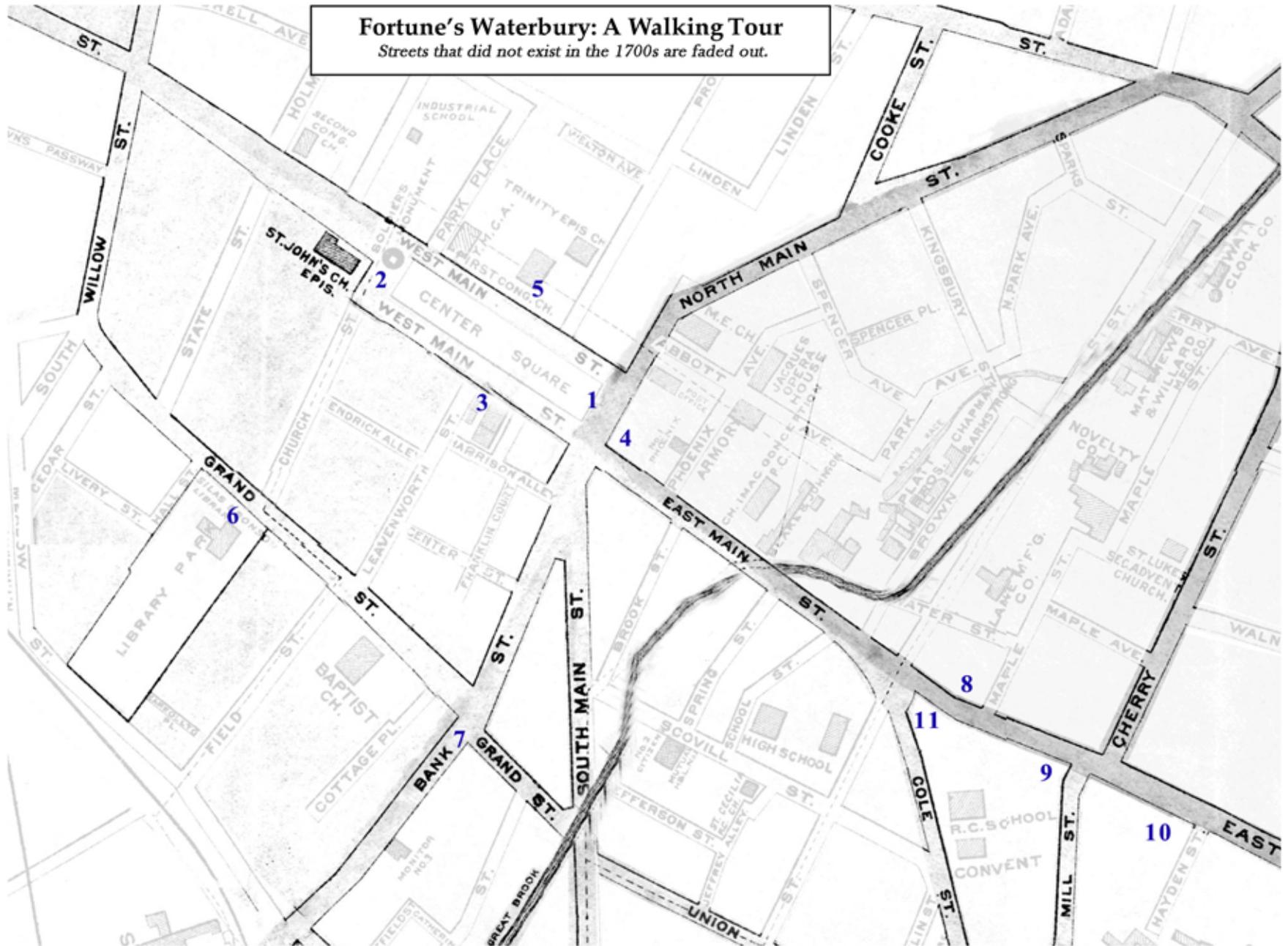


# Fortune's Waterbury: A Walking Tour

Streets that did not exist in the 1700s are faded out.



# Fortune's Waterbury

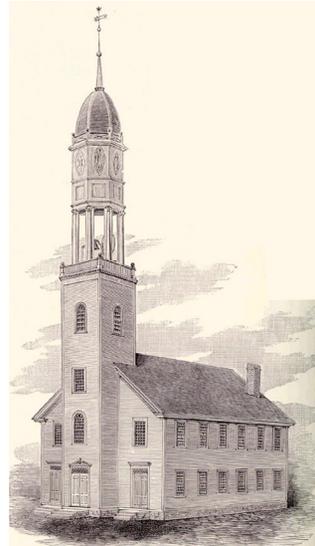
*Numbers indicated at each location correspond to numbers on map.*

## 1. Meeting House (Congregational Church after 1795)

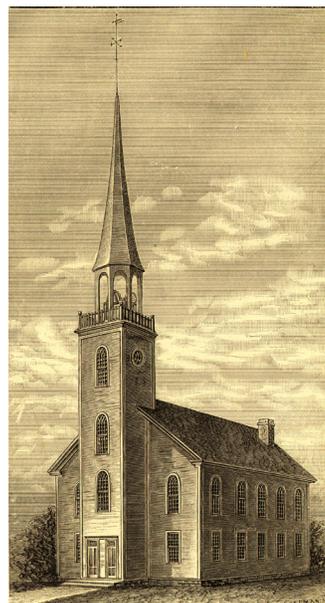
Seating in the Meeting House was organized according to status, with the most prominent citizens seated in the front. Many towns had a special section in the back of the meeting house designated for non-whites, but there is no record of this in Waterbury. The Congregational church in neighboring Westbury (now Watertown) had a pew in the back specifically for "people of colour."

In 1795, there were ninety-three members of the church. Mingo, who had once been enslaved by one of the church's deacons was the only African American member.

The third house of worship constructed by Waterbury's Congregationalists in 1795 on the east end of the Green. It was used as a church until 1840, when a new church was built on the north side of the Green.



*Congregational Church, 1796*



*St. John's Episcopal Church, 1797*

## 2. St. John's Episcopal Church

St. John's church, designed by architect David Hoadley, was constructed on the Green in 1795, replacing St. James' church which had been located further away. St. John's church was consecrated on November 1, 1797.

Preserved Porter and his family were members of the Episcopal church. Porter's wife, Lydia, was a devout Episcopalian. She may have been influential in having Fortune baptized on December 20, 1797. Fortune appears to have been the only member of his family to have been baptized.

## 3. Clark Homestead and Tavern

Deacon Thomas Clark was the owner of one of Waterbury's earliest slaves. Mingo was brought to Waterbury as a boy sometime around 1730. Mingo helped work Clark's farm and was at times hired out to other Waterbury residents.

Following Deacon Clark's death in 1767, Mingo had chosen to remain in the family home with Clark's son Thomas, but when the home became a tavern, Mingo moved to the Town Plot section of Waterbury, to live with the Deacon's other son, Timothy. The 1790 census listed Mingo as free; he was a member of the Congregational church by 1795 and died in 1800.

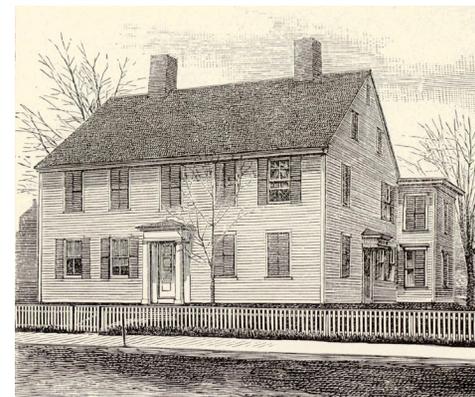
## 4. Rev. James Scovill's Home

Rev. James Scovill was a Waterbury native who served as the town's first resident Episcopal minister, from 1759 to 1788. Scovill had at least two slaves in his household: Dick and Phillis. Dick was taken captive while a boy in Africa, probably during the 1750s; it is not known when he or Phillis arrived in Waterbury. Dick lived to be either 90 or 96; he died in 1835, outliving all those who had held him as property.



*Rev. Scovill's Home, after it was relocated to South Main Street.*

At one point, Dick had also been enslaved by Waterbury's Episcopal deacon Stephen Bronson, who lived next door to Scovill. Scovill's son James continued to live in this house after 1788, operating a store from his home.



*Bronson Homestead*

Dick had a wife and children and owned property in the southern area of Waterbury. Dick was considered to be a "member of the family" by the Scovills and Bronsons. Henry Bronson remembered from his childhood that Dick was a kind man who became blind in old age. Bronson also recalled that "wicked boys" would "play tricks" on Dick after he lost his sight.

## 5. Homesite of Rev. Mark Leavenworth and Dr. Edward Field

Mark Leavenworth became the pastor of Waterbury's Congregational church in 1740. He owned two slaves, Peg and Phillis. The Leavenworth household had one slave listed in the 1790 census, and two in the census of 1800. Peg and Phillis are both named in Rev. Leavenworth's estate inventory following his death in 1797. Peg died June 13, 1806, when she was 54.



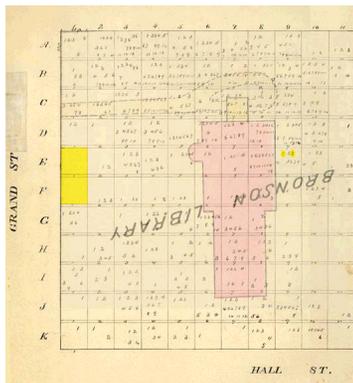
*Dr. Field's House, with later additions*

By 1810 the house was the home and office of Dr. Edward Field, who was married to Leavenworth's granddaughter. Field tore down the Leavenworth homestead in 1816, replacing it with a larger house and office. The Merriman house, as Field's house became known in the late 19th century, was moved to nearby Watertown in 1925 to make room for the Immaculate Conception church.

Phyllis appears in the 1810 census record as a slave in the Field household and as the only person still enslaved in Waterbury. The 1820 census listed her again in the Field household, but as a free person. Phyllis died on May 20, 1821, when she was 60 years old.

## 6. Grand Street Cemetery, African American Burial Plot

The first cemetery in Waterbury was located on Grand Street, where the Silas Bronson Library is today. It was divided into the main section, for white Protestants, and a smaller section to the side for African Americans and Native Americans. A third section was added in the nineteenth century for Roman Catholics.



By the 1880s, the cemetery was being called a "closed up and desolate place" in the heart of the city by prominent figures. It was at this time that the cemetery's custodian, Sturges Judd, undertook the task of locating and mapping every grave plot in the Grand Street Cemetery. His records found approximately

*Overlay of Judd's map and the original library. Grid E1 was the African American Burial Plot. Grid F1 held the entrance to that plot. Each grid measured 25x25 feet.*

800 inscribed stones and roughly 1,800 unmarked graves. By 1891, the city had decided to convert the cemetery to a public park and library. Some remains were relocated to other cemeteries by family members, but most of the remains were left untouched, including those of Dr. Preserved Porter and his son Jesse.

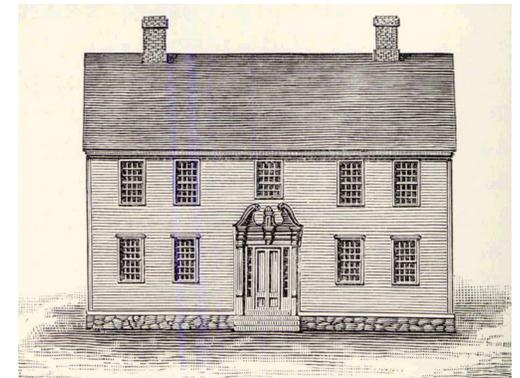
The section of the cemetery designated for "colored people" did not have any grave markers when Judd made his map of the cemetery. Their remains are still here. The "colored burial plot" was an area measuring at most 25x50 feet and is located just in front and to the side of a sculpture, *Benjamin Franklin* by Paul Wayland Bartlett.

## 7. Common Fence Gate

Eighteenth-century Waterbury was bounded by the Common Fence, which ran along the western and southern borders of the village; its two gates, on what are now Bank and West Main Streets, were designed primarily to protect crops from wandering cattle and pigs rather than to keep out human intruders. During times of war, however, they served as fortification against possible invaders. The fence remained a boundary line until 1800, and portions of it still stood as late as 1893. In the 18th century, African Americans in Connecticut were not permitted to leave their town without a written pass and were required to be in their homes by 9 p.m.

## 8. John Nichols' Home

John Nichols was a graduate of Yale College and lived in the house his father built for him on East Main Street. He practiced law in the justice courts, but was not a member of the bar. Nichols helped establish a deer park and club house in the "western part" of Waterbury, possibly in the Bunker Hill area.



*John Nichols' House*

John Nichols is listed in the 1790 census as owning three slaves, and two slaves in the 1800 census. In 1793, the *Litchfield Monitor* reported on the death of a "negro girl of about nine years old" who was the property of John Nichols. The unnamed girl had been left alone in the home of Rev. Hart, Waterbury's Episcopal minister, where she drank the contents of a "bottle of spirits" and died of alcohol poisoning. She may have been the daughter of the other two people enslaved by John Nichols.

### 9. Dr. Jesse Porter's Home before 1833

Jesse Porter was a son of Dr. Preserved Porter. Born in 1777, Jesse would have known Fortune and his family very well. Jesse was 21 when Fortune died. Jesse, like his father, was a doctor. He inherited Fortune's bones when Preserved Porter died in 1803. Jesse also inherited a portion of his father's house, which may be the same house Jesse was living in 30 years later.

Fortune owned a small house 80 rods (1/4 mile) east of Preserved Porter's house, on the north side of the road. If this is the location of Preserved's house, then Fortune's house was located approximately where Williams Street is today.

### 10. Dr. Daniel Porter's Home

Daniel Porter was Preserved Porter's father. The property remained in the Porter family until the 1860s.

### 11. Dr. Jesse Porter's Home after 1833

Jesse Porter built a stone house and doctor's office here in 1833 and lived in that house until his death in 1860. His daughter, Adelia, married David Law, Waterbury's postmaster, in 1837. Their son, Homer Lycurgus Law, taught anatomy to his daughter Sally using Fortune's bones in the 1880s. Fifty years later, Sally (who was herself a doctor) donated the skeleton to the Mattatuck Museum.



*Fortune as he may have looked in life. Painting by medical illustrator William Westwood, based on a photograph of Fortune's skeleton.*

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**Mattatuck Museum**  
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