

Prudence Crandall:
A Pioneer for Equality in Education



Prudence Crandall
1803 – 1890
*(Courtesy of the Connecticut
Commission on Culture and Tourism)*

The election of Barack Hussein Obama, the first African-American President of the United States, on November 4, 2008, was a historic event for our country. His inauguration marked the birth of a new age for a nation that has, for almost four hundred years, endured the agony of slavery and post-civil war race relations and the struggles of the civil rights movement. Mindful of this, we must bear witness to a seminal event in our state’s history. Indeed, few people know that the first academy for African-American girls in New England was established here in Connecticut. That academy was founded by Prudence Crandall, a resident of the Town of Canterbury.

Prudence Crandall was born of Quaker parents on September 3, 1803, in Hopkinton, Rhode Island. Her family moved to the small town of Canterbury, Connecticut in 1813. She attended the Society of Friends School in Providence, Rhode Island, and later taught in schools in Plainfield and Lisbon, Connecticut. Crandall had already gained a reputation as a fine teacher and mentor when, in the summer of 1831, she was asked by a group of wealthy Canterbury residents to establish a private academy for their daughters. At age twenty-eight, Crandall purchased a house located on the Canterbury Green. There, in November 1831, she opened the Canterbury Female Boarding School.

The academy was very successful in its first few months until September 1832 when Crandall admitted Sarah Harris, a twenty-year-old African-American woman who aspired to teach African-American children in her native town of Norwich, Connecticut. Prudence Crandall immediately found herself embroiled in controversy. Various prominent Canterbury residents took notice and called for the withdrawal of Sarah Harris. Crandall, who was acutely aware of the evils of slavery and prejudice from reading the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*, refused to dismiss her. Soon, some parents began to withdraw their daughters from the school.

In January 1833 Crandall wrote to and then traveled to Boston to meet with abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, the publisher of *The Liberator*. She discussed with him the possibility of closing the academy for white students and reopening it as a school solely for African-American girls. With Garrison’s help, Crandall met with several well-to-do free African-American families in New England and New York who soon agreed to enroll their daughters in the school. With the support of some of the most influential abolitionists in New England, Crandall placed an advertisement in *The Liberator* on March 2, 1833, announcing the reopening of the academy as a school to educate “young Ladies and little Misses of color.” On April 1, 1833, Prudence Crandall opened the first academy for African-American girls in New England.

Aware of this, a group of Canterbury leaders urged Crandall to abandon the effort, and, when she refused, organized a boycott of the school. As opposition mounted, the Connecticut General Assembly passed the infamous “Black Law” on May 24, 1833. The Black Law made it illegal to establish any school for the instruction of “colored persons who are not inhabitants of this State”

without the consent of town authorities. Staunch in her belief that this law was unjust, Prudence Crandall continued teaching at the school. This would prove to be a life-risking act of defiance.

In June 1833 Crandall was arrested for violating the Black Law and chose to spend a night in the Brooklyn, Connecticut jail in order to draw public attention to her cause. The jury in her August 1833 trial failed to reach a verdict. Arrested again in September 1833, she went through a second trial in which she was found guilty but was not sentenced. Crandall's lawyers appealed the decision to Connecticut's Supreme Court of Errors. At issue was whether the Constitution of the United States of America protected free African-Americans as citizens, and, accordingly, their right to have freedom of education. In July 1834 the Connecticut Supreme Court of Errors dismissed the case on a legal technicality, but the lower court's assertion that free African-Americans were not constitutionally-protected as citizens remained unchallenged. Prudence Crandall's crusade against the racist undercurrent of the Black Law became the rallying cry of abolitionists as *The Liberator* popularized her cause and condemned the evils of prejudice. The Black Law would be repealed in 1838.

Although her legal battles eventually ended, Crandall and students endured acts of harassment, discrimination, and hostility during the seventeen months that the academy was open. Most local shopkeepers refused to sell them food, and a local doctor refused to treat her students. Local youth threw stones and eggs at the school, and manure was put down its well making the water undrinkable. In January 1834 someone even set the building on fire. Despite these hostilities, the academy remained open until the night of September 9, 1834, when a mob armed with clubs and iron bars terrorized the students and ransacked the academy, breaking windows and overturning furniture. Fearing for the safety of her students, Crandall decided to close the school.

Crandall and her husband, Reverend Calvin Philleo, whom she had married on August 12, 1834, moved to upstate New York but returned to Canterbury a few years later. In 1842 Prudence moved westward to Illinois where she taught again and farmed land purchased by her late father. Calvin Philleo died there in 1874. In 1877 Prudence and her brother Hezekiah moved to Elk Falls, Kansas where she continued to farm, teach, write poetry, and speak on topics such as temperance and women's rights.

Some residents of Canterbury and other supporters, including renowned author and Hartford resident Mark Twain, were instrumental in getting the Connecticut General Assembly to approve an act on April 6, 1886, authorizing a \$400 per year pension for Prudence Crandall. The pension, termed by a newspaper of the day as "a tardy act of justice," was granted "by way of compensation for injuries done to her person and property" by the opponents of her academy for African-American girls "during the years 1833 and 1834."¹ Prudence Crandall died in Elk Falls in 1890 at the age of 87.

In 1995, more than a century after her death, the Connecticut General Assembly passed an act honoring Prudence Crandall as Connecticut's State Heroine.

The Prudence Crandall House was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1991. Located at the intersection of routes 14 and 169 in Canterbury, it is operated as a museum by the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism.

In 2008 a statue of Prudence Crandall was dedicated in the South Lobby of the State Capitol in recognition of her legacy.

¹ House Joint Resolution No. 231, "Making an Appropriation to Prudence [Crandall] Philleo," approved April 6, 1886 in *Special Acts and Resolutions of the State of Connecticut*, Volume X, page 355. Hartford: Case Lockwood and Brainard, 1890.

Prudence Crandall stands as a symbol of decency, integrity, equality, and freedom—defining traits of a great democracy. A woman who was decades ahead of her time, she risked her life and personal freedom to challenge racial injustice. I am, therefore, proud to dedicate the 2009 edition of the *Connecticut State Register and Manual* to Prudence Crandall.

Susan Bysiewicz

Secretary of the State



(Courtesy of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism)

The Prudence Crandall Museum

Home of Prudence Crandall and site of New England's first academy for African-American women, this National Historic Landmark is located in Canterbury Connecticut.



(David Killian, Secretary of the State's Office)

Statue of State Heroine Prudence Crandall and Student

Located in the Connecticut State Capitol Building in Hartford

Perfection Defined:
The National Champion University of Connecticut Women's Basketball Team



(Courtesy of UConn Athletics)

“Simply the Best...Better than all the rest,” were the words made famous more than twenty years ago by Tina Turner. No phrase more aptly describes the 2008-2009 UConn Women's Basketball Team and head coach Geno Auriemma. The Huskies won their sixth NCAA national championship this year, completing their season with a perfect 39-0 record.

What does it mean to be perfect? It is not merely a collection of numbers on a page. It is also not a series of victories on game day during the basketball season. To look at the numbers and the wins alone would be ignoring the true value of perfection at one's craft. Perfection is the culmination of many years of dedication and preparation; the unglamorous hours spent lifting weights, doing sprints, running plays, working on blocking, passing, rebounding, shooting countless foul shots on the floor every day on the basketball court. Perfection is the result of discipline on and off the court, keeping up with studies while maintaining a laser-like focus on physical conditioning, taking direction from the coaching staff and finding new ways to work with teammates to achieve collectively what no one individual could possibly do alone.

Most importantly, perfection does not mean the absence of mistakes. Quite the opposite, to achieve perfection an individual or a group makes many mistakes—the key is turning those mistakes into learning experiences that strengthen character, sharpen skills, and add to the intelligence of the individual and group as a whole. This requires mentors such as Coach Geno Auriemma who are able to correctly point out shortcomings with the goal of helping the team learn and improve. Just as significant, it requires the poise and confidence of team members who can engage in serious self-reflection and evaluation, take the criticism and work together to improve their game.

The UConn Women's Basketball team has now completed three undefeated seasons, and won six national championships. Their latest achievement came during a period of great uncertainty in our country and in the world. At a time when many are not sure if they will be able to hold onto their jobs or their homes, the Huskies provided a great inspiration and brought joy into the lives of thousands of Connecticut residents once again.

Given this tremendous achievement, we say thank you and congratulations. Our state appreciates the true depth and measure of your success and we will never take it for granted. You have worked hard and achieved great things, and we are proud of you.

Susan Bysiewicz
Secretary of the State

In Memory of

Christian S. Cotner

Thomas J. Brown

*Service members from Connecticut lost in
Afghanistan and Iraq,
May 2008 – June 2009*



Marine Corporal Christian S. Cotner

Marine Cpl. Christian S. Cotner of Waterbury died May 30, 2008 in Al Anbar province while serving on his first tour of duty in Iraq. He was 20 years old.

Corporal Cotner was a graduate of Wilby High School where he volunteered to serve in honor guards as well as in the ROTC.

“He was very conscientious and really loved being in ROTC,” his high school principal Robyn Apicella told the Republican-American of Waterbury. “And he couldn’t wait to go into the military.”

Friends said Cotner worked at a local skating rink in Waterbury while in high school.

“I went to school . . . and also worked with him at Roller Magic,” Amy Percy, of Naugatuck, said. “I always remember him as being funny. He could always make me laugh. He was just a sweetheart.”

Another friend, Lauren Galanti, of Waterbury, said Cotner’s death brought home the reality of the war.

“Until I heard about it, I never thought much about Iraq,” Galanti said. “When I realized Christian isn’t coming back, I realized the war is real.”

Christian Cotner entered the Marine Corps in August 2006. He was assigned to Marine Wing Support Squadron 172, Marine Wing Support Group 17, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, III Marine Expeditionary Force, based in Okinawa, Japan.

A field radio operator, Cotner was promoted to the rank of corporal in April 2008.

His awards and decorations included the National Defense Services Medal, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Sea Services Deployment Ribbon, and Meritorious Mast.

Corporal Christian S. Cotner was the 42nd service member with ties to Connecticut to die in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2002.

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Additional information courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Photo courtesy of the Cotner family.



Army First Lieutenant Thomas J. Brown

Army First Lt. Thomas J. Brown, who grew up in Shelton, died Sept. 23, 2008 in Salman Pak, Iraq after the patrol he was leading came under small arms fire. He was 26.

A rifle platoon leader, Brown was serving with the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, based in Baumholder, Germany.

Thomas Brown graduated from Notre Dame High School in Fairfield in 2000, and from George Mason University in 2004 with a degree in government and international politics.

After college, “[h]e tried working, but found life behind a desk was not for him,” said Carol Brown his mother. “Ever since Tom was young, he always wanted to go into the military,” she said.

So Thomas Brown enrolled in Army Officer Candidate School. In addition to earning an officer’s commission, he also earned Airborne wings and graduated from the Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Carol Brown said her son, who lived in Burke, Virginia, was proud to be an infantry soldier. “Infantry meant everything to him,” she said. By being on the ground and leading soldiers, he believed he could make the most impact and do the most good. “The whole purpose, he felt, of joining the military is he wanted to make a difference,” Carol Brown said.

Thomas Brown was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart and the Combat Infantryman Badge. His other awards included the National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Overseas Service Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Parachutist Badge and the Ranger Tab.

First Lieutenant Thomas J. Brown was the 43rd service member with ties to Connecticut to die in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2002.

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Additional information and photograph courtesy of the U.S. Army, HQ USAREUR & 7th Army, OCPA, Media and Community Relations.

In Memory of

John A. Chapman

Phillip A. Jordan

Kemaphoom Ahn Chanawongse

Wilfredo Perez, Jr.

Richard Selden Eaton, Jr.

David Travis Friedrich

Anthony D'Agostino

Phillip R. Albert

Jeffrey Braun

Eric Thomas Paliwoda

Benjamin Gilman

Tyanna Avery-Felder

Felix Delgreco

Nathan B. Bruckenthal

Melissa Hobart

Jacob D. Martir

*Service members from Connecticut lost in
Afghanistan and Iraq,
March 2002 – September 2004**

* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2004 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*

In Memory of

William Brennan

Kevin J. Dempsey

Joseph Michael Nolan

Michael J. McMahon

Henry E. Irizarry

Robert Hoyt

Thomas E. Vitagliano

Lawrence R. Philippon

John T. Schmidt, III

Christopher Hoskins

Steve Reich

David Coullard

*Service members from Connecticut lost in
Afghanistan and Iraq,
October 2004 – October 2005**

* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2005 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*

In Memory of

Brian S. Letendre

Stephen Bixler

Jordan C. Pierson

Philip A. Johnson

Nicholas A. Madaras

*Service members from Connecticut lost in
Afghanistan and Iraq,
November 2005 – September 2006**

* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2006 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*

In Memory of

Jason Hamill

Joseph E. Phaneuf, II

Richard L. Ford

Stephen K. Richardson

Keith Heidtman

*Service members from Connecticut lost in
Afghanistan and Iraq,
November 2006 – May 2007**

* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2007 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*

In Memory of

Andre Craig, Jr.

Jason D. Lewis

Jason Lantieri

*Service members from Connecticut lost in
Afghanistan and Iraq,
June 2007 – April 2008**

* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2008 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*