

## PRESS RELEASE

### ABCD Takes Next Step to Restore Freeman Houses

**BRIDGEPORT, CT, OCTOBER 8, 2008:** On Wednesday, October 8, 2008 from 10:00 am to noon a team of researchers led by Connecticut State Archaeologist, Nicholas F. Bellantoni, Ph.D. will use specialized electro-magnetic imaging equipment to scan the backyard area of Little Liberia's Mary and Eliza Freeman houses at 354 and 360 Main Street. Backyard garbage dumps were common in the 1800's and can yield important artifacts. Archaeological testing is required before preservation grants can be awarded to non-profits. Testing moves ABCD one step closer to the start of restoration.

Dr. Bellantoni's team will use non-intrusive techniques to test the backyard for geophysical deposits and areas of disturbance, indications that artifacts might be preserved below ground. The archaeologists will return in spring with ground penetrating radar if tests suggest that further investigation, or a dig, is needed. Archaeological testing of historic sites is a service offered jointly by UCONN's Office of State Archaeology and the CT Department of Agriculture. Actual scanning will take place between 10:30 and 11:00 am on October 8<sup>th</sup>.

The Freeman Houses, CT's oldest homes built by African Americans & listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are the only surviving homes of Bridgeport's "Ethiopia" (Little Liberia) - a community of free people of color that thrived from the 1820s to the 1850s. Free blacks born in Connecticut, runaway slaves, and members of Indian tribes from Connecticut and New York lived and worked together.