

Newsletter | July 1, 2023



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Trivia question

Happy Fourth of July weekend! To celebrate, here's a question regarding Hartford's role in the Revolutionary War:

What Hartford businessman became known for supplying American and French troops?

For the answer, scroll to the end of the newsletter.



Summer at the Museum returns

Today marks the return of a summer program that gives Connecticut kids free admission to more than 120 museums around the state—including many in the Hartford area. Until Monday, Sept. 4, children ages 18 and under (with one accompanying adult) can get free admission to any of [these participating museums](#).

Fate of 1920s apartment building in dispute

Hartford Hospital wants to demolish the vacant, four-story building it owns at the corner of Washington and Jefferson streets, the Hartford Courant [reports](#). The hospital says the structure, with its crumbling walls and collapsing floors, is too far gone to rehabilitate economically. But preservationists and neighborhood leaders contend the hospital has no estimate of what rehabilitation would cost--or any firm plans for what would become of the site after demolition, other than creating a grassy area. Meanwhile, the city, concerned about safety and blight, is pressuring the hospital to do *something*.

State chips in for library repairs

Insurance won't cover all the costs of repairing the Main Street branch of the Hartford Public Library, which has been closed since a burst pipe on Christmas Eve caused at least \$8 million in damage, including to the Hartford History Center on the third floor. But the state is stepping into the breach, committing \$3.2 million for the work, with \$1.7 million coming from the new state budget and the remaining \$1.5 million raised through bond sales, according to [WFSB-TV's Eyewitness News 3](#). The building remains closed through at least the summer.

Name change for the Hartford-based museum

The Connecticut Historical Society has renamed itself the [Connecticut Museum of Culture and History](#). Among the reasons museum officials gave for the change: a sense in the public that the word "society" implied exclusivity. "I hear people say they drive by our building all the time and they didn't know they could come in," Ilene Frank, the organization's deputy executive director and chief strategy officer, told [CT Insider](#). "We don't want that. We don't want to be a hidden gem anymore. We want people to know we are an organization that is here to work with the community and tell the stories of the people of the state, whether those stories are from hundreds of years ago or... the last 20 years."

The organization was founded in 1825 and operated from the Wadsworth Atheneum until 1950, when it moved into the mansion built by inventor Curtis H. Veeder on Elizabeth Street, in the city's West End.

New owner for historic Webster Theater

The Webster Theater, built in 1937 as a movie theater and operated since the 1990s as a venue for rock bands, has been sold to Concert Crave, a New Jersey-based concert promoter that primarily hosts hip-hop concerts. The 1,200-person venue, a prominent feature of the South End's Barry Square, already has been re-named [The Webster](#). Renovations are promised, along with a wider array of events.

[Hartford Courant article](#) | [CT Insider article](#)

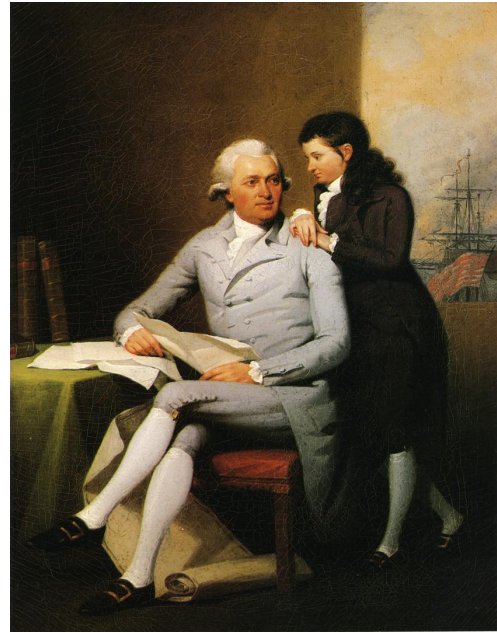
Black Civil War regiment honored at Old North Cemetery

Juneteenth weekend saw ceremonies at Old North to honor the state's first African American regiment, the 29th Regiment Connecticut Volunteers. More than 1,700 men of color enlisted in the Regiment, and seven found their final resting places in the Main Street cemetery, according to the [Hartford Courant](#). The June 17 ceremonies included the dedication of an installation about the Regiment. It will be added to the [Hartford Black Heroes Trail](#), a new series of public installations along Main Street. ConnecticutHistory.org has [more](#) on the Regiment.

Trivia question answer

Jeremiah Wadsworth.

He began the war by handling commissary assignments in Connecticut. In 1777, Congress chose him to serve as deputy commissary general of purchases; by 1778, he was commissary general. He also served as commissary for Comte de Rochambeau's army. Glenn Weaver and Michael Swift, writing in "Hartford: An Illustrated History" (2003, American Historical Press), observed that Wadsworth openly acknowledged the fortune he made from contracts with the American and French governments, adding, "he always insisted he be paid for his produce and services in gold."



Wadsworth went on to lead Hartford's nascent banking, insurance, and textile industries. He founded Hartford's first bank, the Connecticut National Bank.

Wadsworth also served in the Continental Congress in 1788 and as member of the Connecticut convention that ratified the U.S. Constitution in 1788. From 1789 to 1795 he served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives.

It must also be noted, however, that Wadsworth owned slaves. Joel Lang, in an [article](#) published in the September 29, 2002, editions of the Hartford Courant, reported that Wadsworth "once bought a whole slave family." And for a time, according to Lang, "Wadsworth owned 6,600 acres of plantation land in South Carolina and the 129 slaves who went with it." He added: "The circumstances that made Wadsworth a slave master are complicated, but also revealing of the North's innumerable ties to the slave economy."

At right: Jeremiah Wadsworth and his son, Daniel, in a 1784 portrait by John Trumbull (Image: public domain.)

More trivia questions at HartfordHistory.net



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