THE MOST IMPORTANT THREATENED HISTORIC PLACES: 2005

Using nominations submitted by members, leads from an informal poll of preservationists across the state, and the observations of the Connecticut Circuit Riders, the Connecticut Trust has compiled a list of the most important threatened historic places in the state. Our aim is to call attention to especially important historic sites that are under threat and also to common dangers that imperil a number of historic places in Connecticut.

A number of our listings this year illustrate what might be called the imagination gap—the challenge of getting owners or developers or officials to visualize the possibilities inherent in historic places. It’s difficult to convince neighbors that a rundown eyesore can ever be a community asset or that a tiny house lacking the latest fashionable “features” could ever be a desirable place to live.

As always, economic pressures affect historic places. At the moment, the hot real estate market continues to entice property owners with dreams of quick turnarounds and big profits at minimal effort or expense. It’s not that preservation projects can’t be profitable, but they often aren’t the most profitable alternatives, or at least not the most quickly profitable. Is it too goody-goody to think that there’s more to be gained than the bottom line?

Finally, there’s the perennial need to plan ahead and get preservation protections in place before a threat comes along. Last-minute National Register nominations might buy some time, and occasionally that’s all that’s needed. But property owners can eventually block listing, and in some cases the result is only to confirm the image of preservationists as obstructionists. In fact, the National Register isn’t the only preservation tool available and it doesn’t guarantee a very high level of protection. Other possibilities are local historic districts, village districts, design review ordinances, and making sure that zoning regulations actually allow is what you want to have built.

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Legal issues have taken up much of the Connecticut Trust’s attention recently. In July the Trust joined as co-plaintiff a lawsuit filed in federal court in May by the Merritt Parkway Conservancy and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, along with the Norwalk Land Trust, the Norwalk Preservation Trust, the Sierra Club, and the Norwalk River Watershed Association (see CPN, July/August 2005).

The suit charges the Federal Highway Administration with violation of federal laws protecting designated historic properties, in this case at the Route 7 interchange on the Merritt Parkway. Construction of a new interchange, as currently designed, will demolish three historic bridges, decimate more than a mile of mature landscaping and create massive elevated ramps high above the Parkway. The suit charges that “as presently designed, the massive interchanges are profoundly in conflict with the official design guidelines promulgated by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) to guide decisions about bridge replacement and other transportation improvements on the Merritt Parkway.” A hearing for a temporary restraining order will be held September 1, after CPN goes to press.

The Board of Trustees thoroughly debated the decision to join this suit as co-plaintiff. Beyond the compelling issue of destruction of the historic fabric of the Merritt at the interchange, the Trustees recognized the Trust’s longstanding involvement with the Parkway: the Trust successfully nominated it to the National Register in 1991 and has been a member of the Merritt Parkway Advisory Committee since its inception in 1994; in 1995, the National Trust awarded the Connecticut Trust an Honor Award for its work on behalf of the Merritt and for incorporating preservation criteria into the ConnDOT’s renovation and maintenance standards of historic parkways; and in 1999 the Trust sponsored the creation of the Merritt Parkway Conservancy, leading to its incorporation in 2001.

In August, the Trust petitioned to join as amicus curiae (‘friend of the court’) a suit filed against the Borough of Litchfield, acting on behalf of the Litchfield Historic District Commission. In this case, a property owner applied for a certificate of appropriateness to authorize the removal (after the fact) of an historic and architecturally significant door and portico. The certificate was denied and the owner sued the Commission arguing that the window that replaced the door was architecturally in keeping with other houses in the district and that the Commission has no power to protect the original door and portico, in spite of their significance. The trial court is currently reviewing briefs to determine if an historic district commission has the power to regulate the destruction of an architectural feature that is historically significant to the town or the state. Or, is that power the sole jurisdiction of an historic properties commission? Also, does the historic district commission have the power to regulate the destruction of an architectural feature if the destruction of that feature results in a modification that is corresponding in kind to other similar features in the district? Our petition was denied, but we continue to follow this case.

Both lawsuits raise critical preservation issues.
Tifkat’s Purchase
by Linda Fallon
Norwalk Community College Archaeology Program

In 1693 the Indian known here as Tifkat* purchased a large track of land for ten pounds and a barrel of cider from the leaders of the Paugussett tribe. For a farmer it was not good land. It was steep and rocky, forested with maples, oaks and hickory, a small mountain really. The soil was thin and large boulders seemed to tumble down the mountainsides. There were a few redeeming features. A river flowed along one side of the property. A smaller stream meandered down the mountainside through a narrow gorge forming a small waterfall before it joined the river. There were salmon and trout, deer and turkey. For a hunter it was very good land. It must have always been so.

At Tifkat’s death in 1734 the land passed into the Johnson family. Sometime during the mid-nineteenth century the railroad built a line along the river and brought weekend visitors to enjoy the natural beauty. In the 1930s the land was bequeathed to the State of Connecticut for recreational purposes and to preserve its rugged beauty in perpetuity.

On a chilly November day in 2003 I walked across Tifkat’s land in search of a potential prehistoric site for an advanced course in archaeology at Norwalk Community College. It was hunting season, so I stayed close to the road. Approximately 50 feet above the river, overlooking a still used game trail, was a cluster of boulders perched atop each other and forming a small shelter. The shelter was approximately nine feet deep and four feet wide. The ceiling was about eight feet high at the drip line, and sloped back at a forty-five degree angle. A seasonal stream ran down the mountainside about 50 yards to the north-west, carrying softball-sized quartz pebbles. I knelt in the shelter and gazed down at the game trail and river below and knew I could not have been the first to do so.

Under the guidance of Professor Ernest Wiegand, I conducted a Phase II survey. Two 50-cm. test pits were dug to a depth of 40 cm. The first test pit was dug at the mouth of the shelter using a trowel. At about 13 cm. I found my first artifact, a piece of Windsor cordmarked pottery along with a small amount of charcoal and a fire-cracked rock. Additional pieces of pottery were found between 13 and 19 cm. All appeared to belong to the same vessel. Windsor cordmarked pottery is associated with the late Middle Woodland or early Late Woodland periods, roughly 800 A.D. to 1200 A.D. Disturbingly, a rusted hand wrought iron nail, and numerous pieces of coal were found at similar depths—objects that likely dated to the 19th century. Had the site been disturbed? Had these later artifacts somehow worked their way down through the soil, or had the pottery worked its way up due to frost heaving? Probing deeper, I found quartz waste flakes, the small chips of stone discarded when knapping a stone point. At 30 cm. I uncovered a small hammerstone, the tool used to produce a stone point. The second test pit, dug on the game trail, was completely barren. In each case rocks impeded digging below 40 cm., but the objective of locating and validating a prehistoric site had been achieved, and the excavation units were closed.

I still had unanswered questions: Was this a multiperiod site? Could the pottery be more precisely dated? Why were the coal and nail at the same depths as the prehistoric Native American pottery? Was there a feature nearby, such as hearth or storage pit? Were there other artifacts in the same excavation unit?

In late summer, I had the opportunity to look for my answers. I reopened the test pit inside the shelter and extended the excavation to include the three adjacent quadrants, opening a full one-meter unit. The quadrant closest to the shelter's north-east wall yielded the broken half of a quartz Levanna projectile point at 6 cm. Levanna points, like the pottery, can be associated with the late Middle Woodland and early Late Woodland period (approximately 800-1200 A.D.) although they remained in use later than the Windsor cordmarked pottery, possibly as late as 1400 A.D.

Several dark stains appeared between 15 and 20 cm. raising the possibility of a fire pit. A large number of fire-cracked rocks were uncovered, appearing to form a fire pit. Additional pieces of Windsor cordmarked pottery were found between 20 and 23 cm. By opening the excavation unit to a

*Tifkat is a fictional name for an historic person. It is used here to protect the site.
Norwich. In a difficult decision, one historic resource will be demolished to preserve another one. The site to be preserved is the Mohegan tribe’s Royal Burial Ground, the burial place of Uncas (d.1683), the tribe’s famed 17th-century chief, and members of his family. Although its full extent not known, the burial ground apparently extended a long block in each direction from the intersection of Washington and Sachem streets.

Uncas sold nine square miles of land to the founders of Norwich in 1659, but reserved use of the burial ground. Early settlers were careful not to impinge upon the site, and its importance continued to be recognized into the 19th century. In 1833, President Andrew Jackson laid the cornerstone for a monument to Uncas that was completed nine years later. But by the time the last burial took place in 1876, the burial ground was being encroached upon and graves desecrated. Tribe members’ memoirs and newspaper accounts from the 19th and 20th centuries tell repeatedly of bodies dug up and burned and artifacts removed. Buildings gradually covered the site, until the only recognizable portion was the tiny plot on which the Uncas monument stands.

The most prominent of the encroachments was the Masonic temple, built in 1928 to designs by the Norwich architectural firm of Cudworth and Thompson. A monumental neoclassical structure located at the intersection of Washington and Sachem streets, the temple is notable for its extensive use of symbolism to represent Masonic concepts and for its impressive auditorium, actually a fully equipped theater that rivaled the lavish movie palaces of the day. Both the temple and the burial ground are listed as contributing resources in the Chelsea Parade National Register district.

Beginning in the 19th century, the Mohegans filed several unsuccessful lawsuits in efforts to regain title to the burial ground. They finally succeeded partially in 1999, when the tribe bought the Masonic temple property from the city of Norwich, which had purchased it four years before from a dwindling number of Masons. The tribe explored ways of reusing the building as a museum and cultural center, among other uses, but every possibility required expanding the building or digging trenches for improved utilities—all of which would have further disturbed graves. In the end, they decided to demolish the temple. As mitigation, the tribe has commissioned the archaeological research firm PAST, Inc., to document the temple’s history and appearance.

Because the temple is listed on the National Register, tribal representatives appeared before the state Historic Preservation Council on August 3 to make their case. Realizing that there was no way...
to reuse the temple without further disturbing graves, the council voted not to oppose the demolition. Historic Preservation and Museum Division. Director J. Paul Loether said, “It’s almost a question of which of two children are you going to save? The council was faced with deciding which of the resources would be most impacted.”

Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel, The Mohegans’ tribal historian, said, “It’s a sigh of relief. This is a project that has been in the works literally centuries. We felt very responsible for fulfilling the wishes of our ancestors.”

The tribe hopes to complete demolition of the temple by late 2006. They have plans to landscape the site and build a memorial on it, a traditional Indian “memory pile” of rocks.

**Newtown.** One historic factory’s turbines are still creating power. Rich Fattibene, Jr., has harnessed the turbines of the New York Belting & Packing Company factory on the Pootatuck River in Sandy Hook to run an electric generator. Water is diverted from the river at the top of the dam, then passes through a tube under the driveway and into the factory, where it drops 40 feet, turning the turbine's fan-like blades, which run the generator.

The factory was built in 1856 for a company that made laminated belts of rubber and cotton. From 1901 to 1977 another company made fire hoses here. The factory was listed in the National Register in 1981 and was converted to offices later in the ‘80s. The hydroelectric plant had been closed for three years when Fattibene reopened it.

The factory originally ran off a water wheel, which was later replaced by the turbine. According to the Connecticut Post, Fattibene, an engineer who has long been interested in hydroelectric power, repaired the mill’s dam and its generating system and since April has been selling electricity to Connecticut Light and Power. Production depends on the weather, the amount of water in the river, and the market. The plant can generate up to 100 kilowatts per hour—enough to supply between 70 and 75 single-family homes and earn Fattibene as much as $240 a day.

**Mystic.** Mystic Seaport is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. Founded in 1929 by three men with ties to southeast Connecticut’s sailing industries who realized that ship models, records and other artifacts were disappearing at an alarming rate, the seaport has grown into a museum that preserves and explores America’s maritime heritage. The first exhibits opened in 1934.

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Concrete Highway Bridges Listed

The early years of the 20th century brought rapid change to Connecticut’s roads, as automobile and truck traffic increased geometrically. Recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places are Connecticut’s six surviving open-spandrel, reinforced concrete highway bridges. Built by the Connecticut Highway Department (CHD), the forerunner of today’s Department of Transportation, between 1915 and 1935, they embody the new scale and importance of highway design during that period. Nominations for all six were prepared by Bruce Clouette of the Public Archaeology Survey Team, Inc. (PAST, Inc.).

Traditionally, almost all responsibility for roads and bridges lay with Connecticut’s towns. In 1895 this changed with the establishment of the CHD as part of a move to improve transportation, particularly for farmers who needed to get produce to markets. In 1905 the state designated a system of Trunk Lines, principal highways that the CHD would maintain and improve, but the system did not include bridges. Finally in 1915, the CHD was given responsibility for constructing and maintaining bridges on the Trunk Lines. The department immediately began a campaign of improvement, but most construction was delayed until World War I ended and the federal government lifted restrictions on the non-military use of steel.

Reinforced concrete was the favored material for highway bridge construction in the early 20th century. The materials were inexpensive, and concrete had considerable strength, both compressive and, with steel reinforcement, tensile. Building the formwork was labor-intensive, but highway builders did not see this as a drawback, since it meant that a larger portion of the cost of a bridge stayed with local builders and workers, rather than being sent to distant bridge companies.

Several design types were used for concrete bridges, depending primarily on length and height. The most complex and expensive was the open-spandrel design, in which the roadway was supported by a series of columns standing on a pair of narrow arches. Engineering such a bridge was more complex, as was building the formwork, but the open spandrel design reduced the amount of materials needed, as well as the size of the footings—a definite advantage when building on rugged terrain or sinking footings in a muddy riverbed. There is also considerable evidence that the visual appeal of open-spandrel bridges, with their repeated rhythm of arches and columns, was an important factor. Four of the nine bridges cited as artistic successes in the department’s 40th-anniversary history in 1935 were open-spandrel designs.

One of the CHD’s first Trunk-Line bridges was the Arrawanna Bridge over the Coginchaug River in Middletown, completed in 1918. Only 55 feet long, it’s at the bottom end of the usual range for open-spandrel designs. Perhaps the department saw it as a dry run for longer bridges then...
in design. Because it is relatively narrow, the Arrawanna Bridge has a single wide barrel arch, rather than two narrower arches connected with tie-beams, as are found on Connecticut’s other open-spandrel bridges. The bridge was bypassed in 1974 and is now in poor condition.

The CHD’s first priority after being given responsibility for Trunk Line highway bridges was the principal east-west shoreline highway, today U.S. 1. In 1921 the department completed the Washington Bridge to carry Route 1 across the Housatonic River between Stratford and Milford. This was much more ambitious than the Arrawanna Bridge, 859 feet long, with five arches plus a double-leaf bascule, or drawbridge, for river traffic. The bridge itself was an in-house design, but for the bascule the department consulted with Waddell & Son, a New York engineering firm with a specialty in bridge design. Located on the state’s most heavily traveled road, the Washington Bridge was the CHD’s first major bridge and was considered a showpiece of the department’s expertise.

After rebuilding bridges along the coast, the department turned its attention to inland bridges. A typical example is Bridge No. 455, completed in 1929, which carries Route 159 over Stony Brook in Suffield. Building a closed-spandrel bridge across the brook’s deep ravine would have been impossibly difficult and expensive, while a truss bridge would have required tall and expensive end piers. The open spandrel was a better solution, as a view of its soaring arch and small footings demonstrate. The underside view also shows the airy appearance characteristic of such bridges, the cantilevered sidewalks used to get additional width, and the simple capitals and bases that dress up the columns.

Completed in 1928, the Reynolds Bridge, carries Route 848 over the Naugatuck River in Thomaston in an area noted for its rugged ledges and tree-covered hills. Leslie G. Sumner, the engineer responsible for the bridge’s conceptual design, wrote of the care that the CHD took in creating a structure that would enhance its setting: “…an attempt was made to provide a structure that will add to rather than mar the beauty of the site. … Investigations showed that a saving could be effected by using a steel structure of a strictly utilitarian type, but it was felt that this economy was not sufficient to outweigh the advantages of permanency and sightliness inherent to the arch.”

Bridge No. 560, which carries Routes 7 and 4 across the Housatonic River at Cornwall Bridge, is the longest open-spandrel bridge in the state and has the longest single concrete arch, the 180-foot river span. In addition to the river, the bridge also crosses railroad tracks, eliminating a hazardous grade crossing. Like many

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However, none of these protections is foolproof. Owners can block National Register listing; historic district commissions can make unexpected decisions; judges can misunderstand the issues. In the end, the best protection comes from having owners and neighbors who understand the economic and non-economic benefits of preserving historic places. The best protection is willingness, not something imposed. That requires constant attention and constant education. —Christopher Wigren

Most Important Threatened, cont’d from page 1

Collins Axe Factory, Collinsville

Significance: From 1826 to 1966 the Collins Axe Company produced world-famous edge tools—axes and hatchets, machetes, bayonets, even the pikes that John Brown and his raiders used at Harper’s Ferry. More recently, the company’s factory has been an incubator for small businesses, located by the Farmington River in a village that is both a National Register district and a Local Historic District. Developer James “Rusty” Tilney of Avon bought the factory in 2002 with plans for mixed-use redevelopment.

Threat: Nothing has come of Tilney’s plans, and the complex is up for sale, with an asking price $6.25 million (Tilney paid about $750,000 in 2002). Because of that, he’s not renewing tenants’ leases, and long-time occupants have moved out or are planning to. Locals say there’s been no visible maintenance for years, and the factory is rapidly falling into disrepair.

What’s needed: Repairs and maintenance first. Then a developer with the experience and resources to do the job properly. With its attractive village/riverside setting, the Collins factory ought to be attractive to developers, but the longer it goes without work, the more difficult this will become. David Leff, chair of the historic district commission, has suggested that Collinsville join the Connecticut Main Street program to promote economic development. Expansion of the state’s rehabilitation tax credit would provide an economic incentive (CPN May/June 2005).

Samuel Taylor house, Middle Haddam

Significance: Built in the mid-19th century, this simple Greek Revival house is located in the Middle Haddam Local Historic District and is a contributing structure in the Middle Haddam National Register district, a former river port on the Connecticut River.

Threat: The owner, Barbara Angelico, wants to demolish the house and build a larger new one. In April the Historic District Commission voted in favor of demolition. Commission members didn’t realize that the house is also listed in the National Register and apparently thought it not worth preserving, since it has been vacant for several years and has aluminum siding. So far, no demolition permit has been issued.

Larger issues: As with the Tully house in Old Saybrook (The Most Important Threatened Historic Places 2002), this situation raises the question of how historic district commissions work. What are the criteria for demolishing buildings or removing historic architectural features? What are the criteria for new design? How uniformly and strictly are the criteria enforced? This case also provides a reminder that even local historic districts and National Register listings don’t provide complete protection for historic sites.

What’s needed: An individual is negotiating with the owner to acquire the house and rehabilitate it. Connecticut Circuit Rider Brad Schide is working with commission members, the owner, the State Historic Preservation Office, and neighbors to resolve the issue. Once a demolition permit is issued, state law calls for a 90-day delay to allow the SHPO to look for alternatives.

Alcoa administration building, Fairfield

Significance: The Aluminum Corporation of America (Alcoa) built a factory in Fairfield in 1928, with an administration building designed by Cameron Clarke, a Fairfield resident and New York-based architect. A handsome Colonial Revival design in brick with relieving arches, wing walls, and an impressive cast-stone doorway, the building is located on the Boston Post Road at western end of downtown Fairfield.

Threat: The current owner, International Nickel, Inc. (INCO) of Wilmington, North Carolina, wants to clear the entire site for cleanup, then sale and development. There is substantial contamination, but it’s not sure that it extends to the administration building. However, INCO doesn’t want to commit the time and expense of an archeological dig.
The Glastonbury-Rocky Hill Ferry National Register district, Glastonbury

**Significance:** The ferry that has crossed the Connecticut River between Glastonbury and Rocky Hill for more than 350 years was the impetus for the creation of a new National Register district that currently awaits final approval in Washington. The new district includes the agricultural landscape of broad fields and distinctive barns associated with Connecticut Valley farming, particularly tobacco growing.

**Threat:** One property owner, Walter Kelly, has secured a building permit and zoning approval to construct a large new house in the district. Unlike historic houses, which stand close to the road, Kelly’s would stand back in the field, directly between two historic tobacco barns. Neighbors fear that its presence will doom the tobacco barns, which are still in active agricultural use. A neighbors’ group, the Friends of Nayaug, hopes to convince Kelly to build closer to the road.

**Larger issues:** Cultural landscapes are a little-understood part of the historic environment; in this case, the fields and barns illustrate the district’s agricultural history. As in Middle Haddam, this case demonstrates that National Register status alone doesn’t provide complete protection.

**What’s needed:** A more appropriate site for Kelly’s house and, in the long run, a local historic district or village district or amended zoning regulations to guide where new construction should and shouldn’t go.

**Pardee-Morris house, New Haven**

**Significance:** Burned by British forces in 1779 and subsequently rebuilt, the Pardee-Morris house has been a farmhouse, a resort hotel, and a suburban boarding house in its long history. In 1915 William S. Pardee bought the house, partially restored it, and bequeathed it with an endowment to the New Haven Colony Historical Society (NHCHS), which opened it as a museum in 1920. The house is individually listed on the National Register.

**Threat:** The house has not been a priority for the NHCHS for a long time and has not been open on a regular basis since 1999. NHCHS executive director Peter LaMothe says the endowment income doesn’t cover insurance and repairs, let alone operation or improvements. In the meantime the house is deteriorating; a condition report by Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven identified several immediate concerns, most notably drainage, moisture problems and security. The NHCHS is planning to sell the house with a preservation easement to be held by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. The big question is, given the house’s location and the cost of needed repairs, who would buy it and for what?

**Larger issues:** Aside from condition, preservationists and community activists are concerned about the potential loss of public access to the house. “It’s a question of the stewardship assumed when one accepts a bequest,” said Robert Grzywacz, chair of the city’s Historic District Commission. “It’s also a question of under what conditions, if ever, an organization is released from such responsibilities.” To sell the house, the NHCHS would have to break Pardee’s will, which would require approval by the state Attorney General.

**What’s needed:** Local activists have urged NHCHS to allow time to find or organize another nonprofit that could continue to open the house to the public. Fundraising for such a group would be a challenge, but with new sources of preservation money in Connecticut, this may be the moment for such an effort to succeed.

**Union Station and the Parade, New London**

**Significance:** One of two surviving Connecticut buildings by the famed 19th century architect H. H. Richardson, Union Station has been described as his “last, biggest and best” railroad station. Saved from demolition and restored in the 1970s, it has recently been re-restored (CPN January/February 2004). The station sits at the foot of the Parade, the city’s oldest public space and the heart of its downtown.

**Threat:** The city of New London has proposed a massive pedestrian bridge just north of the station, which would allow access from a city parking garage to the railroad platform and the Cross Sound continued on page 10
Ferry’s pier. The project also includes a bus turnaround, waterfront walkway, lighting and sidewalks. As designed by Centerbrook Architects, the bridge will be 300 feet long and stand more than 75 feet high, taller than the station and looming over it and the Parade. Federal and state grants will cover $8.2 million of a total cost estimated at $11.5 million or higher. The ferry’s owners are politically influential, so the city is reluctant to turn them down, but it’s also strapped for cash and may not be able to afford the project. In any case, the bridge won’t solve the real problem, which is high-speed traffic swooping around the curve from the Parade to Water Street and endangering pedestrians. The city has issued an RFP; bids are due on September 26. The station’s owners have put it up for sale, claiming that the bridge plans make it impossible for them to continue with their redevelopment plans for the building.

What’s needed: An access plan that includes a complete redesign of the Parade and Water Street, including extensive traffic calming. Incidentally, a new plan would provide an opportunity to reverse the questionable redesign of the Parade done in the 1970s, which blocks views of the station from State Street.

Our Lady of Good Counsel chapel, Sound View

Significance: Built in 1906, this shingled Gothic Revival chapel is part of Connecticut’s resort history. Several of the state’s seasonal chapels (as well as one synagogue) are listed on the National Register. Most of them are Protestant, but Our Lady of Good Counsel is an unusual Catholic example that reflects the social variety of the state’s summer resorts.

Threat: Christ the King parish of Old Lyme is building a new church and decided to close the summer chapel without informing parishioners, who in fact thought it was definitely to remain open. A group of worshippers is trying to keep the chapel open, but they have made no headway with the church hierarchy. There is widespread fear that the chapel will be demolished once it’s sold; zoning allows three single-family houses to be built on the site.

Larger issues: While keeping the chapel open as a seasonal house of worship would preserve an important element of Sound View’s history, that may not be possible at this point. Even if historic congregations are closed, their buildings can continue to serve as community landmarks through adaptive use. Unfortunately, closed decision-making processes in many religious organizations can leave preservationists with no way to discuss and encourage reuse alternatives.

What’s needed: If the chapel must indeed be closed, steps could be taken to ensure the building’s preservation. National Register listing could document the chapel’s history and offer some protection against unreasonable demolition, as well as possible tax incentives for adaptive use.

Parley Converse house, Stafford Springs

Significance: Parley Converse, a farmer and a founding father of Stafford’s woolen mills, built this house in 1816, and his daughter and her husband extensively remodeled it in about 1870. One of Stafford Springs’ finest early Victorian buildings, the house was a restaurant from the 1930s until 1999.

Threat: The last restaurateur’s widow, Marie-Therese Courrieu, wants to sell the property, which lies between a residential neighborhood and an emerging commercial area. After the town denied rezoning for a convenience store, the Stafford Historical Society offered to help find a more sympathetic buyer, but Courrieu has been unresponsive. In the meantime, the house is deteriorating. “The big concern is that if the building remains unattended for another year, it is slipping dangerously beyond the point of any reasonable return,” says Ed Bareiss of the historical society. A sale to a preservation-minded buyer recently fell through when the building’s condition scared away a lender. The asking price of $350,000 is considered unreasonably high, an opinion supported by the fact that the house has been on the market at that price for years.
What’s needed: A buyer who can convince the owner to sell at a reasonable price.

The Carroll, 44 Willow Street, Waterbury

Significance: This 4-story brick apartment building was built in 1910 and designed by Waterbury architect Joseph T. Jackson. It is considered the finest of several early 20th-century apartment buildings in the Hillside National Register district.

Threat: Neighbors want the vacant and deteriorating building torn down, largely because bad management in the past filled it with undesirable tenants. A neighborhood revitalization plan calls for making the site a pocket park, but the city currently has no money for demolition. The owner, Kenneth Benjamin of Rockaway, New York, wants to renovate the building, but can’t start unless the city forgives unpaid back taxes, which is unlikely because of neighborhood opposition. Neighbors say Benjamin lacks the experience to complete the renovation. They fear that his project, like previous attempts, will go nowhere.

Larger issues: It can be difficult for neighbors to visualize a rundown building as restored. All too often, they think the easiest way to get rid of a neighborhood nuisance is to raze it, but that’s just punishing the building for the sins of its owner or inhabitants.

What’s needed: Convince the neighborhood that a renovated building could be a community asset—a similar building just two doors away has been attractively renovated and could be a good model—and the city to forgive the taxes so that The Carroll can be put back to use. Find assistance to help Benjamin carry out the project, if he needs it.

Amos Bradley house, Westport

Significance: Built around 1800 for a boot maker and veteran of the Revolution and the War of 1812, the Bradley house is a simple, well-preserved farmhouse with a graceful bell-cast gambrel roof and many original interior features. The State Archaeologist thinks it’s likely that there are substantial archaeological remains, both prehistoric and Colonial, on the site.

Threat: A developer bought the house a year ago with plans to demolish it for a new house. A coalition from Fairfield and Westport has nominated the Bradley house to the National Register and sued under Environmental Protection Act to block demolition. This has stopped action until the nomination reaches the point where owner can legally object and thereby remove protection. The developer, who paid $600,000 for the house, has offered to sell it to the preservationists for $1.2 million, but they couldn’t raise that much money.

What’s needed: Convince the owner to consider adding to the Bradley house or selling it at a reasonable price.
Connecticut is on its way toward being the first of nine states along the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route to complete a comprehensive interpretive marker project. The Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism and local history advocates including the Connecticut Chapter of the Society of the Cincinnati and Hugh Trumbull Adams have supported the creation of ten panels marking significant locations on the route taken by the French army through Connecticut from June 19 to July 2, 1781, and on the return north October 23 to November 9, 1782. The first of the panels, shown here, will be dedicated in Lebanon on October 1.

Norwich. Two threatened places have new owners who raising hopes that the sites will be restored. In June the New York-based development firm Onekey LLC announced plans to renovate the Mill No. 1 at the Ponemah Mill (listed 1990) with apartments, offices and retail space. The mill, one of the largest in Connecticut, was built in 1871 by the Ponemah Mills Company and produced cotton cloth until 1972. Since 1974, Mill No. 1 has been used by Helikon Furniture to make office furniture. Onekey has hired Frederick Biebesheimer, a well-known preservation architect and former CTHP trustee, to design the restoration of the mill.

Also in June, local developer Jenny Lam bought the Uriah Hosmer still house (listed 2004), also known as the Chelsea Landing Pub, at auction. The pub, built in 1741, is one of a tiny handful of Colonial buildings to survive in Connecticut downtowns. It was put on the Most Important Threatened Places list in 2004 after it was condemned because of structural problems. Lam, who has already renovated a number of historic buildings in downtown Norwich, hopes to repair the building and reopen it as a pub.

Around the State, cont’d from page 5

Since 1941, the star of the Seaport’s collection has been the whaling ship Charles W. Morgan, built in New Bedford in 1841. The last wooden whaling ship in the world, the Morgan is now a National Historic Landmark, as is the Sabino, a coal-fired steam ferry dating from 1908 and purchased in 1974. Today the museum has more than 500 boats, ranging from rowboats to racing boats.

The museum has also collected historic buildings, many of which were in danger of demolition. They include the Buckingham-Hall house, built in the 17th century, as well as a sail loft, ropewalk, and lifesaving station. At the Library and Research Center, researchers can study ships’ logs and plans, books and charts, figureheads and models, paintings and photographs. Some of this material is available on the Internet.

In addition to physical artifacts, the Seaport helps to preserve maritime skills and traditions. It includes a working shipyard, where the Seaports’ boats are maintained and where the reproduction of the schooner Amistad was built. There are also demonstrations, programs for school-children and a maritime studies program in conjunction with Williams College. Speaking at the Seaport in 2003, Senator Christopher Dodd underscored the importance of its mission: “America cannot be understood as a nation until we understand it as a piece of land surrounded by water… Our rise as a powerful nation can be traced to our growing power on the seas—to harvest food, to conduct commerce, and to defend our national sovereignty. Indeed, it has been said that sea power is an indelible mark of a free people.

For more information, visit www.mysticseaport.org

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of the open-spandrel bridges, Bridge 560 had panels on its piers that were hammered to expose the aggregate and create a two-toned appearance, an effect that has been obscured by repairs and weathering.

Bridge No. 1132, carrying Route 80 over the Hammonasset River in Killingworth, was completed in 1934. At that time, the road passed through an active agricultural area and gave local farmers improved access to markets. Round-arched fascia beams create the appearance of a continuous arcade, although the only true arches are the large supporting ribs. The bridge retains its original railing, with chamfered balusters, a detail repeated on smaller bridges along the route.

These bridges represent an important turning point in Connecticut history, the reshaping of the state’s landscape, for better or worse, in response to the rapid increase of automobile and truck traffic. All of them designed by CHD engineers, they also represent a significant achievement by the state. Finally, they show us how one generation combined efficient engineering with careful attention to design to create public works that were not merely useful, but also handsome objects in their own right and enhancements to the larger landscape—a example that our own age should heed.
At the Trust, cont’d from page 2

issues, and we will report on them as they progress. If you would like more information, please call me at (203) 562-6312.

Communication between a local historic district commission and the district’s property owners can be muddy, and, in some case, non-existent until a critical case comes up, as the Litchfield case shows. Favorite quotes from Connecticut Circuit Rider Nina Harkrader are: “They said they didn’t realize they lived in an historic district and they’ve already done the work,” and, “Our residents refer to our commission as the ‘hysterical commission.’” With funding from the Commission on Culture and Tourism, Nina created a seminar for commissioners and local certified government officials titled “Public Relations 911! Simple and Effective Ways to Communicate with the Public.” The first two sessions, held in Norwich and New Haven this summer, attracted almost 50 commissioners and officials. Two more sessions will be held this winter, in the Hartford area and Fairfield County.

—Helen Higgins

Tifkat, cont’d from page 3

full meter, I was able to probe deeper. Each depth produced additional fire-cracked rocks, charcoal and varying amounts of tool-making debris, primarily quartz. In addition to the earlier hammerstone, an anvil stone was found at 34 cm., and lastly at 41 cm. a broken Brewerton Eared-notched point made from phylite. The Brewerton specimen indicated that the site was older than the Woodland stage, dating to the Late Archaic period, approximately 1000 B.C. This established it as a multiperiod site.

There are still many unanswered questions and the analysis of the soil samples and artifacts continues. Such small rockshelters, near game trails and water sources are very common in Connecticut’s forests. They not only reflect ephemeral prehistoric uses as hunting camps or overnight stops, but they also commonly contain later Colonial, and sometimes even modern artifacts. These materials indicate that, like pre-contact Native Americans, more recent settlers of the area continued to find uses for such sites. As a student of archaeology, I found the work at Tifkat’s rockshelter an important opportunity to gain experience in field archaeology and increase our knowledge of the past. For a few days last summer, I was able to touch another time and imagine what Tifkat saw as he gazed down from his mountain.

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for new buildings at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, the partner in charge, was interested in adapting Gothic architecture to 20th-century needs, and his interest extended to modern building materials as well. Beginning with the West Point job, Economy Concrete provided ornament for a number of CG&F buildings, and in return Goodhue designed the company’s headquarters, an unassuming Tudor building that still stands just a block from the bank.

A careful eye can spot numerous examples of cast stone around New Haven, much of it by Economy Concrete (but at least two other cast-stone companies were active in New Haven in the 1920s). It’s used on schools, churches, commercial buildings and houses. The only structure built entirely of cast stone is the Hamden Bank, and it’s clearly the company’s masterpiece, still as crisp and impressive as it was in 1926.

Cast stone ornament lost its appeal after World War II with the rise of modern, unornamented architecture, but precast concrete continued to grow in importance as a building material. In the postwar years, Economy Concrete’s place was taken up by Plasticrete, the company to which Marcel Breuer turned for the facade panels of the Pirelli Building in New Haven.

The Hamden Bank and Trust building stands at the intersection of Dixwell, Putnam and Circular Avenues in Hamden. The Economy Concrete Company headquarters is just up the street at 1337 Dixwell Avenue.
Concrete Achievements: Hamden Bank & Trust Company, Hamden

The intersection is wide—acres of asphalt with confusing traffic patterns—but a handsome stone building takes control of it. You know at once that it’s a bank: the classical detailing, large-scaled and simple, gives it a sense of monumentality and permanence that early 20th-century bankers thought would create confidence in their institutions. The walls are rusticated to emphasize their strength. Classical pilasters say that this is a place of serious business. Graceful volutes support the door lintel, where low-relief carvings of beehives suggest industry and thrift, saving ahead for future needs.

But it’s not really stone. The bank is built of something called ‘concrete stone’ or ‘cast stone’—actually high quality precast concrete, made by the Economy Concrete Company also of Hamden. Not coincidentally, Economy Concrete’s president was a director of the bank, which failed in 1929, just three years after completing its new building.

According to an article the company published in 1921, “One of the most notable factors in the recent development of the building arts in America is the constantly increasing use of ornamental concrete stone… Up to fifteen years ago there were but a few isolated examples of ornamental concrete in the United States and they were little known or understood by the members of the architectural profession.”

Economy Concrete had gotten its big break in 1906, when the prominent architectural firm of Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson selected it to supply ornament...