



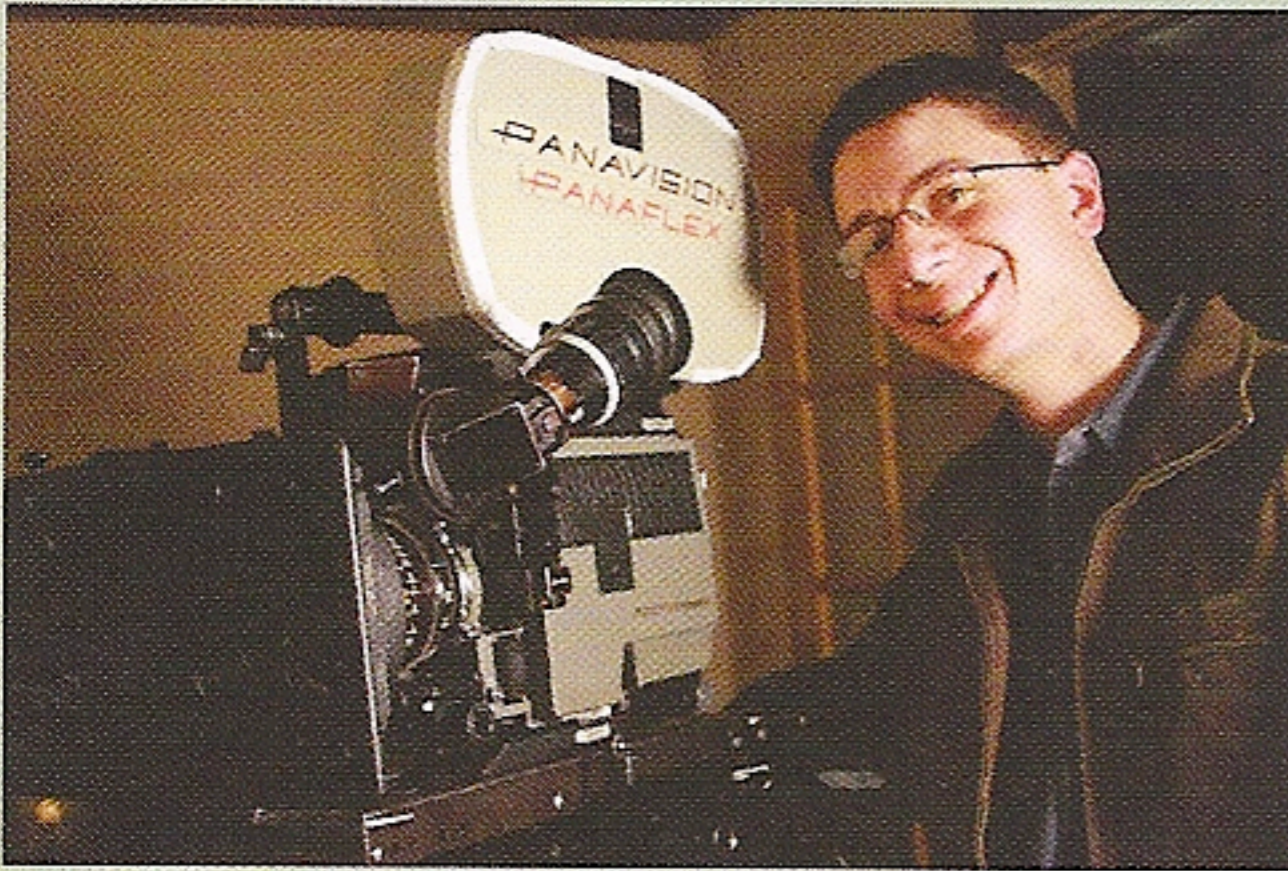
# The Hebronian

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## TESTIMONIES GETS GREEN LIGHT FROM STATE FILMING TO BEGIN MAY 2009



Matthew Troy wrote the script for *Testimonies of a Quiet New England Town*, and will direct the film in May 2009, thanks to a Culture and Tourism Special Initiative Grant awarded to Hebron Historical Society in early November.

notified that it's most recent Special Initiative Grant (SIG) application for *Testimonies* had received a thumbs-up. The Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism (CCT) approved a \$50,000 budget for the pre-production, production, and post-production costs needed for the film.

"We're grateful and humbled by CCT's support for this project," said Donna McCalla, who will be producing the film on behalf of the Society. "This grant is in addition to a previous Culture Tourism Partnership grant which was used to launch the website promoting the film, and a May 2008 Special Initiative Grant to hire an Executive Producer and a Certified Historian."



Five-time Emmy Award winner Karyl Evans, a well-known producer of films on Connecticut history and Connecticut slavery, will serve as Executive Producer of *Testimonies*.

After two years of applying for numerous grants, the quest for funding to produce *Testimonies of a Quiet New England Town*, written and directed by Matthew Troy, has reached a successful conclusion.

On November 10, the Hebron Historical Society was

Using those previous grant funds, McCalla and Troy met with 5-time Emmy Award winner Karyl Evans, who agreed in June to serve as Executive Producer. Evans is best known for her work with Steven Spielberg on *The Amistad*; she has also produced

numerous films relating to Connecticut slavery and Connecticut history, including her most recent documentary on New Haven's Grove Street Cemetery.

Evans will be working on production details and casting, which is scheduled to take place in New York and Hebron during January 2009. At this time, there are six primary speaking roles slated for the film, and approximately 30 roles as extras. Casting calls for actors will be publicized in a variety of media outlets in December and January.

In early November, Gregory Farmer, Circuit Rider for The Connecticut Trust and the National Park Service and Principal Owner of Agricola Corporation in Chicopee, MA, agreed to serve as Certified Historian for the project. Farmer brings a solid background in historical preservation and analysis to the team. As Certified Historian, he will review the script for accuracy and provide consultative services on the film's costuming and properties.



Gregory Farmer, Principal Owner of Agricola Corporation and Circuit Rider for Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, has agreed to be Certified Historian for the film project. Farmer brings decades of experience to *Testimonies*.

Significant corporate grants supporting the film have also been received as a result of the efforts of Society members Mary Melfi (United Technologies) and Lynn Schroder (ING).

Using flashback techniques, *Testimonies* focuses on the first trial Cesar and Lowis Peters faced following their attempted seizure by South Carolinian David Prior and his gang of slave traders. Troy emphasizes the drama of just one day – September 27, 1787 – to illustrate the moral conflict many colonists felt immediately after the Revolutionary War and their struggle for freedom from England and the issue of slavery. How could men fighting for the notion of "freedom for all" condone the existence of slavery in their very midst?

continued from page 1



*Cesar Peters and the slave trader*

**Carol A. Taylor's pen and ink drawing in John Sibun's *Our Town's Heritage: Hebron, CT 1708-1958* drew the attention of many local and state residents to the Cesar and Lewis Peters story.**

Following their rescue by Hebron neighbors, a faux trial was necessary in order to "sentence" the slaves to a length of servitude, thus making them "unavailable" for transport to the South for a long period of time. Central to the story is the role of Elijah Graves, the local tailor pressured to lie about Cesar's purported theft of clothes. Lying in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, of course, was an unpardonable sin, carrying both religious, legal and social repercussions.

Hebron's rescue of Cesar and Lewis Peters and their eight children is the earliest documented evidence of abolitionist action in Con-

necticut. It predates the Prudence Crandall story by 46 years, the Amistad story by 52 years, and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by 65 years.

Part of this latest SIG grant includes hiring an educational resource consultant, who will determine the most logical and appropriate way to include the film in the current curriculum approved by the Connecticut Department of Education.

"It does no good to widely promote and distribute the film to schools if we can't demonstrate to teachers and administrators how it fits into the approved curriculum," said McCalla. "We hope to hire someone who is intimately familiar with the curriculum approval process... someone who will work with us to ensure the film's message reaches the most viewers."

In addition to the state and corporate grants that have been received, the Historical Society has been working for over a year to raise funds for their share of the film costs. In addition, almost \$30,000 in "In Kind Services" have been raised. "What began as an \$8,000 film short has grown into an almost \$100,000 project," said Troy. "It's exciting to know that this significant piece of Hebron history has the support of so many local residents and state organizations."

*Testimonies* is scheduled to begin filming in Hebron and surrounding locations from May 22 through May 29, 2009. It will be shot entirely in 16mm format, which is considerably more expensive – but offering a much higher quality – than videotape. Troy's professional colleagues at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts have volunteered their production services on the film, significantly reducing the costs of the project.

Developing, processing and transfer to DigiBeta will occur the second week in June, with picture assembly and editing scheduled for completion by the first of July. Sound creation and production will occur in August.

“Culture and Tourism was clear in its expectations: produce the highest quality film, use the highest quality production crew, and engage top-notch actors,” said McCalla. “That’s our goal, and we’re confident we can achieve it, especially given how well the production principals work together and are committed to this film.”

Other project goals include promoting film production in eastern Connecticut, bringing economic benefits to the Hebron community, and emphasizing the importance of independent film producers in CT. Following its premiere, the film will be offered to CPTV and entered into a number of significant film competitions.

*Testimonies of a Quiet New England Town* is currently scheduled for premiere in Hebron late September 2009. For more information about this major project, go to [www.QuietTestimoniesTheFilm.org](http://www.QuietTestimoniesTheFilm.org).