

July 2019

## "Great Lives" Biography Book Group Brookfield Public Library 2019-20

Books are available at the Circulation Desk about a month before the meeting. Anyone interested in reading and discussing biographies is welcome!

**Monday, August 26, 2019**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

### ***Jefferson's Daughters* by Catherine Kerrison**

Thomas Jefferson had three daughters: Martha and Maria by his wife, Martha Wayles Jefferson, and Harriet by his slave Sally Hemings. Although the three women shared a father, the similarities end there. Martha and Maria received a fine convent school education while they lived with their father during his diplomatic posting in Paris--a hothouse of intellectual ferment whose celebrated salonnères are vividly brought to life in Kerrison's narrative. Harriet Hemings followed a different path. She escaped slavery--apparently with the assistance of Jefferson himself. Leaving Monticello behind, she boarded a coach and set off for a decidedly uncertain future. The richly interwoven story of these three strong women and their fight to shape their own destinies sheds new light on the ongoing movement toward human rights in America--and on the personal and political legacy of one of our most controversial Founding Fathers. (Polaris summary)

**Monday, September 23, 2019**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

### ***House of Dreams* by Liz Rosenberg**

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Maud who adored stories. When she was fourteen years old, Maud wrote in her journal, "I love books. I hope when I grow up to be able to have lots of them." Not only did Maud grow up to own lots of books, she wrote twenty-four of them herself as L. M. Montgomery, the world-renowned author of *Anne of Green Gables*. For many years, not a great deal was known about Maud's personal life. Her childhood was spent with strict, undemonstrative grandparents, and her reflections on writing, her lifelong struggles with anxiety and depression, her "year of mad passion," and her difficult married life remained locked away, buried deep within her unpublished personal journals. Through this revealing and deeply moving biography, kindred spirits of all ages who, like Maud, never gave up "the substance of things hoped for" will be captivated anew by the words of this remarkable woman. (Polaris summary)

**Monday, October 28, 2019**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

### ***Empire of the Summer Moon* by S.C. Gwynne**

A stunningly vivid historical account of the forty-year battle between Comanche Indians and white settlers for control of the American West, centering on Quanah, the greatest Comanche chief of them all. *Empire of the Summer Moon* spans two astonishing stories. The first traces the rise and fall of the Comanches, the most powerful Indian tribe in American history. The second entails one of the most remarkable narratives ever to come out of the Old West: the epic saga of the pioneer woman Cynthia Ann Parker and her mixed-blood son Quanah, who became the last and greatest chief of the Comanches. (Amazon.com)

**Monday, November 25, 2019**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

### ***Reporter: a Memoir* by Seymour M. Hersh**

Seymour Hersh's fearless reporting has earned him fame, front-page bylines in virtually every major newspaper in the free world, honors galore, and no small amount of controversy. Now in this memoir he describes what drove him and how he worked as an independent outsider, even at the nation's most prestigious publications. He tells the stories behind the stories--riveting in their own right--as he chases leads, cultivates sources, and grapples with the weight of what he uncovers, daring to challenge official narratives handed down from the powers that be. (Polaris summary)

**December NO MEETING**

**Monday, January 27, 2020**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

### ***John Quincy Adams* by Paul C. Nagel**

Nagel probes deeply into the psyche of this cantankerous, misanthropic, erudite, hardworking son of a former president whose remarkable career spanned many offices: minister to Holland, Russia, and England, U.S. senator, secretary of state, president of the United States (1825-1829), and, finally, U.S. representative (the only ex-president to serve in the House). On the basis of a thorough study of Adams' seventy-year diary, among a host of other documents, the author gives us a richer account than we have yet had of JQA's life--his passionate marriage to Louisa Johnson, his personal tragedies (two sons lost to alcoholism), his brilliant diplomacy, his recurring depression, his exasperating behavior--and shows us why, in the end, only Abraham Lincoln's death evoked a greater outpouring of national sorrow in nineteenth-century America. (Polaris summary)

July 2019

**Monday, February 24, 2020**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

***Invisible Woman* by Claire Tomalin**

When Charles Dickens and Nelly Ternan met in 1857, she was 18: a professional actress performing in his production of *The Frozen Deep*. He was 45: a literary legend, a national treasure, married with ten children. This meeting sparked a love affair that lasted over a decade, destroying Dickens's marriage and ending with Nelly's near-disappearance from the public record. In this remarkable work of biography, Claire Tomalin rescues Nelly from obscurity, not only returning the neglected actress to her rightful place in history, but also giving us a compelling and truthful account of the great Victorian novelist. Through Dickens's diaries, correspondence, address books, and photographs, Tomalin is able to reconstruct the relationship between Charles and Nelly, bringing it to vivid life. The result is a riveting literary detective story--and a portrait of a singular woman. (Polaris summary)

**Monday, March 23, 2020**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

***Rocket Men* by Robert Kurson**

A riveting account of three heroic astronauts who took one of the most dangerous space flights ever. In early 1968, the Apollo program was on shaky footing. President Kennedy's end-of-decade deadline to put a man on the Moon was in jeopardy, and the Soviets were threatening to pull ahead in the space race. By August 1968, with its back against the wall, NASA decided to scrap its usual methodical approach and shoot for the heavens. With a focus on astronauts Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders, and their wives and children, this is a vivid, gripping, you-are-there narrative that shows anew the epic danger involved, and the singular bravery it took, for man to leave Earth for the first time--and to arrive at a new world. (Polaris summary)

**Monday, April 27, 2020**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

***Code Name: Lise* by Larry Loftis**

The year is 1942, and World War II is in full swing. Odette Sansom decides to follow in her war hero father's footsteps by becoming an SOE agent to aid Britain and her beloved homeland, France. Five failed attempts and one plane crash later, she finally lands in occupied France to begin her mission. It is here that she meets her commanding officer Captain Peter Churchill. As they successfully complete mission after mission, Peter and Odette fall in love. All the while, they are being hunted by the cunning German secret police sergeant, Hugo Bleicher, who finally succeeds in capturing them. They are sent to Paris's Fresnes prison, and from there to concentration camps in Germany where they are starved, beaten, and tortured. But in the face of despair, they never give up hope, their love for each other, or the whereabouts of their colleagues. (Polaris summary)

**\*\*\*Date change because of Memorial Day\*\*\***

**Monday, June 1, 2020**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

***Patriot or Traitor* by Anna Beer**

"Sir Walter Raleigh's life is romantic, irresistible and of central importance to our island story. His death is a convoluted and contested tale of bargaining, failure and betrayal. Through the Elizabethan golden age and Raleigh's famous adventures to the final act, Anna Beer presents his stranger-than-fiction life in all its richness. How could a man once the Queen's favourite find himself consigned to the Tower by her successor? Should his legacy be fame or infamy? Who was the real Sir Walter Raleigh?" --Provided by publisher.

**Monday, June 22, 2020**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

***Selection Meeting for the 2020-21 season. Cast your votes!***

**Monday, July 27, 2020**

**1:00pm**

**Harnischfeger Room**

***Ninety-Nine Glimpses of Princess Margaret* by Craig Brown**

Princess Margaret aroused passion and indignation in equal measures. To her friends, she was witty and regal. To her enemies, she was rude and demanding. In her 1950s heyday, she was seen as one of the most glamorous and desirable women in the world. By the time of her death in 2002, she had come to personify disappointment. One friend said he had never known an unhappier woman. The tale of Princess Margaret is Cinderella in reverse: hope dashed, happiness mislaid, life mishandled. Such an enigmatic and divisive figure demands a reckoning that is far from the usual fare. Combining interviews, parodies, dreams, parallel lives, diaries, announcements, lists, catalogues, and essays, Craig Brown's *Ninety-Nine Glimpses of Princess Margaret* is a kaleidoscopic experiment in biography and a witty meditation on fame and art, snobbery and deference, bohemia and high society. (Polaris summary)