

May 15, 2017

## **“Redding Reads – Mark Twain Library Celebrates 250th Anniversary” Town-Wide Read Features *My Brother Sam is Dead***

REDDING, CT, May 15, 2017 ó Delve into the fascinating colonial history of Redding with a special town-wide read of the classic *My Brother Sam Is Dead*, the widely-acclaimed historic novel based in this town during the Revolutionary War.

Since it was published in 1974, this National Book Award nominee by James and Christopher Collier has become a staple in countless classrooms nationwide. It centers on actual historic events that took place in Redding and the effect the war had on the people who lived here.

“It is an incredible honor to be the setting for such an important literary classic,” said Jennifer Wastrom, president of the Library. “How remarkable to have another literary link ó in the same vein as our founder ó to celebrate this summer.”

A Newbery Honor and an ALA Notable book, *My Brother Sam is Dead* received universal acclaim for its realistic depiction of the Meeker family, which was torn apart by competing allegiances. Young Tim Meeker must choose between his father, who feels bound to the English king, and his brother Sam, who is devoted to the cause of the Patriots.

“This book is both touching and memorable ó it’s a young adult book that adults will enjoy reading, too. It’s the perfect way to learn about the town’s early history during this sescentennial celebration year,” said Beth Dominianni, director of The Mark Twain Library.

The kick off for the town-wide read will be during the town’s Memorial Day parade on Saturday, May 27. The Library will be offering free copies of the book and working with other town organizations on many programs (listed below) through the summer and fall which center on the town’s early history.

“We’re planning everything from a Redding birthday party for little kids to academic lectures for adults,” said Mark Gilbert, chairman of the Library’s Town-Wide Read committee. “We’re hoping that families will read ó or rediscover -- the book together and participate in Library programs to better appreciate and honor the town’s role in the Revolutionary War.”

After Memorial Day, look for free copies of the book in display boxes at the Library and several locations around town (see locations below). The Library invites residents to take a free copy, read it, and then return it to either the Library or the display box for someone else to enjoy.

A special map of *Sam Meeker's Redding*, highlighting town landmarks in the book, has been designed by Redding's Amy Cabot and will be available at the Library.

The Library invites readers to take a picture with the book at one of the landmarks on the map, and post it with the hashtag, #ReddingReads, or email it to [reddingreads@marktwainlibrary.org](mailto:reddingreads@marktwainlibrary.org). You'll be entered into a prize contest and we'll use your photo in our displays!

## Redding Reads Programs

### ■ Official Kick Off – Memorial Day Parade

Saturday, May 27 at 11:30 a.m. at Redding Elementary School, 33 Lonetown Rd.

Look for us at the town's Memorial Day parade -- we'll be donning tricorne hats and handing out free copies of the book. This book is appropriate for ages 12 and up, but we'll have plenty of book recommendations and programs for younger kids, too!

Display boxes with free copies of the book will be set up in several locations throughout town. The MTL invites you to take a free copy, read and enjoy it, then bring it back to the box or to the Library.

Drop by the Library to get a free *Sam Meeker's Redding* map featuring town landmarks designed by Redding's Amy Cabot. Take a picture with the book at the town landmark(s), and email it to [reddingreads@marktwainlibrary.org](mailto:reddingreads@marktwainlibrary.org). You'll be entered into a prize contest and we'll use your photo in our displays!

### ■ Fact vs. Fiction in My Brother Sam Is Dead

Wednesday, June 14 at 7 p.m. at the Mark Twain Library, 439 Redding Road

*My Brother Sam is Dead* is a historic novel based in Redding during the Revolutionary War, but which parts are fact, and which parts are fiction? Find out with Town Historian Charley Couch as he sifts through the novel and discusses what *really* happened in Redding during the Revolutionary War. This talk is a great way to start a conversation with the family about town history! Visit [www.marktwainlibrary.org](http://www.marktwainlibrary.org) for information. Co-sponsored by the Redding Historical Society.

### ■ Rediscover Revolutionary Redding – Family Day

Saturday, August 26 from 2 to 4 p.m. (Rain Date: August 27) at Putnam Memorial State Park, 499 Black Rock Tpk.

Walk in Sam Meeker's footsteps during a Family Day at Putnam Memorial State Park. Watch as reenactors create items from colonial days and participate in a Scavenger Hunt. Fun for the whole family! Registration opens in August. Visit [www.marktwainlibrary.org](http://www.marktwainlibrary.org) for information. Co-sponsored by the Friends and Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park (FANS).

## ■ Revolution, Patriotism & Liberty – How We Remember and Represent Our Past

Monday, September 11 (Patriot Day) at 7 p.m. at Mark Twain Library, 439 Redding Road

Dr. Leslie Lindenauer, professor of history at Western Connecticut State University, discusses the theme of Patriotism in "My Brother Sam is Dead," with a focus on how we have chosen to remember and represent notions of patriotism and liberty from the Revolutionary War. Dr. Lindenauer, who received her PhD from New York University in 1997, has worked recently on American identity, memory, and popular culture in American History. Registration opens in August. Visit [www.marktwainlibrary.org](http://www.marktwainlibrary.org) for information.

## ■ Happy Birthday, Redding!"

Thursday, October 12 from 4 to 5 p.m. at Mark Twain Library, 439 Redding Road

To celebrate the town's 250th anniversary, Miss Lisa is throwing a big birthday party bash for Redding! Make your own ice cream sundaes and make a collage of your favorite places in town. Ages 4 to 7. Registration opens in September. Visit [www.marktwainlibrary.org](http://www.marktwainlibrary.org) for information.

## ■ Twilight Colonial Graveyard Tour

Friday, October 27 at 6:30 p.m. at Christ Church Parish, 184 Cross Hwy.

Visit the church grounds just across the street from the Meeker Tavern, where the Sam and his family worshipped on Sundays. Town Historian Charley Couch leads a tour of historically significant gravestones in the Colonial Graveyard of Christ Church Parish. The Reverend Marilyn Anderson, rector of the parish, will welcome participants to the church's sacred ground, and lead a brief moment of silence before the tour. Following the tour, come inside Christ Church for a light reception and Rev. Anderson will point out some church artifacts from the Revolution. Limited to 50 participants. Ages 10 and up. Registration opens in October. Visit [www.marktwainlibrary.org](http://www.marktwainlibrary.org) for information. Co-sponsored by the Redding Historical Society.

## ■ Town-Wide Book Discussion

Friday, Nov. 3 at 7 pm at Mark Twain Library, 439 Redding Road

Library Director Beth Dominianni leads a discussion on major themes in the book, including the impact of war on a community, military justice, and how families can be riven by politics. Ages 12 and up.

## ■ Loyalists & Patriots – Religion and the Revolution

Sunday, November 5 at 3 p.m. at First Church of Christ, Congregational, 25 Cross Hwy, Redding Center

During the Revolution, church membership often signaled a person's loyalties -- to an emerging United States or to England, the mother country of the colonies. Sam Meeker's family belonged to the church across from their tavern in Redding Ridge, today's Christ Church Parish. What did the family's affiliation with that church signal to other colonists? Town Historian Charley Couch and the pastors of Redding's two oldest parishes discuss the role of religion during the Revolution and the early church history of Redding. With The Rev. Marilyn Anderson, rector of Christ Church Parish and The Rev. Dr. Dean

Ahlberg, senior minister of First Church of Christ, Congregational. Reception follows. Registration opens in October. Visit [www.marktwainlibrary.org](http://www.marktwainlibrary.org) for information. Co-sponsored by the Redding Historical Society.

## ■ **Finale: Are You Smarter Than a Middle Schooler? A Town History Trivia Contest**

Saturday, November 18 from 2 to 4 p.m. at Redding Community Center, 37 Lonetown Road

Town officials go up against middle schoolers to test their knowledge of town history during this fun and fast-paced finale of the Mark Twain Library's Town-Wide Read. Find out which side will claim bragging rights to being named the town's top history experts! Brent Colley, local historian and First Selectman of Sharon, will be the master of ceremonies. Visit [www.marktwainlibrary.org](http://www.marktwainlibrary.org) for information.

Display box locations include: The Mark Twain Library, the Community Center lobby, Redding train station, town hall, Uncle Leo's Coffee and Donuts, Redding Ridge Market, and The Spinning Wheel.

The Mark Twain Library is owned by the Mark Twain Library Association. It was founded in 1908 by Samuel Clemens or Mark Twain himself or one of Redding's most celebrated residents.

Visit [www.marktwainlibrary.org](http://www.marktwainlibrary.org), for more information.

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