



GLENCOE MANSION MUSEUM & GALLERY

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Mary Draper Ingles Festival to Feature Renowned Authors

RADFORD, VA—New York Times bestselling author, James Alexander Thom, and author Eleanor Lahr will be part of the Mary Draper Ingles Festival, which runs from July 29 through 31. James Alexander Thom, who wrote, “Follow the River,” says Mary’s daring escape from a Native American Shawnee tribe during the French and Indian War and her 42-day odyssey became the literary seed for his national bestseller.

Much of the power of Mary’s story comes from the power of her antagonist, the wilderness, says Thom. “Europeans were afraid of nature and uncomfortable in it.” Amazing as the story was, it took a second element to convince Thom he had enough material for a novel. Joining Mary in the escape was an Old Dutch woman from western Pennsylvania, and together they faced the great power of the wilderness.

On top of that, Mary soon grappled with the Old Dutch woman’s breakdown, which gave Thom the extra tension and danger he wanted for his 1981 novel. ABC liked the concept, too, and in 1995 produced a made-for-television movie. Thom’s book still sells thousands of copies annually, proving its drawing power.

Thom will speak at the dedication of the Mary Draper Ingles Cultural Heritage Park on the grounds of Glencoe Mansion, Museum & Gallery at 5 p.m. Friday, July 29. Following the ceremonies, the author will sign copies of “Follow the River,” which will be available for sale.

Joining Thom on Saturday, July 30 from noon to 2 p.m. for a book signing at Glencoe Mansion will be Eleanor Lahr, who wrote “Angels Along the River: Retracing the Escape Route of Mary Draper Ingles.” The book has been described

as an “inspirational story of hope, fear, joy and accomplishment that is a testament to the incredible tenacity and spirit of ordinary people everywhere.”

When Lahr read Thom’s novel, “Follow the River,” it changed her life, and she felt compelled to retrace the heroine’s route. Although Lahr enjoyed the outdoors as a child and worked as a naturalist for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, her first serious hike was retracing Mary’s steps along the Ohio, Kanawha and New rivers from Kentucky to Virginia. She says her physical journey became a “transformative personal journey that redefined her as a capable, strong and independent woman.” Both books will be available for sale. For more information about the festival, contact Glencoe Mansion at (540) 731-5031 or visit the website at www.glencoemansion.org.

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