

JOHN MILLS

Public Historian | Genealogist | Author | Filmmaker

President & Founder, Alex Breanne Corporation • Bloomfield, Connecticut • alexbreanne.org

PROFILE

Independent public historian and trained genealogist specializing in African American history, enslavement in New England, descendant reconnection, historical recovery, and public memory. Founder and president of the Alex Breanne Corporation, a Connecticut nonprofit that combines archival and genealogical research with descendant engagement, preservation, commissioned art, museum interpretation, memorialization, education, writing, and documentary storytelling. Mills's work frequently traces overlooked people forward through the historical record to locate living descendants and return ancestral stories to the families and communities that inherited them. His research is informed by descendant perspective and emphasizes the research, interrogation, and presentation of lesser-known stories representing the lived experience of enslaved Americans. Has raised more than \$114,000 to support community-based public history, historic preservation, memorialization, public art, descendant engagement, and educational initiatives. His experience also includes museum advisory service and the development of research used in permanent monuments, exhibitions, and public interpretation.

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Boston University, Center for Professional Education — Certificate in Genealogical Research, December 2023.

LEADERSHIP & PUBLIC SERVICE

Alex Breanne Corporation, Connecticut — Founder and President. Leads research, preservation, descendant-reconnection, public-history, education, memorial, and arts initiatives focused on people of African descent whose stories have been marginalized or omitted from the historical record.

Connecticut League of Museums — Board Member, March 2024–March 2026. Served on the board of Connecticut's statewide museum association, contributing museum-sector governance, advocacy, and support for museums and cultural organizations throughout the state.

Webb Deane Stevens Museum — Board Member, April 2023–April 2024. Served on the board of the Webb Deane Stevens Museum, providing programming and exhibit guidance.

Connecticut Freedom Trail Committee — Committee Member, June 2022–Present. Contributes research and public-history perspective to the identification, preservation, and interpretation of sites significant to Connecticut's African American history.

Independent Scholar, Bloomfield, Connecticut — 2003–Present. Conduct genealogical and archival research focused on African American history and the lives, families, communities, and descendants of people who were enslaved in the United States, with particular emphasis on Connecticut and New England.

MUSEUM & HISTORICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

Connecticut Museum of Culture and History, *Rebellious* — Museum Advisory Committee, 2025–2026. Served on the advisory committee for the Museum's America 250 exhibition, contributing historical and interpretive perspective to the development of the exhibition. The exhibition opened April 23, 2026.

GRANTS & INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING

Connecticut Humanities / Connecticut Cultural Fund Operating Support Grant — \$5,100, 2022.

BOOKS & SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

The Narrative of Primus: A Lineage Woven into American History — Author. J. & E. Mills Publishing, 2026. A genealogical and public-history study tracing an enslaved Connecticut family across slavery, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and later generations.

A Century in Captivity — Contributor/collaborator with Denis Caron and co-authors; Wesleyan University Press, forthcoming October 20, 2026.

Mills, John. “Enlistments in Connecticut's Colored Regiments During the Civil War.” *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation* 5, no. 4 (2024): 86–92. Published December 2024. Article and transcription/data contribution based on the *Record of Connecticut Men in the War of Rebellion, 1861 to 1865*. [Published article](#)

Mills, John. “From Enslavement to Legacy: The Jackson-Wallace Family of Simsbury.” *Connecticut Explored*, Spring 2026.

PUBLISHED GENEALOGICAL PROOF ARGUMENTS & RESEARCH

“Is Jeremiah Loudon of Milford, CT the Father of Frederick Loudin of the Fisk Jubilee Singers?” — Published February 26, 2026. Research establishing the Connecticut lineage of Frederick Loudin and the relationship between Frederick Loudin and Sgt. Maj. Horace Loudon of the 29th Connecticut Colored Infantry.

“Where Did the 18th Century African-American Jackson Family in Simsbury, CT Originate From?” — Published December 13, 2025. Research into Peter and Esther Jackson and the multigenerational military service of the Wallace/Jackson family.

“Who Was Pvt. Leverett Holden of Vernon, CT?” — Published May 13, 2025. Proof argument examining the identity and family origins of a soldier of the 29th Connecticut Colored Infantry and his father's enslavement in Rhode Island.

SELECTED ORIGINAL RESEARCH & HISTORICAL CORRECTIONS

Black Civil War Soldiers of Windsor Research Project — Windsor, Connecticut, 2025-2026 — Conducted extensive genealogical and historical research to identify 19 Black Civil War soldiers with ties to Windsor, completing the identification process on December 21, 2025. The Windsor Freedom Trail used the final identifications for a new monument at Veterans Memorial Cemetery, unveiled May 9, 2026. Continued the research to develop detailed narratives of the soldiers and their families, culminating in an approximately 200-page research document completed July 20, 2026. The finalized research subsequently provided the narratives for the Windsor Freedom Trail's public website about the 19 soldiers.

- Conducts extensive primary-source research in state, local, university, museum, genealogical, military, cemetery, and other archival collections.
- Early institutional research collaborations included work with Yale University to identify records concerning cadavers received from state prisons; the Wethersfield Historical Society to identify prison inmates and reconstruct their experiences; and the State of Connecticut to identify locations associated with enslaved people.
- Identified Sgt. Maj. Horace Loudon, rather than Sgt. Alexander Newton, as one of the two soldiers depicted in a Civil War-era image in Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, part of the Randolph Linsly collection. After approximately two years of advocacy and documentation, the library corrected its catalog record on August 18, 2025.
- Established the family relationship between Sgt. Maj. Horace Loudon of the 29th Connecticut Colored Infantry and Frederick Loudin of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, revealing a significant Connecticut connection to the Jubilee Singers.
- Reconstructed the lineage of Primus and Venus Armes of Norwich, Connecticut, including their son Job Lathrop's Revolutionary War service and the Civil War service of later descendants, including Sgt. Daniel Stanley Lathrop.
- Reconstructed the military history of Esther Jackson's family in Simsbury, including her father London Wallace's French and Indian War service, the Revolutionary War service of three brothers, and the Civil War service of seven grandsons.
- Located living descendants of Nancy Jackson, the Connecticut woman who petitioned for freedom in 1837, returned her story to the family, located her grave in Brooklyn, New York, and funded repair of her headstone.

SELECTED FUNDED PUBLIC HISTORY, PRESERVATION & MEMORIAL PROJECTS

Prince Mortimer Avenue, Middletown, Connecticut — \$4,000 raised. Led the historical research, fundraising, and advocacy resulting in Rapallo Avenue receiving the honorary name Prince Mortimer Avenue, commemorating the formerly enslaved man who walked the route to his enslaver's ropewalk. Dedicated February 1, 2024.

Old New-Gate Prison & Copper Mine, East Granby, Connecticut — Successfully nominated the site to the Connecticut Freedom Trail. A permanent interpretive panel includes Mills's image and words concerning Prince Mortimer, who was imprisoned there. Dedicated September 13, 2024. Completed without a separate fundraising campaign.

Pvt. Isaac J. Hill, Woodbury, New Jersey — \$7,500 raised. Worked with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to obtain a new military headstone for Hill, a soldier of the 29th Connecticut Colored Infantry; located living descendants, returned Hill's story to them, and collaborated with the City of Woodbury and military participants on a public ceremony held June 8, 2024.

Newton Family Memorial Project, New Haven, Connecticut — \$6,000 raised. Funded restoration of the broken headstone of Mary and Thaddeus Newton; obtained a VA cenotaph for their son Stephen Newton, who died in the assault on Fort Wagner; located living descendants and hosted a dedication and unveiling on June 21, 2024.

Fortune Mural, Waterbury, Connecticut — \$32,000 raised. Commissioned, funded, and implemented an 80-foot public mural honoring Fortune, a formerly enslaved Waterbury man. Dedicated November 2, 2024.

Esther Jackson Family Memorial, Simsbury, Connecticut — \$20,000 raised. Located living descendants, commissioned a historically informed portrait of Esther Jackson, and created a monument honoring the military service of members of the Wallace/Jackson family. Descendants traveled from North Carolina for the June 19, 2025 unveiling. The project total includes \$1,200 for the Esther Jackson portrait.

Connecticut Colored Regiments Walk & Old State House Exhibit — \$8,000 raised. Founded and funded the inaugural commemorative walk retracing the route taken by the 29th Connecticut Colored Infantry and 31st United States Colored Troops on their November 1865 return to Connecticut. The November 22, 2025 walk coincided with the unveiling of a new 29th Connecticut exhibit at Connecticut's Old State House featuring artifacts loaned by the Alex Breanne Corporation. Received a citation from State Representative Joshua Hall.

Primus and Venus Armes Mural, Norwich, Connecticut — \$30,000 raised. Commissioned and led implementation of a public mural in collaboration with UCFS Healthcare, the NAACP Norwich Branch, and the Norwich Historical Society. Unveiled May 9, 2026.

Robin Starr Cenotaph Project, Cornwall, Connecticut — Worked with Cornwall Consolidated School and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to obtain and install a cenotaph at Calhoun Cemetery. Unveiled May 25, 2026. Completed without a separate fundraising campaign.

America 250 Highway Service Plaza Interpretation — Shared original research on Revolutionary War soldiers Job Lathrop of Norwich and Robin Starr of Danbury with Connecticut State Historian Andy Horowitz. The research informed interpretive signs installed at Connecticut Department of Transportation highway service plazas statewide. Spoke with Governor Ned Lamont at the public announcement on June 26, 2026.

COMMISSIONED HISTORICAL PORTRAITURE & MUSEUM LOANS

Raised approximately \$8,000 in total to commission historically informed portraits grounded in genealogical research and, where possible, the facial characteristics of living descendants. This total includes \$1,200 for the Esther Jackson portrait, which is also included within the \$20,000 Esther Jackson Family Memorial project above; the cumulative fundraising figure in the profile excludes that overlap. Selected works include:

- **Prince Mortimer — Middletown, Connecticut** — On loan to the Museum of Connecticut History.
- **Esther Jackson — Simsbury, Connecticut** — On loan to the Museum of Connecticut History.
- **Primus and Venus Armes — Norwich, Connecticut** — On loan to the Slater Memorial Museum.
- **Pvt. Richard Myers Hedgman** — On loan to Connecticut's Old State House.
- **Mary Herritage Newton — New Haven, Connecticut** — On loan to the Stowe Center for Literary Activism.

DIGITAL HUMANITIES & PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

Historical Expert, *STATES OF INDEPENDENCE* — New American History / University of Richmond and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, 2026. Selected as one of the historical experts representing Connecticut for a national interactive digital exhibition commemorating the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. Featured in the Connecticut component discussing the American Revolution from the perspective of enslaved African Americans and examining what the Revolution's promises of liberty and freedom meant to people who remained enslaved. The exhibition features approximately 100 videos with historical experts from each of the thirteen original states and was released publicly August 21, 2026. [View Connecticut segment](#)

"Prince Mortimer." The Stories, Enslaved.org. Historical narrative on the life and experiences of Prince Mortimer of Middletown, Connecticut. [View narrative](#)

"Mary Margaret Herritage & Thaddeus Newton." The Stories, Enslaved.org. Historical and genealogical narrative reconstructing the lives and family history of Mary Margaret Herritage and Thaddeus Newton of New Haven, Connecticut. [View narrative](#)

DOCUMENTARY FILM

***Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten* (2026)** — Director/filmmaker. A 33-minute documentary following Mills's genealogical research, descendant reconnections, preservation projects, memorialization, and efforts to restore overlooked African American lives to public memory. The film has received multiple festival selections and awards, including a Bronze Award for Editing from the Independent Shorts Awards and Semi-Finalist recognition from Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival.

IMMERSIVE INTERPRETATION & HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE

Cato — Immersive Augmented Reality Heritage Research Project, Ashley House, Western Massachusetts — May 18–23, 2023. Actor, historical interpreter, guide, and narrator in an immersive augmented reality experience examining the lives and experiences of Jin Cole and her son Cato, who were enslaved by Rev. Jonathan Ashley. Portrayed Cato in hourly performances at the historic Ashley House. Participated in an international performance-research project bringing together theatre and digital-design artists from the United States, United Kingdom, Greece, and elsewhere to examine the effectiveness of immersive heritage design in decolonizing museum sites and historical narratives. Project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Fortune — Spirits Come Alive at Riverside, Riverside Cemetery, Waterbury, Connecticut — October 4, 2025. Costumed historical reenactor portraying Fortune, a formerly enslaved Waterbury man, as part of Riverside Cemetery's living-history interpretation program.

SELECTED EDUCATIONAL & PUBLIC HISTORY PROGRAMMING

"Freedom's Unfinished Promise," Central Connecticut State University — March 20, 2026. Invited lecture presented during the conference *CT 1776: A Revolutionary Event*.

"Individuals of Connecticut's Colored Regiments," New Haven Museum — November 2023.

"Reexamining Connecticut's Prince Mortimer," Middlesex County Historical Society — February 2023.

"Prince Mortimer Revisited," Webb Deane Stevens Museum — February 2023.

"Prince Mortimer," Old New-Gate Prison & Copper Mine — September 2022.

"Reexamining Connecticut's Prince Mortimer," Northwestern University — June 2022.

"Reexamining Connecticut's Prince Mortimer," Webb Deane Stevens Museum — June 2022.

"Prince Mortimer," Wesleyan University — November 2021; February 2023.

Connecticut 1775: The Revolution Is Coming!, Central Connecticut State University — February 8, 2025. Presented on the meaning of the nation's 250th anniversary and invited descendants Michael Lathrop and Dawn Lathrop-Goode to discuss the legacy of Primus and Venus Armes.

Universities, museums, libraries, historical societies, schools, and civic organizations — More than 50 public presentations and programs since 2023 on African American genealogy, slavery in Connecticut, Black military service, descendant reconnection, public memory, and historical preservation. Selected engagements available upon request.

SELECTED MEDIA & NATIONAL FEATURES

AARP The Magazine — Subject of a feature profile on Mills's genealogical and public-history work, published in the February/March 2025 issue.

The Kelly Clarkson Show — June 19, 2024 — Appeared with a living descendant of Mary and Thaddeus Newton whom Mills had located through genealogical research, sharing the family's recovered lineage and history.

The Washington Post — Featured for genealogical/public-history work.

Junior Scholastic / Scholastic Magazine — Featured for historical and genealogical work.

Connecticut Public — Unforgotten: Connecticut's Hidden History of Slavery — Interviewed by special correspondent Diane Orson for the feature documentary examining Connecticut's hidden history of slavery. Published March 15, 2024.

The Areva Martin Show — Featured guest discussing genealogical and public-history work.

SELECTED HONORS & RECOGNITION

- **Gubernatorial Nomination — Raymond E. Baldwin Museum of Connecticut History and Heritage Advisory Board, 2026.** Officially nominated by Governor Ned Lamont for appointment to the advisory board pursuant to CGS § 11-6a; appointment pending completion of the formal appointment process.
- **100 Men of Color Black Tie Gala & Awards — 2026 Honoree.** Selected for recognition at the 100 Men of Color Black Tie Gala & Awards, The Bushnell, Hartford, Connecticut, September 25, 2026.
- Citation from Connecticut State Representative Joshua Hall recognizing the significance of the inaugural Connecticut Colored Regiments Walk, November 22, 2025.
- Independent Shorts Awards — Bronze Award for Editing, *Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten*, 2026.
- Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival — Semi-Finalist, *Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten*, 2026.

RESEARCH & PUBLIC HISTORY AREAS

African American genealogy • Enslavement in Connecticut and New England • Revolutionary War and Civil War Black military service • 29th Connecticut Colored Infantry • Descendant tracing and reconnection • Genealogical proof arguments • Cemetery and gravestone preservation • Public memory and memorialization • Museum interpretation • Community-engaged public history • America 250