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# NOTES *and* The NEWS

A Museum and Library  
of Connecticut History

 *Connecticut  
Historical  
Society*

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*EXHIBITION AND ARRAY OF ACTIVITIES CELEBRATE SPRING*

## Victorian Gardens Exhibition Explores Emergence of American Passion For Horticulture

**D**uring the second half of the nineteenth century Americans developed a passion for things green and flowering that had an impact on nearly every aspect of the nation's life, from recreational activities to the language of love to cemetery design. The emergence of that fascination for fauna is chronicled in the exhibition "Victorian Gardens: A Horticultural Extravaganza," on display from April 7 through June 24.

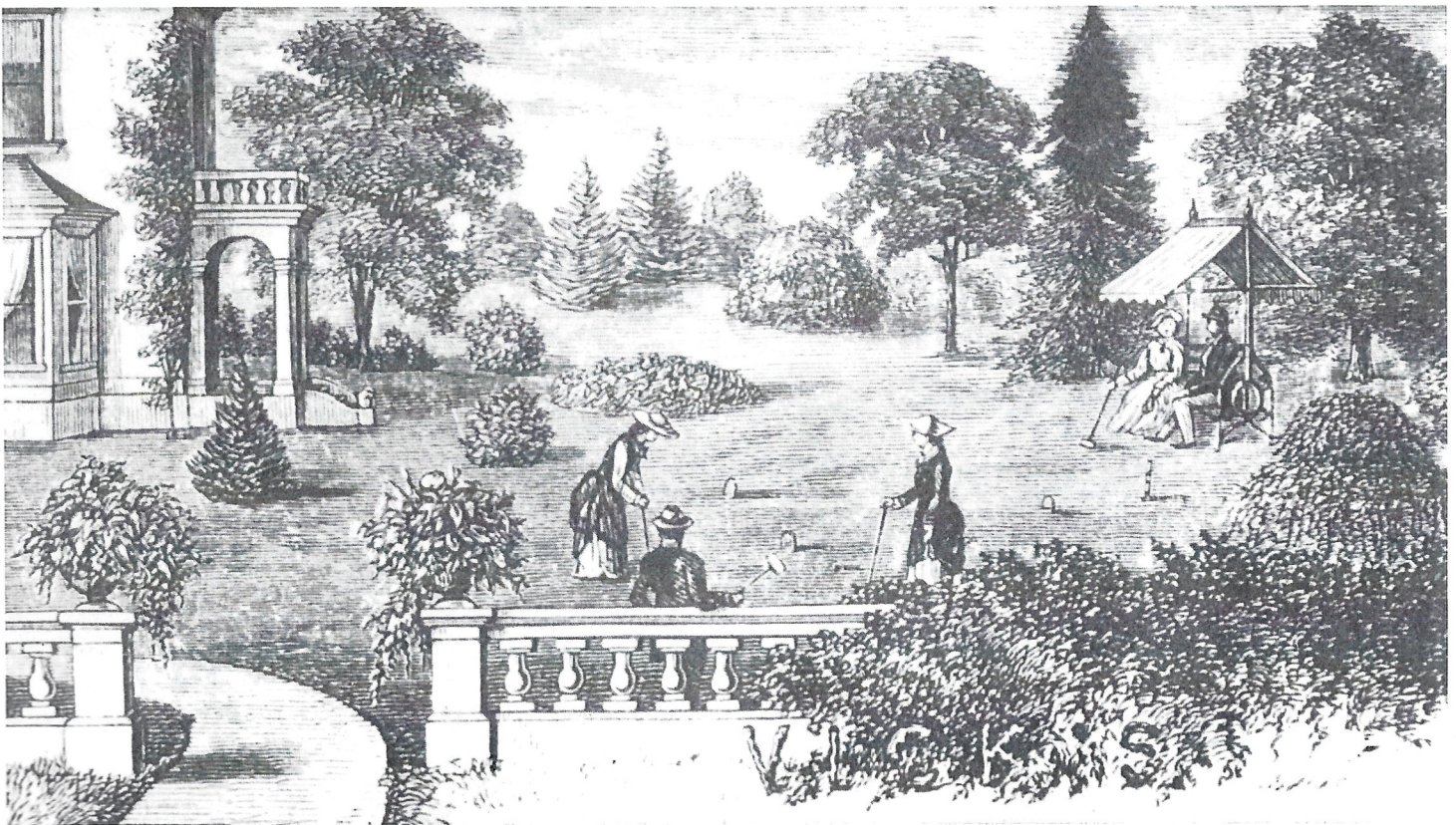
In conjunction with the "Victorian

Gardens" exhibition The Connecticut Historical Society will celebrate the arrival of spring with an assortment of activities that will provide unusual opportunities to experience

the essence of the Victorian fondness for nature's beauty. A lecture, bus trips, walking tours, a plant sale, and social events with a Victorian flavor have all been planned and are listed in flyers that have been sent to members and in the calendar in this issue of *Notes and News*.

The "Victorian Gardens" exhibition was

*(Continued on page 6)*



*Office of Horticulture, Smithsonian Institution*

*CROQUET, played on carefully landscaped lawns such as this one illustrated in 1879 in Vick's Illustrated Monthly Magazine, became a popular recreation among Victorians eager to spend new-found leisure time amidst nature's beauty.*



# Docent Applies Teaching Experience To Guiding "Free Men" School Tours



CHS DOCENT BARBARA ALLEYNE studies the portrait of Cinque, the leader of the revolt aboard the slave ship Amistad, that she highlights when guiding school tours through the "Free Men" exhibition.

"Commitment, perseverance, pride, and courage" are the values Connecticut Historical Society docent Barbara Alleyne strives to impress upon the school children she takes on tours through the exhibition "Free Men: The Amistad Revolt and the American Anti-Slavery Movement."

Mrs. Alleyne is one of a dozen docents recruited and specially trained by the CHS Education Department to conduct tours of the "Free Men" exhibition, which opened on February 4 and will be on display through June 17. Mrs. Alleyne became involved in the special training program, made possible by funding from Loctite Corporation and the Connecticut Humanities Council, through Barbara Hudson, project coordinator for the "Free Men" exhibition, and Esther Harris, who took part in a summer teacher's institute at CHS on the Amistad incident.

Mrs. Alleyne is a museum educator's ideal of a docent. A history major in college, she taught second grade for 35 years at the Martin Luther King School in Hartford before retiring, and was familiar with the story that the "Free Men" exhibition recounts: the saga of 53 Africans who in 1839 seized control of the ship carrying them to slavery in Cuba, thereby touching off an important human rights case, most events of which occurred in Connecticut, that had a major impact on American history.

Mrs. Alleyne has seen children react with surprise, wonder, appreciation, and pride as she guides them through the exhibition, which will be seen by more than 10,000 students during its run at CHS. They are appalled by the section that depicts the barbarous conditions Africans endured on the voyage from Africa to slavery in North America that is known in history as the Middle Passage. The idea of being crammed together in the hold of a slave ship for weeks has such an impact on them because, Mrs. Alleyne thinks, in modern society "we're so used to not invading each other's space."

Mrs. Alleyne puts particular emphasis on the introductory section of the "Free Men" exhibition that explores the Mende culture in West Africa from which most of the Amistad Africans came. She believes it is important for the children to understand where the Mende lived, and that they were skilled artisans. Later in her tours she encourages the students to study closely the magnificent portrait of Cinque, the leader of the Amistad Africans, to read the courage and determination in his face.

In a way, Mrs. Alleyne's service as a docent at CHS brings the legacy of the Amistad full circle. She received her history degree from Fisk University, one of the black institutions of higher education founded after the Civil War

by the American Missionary Association, which grew out of the Amistad Committee formed to aid the Amistad Africans. Now, 150 years after the revolt, she is helping to teach a new generation of Connecticut children about that landmark event and its enduring influence on American history that included the establishment of her own alma mater. □

## Grant Will Fund Buses to "Free Men"

A grant of \$10,500 from the Ensworth Charitable Foundation to The Connecticut Historical Society will make it possible for additional thousands of students from the Hartford school system to visit the exhibition "Free Men: The Amistad Revolt and the American Anti-Slavery Movement" during the remainder of its run at CHS.

The grant will underwrite the cost of transporting the students to and from CHS headquarters. It will make it possible for 140 bus loads of children to come to the "Free Men" exhibition, where they will be taken on guided tours by specially trained docents.

It is anticipated that more than 8,000 students will be able to tour "Free Men" thanks to the Ensworth funding. Total visitation of the "Free Men" exhibition by school students is expected to exceed 10,000 by the time it closes on June 17. □

## "Free Men" Items Available for Sale

The Connecticut Historical Society has for sale a variety of items relating to the "Free Men" exhibition, including:

- Full-color poster of Nathaniel Jocelyn's 1840 portrait of Cinque. 28" x 22" \$10.00; CHS member's price \$8.00. Mail orders should include \$2.50 each for postage and handling. Connecticut residents should also include 8% state sales tax (80 cents for \$10.00, 64 cents for \$8.00).
- T-shirt featuring "Free Men" logo in black on deep turquoise background. \$10.00; CHS member's price \$8.00. Please specify size: S, M, L, XL. Mail orders should include \$2.00 each for postage and handling.
- *Free Men: The Amistad Revolt and the American Anti-Slavery Movement*, companion booklet to the exhibition. 8 1/2 x 11", 20 pages, black-and-white illustrations. \$1.00 (includes Connecticut state sales tax). No CHS member discount. Mail orders should include 75 cents postage and handling. □



# "Free Men" Events Draw Record Numbers

In the two months it has been on display, "Free Men: The *Amistad* Revolt and the American Anti-Slavery Movement" has been the most successful exhibition in The Connecticut Historical Society's history. A preview reception on the night of February 2, attended by more than 350 people including Connecticut First Lady Mrs. William A. O'Neill and Hartford Mayor Carrie Saxon Perry, was a splendid debut for the exhibition, which is expected to be toured by more than 10,000 school children during its run at The Connecticut Historical Society. Several related programs have proven extremely popular, including the family program "Celebration of African-American Heritage and Culture." The "Free Men" exhibition was the focus of a segment on the issue of teaching African-American history in schools that was broadcast nationally in February on World Monitor Television. The exhibition will be on display at The Connecticut Historical Society through June 17, 1990. □

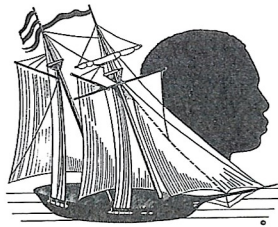


Leslie Jacobs

*DELIGHTED WITH THE PREVIEW RECEPTION for the "Free Men" exhibition were (left to right) CHS Executive Director Dr. Christopher Bickford; CHS Trustee Dr. Edythe Gaines; CHS President Robert Ewing; CHS Trustee and Connecticut First Lady Mrs. William A. O'Neill; Hartford Mayor Carrie Saxon Perry; Esther Bush, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Urban League of Greater Hartford; and New Haven Colony Historical Society Executive Director Robert Eggleston.*



Leslie Jacobs



*CHS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Dr. Christopher Bickford greets Hartford Mayor Carrie Saxon Perry (center) and CHS Trustee Dr. Edythe Gaines at the "Free Men" preview reception.*

*DR. DONALD SPIVEY (right), one of the scholars in the field of African-American history who served as advisors to the "Free Men" exhibition, and his wife, Diane, chat with CHS Executive Director Dr. Christopher Bickford at the "Free Men" preview reception.*



Leslie Jacobs

The Hartford Courant/Photograph by Bob Stern



*MASTER PERCUSSIONISTS Ra Atam (left) and Mor Thiam performed West African drumming for the "Celebration of African-American Heritage and Culture" February 18 family program.*



Leslie Jacobs

*WEST AFRICAN MUSIC was provided for the "Free Men" preview reception by Wes Brown and Kalpana Devi.*

*CHS EDUCATION ASSOCIATE KATE SAWYER conducts a tour of the "Free Men" exhibition for one of the more than 200 school groups that had viewed the exhibition by the end of March.*

