
September 21st, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

At the request of Wendy Tyson-Wood, Branch President of the NAACP of Greater Waterbury, I am writing to request a site addition to the Connecticut Freedom Trail. The site I'm requesting is the Silas Bronson Library, specifically the front grassy area in front of the library.

The Silas Bronson Library is the location of the first cemetery in Waterbury which was established in the 1670's. In the 1700's, a section of the cemetery was reserved as the **"Colored Burial Plot"**, used by Waterbury's non-white population. On the opening of "Riverside Cemetery" in 1853, the Grand Street cemetery started to decline in use. By the 1880's, it was hardly used at all.

Originally from Waterbury, Silas Bronson was a wealthy New York merchant. On his death in 1867, Bronson left \$200,000 to the city of Waterbury specifically for the creation of a library. The original library opened in 1870 on West Main Street but was rebuilt on the very land of the Grand Street Cemetery in 1894. While some of those interred there were moved to Riverside Cemetery at the expense of their families, the entire **"Colored Burial Plot"** section was left as is. Today, that location exists near a statue of Benjamin Franklin in a large grassy area near the front walk of the library. It is honored by a stone bench placed there in 2005 by the Mattatuck Museum and funded by the Mayor's Arts and Tourism Commission and the Friends of Silas Bronson Library. It's estimated that as many as 40 African American's lie buried under that location.

The site is a reminder of the ancestral disconnections created by segregation even in death, as well as the lack of documentation afforded those considered of lessor value. Of note, while the bones of "The Man Fortune" were ultimately buried at Riverside Cemetery in 2013 (215 years after he died), we do not know what became of his wife and 4 children. There's a possibility that they are buried here.

Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Mills