

Testimony
Appropriations Committee, General Assembly
February 17, 2009

Honorable Senator Harp and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am Robert Egleston, Cheshire, Secretary of the Amistad Committee.

For the better part of fifteen years, the Amistad Committee has helped to promote and extend the Connecticut Freedom Trail. We have done this in partnership with the Connecticut Historical Commission, now the History Division of the Commission on Culture and Tourism. We have assisted the Freedom Trail Committee, a group of dedicated volunteers from across our state who work diligently to advance the objectives of the Freedom Trail statewide and coordinate activities on the local level. These volunteers are especially active during September Freedom Trail Month.

The Amistad Committee's long standing interest in the Freedom Trail might give the impression that the Amistad Committee owns the Freedom Trail. It does not. The Connecticut Freedom Trail was established by an Act of the General Assembly in 1995. The Freedom Trail belongs to the State of Connecticut, just as Gillette Castle, the Prudence Crandall Museum, and Sleeping Giant State Park belong to the State of Connecticut.

The Freedom Trail is fragile because it has no physical existence of its own. It is an idea, or a cluster of ideas, that links together diverse properties and sites, both public and private, scattered across the Connecticut landscape. Without adequate support for the Freedom Trail, awareness of these ideas and the nature of the connections between the sites will fade and be forgotten. The virtue of these ideas and connections is that they help us understand our own history, serve to enhance the significance of each site on the Freedom Trail, and provide a meaningful framework for visitation.

Education and visitation are the primary objectives of the Freedom Trail. Promoting understanding and encouraging travel are positive goods, even in difficult economic times. Without the continued support of the Connecticut General Assembly, there will be no Connecticut Freedom Trail, and all that it could contribute to our state's future will be lost.

Thank you