



*Boston Authors Club*

## October 2020 Newsletter

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## Featured Bookstore: The Blue Bunny



***BAC talks with children's book author and illustrator and bookstore owner Peter H. Reynolds about *The Blue Bunny Books and Toys*, a Dedham institution for creative inspiration since its founding in 2003.***

### Five Questions for The Blue Bunny Books & Toys

***You call yourself "the little shop with a big mission." What is that mission and how has it developed over the years? As an author yourself, you have a special perspective on the world of book sales. How do you choose what will be sold and featured in your store?***

I know the power of hand-selling a book and I'm thankful. My success is due in large part to independent bookstores becoming champions of my titles, like *The Dot* and *The Word Collector*. That's the advantage of buying your books from a real, brick and mortar book shop staffed by humans who love books and know the books on their shelves. My staff lovingly chooses each book. We also are partial to books promoting creativity and social justice. You can check out a sampling of our favorite books at [www.bookshop.org/shop/bluebunny](http://www.bookshop.org/shop/bluebunny) which is our online shop. Andy Hunter founded [bookshop.org](http://www.bookshop.org) as independent bookshops' answer to Amazon which had really taken a bite out of indie book sales. 30% of the sales on our [bookshop.org](http://www.bookshop.org) site goes to support our bookshop.

As an author, I can highlight my books and offer them autographed which really helps drive people to our brick and mortar. I have developed a line of inspirational prints which are also signed and ready to frame. Those have been very popular. Recently, we added an online shop featuring all my books and prints: [www.thedotcentral.com](http://www.thedotcentral.com) - all proceeds of which get driven back into the store.

***Blue Bunny publishes a magazine that is created primarily by students. How did that come about and what is the larger goal of it?***

HUTCH Magazine grew out of a project started by Nancy Marsh, a local resident who wanted to inspire kids to write with purpose. Her workshop resulted in a black and white magazine. Knowing my mission to inspire creativity, she approached me to see if I'd like to upgrade the magazine to really honor the students' work. HUTCH was born. Twenty-two issues later, we are preparing our next publishing celebration which will be a virtual event for the first time. We are exploring wider distribution. Our goal is to scale the impact and inspire the next generation of creative artists, writers, and thinkers. You can learn

**What do independent stores bring to their communities and what have you tried to bring to Dedham?**

We look at our bookshop and cafe as a community center. Independent bookshops are a bastion of ideas, of many voices, all coming to rest side by side as books upon shelves. These books co-exist peacefully. It's a great lesson for all of us to take to heart. That idea of welcoming new ideas, encouraging independent thought, and safeguarding freedom of expression are the foundations of the American vision. **For the past few years, you have shared space with the Mocha Java coffee shop. How did that relationship come about and what other relationships have you established in the community?**

Steve Carlson, a Seattle transplant, became a pioneer in bringing great coffee to the East Coast. He opened Mocha Java 25 years ago, but 4 years ago he lost his lease. An idea popped into my head. We moved Mocha Java into our bookshop. It was a natural fit and became a win-win business idea. Unfortunately, Steve's father got sick and after returning to Seattle to take care of him, he sold the business to me. We carry on Steve's passion for great coffee and his love of bringing neighbors to gather to share it. Now they can curl up with a good book on the on vibrant High Street in Dedham Square to sip and savor.

I helped found Dedham Square Circle to help promote and nurture this kind of downtown-fueled community spirit. After 15 years, we have become a united "family" of businesses all working to create memorable experiences. Take a peek at [www.visitededhamsquare.com](http://www.visitededhamsquare.com) to see all that we do. Many other towns are looking at Dedham as a model of how to make their own downtowns not only survive, but thrive. In these challenging times, a sense of community and human connectivity is exactly what will heal us.

Visit Blue Bunny at [www.bluebunnybooks.com](http://www.bluebunnybooks.com)

*Interview by Matt Robinson*

## BAC Julia Ward Howe Award Updates



### Judges at Work - The JWH Honored Authors and Winners Will Be Announced in November!

## Submit a Proposal for the 2021 JWH Symposium

### The Legacy of Julia Ward Howe: A Symposium

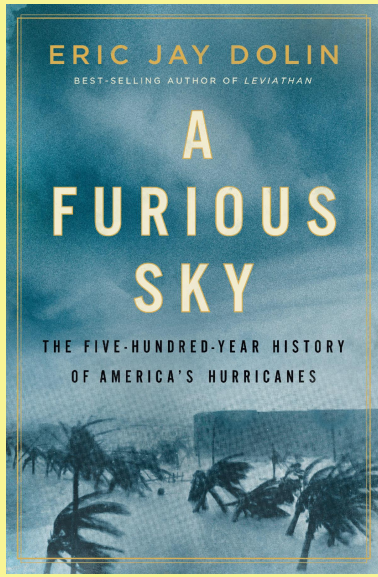
To celebrate the 150th anniversary of its founding (by JWH), Boston's Saturday Morning Club will host a one-day symposium on Saturday, June 12, 2021.

Members of the BAC, and anyone interested in presenting a paper related to JWH's Legacy, is cordially invited to submit a brief proposal (a 250 word abstract or panel description) to the Symposium organizers this month.

*Topics on any aspect of Julia Ward Howe's legacy are welcome, for example:*

- *Women Writing Hymns and Poetry*
- *Transatlantic Social Movements*
- *Gender and Identity*
- *Literary Celebrity*
- *Women's Suffrage*
- *Howe and Material Culture in the Gilded Age*
- *Howe, Abolition, and Race*
- *Ladies' Clubs, Then and Now*
- *The Domestic Sphere*
- *19th Century Women's Travel Writing*
- *Writing Women's Biography*
- *Women's War Writing*
- *Teaching Howe in the 21st Century*

**Please send all proposals and your full contact information to [JWHSymposium@gmail.com](mailto:JWHSymposium@gmail.com) by October 15, 2020.**



**Congratulations to Eric Jay Dolin, whose latest book is a finalist for the 2020 Kirkus Prize for Nonfiction, selected as one of six from a field of 395 titles in the nonfiction category. The winner will receive \$50,000.**  
<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/kirkus-prize-finalists-are-announced/>



**Helen Marie Casey has poems published and/or forthcoming in *The Greensboro Review*, *The Westchester Review*, *The Peauxdunque Review*, *The Comstock Review*, *Paterson Literary Review*, and *The North Dakota Review*. Her new chapbook, *You Kept Your Secrets*, due out in late November, can be ordered from Finishing Line Press.**

**authors!**  
**AUTHORS!**

**Share your news!  
Email your publication and event news by October 29 to [bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com](mailto:bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com) for the NOVEMBER newsletter**

## **BAC President's Note**



### ***October Musings***

***I've been reading a lot of fiction lately. This is partly because we're still assessing books for the annual Julia Ward Howe prize (due to unanticipated circumstances we're running late this year) and partly because I'm finding it a necessary counterbalance to the realities of life right now. There's probably no better a deflection, no finer a salve, than losing myself in a book.***

I've actually done this for many years. When I was growing up I used to have what I termed my "Saturday lunch books." These were books of fiction which I'd already read, often many times over, which I'd re-read on Saturdays when I could heat up a bowl of soup and sit down at the kitchen table in the house in which I grew up, book propped open in front of me, and engage in the solace and familiarity of warm food and words and stories whose patterns were known and loved. It was ritualistic, it was comforting.

To this day my parents like to tell stories of what a voracious reader I was as a child, and their amazement at my interest in not only reading a variety of literary genres, but also my interest in re-

reading a number of books. I know that I read Dorothy Sterling's *The Brownie Scout Mystery* over fifty times! Edward Fenton's *The Phantom of Walkaway Hill*, Elizabeth George Spear's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Edward Eager's *Seven Day Magic* and a roster of books by Elaine Konigsberg and Ruth M. Arthur filled out my rotation of "Saturday lunch books."

As I think about it today, I realize that what drew me to these books time and time again was not that they were great literature, but rather that there were aspects of each of their plots or characters that took me away from my suburban home, the increasing pressures of school and social life as I was growing up. Reading about kids who found a half coin that whisked them off to magical adventures, or a young woman falsely accused of being a witch in 18<sup>th</sup> century New England and how she escaped a fate others weren't so lucky to avoid and find real love in the process, or a brother and sister who managed to evade authorities and live in the Metropolitan Museum of Art for days when they ran away from home, transported me to other times, other places, other lives. That's what fiction can do for you.

So as we all deal with the multifold pressures and very real anxieties of this time in which we're living, I encourage you to spend a little time reading fiction. I know when I wake up in the middle of the night, escaping into a novel helps to set my mind at ease and lifts my soul.

Stay well,  
**Julie Dobrow**  
**BAC President**

## Yesteryear at the BAC: Julia Ward Howe and the Radical (Club) Writers on Beacon Hill

**If you asked me in passing if I thought Julia Ward Howe and Benjamin Peirce had ever met, I would have said that I thought it unlikely, he being a theoretical mathematician over in Cambridge and she being a literary light on Beacon Hill. But Boston's postbellum thought leaders could be numbered on a few hands and transcendentalism was still a coin, however depreciated, of the savants.**

Howe and Peirce were both members of the Radical Club of Chestnut Street. The group started in the autumn of 1867. It had a five-year run, was reborn as the Second Radical Club in 1872, and survived another eight years, finally dying for lack of interest in 1880.

The club met at the residence of Rev. and Mrs. John T. Sargent, No. 13 Chestnut Street, and consequently is sometimes referred to as the Chestnut Street Club. In addition to being the Sargent's residence, No. 13 was the home of a salon hosted by Mrs. Sargent, who was born Mary Elizabeth Fiske in New Orleans in 1827. (Thanks to Marie Oedel for this bit of historical sleuthing.) Mary Elizabeth was the second wife of Rev. John. For those who enjoy Burke-ian connections, she was the granddaughter of the great Boston clockmaker, Aaron Willard. We'll set aside the story of Mary Elizabeth's Boston to New Orleans and back to Boston journeys for another time.

Mrs. Sargent edited *Sketches and Reminiscences of The Radical Club of Chestnut Street, Boston* which was published by James R. Osgood and Company in 1880. (Title page illustrated above.) One must assume that *Sketches and Reminiscences* gives a fair representation of the ponderings of the club. Getting back to the crossing of paths, there is a sketch of a paper by Howe, "Limitations", and two by Benjamin Peirce, "The Nebular Theory" and "Ideality".

In her note on the history of the Radical Club, Sargent says "In earlier years, the papers were chiefly confined to theological and religious questions; but during the last decade they were generally upon scientific and educational problems. ... Rare thoughtfulness, deep human tenderness, and profound earnestness marked these reunions."

You can imagine that displays of profound earnestness might become the butt of backstreet comment. Due to the location of the club house, Edgar Allen Poe referred to them in a less than complimentary mode as the "Frogpondians".

Howe was elected President of the Radical Club in 1870. She devotes a lively chapter to that Club in her *Reminiscences*. In one sample commentary about literary critics, she compares [literary criticism] to the ancient punishment whereby an offender was first smeared with honey and then hung up to be stung to death by wasps. Yet the wasps, she reflects, take an innocent pleasure in it... Surely, this isn't *our* Mrs. Howe. But, yes it is. Perhaps Mr. Poe's caricatures stung rather deeply.

SKETCHES AND REMINISCENCES  
OF  
THE RADICAL CLUB  
OF  
CHESTNUT STREET, BOSTON.

EDITED BY  
MRS. JOHN T. SARGENT.



BOSTON:  
JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY.  
1880.

**Here's a new challenge to Yesteryear readers:**

**There was a long article in the *New York Tribune* October 7, 1874, entitled "The Boston Radical Club. Its Death, and How it Came to Die. ...**



*Literary Pyrotechnics—A Lofty Contempt for Facts—Bright Talk Varied with Sublime Rubbish” presumably marking the passing of the First Radical Club. The article is signed R.W.L. A free copy of Literary Boston Today goes to the first BAC News reader who identifies R.W.L. Submit your entries to [bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com](mailto:bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com)*

**LEFT: 13 Chestnut Street today**

**Membership dues are \$50 annually for the calendar year. You can join and renew online by [clicking here](#). If you would rather pay by check, please make your check out to Boston Authors Club and mail it to the following address:**

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