

# HartfordHistory.net

Dedicated to the history of Hartford, Connecticut

Newsletter | March 3, 2023



## Trivia question

In honor of Women's History Month, what important role did Caroline Hewins play in the history of Hartford?

Scroll to the bottom of the newsletter for the answer.



## Time to apologize for witchcraft trials?

At least 34 Connecticut colonists were tried on witchcraft charges between 1647 and 1697—three decades before the better-known Salem, Massachusetts trials. Twelve were convicted, and 11 were hanged, all but two of them women. Four of the 11 lived in Hartford. The first recorded hanging, that of Else Young of Windsor, is said to have occurred in Hartford's Meeting House Square, eventual site of the Old State House.



Now, state lawmakers have been asked to adopt a [resolution](#) of apology to the accused, [The New York Times reports](#). The group behind the drive, [the Connecticut Witch Trial Exoneration Project](#), says the resolution would also serve as a timely warning about the dangers of persecution.

More information:

- "[Witchcraft in Connecticut](#)," ConnecticutHistory.org;
- "[Before Salem, the first American witch hunt](#)," History.com;
- "[A push to exonerate victims of Connecticut's early witch trials](#)," audio from Connecticut Public Radio; and
- "[Connecticut Witch Trials and Posthumous Pardons](#)," a 2006 report from the Connecticut General Assembly's Office of Legislative Research (OLR.)

## Hartford stamp collection on the block

A prize-winning stamp collection highlighting the “postal history” of Hartford in the 1700s and 1800s is about to be auctioned off, [according to the Hartford Courant](#). Its owner, history buff Anthony Dewey, told the newspaper that he’s ready to move on to other projects. Described by the firm handling the auction as “essentially mail to and from Hartford,” the collection includes documents dating as far back as 1717 and carrying addresses like that of one “S.L. Clemens,” the writer on Farmington Avenue who went by the pen name Mark Twain.



Dewey told the Courant: “Holding a letter that was written to a Connecticut soldier in a Confederate prison camp during the Civil War brought history to life right in my hand.”

Photo: The Hartford Post Office in 1903. Old State House on left. [Wikimedia Commons](#))

## March 21: Screening of 'Hartford Jews'

This year's Hartford Jewish Film Festival will feature a screening of a rediscovered 1973 documentary, "Hartford Jews, 1900-1925." The 30-minute film was produced for WTIC-TV, Channel 3 in Hartford, which is now WFSB-TV. Narrators included founders of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford (JHSGH.) The work explores the economic, political, and cultural history of the local Jewish community at a time of peak immigration, according to the JHSGH.



The film will be screened at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 21, at the Mandell Jewish Community Center, at 335 Bloomfield Avenue in West Hartford. [\(Buy tickets here.\)](#) A discussion will follow. The film will also be among those available for streaming from March 27 to April 3. [\(Buy tickets here.\)](#)

## Trivia question answer

For 51 years, Caroline Hewins was the head librarian of what eventually became the Hartford Public Library. Hired at age 29 in 1875 by the forerunner of

the Library, the Young Men's Institute, she oversaw the institution's transformation from a private subscription service for about 600 members to a free public library that served everyone. Many of her other accomplishments centered on creating world-class library services for children. According to her page on the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame website:



"Upon her arrival in Hartford, Hewins was dismayed to discover a dearth of children's materials in the library and spent considerable time and resources to develop a children's collection. She partnered with local schools so that children would have better access to library materials. In 1882, she published 'Books for the Young,' the first bibliography intended for children, and in 1888 she wrote a history of children's literature for the Atlantic Monthly. Hewins made herself available to local parents and teachers, serving them tea once a week when they came to consult with her, and founded the Education Club, which later became the Parent-Teacher Association. She also devised nature outings and story times for children, causing them to flock to her library."

As if that wasn't enough, Hewins "expanded the library's hours to include Sunday afternoons so that working people could take advantage of the institution's resources. She also opened the first branch library in the North Street Settlement House where she lived, staffing it herself one hour each evening."

Caroline Hewins died in 1926, just after publishing a memoir, "A Mid-Century Child and Her Books."

Sources: [The Hartford Public Library](#), [ConnecticutHistory.org](#), and [the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame](#). Photo: [American Library Association](#)

More trivia questions at [HartfordHistory.net](#)

HartfordHistory.net | 195 Auburn Road, West Hartford, CT 06119

[Unsubscribe kevinflood2@gmail.com](#)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by kevin@hartfordhistory.net in collaboration  
with



Try email marketing for free today!