

Dear Representatives of the State of Connecticut

March 1, 2023

John Carrington Sr. and his second wife, Joan of Wethersfield, Hartford County, Connecticut were my 10th great grandparents. Both were indicted on 20 February, 1651 of witchcraft and found guilty and executed on 6 March 1651. The charge for both was "familiarity with Satan and works above the course of nature." Colonial Connecticut Governor Edward Hopkins conducted the court. The magistrates present were Deputy Governor John Haynes, Thomas Welles of Wethersfield, Henry Wolcott and Henry Clark from Windsor and John Cullick and John Webster both from Hartford. A twelve-man jury heard the case.

John Carrington's indictment reads as follows, "John Carrington, thou art indicted by the name John Carrington of Wethersfield, carpenter, that not having the fear of God before thine eyes thou has Entertained familiarity with Satan, the great Enemy of God and mankind and by his help hast done works above the Course of nature for which both according to the Lawe of God and of the Established Lawe of the Commonwealth, thou deservest to die".

A local man at that time, Matthew Grant, stated in his diary that both were hanged. Unfortunately, all records of this trial and case have disappeared but the execution of my ancestors is not in question, given the many sources of this information. An educated guess from people who have researched this issue state they were taken from the prison on the Meetinghouse Square (Old State House) and after being hanged, their bodies thrown into an unmarked hole in the prison cemetery. They represent the only couple executed in Connecticut during the period known as the "Witch Hysteria in Connecticut from 1647-1663". John Carrington Sr also represents the only man to be executed for witchcraft during this period. Prior to 1662 when my ancestors were accused, Connecticut required only a single witness to a witchcraft event. The sentence was also pronounced by the Colonial Governor Hopkins of Connecticut. He had the authority to over-rule the funding of the jury, thus having absolute power over the proceedings.

John Sr and Joan Carrington lived just east of Shady Lane in Wethersfield and had an eleven-year-old son, John Jr from John Sr's first marriage to his wife, Mary, who had passed away. His second wife, Joan, had just delivered their daughter, Rebecca, who was orphaned at a few months of age. Rebecca grew to adulthood and married Abraham Andrus Sr and is my 9th great grandmother. I have identified numerous relatives who, like myself, are direct descendants of either John Jr or Rebecca Carrington. We are asking for any action on your part, even a pardon, for both John and Joan Carrington in the interest of social justice. They were extremely poor people – their whole estate totaled less than 24 pounds. Their deaths, besides being horrible for them, was also a hardship on their vulnerable children and later grandchildren.

This may seem like an old issue, irrelevant now after being buried over the centuries, but I have difficulty telling my young granddaughters, Josephine, Liesel and Mathilde, about what happened to their ancestors. Three states, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Virginia have rectified at least some witchcraft convictions, but thus far Connecticut has not. Attempts to get redress through the Connecticut legislature by my distant cousins in 2010 have also proved unsuccessful. Given the recent deaths of citizens by law-enforcement throughout the United States, your office's healing actions would send a strong statement to all oppressed people who may identify with the senselessness of these difficult times, past and present. I thank you for your time and consideration. I can be reached as below and would be glad to travel to your office or chat by phone about this matter with anyone you so designate.

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