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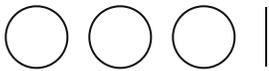
NEWS

# Wooster School students honor enslaved Danbury man freed after fighting in Revolutionary War



Kendra Baker

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The Witness Stone dedicated to Nimrod Benedict at Long Ridge United Methodist Church in Danbury, Conn.

Contributed photo

DANBURY — Outside the Long Ridge United Methodist Church lays a stone recognizing a former resident and veteran named Nimrod Benedict, whose life and story has become the focus of an extensive local history project at Wooster School.

The stone honoring the late Danbury resident was placed during a May 31 ceremony, following weeks of research by Wooster School seventh and eighth grade teams in partnership with the [Witness Stones Project](#).

The Witness Stones Project is a Connecticut-based organization that works with schools and community groups to “restore the history and honor the humanity” of enslaved individuals in Connecticut through research, education and civic engagement.

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Wooster School teamed up with the organization to not only teach seventh and eighth graders about the history of slavery in Connecticut, but have them research a former enslaved individual and memorialize them with a stone.

With help from the Witness Stones Project coordinators, the students decided to focus their research efforts on Nimrod, who was born into slavery in the 18th century, served during the Revolutionary War and later died a free man.

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Joulé Bazemore, Wooster’s Equity and Justice Center director, said the students spent about five weeks working on the project this school year and she was “impressed they got as much information as they did.”

Bazemore said the students conducted “pretty extensive” research and found that Nimrod was born in Danbury around 1760, sold to a local man named Noble Benedict when he was about 4 years old and later served in the Revolutionary War.

“According to the kids’ research, he was young – between 15 and 16 years old – when he fought in the war” Bazemore said

which he fought in the war, Bazemore said.

Although they have yet to uncover much about his life after service, she said the students learned Nimrod was freed at some point after the war.

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“We don’t know how long it took for him to gain his freedom, but we do know that he was freed after the war,” she said.

The students’ research into Nimrod provided some insight into some of the obstacles he faced as a person of color.

“Part of the research actually involved testimony that he gave when he was fighting for a war pension,” Bazemore said.

According to a biography Wooster students put together, Nimrod testified about his wartime service at the age of 72 in 1832.

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In doing so, the students wrote, Nimrod “showed his agency through his words.” They also noted that comments from officials who heard his testimony showed that Nimrod was a “well-respected and trusted man” in the community.

As a man of color, Bazemore said Nimrod’s fight for a war pension took courage.

“This was a man who put himself at risk by asking to be paid after the war,” she said. “That’s agency; that’s resistance; that’s ‘I’m here and you’re going to notice me.’”

Witness Stones are typically placed at either a person’s birthplace, place of work or somewhere with “a personal connection” to the individual, according to Bazmore.

“He had a connection to the Long Ridge United Methodist Church, so we thought it would be a great place to install the stone,” she said.

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According to Bazmore, a member of the congregation advocated for Nimrod to receive his war pension.

Although his stone states his name as Nimrod Benedict, that surname wasn't his birth name, and, according to the students' research, he might have gone by other last names later in life.

Nimrod's stone is the first Witness Stones memorial in Danbury and the seventh in Fairfield County, according to Witness Stones Project Executive Director David Culliton. The other six are all located at the Bush-Holley House in Greenwich.

Bazemore said she hopes Wooster School's involvement with the Witness Stones Project inspires nearby communities to do the same.

"I think the more we can amplify this, the better, because it's really important work," she said. "It's not about shaming ourselves because of the past, but saying we acknowledge what happened and we're reconciling."

According to Culliton, there are plans underway for Witness Stones Projects in Ridgefield and Wilton.

"We are beginning our work in Ridgefield through the middle schools there and partnering with the Ridgefield Historical Society to bring the stories of Ridgefield's

partnering with the Ridgefield Historical Society to bring the stories of Ridgefield's enslaved to the students and community," he said.

In Wilton, Culliton said they're working with St. Matthew's Episcopal Church and the town's historical society to "bring the project to the religious education students."

Bazemore said Wooster School will continue working with the Witness Stones Project next school year and would like to get members of the public involved as well.

"We're going to explore pathways we can take to involve the greater Danbury community," she said. "We don't see this as a Wooster-only thing – it's something that has a wider impact – and Wooster wants to give back to the local community."

Bazemore said anyone interested in getting involved can email her at [joule.bazemore@woosterschool.org](mailto:joule.bazemore@woosterschool.org).

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