



ANCIENT
BURYING
GROUND
ASSOCIATION

PASSAGES

Preserving A History Carved in Stone

President's Letter

Dear Friends of the Ancient Burying Ground,

The Ancient Burying Ground Association (ABGA) board of directors has been very busy in 2023. We received matching funds from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to commission two planning grants, one for the Historic Landscape Preservation Plan and one for the Historic Gravestone Conservation Assessment. These two very comprehensive surveys will guide our conservation efforts for the years to come.

We have developed a working collaboration with the 1636 Heritage Partnership, which is a secular non-profit organization that works to preserve the Meeting House and Church House of The First Church of Christ in Hartford/Center Church which border the Ancient Burying Ground (ABG). We schedule and promote tours and events



Ty Tryon

together, and the church buildings are available for ABG events as a backup in case of inclement weather. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the 1636 Heritage Partnership.

We have gone high-tech this year. We received funding from SHPO to survey the subsurface of the ABG with ground penetrating radar and a geo-physical ground conductivity meter. Interpreting the readings is a

complex process, and we hope to find answers to some of the questions about what lies below the surface.

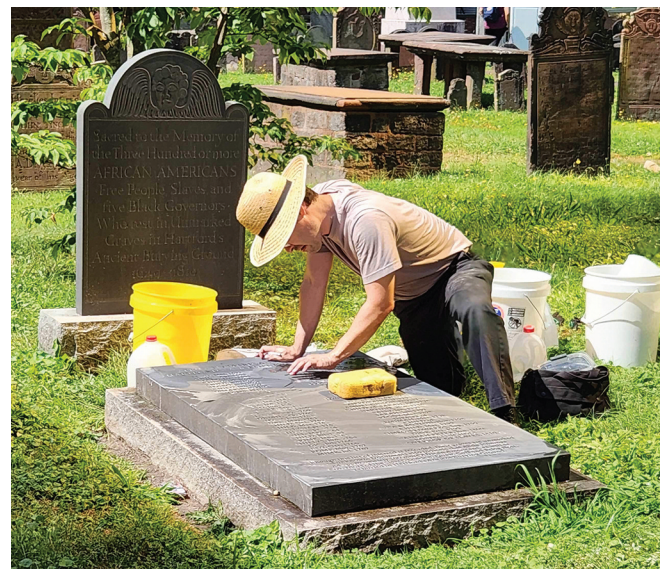
Our fall events this year included the popular topic of the Hartford Witch Trial Panic. Author Dick Ross has given several lectures, and our own Christine Jewell has led tours as well. (Please see accompanying stories for more on this and the above items.)

The stewardship and care of an historic burial ground is never-ending. It takes dedicated volunteers, a committed board of directors, and most importantly, funding. Thank you for your support in maintaining the ABG as a premier cultural heritage destination, in good repair and open to the public year-round.

Ty Tryon

Gravestone Conservation Update

The African-American Memorial was vandalized with scratch marks in 2022. The board of directors allocated funds for repairs, which were made by the John Stevens Shop, founded in 1705 and one of the oldest continuously operating businesses in the country. The artisans of this Newport, Rhode Island shop designed and carved the African-American monument. This two-piece memorial, erected in 1998, was the result of research and fundraising by Hartford schoolchildren. Fortunately, the damage was not deep, and Wes Adams of the John Stevens Shop was able to hone the memorial surface back to its original appearance.



Board Members – Welcome and Farewell

Katherine Dimancescu

We're pleased to welcome back Kate Dimancescu, who is returning to the ABGA Board, having served from 2012-2016. When Kate learned that our meetings were on Zoom most of the year, her drive from Massachusetts was no longer an obstacle, and she joins three other board members who attend on Zoom from out of state now.

Kate is the author of *The Forgotten Chapters: My Journey into the Past*, with stories of her maternal ancestors and their lives as pioneers and settlers of early New England, and *Denizens, A Narrative of Captain George Denison and his New England Contemporaries*. Kate is a life-long writer and lover of history, genealogy, and research. She is also devoted to historic preservation and sharing the stories of the past. She has three maternal ancestors buried in the ABG, Captain George Denison and Thomas and Dorothy (Bird) Lord.

Caitlin Green

Cait Green brings expertise in art conservation to the Ancient Burying Ground Association as a new board member. Cait lived in Hartford, Connecticut for five years and is currently living in Buffalo, New York as a Graduate Fellow in the Patricia H. and Richard E. Garman Art Conservation Department at SUNY Buffalo State University.

Cait has participated in various cemetery conservation projects in New England, including contributions at God's Little Acre in Newport, Rhode Island, and a headstone cleaning project at the North Burial Ground in Providence, Rhode Island. In addition to her growing expertise, Cait brings dedication to

the preservation of our vital cultural landmarks.

We also welcome as an Ex Officio board member the new Hartford Mayor **Arunan Arulampalam**, whose wife the Rev. Elizabeth Arulampalam, as pastor of the ABG's neighbor Center Church, is also an Ex Officio board member.

The ABGA Board thanks **Jeffrey Marsted** and **Kory Mills**, both of whom retired from the board this past year. Jeff Marsted was on the board in the ABGA's early years from 1986 to 1993, serving as Treasurer for those years, and rejoined the board at the beginning of the new century. Jeff has a personal connection to the Ancient Burying Ground, and over the years has cared for the gravestones of his ancestors Jonathan Gilbert and wife Mary.

Kory Mills joined the board in 2019, stepping up to the position of Treasurer after two years on the board. Kory brought his expertise in budgets to the job, from his work in the Hartford City budget department.



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Executive Board Members

Ty Tryon President
Anne Holcombe. Secretary

Board Members

Victoria Bradford
Emily Cahill
Brendan W. Clark
Katherine Dimancescu
Molly Gilmore
Caitlin Green
Jon B. Harden
Stephen Morris
Frederick W. Sawyer

Ex Officio Board Members

Robert Storm
The Honorable Arunan
Arulampalam
Rev. Elizabeth Arulampalam

ABGA Representative

Ruth Shapleigh-Brown

Program and Grant Coordinator

Christine Jewell

Visit and Research Inquiries

We appreciate all inquiries from historians, students, descendants, and researchers about your connections with and investigations into genealogy, history, and more. We now have a new form on our website under the Visit page for all inquiries.

In recent months visitors have arrived at the Ancient Burying Ground only to find the gates locked. We apologize for this and we have rectified this situation with our partners at the Hartford Business

Improvement District, who open and close the gates. If you are traveling from out of town or are planning a visit, please complete the form so that we can ensure that the gates are open.

Your responses also help us track attendance, research requests, and visitors. This data helps with funding requests. Please complete the form so that we may serve you better.

<https://ancientburyingground.com/visit/>

Telling New Stories

The Ancient Burying Ground Association commissioned Dr. Katherine Hermes to research two separate threads in the lives of people buried in the Ancient Burying Ground: connections with the West Indies, and women's history. Both research projects included primary source research and genealogy with an emphasis on people of color and their experiences. The project resulted in two online exhibitions that are accessible on the ABGA website. This project was funded by CT Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of the American Rescue Plan Act.

Over the last year, Dr. Hermes has presented several lectures on these topics around the state. She will be presenting a talk in January in partnership with the CT Museum of Culture and History in Hartford.



Ties to the Caribbean

While as many as 6,000 people once lay interred in the ancient grounds, nearly 500 of them indigenous, African, or African American, only a little over 400 have stones that survive. The hidden tales Dr. Hermes found are thrilling, disturbing, and fascinating. Come to a talk by Dr. Hermes on January 18.



Women's History

At this online exhibition, explore the lives of women, who managed the households and kept Hartford running: the Native, African, and African-American female servants and enslaved women, and the mothers, daughters, wives, and widows of European settlers. Learn more about Ruth Moore, the first woman of color to leave a will in colonial Hartford; Sarah Onepenny, a leading elder of the Wangunk; and the widowed sister of Rev. Thomas Hooker, Dorothy Chester, who died impoverished.

“Whether a Puritan helpmeet in charge of the household or a woman of color forced by circumstance to serve her, the focus of this project is to bring women interred in the Ancient Burying Ground to the forefront of our picture of Hartford's past.”

Telling New Stories: Ties to the Caribbean in the Ancient Burying Ground

Presented by Dr. Katherine Hermes
Thursday, January 18, 2024 | 6:00 pm
Connecticut Museum of Culture and History,
1 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, CT
(formerly the Connecticut Historical Society)

Everyone knows Connecticut had ties to the West Indies (we're the Nutmeg State, after all), but we often don't know the personal stories of the individuals who straddled both places in the Atlantic World. This program will feature a range of diverse people including Connecticut merchants looking for new markets and products; enslaved people from Antigua serving in households in Hartford; a West Indian enslaved man brought to Guilford who later opened a thriving grocery store in Hartford; and a French woman fleeing the Haitian Revolution. We will examine the shipping news from the *Connecticut Courant*, as well as documents from probate records, newspapers, vital records, and account books, which hold the keys to uncovering this history.

2023 Educational Tours and

Over 300 people have attended the Ancient Burying Ground Association programs over the summer and fall. Summer Tours kicked off with CT Open House Day in June, a yearly event promoted by CT Visit, our state's tourism agency. The day encourages historic and cultural organizations to open their sites for free. The summer continued with monthly Guided Tours and new Scavenger Hunts, which younger visitors enjoyed. The Scavenger Hunts encourage people to find significant grave markers, symbols, art, and other visual cues to learn more about history. Highlights of some of our additional tours follow.



HPL English Language Learning Program

About 20 high school students from various countries, including Peru, Honduras, Rwanda, the Congo, Afghanistan, and countries in the Caribbean, are participating in Hartford Public Library's English Language Learning Program. They came for a tour of the Burying Ground in July to learn about Hartford's early history.



Vassar College Alumnae/i Tour

The ABGA was pleased to welcome the Vassar College Connecticut Alumni Chapter for a late fall tour. The tour was led by board member Steve Morris and touched on the overall history of the site and the connection of the site to the witch trials that swept the Connecticut River Valley in the 17th century. If you have a group that would like a private tour of the Burying Ground, head to our website to contact us.



Hartford Public Library "Big Read"

In this guided tour last November, Coordinator Christine Jewell discussed ABGA's research projects that give us insight into the past, sharing stories from the award-winning website *Uncovering Their History: African, African-American and Native-American Burials in Hartford's Ancient Burying Ground, 1640-1815*. Presented in partnership with the Hartford Public Library and "The Big Read."



Watertown HS History Class

About 25 high school students from Watertown High School visited the ABG in late October as part of their studies in Connecticut Making and their new Black and Latino studies classes. Accompanying the students was Dr. Nicholas Bellantoni, Emeritus State Archaeologist. We are pleased to learn that the ABGA website is used in their history curriculum.

and Historical Presentations

Witchcraft Trials

October was a busy month as our awareness turned to the 17th century witch trials. The ABG is the final resting place for many magistrates and others connected with these events.

In partnership with the Wadsworth Atheneum, Coordinator Christine Jewell led groups during the *Spirited Social* evening for adults, totaling nearly 80 people. Ms. Jewell also led groups for a guided tour entitled *Justice Meets Myth and Magic*. The tour discussed how the colonists brought a belief in witchcraft from England, where it was rooted in folk traditions and the Bible, reinforced by the Church, and heightened by witch-hunting pamphlets.

Ms. Jewell was a guest on local TV to discuss and promote our October Witchcraft Panic programs. She was

on Fox61 with Angelo Bavarro and on Halloween joined Scott Haney and Nicole Nalepa for Great Day on WFSB.

Richard Ross III led *Witchcraft Panic* guided tours for the last two Saturdays in October. Participants heard the stories of the individuals connected to the 17th century Hartford Witch Trials including the magistrates, lawyers, townspeople, and clergy. Ross is the author of *Before Salem: Witch Hunting in the Connecticut River Valley, 1647-1663* and contributed his scholarship for the ABGA brochure, *Connecticut Colony Seventeenth-Century Witch Panic*. In a partnership with the Old State House, Ross also presented his lecture at this location, where attendees included a group from the Associated Daughters of Early American Witches.



The witchcraft trials in Connecticut received widespread publicity this past year through the efforts of historians, descendants, and supporters who helped to pass Resolution HJ 34 in the Connecticut General Assembly in May 2023. This resolution proclaimed the innocence of all those accused of witchcraft in Connecticut.

High Tech Comes to the Ancient Burying Ground

The ABGA received a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to survey the subsurface of the Ancient Burying Ground with the latest technology. The grant allows for up to one acre of surveying and the ABG is just a fraction over one acre.

We know so little about what lies below the surface of the ABG. Documents and records were never kept, so it's a big mystery. Some of our questions include these: Do burial shafts line up with gravestones? What is the location of unmarked graves? How far do burials extend within the fenced boundaries? What are the sites of any sunken grave-stones? How close together are the



Doria Kutrubes, President of Radar Solutions (right) with the crew and the GPR reader.

burials? and Where are the drain pipes and sewer lines?

We commissioned Radar Solutions International, Inc. of

Waltham, Massachusetts. They employed two devices, a Pulse EKKO ground-penetrating radar (GPR) mounted on a wheeled carriage and a shoulder-carried EM-38 mk2 ground connectivity meter.

Each scanning pass of the wheeled GPR across the grounds is considered a "slice" of data-intensive information. Radar Solutions stitches the data slices together to create a comprehensive subsurface image for the ABGA. This is a time-consuming process, and includes aligning the images to key latitude/longitude data points. At this time, we cannot report on any detected anomalies. Stay tuned for an update in the near future.

Ruth Shapleigh-Brown Honored by the Ruth Wyllys Chapter of the DAR

This November, Ruthie Brown was recognized for her ongoing work with Connecticut's old burial grounds. The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution Ruth Wyllys Chapter's Historic Preservation Committee awarded her their Historic Preservation of Excellence Award. She has in past years received other awards from the DAR, including being honored by the Connecticut State DAR in 2013 when she received their National Historic Preservation medal, of which she is also very proud.

The award this year was given by the local chapter, the Ruth Wyllys Chapter, whose first project, in the late 19th century, was Hartford's old burying ground. They raised awareness and funds to buy and give to the City the buildings on the north side of Gold Street, which were then razed to open access and views to the Ancient Burying Ground. The Chapter also did extensive conservation work in the ABG, a major effort to preserve and save this local history. Mrs. Holcombe, who was former ABGA President Shepherd Holcombe's grandmother, was a major part in that movement and has an honored burial lot in the old burying ground because of her dedication to the history.

Chapter Regent Angela Munson presented the award to Ruthie with great thanks. Ruthie is honored for her unflagging devotion to preserving old burial grounds across the state and educating people about the history and art they hold, and also for sharing knowledge and expertise about the care of old gravestones and



DAR Chapter Regent Angela Munson presents Ruthie a special award.

the sources for historical and genealogical research. The DAR recognized her lifetime work, and thanked her for continuing to explore and share.

Ruthie returned the thanks, acknowledging the DAR members as generous sources of knowledge and as mentors who had worked with her throughout the years past. She also encouraged all to look to the upcoming 250th anniversary of the Declaration and the Revolution as an opportunity to renew interest in America's beginnings, the individuals and families from the times, and the connections across Connecticut. She noted that Hartford's Ancient Burying Ground is a fine example of the statewide connections of those buried there, demonstrating family, business, social, and political networks and leaving traces of how the state grew. Pointing out those connections has always been a highlight in Ruthie's tours, demonstrating that the history in the ABG is not only that of the city of Hartford, but of ALL of Connecticut's first two centuries.

The event was held at the Bull Tavern, a building of Connecticut



Ruthie leads a tour of the ABG.

Landmarks in downtown Hartford. After the tea and ceremony, all were invited to an informal tour of the Butler-McCook House, just through the garden to Main Street. This house is filled with the families' histories and wonderful collections and art.

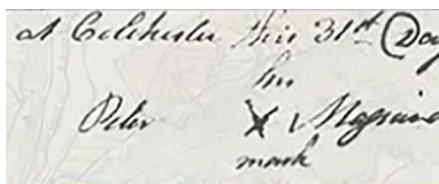
We ended the morning with a visit to the Ancient Burying Ground, to pay respects to the Wyllys family and the rest of Hartford's early residents. We were met by the "ghost" of Ruth Wyllys, who shared highlights from her life as the wife of an important Revolutionary officer.

Looking Forward - 2024 Calendar of Talks and Tours

January's program is in person, February and March are online. To register, please visit <https://ancient-buryingground.com/events/>

Ties to the Caribbean in the Ancient Burying Ground

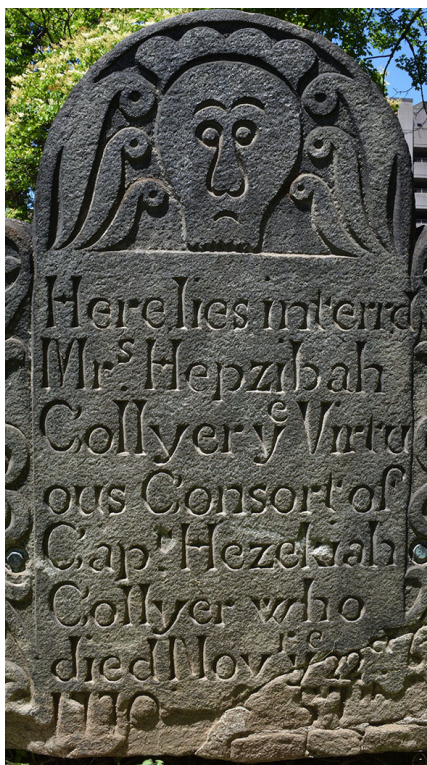
January 18, 6 - 7:30
with Dr. Katherine Hermes
See p. 3 for more information.



From Africa to Middle Class Hartford - Two Generations of the Maguire Family

Thursday, February 22 | 7:00 pm
| Online \$10 Admission; Free for members of the ABGA and CSG.
Presented by Pauline Merrick, President of CT Society of Genealogists.

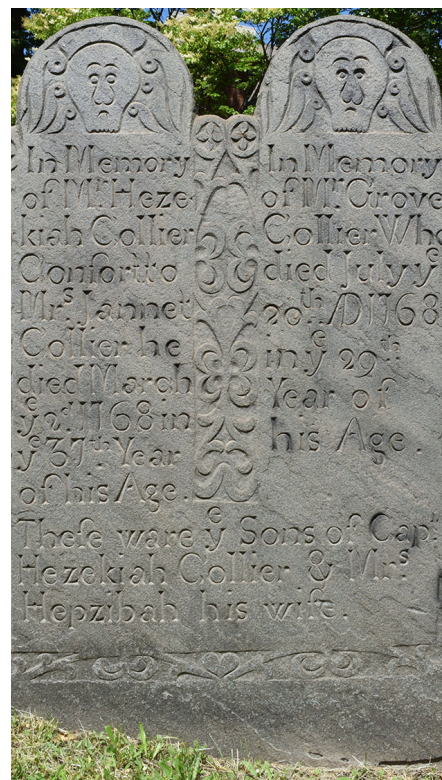
Pauline C. Merrick is a genealogist and historian whose research into Black Revolutionary War soldiers led her to discover the descendants of Peter Maguire in Hartford. Maguire was born in Africa and enslaved in Colchester, Connecticut. He was emancipated as tensions were building up with the British and served in the war. We will follow his path using historical documents such as pension applications, vital records, deeds, and city directories. At least three of his children were landowners and living in Hartford as part of the city's Black Middle Class before the Civil War. Genealogical and historical research processes will be illustrated.



Carved in Stone: How to Access the Photo Inventory

Tuesday, March 5 | 7:00 pm |
Online | \$5 suggested donation; free for ABGA members.

Delve into the Ancient Burying Ground Association's photo database project, *Carved in Stone*. This 2021 project features photographs of the stones, markers, and monuments found at the Ancient Burying Ground, transcriptions, and epitaphs. Join Sharon Clapp and learn how to use this valuable database of information, available for anyone to access on the ABGA website. Sharon is the ABGA webmaster and Digital Resources Librarian at the Elihu Burritt Library, Central CT State University. This project was funded in part by the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office of the Department of Economic and Community Development. View the searchable and downloadable database of historic marker photographs.



Gravestone Interpretation & Cleaning Workshop

Sunday, May 19, 1 - 3:00 pm | \$5 suggested donation; free for ABGA members, register online.

Join Ruth Shapleigh-Brown of the CT Gravestone Network to learn more about preserving colonial gravestones and interpreting their history. Learn how the symbolism and iconography changed over time and how to interpret spelling and language. Watch a demonstration on how to gently clean gravestones with tips and tricks on how to photograph them. Training and cleaning materials supplied.

CT Open House Day

Saturday, June 8 | 10am - 1pm

Visit our website or Facebook page for updates and more details on spring and summer tours and events.



ANCIENT BURYING GROUND ASSOCIATION

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Tree Maintenance

The ABGA worked with the City of Hartford's Arborist to survey and assess the conditions of the trees in the Ancient Burying Ground. The City sent a crew from SavATree to go through most of the trees, cutting off dead limbs in the larger trees and removing a few smaller trees which were dead or failing. With the potential hazards that trees can pose to gravestones, we are glad to have this partnership with the City to keep the ABG trees healthy and safe.

Contact Us

For more information or to make a contribution, please contact us.

Telephone: (860) 337-1640

Email: abgact@gmail.com

PO Box 347, Hartford, CT 06140

www.theancientburyingground.org



The bucket truck was used, as seen in the photo, just inside the gate, since the crew had access here without endangering gravestones. The rest of the big tree work was done by a climbing crew.