructions. The registration for a recreational drone ranges from \$15 to \$55 dollars.

There are drones on the market that weigh less than 0.55 pounds (250 grams) available to buy for a beginner to practice before making a more expensive purchase. A quick Google search should be enough to help identify which are the best "entry-level" drones under 0.55 pounds to start learning.

One of the best lightweight drones out in the market is the DJI Mavic Mini. With a price of \$399.00 and a 2.7k resolution camera, the DJI Mavic Mini offers great video and photography capture. The drone's stability is amazing considering the size. Flying the drone during optimal weather conditions will be an amazing experience. The drone comes with its own remote that must be con-

nected to an Android or iOS device (phone or tablet both work). For the drone to work with the device, it will be necessary to download the DJI Fly app, which is easy to use and very intuitive.

No matter what drone is purchased, some safety practices are required before flying. A pre-flight check list is optimal to have, next there are a few things to check before you start flying:

#### Assess the weather conditions

Before starting to fly, know if there are weather changes coming. This is particularly important when flying a lightweight drone. High winds are dangerous at higher altitudes. Optimal visibility is best when flying, so fog, clouds, or smog are some things to avoid. Obviously, rain and snowstorms are a no-go when to flying the drone.

#### Batteries

Make sure the drone batteries are fully charged and have a replacement battery on hand if flying more than 20 to 30 minutes of the typical drone battery life. It is important to remember not only the drone is battery operated but so is the controller, do not forget to charge it as well!

#### Check your drone for damage

It is good practice to check the drone for signs of damage before and after each flight. DJI offers a plan where for approximately \$30.00 yearly to cover the drone in the case of damage caused by collision, it is a good thing to consider purchasing.

As mentioned before, the DJI Mavic Mini has an app to fly the drone and it has a lot of different adjustable settings. Every drone will have different settings and many of them will share similar capabilities. Before going out there and flying, get acquainted with all the settings and everything the drone is capable of and most importantly not capable of. Other than that, the most important part is to have fun and stay safe while flying.

Harkness Memorial State Park, photo taken with a DJI Mavic Mini, manual settings





## MOVIE REVIEW: MULAN (2020)

### *An Unimpressive Live-Action Adaption of a Beloved Disney Classic*

Story by *Maiquynh Truong*

#### *The Plot/ Writing (2/5)*

For a Hollywood movie so star-studded with the biggest names in Chinese and Asian cinema, the plot suffered from predictable storytelling, awkward dialog, and painfully stale comedy bits. Despite keeping some familiar elements from the original 1998 adaption, many plot points were eliminated while many more were added.

A lot of characters were rewritten and most of the time it is bearable. The addition of the witch, Xianniang at first seems like a convenience push to add a more active female role in the movie but as the story progresses, she does eventually grow on you as a sympathetic anti-hero. However, the leader of the Han army and the main antagonist of the whole movie was unintimidating and capably evil at best.

Out of all the alterations, what was irksome was the demonstration of Mulan's growth and personal strength. In the original 1998 animated film, Mulan was an ordinary village girl who became a great soldier

because of her courage, perseverance, and indomitable spirit. But in the 2020 adaption, Mulan was already a girl of immense martial arts talent and hid her true abilities when she joined the army. And thus, eliminating any aspect that Mulan's hard work contributed to her growth as a stellar soldier and replacing it with a juvenile explanation that she is already a powerful fighter and all she need to do was flip some convenient "Chi" switch.

#### *The Costumes / The Set (2/5)*

Though stunning in some respects such as the use of vibrant landscapes and impressively constructed backgrounds, the film also looks downright silly in others. It is incredibly difficult to discern the feel of the movie from the costume and set design. If

the tone of the movie is meant to be realistic and genuine, why is everything so bright and colorful? Is Mulan going to war or theatrical performance on war? A sensible person would not shed their armor in the middle of the battle and run around in an eye-catchingly red outfit. Oh, but it is acceptable because Mulan is such a phenomenal, air dodging martial artist and this is a fantasy Disney film?

Disney's attempt to blend both the animated, cartoony elements and the realistic plot directions resulted in a film filled with painfully jarring visual contrasts.

#### *The Action Sequences (2/5)*

The same can be said for the movie's mediocre action sequences. Instead of looking cool or stylishly choreographed, a handful of the fighting scenes were corny and unimpressive. Applause goes

to the film's use of slow-motion and some creative shots of the characters and objects mid-action. However, many if not all the major battles lack a certain sense of dread and thrill that made the original 1998 version so great. The attack on the snowscape was sadly less dramatic and the final melee was converted from an adrenaline-rushed, high-stake rescue of the emperor at the crowded capital to a small-scale confrontation in an abandoned structure hundreds of miles away from the original location.

#### *Music (3/5)*

As predicted, the choice to eliminate sing-along tunes in this new adaption is still a huge mistake on Disney's part. Memorable hits like "Make A Man Out of You" are rendered into instrumental background music. Though the changes add a touch of realness to the sober interpretation of Mulan's tale; losing the magic and fun of a spontaneous musical number while characters decked out in colorful, almost cartoony wardrobe is painfully palpable.

The one saving grace to the movie's music ensemble is the return of Christina Aguilera, who once again reprises her role as the vocalist to Mulan's theme songs. "Loyal Brave True" is a great follow-up to its precedent "Reflection," capturing the evolving strengths and values of a young woman made even more impactful by Aguilera's older and more matured voice.

#### *Conclusionvvvvv*

Overall, the movie was watchable. The film struggles to remain "authentic" to both the original Chinese tale and Disney's 1998 animated adaption. In the end, this much anticipated Disney movie of 2020 was twisted into an incoherence mess full of contradictions.

If looking for an entertaining, educational, and visually impactful take on this classic Chinese tale with lots of heart and lovable characters then stick to the original Disney animated version of Mulan. However, if in the market for something more mature, authentic, and grounded, why not check out the Chinese produced *Mulan: Legendary Warrior* (2009)? Either way, you will be much better off than paying Disney to watch this unimpressive adaption on their streaming service.



*Mulan (2020) poster image from imdb.com*





*Photo by Kimberlin Stanford*

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