

## Waterbury: Saving City Hall

After voters defeated a referendum on bond funding to renovate Waterbury's crumbling but historic City Hall last November, there were real fears that the building could be lost. Suffering from years of neglect and recent vandalism, it had been condemned by the city's own building department, and new code requirements threatened to make restoration technically difficult and financially burdensome. Better to sell it off, some said, and build a new, efficient, city hall somewhere else. The building had become a symbol for Waterbury's wider problems, which included a former mayor in jail as well as economic difficulties that resulted in the city's finances being put under state control.

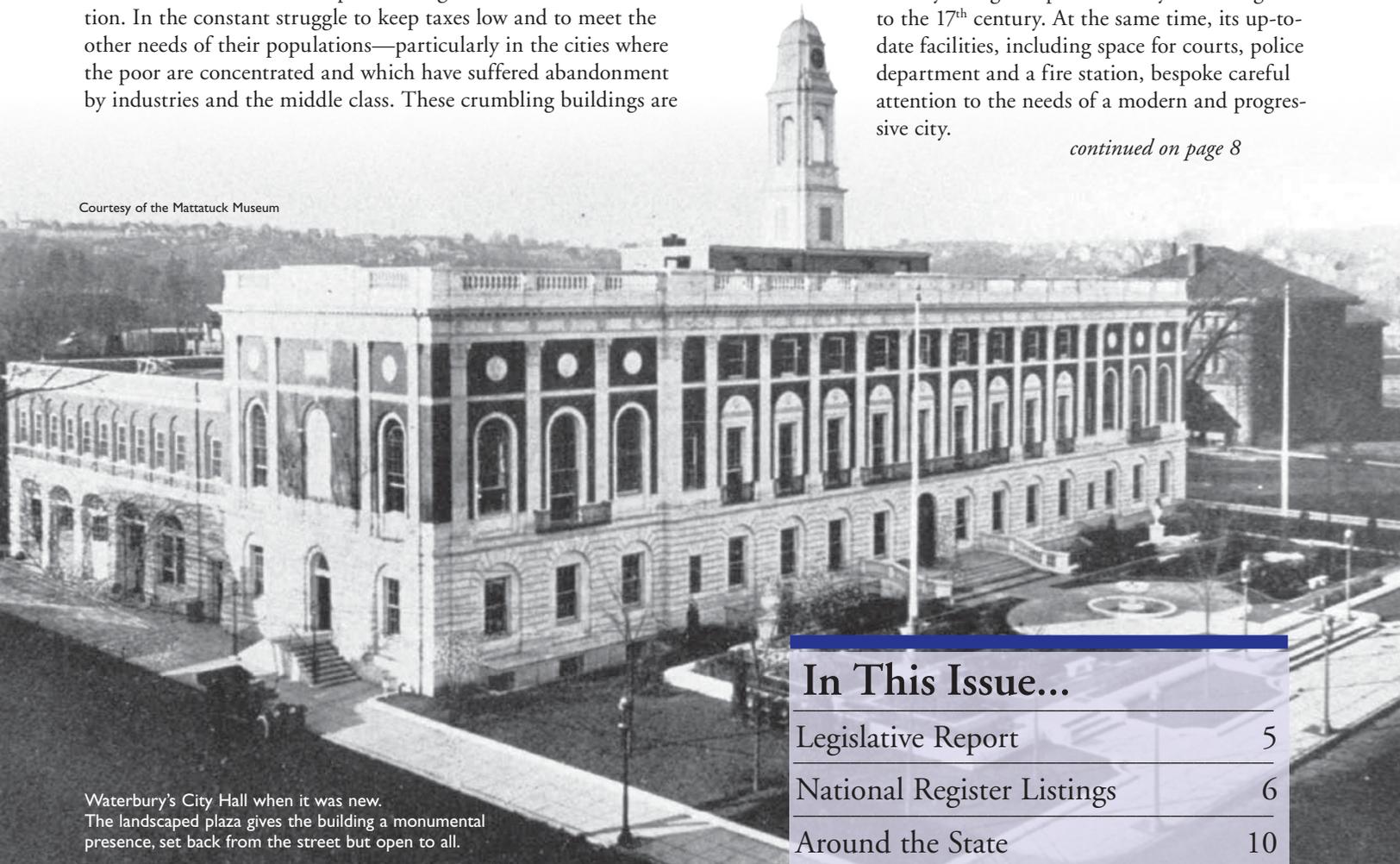
Waterbury's City Hall isn't alone. Other Connecticut towns and cities have landmark municipal buildings that need care and attention. In the constant struggle to keep taxes low and to meet the other needs of their populations—particularly in the cities where the poor are concentrated and which have suffered abandonment by industries and the middle class. These crumbling buildings are

poster children for generations of planning policies and economic practices that are killing our cities. Once expressions of civic pride, they have become symbols of urban decline.

This was not always the case. When Waterbury's City Hall opened in 1915, the city was an industrial power, manufacturing not only clocks, buttons, carriages, mattresses, and household implements but also the machinery to produce many of these items. Above all Waterbury was a national center in the production of brass and brass goods. The new city hall was a statement of civic pride. Designed by Cass Gilbert, the architect of the Woolworth Building in New York and, later, of the U. S. Supreme Court, its Colonial Revival design was a reminder of the city's long and proud history stretching back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, its up-to-date facilities, including space for courts, police department and a fire station, bespoke careful attention to the needs of a modern and progressive city.

*continued on page 8*

Courtesy of the Mattatuck Museum



Waterbury's City Hall when it was new. The landscaped plaza gives the building a monumental presence, set back from the street but open to all.

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## From the Executive Director

I am pleased to write that Hartford has been selected as a finalist in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's search for a site in the Northeast for its **2011 National Preservation Conference**. This conference draws more than 2,500 preservation professionals, community leaders, developers, architects and just plain interested folks to four days of educational sessions and stimulating field trips. Our proposal, while centered on Hartford, draws on the rich heritage and preservation stories that abound in Connecticut, from bike tours of historic town greens to visits to the cultural and educational treasures of New Haven. Two interesting themes are emerging that will be special to Connecticut: Women in preservation and architecture and Modernism.

The Connecticut Trust is lead sponsor, with **Hartford Preservation Alliance** as co-sponsor and the **Hartford Convention**

and **Visitor's Bureau** as the lead organizer. Also involved is a steering committee of both Hartford and statewide preservation leaders.

The National Trust is sending a visiting team to Hartford on August 9 and 10, and we are working hard to put together a winning visit. We will know if Hartford is selected in October at this year's conference in **St. Paul, Minnesota**. Registration for the St. Paul conference has begun, and if you register before July 31 the fee is discounted. Please visit [www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org) for more information.

After almost twelve years of devoted service to the Connecticut Trust, the accounting firm of **Konowitz, Kahn** in North Haven will no longer be performing our audit, although we will continue to contract with them for our bookkeeper. It may sound strange to say a fond good-bye to one's auditor, but our good friends at Konowitz have been extraordinarily helpful and supportive of the Trust over the years. Now, with significant funds appropriated to us from the State of Connecticut, we need additional

auditing services that Konowitz does not provide. Many thanks, Dave Reynolds!

Since last winter we have had **Christopher Bolick** as an intern. Showing up one day a week, Chris took on two important tasks: inputting our barns survey data and updating our list of restoration contractors, historic architects and other preservation consultants for the on-line Restoration Services Directory at [www.cttrust.org](http://www.cttrust.org). He also contributed an article on National Register listings for the May/June issue of CPN. For the summer, as Chris moves on to a full-time job elsewhere, we welcome **Melissa Antonelli**, who is majoring in historic preservation at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. Melissa brings a strong background in historic preservation principles and practices. Her main responsibility will be to solicit and compile nominations for our Most Important Threatened Historic Places list, coming out in September/October issue of CPN. Please contact Melissa at the Trust if you have a building or site you would like to nominate. 🌸

—Helen Higgins

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Connecticut Commission  
on Culture & Tourism

# HouseTalk

Two HouseTalk programs in June offered Connecticut Trust members insights into the workaday world of early blacksmiths and the luxurious life of one of Connecticut's richest merchants.

Trustee Bill Hosley called the Bakerville Blacksmith shop and tannery, in New Hartford, "the most authentic and best preserved pre-industrial site of its type in New England, if not the entire country." At the site, Goshen First Selectman Bob Valentine provided a demonstration for the attendees.

In Woodbury, architectural historian James Sexton guided attendees around the Jabez Bacon house, built in 1760. He explained how the size, scale, and details of the house all worked together to proclaim Bacon's wealth, even to passers-by on the road. ❀

Melissa Antonelli



Melissa Antonelli



Melissa Antonelli



Gregory Farmer

Thanks to all the people who made these HouseTalk events possible!

**New Hartford:** New Hartford Historical Society; Pat Casey; Gordon Ross; Scott Goff and Allyn Sedgwick; Bob Valentine; Bill Hosley; Ken and Chris Croke; Ann Babcock and Jana Petano, William Pitt/Sotheby's International; Neal Yates.

**Woodbury:** Clark, Marion and Sarah Griswold; James Sexton, Tom Nissley, Prudential Connecticut Realty; The Glebe House Museum.

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# New Trustee

Governor M. Jodi Rell has appointed Redding First Selectman Natalie Ketcham to the Connecticut Trust's Board of Trustees. A member of the Redding Board of Selectmen since 1995, she has been First Selectman since 1999. She has also served on the town's Board of Education.

Ms Ketcham, who holds a Bachelor of Science cum laude from Northwestern University, previously worked in advertising for BBDO, Inc. an advertising agency on Madison Avenue in New York City, and as an advertising account executive for CBS Radio in New York City and Charter Communications, the cable television company. Her volunteer work has included the League of Women Voters, the Redding Newcomers' Club and Garden Club, PTA, and Redding's Republican Town Committee.

Ms Ketcham was designated a "Hometown Hero" by Connecticut Celebration 350 in 1986. This state pro-

The Redding Pilot



Natalie Ketcham

gram recognized "all those who made Connecticut what it was in the past, what it is today, and what it will be in the future." In 2004 she received an Environmental Merit Award from the United States Environmental Protection Agency's New England Region.

The Trust recommended Ms. Ketcham for the position due to her active support of historic preservation in Redding and her participation in the Trust's Ambassador Program, which involves meeting with municipal and state elected officials, to let them know what the Trust does and what resources the Trust can offer towns, including Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants. Redding was one of the first towns to take part in the program.

Ms. Ketcham "is the poster child for what we would like to see happen around the state," said Board chairman Jeffrey Muthersbaugh. "She can talk to other towns about how to move forward, like Redding has done. She realizes how important historic resources are to the town of Redding and its fabric. It's why the legislature has given money for grants to the Trust."

According to the Trust's charter, the Governor appoints three members of the Board of Trustees. Ms. Ketcham replaces Arthur Lathrop, of Norwich, who resigned in 2006. ❖

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# Legislative Update

The General Assembly finished its 2007 session on June 6 without passing a budget, but did pass two bills that will help historic preservation.

"An Act Concerning Youth Opportunities and Urban Revitalization" gives Connecticut a new state historic rehabilitation historic tax credit. It was signed into law by Governor Rell on June 14. The bill expands the tax credit passed last year, which covers the conversion of historic commercial and industrial buildings to residential use (see CPN, July/August 2006). The new law makes mixed-use projects also eligible for rehabilitation tax credits. It also allows a higher credit for affordable housing projects in historic buildings, 30 percent instead of 25 percent.

Anita Mielert, secretary of Connecticut Preservation Action, a statewide lobbying group for historic preservation, praised the new credit, saying, "This gives us two state historic rehabilitation tax credit measures. The law created one year ago remains in force as is. This second measure is for mixed-use projects only. Together they give us up to \$95 million over the next three years to accomplish some very, very significant changes to our communities."

The second bill is "An Act Concerning Demolition of Buildings," which allows municipalities to pass delay of demolition

ordinances of up to 180 days. Previously, the maximum was 90 days. Delay of demolition ordinances don't prevent the demolition of historic buildings, but they do give preservationists a chance to work with property owners and developers to find ways of saving and reusing these structures. The bill was introduced by Sen. Bob Duff (D-Norwalk). It too has been signed by the governor. As we go to press, the General Assembly approved the 2007 budget, including an appropriation for the Trust's Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants. ❖

To read both bills, visit the General Assembly website, [www.cga.ct.gov](http://www.cga.ct.gov). The tax credit is SB 1352 and the delay of demolition bill is SB 618.

## Upcoming Meetings of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

Wednesday, August 1, 2007  
at 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, September 5, 2007  
at 9:30 a.m.

All meetings take place at the  
South Congregational Church  
277 Main Street, Hartford

For more information call (860)566-3005

As we move into the 21st century, using the internet has become a more convenient and essential means of communication. So that we can keep you abreast of the latest developments on the preservation front in Connecticut, the Trust is requesting that you send a simple email to [email@cttrust.org](mailto:email@cttrust.org) with your preferred email address so that we may update your account. This is only for our use and will be shared with absolutely no one.



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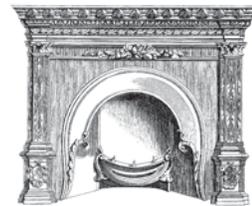
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The Commercial Trust Building, in downtown New Britain, is being rehabbed with ground-floor commercial space and apartments for seniors above. The developers hope to use Connecticut's new mixed-use historic rehab tax credit on the project.

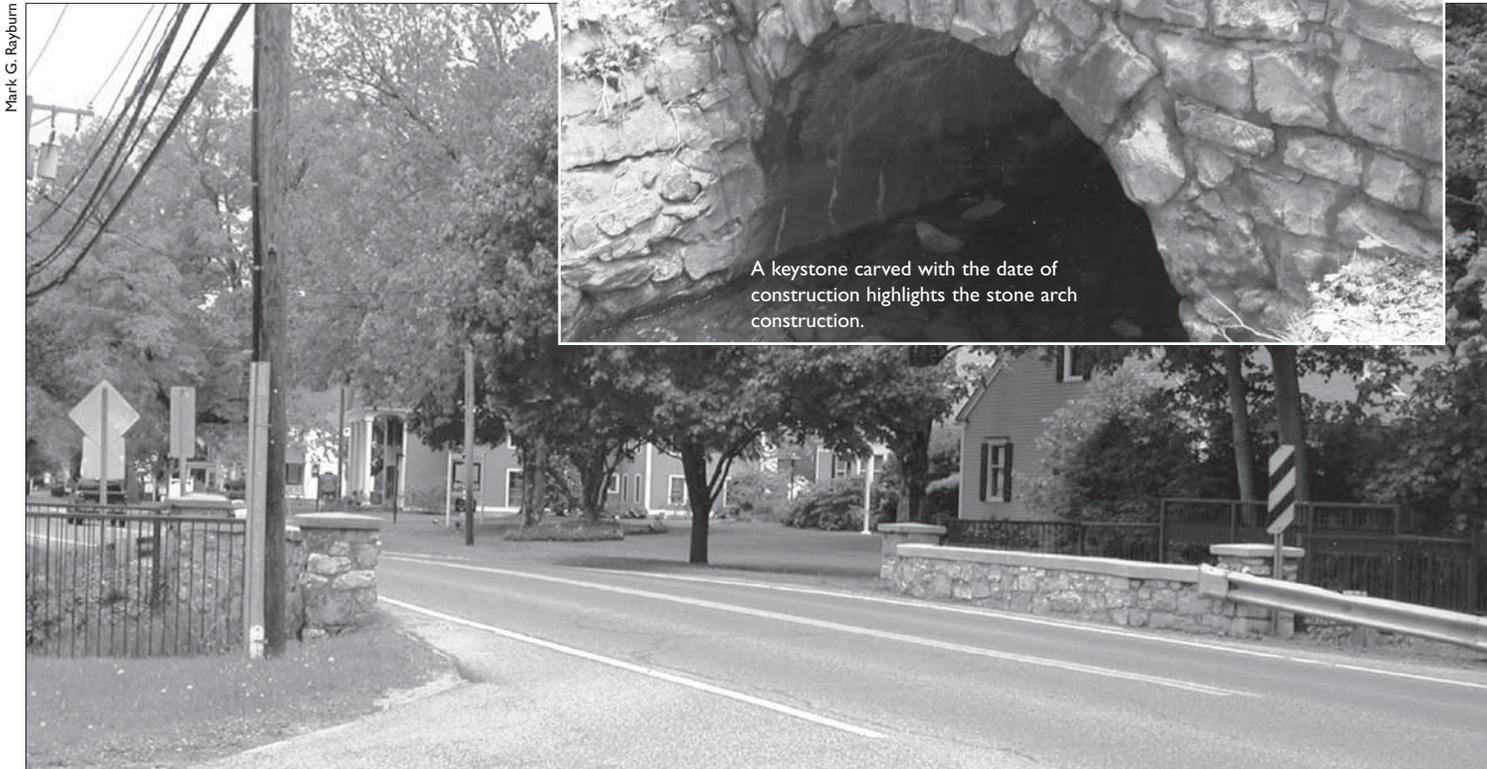
# Historic Bridges Listed

Bridges have historically provided necessary links in the transportation network, allowing people to get together, making possible the movement of raw materials and finished goods. Three Connecticut bridges recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places illustrate changes in bridge building in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Two employ the age-old technique of assembling cut stone into arches. Such bridges were costly, requiring extensive labor to quarry, shape and assemble the stones. But in some cases the durability of stone was worth its cost.

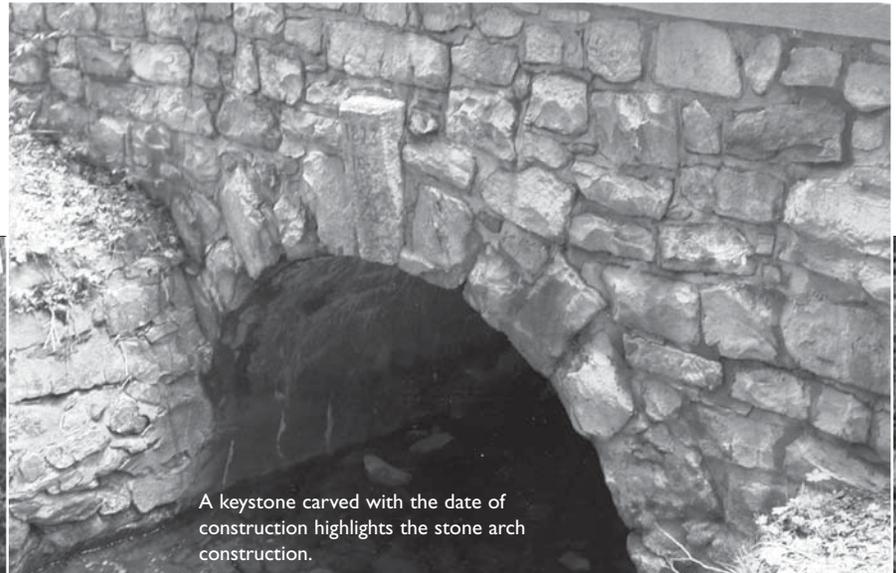
The oldest of the three bridges is the **Burton Brook bridge, in Lakeville** (in the town of Salisbury), built in 1873. The bridge serves Main Street (U. S. 44), once the Albany Turnpike, the principal east-west route across the northern part of the state. Heavy traffic levels dictated not only construction of local marble, but also the bridge's generous 29-foot width — far wider than was typical for the time. This has also allowed the bridge to continue to serve modern traffic.

Unusually wide for its time, the Burton Brook bridge in Lakeville can accommodate modern traffic.



Mark G. Rayburn

Mark G. Rayburn



A keystone carved with the date of construction highlights the stone arch construction.

Also of stone is the **Perry Avenue bridge in Silvermine**, a part of Norwalk, built in 1899. At the time, Silvermine was a small village with a few small industries. The bridge crosses the Silvermine River just downstream from a mill dam, and the possibility of flooding seems to have justified stone construction. In the 20th century the community attracted a group of artists, many of whom drew or painted the bridge.

An alternative to stone construction was steel. Lighter and more flexible than stone, stronger than timber, and able to be mass-produced more cheaply in factories, steel bridges proliferated in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The wide variety of early steel bridge types gradually settled down to a few standard types. One was the “Parker modified through truss,” as seen in the **Depot Street bridge in Beacon Falls**. Patented in 1870 by

Charles H. Parker, this design modified an earlier truss design by arching the top chord. The arch shape was more expensive to fabricate, but used less steel and—most important at a time when vehicles were becoming heavier and heavier—it was stronger.

The Depot Street bridge replaced an earlier structure that was becoming inadequate. Located in an industrial town, the bridge was crucial to shipping raw materials in to factories and finished goods out, as well as to allowing employees to get to work.

The different structural systems determined the bridges' appearance. Obviously, stone arches are heavy and solid looking, as the Burton Brook bridge demonstrates. But imaginative builders weren't always restricted. The Perry Avenue bridge, with its shallow arch and low parapet walls

*continued on page 14*

Tod Bryant



The graceful lines of the Perry Avenue bridge in Norwalk are unusual for stone bridges.



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Stone construction was used to survive a flood in case the mill dam gave way.

Lattice bracing provides strength while appearing light and airy.

The Depot Street bridge in Beacon Falls used both state and federal funding.



Luc Livimonek

Luc Livimonek



### The Shorefront Park Historic Gatehouse

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## Waterbury, cont'd from page 1

At the top of Waterbury's economy was the Chase family, owners of the Chase Brass Company. Family members spearheaded the building's construction, donating about 75 percent of its cost. They were also instrumental in developing a complex of other buildings nearby, all designed by Gilbert, that was a showplace of the latest in architecture and city planning (*see sidebar, page 15*). This complex exemplified the interdependent roles of government, business, and charities in building a prosperous and progressive city, and it promised to be a source of pride for generations to come.

But as Waterbury's government grew over the years, many city functions were moved out of City Hall and into other buildings, including the Chase Company's grand office building across the street, which the city purchased in 1966. City Hall itself fell victim to municipal economies. Offices were overcrowded, systems became obsolete, and maintenance was neglected.

By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, engineering inspections found water leaking through the roof, foundation and walls, causing steel interior columns to rust and exterior stones to pull loose. In addition to neglect, there was

Ann Smith



Ornamental railings highlight Waterbury's brass industry.

deliberate damage. In 2005 vandals opened a fire hose, flooding the entire building, and in January of this year a thief stole copper pipes from the basement, causing another flood. Finally, there were fire code violations as well. After the referendum was defeated, the Fire Chief shut the build-

ing down, and by April of this year its only occupant was the Clerk's office, which could not operate without its records vault.

In 2006 the Board of Alderman finally approved a plan to renovate and update the ailing building. The plan outlined new and more efficient office layouts, made possible

This photograph, taken in 1978 for the National Register nomination, already shows efflorescence, peeling paint, and unsightly window air conditioners, all signs of neglect.

Ann Smith





Throughout the building, architectural details are carefully designed to express the dignity of civil government.

in part by moving the fire department out to a new station to be built nearby. Water damage and deterioration were to be repaired, code violations corrected, and full accessibility provided. The total cost was \$48 million.

Saying that such a large expense should be approved by all city voters, aldermen from the Independent Party forced the issue to a referendum last November. The referendum failed by a vote of 7,330 to 5,868.

After several months of negotiations, the city's Board of Aldermen approved a new restoration plan on May 28. The new plan, estimated at \$36 million, saves money by not constructing a new fire station, but rather keeping the fire department in its historic location in one wing of the building. With this reduced cost, the Independent aldermen agreed not to request another referendum.

According to Michael O'Connor, Executive Director of the Waterbury Development Corporation, the city's architects, DeCarlo & Doll of Hamden, have done preliminary design work and should have contract documents ready by the end of July. "We expect that it will take approximately one year before construction activities are visible on site," says O'Connor. The Waterbury Development Corporation acts as the program manager for the City of Waterbury for large-scale construction projects.



Why is this building important? To help raise local support for the building, local and statewide groups organized a symposium, held at the Mattatuck Museum on April 21, to draw attention to the building's importance and to present information about the renovation proposals.

At the symposium, Barbara Christen, an architectural historian who has written about Cass Gilbert and his career, analyzed the City Hall and Gilbert's other Waterbury works in light of the architect's twin interests in city planning and Colonial Revival design. Blending elements from numerous historic sources, she said, Gilbert created a distinctive grouping of buildings with the City Hall as its heart. Gilbert, she pointed out, considered City Hall to be one of his best works, including it in a montage of buildings he designed.

Alan Plattus, professor at the Yale School of Architecture and director of Yale's Urban Design Workshop, spoke about the building's civic importance. "As important as it may be," he said. "This building is not just about architecture but about our identity as citizens." Working with towns across the state, Plattus has found that most communities want a centrally-located, visually prominent municipal building, an easily accessible gathering place for doing public business and foster-

*continued on page 15*

## Ledyard.

Remains of a 19th-century settlement of Rogerene Quakers will be protected under the first subdivision to be approved under the town's conservation subdivision regulations. The Rogerenes were a small sect that had settlements in Watertown, Groton and Ledyard before dying out in the 20th century. Also protected are possible Native American resources.

The subdivision, called "Founders Preserve," is being developed by a company whose sole principal is Arnold Peck of Orange. As approved, the subdivision will include 32 lots on 96.5 acres, with 47.6 acres set aside as open space.

According to Ledyard's town planner, Brian Palaia, the conservation subdivision regulations, adopted in August of 2006, allow developers a density bonus in exchange for setting aside open space to protect historic or natural sites. If at least 40 percent of the parcel is left undeveloped, the remainder of the parcel can be developed at the next higher density category. For instance, the Founders Preserve subdivision is located in a zone where the minimum lot size is one and a half acres, but under the conservation subdivision, the developer is able to have one-acre lots.

The conservation subdivision ordinance builds on other Ledyard regulations requiring developers to protect or mitigate damage to historic resources, says Palaia. Since the 1990s the town has required developers to prepare resource management plans to identify and address historic or natural resources. For instance archaeological sites could be protected with an easement, or be put into open space. Or, the developer could arrange to have the site investigated and documented.

David Poirier, Staff Archaeologist for the State Historic Preservation Office, says, "At least two dozen towns in the state have planning and zoning regulations that address historic archaeological resources, but Ledyard's are probably the best." Poirier added that having good regulations is only part of the story; they also have to be well implemented. At Founders Preserve, he said, "the town and the developer really worked together to protect the site."

In addition to setting aside open space, the Planning Commission imposed ten

Donna McCalla



The ballroom of the Peters house features a coved ceiling and built-in benches for dancers to rest. A later partition divides the room in half, but it could be removed.

conditions on the developer of Founders Preserve, including additional survey work and actions to protect historic resources from accidental damage during construction. These conditions were recommended in the study conducted by the Public Archaeology Survey Team, Inc., a nonprofit history and archaeology consulting firm based in Storrs. 🌿

## Hebron.

New research seems to confirm the tradition that the town-owned Peters house at 150 East Street was the site of a dramatic episode in Connecticut history. Bruce Clouette, an historian for the Public Archaeology Survey Team, has found evidence suggesting that Caesar and Louis Peters, a black couple owned by the Rev. Samuel Peters, were indeed living in what is now the ell of the house when they were abducted by slave traders in 1787. Townspeople rescued the couple in a well-documented episode that became part of Connecticut's abolitionist tradition.

On the other hand, the research disproved the other half of the Peters house legend, that it was the home of the Rev. Peters, a notorious Tory who left Connecticut during the American Revolution and spent the rest of his life in exile in England. Looking into the land records, Clouette determined that

the house and the land on which it stands never belonged to Peters, but rather to his brother, Jonathan Peters, and then to Jonathan's son, another Jonathan. Tax records seem to indicate that the younger Jonathan built the house sometime between 1797 and 1812.

This documentary research is confirmed by John O. Curtis, an architectural historian and consultant, who investigated the structure. Although the house employs the old-fashioned center chimney plan, Curtis found proportions, construction techniques and decorative elements not found in Connecticut before the 1790s -- well after the Rev. Peters' departure.

Curtis calls the house "...virtually a text book example of the skillful blending of the traditional and the high-style by an imaginative and innovative housewright..." Pointing out such features as the elegant façade, a ballroom with built-in benches and a "stunning" tray ceiling, and a highly rare built-in chest of drawers, he recommends that the house be nominated to the National Register for its architectural merit.

Curtis' and Clouette's studies, paid for in part by an Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant from the Connecticut Trust, strengthen the case for taking action to preserve the house, which the town acquired in 2004, along with land destined to become a park.

The best option may be to sell the house after putting in place restrictions to ensure that subsequent alterations are in keeping with its architectural and historical character. Designating the house as a Local Historic Property would be easy, since the town already has an Historic Properties Commission, but local designation would only cover the exterior. To protect interior features would require a preservation easement.

Other options that have been discussed include allowing the Hebron Historical Society to operate the house as a museum, or adapting it to professional use. Curtis cautions, “the world is already too full of historic house museums and many are in financial trouble,” while professional use would require alterations to meet accessibility requirements, which could be damaging. The Historic Properties Commission is to bring its recommendations to the selectmen in late June. ❖

### Fairfield.

The United States Coast Guard has declared the Penfield Reef Lighthouse to be surplus property and is offering it to government agencies and non-profit or community organizations, for education, park, recreation, cultural, or historic preservation purposes.

The Penfield Reef Light, a Second Empire lighthouse established in 1874, marks a submerged reef near the entrance of Black Rock Harbor, offshore of Fairfield Beach and Bridgeport. It is listed on the

**Seth Wetmore house, Middletown** (2004). “Every historic house has a couple drawbacks,” Jack Bolles says. “This one happens to have close to 200.” He is referring to his newest restoration project, the Seth Wetmore House in Middletown. Wetmore was a successful Middletown merchant, judge and landowner, part of the Connecticut Valley elite known as the “River Gods,” but his grand home had long been neglected.

Bolles first read about the Wetmore house in the July/August, 2003, issue of CPN (which he still has), and he took an instant liking to it. But he was restoring another house in Newington and couldn’t take on any more projects. Every so often, Bolles would read about the Wetmore house in the Hartford Courant or CPN, but it wasn’t until the owner died and the bank foreclosed on the mortgage that Bolles realized the peril the house faced and decided to visit it.

The Newington project was finished, and Bolles was ready to relax for a bit, but one look inside the Wetmore house

changed his mind. As soon as he walked in, he realized the entrance was similar if not identical to the Webb house in Wethersfield—too good to lose. A week later he submitted a bid.

Bolles has his work cut out for him. Seventy window panes need replacing; the south wing needs a new foundation and the exterior has rot. But he is not alone. The Middletown Plate Glass Company has offered to donate window glass. Seth Wetmore’s great-great-granddaughter Cornelia H. Wetmore (1830-1934) provides help from beyond with the historic structure report that she wrote in 1909. And friends and acquaintances have sent pictures of the house in various states throughout its history.

With airy and well-lit spaces, impressive paneling, summer beams, and even feather-edge boards in the closets, the Wetmore house has much to offer. It is a place in history and as Bolles says, “Sitting in the back yard is like sitting in the country, 200 years ago.” ❖

—Todd Levine

National Register. This offer comes as part of a national program to deaccession surplus historic lighthouse (see CPN November/December 2004).

The Department of Interior will review applications and select an eligible entity to receive the property. Letters of interest are due by July 18. If no applicant is

approved, the lighthouse will be offered for sale. In either case, historic preservation covenants will be included in all deeds, and the Coast Guard will retain the right to operate equipment in the light, as well as an unrestricted right of access to maintain, operate, repair, replace or relocate the equipment. ❖

*For more information on the disposal of lighthouses, visit [www.cr.nps.gov/maritime/nhlpa/nhlpa.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/maritime/nhlpa/nhlpa.htm).*

### Brooklyn.

In May, the Brooklyn Unitarian-Universalist Society rededicated its meeting house after restoration of the steeple was completed.

According to Dennis C. Landis, chair of the restoration committee, the project started about ten years ago, when the congregation discovered that the bell tower was leaning. Investigation confirmed structural problems in the steeple, which had been replaced after the hurricane of 1938 blew down the original. The architects recommended removing the steeple and

*continued on page 12*

The Penfield Reef Light, off the coast of Fairfield, is being offered by the federal government



# Trust Offers Barn Workshops

One of the goals of the Connecticut Trust's *Historic Barns of Connecticut* program is to help local history and community groups learn how to perform "windshield" barn surveys in their own communities, as we aim to include barns from every town in the state. To do this, the Trust is presenting workshops to local, historic, agricultural, and other community groups. So far, we have done workshops in New Haven, Thompson, Wethersfield, Stamford, Portland, Hartford and most recently, Oxford.

Each workshop consists of a brief history of the Connecticut barn, an introductory presentation on barn typologies and

categories and a "Best Practices" demonstration on how to document historic barns. The workshop wraps up with a section on downloading your new data to the Barns website and a Q&A session.

The workshop is free of charge and is available to any nonprofit organization or municipality. Historical societies, town departments such as planning and zoning, schools, and any concerned citizens group need only to send a letter (or email) of inquiry to the Connecticut Trust to request a free workshop at their facility.

For more information, please contact Todd Levine, Preservation Services Officer, at (203) 562-6312 or [tlevine@cctrust.org](mailto:tlevine@cctrust.org). ❀

reinforcing the tower. This was done in 2001, but in the process it was discovered that the steeple itself was in bad condition, and had to be rebuilt, which has now been completed. Landis says that the new spire is taller and slimmer than the 1939 version—closer in appearance to the original one.

Funding came from the Commission on Culture and Tourism's Historic Restoration Fund, as well as an additional state grant obtained with the assistance of State Sen. Donald Williams, private donations and a loan. Restoration of the steeple was part of an ongoing restoration of the meeting house, being carried out gradually by the congregation.

Built in 1771, the meeting house is one of Connecticut's oldest. It is a contributing resource in the Brooklyn Green National Register district. ❀



Class members learn to document historic barns in Thompson.

T. Levine

Dennis C. Landis



Brooklyn's meeting house, with its steeple restored.

## Puerto Rican Heritage Trail

Puerto Ricans have been coming to Connecticut since the 19th century, but in the last few decades they have been able to build visible and viable communities within our state. Upon arrival to the state they took jobs that no one else wanted, the lowest paid and least skilled jobs on farms and in factories. As they worked to raise their families, learn a new language, and live productive lives, Puerto Ricans also established their own community institutions, stores, clubs, churches and agencies. Most importantly they have contributed both economically and culturally to the state's well being.

The Hartford Puerto Rican Heritage Trail project, sponsored by Connecticut's State Historic Preservation Office, will attempt to bring forth Puerto Rican contributions to the state and document the rich history of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut.

The Historic Preservation Office is seeking nominations for the Heritage Trail. All submissions will be reviewed for suitability by the Puerto Rican Heritage Trail Advisory committee, a group composed of historians and other specialists from numerous educational and cultural institutions as well as individuals with interest and expertise in Puerto Rican history.

Sites will be chosen based on their ability to convey stories of Puerto Rican history and culture in Hartford. Priority will be given for inclusion to buildings or landscapes that still exist in their historic

form and can be visited or viewed from the exterior. Those sites that have been significantly changed will still be considered if they have been well documented.

The committee is looking for sites that:

- represent a "first" such as first school or church, or
- are associated with a person, event, issue, or place of local and or national importance, or
- have multiple meanings or uses that convey the Puerto Rican experience, and
- are within boundaries of Hartford.

For more information please contact: Carol T. Correa de Best or Cora Murray at (860) 566-3005 or by email:

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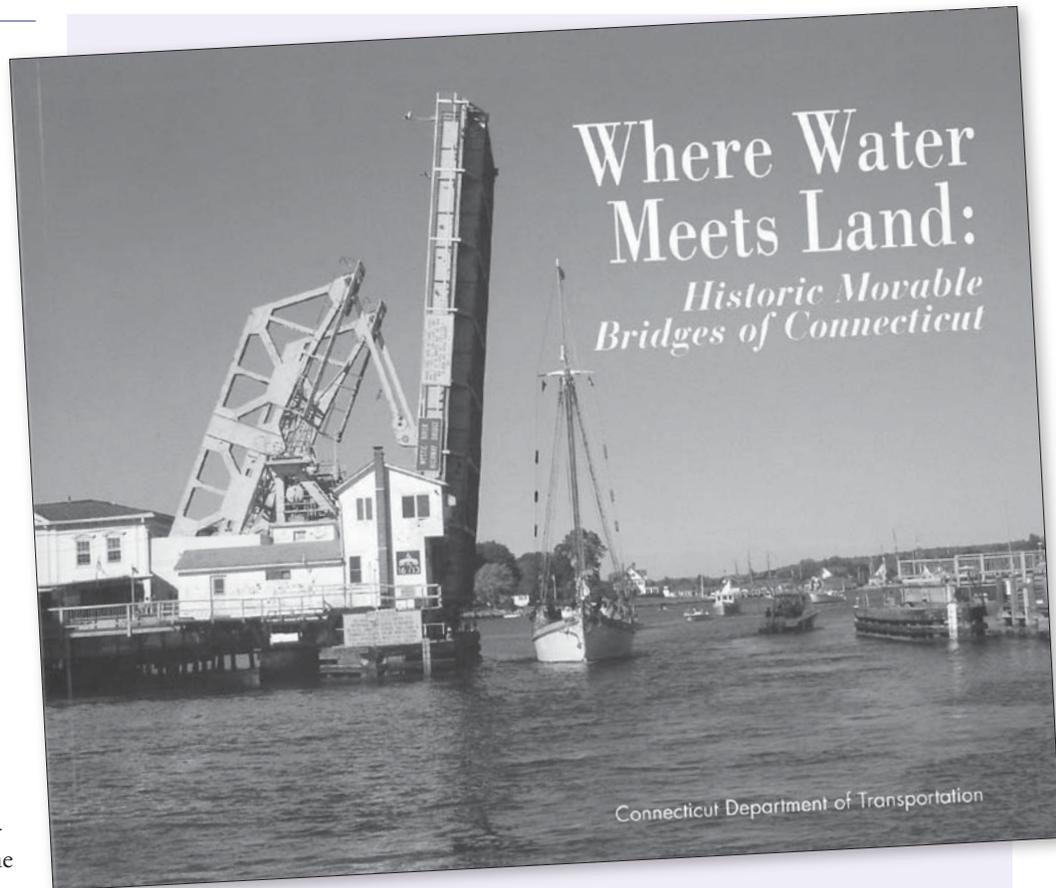
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topped by railings, manages to look much lighter and more graceful. Steel truss bridges are characterized by the ever-shifting interplay of structural members as one travels across them. They also provide a sense of enclosure, while still allowing views of the water and surrounding countryside.

How bridges were paid for also changed over time. In the latter part of the 19th century, most Connecticut bridges were still paid for by the towns, and town politics consequently played a role in determining what kinds of bridges were built and where. In Salisbury, the town selectmen voted in 1874, just a year after the Burton Brook bridge was completed, that from then on all town bridges were to be constructed of timber, not stone.

There were, however, other sources of funding. When an earlier Depot Street bridge was washed out in 1855, the American Hard Rubber Company, needing a replacement as quickly as possible, undertook to build it—closer to the factory.

In the 20th century, funding was more likely to come from the state, or even the federal, government. The new Depot Street bridge was constructed by the Connecticut Highway Department, and the town contributed only about one-fifth of the cost. The rest came from the state and from a federal Works Progress Administration grant. 🌿



**If you want to know more about bridges,** the Connecticut Department of Transportation has a new book out, *Where Water Meets Land: Historic Movable Bridges of Connecticut*, by Bruce Clouette. The book offers a background essay on movable bridges, and then detailed descriptions and histories of a number of highway and railroad bridges across the state. This work builds on the Department's earlier book, *Connecticut's Historic Highway Bridges*, published in 1991. While supplies last, free copies are available from the State Historic Preservation Office. Send a request, including a complete mailing address, to David A. Poirier, Staff Archaeologist (dave.poirier@ct.gov), or telephone (860) 566-3005.

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ing a sense of civic identity. "We need places like this to come together and remember who we are," he said.

On a more practical level, Plattus argued that the city's treatment of this building would send a signal to would-be developers. What message would potential investors receive if the city were to abandon its signature building? On the other hand, caring for a downtown city building says, "We care about this place and we'll continue to come here."

Marie Galbraith, executive director of the Mattatuck Museum and one of the symposium's organizers, credited the gathering with helping to change attitudes about restoring City Hall. "The symposium was on cable access and I think it helped persuade people to support restoration," she said. "A lot of controversies I think are created by a very small minority—in this case just a handful of people, and they fortunately have now come into the fold and we're looking forward to seeing the building returned to its former glory."

With the aldermen's vote to fund restoration of their City Hall, Waterbury has a chance to reverse the trend of disinvestment in municipal buildings and to lay claim once again to the pride that created this and other civic masterpieces. As City Hall is revitalized, we hope that it inspires a spirit of renewal throughout the city, and in other Connecticut cities and towns as well. ❖

*Speakers' presentations from the symposium "A National Treasure in Waterbury" can be found at [www.wdconline.org/worx-cms\\_published/news\\_page189.shtml](http://www.wdconline.org/worx-cms_published/news_page189.shtml).*

## A Civic Center

Waterbury's City Hall is the centerpiece of a group of municipal, institutional and commercial buildings all designed by the architect Cass Gilbert (1859-1934). Together, they make up the Waterbury Municipal Center Complex National Register district. In the district nomination, prepared in 1978, Tony P. Wrenn, writes, "There are no other complexes designed by Gilbert of the caliber of the Waterbury one, and few others of this caliber designed by a single architect. When their value as works of a nationally known architect is added to their value as exemplars of their era and style, the complex becomes one of national architectural importance."

The buildings are:

- City Hall (1914-1915)
- Chase Building (1917-1919), City Hall Annex since 1966
- Lincoln House (1916-1917), built for Waterbury Associated Charities; restored in the 1970s with a loan from the Connecticut Trust; now law offices and an apartment
- Chase Memorial Dispensary (1923-1924), now the offices of the Connecticut Community Foundation
- Waterbury National Bank (1919-1922), now offices for a mortgage company

a mechanic's stethoscope available at some auto supply stores for under \$20. You plug it into your ears just like a doctor's stethoscope. It has a long thin metal rod that picks up the sound. Have a friend make the floor squeak while you track down the exact location of the squeak. You might find it from the finish flooring above or from the rough flooring and joists below. Try to imagine the construction and joints of the flooring to picture in your mind which hidden parts are rubbing together. Then drill a 1/16" diameter hole to the exact surfaces that are rubbing together. Use a hypodermic needle to squirt a small amount of light lubricating oil between the surfaces. If the floor still squeaks you missed the exact location. Try again. If you had to drill through the finish floor, a 1/16" hole is easily filled with a bit of colored wax.

For more information on designed joints and sealants, order Leeke's Practical Restoration Report, Exterior Woodwork Details (10 pages, \$8.00, [www.historichomeworks.com/hhw/reports/reports.htm](http://www.historichomeworks.com/hhw/reports/reports.htm)), which lists suppliers, illustrations and more details. ❖

*John Leeke is a preservation consultant who helps homeowners, contractors and architects understand and maintain their historic buildings. You can contact him at 26 Higgins Street, Portland, Maine 04103, (207)773-2306; or by email: [johnleeke@HistoricHomeWorks.com](mailto:johnleeke@HistoricHomeWorks.com); or log onto his website at: [www.HistoricHomeWorks.com](http://www.HistoricHomeWorks.com).*

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*"I look forward to an America which will not be afraid of grace and beauty, which will protect the beauty of our natural environment, which will preserve the great old American houses and squares and parks of our national past, and which will build handsome and balanced cities for our future."*

*John F. Kennedy - October 26, 1963*

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# John Leeke's Historic Home Works™

## Insulation Holes in Clapboards

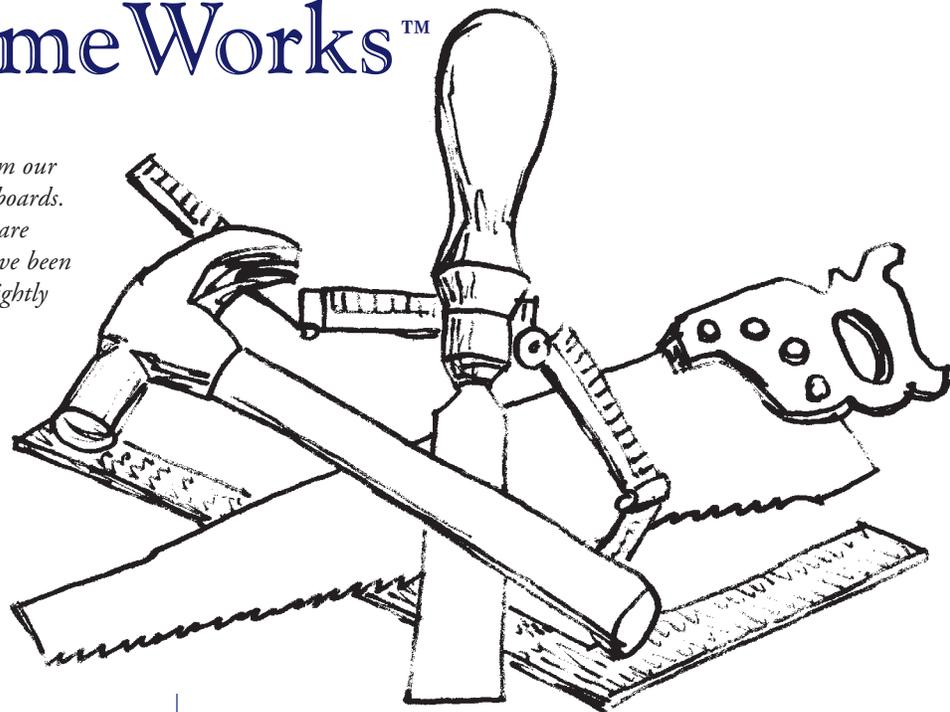
*We are removing 60-year-old cedar shingle siding from our 1885 Queen Anne and returning to the original clapboards. Last year we had fiberglass insulation blown in, and are replacing the plastic plugs with 1" wooden plugs. I have been told that prior to painting we should sink the plugs slightly below the surface and fill the depressions. If that's the best advice, what should we use for filler?*

If the wood plugs will be in the original wood clapboards I would trim and fit the length of the plugs so they do not penetrate into the sheathing boards beneath. You want the clapboard to be completely independent from the sheathing, except as attached by the nails, as intended by the original builders. To prevent the plugs from working loose over time, use the same species of wood as the clapboards and cut the plugs so they have the same end-grain orientation (flat-grain or vertical-grain). This will assure the plug has the same expansion and shrinkage rate as the surrounding clapboard. Make the sides of the plug just slightly tapered. Prepare the sides of the hole and plug by applying epoxy consolidant, and repeat on the end-grain surfaces until no more soaks in within 5 minutes. Finally, seal the plugs in place with a mixture of epoxy consolidant and epoxy paste filler. Leave the surface of the plug slightly (perhaps 1/16") higher than the surrounding clapboard surface. After the epoxy has set, completely trim the plug flush with a sharp hand plane or a sanding block.

## Rehab Specifications

*I need to put together some specifications for a housing rehabilitation project. Do you know of potential sources of standard specifications for all aspects of housing (siding, roofing, wood work, plumbing etc.) of rehabilitation? This is for low income repairs, so I really need basic materials, nothing fancy.*

The Enterprise Foundation (410-715-2273) specializes in low-income housing rehabilitation. They have a Master Rehab



Spec book and computer disk, as well as SPECMASTER software and workshops to train you in how to do rehab specifications. For more detailed how-to treatments, look up specific topics in back issues of the Old-House Journal (508-283-4721). OHJ has been published since the early 1970s and a cumulative index is available through 1989. Since then yearly indexes are published in the November/December issues.

## Wood Floor Squeaks

*I just bought a 20-year-old house that has some squeaky floors. I've tried screwing down through the top, pulling down with a special plate mounted on the bottom, and some of the other commercial products. The problem is not only do they not eliminate the squeak, it has NO EFFECT AT ALL!*

Squeaks usually occur when wood rubs against wood or against a nail. If you can't stop the movement with screws or special devices, here is a solution that worked once for me. Use

*continued on page 15*