

REMEMBER

Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

February 1, 2025 01:00 PM - 03:30 PM

Connecticut's Old State House

800 Main St, Hartford, CT 06103



Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

02.01.2025 | 01.00 PM - 03.30 PM

1:00 PM – 1:10 PM: Welcome by Rep. Jane Garibay

Rep. Jane Garibay, who shepherded the absolution resolution through the General Assembly, will begin the event with some opening remarks.

1:10 PM – 1:50 PM: Dramatic reading of “The Last Night”

Connecticut performers Debra J. Walsh and Ginny Wolf present a dramatic reading of their play, “The Last Night,” which tells a story of Connecticut Witch Trial victims Rebecca Greensmith and Mary Barnes.

1:50 PM – 2:00 PM: Presentation by Dr. Katherine Hermes, JD, Phd.

Dr. Katherine Hermes, author of the initial draft of resolution HJ 34, presents a brief pre-recorded message about her work on the resolution, posthumous exoneration, and the colonial court.

2:00 PM – 2:40 PM: Panel Discussion: Remembering the Innocent Victims

Panelists: Rep. Jane Garibay, Sen. Saud Anwar, Dr. Richard S. Ross III, Tony Griego, Beth M. Caruso, Mary Louise Bingham

Moderators: Sarah Jack and Josh Hutchinson

The legislators who proposed HJ34 will join Historian Dr. Richard S. Ross III and the [Connecticut Witch Trial Exoneration Project](#) co-founders to discuss the process of exoneration, as well as the history and legacy of the Connecticut Witch Trials.

2:40 PM – 3:00 PM: Remembrance Ceremony

Honor the innocent victims of Connecticut’s witch trials with a thoughtful tribute, featuring a reading of the resolution which absolved them by name, followed by a moment of silent reflection.

3:00 PM – 3:30 PM: Memorial Walk to Ancient Burying Ground

Join us for a quiet walk to the Ancient Burying Ground, where flowers will be laid on the memorial bricks placed there for some witch trial victims.



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Connecticut Witch Trial History

A Brief Introduction

Between 1647 and 1742, at least 50 people in the Connecticut and New Haven colonies were accused of witchcraft in cases that wound up before the courts as either witch trials or defamation suits. Colonial courts indicted or presented at least 34 individuals for witchcraft, and 14 innocent people were convicted. 11 convictions resulted in hangings, 2 convictions were overturned, and 1 woman was reprieved.

Alice Young of Windsor was the first person known to be tried for witchcraft in New England and became the first American colonist hanged for supposedly committing the impossible crime on May 26, 1647. At the time, witchcraft was defined by covenanting with the Devil and having familiarity with evil spirits, two acts we know cannot be proven in a court of law. Connecticut Colony hanged all of the first 7 people presented in courts for the capital crime of witchcraft before Elizabeth Garlick of Easthampton (now East Hampton, NY) was acquitted in 1658. A brief wave of panic hit Hartford in 1662 and 1663, claiming a further 4 lives. Mary Barnes was the last person hanged for witchcraft in Connecticut on January 25, 1663. In 1697, Winifred Benham, Sr. and her daughter, Winifred Benham Jr. were the last two people to face trial in Connecticut for the crime of witchcraft.

On May 25, 2023, the Connecticut General Assembly adopted House Joint Resolution 34 Resolution Concerning Certain Witchcraft Convictions in Colonial Connecticut (HJ34). Through this landmark resolution, the state officially absolved by name all those convicted of witchcraft and apologized to all indicted. See the following pages to read HJ34 in full as adopted.



Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials



House of Representatives

File No. 782

General Assembly

January Session, 2023

(Reprint of File No. 548)

House Joint Resolution No. 34 As
Amended by House Amendment
Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner
May 12, 2023

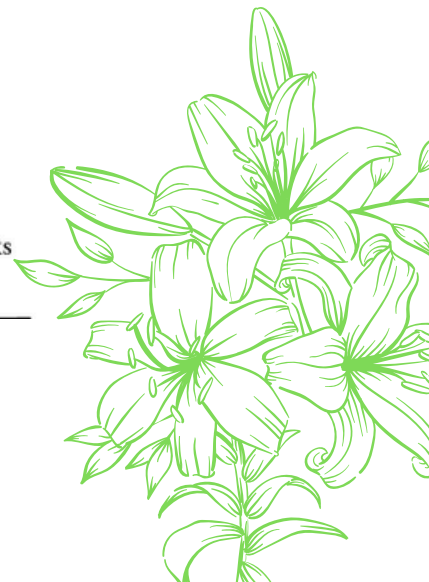
**RESOLUTION CONCERNING CERTAIN WITCHCRAFT CONVICTIONS IN
COLONIAL CONNECTICUT.**

Resolved by this Assembly:

WHEREAS, the courts in the early British colonies of Connecticut and New Haven indicted at least thirty-four women and men for the alleged crimes of witchcraft and familiarities with the devil and convicted twelve of them, executing eleven, and it is now accepted by the historical profession and society as a whole that all the accused were innocent of such charges, and

WHEREAS, legal procedures differed at the time and many practices of the Colonial courts would not meet modern American standards of proof, so that the miscarriage of justice was facilitated by such procedures, and

WHEREAS, the status of women was radically different than it is today, and misogyny played a large part in the trials and in denying defendants their rights and dignity, and



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HJ34

File No. 782

WHEREAS, community strife and panic combined with overwhelming fear and superstition led to these accusations of alleged witchcraft and the subsequent suffering of those accused.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that all of the formally convicted and executed are absolved of all crimes of witchcraft and familiarities with the devil. The legislature specifically absolves the following people believed to have been convicted and executed for the crimes of witchcraft and familiarities with the devil: Alice Young in 1647, Mary Johnson in 1648, Joan Carrington in 1651, John Carrington in 1651, Goodwife Bassett in 1651, Goodwife Knapp in 1653, Lydia Gilbert in 1654, Mary Sanford in 1662, Nathaniel Greensmith in 1663, Rebecca Greensmith in 1663, and Mary Barnes in 1663; and one Elizabeth Seager convicted and reprieved in 1665.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that those who were indicted for the crimes of witchcraft and familiarities with the devil, forced to flee, banished or even acquitted continued to live with their reputations destroyed and their family names tarnished, will have their reputations restored and no longer have disgrace attached to their names, now, being in good standing in the state of Connecticut. The following indicted for the crimes of witchcraft and familiarities with the devil who were not convicted but still suffered greatly after indictments were: Goodwife Bailey in 1655, Nicholas Bailey in 1655, Elizabeth Godman in 1655, Elizabeth Garlick in 1658, Margaret Jennings in 1661, Nicholas Jennings in 1661, Judith Varlet in 1662, Andrew Sanford in 1662, William Ayers in 1662, Judith Ayers in 1662, James Wakely in 1662, Katherine Harrison in 1668 and 1669, William Graves in 1667, Elizabeth Clawson in 1692, Hugh Crosia in 1692, Mercy Disborough in 1692, Mary Harvey in 1692, Hannah Harvey in 1692, Mary Staples in 1692, Winifred Benham in 1697, and Winifred Benham Jr. in 1697.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State of Connecticut apologizes to the descendants of all those who were indicted for the crimes of witchcraft and familiarities with the devil, convicted and executed and for present day, and acknowledges the trauma and shame that wrongfully continued to affect the families of the accused.



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**Thank you, Rep. Jane Garibay
and Sen. Saud Anwar**

We wish to extend our deepest gratitude to Rep. Garibay and Sen. Anwar, the legislators who proposed House Joint Resolution 34, for their tireless advocacy on behalf of the victims of Connecticut's Witch Trials, their descendants, and society. This historic legislation would not have been possible without Rep. Garibay's work to get the legislation to and through the house of representatives and Sen. Anwar's work to secure a favorable vote in the senate.



Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

Thank you, Tony Griego and Beth Caruso of CT WITCH Memorial

Thank you to the irrepressible Tony Griego for nearly 20 years of advocacy to clear the names of those accused of witchcraft in Connecticut.

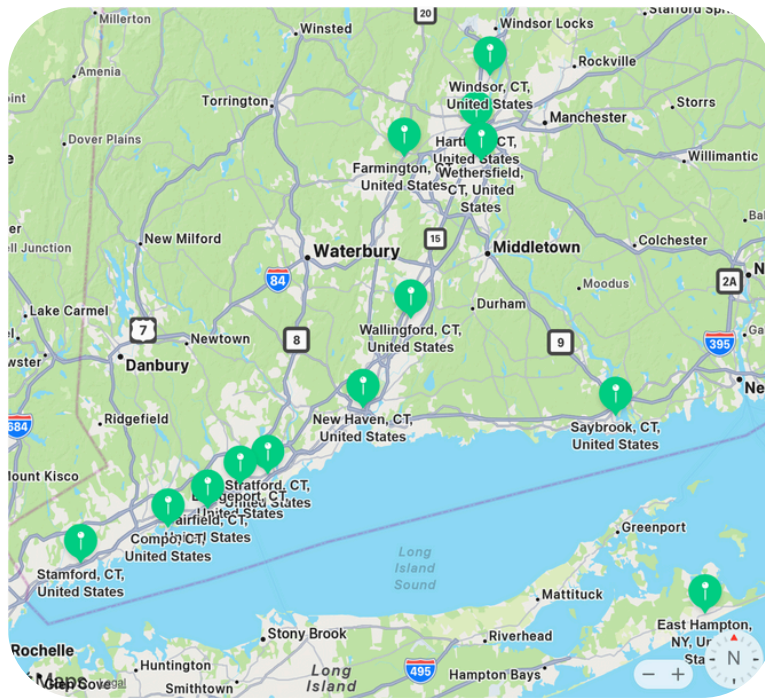
Thank you to the incomparable Beth Caruso, author of the Connecticut Witch Trials Trilogy, for her determination to memorialize the victims of Connecticut's witch trials.

Tony and Beth have been collaborating on the popular CT WITCH Memorial Facebook page since 2016, bringing together many descendants and others interested in the history of the Connecticut Witch Trials.



Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

The Connecticut Witch Trial History Trail offers many ways to explore the history of the witch trials through visits to locations associated with the trials and the hometowns of the victims and their accusers. While in each town, we encourage you to stop in local museums and historical societies to learn more about Connecticut's rich history.



connecticutwitchtrials.org/trail/



Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

For more on Connecticut's witch trials, consult these sources:

Before Salem: Witch-Hunting in the Connecticut River Valley, 1647 - 1663 by Richard S. Ross III

Connecticut Explored magazine: ctexplored.org

Connecticut Witch Trial Exoneration Project: connecticutwitchtrials.org

Grating the Nutmeg podcast: ctexplored.org/listen/

Witch Hunt podcast: witchhuntshow.com

End Witch Hunts: endwitchhunts.org

Links and more:



THANK

Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

Remembrance Day Planning Committee

Thank you to all who have helped plan and
prepare this event.

Committee Members:

Sue Bailey

Mary Bingham

Patricia Bruhn

Beth Caruso

Alse C. Freeman

Tony Griego

Josh Hutchinson

Sarah Jack

Dr. Richard S. Ross III

Dr. Anna Vaughn

Debra J. Walsh



THANK

Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

Partner Organizations and Projects (click logos for more information)



END WITCH HUNTS



501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT CORPORATION



ANCIENT
BURYING
GROUND
ASSOCIATION

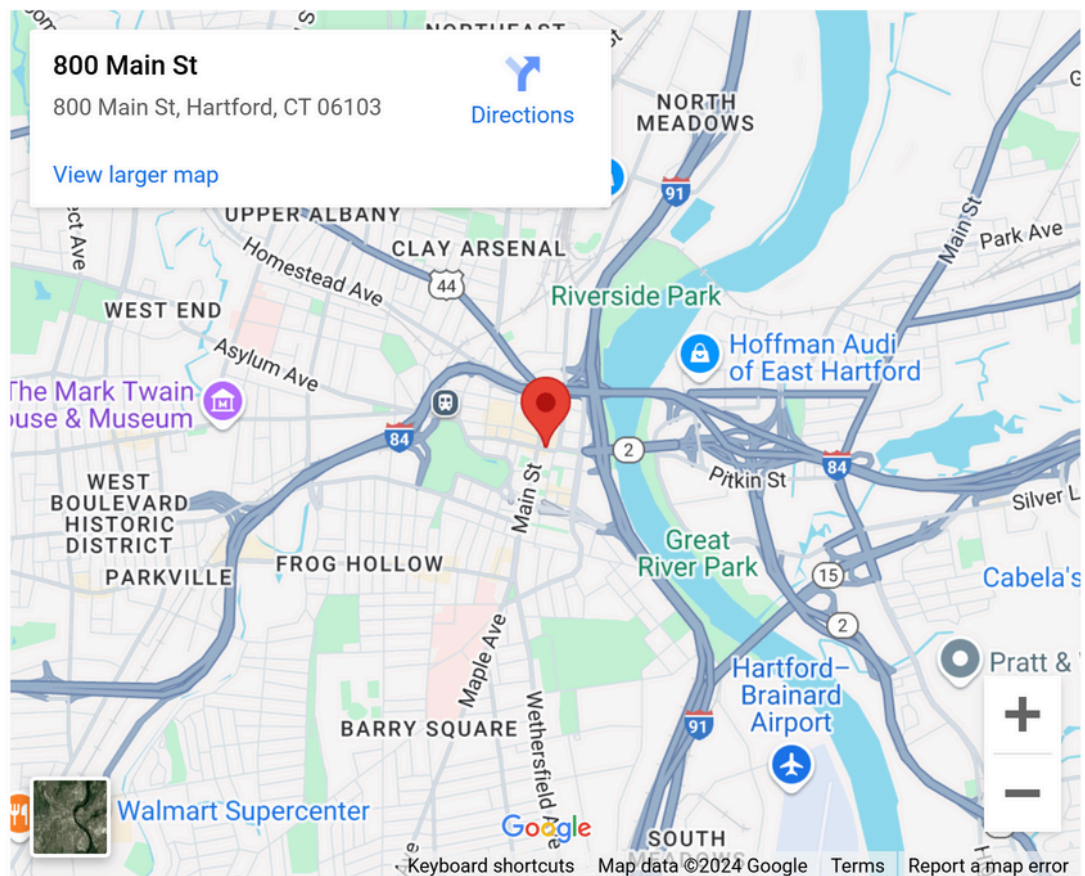
Open Daily
9am - 4:30pm
679 Main Street
Hartford, CT

abgact@gmail.com | 860-337-1640 | ancientburyingground.com



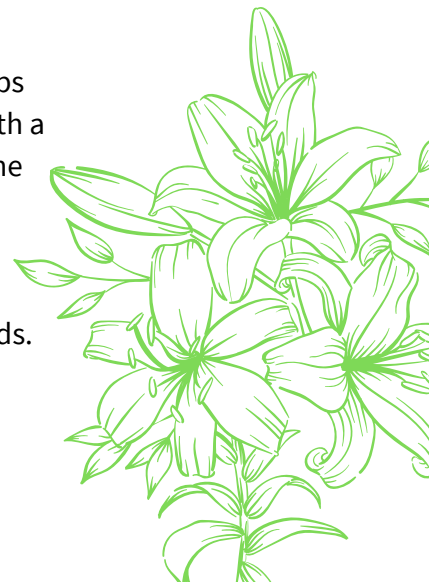
Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

Map and Parking



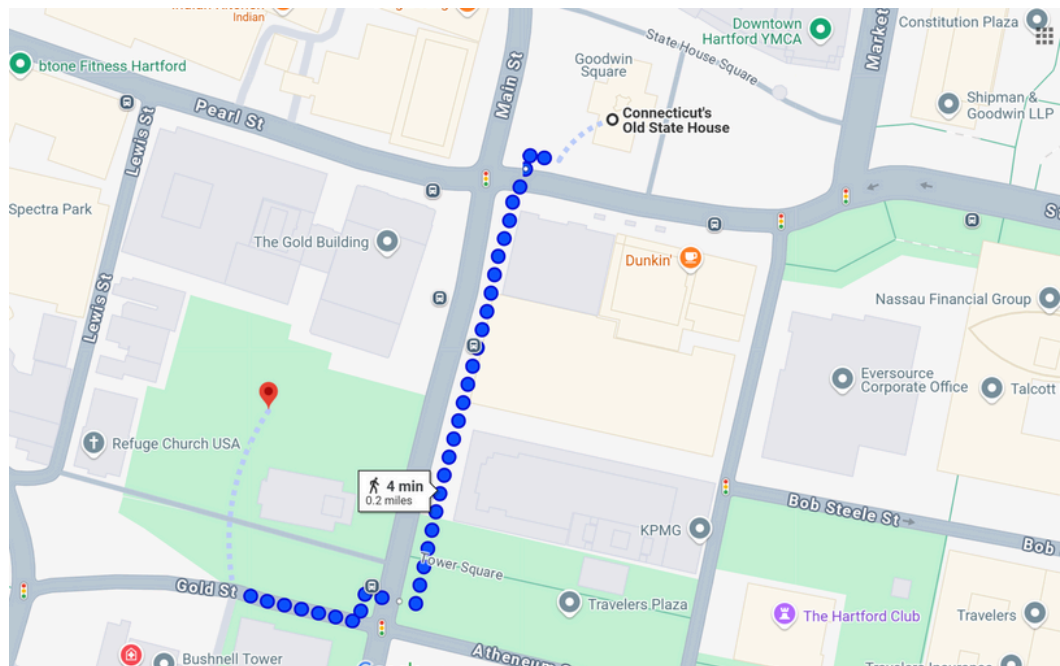
The Old State House recommends parking in the State House Square parking garage, located at 55 Market Street and just steps away from Connecticut's Old State House. Parking is only \$5 with a validated ticket. NOTE: Please look for signs indicating what time the garage closes. Please present your parking ticket to the museum's Visitor Services desk for validation.

Free on-street parking is available after 6:00pm and on weekends. Follow posted parking instructions. For the most up to date information about parking downtown, please visit hartfordparking.com.



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A Walk to the Ancient Burying Ground



Following the event at the Old State House, please join us as we walk the short distance to the Ancient Burying Ground, where we will lay flowers on memorial bricks commemorating some victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials. Google maps estimates a 4 minute walk.



Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

RSVP

**Please let us know you are coming by
claiming a free ticket at eventbrite.**



Remembering the Innocent Victims of the Connecticut Witch Trials

Thank you for attending the First Annual Remembrance Ceremony for those Accused of Witchcraft in Connecticut
February 1, 2025



FINISH