



This is a static version of the Amistad: Seeking Freedom in Connecticut homepage. You can view the [flash version](#) of this page.

Produced by the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places, in partnership with the communities of Farmington, Hartford, New Haven and New London, Connecticut, the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.

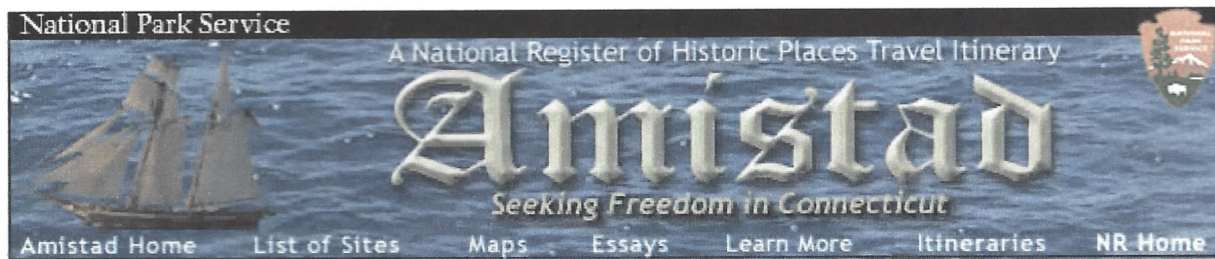
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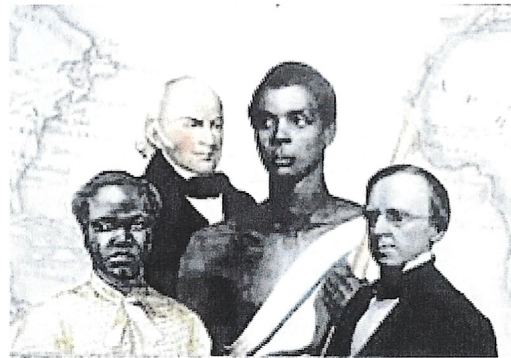
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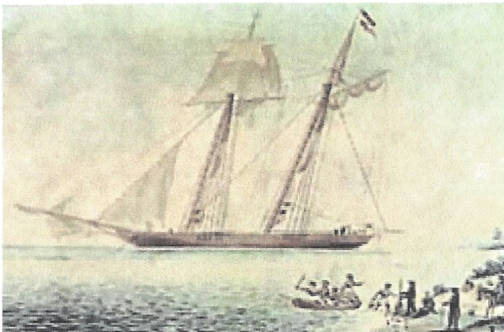


Introduction

The National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places in partnership with the communities of Farmington, Hartford, New Haven and New London, Connecticut, the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers invite you to explore ***Amistad: Seeking Freedom in Connecticut***. The plight of the Mende Africans caught the attention of America in the 1840s, and continues to hold our attention today. This travel itinerary highlights 14 historic places listed in the National Register of Historic Places that tell the story of the *Amistad* and the Mende Africans' legal battle and quest for freedom in Connecticut.



Composite of significant people in the *Amistad* story: (L to R) Margru, John Quincy Adams, Cinque and Roger Sherman Baldwin
Photo courtesy of The Connecticut Historical Society



Slave ship *Amistad* off Culloden Point, Long Island, NY, oil by unknown artist, 1839
Photo courtesy of New Haven Colony Historical Society and Adams National Historic Site

In January 1839, a group of Mende Tribe Africans, were captured by Spanish traders and shipped to Cuba, where the Africans were bought by two plantation owners who intended to take them to their own plantations on another part of the island on the ship *La Amistad*. During that journey, the Mende revolted against their captors and tried to force the Spanish to sail them back to Africa. The Spaniards sailed north by night unbeknownst to the Africans, and the *Amistad* reached Long Island Sound on August 27, 1839. In search of food and water, the Mende debarked on Montauk Point, Long Island, where they were recaptured by the Federal naval brig, *Washington* and escorted to nearby New London Harbor, Connecticut. The *Amistad* remained in New London, until it was sold 14 months later and its cargo auctioned at the [New London Customhouse](#). The riveting trial of the *Amistad* Africans, including their legal defense by former President of the United States, John Quincy Adams, began in Connecticut and led to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Mende remained in Connecticut, as their fate was being debated and decided, for the next two years: in court in [Hartford](#) and [New Haven](#) (where the Mende were held in jail during much of the trial), and finally to [Farmington](#) where they spent three months while funds were raised for their return journey to Sierra Leone--places where important chapters of the *Amistad* story played out.

Amistad: Seeking Freedom in Connecticut offers

several ways to discover the places that tell this story. Each highlighted historic place features a brief description of that place's historic significance, color photographs and public accessibility information. At the bottom of each page the visitor will find a navigation bar containing links to five essays that explain more about the Amistad Story, Timeline of Events, Slave Trade, Connecticut Abolitionists and Connecticut Freedom Trail. These essays provide historic background, or "contexts," for the places included in the itinerary. In the Learn More section, the itinerary links to regional and local web sites that provide visitors with further information regarding cultural events, special activities, and lodging and dining possibilities. Visitors may be interested in [Historic Hotels of America](#), a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, located in Connecticut. The itinerary can be viewed online, or printed out if you plan to visit Connecticut in person.



The Old Statehouse in Hartford, where the Amistad Trial began on September 19, 1839
Photo courtesy of Jeremiah Stevenson



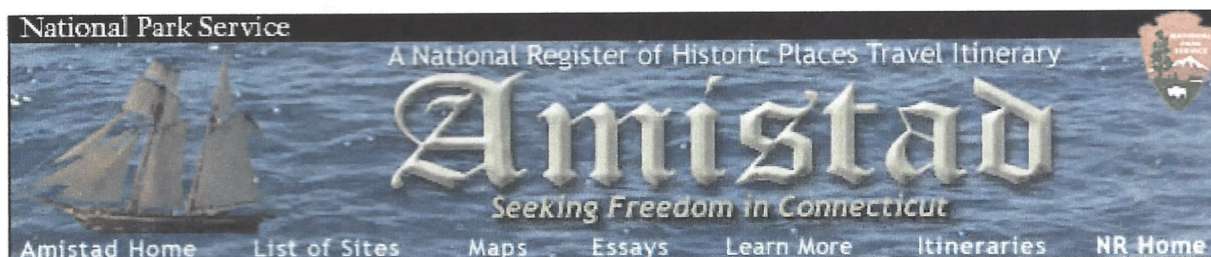
Austin F. Williams built this dormitory (later used as a carriagehouse) for the Mende during their stay in Farmington

Photo courtesy of the Farmington Historical Society

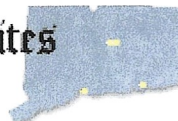
Amistad: Seeking Freedom in Connecticut is the latest example of a new and exciting cooperative project. As part of the Department of the Interior's strategy to promote public awareness of history and encourage visits to historic places throughout the nation, the National Register of Historic Places cooperates with communities, regions and heritage areas throughout the United States to create online travel itineraries. Using places nominated by State, Federal and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the itineraries help potential visitors plan trips by highlighting the amazing diversity of this country's historic places and supplying accessibility information for each featured site. **Amistad: Seeking Freedom in Connecticut** is the 37th National Register travel itinerary in this series. Additional itineraries will debut online in the future. The National Register of Historic Places hopes you

enjoy this virtual travel itinerary of **Amistad: Seeking Freedom in Connecticut**. If you have any comments or questions, please just click on the provided e-mail address, "comments or questions" located at the bottom of each page.





List of Sites



NEW LONDON

New London Customhouse

HARTFORD

Old Statehouse

Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building

NEW HAVEN

New Haven Green

United Church on the Green

New Haven Colony Historical Society

FARMINGTON

Austin F. Williams Carriagehouse and House

Noah Porter House

Timothy Cowles House

Union Hall

First Church of Christ

Samuel Deming House

Horace Cowles House

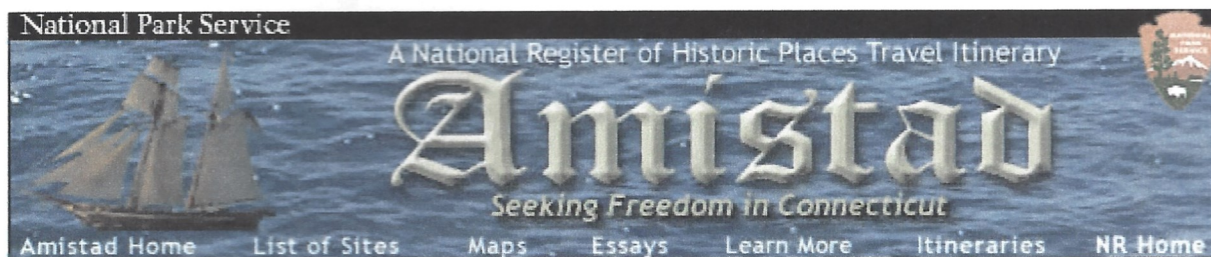
Stanley-Whitman House



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[Essays: Amistad Story](#) | [Timeline of Events](#) | [Slave Trade](#) | [Connecticut Abolitionists](#) | [Connecticut Freedom Trail](#) |

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Connecticut Freedom Trail

This year marks the 10th anniversary of legislation authorizing the establishment of the Connecticut Freedom Trail (CFT). The legislation was signed in August 1995 and the trail officially opened in September 1996 with 60 sites in 30 towns. Included on the trail are sites associated with the *Amistad* case of 1839-1842, buildings reported to have been used on the Underground Railroad and gravesites, monuments, homes and buildings that are associated with the heritage and movement towards freedom of Connecticut's African American citizens.

Administration of the trail is assigned to the Amistad Committee, Inc. of New Haven, and the former Connecticut Historical Commission (now the Historic Preservation and Museum Division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism). Liaisons from these two agencies and representatives from the various sites make up the Connecticut Freedom Trail Site Selection Committee which reviews research materials and requests for additions to the trail. As of 2005, there are 100 sites in 42 towns on the CFT.



Connecticut Freedom Trail Logo

Photo courtesy of the Historic Preservation and Museum Division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism



Bronze plaque at the New London Customhouse
Photo courtesy of Richard Salews, Niantic, CT

Funding for the trail has been provided over the years by the State of Connecticut in the budgets of the Connecticut Historical Commission for the marking of the trail with plaques and informational signs and development of research on African American Heritage, and the Tourism Division of the Department of Economic and Community Development (now the Tourism Division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism) for brochures and publicity. The Amistad Committee, Inc. has been a major contributor to CFT activities and has through the years secured significant corporate sponsorship for materials and activities promoting the trail. In addition,

contributions have been made by local municipalities and even some property owners.

Once a site is listed on the trail, the owner receives a CFT plaque, informational sign and CFT flag. Other Freedom Trail products, which are available to the general public, include the video, audio tour tapes, brochures (3rd edition), and posters. There is also a CFT [website](#).

Most of the credit for the popularity of the CFT must go to the Connecticut Freedom Trail Planning Committee which plans programs and events for CFT Month (September) to celebrate, publicize and promote the existence of the trail. The committee is made up of dedicated volunteers who work with the Amistad Committee, Inc. and CHC in developing activities that foster interest and involvement with the trail. Past events have included:

1998--CFT Bicycle Tour and Quilting Bee which resulted in the four CFT Quilts which are now on permanent display at the Raymond Baldwin Museum of Connecticut History in Hartford.

1999--CFT Gospel/Inspirational Music Festival which included performances by the Ebenezer Baptist Church Choir of Atlanta, Georgia, the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church Choir of Montgomery, Alabama, The New Jersey Fellowship Choir of Plainfield, New Jersey and choirs from churches included on the trail.



Connecticut Freedom Trail Quilts
Photo courtesy of the Museum of Connecticut History

2000--Commemoration of *Amistad* captives buried in Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven which included participation by the President of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Tejan Kabbah.

In the area of research, many new topics have been explored, however, the hottest topic to date is that of **Connecticut's Black Governors 1776-1856**. This subject was brought to the attention of the Commission by eighth grade students from Lewis J. Fox Middle School in Hartford. During three years of archival research, the students and their teacher uncovered evidence that more than 300 Americans of African descent were interred in Hartford's Ancient Burying Ground, one of the oldest cemeteries in Connecticut. The students' research shed light on the fact that African Americans helped settle the Connecticut Colony and revealed that five "Black Governors" were buried in unmarked graves. To commemorate the more than 300 forgotten souls, a memorial marker and slate tablet inscribed with names and interment dates now stands in the cemetery. The students designed, selected materials, and raised funding for the monument.



Hartford Ancient Burying Ground
Photo courtesy of Karen O'Maxfield, ©1988

Intrigued by the students' findings, the Connecticut Historical Commission hired a consultant to further explore the topic of the Black Governors. Since the students' research provided the names of 22 governors, the purpose of the new research was to identify and evaluate sites associated with the governors for possible inclusion on the Freedom Trail. The additional research revealed that from 1749 to 1856, 26 black governors were elected by the black population of Connecticut. The gravesite of Governor Boston Trotrow was located in the Old Norwichtown Burial Ground in Norwich, Connecticut. The inscription reads: "In memory of

Boston TrowTrow, Govener of ye Affrican Trib, he died May 28, 1772 at 62." In New London, the grave of Flora, the wife of Governor Hercules was found. Her inscription reads: "Flora, wife of Hercules, Governor of the Negroes." It is anticipated that The Connecticut Black Governors' research report will be published during the summer of 2005.

The John E. Rogers African American Cultural Center (JERAACC) of Hartford has taken the lead in promoting the story of Connecticut 's Black Governors. Individuals have been recruited to portray the governors at various events sponsored by JERAACC including the Black Governors' Ball. This year, in addition to the ball, JERAACC will hold a reenactment of "LECTION" DAY.

As previously stated, there are now 100 sites in 42 towns on the Connecticut Freedom Trail. As research continues, new sites will be identified and added. It is hoped that those who visit some or all of the locations on the Freedom Trail will gain a greater appreciation for the experiences and contributions of Connecticut 's African Americans.

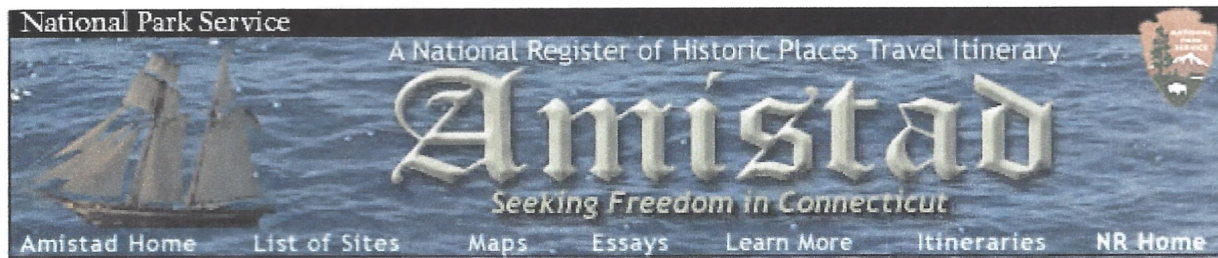
Essay by Cora Murray, Liason to Connecticut Freedom Trail, Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism



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Learn More

By clicking on one of these links, you can go directly to a particular section:

[Links to Farmington, Hartford, New Haven and New London Tourism and History](#)

[Links to Websites of Places Featured in this Itinerary and Amistad Related Sites](#)

[Selected Bibliography for Amistad](#)

[Children's Books](#)

Links to Farmington, Hartford, New Haven, New London and Connecticut Tourism and History

Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

Protecting resources that are windows on the past is the job of the Historic Preservation and Museum Division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, a state agency established in 2004, in accordance with Public Act 03-6 of the Connecticut General Assembly.

Farmington, Connecticut

Learn about the community, government and tourist opportunities available in historic Farmington, Connecticut.

Hartford, Connecticut

One of the many links on this informative page leads to an order form for a free visitor's guide. Dining and accommodations can be reached from here as well.

West Hartford Chamber of Commerce

The West Hartford Chamber of Commerce webpage has a "Places to See" page that explores historic, cultural and entertainment sites.

New Haven, Connecticut

New Haven's guide to economic development, government, parks and schools.

Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce

A guide to the hotels, museums, entertainment and festivals in the greater New Haven area.

New London, Connecticut

City government, general information, community, businesses and tourist information.

Chamber of Commerce Eastern Connecticut

Promoting a regional identity, the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut (which

covers the area of New London) has links to Connecticut tourism.

Welcome to Connecticut Tourism

An excellent site to help the vacation bound discover Connecticut's treasures.

Connecticut Main Street Center

Connecticut Main Street Center is the state's leading resource for cities and towns seeking to comprehensively revitalize their main street districts and is committed to bringing Connecticut's commercial districts back to life, socially and economically.

Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, founded by special act of the Connecticut General Assembly in 1975, works to preserve the character and ensure the vitality of Connecticut's historically significant places.

Connecticut State Parks and Forests

The diversity and splendor of Connecticut's state parks and forests offers everything in a vacation.

Adams National Historical Park

Located in Quincy, Massachusetts, approximately 10 miles south of Boston, Adams NHS interprets five generations of the Adams family (from 1720 to 1927) including Quincy Adams, 6th U.S. President and one of the lawyers for the Mende Africans.

Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor

This National Heritage Corridor in northeastern Connecticut and south central Massachusetts has been called "the last green valley" in the Boston-to-Washington megalopolis. Close to Hartford, Providence and Worcester, but far enough away to avoid urban sprawl, this 1086 square mile region administered by the National Park Service remains predominately rural.

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Discover the the Appalachian National Scenic Trail as it winds through Connecticut--administered by the National Park Service.

Weir Farm National Historic Site

Administered by the National Park Service, see how the environment of American Impressionist painter J. Alden Weir's (1852 – 1919) Connecticut farm provided him with the means to explore his artistic impressions of nature.

Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER)

The HABS/HAER program documents important architectural, engineering and industrial sites throughout the United States and its territories. Their collections, including some of the places highlighted in this itinerary, are archived at the Library of Congress and available online. You can view these by clicking on the link above and entering search the names of the four towns highlighted in this itinerary.

National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers

The professional association of the State government officials who carry out the national historic preservation program as delegates of the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to the

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Learn about the programs of and membership in the oldest national nonprofit preservation organization.

Historic Hotels of America

A feature of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Heritage Traveler program that provides information on historic hotels and package tours in the vicinity of this itinerary.

National Park Service Office of Tourism

National Parks have been interwoven with tourism from their earliest days. This website highlights the ways in which the National Park Service promotes and supports sustainable, responsible, informed, and managed visitor use through cooperation and coordination with the tourism industry.

Links to Websites of Places Featured in this Itinerary and Amistad Related Sites

[Amistad America](#)

[Mystic Seaport and their Exploring Amistad website](#)

[Old Statehouse](#)

[Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building](#)

[The Connecticut Historical Society](#)

[United Church on the Green](#)

[Miss Porter's School for Girls \(owner of several sites in Farmington\)](#)

[First Church of Christ](#)

[Stanley-Whitman House](#)

Selected Bibliography for Amistad

Amistad Committee. *The Amistad Revolt : Struggle for Freedom*. New Haven, Conn.: Amistad Committee, 1993.

Fage, J.D. and William Tordoff. *A History of Africa*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Horton, James Oliver and Lois E. Horton. *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Jones, Howard. *Mutiny on the Amistad: the Saga of a Slave Revolt and its Impact on American Abolition, Law, and Diplomacy*. Oxford University Press, 1987.

Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery: 1619-1877*. New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 2003.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Amistad: A Long Road to Freedom*. London: Puffin Books, 2001.

Nagel, Paul C. *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, a Private Life*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Pesci, David. *Amistad*. New York, New York: Marlowe & Co, 1997.

Osagie, Iyunolu Folayan. *The Amistad Revolt: Memory, Slavery, and the Politics of Identity in the United States and Sierra Leone*. Athens, Georgia:University of Georgia Press, 2000.

Stewart, James Brewer. *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*. New York, New York: Hill and Wang Press, 1997.

Children's Books

Chambers, Veronica and Paul Lee (illustrator). *Amistad Rising: A Story of Freedom*. San Diego, California: Harcourt Children's Books, 1998.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Amistad: a Long Road to Freedom*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1998.

Sterne, Emma Gelders. *The Story of the Amistad (Dover Juvenile Classics)*. Mineola, New York: 2001.

Zeinert, Karen. *The Amistad Slave Revolt and American Abolition*. North Haven, Connecticut: Linnet Books, 1997.



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