

## Community Renaissance Towns and Cities Look to Historic Assets

Interest in cultural planning is on the rise. Even though preservationists have long known that historic buildings are good for more than museums, it's still easy to fall into that mindset with confronted with structures in need. However, looking at the community as a whole and the role that historic places play in it can suggest other strategies.

Connecticut towns frequently mention 'culture' and 'historic preservation' in their plans of conservation and development, but the resulting development rarely centers on these activities, focusing instead on infrastructure rather than cultural assets.

Now, several Connecticut towns and cities are rediscovering that preserving historic buildings and sites can be the path to renewal. They recognize that truly vibrant communities mix historic buildings with a variety of other cultural, commercial, and natural resources.

Beyond Connecticut, cultural investment has achieved notable success in Bellows Falls, Vermont, where Robert McBride, director of the Rockingham Arts and Museum Project, has been a key instigator for the "creative economy" movement. McBride and his

group have used the arts as a catalyst to reposition Bellows Falls as a vibrant community and attract high-tech industries looking for a great place to relocate. Renovated historic downtown buildings have played a crucial role in the town's renaissance.

In addition, a recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia (cited in the Boston Globe) found that in a field of 150 metropolitan areas, those that were "...rich in 'consumption amenities'—the things that make a city delightful like parks, historic sites, museums beaches—disproportionately attracted highly educated individuals and experienced faster house appreciation."

Around Connecticut, a number of towns and cities are looking at under-used or under-valued cultural and historic assets that could become catalysts for broader community revitalization and redevelopment.

This year, the Connecticut Trust has the opportunity to work with three of these municipalities. In September, the Trust awarded Community Cultural Planning and Action Plan Grants to help Danbury, New Britain, and New London

G. Farmer

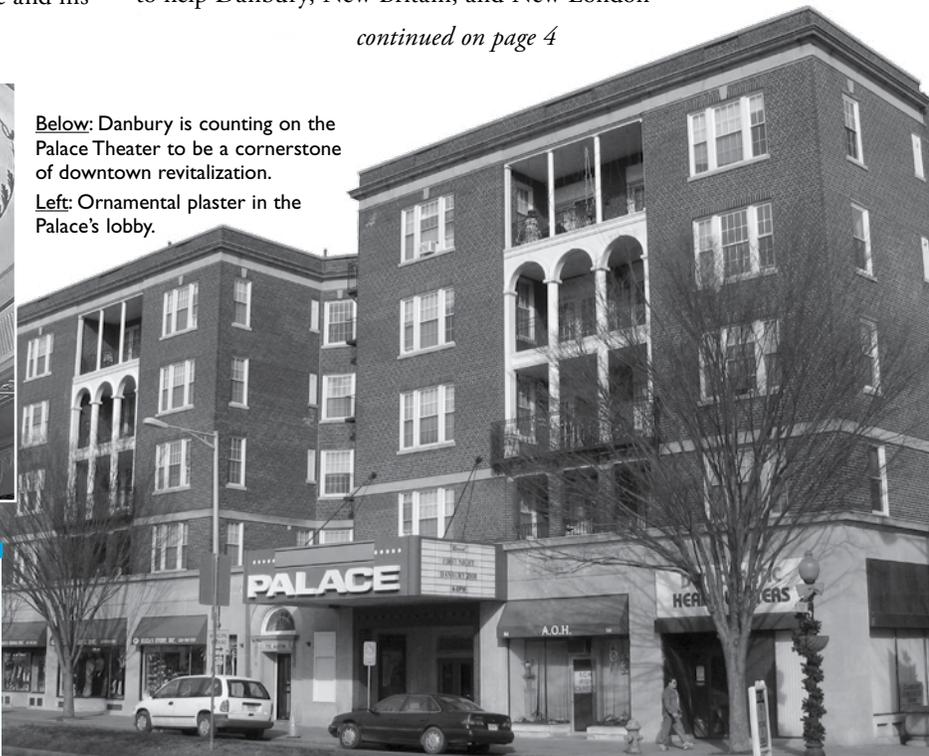
*continued on page 4*

G. Farmer



**Below:** Danbury is counting on the Palace Theater to be a cornerstone of downtown revitalization.

**Left:** Ornamental plaster in the Palace's lobby.



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## From the Executive Director

Funds coming to Connecticut from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act are intended to stimulate economic activity by investing in projects that will create jobs. A further goal is to stimulate investment in energy efficiency whether in publicly or privately owned buildings. For the preservation community, weatherization is a double-edged sword, as we have written in CPN previously.

Now, at the Connecticut Trust, we are taking action to help forestall some of the un-preservation-friendly types of “energy upgrades” that stimulus dollars could encourage, for example, replacement windows or “permanent paint.” In October, we sent a letter to every town in the state offering free preservation assistance and small grants for energy audits. Connecticut Trust Circuit Riders, field service staff who also represent the National Trust for Historic Preservation, will visit any interested town or city to help it plan carefully to make its older, historic buildings more energy efficient. As part of this free, on-site consultation, the Circuit Riders will offer small grants of \$500 to facilitate an energy audit on a selected municipal building 50 years or older. The audit will help set priorities in using stimulus dollars for energy projects in town owned buildings, especially older, historic town halls. The Circuit Riders will meet with town officials to review the results and point out the best possible ways to make our older, historic buildings more energy efficient while at the same time preserving their historic character.

In a new partnership for the Trust, we are pleased to be part of the Community Economic Development Fund’s Main Street Project in East Hartford. We have awarded a small grant of \$2,500 to assist with interviews and surveys of East Hartford businesses and residents that will result in strategies and action steps to promote economic development. Our interest is in encouraging investment in East Hartford’s historic buildings, especially in and around the central Main Street business district. Student interns from Trinity College will assist with the canvassing, survey compilation, and the priority-setting meetings.

**Staff Changes:** As the economy continues to affect our finances, we said good-bye to Pamela Gallagher, Director of Development, after four years of loyal and energetic service. Municipal Historian and archeologist Kathleen von Jena of Redding has joined our staff as Membership and Office Manager as Jane Montanaro moved to become Preservation Services Officer in July. Stephanie Lessard, a Roger Williams University graduate in Historic Preservation is now interning on our Barns Survey project.

Please do visit our web site, [www.cttrust.org](http://www.cttrust.org), to see its new look. Thanks to Todd Levine for facilitating this change.

Members are the heart and soul of the Connecticut Trust. Our deep appreciation goes to trustees Serena Bechtel of Greenwich, Jim McLaughlin of Durham, Bill Hosley of Enfield, and Bob Svensk of Southport who made extra efforts, through parties and special mailings, to boost membership in their towns. Won’t you tell your friends about our good work and ask them to join? 🌿

—Helen Higgins

### Barn Hunters

Charlotte Hitchcock and Stephanie Lessard are busy photographing for the Trust’s survey of historic barns. You can keep up with the survey on <http://historicbarnsofconnecticut.blogspot.com/>.



The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation is a nonprofit statewide membership organization established by a special act of the State Legislature in 1975. Working with local preservation groups and individuals as well as statewide organizations, it encourages, advocates and facilitates historic preservation throughout Connecticut.

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Connecticut Commission  
on Culture & Tourism



## Visit the New Heritage Resource Center Web Site

The Connecticut Humanities Council (CHC) has launched its new Heritage Resource Center (HRC) website. Located on the Web at [www.ctculture.org/hrc](http://www.ctculture.org/hrc), the site is designed to give museum directors, staff, and board members access to resources that help them adapt and respond to the unprecedented challenges facing organizations of every size today. Visitors will find reviews of new books and articles, recommendations on the most useful Web sites and blogs, and special reports, surveys, and audience studies.

New visitors can first explore collections of “must reads” for each of the site’s eight core subject areas. These resources, selected by an advisory committee composed of leading museum practitioners, represent the essentials with which every-

one working in museums will want to be familiar. Site visitors can next dig deeper by visiting the Community Center—an ever-expanding set of resources that address the many challenges facing the museum community today. Followers of the HRC can easily keep track of newly posted content through an RSS feed, a monthly e-newsletter, Feedburner e-mail updates, and the CHC Heritage Resource Center page on Facebook.

While the HRC is designed to be a “must visit” source of relevant research, current thinking, emerging trends, and best practices, it is also a virtual community where museums and nonprofits—both within Connecticut and beyond—can come together to share their collective knowledge, experience, and ideas. Visitors are encouraged to engage in an ongoing dialogue about what resources are helpful, what has worked or not worked at their museums, and what tips and suggestions they can offer to others.

Recent posts have explored James Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine’s book *Authenticity*, introduced readers to the IMLS’ new Museums, Libraries, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills initiative, and discussed The Prime Minister of Permission Marketing, Seth Godin’s blog. The HRC also shared the findings of the CHC-funded Connecticut Cultural Consumers Study,

conducted by Reach Advisors, that explored what 4,500 visitors to 24 cultural institutions across the state liked, disliked, and wanted when they visited.

Coming up, the HRC will soon post research from other CHC-funded studies, including a survey and report conducted by the University of Connecticut’s NEAG School of Education on *Supporting Student Learning at History Museums* that compares the attitudes, practices and beliefs of secondary school teachers to those of museum educators. A synthesis of three audience studies conducted since the opening of the new Fairfield Museum and History Center in September 2007 will also be posted soon. ❁

### Upcoming Meetings of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

December 2, 2009, at 9:30 a.m.  
January 6, 2010, at 9:30 a.m.

All meetings take place at the Commission on Culture and Tourism Main Conference Room  
1 Constitution Plaza

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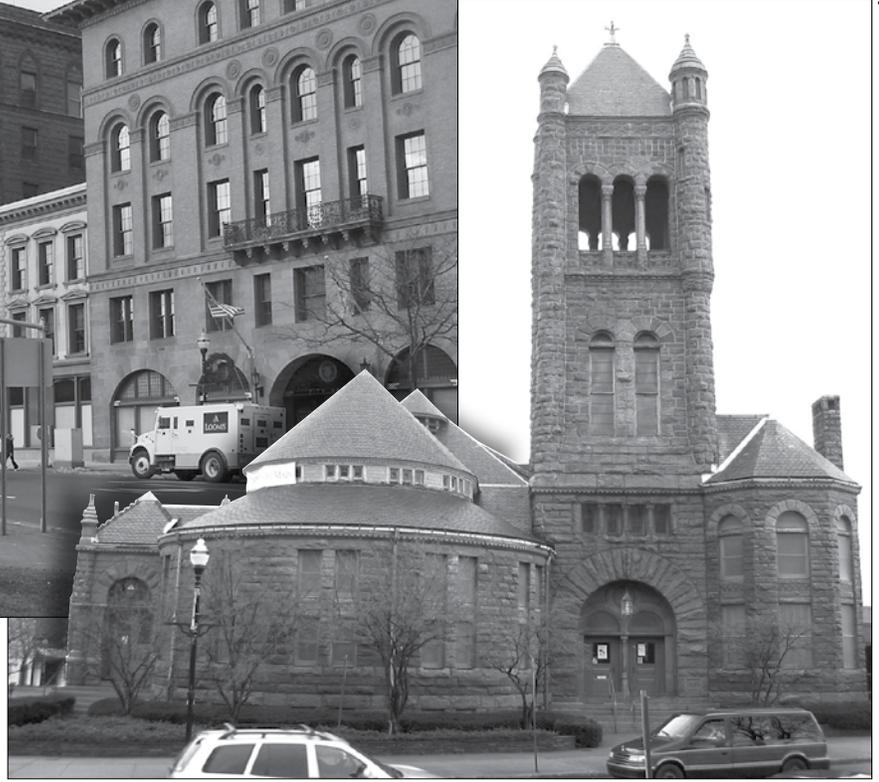
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B. Schide



Downtown New Britain

J. Sexton



Trinity-on-Main, a converted church, has brought performance space to downtown New Britain.

create action plans for underutilized or unrecognized cultural and historic assets. The money for the grants comes from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, the only state agency whose mission is to develop and promote our culture and encourage visitors to enjoy it.

One innovative feature of the grants is the ongoing involvement of Connecticut Circuit Rider Brad Schide, beginning in a two-part application process where Schide and other Trust staff and board members worked with applicants to refine their proposals. Once the grants were awarded, the Trust has continued to advise on process, help with selection of consultants, attend local meetings and presentations, and review preliminary results. The Trust will also work with the applicants who did not receive grants, and is encouraging them to apply for Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants.

The city of **Danbury** is counting on the long-vacant Palace Theater to be a cornerstone for downtown revitalization—a goal identified in the city plan of conservation and development in 2002 and repeatedly urged by the Main Street Renaissance Task Force. The Colonial Revival theater, built in 1926 for vaudeville and later used for movies, is a contributing structure in the

Danbury's Main Street National Register district and its interior boasts well-preserved architectural theatrics.

The Palace's owner has begun repairing the building and has commitments from several performing groups to use the revitalized space, greatly improving its chances of success. But he and the city recognize that a theater by itself can have only a limited impact. The grant, supplemented with \$10,000 from the owner, will support a study to determine how the city can stimulate other development to complement the theater and create a larger body of downtown attractions, and how best to restore, operate and market the building to achieve that result.

In **New Britain**, as in Danbury, a performance space has provided a beginning for revitalization. The successful conversion of Trinity Methodist Church to Trinity-on-Main has raised hopes that the city's noteworthy collection of historic downtown buildings could be the raw material for a renewed and exciting downtown. The city sees its greatest need to be for protections and design guidelines to encourage the pres-

ervation and reuse of historic buildings.

The grant will allow New Britain to develop a design manual for use by developers and city staff; revise zoning regulations; explore alternatives to demolition, including potential preservation incentives; and draft a framework for the formation of a city historical commission. This plan will also lay groundwork for seeking grants through the federal Preserve America program, for which New Britain has already qualified.

Downtown **New London** is seeing a rising tide of investment and activity despite the economic downturn. Bank Street has a number of active businesses, as well as the Custom House museum and the Hygienic Building with its artists' studios and gallery. Nearby downtown living opportunities include Starr Street, one of Connecticut's iconic restorations, and the Monte Cristo Garage, an award-winning adaptive use project. But other nearby historic residential areas remain unrestored, and the connections between them and Bank Street are weak, in large part due to a wide no-man's-land of urban renewal era parking lots.

C. W. W. W. W. W.



In New London, parking lots cut commercial Bank Street off from nearby residential areas.

C. W. W. W. W. W.



Starr Street, New London

Knitting these historic resources together into a successful live-work downtown is the city's goal. According to Harry Smith, the city planner, "While the study area contains several specific historic and cultural assets, the area as a whole—the mix of buildings and streetscapes as well as the legacy of previous generations—is the historic resource we believe in which it is crucial to invest."

The first step is a plan that will promote investment in existing historical and cultural resources, foster community connections, increase awareness of resources, and identify infrastructure improvements that would contribute to revitalization.

The good news is that these three projects, along with those illustrated beginning on page 6, are just the beginning. Every town in Connecticut has cultural and historic assets like the ones cited here—underappreciated buildings, districts, parks, and other places that, with a little creative thinking and strategic investment, have the potential to make valuable contributions to the life of the larger community. They provide a richness of association and a diversity of design that no new construction can hope to achieve. ❁

Feature continued on page 6

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*John F. Kennedy - October 26, 1963*

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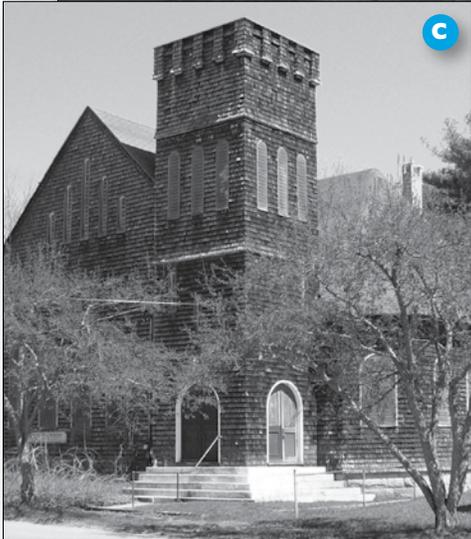
# These communities also have ideas for cultural planning projects.

Cunningham Preservation Associates



A

G. Farmer



C

City of Bridgeport



B

**A. Barkhamsted:** The picturesque village of Riverton has suffered since the Hitchcock Chair Factory closed in 2006. The town hopes to revitalize Riverton based on the twin themes of Wilderness (outdoor activities) and Wellness (arts, fitness, relaxation, spas, dining, entertainment, and socializing).

**B. Bridgeport:** The former Black Rock Bank and Trust (1929) dominates a major intersection in the Black Rock National Register district. Hoping that the vacant bank can become the center of a larger Black Rock Arts and Entertainment District, the City is working to identify and work with a developer to reuse the building as an arts center, perhaps with a restaurant and artists' lofts.

Jan Cunningham



D

**C. Canaan:** The Falls Village Children's Theater is restoring the village's former Methodist church (part of a National Register district) as a community and cultural center. The town of Canaan wants to integrate the community center into the fabric of the village, to serve as a gathering place for area residents as well as a venue for performances and presentations.

**D. East Hartford:** Despite recent accomplishments on Main Street, East Hartford's mayor Melody Currey says "the major obstacle to continued investment is the traffic issue and appropriate infill development to support a true, old-time 'Main Street' feel to this area." The town is pursuing opportunities to address preservation of historic structures, plan well-conceived infill development, inventory cultural assets, and find ways to accommodate both foot and vehicular traffic (see "At the Trust," page 2).

Robert Dunne



E

**E. Manchester:** Several years ago, community action saved the former Cheney Trade School, located in the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark district, from demolition. Now, the town is pursuing plans to reuse the building for arts and cultural organizations and activities, such as studios, galleries, and performance, rehearsal or instructional space.

Mary Dunne



F

**F. New Haven:** Westville serves as a gateway to New Haven from the west, noted for its shops and restaurants and its strong community identity. The city of New Haven, in coordination with Westville Village Renaissance Alliance, hopes to create a comprehensive plan for the district, including appropriate zoning, transportation planning, streetscape and public space design guidelines, and improved connections to nearby parks.

**G. Norfolk:** The rehabilitation of Infinity Hall, an historic music hall and commercial block, has transformed Norfolk's self-image. The town wants to build on this success to encourage more culturally-based economic development. A study will evaluate the village's physical characteristics and needs and offer recommendations for creative integration of public and private assets and encouraging appropriate uses for historic structures.

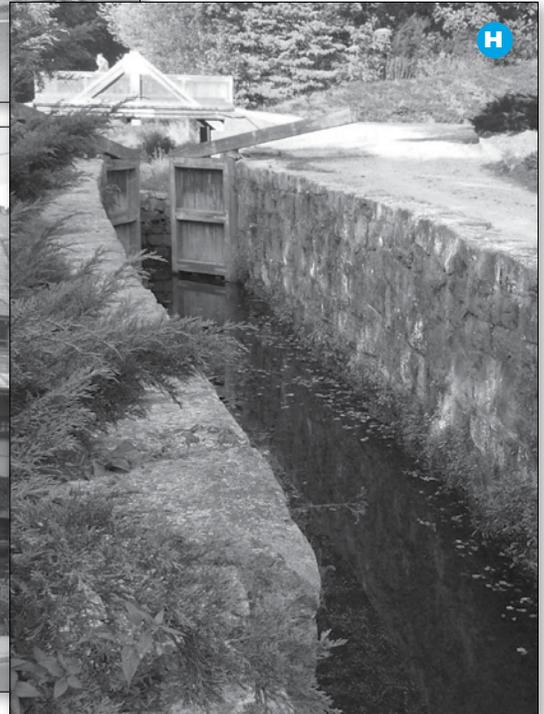
**H. Plainville and Southington:** The construction of a continuous trail along the Farmington Canal (which is listed on the National Register) creates an opportunity to showcase the area's history, but so far the effort has concentrated on recreation. The Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency wants to inventory historic and cultural assets on or near the trail in Plainfield and Southington and forge connections between these assets and the trail.

*continued on page 8*

C. Wigen



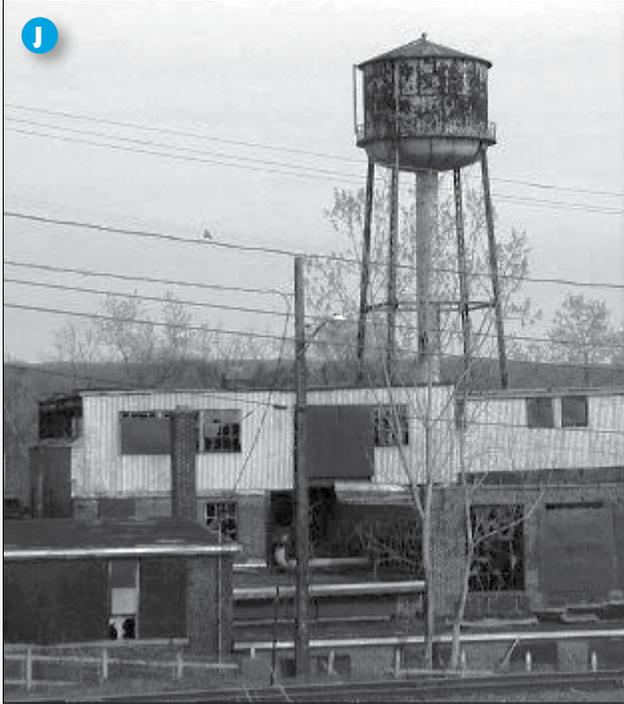
G



H

Wikipedia

Town of Rocky Hill



B. Schide



B. Schide

**I. Putnam:** As the town's oldest, largest, and most diverse mill complex, Cargill Mills is possibly the most important industrial site in Putnam. The town has already designated the mill as part of its Industrial Heritage Overlay District and wants to further support the mill's redevelopment with a plan to integrate it with the downtown.

**J. Rocky Hill,** once a shipbuilding center and river port, wants to strengthen its historic connection to the Connecticut River. The town is looking to create a plan to reuse the "Foundry property," an abandoned industrial facility on the riverfront, and make streetscape improvements along Glastonbury Avenue, which connects the property to the town center.

**K. Torrington:** To attract tenants for vacant storefronts, the city hopes to redevelop an historic downtown property as an artists' co-op and gallery and establish a low-interest revolving loan fund, funded by a grant and by five local banks, to help fund renovations or defray rent deficits.

**L. Windham:** The town of Windham hopes to hire facilitators and other experts to help address questions confronting attempts to revitalize Willimantic's Main Street. Topics include the viability of several abandoned historic buildings, balancing the need for parking with encouraging pedestrians, supporting private businesses, and identifying desirable types of development.

B. Schide



## Hartford.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation has named the Hartford Parks System to “Landslide,” its annual list of culturally significant landscapes at risk of alteration or destruction.

According to the organization, “Hartford is not only blessed with the first municipal park (Bushnell Park, 1854) and first municipal rose garden (Elizabeth Park, 1904) in America, it also boasts an unrivaled legacy of parks and boulevards that span several decades of involvement of all three Olmsteds, ranging from small-scale squares and greens (Barnard Park, c.1865) to large-scale municipal works such as Keney Park (1896), the 693-acre career capstone of Charles Eliot’s tenure with the Olmsted office. Today, with diminished municipal funds, these parks are dying a quiet death.”

Beginning in the 1960s, disinvestment and deferred maintenance have eroded and weakened the parks, but the problem is not only economic. The elimination of the Hartford Parks Department and the division of its responsibilities between the departments of Public Works (maintenance) and Health and Human Services (recreational programs) has left a “void of vision.”

The foundation urges the parks’ non-profit friends groups to work together for the good of the system as a whole. Above all, it calls for the development of “a clear compelling vision of the public park system” to inspire public interest and involvement.

To start that process, the Connecticut Olmsted Heritage Alliance (COHA) is planning to celebrate Frederick Law Olmsted Day with a conference on Hartford parks, to be held in April or May. The conference will be designed for city officials and residents as well as landscape preservationists and those who love urban parks. “We hope to get a lot of people who really use and appreciate these parks involved, says Norma Williams, a landscape architect who serves on the board of COHA. 🌿

*For more information, visit:*

*The Cultural Landscape Foundation,*

[www.tclf.org](http://www.tclf.org)

*Connecticut Olmsted Heritage Alliance,*

[www.ctolmsted.org](http://www.ctolmsted.org)

Norma Williams



Goodwin Park, Hartford

## Litchfield.

Chabad Lubavitch of Litchfield County and Rabbi Joseph Eisenbach are suing the town of Litchfield, the Litchfield Historic District Commission and ten unnamed individual defendants to overturn the commission’s rejection of Chabad’s application to convert a 19<sup>th</sup>-century house into a synagogue.

The commission ruled against Chabad in December, 2007, primarily on account of the size and scale of the proposed addition, which, in the commission’s opinion, would overwhelm the original house. The commission indicated that it would be willing to consider a revised plan with a smaller addition.

The lawsuit, filed under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA), claims that the commission “engaged in a targeted and deliberate effort to prevent the Plaintiffs from developing the Property...while permitting other development within the Town that is substantially similar...constituting a pattern of religious discrimination directed at the Jewish people.”

Chabad asks the court to allow the synagogue to be built as planned, award damages, and appoint a monitor to ensure that the defendants comply with all court orders. RLUIPA forbids regulatory bodies from putting undue burdens on religious practices. However, the historic district commission noted that it was ruling solely on the appearance—not the use—of the house and that it had taken special care not to rule on religious matters or to treat Chabad differently from any secular applicant. 🌿

## Fairfield County.

The World Monuments Fund (WMF) has listed the bridges of the Merritt Parkway to its biannual World Monuments Watch List.

According to the WMF, “...the Merritt was designed with 68 bridges ranging in design from French Renaissance and neoclassic to art deco and rustic. The preservation of these many distinct bridges may be at risk due to necessary infrastructure work required to maintain the Merritt as a major thoroughfare. Balancing the functionality of the parkway while protecting the aesthetic qualities that make it unique pose challenges still to be addressed.”

The WMF is a New York-based non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historic architecture and cultural heritage sites worldwide. Its Watch List, published every other year, is intended to raise awareness for important sites. The organization’s website says, “Not all sites on the Watch are in imminent danger. Many face challenges on the horizon, providing the opportunity to engage in dialogue and decision-making now, so as to avoid problems in the future.”

“We’re thrilled to have it be listed,” said Jill Smyth, executive director of the Merritt Parkway Conservancy, which nominated the Parkway for listing to help promote the need to preserve its bridges as well as its landscape. In addition to the bridges, the conservancy is currently addressing tree removal by the Department of Transportation along the road.

“There’s always that fine balance between preservation and incorporating what [transportation officials] believe is needed for a safe, modern design for a highway,” Smyth said.

In addition to the Merritt, the WMF’s list includes a monastery in Bhutan; gingerbread houses in Port-au-Prince, Haiti; two New Orleans sites damaged by Hurricane Katrina; and the cultural landscapes of Hadley, Massachusetts. 🌿

*For more information, visit:*

*World Monuments Fund,*

[www.wmf.org](http://www.wmf.org)

*Merritt Parkway Conservancy,*

[www.merrittparkway.org](http://www.merrittparkway.org)

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**New Haven.**

Once threatened with demolition, a house in the city's Westville section has been restored. The Miles and Eleazer Hotchkiss house, built in about 1835 by two brothers who owned a nearby paper mill, had been vacant for more than 25 years and fallen into disrepair. A developer wanted to demolish the Greek Revival house to build condominiums, a plan that sparked widespread community opposition.

Westville Village Renaissance Alliance (WVRA), a Connecticut Main Street organization, led the opposition. The group wanted to encourage preservation not only in the main business corridor and the high-income residential areas of Westville, but also in the less prosperous area where the Hotchkiss house is located, a designated empowerment zone.

The developer finally sold the house to two local activists, Thea Buxbaum and Rebecca Gratz, to hold for WVRA. The plan was for WVRA to apply for grant funds to restore the house and operate it as a site for community events and to produce income for the organization.

WVRA nominated the house to the State Register and obtained an Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant from the Connecticut Trust to prepare renovation plans. Buxbaum and Gratz restored the house themselves, working with Kenneth Boroson Architects and contractor JNA Construction, both of New Haven.

Due to the economic downturn, the house's long-term use remains uncertain. Possibilities include a bed-and-breakfast, studios for local artists, or multi-family

Thea Buxbaum



Miles and Eleazer Hotchkiss house, New Haven

housing. Buxbaum hopes that WVRA eventually will be able to take over the building. ❁

**Berlin.**

The former American Papergoods Company factory will have a new life, thanks to the nonprofit Corporation for Independent Living (CIL), which is converting the factory to 72 loft apartments. Plans also call for building twelve townhouses on the property.

The factory's oldest section dates to 1893, when the Ajax Envelope Company of

New York and the Howard Manufacturing Company of Jersey City formed American Paper Goods and moved to the Kensington section of Berlin, where it produced waxed paper bags, envelopes, and paper cups. The company added more buildings in the early 20th century, but it's the original section, with its semicircular end overlooking the company dam, that catches the eye.

CIL develops housing for people who are disabled, affordable multifamily housing, and homes for low-income first-time buyers. Many of the organization's projects use historic buildings; projects in Hartford in the past 10 years including award-winning housing preservation projects on

American Papergoods Factory, Berlin

C. W. Green



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Mortson and Putnam, Benton and Belden streets. The organization is currently renovating the Rudder Building, built in 1885 as a warehouse for the Colt armory, to be its own offices. In Coventry, CIL is creating 46 units of moderately priced housing in the long-abandoned Kenyon Mill, using tax credits from the Connecticut Historic Structures Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program.

Proceeds from the American Papergoods project will go to support CIL's programs. The units are expected to be ready for occupancy in the fall of 2010. Funding for the project has included financing by the town of Berlin to cover environmental cleanup, as well as \$2.7 million in Historic Structures tax credits.



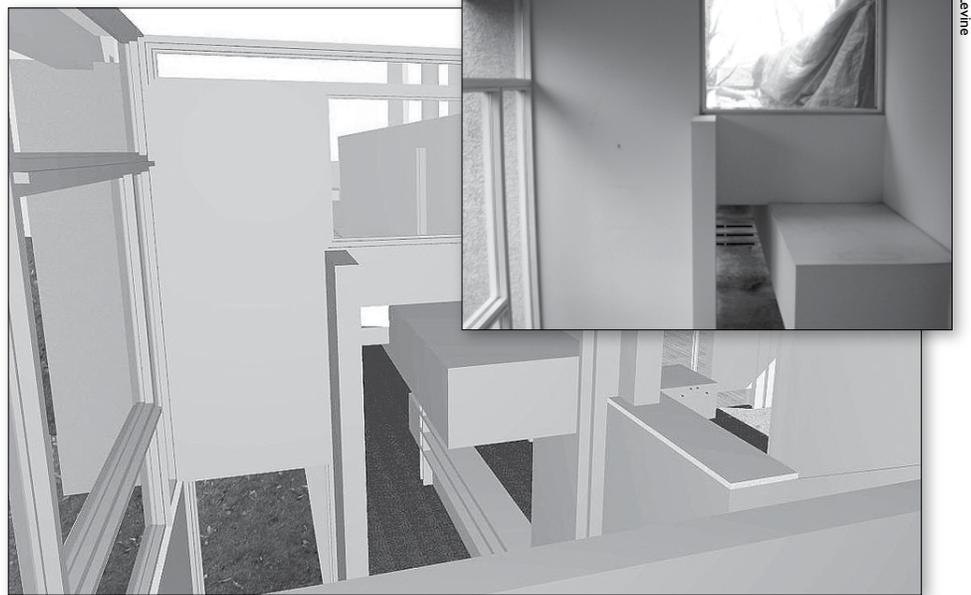
**Westport.**

Stephen Lasar Architects of New Milford have completed computer-based drawings of the Micheels house, which was demolished in 2007 after the Connecticut Trust unsuccessfully sued to save it. (see CPN March/April 2007). The drawings are based on photographs, measurements, and sketches made before demolition by Trust staff and historical consultants. The Trust will submit all the materials on the house to the Historic American Buildings Survey, so that, even though the house itself is gone, future generations will have a record of this work by the Modernist architect Paul Rudolph. The Trust thanks Steven Lasar Architects for generously donating their time and expertise to this important project.



G. Farmer

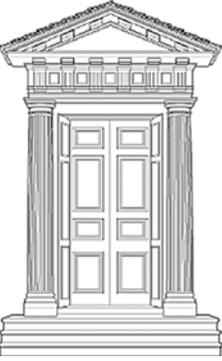
Micheels house, dining room



T. Levine

Micheels house, entry

renderings: Stephanie Trzyna, Stephen Lasar Architects



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## Industries and Industrialists



Jean McClellan

The Chamberlin Mill, in Woodstock, retains its historic equipment.



P. Esser

As the Silvermine Center historic district, in Norwalk, changed from industrial hamlet to artists' colony to suburb, the Silvermine Tavern has remained a center of community life.

Four sites recently added to the State or National Register of Historic Places illustrate chapters in Connecticut's industrial history.

The **Chamberlin Mill** in Woodstock, listed on the State Register, is typical of small-scale industrial sites in rural areas that served local populations, primarily grinding grains or sawing lumber.

This saw mill was in existence by 1869 and operated until the 1970s. It is unique in its completeness and preservation, including most of its machinery—even a cut-down 1928 Studebaker truck which supplanted water power in the mill's later years.

The Nature Conservancy acquired the mill in 2008 as part of the Still River Preserve, and a group of local residents, including the Woodstock Historical Society, an agricultural society, and some old-tractor buffs, is working to ensure the mill's long-term preservation (see CPN, September/October 2009).

Like much of Connecticut, the **Silvermine Center Historic District**, lying on the border between Norwalk, New Canaan, and Wilton, might be called a postindustrial community. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries various small and medium-sized mills appeared along the banks of the Silvermine River. Together with stores, a tavern, and the homes of the people who worked there, they made Silvermine a self-sufficient community, one of many

scattered across Connecticut. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the village entered a period of decline, as most of the mills succumbed to competition from larger companies in larger cities.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, artists and writers discovered Silvermine. In addition to their own remodeled homes and studios, the old tavern became an inn catering to travelers, and a number of other buildings became antique shops. But the small-scale vernacular architecture and irregular layout of the older community, preserved by the period of poverty, absorbed the changes. Most recently the community has become a more general suburb, although one still characterized by a strong arts community.

Either by their absence or their presence, company owners played a dominant

role in determining the physical appearance of industrial communities. In the **Case Brothers Historic District**, in Manchester, members of one family founded and ran a paper mill that that operated from 1862 to 1971. In addition to the mill itself, they built housing for workers and a company store (both now separated from the historic district by a highway).

Most importantly, the owners themselves lived in the community. They surrounded their own houses with gardens and a larger naturalistic landscape that included a 391-acre nature preserve that functioned (and has become) a town park.

The Case family's lifestyle, set in elegant houses and gardens, was an example of the County Life movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which advocated a genteel

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CONNECTICUT PRESERVATION NEWS, November/December 2009

Tod Bryant



Restmore, in Fairfield, is a rare building inspired by Dutch colonial architecture of South Africa.

Rachel Carley



An ornamental dam and carriage bridge is part of the Case Brothers historic district in Manchester.

rural lifestyle as an antidote to the stresses of the cities. The houses are also an example of the compounds that many upper-class families built during the era (another such compound is the Cheney family's Great Lawn, also in Manchester).

Even away from their factories, owners added to the state's built environment, as illustrated by **Restmore**, the summer home of Dr. Ira DeVer Warner, co-owner (with his brother Lucien) of the Warner Brothers corset company in Bridgeport. Warner's architect, Ehrick Kensett Rossiter, chose

an unusual architectural model for the house: Grootte Shuur, the home of Cecil Rhodes, in Capetown, South Africa. The house's stuccoed walls, shaded loggias, and shaped gables all reflect the Dutch colonial architecture of South Africa. Whether this stylistic choice was Rossiter's or Warner's, the unusual design reflects the architectural eclecticism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the interiors revert to the conventional Colonial Revival of the time. ♣

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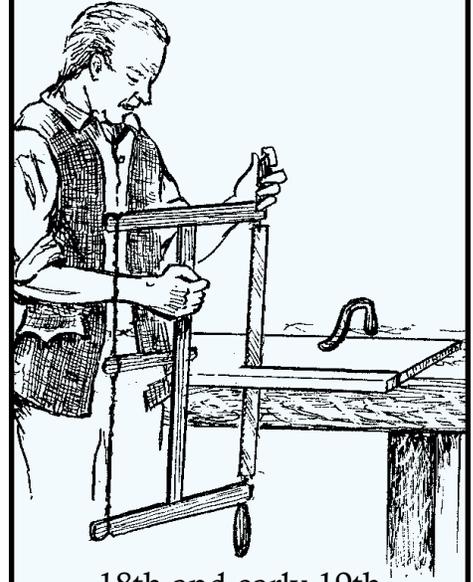
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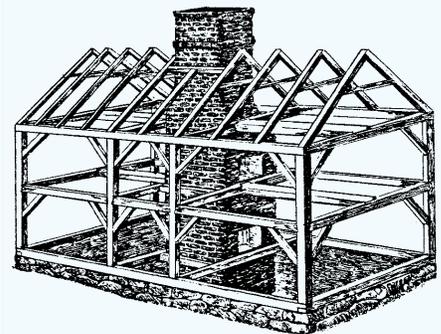


# West River Restoration



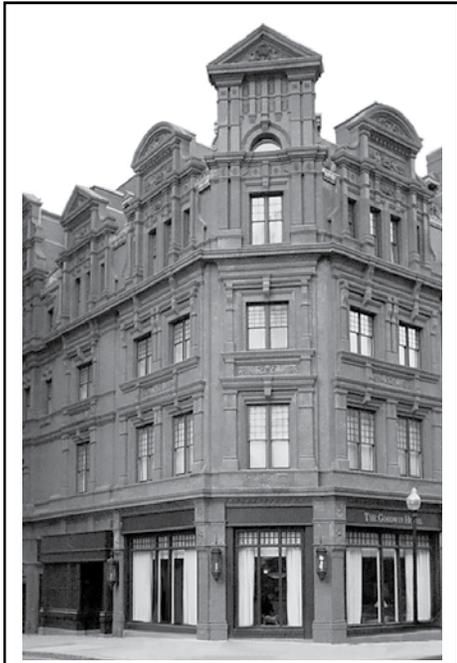
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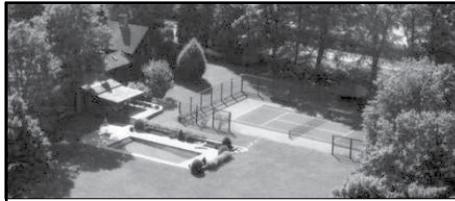
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out leaving curved swirl marks in the wood surface which require a lot of power sanding to smooth out. Shaving of the wood surface and sanding can reduce the thickness of the clapboards significantly, possibly weakening them. Also note that the PaintShaver does not remove 3-4 inches of paint from clapboards along all of the surrounding trim woodwork, which must be

removed by hand. The PaintShaver does remove about 95% of the paint very fast, but additional needed removal, sanding and loss of wood have made it not as economical as other methods when we have done formal testing and comparison with other methods. The "one square foot in 15 seconds" figure promoted by the manufacturer only includes a pass of the machine—no setup, no cleanup, no scaffolding and, none of the substantial additional work needed to arrive at a paintable surface. There is also the issue of controlling lead-containing dust, which is only partially addressed with the brush. I am not saying this is a bad machine, but when we have done side-by-side comparison testing it has not yet been our selected method.

*porches were enclosed by earlier owners but they made no effort to match the siding of the original house, probably due to expense. Where can I find the 4-3/4" wooden shingles like those used during that era?*

The lowest cost source will be your local lumber yard. Buy random-width shingles and cut them down to width on a table saw. Of course this results in some waste. To avoid the labor involved you can order custom sized shingles at a higher cost. If your local building materials supply house cannot order them, try The Cedar Guild, Inc., P.O. Box 249, Lyons, OR 97358-0249; 800 270-2541; web site: [www.cedar-guild.com](http://www.cedar-guild.com); email: [cedarinfo@cedar-guild.com](mailto:cedarinfo@cedar-guild.com). They can make any size or shape of shingle you require. 🌿

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*Our home was built in 1909 and is a shingled Foursquare house. The back sleeping*

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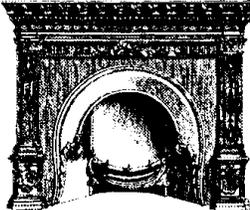


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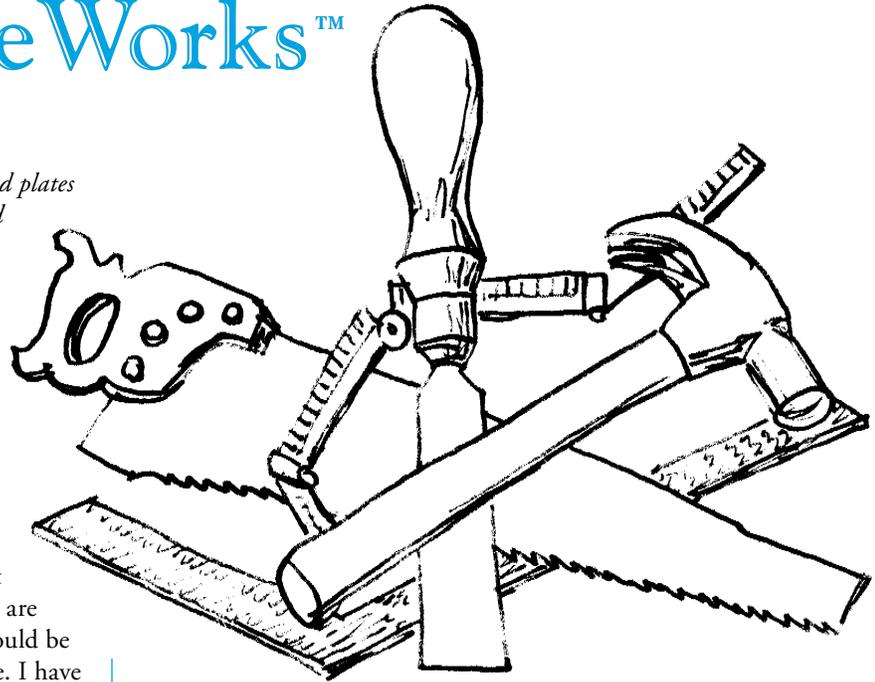
# John Leeke's Historic HomeWorks™

## Rusty Hardware

*In my 200 year-old home I have a couple old door knobs and plates that are rusted metal. I would like to paint them and would like some historically correct color suggestions. The doors are painted various darker colors. Thanks for any help.*

First consider what is historically correct for these particular knobs and plates. They never were painted and so there will be no “historically correct” color for a paint finish. They probably had an original “patinated finish” which colors the very surface of the metal without coating it, and without giving it much protection from rusting. If your hardware is handmade of wrought iron it may be possible to heat the metal and dip it in linseed oil for a traditional “burnt oil” finish with a dark brown or black color. If the knobs are later stamped sheet metal with “artistic patinations” it would be costly or impossible to remove all the rust and re-patinate. I have seen many door knobs in older houses painted black, probably as a practical maintenance strategy to keep dirt from showing.

To paint your knobs and plates black, begin by brushing off loose rust with a stiff wire bristle brush. Do not bother trying to grind off all the rust with a motorized wire wheel. Brush on a rust stabilizing treatment such as Rustoleum's Rust Reformer(TM). This is a solution of tannic compounds that convert the iron oxide back toward a metallic form of iron. The solution is mixed with an acrylic binder that stabilizes the surface and primes it for painting. Then give the plates and knobs two or three top coats of black enamel. Allow plenty of drying time between coats and sand each coat lightly with 320 grit paper except the last coat. Oil-based enamel will give you a longer lasting finish than acrylic enamel.



## Paint Shaving

*Have you had any experience with the PaintShaver product advertised in Old House Journal? They say that it is some form of power planer that can “shave” paint from both the butt and surface of siding simultaneously at about one square foot every 15 seconds. Also it has what appears to be a Plexiglas shield surrounded by brushes to contain the “shavings” with a hose attachment that can be led to a shop vac.*

This power tool has three carbide teeth that rotate at high speed. It is more than a little nerve-wracking to use and requires considerable practice to develop the deft touch needed for the best results. It is almost impossible to remove all the paint with-

*continued on page 15*