

**CONNECTICUT FREEDOM TRAIL APPLICATION
EBENEZER D. BASSETT & THE New Britain NORMAL SCHOOL**

Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett: Connecticut's Son

I hereby submit this application to the Freedom Trail Committee and request that you carefully consider acknowledging the life and legacy of Mr. Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett. Mr. Bassett's state, national, and international contributions helped to advance the cause of African American people during a troubling time in United States history. His life service as an educator, humanitarian and African American abolitionist leader makes him deserving of formal recognition. His life is a testament of many firsts. He was the first AFRICAN AMERICAN accepted/enrolled at the State Normal School, the first to graduate, and the first to serve as a United States diplomat. I respectfully request that you add Mr. Bassett and the location of the proposed Connecticut Freedom Trail site, Central Connecticut State University (formerly State Normal School), to your registry.

One primary and two secondary sites are proposed. Central Connecticut State University will serve as the commemorative site of the honoree. The primary site will focus on Mr. Bassett's advancement as an educator and his early involvement in the abolitionist movement. His life as an educator and civil rights leader embodies the essence of his character and his life time of serve. The relationship between Mr. Bassett and New Britain are both central to this application. The man and the setting are both intertwined into this Freedom Trail application. The City of New Britain and its history as a place of active abolitionists and known passage way to those African American's who were seeking freedom. The years the City spent debating the question of African American freedom, helped it to become a progressive community that was receptive to embracing Mr. Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett as a resident and the first African American student at the States Normal School in New Britain. Unlike other Connecticut towns/cities, there is no reported discord regarding Mr. Bassett's acceptance into the State Normal School and (or) surrounding community.

Primary Site

- **Central Connecticut State University** (formerly New Britain Normal School) – New Britain, Connecticut

This site was chosen for its historical connection with Mr. Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett. Central Connecticut State University (formerly the State Normal School) stood out as a leader of its time when it admitted and subsequently graduated Connecticut's first African American college student. The institution also helped to produce the Nation's first African American United States diplomat.

We propose Central Connecticut State University as the primary Freedom Trail memorial site for Mr. Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett for several reasons. Education embodied the work and service of Mr. Bassett. We believe that it is of the utmost importance to tie Mr. Bassett to a location that fully represents his ideals, principals, and his life's work. There is no better location than an

institution of higher education to emphasize Mr. Bassett's commitment to education, justice, and equality. The history of the City of New Britain¹, the university, and the residents provided young Mr. Bassett with an opportunity to excel in life and obtain his scholarly life pursuits. His success in life was attributed to the foundation he established educationally. His teaching credential provided him with the means to become the man we now celebrate. We cannot discount the importance and relevance of "*EDUCATION & SOCIAL JUSTICE*" as themes in his life.

In considering a site, we must pursue a location that has the infrastructure, visibility, and the resources to continue to promote his legacy. We have over 12,000 thousand students who are enrolled on the CCSU campus and over 1,000 faculty, administrators, and staff. We have the capacity to continue to host events and bring attention to Mr. Bassett on a regular basis. I truly believe we must claim a location that is invested in much more than a sign of recognition. Some of the original structure of Ms. Bassett's life may not be around anymore, but the institutions that played a role in his life (like CCSU), are still in existence and will forever remain relevant to aspiring students.

- For several years, faculty and students participants of the Man Enough Support Initiative have celebrated the life and legacy of Mr. Bassett through the creation of an annual award given out to CCSU male students. The Ebenezer D. Bassett Student Achievement Award exists as a campus-wide award that recognizes student in five areas related to the attributes of Mr. Bassett. The award has been given out to over a hundred and twenty students since its creation. During the spring of 2014, Mr. William Fothergill (Associate Counselor, CCSU) organized an interdepartmental and community-based committee that was established to commemorate Mr. Bassett. The partnership has galvanized the support of various Connecticut cities and town (e.g., New Britain, New Haven, Derby, Hartford, etc.), public and private agencies, and has expanded beyond state lines to include State Department Officials and Cheney University in Pennsylvania. The Ebenezer D. Bassett Memorial Committee led the organization of a statewide celebration and ceremony, which was held on the historic CCSU campus on October 16, 2014. Coordinated through the work of the Committee, State's legislature and several of the state's cities and town formally recognized October 16th as annual Ebenezer D. Bassett Day throughout the state of Connecticut.
- The Committee is currently working with the University's president and several top administrators to formally commemorate a sight on campus that will bear the name of the honorable Ebenezer D. Bassett. Through the work of the Committee several collaborative project are underway that will continue the universities commitment to securing Mr. Bassett's legacy. One of the Committee members, Marian O'Keefe, for years has worked tirelessly to have Mr. Bassett memorialized on a U. S. commemorative stamp. Led by the encouragement of Ms. O'Keefe, CT Congresswomen Rosa DeLauro authored a resolution/bill (H.R. 5702) to insure a commemorative postage stamp is issued in honor

of Ebenezer D. Bassett, first African American Diplomat. The bill was presented to the 113th Congress on November 13, 2014 and still awaits a vote.

- Members (e.g., Mr. William Fothergill, Dr. Warren Perry, Dr. Daniel Broyld, and Mr. Anthony Roy) of the committee have independently participate in research (that will lead to future publications), curriculum development, and (or) written the subject of Mr. Bassett into their classroom curriculum.
- Mr. Bassett was highlighted in a recent exhibit titled, The New Britain African American Oral History Project. This history project exists as a part of the larger research being conducted by Ebenezer D. Bassett Memorial Committee member and university professor Evelyn Phillips, CCSU Anthropology Department.
- The CCSU Africana Center is presently a part of a community collaborative that is working on establishing a student academy in New Britain. Inspired by the campus's work to preserve the legacy of Mr. Bassett, the organizers have chosen to name the academy after the honorable Mr. Bassett – Ebenezer D. Bassett Academy.
- The project has gained the support of leading researchers on the life of Mr. Bassett (i.e., Christopher Teal and Ms. Marian O'Keefe) and state agencies (e.g., CT African American Affairs Commission).

In honor of the significant reference points in Mr. Bassett's life, we request that the Freedom Trail Committee considers two Freedom Trail sub-sites. These sub-sites will serve as historical reference points that will help tell Mr. Bassett's story in Connecticut. We encourage the consideration of Derby and New Haven. The Ebenezer D. Bassett Memorial Committee will continue to work with each town/city to continue its proposed commitment to recognizing Mr. Bassett. Each of the respective town/city presented a proclamation declaring October 16th as annual Ebenezer D. Bassett Day in their community.

Secondary Sites

Town Green – Derby, Connecticut

Mr. Bassett resided in Derby during his formative years. His family existed as contributors to the history of African people in Connecticut. His family and community greatly contributed to his development and provided him with the opportunity to break the chain that bound many African Americans. In the book, *The History of the Old Town of Derby, Connecticut, 1642-1888* (by Samuel Orcutt and Ambrose Beardsley), Mr. Bassett is attributed with the following sentiments about Derby.

“My success in life I owe greatly to that American sense of fairness which was tendered me in old Derby, and which exacts that every man whether white or black, shall have a fair chance to run his race in life and make the most of himself.” (Orcutt & Beardsley, 1880)

- The city of Derby established a Hall of Fame to formally recognize town residents who have “made significant contributions toward promoting the quality of life in Derby and (or) those who have earned special distinction or honor in their chosen field at the state, national, or world level.” Mr. Bassett was one of the first eleven inductees into the city’s Hall of Fame. The city honored Mr. Bassett with an engraved brick on the plaza on the Derby Greenway.²
- In 2010, the Town of Derby dedicated a street in honor of Mr. Bassett (i.e., E. Bassett Lane). A plaque highlighting the honorable Mr. Bassett adjacent sits adjacent to road sign that bears his name.³

Grove Street Cemetery – New Haven, Connecticut

New Haven was the long term residence and place where Mr. Bassett honed his skills as a civil rights activist. Mr. Bassett and his family are all entombed at the Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven, Connecticut. The Grove Street Cemetery is the nation’s first chartered burial ground. The Grove Street Cemetery already exists on the Connecticut Freedom Trails registry. The Ebenezer D. Bassett Committee is committed to working with the City of New Haven to recognize the grave site of Mr. Bassett and his family.

Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett “Connecticut’s Son”

Mr. Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett, is undoubtedly, one of the most significant and prominent figures that claims a connection to the State of Connecticut. His life serves as a tribute to the nation’s founding principal – “Liberty and Justice for All”. He exists as one of the most noteworthy individuals of the nineteenth century.

DERBY

Royalty

Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett was destined for greatness. He was endowed with the right genes, supportive community, and born at a time that embraced the radicalism and progressive thinking that would later define the course of his life. Simply said, Bassett was the product of his time and the opportunities that germinated in a society that was motivated to create an injustice against humanity. The early to mid-18th century was flooded with radical ideas and progressive ways of thinking about the human experience. Mr. Bassett was a descendent of what could be referred to as a “Black Aristocratic” family who had a legacy of social and political leadership and service within their community. In his book “The Stolen Boy: A Story of the Revolution”, Mr. Israel P. Warren chronicles the life of the patriarchs of the “Pero-Tobias-Bassett” family of Derby, Connecticut. The known genesis of Ebenezer Bassett’s family began with a man named Pero. Pero was the great-grandfather of Mr. Bassett who was allegedly born somewhere in the Continent of Africa.¹⁶

Being old enough to recall his experiences in the motherland of Africa, Pero remembered the freedoms he was afforded in his tribal land. These memories must have served as a beacon of hope and inspiration to his children and grandchildren. They most likely heard his stories and learned about the true meaning of what it meant to be a free person born without slavery’s yoke and chains. In Warren’s chronicles, Pero was said to have boasted about his life as an African person of “royal blood” and ancestry. He claimed to be one of many children born to an African tribal king, yet his royal blood did not protect him, nor his mother, or younger brother from the perils of the slave market. Pero’s enslavement resulted in his transport to the West Indies where he resided on a sugarcane plantation in Jamaica. Prior to coming to United States, Pero reported living a leisurely existence with his white captors. Sometime before 1740, Pero arrived in Connecticut where he was purchased by Deacon John Riggs and later Captain James Wheeler of Derby, Connecticut.

It is chronicled that Pero was later married to an enslaved woman named Hagar who was a servant in the household of Reverend Richard Mansfield of Derby. Two of Pero most acclaimed children were Tobias and Laban. Like many captive children, safety was not found in the protective loving arms of an enslaved child’s parents. Tobias was torn away from his family and sold into the household of Captain John Wooster of Derby.

For many year, Mr. Bassett's grandfather was a man captive of Captain Wooster. Tobias was a man of stature who was well known and respected. Unlike his father who was probably never given the opportunity of a surname, Tobias took on the surname of Pero, which represents him as the "son of Pero". Tobias Pero and his brother Laban both earned their freedom after enlisting and serving in the Revolutionary War. ⁹Prior to the great war of Independence, Tobias was married to Rachel the daughter of Peter Hull. Tobias, Rachel, and Peter were all captives in the household of Captain James Wooster.

Tobias had a son who assumed his first name as his surname – Eben (Ebenezer) "the son of Tobias" and (or) Eben Tobias. Tobias and his son Eben Tobias (Bassett) were both acclaimed elected Black officials. Derby was the home of two of Pero's clan and was also the home of four the twenty-one identified "Black Governors" in the state. Tobias and Eben bore the title and responsibility of serving as governors. Connecticut was one of only a few states that permitted Black Governorships or permitted leaders in the African American community. The records do not specify, but at some time before 1840 he resided in the household of Squire Bassett of Derby. Whether he was emancipated by his captor and (or) purchase his freedom remains a mystery. Prior to his marriage, Eben put to rest "Tobias" as his surname and embraced the surname of his white master – "Bassett".

Ebenezer D's parents, Eben Tobias Bassett and Susan Gregory, were both free colored people who reside in Connecticut. Mr. Bassett's parents were of African and Native American ancestry. His mother was recorded as a mulatto woman of mixed African and Schaticoke /Pequot descent, while Eben Tobias Bassett was described by his son as a mulatto man. ⁹ Somewhere between 1830 and 1832, Eben Tobias Bassett left his familiar home in Derby and set off for greater opportunities in the hamlet of Litchfield, Connecticut. During his time in Litchfield, Eben Tobias met and married Susan Gregory. For several years the couple resided in Litchfield where they produce three children who were all born there, the middle child being Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett. Ebenezer was born on October 16, 1833. Sometime prior to 1840, Eben Tobias decided to return to Derby with his is young family in tow. By the 1840 census, Eben and his family are found once again in Derby. ¹⁵ The family resided on a track of land owned by Dr. Martin Bull Bassett.

Slow to act, slavery was not completely abolished in the state of Connecticut until 1848, fifteen years after the birth of Ebenezer and five year prior to his enrollment at the State Normal School. In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed, which galvanized many in the country to risk their own security to create safe havens and passages to help Black men, women, and children escape to freedom.

FORMAL EDUCATION

Mr. Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett was also born at a time and into a family that stressed the importance of education. Mr. Bassett spent his childhood and began his formal education at Birmingham Academy in Derby, Connecticut. Mr. Bassett caught the attention of prominent White figures that were willing to invest in the education of minor Bassett. Figures like, Dr. Ambrose Beardsley (physician) and Colonel William Burr Wooster (later commanded the Connecticut 29th Color Infantry Regiment during the Civil War) were a few of those in Derby,

besides his parents, who encouraged and supported Mr. Bassett's educational aspirations.⁹ He later attended the prestigious Wesleyan Academy (presently known as Wilbraham & Monson Academy) in Wilbraham, Massachusetts.

NEW BRITAIN

The City of New Britain came into maturity with conflicting political values that reflected the diversity of thought and ideas that existed in each of its parent towns (e.g., Farmington, Berlin, etc.). Like many Connecticut towns and cities, New Britain tried to avoid the emerging question about slavery and the liberty denied African American people. The captivity of African people became a national issue that slowly began to challenge how white people valued slavery. New Britain had its share of human captors who held to the belief that African's were chattel and existed as a commodity to be used for the labor of those who had the financial means to own a human being. The slavery question would not go away, and finally the nation was forced to face its own sins about its treatment and enslavement of African people. Many Americans were still reveling in the victory that secured freedom from the tyranny of British rule. The quest for independence secured and advanced the rights of white men, while disregarding the requests to provide equitable freedoms to African people displaced due to slavery in the Americas.

The fledgling city of New Britain became the right place for Ebenezer D. Bassett. The city and its new colored resident were both embarking on a new developmental chapter. New Britain was originally a part of the town of Farmington which included Avon, Bristol, Burlington, Berlin, Southington, Plainville, and parts of West Hartford. The residents of New Britain later petitioned the State and the city was incorporated as an independent town in 1850.

Just one year prior to the incorporation of the City of New Britain, the Connecticut Normal School was founded (1849) as a training school for teachers. On the corner of Main and East Main Street, the city of New Britain erected its city hall building. While in the process of building the City Hall, the building was purchased by the New Britain Educational Fund Company and redesigned to accommodate both the State Normal School and the New Britain High School. This newly completed building became the first home of the State Normal School. The Normal School operated out of its Main Street location for three decades until a new location was established for the institution in the Walnut Hill Park (#27 Hillside Place) in 1883.⁴

The General Assembly in 1881 appropriated seventy-five thousand dollars for a new building on condition that the town of New Britain would appropriate twenty-five thousand for the same purpose. The appropriation was made and the building was erected on a commanding site overlooking the city and the country to the east of New Britain. The new building is 126 feet in entire length by 85 feet in width, the foundations and underpinning being of Portland brown stone and the walls above of brick. The building is heated throughout by steam. It provides study, recitation, and other rooms for the Normal School, and school rooms for a part of the Model and Training Schools. It was opened and occupied in the autumn of 1883.⁷

The State Normal School, #27 Hillside Place (1881-1883) was founded in New Britain in 1850. This was the first school in Connecticut (and sixth in the nation) to specialize in teacher education. The school building is an eclectic blend of Eastlake, Queen Anne, and Second Empire influences. It was designed by Warren Briggs, a Connecticut architect. In this building was founded what is probably among the first American kindergarten. The normal school occupied this commandingly situated landmark until 1927. Today the building serves as administrative headquarters of the public school system.⁵

The Normal School quickly outlived the capacity of its second home, and under the leadership of its current president, Mr. Marcus White, a request was made before the General Assembly for appropriations to relocate and rebuild the school in a new location within the City. In 1922, the school opened in its present location on Stanley Street. After attending Wesleyan Academy in Massachusetts, Mr. Bassett became a part of the New Britain community.¹⁰ He was enrolled into the teacher training facility in August of 1852. Mr. Bassett entered the junior class and graduated as the institution's first African American student. The State Normal School is presently known as Central Connecticut State University, which is Connecticut's oldest publicly-supported institution of higher education.

The opportunity afforded to Mr. Bassett was made possible, no doubt, through the dedicated efforts of Mr. Henry Barnard, the educational reformist who also served as New Britain State Normal School's first Principal. Along with the financial and inspirational support of benefactors in Derby, the African American community, and the moral sacrifices made by the righteous citizens of New Britain who paved the way for the establishment of the school that later accepted Mr. Bassett and therefore contributing to the diversification of the institution that enrolled and graduated the State's first African American college graduate.

CITY POLITICS

New Britain has a history of standing out as a Connecticut city. Its residents were once citizens of the larger town of Farmington, which placed them on the center stage of many controversial moral issues such as the *Amistad Case*, which captured the attention of many Americans (1839-1841). The City propelled itself as a place of sociopolitical change, became a major site of the American Industrial Revolution, and was a place of educational reform. The City appeared prime and ready to accept its first African American student.

Unbeknownst to many, New Britain was a key player in the Underground Railroad and assisted many captives as they pursued freedom. Its churches and many of its residents were actively involved as abolitionist and agents in the Underground Railroad. Many captives made their way from southern Connecticut (e.g., Middlesex and New Haven Counties) and found passage to freedom through Berlin and Southington and eventually passing through New Britain into Farmington and northward. New Britain is tied to Farmington's history as Connecticut's Underground Railroad "Central Station" and gateway to freedom for many fleeing African American people.

Residing in the City of New Britain were several Underground Railroad Agents including: Amon and Noah Stanley, David Whittlesey, Horace Booth, Alfred Andrews, Norman Hart, etc. Its

location and the moral conviction of many of its residence placed New Britain at the center of Connecticut's anti-slavery activities. New Britain made up 9 out of the 22 identified recorded Underground Railroad agents who resided in Hartford County.¹³

New Britain's oldest church, First Church, was also an ally in the anti-slavery movement. The church became of sympathetic setting for those who heeded the call for a more just and equitable society. The congregational list of those who attended the First Church's membership roll mirrored those who were actively involved in New Britain's Underground Railroad leadership.

Sentiments about the anti-slavery movement ran hot and split the residence in the New Britain community. The church was not impervious to the national debate about slavery which resulted in the division of the church and the fracturing of many families. Due to philosophical differences about slavery, members of the First Congregational Church petitioned to separate from the main church in order to establish a new congregation. The separation was approved and resulted in the formation and establishment of the Second Church (presently known as the Second Congregational Church of New Britain). Mr. Bassett would later attend and join the First Congregational church while he resided in New Britain and attended the State's Normal School.

The history of the Black struggle for freedom and equality did not begin or end with Bassett's enrollment and graduation from the State's Normal School. The City of New Britain proved itself time and time again as a place that challenged the status quo. Whether it was planned or occurred by happenstance, the relocation of the Normal School from Walnut Hill Park (#27 Hillside Place) to its present location on 1615 Stanley Street had to be divinely driven. Even though Bassett's Normal School (Main and East Street) is long gone, the present site of the university carries forward New Britain's history and involvement in the anti-slavery and Abolitionist Movement. The university is presently situated on a main thoroughfare that is named after a prominent family that stood on both sides of the slavery debate – "Stanley". Several of New Britain's abolition leaders and Underground Railroad agents (e.g. Amon Stanley, Daniel Clark, etc.) orchestrated much of their activities from their homes in Stanley Quarter. Several of these residents were located in the vicinity of the present home of Central Connecticut State University.¹³

HENRY BARNARD

Ebenezer D. Bassett's acceptance into the States Normal School was no doubt championed by the institutions first superintendent Henry Barnard. Maybe the bond between the principal and the pupil was much greater than their ties to the Normal School but was forged from each man connection to Wesleyan –Mason Academy.

Like the political climate in the city of New Britain, Mr. Barnard embodied the ideals that supported educational access for all students. Mr. Barnard was an educational reformist and like the city of New Britain he was ready to embrace the radical idea of graduating the State's first Black college graduate. New Britain had many forefathers who impregnated the City with progressive ideas about educating the common man.

THE NORMAL SCHOOL YEARS & THE PRINCIPAL

Upon acceptance to the State Normal School, in 1852, Mr. Bassett became the first African American accepted, enrolled, and eventually graduate with honors. He was one of the youngest students in his class to graduate on September 29, 1853. As a one of the institutes best and brightest, Mr. Bassett presented his final paper, "The True Teacher." during the commencement ceremony held at South Church (presently known as South Congregational Church) in New Britain. After graduating, Mr. Bassett's respect for the institution that helped him become a world class educator was made evident by his active status as an alumnus of the institution. For several years he maintained regular correspondence with the Alumni Association at his alma mater (i.e., New Britain State Normal School).¹¹

Mr. Bassett's time at the State Normal School allowed him to receive the most innovative education in the State. The school was forged from the ideas of progressive thinkers who sought to create a more enlightened form of education. The Normal School became the incubator for maturing qualified and component teachers. The names of these progressive educators are honored today on the Central Connecticut State University campus where their names are forever memorialized on academic buildings and (or) various rooms on the campus. Mr. Bassett and his male and female classmate were the recipients of this advanced form of education. It is not clear what heights his classmates achieved, but the Normal School helped Mr. Bassett build a foundation propelled him onto the world's stage.

Mr. Bassett spent his life as the ultimate educator. These skills became useful in his future role as a teacher, principal, and statesman. Mr. Bassett was committed to improving educational access and providing the highest level of education for all students, especially the disenfranchised. His special care for teaching left an indelible mark on those who received his instruction, work beside him, and (or) those who received his supervision. Mr. Bassett demonstrated that when African American's are given a chance they can advance themselves personally, professionally, and scholastically.

Even though there is not much known about Mr. Bassett's life in New Britain, most likely he was an active participant in the political issues going on in the city. The city was in labor and preparing for major assaults on the supporters of anti-slavery campaigns throughout the city. Mr. Bassett was also a member of the city's most progressive church that only a few years earlier split on differences about the freedom of African American people. The city's abolitionists were known and public. The historical silence about Mr. Bassett in New Britain was most likely intentional. Mr. Bassett probably served as the champion of their cause and the embodiment of everything good about emancipation of Negro people. His success at the Normal School was more important than his public advocacy.

NEW HAVEN

Shortly after graduating from the State's Normal School, Mr. Bassett removed to New Britain, Connecticut. His thirst for knowledge led him to take classes at the prestigious Yale College (formerly known as Yale College), New Haven, Connecticut, where he took courses in advanced mathematics, literature and the classics.

Mr. Bassett graduated from the New Britain Normal School 17 years before the Yale graduated its first African American students. Mr. Richard Henry Green and Cortlandt Van Rensselaer Creed are recorded as Yale College's first African American graduates. He is attested with entering the college in 1853 and graduating in 1837. Cortlandt Van Rensselaer Creed graduated from the Yale School of Medicine. Edward Bouchet is also recorded as another early African American graduate from Yale College. It is highly probable that Bassett's graduation inspired other schools in the state to change their policies restricting the credentialing of college degrees to African Americans and other non-white students, therefore creating expanded scholastic opportunities for African American seeking degrees. In 1844, Yale College graduated the first Chinese student in the United States who was also a graduate of Wesleyan Academy in Massachusetts.^{12, 17}

The first African American graduate from the State Normal School was recruited to serve as an agent of change when he was recruited to serve as the administrator of the newly established grammar school for Negro students in the city of New Haven, Connecticut. Mr. Bassett was hired as a principal/teacher at the Whiting School for colored children. After his tenure in New Haven, Mr. Bassett was praised for his astounding work and transformative work that greatly improve educational outcomes of the city's African American student population.

The City of New Haven became, yet another community that helped to develop the promising national leader. The years spent in New Haven helped to mature and prepare Mr. Bassett for his future role as an orator, civil rights leader, and diplomat. Mr. Bassett's life in New Haven thrust him squarely into the major political issues of the times – “anti-slavery movement”. As a young adult, Mr. Bassett was exposed to many pre-Civil War activists that helped to galvanize the Abolitionist Movement in Connecticut and throughout the nation. In a short time, he became intimately connected to the anti-slavery cause.

His education and experiences exposed him to many individuals who were working to advance the rights, freedoms, and opportunities of African American people in America. He became active in the abolitionist movement by becoming a prominent civil rights leader, using his voice to advocate for the right for African American men to serve as soldiers in the “War of the Rebellion” (Civil War). During his civil rights work in Connecticut, Mr. Bassett met the great humanitarian for justice, Frederick Douglass. Mr. Bassett and Mr. Douglas formed a lifelong friendship, which merged the anti-slavery work done by both men.

In 1855, Mr. Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett married Ms. Elizabeth Park (b. 1836 – d. 1895) of New Haven. The couple had eight children.

- Charlotte Bassett (b. 1856 - d. 1912)
- Ebenezer D. Bassett Jr. (b. 1858 – d. 1922)
- Iphigenia (Nora) Bassett (b. 1864 – d. 1875)
- Elizabeth (Lizzie) Bassett (b. 1867 – d. 1929)
- Ulysses Grant Bassett (b. 1895 – d. -)
- Fredrick Douglass Grant (b. 1874 – d. 1877)
- Olive Lubin Bassett (b. 1876 – d. 1882)

- Wendell P. Bassett (b. 1878 – d. 1915) ⁶

Ms. Bassett, his wife, the couple's eight children, and his younger Napoleon Bonaparte Bassett are all buried in Grove Street Cemetery (227 Grove Street & Magnolia Avenue – East) in New Haven, Connecticut. Mr. Bassett had strong ties to the city of New Haven. No matter where around the world he was called to serve, Mr. Bassett always found his way back to the “Elm City”.

INSTITUTE FOR COLORED YOUTH & PHILADELPHIA

One again, Mr. Bassett was recruited to a position where he would do more good to advance the cause of African American people. Mr. Bassett left New Haven to take on a new position in Philadelphia. In 1856, Mr. Bassett was appointed as the second Principal of the Institute for Colored Youth, founded in 1837, in Philadelphia (ICY), Pennsylvania. ICY (currently known as Cheney University) is the oldest historically Black College/University (HBCU) in America. Mr. Bassett held the office of Principal for fourteen years. He exists as one of the longest-serving administrators in the University's history.

While in Philadelphia, Mr. Bassett became increasingly more active as a Black abolitionist. While serving as the principal of ICY, Mr. Bassett used his position to speak out against the travesties of slavery and passionately recruit African American men to serve in the Union Army during the Civil War. Mr. Bassett continued in this position until he was called to represent the country in an international capacity by Ulysses S. Grant the 18th President of the United States.

THE DIPLOMAT & MINISTER RESIDENT

After many years serving as an educator, Mr. Bassett was persuaded to advance himself and represent the disenfranchised race as the nation's first African American diplomat abroad serving abroad. With the support of many influential Black and white leaders, Mr. Bassett's name was offered up as a response to President Ulysses S. Grant's quest to find a reputable “Negro” man to send to Haiti. Mr. Frederick Douglass was one of those who lent his support and encouraged the President Grant to select Mr. Bassett as the nation's first Black diplomat. President Grant nominated Mr. Bassett to the stately position. After some debate, in congress, about who was best to serve, the United States Congress unanimously approved the appointment of Mr. Bassett to the position as Minister Resident (now known as U. S. Ambassador) to the newly independent country of Haiti. ¹⁴

Mr. Bassett officially became the United States of America's first African American Diplomat in 1869. Mr. Bassett served the Country and the Haitian people with distinction for eight years. He remained active in his post until 1877, and as customary, resigned his position at the conclusion of President Grant's term of office. After resigning, Mr. Bassett was appointed Haitian Consul General (in New York) by the President of Haiti. Mr. Bassett continued to reside in New Haven and maintained an office at the Haitian Consulate in Bowling Green, New York.

After the election of Benjamin Harrison to the presidency, Mr. Bassett once again positioned himself for the vacant Resident Minister position to Haiti. This time he was not the favored son for the position. Fredrick Douglass was the leading candidate and later chosen as the nation's third appointed Black diplomat to Haiti. In 1888, the defeated and disappointed Bassett humbly asked to serve on the staff of Mr. Douglass when he was not selected for his previous post Resident Minister post. Douglass's appointment was short lived. After nearly two years of service Douglass resigned his position, which left Bassett without a job.

THE SENIOR STATESMAN

In 1891, the unemployed and sickly Bassett returned to the United States with his family. In 1898, the President of Haiti appointed Mr. Bassett to yet another position, that of Vice Consul General. He served faithfully in this position until his death. After many years of dedicated service and after a lengthy illness, which plagued him after his initial return to the United States, Mr. Bassett died in Brooklyn, New York, on November 13, 1908. Mr. Bassett was buried in the family gravesite in the Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven, Connecticut. Mr. Bassett lived a life of dedicated and committed service to others.

The impact of his contributions was made on a national scale and his vast global experience took him throughout the world. Mr. Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett could have chosen anywhere in the world as his primary residence, but he chose Connecticut. Mr. Bassett is undoubtedly one of the most significant and prominent figures that claims a connection to the State of Connecticut. His life serves as a tribute and testimony to the nation's founding principal – "Liberty and Justice for All". Mr. Bassett was an educator, humanitarian, and civil rights leader. His devotion and dedication to freedom, justice, democracy, and equality is made known through his tireless pursuit to create a more inclusive society for all Americans. Mr. Bassett existed as one of the most noteworthy figures of the nineteenth century. Through his legacy he continues to live as one of Connecticut's greatest sons.

Article

The submitted application titled, "Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett: Connecticut's Son", exists as a modified version of a more expansive article written by the author, William Fothergill, Central Connecticut State University. The article is currently pending publication. The author prohibits the reprint of this article without expressed approval.

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