

**“Uncovering Their History: African, African-American and Native-American Burials in
Hartford’s Ancient Burying Ground, 1640-1815”**

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The project, “Uncovering Their History,” resulted in the creation of a website that will be hosted by WebSolutions for the Ancient Burying Ground Association.

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The website features numerous pictures. It includes the original artwork of Dr. Cora Marshall, Professor Emerita at Central Connecticut State University, who has painted portraits of African and Native people. The colors used in these images determined the colors we used in the website design. We also included pictures of documents, newspaper articles and ads, photographs of locations in and around the burying ground, and maps. The individual profiles of the people we uncovered now serve as their “markers.”

Methodology and Process

In the Spring of 2018 our research team from Central Connecticut State University was tasked with uncovering the lost history of Native, African and African-American burials in Hartford’s Ancient Burying Ground. Previous estimates said that about 300 such burials occurred here, though there are no extant stones to mark them. Using probate records, census data, vital records, church records, state archival materials, seaman’s protection certificates, newspapers, and many other sources, we have attempted to piece together what remains of this obscured past. The majority of the records we used were housed in the Connecticut State Library and the most valuable were the earliest church records, *Connecticut Church Records: Hartford First Church*, vol. 1, 1684-1910, reel 505. A copy of the Kingsbury Census (the Negro Census of 1805) is at the Stowe Center. Ancestry.com was also a valuable database, but searching it required special techniques to find records as we initially lacked names. We used the online card catalogue to locate Connecticut-specific sources and the keyword feature to locate people described as Negro, colored, black, Indian, and Native. We also used the Mystic Seaport Research online database of seamen’s certificates; seamen’s certificates are also in Ancestry’s card catalogue, but we found we needed to search both databases to retrieve all information.

We also accessed Central Connecticut State University’s databases: America’s Historical Newspapers, African-American Periodicals, and American Periodicals. These databases are available at many other colleges and universities. Hathitrust and Google Books have digests, local history and town records online. Library shelves also held printed, transcribed records including the Particular Court Records, Court of Assistants Minutes and the Hartford County

Court Minutes. Our bibliography lists the sources we used. In addition to research our task was also to create a website which hosts a searchable database of demographic information on these individuals, an explanation of the burial ground itself, featured pages of notable connections, and a user-friendly interface for the general public.

The project was completed between May 2018 and April 2019. It is likely that as the public uses the site, the number of discovered records will continue to grow and expand. We estimate that several research projects could result from the findings here. We hope the site will continue to challenge and change how historians write about the indigenous people and people of African heritage in Hartford. The research here may further many different kinds of projects, such as genealogy and family histories, community studies, histories of Connecticut, studies of slavery, labor history, and more.

We discovered a previously unknown transatlantic slave voyage in the estate administration of Normand Morison; it is possible that by identifying such records, more will be found. In order to fully understand a person, one must look further than genealogy. Therefore, the website is divided into a database portion complete with a full bibliography as well as a portion for several of these important profiles that list genealogy, relationship trees, biographies, and links to other family members.

We conducted our research fully cognizant that the people we were searching for usually lacked a strong voice in the records of their society. Although they were not the authors of the records, they are mentioned in them. It was necessary to pay careful attention to details to try to find out more about them. We also looked for female connections among both the white and non-white population. Women changed their names upon marriage, and they could also carry property with them. Finding marriage records helped us follow white women's property, which included people of color. Moreover, the African, African-American and Native populations in Hartford had different naming practices and circumstances than the white population. Some had dual names. African people might have an African name and an Anglicized name by which they were called. Some black people assumed the surnames of their white masters or created surnames for themselves when they were manumitted, but recordkeepers did not always honor these surname choices. Native people changed names as they aged or changed status. Colonists did not have standardized spelling rules, so variant spellings had to be checked as well. Names had meaning, both to masters and those who held them. Diminutive English names indicated a subordinate status. A name like Scipio, with its Roman reference to Scipio Africanus, could signal a visible African heritage even if the man was Native. Masters used names to emphasize and enforce the patriarchal order. Names like Prince or Caesar might have seemed humorous to masters, but some captive Africans were princes and men of high status. While more research is needed on naming in Hartford, we tried to pay attention to what it might tell us.¹

This project lays the foundation for similar projects to follow throughout the state of Connecticut and helps with redefining how we interpret the past.

¹ Margaret Williamson, "Slave Names and Naming in the Anglophone Atlantic," *Oxford Bibliographies*, last modified April, 2018; DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780199730414-0291; Robert K. Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise: Master/slave Relations in Eighteenth-Century Narragansett, Rhode Island* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 188-192.

The Database Categories

Our original spreadsheet, which serves as the basis for the individual profiles on this website, included the following categories:

Name, Confidence, Race/Ethnicity, Nation, Sex, Age at Death, Date of Death or Burial, Birthplace or Origin, Date of Baptism or Church Membership, Name of Master(s)/Mistress(es), Indenture Date, Purchase Date, Manumission Date, Occupation, Race/Ethnicity of Mother, Race/Ethnicity of Father, Spouse(s), Child(ren), Additional Relationships, Most Recent Place of Residence, Longest Place of Residence, Notes, Bibliography.

For most individuals, it was impossible to fill all of this information.

Finding Information on the Burials

None of the people included in this database have extant gravestones in the Ancient Burying Ground, requiring our team to engage in extensive archival research. As a result, any who wish to make use of our findings should be made aware of several key distinctions that had to be made. First and foremost is that any names listed in the database cannot be claimed to be buried there with 100% certainty as there are no marked gravesites left to cross-reference our findings. No original map of the graveyard or archaeological findings exists to confirm the number of burials. All of our findings are made through written sources, and we can state for each name a varying degree of confidence of their location. Therefore, under each name listed is a category marked as “Confidence” that either states “Highly Confident,” “Somewhat Confident,” “Slightly Confident,” or “Not Confident.” Those marked “Highly Confident” usually have a death date provided in a church record of some kind or some other record indicating a high likelihood that they are in the burial ground. Those for whom we are “Somewhat Confident” usually appeared in church records as baptized people or had a close relative (a spouse or child) who we are highly confident was buried in the cemetery. They might also have had a will or probated estate. We marked as “Slightly Confident” those who may have died in Hartford during the time period that the cemetery was in operation for whom we have no other corroboration. Those indicated as “Not Confident” may have died after 1806 but before 1815, perhaps with family members in the graveyard. They may also include people whose bodies could have been taken elsewhere for burial, like two Native people executed in 1711 for murder in Hartford or enslaved people who appeared in personal estate inventories for whom no other record exists. Enslaved people may have been buried on family land, or farms outside the city. We did not include all Native or African people we found in the records, because some people were transient or were potentially sold by their white owners. We looked for some indication that inclusion in the burial ground was possible.

Lastly, 120 people whom we are highly or somewhat confident are buried in the cemetery were unnamed. They had death dates recorded in church records or in the newspaper, but no name in the death record. These unnamed people may well overlap with people whose names we found in other records for whom we have no death date. For example, Quamino, who appeared on the 1805 Kingsbury Census, could be the same person as “Unnamed” who died in 1808, marked slightly confident, whose death was reported in the Connecticut Courant. The paucity of information in all the records about people of color made it nearly impossible to match up the unnamed with names we had from other sources. Even those names which we suspected were

not actually buried in the burial ground are still significant. These individuals could be close relatives of those buried, or they could have some other interpersonal relationship that still highlights how these individuals might have lived.

Terminology

As we developed the categories for our database and the narratives that accompany it, terminology became a concern. Many of the terms used while the burying ground was in operation are outdated and today can seem insensitive or offensive. We have tried to balance our goals of historical accuracy with modern usage. It is essential to convey faithfully the complexity of the past, and to represent clearly types of relationships that no longer exist, from fictive kinships to indentured servitude to enslavement.

Native people, Africans and African Americans could have a range of statuses in the colonial world: free, indentured, enslaved. One person might pass through two or even three of these stages in his or her lifetime. In any of these statuses, one might be described as a “servant” if one worked for someone else. Hartford was composed of both free people of color and bound people of color from its inception, just as it had free white people and bound white people. A sharp contrast existed, though, between free and enslaved. No white people were enslaved in colonial Connecticut. We use the word “servant” where the documents use it. In general, documents about individuals from the time often do not refer to “slaves;” one might see the term in a newspaper but rarely in a will, estate inventory, or church record. We mostly have used “enslaved” rather than “slave” in our narratives in order to emphasize the action of enslavers and colonists, for a person is not inherently a “slave.” In rare cases, where “slave” was appropriate for its historical meaning or particular usage, we retained it. When we use the word “slave,” it is to indicate the master class’s point of view and it is selective. We also use the words “master” and “mistress,” and occasionally “owners,” words that may seem jarring today, for two reasons. First, both indentured people and enslaved people had masters or mistresses, so we could not use the word “enslaver” in an overarching category. Moreover, enslavement happened at several intervals, from capture in Africa to sale in the Americas, and in continued possession and captivity. The law of master/servant remains to this day accepted terminology to indicate employment relationships. Our use of these terms does not indicate the superiority of one person and the inferiority of another, but it does indicate the dominance of one and the oppression of the other. The harsh reality of captivity should not be rendered invisible by more palatable terms. Slavery occurred because international law and practice recognized it, and then colonial legislatures made it legal, not because it was a natural state of being. Connecticut recognized lifetime slavery by statute in 1650.

Race and ethnicity are also complicated subjects. Colonists often thought of race as both a matter of complexion and a matter of nationality. In runaway advertisements words of color could be used to modify the word “Negro.” A “yellow Negro” was another way of describing someone who was multiracial. “Mungerel squaw” meant a Native woman who was of mixed racial background. Mongrel was a term that meant “half-breed.” Complexion was not just a matter of color. It could describe a person’s physical condition in subtle ways.²

² Sharon Block, *Colonial Complexions: Race and Bodies in Eighteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 2-3, 65-66.

The English were notoriously xenophobic, and anyone who was not of English origin was usually designated with a qualifier in records. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, those designators included “Negro” for someone who appeared to be of fully African descent; “mulatto” or “colored” for someone who was of more than one race or ethnic stock, but usually a Euro-African heritage; “Indian” for an indigenous person; “mustee” for a Euro- or Afro-Indian heritage (rarely used in Connecticut, but frequently used in Rhode Island). In our database we have retained “Negro” when it was used in place of a name (“A Negro Man”), but we used “Black” to indicate the race of someone of African descent, though we recognize how problematic that usage is. The captive people from Africa represented many different nationalities and ethnicities and were hardly monolithic.³

We used “multiracial” instead of mulatto or mustee, and “Native” instead of Indian. When we knew the tribal affiliation or nation of a Native person or the tribe or country from which an African came, we placed that in a separate column labeled “Nation.” At times we ran into difficulty with these classifications, such as when parents and some children were designated as “Negro” or “black” and others in the same family were termed “mulatto” or “colored.” Seaman’s protection certificates sometimes described Native people as “copper,” and a man who had two parents of some African descent might be described as mulatto or as having a light or dark complexion, depending on how he looked. We were sometimes confronted with having two black parents, a black child, and a multiracial child in one family. Several explanations are possible for this, from inconsistent racial designations in records to the impregnating of a black woman by a white man. In only one case, that of Abda Duce-Ginnings, was a white father identifiable from the historical record.

It has become common for scholars and journalists to refer to Native, African and African-American people in this period as “marginal” or “marginalized.” One must ask, “Marginal to whom?” They were absolutely essential, both to their own families and to the colonists. White colonists tried to marginalize them, by relegating Native people to reserved lands away from towns and free Africans to poor neighborhoods. Practices such as “warning out” existed, to remove strangers of any race or ethnicity who might wind up on poor relief. Colonial life, however, depended on the labor, trade, and knowledge systems of Native, African, and African-American people.

Dates

Before 1753 England and all of its colonies observed the Julian Calendar. After 1753, England began to observe the Gregorian Calendar. In England and its colonies, the Julian calendar began on January 1, but its new civil year began on March 25; the Gregorian calendar is the one in use today, and it begins the new civil year on January 1. This can be very confusing. There is a formula for calculating a date in both [Julian and Gregorian](#) terms. For example, Phillip Moore, Jr. died January 5, 1697 according to the Julian calendar. In some sources, this would be written January 5, 1697/98, to indicate that he was born in the eleventh month of the year 1697 or the first month of the year 1698. Yet a true conversion would have to account for a difference of 10 to 11 days between the two calendars. Thus, Phillip’s Gregorian death date was January 15, 1698.

³ Katherine J. Harris, “Freedom and Slavery,” *African American Connecticut Explored*, Elizabeth J. Normen, ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 6.

In order to simplify our spreadsheet and to record the dates as they were written down by those at the time, we have not done a full conversion on the dates. We have written Phillip Moore, Jr.'s death date as 01/05/1697 O.S. The initials stand for Old Style and indicate that this is how the death was reported in its time. Of course, January was not really the first month, but since we recognize it as such now, we kept that in the numerical form.

Ancestry.com Family Trees

Each individual is linked with a family tree on Ancestry.com that can be viewed by anyone with a membership or free trial membership to Ancestry.com. For several of the largest slaveholding families, we also did family trees.

Each family tree has a timeline for each individual-in-the-tree's profile. Where possible we have attached information on birth, life events, and death. Sometimes there were probate records. If the individual was mentioned in a history or other sources external to Ancestry.com, we tried to include a reference for that, though it is possible we did not find every primary or secondary source that mentioned someone. There are more people in the family trees than there are in the database, because we often found descendants not buried in the Ancient Burying Ground. We went as far as we could in the time allowed in developing the family trees, but doubtless more information will come to light. Occasionally we made guesses about relationships between people we thought were of the same family, and we made a note in the timeline to indicate when something was conjecture. We expect these trees to be corrected and to grow.

As we worked on the database we used primary sources like the United States Federal Census of 1790 and 1800, and the Kingsbury Census of 1805 to identify people. Sometimes we had information about the deaths of people on these rolls, but more often we found out they died after the period when the cemetery was accepting burials. If we had already created a tree on Ancestry for that person, we let it remain even if we removed the individual from the database. Thus, there are more family trees on Ancestry than there are families in the database.

Relationship Trees

One of the difficulties with using genealogical programs like Ancestry.com is that it records only family relationships, and these programs cannot accommodate friendships, neighbors, or fictive kin. If one does not know how "Aunt" Sarah is one's aunt, she has no place in the tree. Genealogies also have no place for master and servant or master and enslaved relationships, even though these were highly significant relationships for many people in the past.

Kinship networks are particularly important for understanding how societies work, but the African and Native people who lived in the colonized world had their kinship networks disrupted, misrepresented in records and histories, and reordered by necessity. Fictive kinship networks sometimes developed. Enslaved and indentured people of color in white households could sometimes range in age from young to old but be unrelated biologically. In New England, most enslaved people lived in households with one or two others of Native or African descent. Elders took care of younger ones, women of the same age became sisterly, and children became like siblings, forming families of necessity. We wanted to be able to document

these relationships, and the interactions with colonists just as one would do in a visual family tree.

Working with a team of computer science undergraduates from Central Connecticut State University (Austin Barrett, Kyle Sturmer, and Max Meyer), supervised by Professor Stan Kurkovsky, Dr. Katherine Hermes created a program called “RelationshipTree” to incorporate all immediate relationships in a person’s life. The relationship trees connect people, events, places, documents and groups to one another. We have completed relationship trees for some of the people in the burying ground to show their wider relationships. We have placed pictures of the relationships on the website, with links to the RelationshipTree™ graphs.

Confidence in the Burial List

Each person in the spreadsheet is marked with a confidence level that reflects how certain we were that the person was in the burying ground: highly confident, somewhat confident, slightly, not confident. If a person died in Hartford, he or she was usually buried in the burying ground. There were exceptions. Native people might have been buried on native land. Some people chose to be buried in their own gardens, like Dr. Normand Morison, whose grave is now on Market Street. His headstone and his son’s footstone mark that location. Others might have been buried in family plots. In the case of enslaved people, we sometimes could not be sure, without a death record, they actually died in Hartford. If we found someone listed as a slave in an inventory, we included that person in the spreadsheet if he or she was an adult, but even when a family had held someone in bondage for decades, sale was still possible. We tried to follow inheritances to determine whether an enslaved person remained in Hartford or went elsewhere with an heir, but it was not always clear.

Demographics and Statistics

Population figures are difficult to come by for the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Jackson Turner Main’s examination of Connecticut probate records revealed that one-tenth of all inventories in 1700 included slaves. In 1709 Governor Gurdon Saltonstall reported there were only 110 white and black servants in the colony, though that figure seems impossibly low. In 1730, the black population climbed to 700, but out of a total enumeration of 38,000. Main estimated one percent of the adult male population in the colony was enslaved, but that by 1750 one-sixth of all black persons in Connecticut were free. At the time of the Revolution, Connecticut had a black population of over 6000; one-fourth of probate inventories included enslaved people. A post-Revolutionary War census taken in 1782 enumerated 1320 blacks and Indians living in Hartford County alone. Gradual emancipation in 1784 resulted in less than a 1% decline in the number of blacks in the colony by 1790. For a few, freedom may have meant moving out of the state, but enslaved or freed, most remained.⁴

We had 495 individual entries in the spreadsheet when we finalized it in March 2019. Older histories of the burying ground frequently cite 300 as the approximate number of African

⁴ Jackson Turner Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 177-178; Frank Andrews Stone, *African American Connecticut: The Black Scene in a New England State* (Victoria, BC, Canada: Trafford Publishing, 2008), 45; “A Return of the Number of Inhabitants in the State of Connecticut, February 1, 1782; and Also of the Indians and Negroes,” *Trumbull Papers*, vol. XXIV, document 178, Connecticut State Library, https://libapps.s3.amazonaws.com/accounts/41502/images/1782_Conn_census_return.jpg

Americans buried there. About 350 can be well documented, but the actual number remains elusive. We are highly confident of 279 individuals buried in the burying ground, somewhat confident of 70, slightly confident of 35 and not confident of 111.

Our data shows that 35 people were identified as Native, 430 as Black, one as Native/Black, 17 as Multiracial, and 7 as unknown. Yet some of the Black people are probably duplicates, unnamed in the sexton's records, but named in some other record. We found among the Native population at least one individual who was Pequot, Nipmuk, and Taino; seven were Wangunk. Of the African people, we identified two as Ibo. We found 213 men, 147 women, and 136 of unidentified gender. Because of the possible duplication in the Black numbers as well as the unidentified, conclusions about a sex ratio cannot be certain. We were able to identify 36 free people of color, with 19 manumissions, but there may have been more.

We had 120 people for whom we had records of death but no name: one Indian girl, 14 black infants, two Native children, 45 Negroes of unknown gender, two Negro boys, 35 Negro children (32 unknown gender, 2 female and one male), one Negro fellow, one Negro girl, three Negro maids, three Negro men, two Negro soldiers, three Negro women, one Native woman ("squaw"), two unnamed whose race and gender is unknown, three unnamed Negroes with unknown gender, two unnamed Negro males and two unnamed Negro females, and one unnamed black woman. The sexton or minister who recorded the deaths of these unnamed individuals noted the date and the race of the person, and occasionally the cause of death and the age of the person, but he left out the deceased's identity. Such an omission did not occur with the vast majority of whites, unless they were poor and transient. In all, 281 records had death dates. In the spreadsheet we used the terminology of the recordkeeper. That could vary; hence, the use of Negro man, Negro fellow, Negro soldier, and unnamed Negro male in the spreadsheet all refer to black men without names in an effort to reflect the record. Some of the unnamed may match a person with a name for whom we do not have an exact death date; "Negro man" could have been "Caesar" and constitute a duplicate entry. The failure to name so many individuals can only have been purposeful. Occasionally the recordkeeper may not have known someone's name, but there are too many without appellations for a lack of knowledge to have been the norm. More likely, the name did not matter to the recordkeeper as much as the cause of death or the age, the kind of data of interest to those who wanted to count the number of cases of dropsy or calculate lifespans. In 136 cases gender was also missing, a fact that would have been highly visible to anyone who viewed the body. Numerical ages or approximate ages in weeks, months or years were noted for 113 individuals.

In 277 cases were able to identify the masters and mistresses of the indentured and/or enslaved people. Often if a white person owned one slave, they owned several. For instance, the Reverend Timothy Woodbridge, a minister in the First Church and a founder of Yale, married Abigail Lord, the widow of Richard Lord, a businessman with several warehouses and transatlantic commercial interests. In Hartford, Abigail and her husbands held in bondage at least 31 enslaved black people, one indentured black servant, and one indentured Native person. There perhaps were more whose deaths were not recorded and whose lives did not show up in probate inventories or other court records, people who were bought and sold too quickly to register in public documents. Many in the learned professions and elites—ministers, deacons, doctors,

lawyers, and magistrates—owned more than one slave. If white people owned slaves, they tended to acquire them later in life; 37% of slave-owning white men were over age 40.⁵

In 1757 several Native burials are recorded. Even though none of these deaths were of soldiers, it is possible that the French and Indian War had an impact on Native communities as men went off to fight with the colonial militias. Such absences of men could impoverish Native families or send women to colonial towns to seek work. Doctor Robin, the medicine man from Wangunk who died in March of 1757, may have come to Hartford to look after members of his community working there.

History

“Native People, Africans and African Americans in Hartford’s Ancient Burying Ground”

When Louis Berbice died at the hands of his Dutch master in Hartford in 1639, he may have been the first man of African descent buried in the town. Adrian Block visited Suckiog, the Native town that became Hartford, in 1614, and eventually the Dutch built a fort and small settlement, the House of Hope, on the banks of the Connecticut River. In 1631 the sachem of Suckiog sent an envoy to Plymouth Colony and Massachusetts Bay Colony to invite the English to settle near his village. He hoped they might be a buffer between him and the Pequot people to the south. In 1637 English colonists arrived under the leadership of John Haynes, the first governor, and Rev. Thomas Hooker, the first minister of the Congregational church. They received land from the Wangunk sachem, Sequassen, the son of the grand sachem, Sowheag (aka Sequin). Hartford became a multiracial and multiethnic settlement at its inception. Native people remained in the meadows abutting the English settlement, as did the Dutch. Not long after settling Connecticut, the English declared war against the Pequot, forming alliances with the Narragansett to the east and the Mohegan to the south. After conquering the Pequot nation, settlers took Native people as captive servants into their homes. The Dutch continued to occupy a small enclave next to the English around Hartford, but eventually many moved into the English settlement. The resting place where Berbice and the early Dutch settlers lay was a burial yard near the Little River (now paved over) and the old House of Hope, disrupted by construction in the nineteenth century. The English settlers began using land for a burial ground that now lies between State House Square and the corner of Market Street and Kinsley Streets, but abandoned this site early and no evidence of it now exists.⁶

Hartford’s English founders laid out the town burying ground in late 1639 or early 1640 on the corner of the road between the meetinghouse and the mill, and the road that went from the Palisado to the Centinel. Today this corner is the intersection of Pearl and Main Streets. The first reference to a burying place in the English land records in February, 1639/40, says it was abutted by parcels belonging to John Skinner, who sold it to John Biddell, on the west (Main Street), Thomas Lord on the south (Gold Street) and Seth Grant on the north (Pearl Street) (*HLR*, 117, 159, 309). Richard Lord also had land abutting the burying ground on the south (*HLR*, 130, 133).

⁵ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1776* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 74-75; Main, 177 n.2; Harris, “Freedom and Slavery,” 8.

⁶ Isaac William Stuart, *Hartford in the Olden Time: Its First Thirty Years*, ed. W. M. B. Hartley (Hartford: F. A. Brown, 1853), 79, 266-267; William Hosley and Shepherd M. Holcombe, Sr., *By Their Markers Ye Shall Know Them: A Chronicle of the History and Restorations of Hartford’s Ancient Burying Ground* (Hartford: Ancient Burying Ground Association, 1994), xii.

It was enlarged by “two roods more or less Abutting vpon the buryeing place” (approximately half an acre) when the town acquired land from Richard Olmstead (*HLR*, 255).

The burying ground was a place for all of Hartford’s deceased. The Congregationalists, or Puritans, believed in a degree of separation of church and state. The ground was not consecrated as it would have been in England, so one’s religious status, and even one’s origins, made no difference when it came to burial. After a death occurred, there were several tasks for families to do. There was no sacramental funeral rite, but occasionally there were processions and speeches. A coffin had to be made, usually costing between 6 and 10 shillings, and the grave dug for another 6 to 9 shillings in the seventeenth century. When the African-American Phillip Moore, Jr. passed away, Jonathan Ashley made his coffin and dug his grave for 16 shillings. Moore’s costs were similar to those for the burials of white colonists, such as Dr. Jepson, whose estate was charged 9 shillings for a grave and one pound for his coffin.⁷ The minister might deliver a eulogy, as Dr. Flint of the South Church did for the last Black Governor, Boston Nichols.⁸ Interment occurred as quickly as possible, usually within a day or two, though hard winter freezes could delay it. If the family could afford it, they could have a stone headstone and footstone carved. A study of Long Island, to which Connecticut Colony laid claim between 1641 and 1664, shows that Native people eschewed stone carvings and opted for wood posts or stone mounds; African Americans who could afford stone markers chose to have them, and those who could not may have had wooden posts, crosses, or carved tablets.⁹ It seems likely this was also true for Hartford’s non-white population. A few black residents were accorded funerals with pomp, like the celebrated Boston Nichols, who was laid to rest in 1808 with his sword and his cocked hat, but most had simpler interments.¹⁰

No remains of an African-American section exist in the Ancient Burying Ground. It is possible that Hartford did not segregate its burial ground like other towns did, such as Wethersfield and Middletown. In those cemeteries carved headstones for blacks exist today, separated by a short distance from their white contemporaries.¹¹ It is also possible that the graves of blacks were clustered on the Main Street side of the cemetery covered now by a lawn and a widened street, or near Pearl Street adjacent to the Gold Building and One Financial Plaza, built in 1973.

People of African descent in Hartford suffered aspects of social death, such as the loss of legal personhood, if enslaved. Local record keepers tended to render them invisible as well. Even when a minister or sexton recorded the deaths of African Americans, they frequently omitted the person’s name, writing “a Negro,” “a Negro man,” “a Negro girl” or similar designation, even when they knew the person’s age and cause of death, indicating the recordkeeper knew the individual. The burials of nearly 115 unnamed people of African descent and five unnamed Native people can be documented.

⁷ *Connecticut Church Records*, Connecticut State Library (CSL), Reel 505, “Records and Papers,” 160. The coffin and grave information is from the *Talcott Memorandum Book*, Private Record, CSL, 81.

⁸ Stuart, 40.

⁹ Gaynell Stone, “Material Evidence of Ideological and Ethnic Choice in Long Island Gravestones, 1670-1800,” *Material Culture* 23, no. 3 (1991): 7, 17-18.

¹⁰ Billie M. Anthony, “Ancient Burying Ground: Monument to Black Governors,” in *African American Connecticut Explored*, 47.

¹¹ Glenn A. Knoblock, *African American Historic Burial Grounds and Gravesites of New England* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016), 155-156.

In probate records, estate administrators and inventory takers rarely reported the existence of objects that might have reflected African heritage. Yet if the people of African descent in Hartford were anything like their contemporary peers in other places, African customs and practices, including burial traditions, crossed the Atlantic with them, and they continued that practice for generations.¹² In the grave, they may have defeated the social death that haunted them in life, and historical archaeology, rather than public records, may provide the tools to decolonize our understanding of Hartford's African and Native past.¹³ Native people were also buried in the cemetery when they died in Hartford. Some, like Japhet, lived in the town as a householder, while others were bound in servitude for a term of years or for life. Occasionally Native people were visiting when they died, as was likely with "Old Robin," otherwise known as Doctor Robin, a Wangunk medicine man whose usual abode was in the area of Middletown. As late as 1795 the child of Abigail, a Native woman, was laid to rest in the Ancient Burying Ground.

Burials in the Ancient Burying Ground stopped sometime around 1815. By then the town had a second cemetery in the South End at Maple and Benton Streets and a third in the North End.¹⁴ The town began to encroach on the territory of the older cemetery. In 1737 the First Ecclesiastical Society built a new meeting house on a corner of the Ancient Burying Ground, and in 1807 that building was replaced with the present Center Church. Storefronts occupied the front perimeter. In 1827 the town officers considered an application to build a firehouse in the burying ground for the use of the city department. Not long after, the Society brought an application before the town meeting with a request to erect a building for a sabbath school and other uses.[10] The city began to pay attention to its newer cemeteries like the North Burying ground, where it planted shade trees. The Connecticut Courant's editors imagined people strolling among the alleys of the burying ground lined with shrubbery, opining that it "might easily be made a delightful place."¹⁵ The Courant, repeating a call from the Observer, urged its readers to support a plan to do the same for the Ancient Burying Ground, asking for an enclosure to be erected and trees to be planted.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the area around the burying ground began to decline.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Gold Street had become a lane of horse stables, gambling dens, houses of prostitution, and tenement residences for the urban poor, many of whom were black. It was Hartford's red-light district, a clogged artery through which traffic and "respectable people" could not pass, according to the white reformers who wanted to change the landscape. Emily S. G. Holcombe, a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), made it her mission to clean up Gold Street, arguing that it had become impossible for the descendants of the people buried there to tend to their ancestors' graves. She engaged Reverend George Leon Walker to give a lecture on the history of the burying ground, raised over \$36,000 in funds for

¹² James C. Garman, "Viewing the Color Line through the Material Culture of Death," *Historical Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1994): 79.

¹³ Ross W. Jamieson, "Material Culture and Social Death: African-American Burial Practices," *Historical Archaeology* 29, no. 4 (Dec., 1995): 40.

¹⁴ Hosley and Holcombe, 8.

¹⁵ "Hartford," *Connecticut Courant*, May 14, 1833, 2.

¹⁶ "The Old Burying Ground," *Connecticut Courant*, July 25, 1836, 3.

the restoration project, and set about to have the tenements on Gold Street demolished. The reformers razed the buildings and planted a lawn.¹⁷

In the late 1880s the construction of the Waverly Building on Pearl Street unearthed 75 graves, and while some bones were carefully reburied in the cemetery, workmen cast other bones into a common grave. Gates were erected at the front entrance on Gold Street to create an imposing entry way to the cemetery. African Americans who had raised their families on Gold Street were displaced. At this time a number of the other elements of the Ancient Burying Ground were lost. The DAR restored gravestones and cleaned up the cemetery, fencing in the memorials it wanted to honor. They very likely fenced out the resting places of some of Hartford's African Americans, whose graves lacked permanent headstones. Following the restoration of the cemetery, a foundation being laid for a chapel between the Waverly Building and Center Church unearthed another 50 graves. The bones and dirt from the graves were dumped behind the Hartford Club as land fill. Later, William DeLoss Love, author of *The Colonial History of Hartford*, had the bones reinterred in the cemetery.¹⁸ The chapel and the Waverly Building are gone now, but their construction displaced many of the dead. These remains may well have included a large number of African Americans.

The same era saw a rewriting of Hartford's history, and the writing out of Native and African people. This was especially true when it came to the Ancient Burying Ground. Local historians and societies published several catalogues of burials in the old cemetery, leaving out more than two-thirds of the African and African-American people buried there. One list of burials, called "The Sexton's List," was originally compiled by Mary K. Talcott from records at the Connecticut Historical Society. Her compilation was published in *Connecticut Magazine* (later known as *Connecticut Quarterly*) between 1898 and 1899. This list was similar to, but not exactly the same as, the list published in the *Historical Catalogue of the First Church*. A history of the Second Church also listed names of its dead.¹⁹ This may have been an attempt to minimize the role of slavery in Connecticut in the post-Reconstruction Era by making it seem as if Hartford had fewer blacks than it actually did. The few Native people included on the published lists seemed to confirm the dominant narrative of the "vanishing Indian" rather than proving the persistence of indigenous people in the capital city. Written for Hartford's white elites, these publications were part of an increasing interest in heritage and genealogy that separated founding families from new immigrants.²⁰

Interest in the history of the Ancient Burying Ground was revived in 1995 when three of Billie Anthony's students from Fox Middle School began investigating stories they had heard about black governors. Andriena Baldwin, Christopher Hayes, and Monique Price did research to uncover the lives of several black men who had served as elected leaders of their community in Hartford. These governors were not "official," but their customary posts became a tradition in the eighteenth century. The students learned through their extensive research that the black

¹⁷ Peter Baldwin, "Antiprostitution Reform and the Use of Public Space in Hartford, Connecticut, 1878-1914," *Journal of Urban History* 23, no. 6 (1997): 715-717; "Gold Street Improved," *The Hartford Courant*, Jun. 19, 1899.

¹⁸ Baldwin, 717; Douglas M. Fouquet, "Who's Who in the Old Burying Ground?" *Sunday Magazine: The Hartford Courant*, Jul 30, 1950.

¹⁹ *The Connecticut Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly*, Vol. 5, 426-525 and Mary K. Talcott, "The Sexton's List," http://hartford.omasfield.com/PDF/SextonsList_ABG.pdf; *Historical Catalogue of the First Church in Hartford, 1633-1885* (Hartford: The First Church, 1885), ;

²⁰ Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 139.

governors were buried in the Ancient Burying Ground. Articles in the newspapers extolled their work and helped raise awareness about a custom long forgotten or ignored by most of the public and professional historians. The students raised funds for a monument in 1998 that now commemorates the contributions of these men.²¹

The cemetery today is approximately four acres, reduced from its original expanse that may have been between five to six acres. Cemetery planners today assume that 800-1000 graves can fit in one acre, and about 6,000 people are presumed to have been buried in the Ancient Burying Ground.²² Many graves surely lie under Main Street itself and the buildings that border the yard. Buildings placed atop the cemetery on Main were torn down in 1983.²³ What exists now is only a remnant of the original burying ground. The monument to the Black Governors and to the African Americans buried in the cemetery helps us remember that Hartford was a more diverse colonial town than we might have first imagined. The website that now hosts a more comprehensive list of who is buried here more accurately represented Hartford's "Founders."

Recommendations

The team recommends further study using the data provided here, as well as further development of the website.

Of foremost importance is the development of curriculum for schools based on the Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks. While we have a section on K-8 curriculum, it is rudimentary. The ABGA should pursue expansion of curricular offerings for K-12 with a team of certified social studies teachers and other professionals who could contribute content, including Native people and African Americans from the state. The Institute for American Indian Studies in Washington, Connecticut, for example, has an education team headed by a Schaghticoke woman, Darlene Kascak. While we are not endorsing a particular individual, it is important to make sure that any curriculum is inclusive to ensure culturally accurate and appropriate assignments and exercises.

The Project Team

The project team brought a unique set of skills to bear for researching Native, African and African- American burials and creating a platform to make that information accessible to the public. The team members have extensive backgrounds as researchers in the history of people of color, local history, and burial grounds. Several have experience with constructing difficult genealogies. All have worked with digital platforms in some capacity. Each member of our team considered it an honor to be tasked with memorializing the individuals in the burying ground.

²¹ Constance Neyer, "Black Governors in Connecticut? There Were Many, but They Are...?" *Hartford Courant*, Feb. 1, 1998; Billie M. Anthony, "Monument to the Black Governors," *Connecticut Explored* (April 7, 2015), <https://www.ctexplored.org/monument-to-the-black-governors/>

²² Valerie Capels & Wayne Senville, "Planning for Cemeteries," *Planning Commissioners Journal* no. 64 (Fall 2006): 1, <http://plannersweb.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/10/230.pdf>.

²³ Charles McCollum, *Courant*, Staff Writer. "Demolition Begins for Cemetery Project," *The Hartford Courant*, Oct. 13, 1983, D3.

Hartford Ancient Burying Ground Board Members:

Angela Berry, Deetsie Bradford, Jon Harden, Molly Gilmore, Curtiss B. Hickcox, Jr., Richard L. Moffitt, William Magee, Raymond S. Nichols, Jeffrey Marsted, Kerron Vernon

The Team:

Dr. Katherine A. Hermes received her A.B. in history, cum laude, from the University of California-Irvine, in 1985; an M.A. (1987) and M.Phil. (1988) in history at Yale University; a J.D. from Duke University School of Law in 1992; and her Ph.D. in Colonial American history from Yale in 1995. She has taught at Central Connecticut State University in the History Department since 1997 and served as Department Chair from 2012-2018. She teaches courses on Anglo-American legal history and Native Americans of the Eastern Woodlands, as well as other courses in Early America. She is the co-author with Alexandra Marvel of several articles and book chapters on Native American history in New England and the author of book chapters on Native legal history. She is the director of the “Uncovering Their History” project. She oversaw and conducted research for the project, and she supervised the building of the family and relationship trees as well as the website.

Stephen Arel received his B.S. Ed. in History/Secondary Education from Central Connecticut State University in 2017; he is now pursuing an M.A. in history at CCSU. As the History Department’s graduate assistant he worked with Dr. Hermes on databases for a project on the Wangunk as well as with Dr. Leah Glaser in creating a digitized exhibit for the New Britain Latino History Harvest. He created the database used for the “Uncovering Their History” project and helped develop and design the website.

Gabriel Benjamin received his B.S.Ed. in History from Central Connecticut State University in 2015. He is currently working on an M.A. in Public History at CCSU. He was an intern at both the Yale Indian Papers Project and the Stanley-Whitman House Slavery Research project, “The History of Captive People in and around Farmington, Connecticut.” He works as a museum educator and docent at the Institute for American Indian Studies. He was the recipient of two faculty-student research grants with Dr. Hermes, for which he researched, designed and published a booklet, entitled “Pequot Perseverance: The Legacy of the Pequot War in Connecticut,” and conducted research for an ongoing project, “Resistance, Acculturation and Accommodation: Tracing the Brotherton Movement from Connecticut to Wisconsin.” He prepared the Ancestry.com family trees for this project.

Sharon Clapp received her B.A. in Anthropology with a minor in Archaeology from Mt. Holyoke College in 1998, and her Master’s of Library and Information Science from Southern Connecticut State University in 2006. She worked as the Web Resources Librarian, developing websites through open source content management software at the Connecticut State Library from 2006-2013 and has served as the Digital Resources Librarian at Central Connecticut State University since 2013. She has extensive experience on numerous archaeological excavations in Connecticut and serves as secretary on the Board of Trustees for the Institute for American Indian Studies. In 2000 she published a book chapter on the adoptive removal of Native American children from their families, has co-authored a chapter on Strategic Planning in

Academic Libraries, and co-edited the Library Information Technology Association Guide to Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and Technology in libraries. She designed and created the website for the “Uncovering Their History” project.

Chelsea Echevarria received her B.A. in History from Mount Holyoke College in 2015. She has museum experience at the Art Museum of St. Joseph University in West Hartford and Mystic Seaport, as well as experience with a graveyard documentation project in South Hadley, Massachusetts. Chelsea contributed narratives and research on the history of the burying ground.

Allison Golomb received her B.A. in History from Bloomsburg University in 2008 and her M.A. in Public History from Central Connecticut State University in 2012. Her capstone project for her master’s degree focused on Wethersfield’s Burying Ground. She worked as the education coordinator and researcher for the Wethersfield Historical Society, where she documented over 7,000 burials, composing a land use history of Wethersfield burying grounds, writing selected biographies of prominent people, as well as designing and implementing a website for genealogical researchers. In 2016 she became the education coordinator for the William Benton Museum of Art at the University of Connecticut. She contributed many of the stories featured in our historical narratives section for the project.

Tavvia Jefferson received her A.A. from Manchester Community College in Hotel Tourism Management in 2012 and her B.A. in History with a minor in Public History from Central Connecticut State University in 2016. She completed an internship at the Mark Twain House in 2016 and worked at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in 2018. She continues to work as an educator in public schools. She has published an essay for the international news magazine, “The Africa Update,” and a blogpost on Digital Farmington about Frank Freeman, a free African American man in colonial Farmington. She was a principle researcher on the project, tracking down documents in the Connecticut Archives at the Connecticut State Library and the Stowe Center. Using church records, probate records, land records, and other archival materials, she helped to populate the spreadsheet with information that appears in the individual profiles of the website.

Alexandra Maravel received her A.B. in Art History from Wellesley College in 1974 and her J.D. from Columbia University School of Law in 1977. As an attorney and former law professor, she developed expertise in international trade law, family law, civil procedure, and legal history. She has taught as an adjunct professor of history at CCSU since 2004. She is the co-author, with Dr. Katherine Hermes, of several articles and book chapters on Native American history. She assisted in the creation of the Relationship Trees and served as an editor for the project.

Cora Marshall, born in Washington, DC, is an artist and educator. She received her B.F.A. from Howard University; M.S.Ed. from Bank Street College of Education with Parsons School of Design; and her doctorate in art from New York University. Dr. Marshall, Professor of Art Emeritus, served as chairperson of the Department of Art at Central Connecticut State University 2006 – 2012. Marshall has exhibited both internationally and nationally including National Conference of Artists, Kumasi, Ghana; A.I.R. Gallery NYC; Skylight Restoration Gallery in Brooklyn; Hammonds House Gallery in Atlanta; Pittsburgh Center for the Arts; Craftery Gallery, in Hartford; the Rosenberg Gallery at NYU; Picture That, LLC, Stamford, CT, Carter G. Woodson African American Museum, Studio@620, and Gallerie 909, St. Petersburg, FL. Dr. Marshall’s current research interest focuses on contemporary African American artists, in

particular, Black women artists of African and African-Native descent. She has presented at numerous professional venues including the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Cornell University, Columbia University Teachers College in NY, College Art Association, Connecticut Art Education Association, and Southern Connecticut State University, in New Haven. Dr. Marshall received the Lifetime Contribution to the Arts Award (2014) from the Greater New Britain Arts Alliance. Dr. Marshall currently resides in the Gulfport, FL area. She created the portraits that appear on the website. Her artwork can be viewed at www.CoraMarshall.com.

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