



ANCIENT  
BURYING  
GROUND  
ASSOCIATION

# PASSAGES

*Preserving A History Carved in Stone*

## President's Letter

Dear Members and Friends:

We've concluded another busy and productive year at the Ancient Burying Ground Association (ABGA).

We offered three very successful tours, and on request, gave another six. All but the final tour were led by Ruth Shapleigh-Brown, and we wrapped up the season this October with back-to-back tours on "Hartford's 17th Century Witch Panic" led by Dr. Richard Ross.

I want to say thank you to retiring Program and Grant Director Mary Donohue, who guided us through tour, talk, and project development and very successfully managed the grant applications to fund our programs and conservation initiatives. Her contributions provided the ABGA with great depth and breadth in the historic burial ground community. Succeeding Mary is Chris-



Ty Tryon

tine Jewell who comes to us with wonderful credentials. I look forward to working with Christine.

Our most recent major project was photographing each and every grave marker, monument, and memorial in the burying ground, establishing a "point-in-time" documentation as of 2021. All 1100 photographs have been imported into an online searchable database embed-

ded in our website. The final search query interface is still a work in progress. When completed, you will be able to search by key word, last name, first name, and plot #, and search within the epitaph text itself. In addition to the ABGA hosting this database on our website, the photos will be deposited in the Connecticut Digital Archives (CTDA). The CTDA is a program that provides long-term preservation services for non-profit Connecticut based institutions, and is hosted by the University of Connecticut Libraries in collaboration with the Connecticut State Library.

Vandalism. Yes, we've been recently vandalized. The beautiful, slate, African-American monument has been maliciously damaged in several places. Our new fencing has been breached and people are entering the

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## Planning Grant to Address Long-term Conservation Issues

The Ancient Burying Ground Association has applied for a two-part matching grant from the State Historic Preservation Office. One part is for overall landscape/grounds planning. The other is for a condition assessment of at-risk tablestones in the burying ground. We will be reviewing the proposals that are submitted and selecting two contractors, one for each plan. The City of Hartford Parks Department will be kept in the loop.

The landscape plan will assess the condition of all elements in the ABG except the grave markers. It is a long-term plan, and projects will be prioritized over the coming years.

Conserving the tablestones has been on the ABGA wish list for some years now. With the removal last year of the declining maple tree that branched over the major



grouping of tablestones and whose roots were undermining and tipping at least a few of them, we are now in a position to begin stabilizing the stones. This grant will cover a thorough assessment and detailed proposals, providing the plan for the conservation work. This will be a large project for us, and very costly, so we anticipate a three-year phased restoration.

## Board Members – Farewell and Welcome

With much gratitude, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of board members who have left over the past year.

Tavvia Jefferson learned about the Ancient Burying Ground when she worked with Dr. Hermes on research for our *Uncovering Their History* project. She inspired us with her questions and interest, always seeking to learn more about the gravestones and their histories.

Catherine Mallinckrodt, curator at the Wadsworth Atheneum, joined the board recently, and all too soon is moving to take on a new challenge as Head Conservator at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Congratulations!

Richard L. Moffitt served as Treasurer. We were saddened by his passing this last year and remember especially the warm welcome he and his wife Linda shared with the ABGA board each holiday season.

Raymond S. Nichols served as

Investment Officer and is an avid historical and genealogical researcher. We thank him for his many years with ABGA and his generosity in sharing his knowledge with members, guests, and researchers from afar.

This Fall we welcome new board member

Brendan Clark, a graduate of Trinity College and currently studying law at William & Mary in Virginia. Brendan



plans to move back to Connecticut, and meanwhile will join us online. Please enjoy his article researched for this newsletter, on page 6.

We also welcome, as Ex Officio members, Center Church's new pastor Rev. Elizabeth Arulampalam, and Robert Storm, President of the Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford.



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### Executive Board Members

Ty Tryon . . . . . President  
Anne Holcombe. . . . . Secretary  
Kory Mills . . . . . Treasurer

### Board Members

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Emily Cahill  
Brendan W. Clark  
Molly Gilmore  
Jon B. Harden  
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### Ex Officio Board Members

Robert Storm  
The Honorable Luke Bronin  
Rev. Elizabeth Arulampalam

### ABGA Representative

Ruth Shapleigh-Brown

### Program and Grant Coordinator

Christine Jewell

## President's Letter

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burying ground when the gates are locked. It is very rare that we experience vandalism in the ABG, but we are not immune from it. The Grounds Committee will be exploring solutions to remedy this.

Look for the fall issue of *Connecticut Explored*, which recognizes 20 Game Changers in the field of public history from around Connecticut. I am proud to say that the ABGA made the list with our award-winning *Uncovering Their History* project. This research on African, African-American, and Native-American burials in the ABG is made available on its own website, with expanded information on individuals, families and more complex connections.

Repair and conservation are a relentless challenge for the ABGA. We have been awarded a two-part match grant from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to develop both a historic landscape plan and a plan for gravestone conservation. Many of our wonderful tablestones are sinking under their own weight. A few are tilting and are at risk of toppling. This conservation project will be a costly initiative. Your contributions are greatly appreciated to help offset our portion of the match grant.

I personally want to thank the board of directors of the Ancient Burying Ground Association for their support in backing these programs.



### Freedom Trail Sign

The Ancient Burying Ground has been a stop on the CT Freedom Trail for a number of years, and we now have a sign, recently installed on a granite post by the Main Street entrance. Visitors come to the African American Monument, erected in 1998 to memorialize all the African Americans, known and unknown, who were interred in the burying ground. The ABGA now also offers recent research on our website, [africannativeburialsct.org](http://africannativeburialsct.org).

## Mary Donohue: “Oh, No! She’s Retiring!”

Mary Donohue was hired by the ABGA Board of Directors in 2016. She had worked in the areas of historic preservation and historic research and documentation for several years in Hartford and throughout Connecticut.



The ABGA Board felt very fortunate to have Mary join the organization as Grant Writer, having managed on our own for a number of years. Little did we know how much more she would bring to the job, especially in the areas of programming and publicity. Mary has coordinated our workshops and tours, often suggesting the speakers. She created and led a tour herself, of architectural sites in view of the ABG. Mary established a partnership with the Hartford History Center at the Hartford Public Library, which provided inside lecture space and additional outreach, and also the ability to present talks live online.

Mary has greatly increased outreach and publicity, taking us into the digital age with social media postings on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, in addition to emails and postcards.

As grant writer, Mary worked with President Ty Tryon and the Board to develop projects such as *Carved in Stone*, the photographic inventory and database of all the markers in the Burying Ground, and *Uncovering Their History*, the research on Africans, African Americans, and Native Americans buried in the ABG. One of Mary’s last projects was a new matching grant from the State Historic Preservation Office, to update the landscape plan for the burying ground and to create an assessment of the tablestones. Both plans will detail conditions and actions needed. We will then be in position to begin conservation of these large markers, and to prioritize other needs for the ABG. With many thanks, we all wish Mary a happy retirement, full of adventure and relaxation, and free of deadlines!

## Christine Jewell, New Program and Grant Coordinator



We are pleased to announce that the ABGA has secured the services of Christine Jewell as our new Program and Grant Coordinator. Christine has tremendous credentials in developing and promoting programming, working with educators and students, and using social media to spread the word.

Christine has already hit the ground running by overseeing our recent tour of ABG connections to the 17th century witch trials. She is working to create online exhibits and programs to share recent research projects by Dr. Katherine Hermes ~ one on women and one on Hartford connections to the West Indies and trade. Christine is also taking over the role of coordinating the grant and contract process for the State Historic Preservation Office Planning Grant.

Christine is a dedicated and innovative professional with over 20 years of experience developing and promoting programs in the arts, education, history, and culture. Most recently she was the Director of Westport Continuing Education, where she oversaw the development, staffing, and implementation of after school and evening programs for K-12 and adults. This included budget oversight, publicity, and working with teachers and students. Previously she worked for 11 years as the Director of Education and Community Programs at the Fairfield Museum and History Center, and prior to that at the Mattatuck Museum in her hometown of Waterbury, CT. She has worked on projects that support diverse expressions of the arts and culture, including student exhibitions, and developing educational programs that support museum learning and critical thinking for students and educators. Christine Jewell received her B.F.A at Purchase School of Art + Design in Purchase, New York, and designed an independent study M.A. in Social Policy and the Arts at Empire State College, New York.

Please join us in welcoming Christine to the ABGA!

## Contact Us

For more information about the Ancient Burying Ground Association, or to make a contribution, please contact us.

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PO Box 347, Hartford, CT 06140    [www.theancientburyingground.org](http://www.theancientburyingground.org)

# 2022 ~ A Year of Lectures, Workshops,

## Talks and Workshops

Over the past year, the ABGA partnered with the Hartford History Center of the Hartford Public Library to present five workshops and lectures, supported by a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council. These events connect the greater Hartford community with the stories of Hartford's earliest citizens and present new scholarship. The three October 2021 programs covered genealogy and the Connecticut witch trials, and all were presented online, with an audience from around the country.

We continued our programs with "Researching Your African American Ancestors" in February 2022, with Dr. Katherine Hermes, Project Director of the ABGA's *Uncovering Their History*. Dr. Hermes explored the challenges of searching for records for African Americans, and the resources likely to offer information. She encouraged researchers to start with family stories, and to follow through on even slim clues, which often lead to more substantial information. (more at [www.africanative-burialsct.org](http://www.africanative-burialsct.org))

In May 2022, Fine Arts Conservator Francis Miller

presented "Saving Historic Gravestones," our first return to a live audience program. He discussed the range of stone materials, the challenges found, and the tools and methods for stabilization and repair.

## Tours with Ruth Shapleigh-Brown

The summer of 2022 saw us back in the Ancient Burying Ground with in-person guided tours by Ruth Shapleigh-Brown, including an introduction to the history of the ABG in June, and a tour of the stones and stories of Revolutionary War veterans in July. In addition, Ruthie gave tours requested by three Family Associations ~ the Bidwells, the Hills, and the Talcotts. She also tailored tours for a group from the Law Council Committee, and for the incoming Knox landscape apprentices. In addition to teaching skills for grounds care and maintenance, Knox encourages their crews to learn more about the spaces they maintain in Hartford. Most recently, Ruthie introduced a group of Hartford CREC students to the burying ground.

Ruthie brings a wealth of knowledge to her tours, relating the general historic and cultural background of Connecticut in the colonial and early statehood periods,



Dr. Richard Ross leads tour of ABG links to the Connecticut Witch Panic of the 17th century.

## Witch Trials and the ABG

This October 22 Richard Ross gave back-to-back tours on the Connecticut Witch Panic, visiting gravestones of individuals connected to the 17th century Hartford witch trials. The talk drew large groups of visitors who learned stories of townspeople, officials, and clergy. Some were relatives of an accuser, others served on committees of inquest or sat in judgment at a trial.

Visitors that day also enjoyed tours offered by Center Church inside the 1807 meeting house.

In conjunction with this fall's tours, the ABGA has published a new brochure, written by Dr. Ross. The following story is from the brochure:

### *Andrew Benton (1620-1683)*

*Andrew Benton purchased the property of husband-and-wife Rebecca and Nathaniel Greensmith five years after they were hanged for witchcraft in 1663. Following the death of his wife in 1672, he married Ann Cole, who a decade earlier accused Rebecca Greensmith and others of witchcraft. Ann lived with Andrew in the Greensmith's former house until his death. She continued to live there until her own death in 1686.*

## CONNECTICUT COLONY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY WITCH PANIC

*A Guide to Connected Persons  
Interred in Hartford's Ancient  
Burying Ground*

# s, Tours, Witches, and Family Histories



*After a tour, the Knox crew members pore over Ruthie's notebooks.*

as well as the specifics of the Ancient Burying Ground. She includes stories of individual lives, genealogical and

other connections, the carvers and their changing art styles, how to care for old grave markers, and more.

As Ruthie has written, she has been involved in burial ground preservation and gravestone studies since the mid 1980's when she visited her ancestral family plots in Maine. The Shapleigh's came from England in the early 1600's, being first settlers in the area now known as Eliot and Kittery. Finding the plots in an overgrown, weed-covered state, she felt this was very disrespectful and organized some family members to clean them up. This was the tip of the iceberg for what has since become Ruthie's passion in life. She states that studying these historic artifacts and protecting them is a way to interact with history and those who came before us. Presently Ruthie finds herself continually engulfed in Connecticut's early history by connecting early families through the study of these first burying grounds.

## Some History Notes on Hartford and the Early Burying Grounds

**By Ruth Shapleigh-Brown**

Most family groups are inspired to visit the Ancient Burying Ground in Hartford because of its history and the Founders Monument. The names listed on that monument mean that the person was among those who held a title to land in the original settlement.

What many don't realize is that it does not mean their ancestor was buried in the Ancient Burying Ground. Many of these named persons may have held title but did not move to Hartford, or passed it on to their younger family members, or after living there for a period, moved on to other areas like the Farmington, Lyme, Saybrook, Stonington, New Haven, and Fairfield settlements.

Another fact that many don't account for is the establishment of surrounding towns. Hartford of the 17th and 18th centuries was a much larger area than what it is now. Prior to 1783, when East Hartford became incorporated as its own

town, Hartford reached east of the river as far as Bolton. No Manchester, no East Hartford. It also included areas west to Farmington, south to Wethersfield and Glastonbury, and north to Windsor.

By the early 1700's, a large portion of the residents owned land EAST of the Great River. Perhaps over 50% of the city's population were involved in farming, mill work, marsh land and river extensions, which provided for the creation of businesses and farms to support communities. For example, the paper mill (rebuilt by Ebenezer Watson's widow) produced what is now the *Hartford Courant*, and the first gun powder mill and glassworks were both established by the Pitkins.

By 1700, the community managers realized that the effort it took to bring bodies over the Great River to be buried at the old burial ground was a growing hardship. Finally, Mr. John Pantry, who was one of the committee that had oversight at the time over the old bury-

ing ground, offered an acre of his land on the east side to the community for its own burial ground in 1710. This is now called Center Cemetery of East Hartford.

This first acre was not as close to Main St. in East Hartford as it is now. Back then it was land that sat behind the estate of the Goodwins. As time progressed, Mr. Goodwin also sold parcels of his land to extend the growth of that cemetery.

When Ruthie does tours for family gatherings, she often finds that these connections are not known. This past year when doing programs, she would provide some with a listing of those by their surname that are buried in Center Cemetery. For example: for the Hills family she found 60+ names, and for the Bidwell family over 110 names were in the data base she has, and this is only in that one cemetery, it doesn't include the other two older cemeteries in East Hartford, or Manchester's old cemeteries.

# Jeremiah Wadsworth and the Founding of the First Bank in Hartford

By *Brendan W. Clark*

Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth, buried in Hartford's Ancient Burying Ground in the last decade of its active use, was a colorful citizen of Hartford. His many accomplishments in civic and business enterprises include service as a charter director of the Hartford Bank ~ which would have a proud history of two centuries from May 1792 until its merger in the late 1990s.

Hartford's first bank, the Hartford Bank, opened for business August 8, 1792, in the third year of George Washington's presidency, as the nation was developing its banking system.<sup>1</sup> Wadsworth was also an early member of the House of Representatives, representing Connecticut from 1789-1795.<sup>2</sup>

Wadsworth was elected June 18, 1792 as a director of the bank, though declined an offer to serve as its first president.<sup>3</sup> This service to the city's first financial enterprise was not Wadsworth's first run with a bank. He was affiliated with the Bank of New York, and it has been said that "confidence in his sagacity" in this endeavor "led his neighbors to act upon his advice in founding the Hartford Bank."<sup>4</sup> He also served as director of the first Bank of the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Wadsworth was already a war hero and patriot of great devotion: in his role as Commissary-General of the Purchases for the Continental Army, Washington wrote that "since



his appointment, our supplies of provisions have been good and ample."<sup>6</sup>

General Nathaniel Greene's biographer has observed that "energy, activity, system and sound judgment were Wadsworth's business characteristics; cheerfulness, sympathy, and sincerity his recommendations as a friend."<sup>7</sup> These qualities of "sound judgment" likely served Wadsworth well in his endeavors to found the bank in 1792.

The bank found its home "on the south side of Pearl street, a few steps from main," with a chest "bought by Colonel Wadsworth in New York, having done good service in days less

perilous to 'safes.'"<sup>8</sup> Announcing its operation on August 13, 1792, the Bank advertised in the *Courant*, observing that "The Bank is to be open every day in the year, except Sunday, public Fasts, Thanksgivings, Christmas, and the Fourth of July, from the hour of nine o'clock till Twelve o'clock in the morning, and from Two o'clock to Five in the afternoon, Saturday afternoon excepted."<sup>9</sup>

The Hartford Bank also introduced U.S. currency in Connecticut to replace the outdated English monetary system, taking "the lead in introducing the decimal system of notation in Connecticut" and resolved that "the notes to be issued should be made payable in dollars" rather than pounds.<sup>10</sup>

After Wadsworth's death, the Hartford Bank bestowed another gift upon Connecticut, although unintended: the abiding spirit of religious liberty. As the *Courant* observed on the bank's centenary in 1892, the "intolerant opposition of the directors of the bank to the charter of the Phoenix Bank, led to the passage of the toleration act ~ the dawn of religious liberty revolutionizing the state."<sup>11</sup> This was because the Phoenix was an "Episcopal bank," in contrast to the Hartford Bank's Congregational tendencies, with history suggesting that Congregationalist opposition contributed to the proliferation of more banks.<sup>12</sup>

Upon Wadsworth's death, it was

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Kaplan, *The Bank of the United States and the American Economy*, 46-48 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> "Wadsworth, Jeremiah," *Bibliographical Directory of the United States Congress*, accessed October 30, 2022, [ps://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/W000013](https://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/W000013).

<sup>3</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia), June 22, 1792, p.3.

<sup>4</sup> P.H. Woodward, *One Hundred Years of the Hartford Bank*, (Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood, & Brainard Company, 1892): 31 (emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Worthington Chauncey Ford, *The Writings of George Washington*, vol. VII, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1890): 141.

<sup>7</sup> George Washington Green, *The Life of Nathaniel Greene: Major-General in the Army of the Revolution*, vol. 2, (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1878): 50.

<sup>8</sup> Woodward, *One Hundred Years*, 57.

<sup>9</sup> "Rules to Be Observed at Hartford Bank in Hartford," *The Connecticut Courant*, Aug. 13, 1792, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Woodward, *One Hundred Years*, 61.

<sup>11</sup> "100 Years in the Field: The Hartford Bank Celebrates Its Centennial," *The Hartford Courant*, June 15, 1892, p.1.

<sup>12</sup> "The Phoenix Bank: Some Interesting Reminiscences," *The Hartford Courant*, May 16, 1873, p.4.

# ABGA Named One of 20 Game Changers

To mark its 20th anniversary, *Connecticut Explored* magazine, supported by Connecticut Humanities, is honoring 20 people and projects that are “advancing the way we study, interpret, and disseminate Connecticut history.” The ABGA is proud to be chosen for our research project *Uncovering Their History: African, African-American, and Native-American Burials in Hartford’s Ancient Burying Ground, 1640-1815*.

ABGA President Ty Tryon initiated this project, with the goal of identifying and researching as many individuals as possible and presenting this knowledge in a format available to the public. ABGA Program and Grant Director Mary Donohue ushered through the project, which was supported by a matching grant from the State Historic Preservation Office.

Dr. Katherine Hermes, Professor of History at Central Connecticut State University, led the research team that delved into archives to create the database and individual histories. They took the project further by creating a website to share the information, and added direct links, where available, to Ancestry.com pages. Dr. Hermes mapped out connections between individuals on her Relationship Tree program, which



gives a picture of more complex connections than are included in ancestry pages ~ such as enslaved and enslaver, heir or beneficiary, friendship, church membership.

## Telling New Stories from Early Hartford: Women, and the Caribbean Connection

The ABGA announces its latest projects: two digital exhibitions that tell fresh stories of the individuals represented in the burying ground. Both projects include scholarship that cuts across race, gender, and class to tell stories of Black, White, and Indigenous members of Hartford’s colonial-era society. The exhibitions will portray the often hidden histories of women, and the connections between Hartford, the West Indies, and trade.

The project historian, Katherine Hermes, educator, author, and the new publisher of *Connecticut Explored*

Please visit the website: [african-nativeburialsct.org](http://african-nativeburialsct.org). With the research available on the website, and through Connecticut history networks, word spread about the project, and Dr. Hermes has been much in demand. She has given interviews and several presentations on her research, beginning with ABGA’s programs at the Hartford History Center in September, 2019, and most recently this fall’s online talk hosted by the New Haven Museum, in collaboration with New Haven’s Grove Street Cemetery.

magazine, has unearthed some of the women’s stories through wills and probate inventories. The stories include an Indigenous mother/daughter from 1713 and 1728, and a woman of French origin with ties to Haiti and Hartford. Also found is the unfortunate fate of Reverend Thomas Hooker’s sister in 1662.

The project is made possible by a grant from CT Humanities. Public programs and the online exhibitions will be available in the new year. Please look for information on our website and Facebook page.

## Jeremiah Wadsworth

Continued from page 6

observed in one obituary that: “In all the private, and public relations of life, he was esteemed and respected. In this gentleman, his family have lost a tender, affectionate, and beloved relation; the poor a kind

and beneficent father; the town its greatest benefactor; the state a most valuable citizen; and the country one of its firmest friends; and most able and faithful patriots.”<sup>13</sup>

Wadsworth was buried with a fine stone in the ABG. As a token of appreciation, his son, Daniel Wadsworth, led one of the first

charges to save the ABG in 1836 and was responsible for the original obelisk commemorating the founders of the city.<sup>14</sup> It is fitting, then, to note Wadsworth’s early contributions to banking, and his family’s impact upon the Burying Ground.

<sup>13</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, May 17, 1804, p.3.

<sup>14</sup>“How Hartford’s Ancient Burying Ground Was Saved By The Gold Street Lady,” accessed November 1, 2022, <https://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/how-hartfords-ancient-burying-ground-was-saved-by-the-gold-street-lady/>.



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## Annual Appeal

'Tis the season for our Annual Fund appeal to support our important projects and initiatives. Please keep the ABGA on your list of worthy recipients. This year we celebrate our amazing accomplishments and encourage you to donate. Your support directly funds important restoration projects that help us to preserve this important site and its many and varied stories.

The ABGA is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your tax-deductible donation will help us to continue our

important work of preserving the Ancient Burying Ground, providing access to research, and presenting educational programs.

Gifts in any amount, large or small, make a difference! Donations are accepted by mailing a check, by clicking on the QR code, or by giving online at [www.theancientburyingground.org](http://www.theancientburyingground.org).



## African-American Monument Vandalized



*Recent intentional scratches mar the memorial. The ABGA is contracting with the monument's makers, the John Stevens Shop in Newport, RI, to remedy the vandalism.*