

Memo to: NHPRC

From: Bruce Stark

Date: March 31, 2005

Re: Final Report on Improving the Management of Connecticut's Historical Judicial Records: A Preservation/Access Project

## Overview

This grant was made possible by financial support from the National Historical Publications Commission and the Connecticut Historic Documents Preservation Fund. It was a pilot project or model designed to develop a plan for improving the preservation of and increasing access to historical judicial records in the State Archives at the Connecticut State Library. For the purpose of this pilot project, we chose to concentrate on the records from Litchfield County and New London County for the period up to 1855, at which time the Connecticut General Assembly temporarily abolished the county courts.<sup>1</sup> Considerable success has been achieved and some valuable lessons have been learned.

One of the first things we learned was that our estimate of what could be accomplished in two years was excessively optimistic. The original design was to process, arrange, preserve and describe the records of the county courts and superior courts for the two counties. Staffing difficulties and preservation problems that were much greater than anticipated, however, combined to reduce production to about 50% of original projections and, thus, the records of the superior courts for the two counties could not be processed.

With regard to staffing, the project was impeded from almost the beginning by the fiscal problems of the State of Connecticut. Within a few months after project archivist Debra Pond on November 30, 2001 started work, a hiring freeze was instituted and the archives was not allowed to hire student workers during the summer months to do initial processing and preservation work. On December 6, 2002, the State announced the layoff some 2,800 employees and that number included the entire judicial records project staff. Debra Pond and a newly hired second project person were both terminated on December 20, 2002. Library Assistant George Miller lost his job after being bumped by someone with more seniority and the project director received a layoff noticed. Due to his seniority, he was able to bump a person with less seniority and was reassigned to another job location. Thanks to the efforts of State Librarian Kendall Wiggin and Public Records Administrator Eunice DiBella, however, the project director returned to his old position in mid-June 2003 with his salary being paid by the Connecticut Historic Documents Preservation Fund. Further efforts led to the rehiring of Debra Pond and the hiring of a one-year project archivist Louise Tucker at the beginning of October 2003 and we were back in business.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut has eight counties. We chose New London County because it was one of the colony's first four counties; was a major maritime, manufacturing, and commercial center, the center for religious dissent; and the region with the largest African American and Native American populations. Litchfield County, on the other hand, was the most rural, least settled, least economically developed region of Connecticut, and the last organized during the colonial era. It became, however, a major political and legal center during the Revolutionary War and the Early National periods.

<sup>2</sup> Louise Tucker accepted another position three months before the end of grant funding.

With the continued work of volunteer Paul Baran and, beginning the summer of 2004, the assistance of student workers Heather Corrigan, Alyssa Kingston, Mona Scully-Smith, and Virginia Imbimbo additional progress has been made. This recounting of staff comings and goings, a direct consequence, of the State's fiscal problems, demonstrates that it is impossible for grant projects to maintain momentum and hope to achieve their goals without stability in staffing.

In retrospect, it is apparent that our staffing configuration was not designed to achieve the best results. We devoted too many resources to professional staff. Had the State Library been able to hire more part-time people to do the initial and routine processing and preservation work, we could have easily gotten by with just one project archivist. Should any future project of a similar nature be considered, it is recommended that one project person at a professional level be hired for training, supervision, and analysis purposes and that the remaining project staff consist of part-timers to be engaged in the tasks described above. With such a staffing configuration, more could be accomplished at less cost.

The huge quantity of eighteenth-century court documents needing repairs marked the other major factor that has slowed down processing progress. The court records were in much worse physical shape than preliminary work and sampling had indicated. We were faced with three basic alternatives when confronted with this mass of documents requiring preservation. First, we could do nothing. Second, we could send these papers to the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) for professional conservation/preservation work, or, third, we could do the repairs ourselves. None of the alternatives presents an ideal solution.

The first alternative, to do nothing, was immediately rejected. Archivists have the responsibility to do the best they can to preserve the collections under their care. To offer improved access to documents that are damaged or torn without making some attempt to at least stabilize their condition would have been unprofessional. The second alternative, to send thousands of documents to NEDCC for conservation was likewise impractical. The cost for repair would have been prohibitive, the logistical problems in processing collections missing large numbers of papers would have been difficult if not impossible to overcome, and our processing progress would have been slowed even further. We chose, therefore, to stabilize the condition of these materials by a combination of methods – repairs using archival document repair tape, enclosure of fragile documents in bond paper, and in some instances by enclosing documents in mylar. These repairs were and are time consuming, but they preserve the information these court records contain and make them more readily accessible to researchers.<sup>3</sup>

During the course of the project, the State Library contracted with the Northeast Document Conservation Center to provide a “Best Practices” report on the treatment of court files. Walter Newman prepared a report with many helpful suggestions, although not all of them were immediately practical. The State Archives shall take this report under consideration in planning any additional projects to process historical court records.

### **Accomplishments and Research Potential**

A great deal has been accomplished over the duration of the judicial records grant and the table at the top of page three provides an overview of what has been completed at different intervals over the course of the grant.

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<sup>3</sup> In addition to enclosing fragile documents in bond, the staff also enclosed three or more documents pertaining to a single case in bond and small documents accompanying larger ones. Each box of records also contains a warning telling patrons that these documents are fragile and must be handled with extreme care.

**Table 1. Processing Totals**

	<b>6 months</b>	<b>12 months</b>	<b>24 months</b>	<b>30 months</b>	<b>36 months</b>
Litchfield	75	146	190	303	388
New London	43	131	216	307	418
<b>Totals<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>118</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>806</b>

Between Dec. 1, 2004 and March 31, 2005, another 64 boxes of Files and Papers by Subject for the New London County Court have been completed, primarily by two student workers, and around 65 more need to be processed before all the records are finished. Considering the poor physical condition of so many of the records and staffing problems the project endured, the totals are impressive, even though some work remains to be done on New London County, a jurisdiction of much greater historical significance than Litchfield County.

As indicated in previous reports, these records contain a wealth of documentation on a wide variety of subjects and contain information that cannot be found in any other sources, together with details that supplement data found in other primary sources. As one legal scholar has stated, county courts served as the “workhorses of the Connecticut judicial system.”<sup>5</sup> No necessity exists to repeat in detail information found in previous reports or contained in the finding aids included with this final report. These records, however, can serve as the fundamental or supplementary sources for genealogists and historians working on scores of articles, books, or dissertations on a wide variety of subjects.

The uninitiated are not aware of the vast quantity of data court records contain on thousands of people. When most people search for information on people in public records, they go to such materials as cemetery, church, land, probate, and vital records. After all, everyone is born, everyone dies, most marry and have children, many belong to a church, and most adult males owned property at one time or another. But court records? What needs to be emphasized is that county courts heard hundreds of civil lawsuits, mostly to collect debts, each year during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and as many people appeared in court records in, say, a five-year period as were born, married, had children, purchased land, joined a church, or died combined.

County court records, then, are an invaluable source to those interested in biography, family history, and genealogy, in particular for those individuals and families that spent a great deal of time within one county. Persons working on genealogies or family history will find court records especially useful for they contain substantive information on hundreds of individuals, from the prominent like the father of Benedict Arnold of Norwich and the Oliver Wolcotts of Litchfield to the obscure like Charles Hazelton of Killingworth and Timothy Tiffany of Lyme, that cannot be found in other sources. The court records project demonstrates that it is impossible to do justice to any biographical subject without close and careful examination of these materials.

In addition, the records contain voluminous information on the role of women before the court. The legal principle of coverture<sup>6</sup> served to limit the appearances of females as plaintiffs or defendants in court cases, but they frequently appeared as witnesses, gave depositions, and served as signatory

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<sup>4</sup> The figures do not include the boxes created for New London County African Americans Collection, New London County Native Americans Collection, or Litchfield County Minorities Collection. These currently make up another eight boxes.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce H. Mann, *Neighbors and Strangers: Law and Community in Early Connecticut* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> Under coverture, a woman could only sue through the personality of her husband.

witnesses to debts by note.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the records contain considerable documentation on women with illegitimate children suing to recover child bearing and maintenance costs. Moreover, single women and widows regularly appeared as plaintiffs and defendants in court cases and a small number, like the diarist Madam Sarah Knight, entrepreneur Mercy Raymond, and widows Elizabeth Hallam, Elizabeth Livingston, and Sarah Rogers made frequent court appearances. The records, then, provide evidence that women were not victims of prejudice by the male dominated judicial system but active players who sought and received justice before the bar.<sup>8</sup>

These records are equally valuable to those interested in studying the downtrodden or minorities. The two minorities most prominently represented in the records are African Americans and Native Americans.

**Table 2. African Americans and Native Americans**

	<b>AA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Litchfield	165	23	188
New London	286	239	525
<b>Totals<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>451</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>713<sup>10</sup></b>

Litchfield County in northwestern Connecticut was the last established during the colonial era and its minority population reached only a fraction of that for New London County. For the entire period between 1752 and 1855, only 188 court cases have been found in which an Indian or Negro was either a plaintiff, defendant, subject, or a person mentioned in a legal proceeding.

The contrast with New London County could not be stronger. Complete statistics for the latter county only exist up to 1774, but for that time period alone almost three times the number of cases have been found. When the figures from New London County Files for the years between 1781 and 1855 and from Papers by Subject are added, then the total will probably be at least six times that for Litchfield County, a number in the 1,250-1,500 range.<sup>11</sup> For further information on these two groups, please see the finding aids for the Litchfield County Court Minorities Collection, New London County African Americans Collection, and New London County Native Americans Collection.

Diligent researchers can likewise find useful information on the lot of apprentices, the mentally incompetent, the poor, and transients. People classified as transients, e.g. those without a legal place of abode, are invariably so identified in the court records. Those at the lowest rung of the economic ladder and unable to pay their debts were almost always jailed and sometimes assigned to the service of those willing to pay their debts. Those interested in the condition of apprentices or indentured

<sup>7</sup> For more information on women in court records, see the Interim Report to NHPRC, July 12, 2002, and the finding aids to the records of the New London County Court and Litchfield County Court.

<sup>8</sup> The victims argument is made most effectively by Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

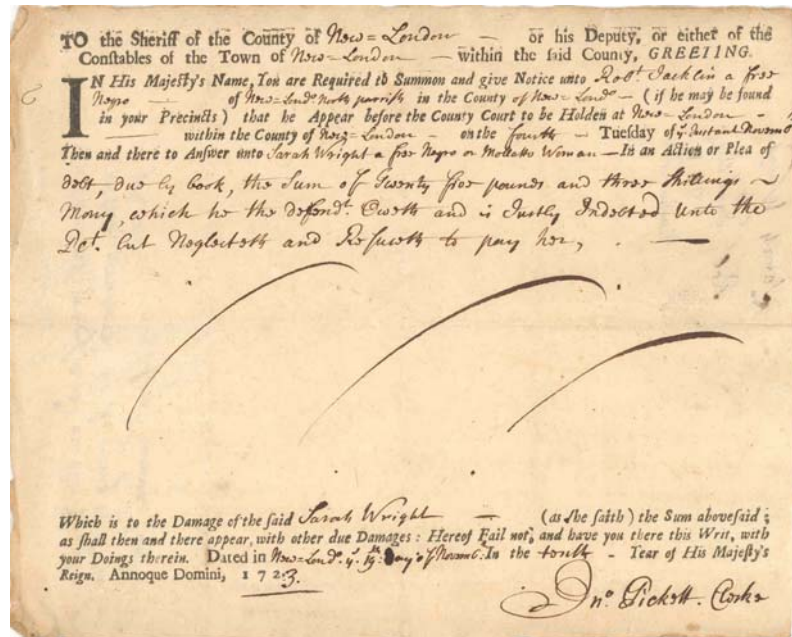
<sup>9</sup> In the last six-month report, covering the period Dec. 1, 2003 – May 31, 2004, the combined total for cases involving Indians and Negroes was 573.

<sup>10</sup> An incomplete list of additional New London County cases involving African Americans and Native Americans found by Paul Baran, Virginia Imbimbo, George Miller, Mona Scully-Smith, and Louise Tucker totals around 250.

<sup>11</sup> No detailed study of slavery at the county level has been undertaken for any county in New England and the completion of this project will make such a project feasible. Most studies of slavery in New England focus on Massachusetts and the authors have generally given just brief reference to Connecticut. The only dissertation on Connecticut slavery is Guocun Yang, "From Slavery to Emancipation: The African Americans of Connecticut, 1650s-1820s (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1999).

servants will probably find more information in town records, but Files for the New London County Court contain about ninety cases on this subject for the period up to the American Revolution. Materials on conservators for those considered “impotent and non compos mentis” are located in Papers by Subject, although some additional information can be found in Files.

### Illustration 1



**Sarah Wright v. Robert Jacklin, Nov. 1723,  
lawsuit between two free Negroes<sup>12</sup>**

As indicated in previous reports and in the finding aids, the vast majority of cases are relatively straightforward debt ones, with debts by note far exceeding debts by book or bill and debts by bond. These cases lack the interest of those concerning assault and battery or defamation and slander as examples, but they nonetheless contain research gold for the diligent. Researchers can, however, find a great deal of information about individual debtors and creditors, traders in company, and patterns of economic growth and development from debt cases. In addition, debt cases are those in which women, minorities, transients, and the poor are most likely to appear.

The court records provide considerable detail on patterns of trade and economic development. In the eighteenth century, a strong focus in the records is on the activities of country traders and merchants. The records contain documentation on New London County merchant accounts with traders in such major metropolitan areas as Boston, New York City, and Newport, together with information on the shipping trade, primarily with the West Indies, but also with the British Isles and the Canadian Maritimes. Court records for Litchfield County in the first part of the nineteenth century contain information on the importance of the dairy industry, particularly the sale of cheese and butter. Dairy products were exported to the South but such cargoes were fragile and the result was frequent litigation.

<sup>12</sup> New London Court African Americans Collection, Box 1, folder 15.

Researchers interested in crimes against person or property will also find county court records extremely useful. The records contain hundreds of cases of assault and battery, breach of peace, profane swearing, riot, theft, sexual assault, and turbulent and threatening behavior. The *Litchfield County Minorities Collection* alone contains 32 cases of assault, 30 of theft, and 5 of breach of the peace. For the period up to the American Revolution, the records for the New London County Court include some 400 cases of assault, profane swearing, riot, and turbulent behavior and another 200 of theft. When one adds to the theft number, those concerning trover and conversion and those in which property has gone out of the possession of plaintiffs by unknown means or was casually lost, then the total for crimes against property mounts a great deal higher. Trespass represents another category of crimes against property. The bulk of these cases concern such matters as illegal cutting of timber, tearing down fences, cutting and harvesting crops, and malicious mischief on the property of plaintiffs.<sup>13</sup>

The subject of “sexual crime” is well represented in county court records. The charge may be for adultery, fornication, incontinence before marriage, keeping a bawdry house, lascivious carriage, or support for a bastard child. The vast majority of the cases concerned fornication and the results there from, the illegitimate child. In the early part of the eighteenth century, both women and their male sexual partners were prosecuted. This was followed by a period at mid-century when women were more generally prosecuted than men, but by the last third of the century, few of either sex faced prosecution. The pattern becomes one of the mother suing the father of the child for childbirth expenses and for maintenance of the child. The mothers often achieved success in these lawsuits.

The role and function of the court and court officers are likewise delineated. The records can be used for institutional studies of the county court itself and the roles of the judges, king and state attorneys, secretaries, treasurers, sheriffs, constables and deputy sheriffs, and jails and jailers. The growth and development of the legal profession in eighteenth-century Connecticut is well documented. In the early part of the century, parties in contested lawsuits rarely used lawyers, but by mid-century, legal counsel was deemed a necessity in all disputed cases. For those with a biographical focus, county court records represent an indispensable research source and, since few prominent 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> lawyers left collections of legal papers, county court records provide an indispensable source to reconstruct legal lives. Sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, and constables had the duty to serve summonses and writs of execution. Often such tasks were not easy and legal officers faced jeopardy for failing to properly serve a writ or summons. Once judgment had been secured against losing parties in court cases then constables and deputy sheriffs by writs of execution attached real or personal property to pay judgment and court costs. The property was turned over to third parties to be held until auctioned off, but often the third parties failed to deliver the property for sale and additional lawsuits ensued. The court issued hundreds of writs of scire facias to summon defendants and their sureties to appear to answer charges brought against them.<sup>14</sup> An all too common occurrence was for a defendant not to appear for his court date and then a writ of scire facias issued to summon the surety.

Court records are not the source researchers think of when it comes to documenting Connecticut’s religious history, but they provide some valuable supplementary information to fill gaps in other records. The quantity is not large in comparison to what can be found in other primary sources, but the records contain information on such subjects as payment of salaries for established Congregational ministers and the building of new meetinghouses, plus scattered but valuable

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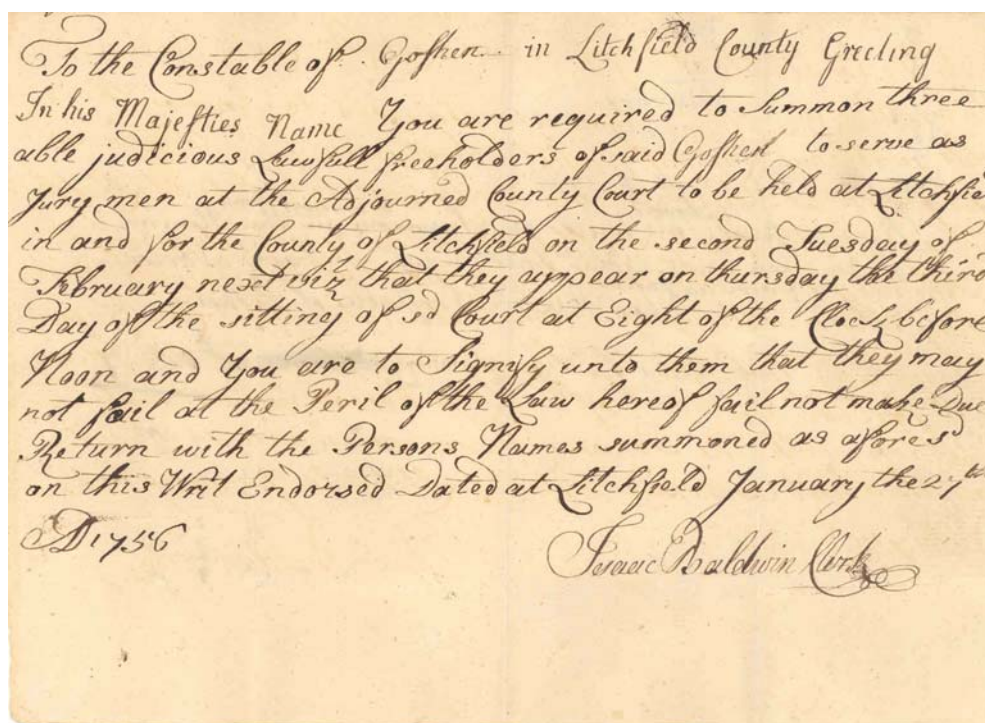
<sup>13</sup> The courts also used trespass to describe cases of assault, defamation and slander, and theft, among other subjects.

<sup>14</sup> Scire facias is a writ requiring the person against whom it is directed to appear at court and show cause why judgment should not be revived.

materials on under documented religious dissenters – Anglicans, Baptists, Rogerenes, and Separatists. Files of New London County for June 1785 provide documentation on a case involving the Shakers.

One of the most interesting subjects found in county court records consists of lawsuits for defamation and slander, cases concerning insults or rumors that struck at the heart of the positions of plaintiffs in society. These lawsuits usually include exact quotations from conversation and, thus, provide a window into the past. Individuals considered themselves defamed for any one of several reasons, including adultery, attempted murder, bankruptcy or inability to pay bills, bribery, buggery or sodomy, counterfeiting or forgery, drunkenness, extortion, fornication, lascivious carriage, perjury or swearing a false oath, profane swearing, prostitution, selling strong drink without license, and theft. Typically the plaintiff sued for large monetary damages, the average being around £500, and he/she could be awarded the entire sum demanded, a token amount, or no amount.<sup>15</sup>

### Illustration 2



### Summons for Jurors in Town of Goshen, Jan. 1756<sup>16</sup>

County court records also provide information on significant events in Connecticut history and represent a source that most researchers have not previously examined. The subject may be religious dissent, the Spanish Ship Case, laws respecting privateers, treatment of insolvent debtors, illicit trade with the enemy, desertion, the problems involved with raising troops during the American Revolution, or political disputes between Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans. In addition, all sorts of issues concerning trade, commerce, economic development, and transportation improvements are fought out in county court records. Court records include early examples of jury nullification in the consistent unwillingness of juries to convict men summoned to serve in the French and Indian

<sup>15</sup> In around one third of all cases, no verdict was rendered as lawsuits were withdrawn or otherwise not adjudicated.

<sup>16</sup> Litchfield County, County Court, Papers by Subject: Jurors, Box 22, folder 14.

War and deserting prior to muster. In addition, the economic hardships caused by the American Revolution are well documented, not to mention the increasing problem of illicit trade with the enemy as the war lengthened and, in New London and Groton, the consequences in death and property destruction by Benedict Arnold's raid on September 6, 1781.

The history of medical practice in Connecticut, to cite one last example, can be studied through court records. The Files for Litchfield and New London Counties contain hundreds of suits by physicians to recover costs for providing care and medicine to the sick. In addition, the papers contain information on how society dealt with the scourge of smallpox and documentation on cases of malpractice.

The few brief paragraphs above by no means come close to exhausting the research riches in county court records. The records contain information on many other subjects, including arson, care for youths and the mentally incompetent, covenant broken, forgery, fraudulent contract, lotteries, perjury, retailing strong drink without license, unlawful smallpox inoculation, and usury. In addition, the court heard lawsuits violating Connecticut statutes regulating commerce, like those accused of setting themselves up as tanners without a license and putting obstructions across rivers and streams.

The materials in Papers by Subject offer a myriad of additional research topics. They include practices for admissions to the bar, appointments of court officers, court expenses, and jail expenses. Included among jail expenses, are accounts for care of prisoners, a disproportionate share of whom were Indians or Negroes. The subseries for Conservators and Guardians has research interest because it documents how Connecticut society dealt with orphans and the mentally incompetent. Fifty-nine boxes of Executions, court orders to enforce a judgment by attaching and selling property owned by the losing party in a lawsuit to satisfy the debt, contain extensive information on property holdings. They also enable researchers to track changes in satisfaction of debt over time, as the execution could be paid in cash, real property, or personal property. Defendants unable or unwilling to pay their bills could be jailed or could depart for places unknown. Those interested in genealogy will find the subseries for Jurors, Licenses, and Partition of Land valuable. The first records the names of jurors summoned to serve at court, the second provides useful information on tanners and tanning licenses, and the third valuable family data on parties involved in partition cases. The Meeting House subseries includes information on building new meetinghouses, together with a small amount on religious dissenters. The records for New London County include important materials on Pensions, Revolutionary War, consisting of applications of 154 indigent veterans, including some two-dozen minorities, for federal pensions. The last subseries of significance is Travel. It holds information on country roads, public highways, and turnpikes together with documentation on town tavern keepers. The bulk of the records concern such mundane yet important subjects as building, changing the routes of, repairing, or discontinuing highways. The county court had primary jurisdiction over roads built and maintained by towns and only secondary jurisdiction over turnpikes charging tolls that were chartered by the General Assembly.

## **Outreach**

We have continually worked to provide information to interested parties about the research value of these court records. Below is a list of publications and papers that have discussed the court records project. We have also discussed our work in meetings of the Connecticut State Historical Records Advisory Board, Connecticut Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History, and the State Historic Documents Preservation Fund Advisory Committee. Through word of mouth, a number of genealogists, graduate students, and faculty have been informed of these records and their research potential. The finding aids and databases are being posted on the web page for the State Archives.



Archives staff has conscientiously worked to publicize the work and promote use of the records. Please see the following list.

Debra Pond and Bruce P. Stark, "The Connecticut Court Records Project, *Annotation* Vol. 34 (Dec. 2002): 4-5, 19.

Bruce P. Stark, "Connecticut County Court Records: Issues of Access and Use," *New England Archivists*, Oct. 18, 2003.

### Illustration 3

Know all men by these presents That I Sarah Knight  
of Norwich in the County of New London & Colony of  
Connecticut in New England Widows & the p'sent  
Have Constituted Ordained deputed appointed & made  
& in my Head & place put deputed John Livingston  
of New London a good Gent. m. to be my true & lawful  
& lawful Attorney for me, & in my name & Head, and to  
appear at any Court or court and before any Judge  
Justice, Officers or ministers of the Law what soever  
and coher to over, and there to Answer, defend & Reply  
to all Actions, causes, matters and things what soever  
in any wise relating to me constituent, and to  
implead and prosecute the same to effect (being  
and hereby Granting unto my sd Attorney my power  
and whole strength power & authority in the Premises,  
All which doings of him my sd Attorney in the Premises  
or his substitutes (one or more of them, I hereby  
also empower him to make) I have & will always  
and in all things Ratify and confirm, as good  
valid & effectual in all things for ever by these presents  
In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand &  
Seal the ninth day of August Anno Domini 1715

Signed Sealed & deliv'd  
in presence of  
C. Christoph P.  
Isaac Pond

Sarah Knight

**Power of attorney by Madam Sarah Knight, 1715<sup>17</sup>**

Debra Pond, "In Their Own Words: Details of Daily Life Revealed in County Court Records," *New England Archivists*, Oct. 18, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> New London County, County Court, Files, Box 9, folder 2.

Debra Pond, "Litchfield County Ladies: Their Lives and Loves," Association for the Study of Connecticut History, May 1, 2004.

Bruce P. Stark, "A Word from the Archives," *CONNservator* 4 (Sep. 2004): 2-5, on African Americans and Native Americans in county court records.

Paul Baran, "County Court Records: An Untapped Source on African Americans," The African American Experience in Connecticut, sponsored by the Association for the Study of Connecticut History, Connecticut League of History Organizations, and Manchester Community College, Nov. 6, 2004.

Bruce P. Stark, "Using Government Resources: Court Records," Underground Railroad Travelers: Research and Family History, sponsored by the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center and The Gilder Lehrman Center, April 9, 2005.

In addition, a Ph.D. student at the University of Connecticut, Dominic DeBrincat, is using New London County Court records as his basic source for, "Yankee Jurisprudence: The Court and Legal Culture of New London County, Connecticut, 1660-1820" and he delivered a paper at the African American Experience in Connecticut conference on November 6, 2004 on "Discolored Justice: Black in New London County Courts, 1710-1750." Katharine Grandjean, a Ph.D. student at Harvard University is using New London County Court records as one of her basic sources in her dissertation, "Bound Communities: Mapping the Encounters of Indians, English, and African Americans in Early New London County, Connecticut." Cornelia Dayton, professor of history at the University of Connecticut and author of the award-winning book on women in early Connecticut, is using the Conservators and Guardians subseries of Papers by Subject for New London County for a study of care of the elderly, infirm, and mentally impaired in New England.<sup>18</sup> A number of the records on Native Americans found for Litchfield and New London Counties will be included in the online Yale Indian Papers Project, currently in development.

Through contacts made with college and university in Connecticut, we continue to promote the use of these records for research projects.

### **Staff**

Paul Baran, volunteer  
 Heather Corrigan, student worker  
 Virginia Imbimbo, student worker  
 Alyssa Kingston, student worker  
 Mark H. Jones, project administrator  
 George Miller, library assistant  
 Karen Nadeski, project archivist  
 Debra Pond, project archivist  
 Mona Scully-Smith, student worker  
 Bruce P. Stark, project director  
 Louise Tucker, project archivist

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<sup>18</sup> Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

## Future Developments

With the formal end of the judicial records project, work remains to be done to complete the processing, arranging, and describing of the records of the New London County Court. I recommend that the project be continued until it is completed and that the Connecticut State Library think about ways to maintain this project to encompass court records from other counties. What this project has demonstrated is that these records are the most historically important unprocessed and underutilized materials in the vast collections of the State Archives.

Once processing, arranging, describing, and finishing of the databases for lawsuits involving African Americans and Native Americans for New London County has been completed, then archival repositories will be furnished with a model on how to make these valuable records more readily accessible to researchers. In addition, the breadth and depth of documentation these records provide both on thousands of individuals and a score of subjects open up research opportunities for dozens of articles, books, dissertations, and theses. They also provide the infrastructure for in depth studies on two disparate Connecticut counties.

## Finding Aids and Products

Litchfield County. County Court. Files, 1751-1855  
 Litchfield County. County Court. Papers by Subject, 1750-1855  
 Litchfield County Minorities Collection, 1753-1854  
 New London County African Americans Collection, 1701-1774  
 New London County Native Americans Collection, 1698-1774  
 New London County. County Court. Files, 1691-1774  
 New London County. County Court. Papers by Subject, 1685-1855

Databases:       Litchfield County Minorities, 1753-1854  
                       New London County African Americans, 1701-1774  
                       New London County Native Americans, 1698-1774

The seven finding aids and three databases will be mounted on the archives page of the CSL website and made available to researchers.<sup>19</sup> We hope to make digital versions of these finding aids and databases available to the public by the end of April.

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<sup>19</sup> See: <http://www.cslib.org/archives/htm>