



Celebrate National Poetry Month with a Branford Poet



April is Poetry Month

And April 26th is Poem in your Pocket Day. Check out poets.org for inspiration.

Don't forget to celebrate National Library Week from April 8-14!

"Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep, and you weep alone," an extract from the poem, *Solitude*. It's become a well-used adage over time. But were you aware that it was penned by Ella Wheeler Wilcox who once resided in Short Beach?

Inspired to write it when travelling to the Governor's inaugural ball in Madison, WI, she met a young sobbing woman on the way whom she tried to comfort for the rest of the journey. Ella felt extremely depressed and was unfocused on the celebration. Later, looking at her own reflection in a mirror, she was reminded of the crying woman and was motivated to write it.

Born in 1850 Ella began her career at the age of nine when she produced a novel of eleven chapters headed with original rhymes. She followed her heart as a writer, producing poetry and short stories, eventually focusing on poems. As she says in her autobiography, "a day which passed without a poem from my pen I considered lost and misused." Much of her earliest work, written in her teens, was devoted to poems about total abstinence. These works

can be found in a volume entitled *Drops of Water*.

Solitude was one of the poems in her volume entitled *Poems of Passion*. Every poem in the collection had been previously published singularly in magazines. Jansen & McClurg, the intended publisher of *Passion*, returned her manuscript intimating that it was immoral. It was eventually printed by a Chicago publisher.

Ella Wheeler married Robert Wilcox in 1884. Her husband was involved in the manufacture of sterling silver works of art at Union Square, Manhattan. Six months a year the couple resided in their summer home, which they referred to as the "Bungalow," in Short Beach. They also formed a social circle of the prominent arts figures from New York.

Robert predeceased Ella. As they both practiced Spiritualism, she attempted to contact him from the other side, becoming grief stricken when she received no response. Ella passed in 1919 of cancer.

Ella also wrote fiction including *Mal Moulée*, *A Double*



The portrait of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, pictured with Alpha Coiro, hangs above the doorway to the Lucy Hammer Room.

Life, Sweet Danger, and *A Woman of the World*. One of her autobiographies entitled *Story of a Literary Career* can be found in the reference department at the Blackstone Library.

An oil painting of Ella with two of her Persian cats hangs in the Blackstone. Wilcox commissioned Lilly Martin Spencer to paint her portrait in 1899.

By Alpha Coiro

Member Spotlight

We are happy to introduce the newest members of the Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library Board, Barbara Barrett and Joe Genua. When this husband and wife team retired from managerial leadership positions at ATT, they decided to devote their time to the Blackstone Library, a place they are passionate about.

Both Barbara and Joe worked at the annual Book Sale on the Green before retirement so it was an easy transition to get more involved with the library after retirement. Barbara started her volunteer work at the Blackstone by shelving non-fiction books as they were returned. After six months of volunteering, an opening for a circulation assistant became available and she joined the library staff.

Joe helps transport donated books from the drop boxes to the sorting space at the Volunteer Service Center. Joe continues to work at the Book Sale and helps the Friends wherever and whenever needed. Joe also volun-

teers at the Community Dining Room where he was recently honored as the volunteer of the month. Barbara, too, works and volunteers at the Community Dining Room. They both serve on the Board of the Volunteer Service Center.

Branford is lucky to have people like Barbara and Joe who are so generous with their time and commitment to making Branford an extraordinary place to live.

Friends of the Library in many

towns sell books online. Barbara and Joe have recently launched an online presence for the Friends, selling text books to buyers all over the country. This is showing great promise as an additional source of funds for the Friends which will help the Friends further support the library.

We are delighted and excited to welcome Barbara and Joe. We know they will be a fabulous addition to the Board.

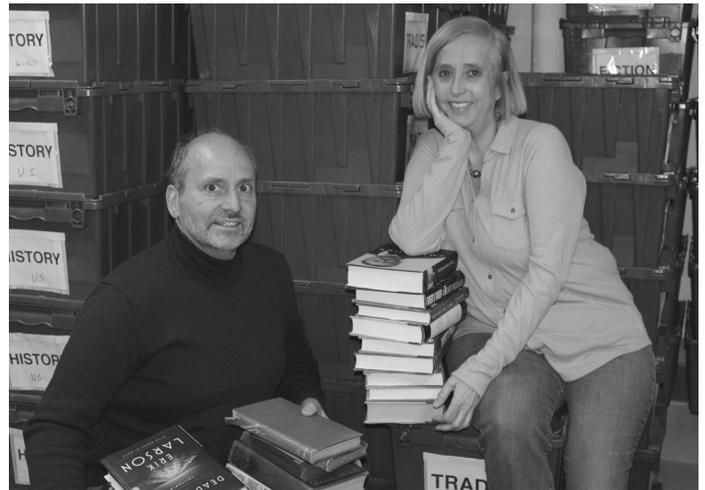
By Pam Roy



2018 Book Sale

Save the dates for the annual book sale!

September 28 — 30



Joe Genua and Barbara Barrett have launched an online presence for the Friends.

Photo: Diane Puchalski

Renovation Update

Much has happened since the last issue of Marble Columns, —all of it good! On January 10, the RTM voted to approve bonding for the library renovation project, with the understanding that the cost would be offset by a \$1 million State Library Grant and that \$800,000 would be raised through a capital campaign effort. We are very pleased that the campaign has raised \$686,000 toward this goal so far, which in-

cludes a generous gift of \$25,000 from the Friends, as well as contributions from many, many individual Friends members. Thank you all!!

Silver, Petrucelli & Associates has completed construction documents and the project is scheduled to go out for bid in late spring. If all goes according to the timeline, construction could start this summer.

During this time, the library staff and materials will remain

in the building. Sections will be closed off in six phases, throughout the 12 months of the project's duration.

Construction equipment and materials will be located in the back parking lot. We ask for your patience throughout all of the inconvenience as we build a better library.

*Karen Jensen
Library Director*

Program Highlights Spring 2018

Programs with an ** require registration. Call the library at 203.488.1441 ext 318, or visit the website: www.blackstonelibrary.org

Ask a Lawyer**

April 19 @ 6pm

May 17 @ 3:30pm

A free consultation with a lawyer, brought to you by the New Haven County Bar Association. First-come, first-served. Signup available in the Reference Department 30 minutes before program.

Intro to Hoopla: Stream Movies, Music & More**

April 19 @ 2-3:15pm

Download FREE ebooks, audiobooks, comics, movies, TV series and music to your PC, tablet or smartphone. NOTE: Hoopla is sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library, and available to Blackstone Library cardholders.

Intro to Overdrive:

May 31 @ 2-3:15pm

Learn how to download free books and audiobooks from

the library with Overdrive.

Bestsellers Book Club**

April 28 @ 3:30pm

White Houses by Amy Bloom

May 26 @ 3:30pm

All American Murder by James Patterson

Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

For a full program listing, visit the library website at www.blackstonelibrary.org

Spring Programs

Over the next year, the library will undergo a transformation in order to offer better services and programs to you and the Branford community. Many new programs will take place in the Lucy Hammer Room, and others off-site. Please check the library website for the most up to date information.

New and Novel-Nonfiction Too!

We're all "readers," for so many reasons; adventure, escape, suspense, romance, food for thought... there's always just the right book waiting for us. Here are a few brand new choices and works that have stirred discussion.

- **The Escape Artist** by Brad Meltzer. A trained painter and soldier discovers a military secret that traces back to Harry Houdini. As is so often the case, the closer he gets to the truth, the more dangerous it becomes!

- **The Room on Rue Amelie** by Kristen Harmel. Set against the danger and intrigue of WWII Paris, this heartfelt novel will keep you riveted until the very last page.

- **Camino Island** by John Grisham. In true Grisham form, a search for stolen rare manuscripts leads to an island in Florida.

- **Educated** by Tara Westover. A young woman,

daughter of survivalists, has never even attended school. She strives to educate herself for university and entry into the world at large. Nonfiction.

- **Enlightenment Now** by Steven Pinker. A case for using reason, science, and humanism to counter negative views of Western civilization. Nonfiction.

- **China's Great Wall of Debt.** By Dinny McMahon. Shadow banks, ghost cities, massive loans, and the end of the Chinese miracle. An enlightening inside look at how and why the Chinese economy is racing toward disaster and the impact its collapse would have on the world. Nonfiction.

The Guide to Walden Pond by Robert M. Thorson. An exploration of the history, nature, landscape, and literature of one of America's most iconic places. The first Guidebook to the literary shrine to Thoreau, Walden Pond.

Spring always awakens my inner Transcendentalist, so I'm eager to pursue Thorson's guide. An omnivorous reader, I devour fiction and non-fiction, alike. Biographies next!

It's a hopeless task to chronicle all the wonderful, engrossing reads out there, so I'm requesting your help: When you've read something you love, the kind of work that stays in your mind even after you've put the book aside, let us know! Share your interesting, pleasurable, thought provoking finds with the rest of the Friends by adding it to Marble Columns! We're hoping to make this article a regular feature of Marble Columns, and your input will be most welcome and appreciated.

Read On!
Hatsie Mahoney

Send us your reviews at friends@blackstonelibrary.org



**Friends of the James Blackstone
Memorial Library**
758 Main Street
Branford, CT 06405

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 117

Return Service Requested

Board of Directors 2017-2018:

- Hatsie Mahoney, President
- Alpha Coiro, Vice President
- Callista Stoddard, Treasurer
- Paula Harrington,
Assistant Treasurer
& Membership Chair
- Don Mitchell, Secretary
- Barbara Barrett & Joe Genua
- Al Bertoline
- Louise Carocari
- Jonathan Clark
- Matt & Mary Hally
- Pam Roy
- John Smith
- Terry Twigg
- Helen Wong

- Karen Jensen, Library Director
Member Ex-Officio

From the President

Greetings Friends!

Another season has passed, and it was a good one for curling up with your book...even if by battery lantern, swaddled in blankets! Hopefully, those storms are behind us and we can begin to enjoy the beauty and renewal spring brings.

Speaking of renewal, before long the little envelopes will be arriving, reminding you to renew your membership in The Friends. Your participation and help are needed more than ever. If you'd like to feel more involved, you're welcome to join us at board meetings, the first Tuesday of every month except January and July, 5:00. And don't forget the Annual Meeting on June 5th!

The board has been busy, planning and strategizing to optimize fund raising and support for our library. The Friends are proud to have donated \$25,000 to the Capital Campaign for the renovation. Every little bit helps, so if you haven't already donated, please consider doing so.

Spring cleaning is the perfect opportunity to donate those volumes that have been accumulating! Donation bins are conveniently located near the rear entrance of the library and at the Volunteer Services Center on Harrison Ave. Urge your friends and neighbors to donate their used books! A new committee is striving to revitalize Marble Columns. Your contributions of newsy bits, information, or reflec-



Photo: Diane Puchalski

tions on a recent read are most welcome. Meeting times will be broadcast by email.

There is always so much to do, and so many new ideas waiting to be aired; I urge you to join in, participate, and help support our wonderful library.

Wishing you a lovely spring,

Hatsie Mahoney
President