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Media Contact:  
Laura Roberts  
203-259-1598

**African American History Month Honored at Fairfield Museum and History Center**

FAIRFIELD, CT (January 14) The Fairfield Museum and History Center will honor African American History Month with *The Slave Archaeology*, a lecture and discussion on Thursday, February 28 at 7:00pm. Examine the lives of Northern slaves and free blacks with Daniel Cruson, author of *The Slaves of Central Fairfield County*. A discussion will follow with curator Frank Mitchell and Craig Kelly, president of the NAACP, Bridgeport, and curator of Original Ancestors, a collection of slavery artifacts.

Daniel Cruson will present research and recent discoveries that build on his previous book, *Newtown's Slaves*. The new book now encompasses the towns of Easton, Redding, Weston, Trumbull and Monroe, and new material. Learn about the fascinating archaeological discoveries of spirit marks and a concealment shoe at the house of former slave Cato Freedom, and the discovery of the Newtown Baptist Church Records which establish Cato and his family as founding members of that church. The difficulties of African American research will be covered and the fascinating stories of two former slaves will be detailed.

The presentation will be followed by a discussion on Northern slavery, joined by Frank Mitchell and Craig Kelly. The audience is encouraged to participate in a dialogue that will address the tough issues and realities of slavery and slaves in the North and in Connecticut. What motivated the General Assembly to create emancipation laws? How did the Northern term "servant" change the perception of slavery? Who were the slaveowners and how did slaves arrive in the North? These issues will encourage critical thinking on America's past involvement in slavery and the importance of dialogue in our present times.

Mr. Cruson is a retired high school teacher and the Town Historian for Newtown. He served as the Chairman of the Newtown Tercentennial Commission in 2005 and is a member of the Newtown Historical Society, where he served as president in the 1990s. He was also a charter member of the Easton Historical Society and served a number of years on its board of trustees and as vice president. In addition, Mr. Cruson is active with the The Heritage Preservation Trust of Newtown, Society of American Archeology, and The Archaeological Society of Connecticut for which he is currently serving as president. He has published several books including *The Prehistory of Fairfield County*, *Newtown's Slaves: A Case Study in Early Connecticut Rural Black History*, and *Newtown and Redding and Easton in the Images of America* series, as well as

*Newtown: 1900-1960* in the same Images of America series. Most recently he has published *A Mosaic of Newtown History*, a collection of his essays, and the history of The Newtown Savings Bank, as part of the commemoration of that institution's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Frank Mitchell is Consulting Historian for The Amistad Center for Art & Culture at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Collections Manager for the New Haven Municipal Art Collection, and has taught museum studies for Trinity College's Graduate Studies Program. He is a founding partner of the consulting group Westside Works and board president of the Connecticut public history cooperative Stone Soup. Curatorial projects for The Amistad Center include the exhibitions *Sankofa*, *Hairitage*, *Flagging Freedom*, *Freeness!*, *Nothing but Freedom*, *Double Exposure: African Americans Before and Behind the Camera*, and *Soul Food!*. His other curatorial projects include *The 1901 Project*, New Haven Colony Historical Society/International Festival of Arts and Ideas; and *Welcome Amistad* exhibit, The New Haven Savings Bank.

Mr. Craig Kelly is President of the NAACP, Bridgeport Chapter and the Curator of *Original Ancestors* ([www.originalancestors.com](http://www.originalancestors.com)), a collection of slavery artifacts. He has made several presentations regarding the African Holocaust and has conducted research in several Caribbean Islands, including Havana and Santiago in Cuba. He is a member of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The Black Memorabilia Society, NYC, and The Greater New Haven African American Historical Society.

*"The Slaves of Central Fairfield County* is an important find for anyone doing research on slaves and slave owners in CT ... Daniel Cruson has set a good example for what research can be done in any part of the state. He has done a great job of finding information about slaves and slaveowners and has well documented his finds," says Deborah Hannah, independent history research with years of professional research experience and training at UCONN in Toxicology and Biology.

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