

PASSAGES

ANCIENT BURYING GROUND ASSOCIATION, INC.

"Passing Connecticut's Heritage from Generation to Generation"

Summer Lunchtime Tour Program

For a third year, the ABGA, with support from the Greater Hartford Arts Council and the Mortensen Foundation, sponsored lunchtime tours of the Burying Ground, offered by Hartford middle school students under the guidance of teacher/coordinator Andrea Ader. Instead of 2009's rain and soggy lawn, there was excessive heat; but undeterred, the guides were on duty Monday through Friday, noon to 2:00 for six weeks in mid-summer. And the visitors came, with a 30% increase in attendance, thanks in part to word-of-mouth and increased



Orlando Romero, Nick Torres, Essence Colon, and Jenny Tang were the 2010 Tour Guides.

promotion.

This summer's guides were

Orlando Romero, Jenny Tang, and Nick Torres from Hartford Magnet Middle School, and Essence Colon from Classical Magnet. Andrea Ader recruited and trained the guides, instructing them in historical research at the Connecticut State Library, Hartford Public Library, and Connecticut Historical Society and Museum. They visited several other historical sites to evaluate docent techniques, and to gain a broader understanding of early Hartford and New England history. Each guide developed specific interests and

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State Historian Walter Woodward Named 2010 Thomas Hooker Honoree

"Just as hemlines rise and fall, only to rise and fall again, history, or interest in historical stories, has a way of circling back on itself, as people find new meaning in old tales," commented Walter W. Woodward in his acceptance of the 2010 Thomas Hooker Award.

"Stories of the past once set aside as less relevant are rediscovered, become important again, and are held up as shining examples from which new and important lessons can be learned," Professor Woodward continued.

"That is why I am so honored to receive the Thomas Hooker award. More than any organization I know,



Shep Holcombe and Kate Steinway (left) and Bob Hill (far right) present Walt Woodward with the Richard Welling print of the Ancient Burying Ground.

the Ancient Burying Ground Association works to preserve and protect the bedrock memory of our

state's history, and the sacred ground in which our founding fathers and

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Flags for Veterans and Wreaths Across America

On Veterans' Day, Memorial Day and the Fourth of July, many cemeteries across the United States mark the graves of those who served in the military with American flags, often placed by Veterans or Scout groups.

ABGA Board member Curt Hickcox is currently researching the graves in the Burying Ground to complete a list of those who served in the military. He placed flags by several this November 11, Veterans Day, and plans to have one wreath, from the Wreaths Across America program, at the Governor's Foot Guard Memorial Boulder for the Holidays.

The research is revealing many interesting stories about veterans buried in the Ancient Burying Ground. For example:

Jeremiah Wadsworth was born in Hartford in 1743. Early in his career he worked as a sailor and merchant aboard ocean-going ships in a family business, which prepared him for a very important role in the American Revolution. He was appointed Commissary-General of the Continental Army in April 1778 by



Capt. Joseph Watson died in 1803.

the Continental Congress. Following the war his further activities in international business made him what some called "the wealthiest man in Connecticut."

Pownal Deming was born in North Lyme, Connecticut. He served through the War of the Revolution in the Continental Army, and at the close of the war held the rank of Captain. He settled in Hartford where he became a merchant. He was a member of the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati, which is open to George Washington's officers and their descendants.

One of the challenging questions

is whether or not to mark graves of men who fought in pre-revolutionary wars, and if so, with what flag. Would we use a British flag, since Hartford citizens were British for nearly two centuries, and fought in British wars until the Revolution? The United States wasn't formed until a few decades before the ABG was closed as Hartford's primary burying ground. Was there a colonial Connecticut flag? Were there flags of different regiments? Our quest continues!



Ancient Burying Ground Association

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Halloween at the Old State House and the ABG

On Friday evening, October 29, Connecticut's Old State House offered a haunting program, which included a witch trial drama and a ghost tour. The evening was capped with tours for two large groups of the ABG, the final resting place of Hartford's earliest inhabitants.

Ancient Burying Ground Hours

The gates to the Ancient Burying Ground are open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., from April 1 to November 30, conditions permitting. The Burying Ground is open also by appointment. Call (860) 280-41457 or the Hartford Guides at (860) 522-0855. For a guided group tour, call (860) 643-5652. There is no charge to visit the Ancient Burying Ground.

2010 Gravestone Conservation Project



Ty Tryon (left) and Wayne Skidgel work to reset the stone of Mrs. Lucinda Patten, on one of several hot days this summer.

The perennial image of colonial burying grounds as neglected places of fallen and leaning grave stones is as accurate today as it was observed by early 18th century European visitors traveling through New England. Neglect and severe New England winters take their toll on colonial burying grounds, as Mother Nature is determined to push these monuments right out of the ground.

The ABGA Board of Directors, serving as stewards to conserve the historic integrity of the Ancient Burying Ground, undertook a much-needed facelift during the summer and fall of 2010 to reset leaning and fallen head and foot stones as well as to clean several badly encrusted with lichen and other biological growths. In addition to the positive aesthetics of a well-maintained historical site, resetting fallen and leaning stones protects fragile stones from falling and breaking, and prevents possible injury to visitors.

Many of the fallen and leaning stones had been reset back in the 1980s with trap rock and stone dust. This mixture may have contributed to the accelerated movement of the stone upward and out of the ground, as water does not drain well from this mixture.

The National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) now recommends alternating layers of pea stone and clean sand, applied with lots of



Every day, the ABG sees visitors, purposeful or chance, those with specific questions or general curiosity. Ty Tryon often filled two roles this summer, and took time to walk around with visitors, but on this day, Ruth Shapleigh-Brown was on hand to answer questions. The row of flagged stones was recently straightened.

water to settle the sand, and tamped down with each successive layer. This technique gives the stone strong support, allows for effective water drainage, and is flexible enough to handle ever-present frost heaves.

Over 50 leaning and fallen head and foot stones were reset back into the ground, straight and true, and 14 table tombs and gravestones are now legible, as biological growths have been removed.



In addition to the 2010 Conservation Project, the ABGA also reset several small stones and did some cleaning at the annual volunteer Work Day, on June 19th. Board member Harmon Leete and Treasurer Bill Magee clean the table stone for John and Mary Haynes and their daughter Sarah.

2010 Summer Lunchtime Tours

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brought individual abilities – and personality! – to their tours, which were available in Spanish and Chinese this year, in addition to English. Better amplification was achieved this year through the purchase of headset/microphones for each student.

The ABGA is thankful for generous support from the Greater Hartford Arts Council and the William and Alice Mortensen Foundation, and grateful to the First Church of Christ for donating use of space for study and rainy days, and to Servus Parking, for kind use of convenient parking. Thank you also to the Arts Council's



ABGA bookkeeper Joy Zahner learns about William Knox from guide Essence Colon.

Welcome Center for enthusiastically sending visitors to the ABG, and sharing the very positive feedback they were given for our tours and knowledgeable guides.

The guides researched and wrote papers on topics related to the Ancient Burying Ground. Jenny Tang attached copies of both a 1767 and 2010 edition of the Courant to her paper on Ebenezer Watson. Orlando Romero, in answer to a visitor's inquiry, speculated that, based on a dramatic change in the man's signature shortly before he died, Jeremiah Wadsworth may have suffered a stroke. In his paper on Wadsworth, Orlando showed good organization and research skills, despite having been in the U.S. for only three years.



**greater hartford
arts council**

Benson Named MacArthur Fellow

Stone carver Nicholas Benson, owner and Creative Director of the John Stevens Shop in Newport, Rhode Island, was named one of twenty-three recipients of the 2010 MacArthur Foundation Fellows Program.

In 1998, Nick Benson and the John Stevens Shop, established in 1705, were chosen to carve the African American Memorial, created through the efforts of Hartford schoolchildren to commemorate more than 300 African Americans, named and nameless, interred in the Ancient Burying Ground.

Visitor from the Original Hartford

Last Summer, July 16, Maurice Champ (second from right), a resident of Hertford, England, was given a tour of the Ancient Burying Ground in Downtown Hartford by Nick Torres of Hartford Magnet Middle School and Essence Colon of Classical Magnet School. The three are shown at right, along with Shep Holcombe (far right), Chairman of the ABGA Board, admiring a statue of Samuel Stone. Stone, who was second in command to Thomas Hooker in the group of colonists who first settled Hartford, was a native of Hertford, England. Hartford, Connecticut was named after that town, although the spelling was changed. (Andy Hart photo)



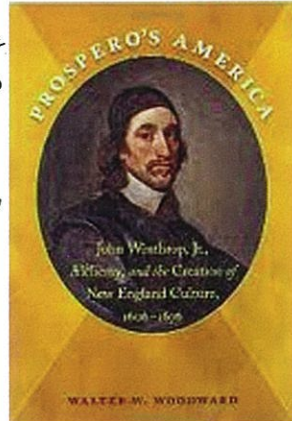
Thomas Hooker Award

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mothers, black and white, lie in repose.”

Walter Woodward’s inspiring words stirred the audience at the Thomas Hooker Awards reception held Thursday, October 7, 2010 at the Town & County Club in Hartford. This year’s award recipient is the State Historian of Connecticut and Assistant Professor of History at the University of Connecticut. He has been traveling the region and overseas to discuss his book, *Prospero’s America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture (1606-1676)*, published in January of this year.

Kate Steinway, Executive Director of The Connecticut Historical Society, in articulating the merits for his nomination, delighted listeners with his varying achievements and talents, including vastly different careers in advertising and music, before his academic work. “How many historians have won a CLIO – an honor for advertising? Walt has won eight of them! His radio commercials were honored as some of the best ever



aired! Remember the Care Bears? He was involved with the production of the movie 35 years ago!” Such revelations dazzled and amused the previously unaware crowd. “Walter brings his humor, his talent, his sensitivity and wit in telling about history – especially Connecticut history. I’ve read his recent book. And it’s not boring!” she quipped.

The annual event, hosted to honor individuals for their community service, professional endeavors, and heritage efforts, was especially upbeat this year. Ty Tryon presented a slide show highlighting the improvements to the cemetery he oversaw earlier this year. He and his team worked to reset, straighten and clean 64 stones in the burying ground.

In addition to the Award ceremony, the evening included a presentation on the iQuilt by David R. Fay, President and CEO of The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts (see below). This major effort is helping to make the city of Hartford more welcoming to visitors, especially pedestrians, with improved landscape, waterscape and streetscape projects.

Please see Professor Woodward’s full acceptance speech on page 6 in this issue.

ABGA and City Plan for ABG Improvements

Over the last year, the ABGA has been working with the City of Hartford to develop a two-part plan for the Burying Ground. One part addresses the landscape, including paths, trees, informational signage, lighting, fences, and more. The second part addresses gravestone conservation, prioritizing needs and specifying treatments.

This planning work was funded by a grant from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. Going forward, we will first look more closely at the soil conditions and drainage in the ABG, then develop the plans for improvement.

The potential for maintaining and improving the ABG for visitors is enhanced by the iQuilt project, especially the “Bushnell Gate on Main,” which turns Gold Street into a park, thus bringing Main Street and the Capitol/Bushnell area together by extending Bushnell Park access.

From the iQuilt Website, www.hartfordiquilt.org

Hartford – unlike many American cities – enjoys a remarkably compact and clearly bounded downtown. Within the small square area of the iQuilt (just over a half mile square) bounded by Buckingham/Charter Oak Avenue, I-84, and the Connecticut River, is a loose grid of north-south and east-west streets which, in map view, form a kind of



David Fay

charmingly irregular quilt. Within this quilt, almost all the key cultural destinations, including the Capitol, Bushnell Park, The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford Stage Company, the Old State House, and the new Connecticut Science Center, are within a 15 minute walk of each other. The iQuilt can also highlight other places of cultural interest which are off the beaten path or often overlooked. The iQuilt will make it easy and enjoyable to walk from one cultural asset to another, while linking them conceptually under a theme of cultural innovation – in science, art and human affairs.

Thomas Hooker Award Acceptance Speech

A few weeks ago, I had the good fortune to stand on the ramparts of Stirling castle, a 700-year-old Scottish fortress, built on a volcanic mountain at the end of the Firth of Forth, a place long known as "the key to the north." Off in the distance, it being a rare, clear day, I could see a grand equestrian statue of Robert the Bruce, the legendary Scots warrior, who in June of 1314 led a Scottish army of 6,000 against an English army of 15,000, and routed them at the Battle of Bannockburn. This battle is celebrated by the Scottish people as the greatest moment in the history of their struggle for independence from England. It is their Lexington and Concord and their Battle of Gettysburg rolled into one, and the heroic statue of Robert the Bruce and the Bannockburn Heritage Center beside it commemorate that victory.

The only problem is, both the statue and the Bannockburn Heritage center are in the wrong place. Ask the right questions, and you find that no one really knows where the Battle of Bannockburn was fought. Somewhere during the course of time, along the winding road of history, the Scots allowed the recollection of where this battle was fought to slip away, and when they went to recover it, it was lost forever. So they made up a past and built a monument to their myth.

History is fragile, and it is a fashion business. Each generation seeks from the past, that which is useful for its concerns, and ignores those parts of history it thinks less relevant to present needs. But just as hemlines rise and fall, only to rise and fall again, history, or interest in historical stories, has a way of circling back on itself, as people find new

meaning in old tales. Stories of the past once set aside as less relevant are rediscovered, become important again, and are held up as shining examples from which new and important lessons can be learned. This happens often, but only if those stories have been preserved to come alive once more.

That is why I am so honored to receive the Thomas Hooker award. More than any organization I know, the Ancient Burying Ground Association works to preserve and protect the bedrock memory of our state's history, and the sacred ground in which our founding fathers and mothers, black and white, lie in repose. Their stories are the essential origin stories of our past, tales of struggle and conflict, effort and achievement, perseverance and faith, consistency and contradiction. Because of the history you work so hard and faithfully to preserve, this and future generations will have a sacred place where it can come to connect with our state's origins, and learn ever new lessons from early effort and sacrifice.

As a colonial historian, I know

our Puritan stories are not currently a primary focus of public interest in history. In this, the year of our state's 375th anniversary celebration, one is hard pressed to find even a handful of events commemorating our early colonial founding. But just 75 years ago this week, 400,000 people, a third of our state's population, came to Hartford to see a 300th anniversary parade that was all about the founders' sacrifice and vision. And that was only one of hundreds of similar commemorative events held all around the state that year.

As I said, history is a fashion business. And as sure as ties get wider and thinner, our stories, the ones you and I tell and preserve, in word and in stone, will be rediscovered in all their glory once again, if not by this generation, then by a future generation who needs them more than ever. That is why you and I work so hard to preserve this past. Because we recognize how important its message is for the future. That's why I'm so proud of the Ancient Burying Ground Association, and so honored to receive your award tonight.

