Agreement Guarantees Preservation of Historic Southington House

Southington. An agreement between the Connecticut Trust and the Southington-Cheshire Community YMCAs guarantees the preservation of the Andrews-Olney house, a Federal-style house located at 116-118 North Main Street. Confirming the agreement, the Superior Court for the Judicial District of New Britain issued a Stipulation for Judgment, preventing demolition of the historic house under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA).

The Andrews-Olney house, built about 1800 by a Revolutionary War veteran and later occupied by a renowned geographer, is the earliest surviving brick house in Southington. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Southington Center Historic District.

continued on page 12
At the Trust

From the Executive Director

AFTER almost ten years as both unpaid and paid staff, Todd Levine, who most recently had been director of the Historic Barns of Connecticut project, left the Trust in January to join the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development.

Todd has given so much to the Trust over the years. As an intern from Central Connecticut State University he was our gallant in-the-field photographer. After graduate school at Savannah College of Art and Design, he returned to the Trust, first as a volunteer, and again taking pictures, but this time of barns. Through the years, he built our barns program from an initial list of 100 to a nearly comprehensive inventory of 8,300 barns documented at www.connecticutbarns.org. Of them, 2,000 now are part of the State’s Historic Resource Inventory, and by this spring 200 of those will be nominated to the State Register of Historic Places.

Throughout, it was Todd’s ability to connect with the hundreds of barn owners around the state—in the field, walking through yet another historic barn to document it, or on the phone, helping owners understand their treasures—that made the Barns project a success. Fortunately, he will continue to guide the project as a volunteer and he will be front and center at our gala Barns Celebration on Friday, June 7 and Saturday, June 8.

In other news, we are pleased to announce that The 1772 Foundation, Saturday, June 8.

Barns project a success. Fortunately, he will through yet another historic barn to docu-
ers around the state—in the field, walking
continues to offer grants but look to this new undertaking as an important step forward for historic preservation in Connecticut.

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.

Upcoming Meetings of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

April 3, 2013, at 9:30 a.m.
May 1, 2013, at 9:30 a.m.

All meetings take place at the State Historic Preservation Office
Department of Economic and Community Development Main Conference Room
1 Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor
Hartford, Connecticut
For more information call (860) 256-2800
On the Merritt Parkway: Tree Cutting Doesn’t Have to Pit Safety against History

In the aftermath of Hurricane Irene, Hurricane Sandy, plus two early snowstorms that toppled trees with leaves still on them, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) has taken a more aggressive approach to cutting trees along the state’s roads. Nowhere is this more visible, or more controversial, than along the Merritt Parkway.

Designed and built in the 1930s as an alternative to the Boston Post Road, the Merritt is best known for its unusual concrete bridges. However, the road is most significant for its landscape, which transformed a rather ordinary highway into a 37-mile-long park.

For many years, DOT has been engaged in a program to rehabilitate the Parkway while making it more up-to-date. Section by section, the department has cleared invasive and overgrown plants, planted thousands of new trees and shrubs, restored crumbling bridges, and made safety improvements that have sharply reduced the rates of both accidents and fatalities on the Merritt.

However, a terrible accident, along with the damage following the 2011 and 2012 storms, led DOT to reconsider safety needs once again. In a departure from the previous policy of trying in most places to leave an 18-foot clear zone along the travel lanes, the Department now will generally hew to the national standard of 30 feet. This would reduce the chances of cars hitting trees and also the likelihood of limbs or trees falling on vehicles.

The cutting has already begun. Recent travelers have noticed long stretches where the DOT has clear-cut trees, leaving long, bare margins along the road that look like the ‘before’ images from the 1930s, before the original landscapers did their magic. But the 1930s ‘after’ photos offer hope that this disruption need not permanently affect the Parkway’s character. They remind us that the Merritt’s landscape is a human-made one and that it can be re-made in a way that is as attractive and natural-looking as it ever was. They also remind us that the Parkway’s landscape was originally intended to be more open that it has become after 70 years of growth. However, in the areas where DOT has completed improvement projects, cleared underbrush, trimmed trees, and new plantings show that DOT still is capable of renewing the Parkway landscape as it did in the 1930s.

What exactly is needed? A reading of the National Register nomination and DOT’s landscape treatment guidelines for the Merritt (by the landscape firm Milone and MacBroom, 1994) offers ideas that include avoiding straight line borders between woods and grass, using shrubs and understory plants to soften the edges, adding shrubs where full-sized trees aren’t appropriate, and using plantings to screen modern development from the Parkway.

DOT officials have made it clear that they intend to re-landscape the cleared areas. The problem is that while DOT is cutting trees now, no one is working on the actual plans—determining which trees or shrubs should go where, how many will be needed, or where the money for this work will come from. Since DOT considers the tree-cutting to be maintenance, the work was not reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office, which is supposed to evaluate public projects for their impact on historic properties. Input from SHPO might have put more pressure on DOT to move more quickly on plans to mitigate the damage to the Parkway landscape.

It’s clear that the Merritt Parkway remains a priority for the Department of Transportation. It’s also clear that the Merritt needs to be made safer for those who travel along it. But the Department cannot put off the other half of its safety-improvement efforts: the repairs to the Parkway landscape. It will take time to draw the plans, and time to raise the money to execute the plans. The time to start is now.

DOT has completed improvement projects, cleared underbrush, trimmed trees, and new plantings show that DOT still is capable of renewing the Parkway landscape as it did in the 1930s.

These photos, taken from the same spot along the Merritt Parkway in 1934 and 1939, show how landscaping healed the scars of construction and created the natural-looking scenery along the Parkway.

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Design Awards for Historic Connecticut Places

A number of Connecticut projects involving historic sites have recently received awards from associations of design professionals. Several of these awards were for excellence of design, rather than preservation per se—a welcome recognition that preservation is not restricted to museum-type restoration, but can encompass many different ways of reusing and enhancing significant places, be they buildings, campuses, townscapes, or landscapes.

On the national level, the American Institute of Architects gave an Honor Award for the renovation of Yale University’s Morse and Stiles colleges, by KieranTimberlake architects, of Philadelphia. Eero Saarinen designed the colleges (opened 1962) as a Modernist reinterpretation of Yale’s neo-Gothic architecture. The renovation addressed maintenance needs and changing patterns of use by providing activity space in the underused basements, redesigning the courtyards with more water and greenery, and reconfiguring the housing from single rooms to suites—all while protecting the colleges’ historic architectural character.

The AIA’s Connecticut chapter presented awards in a preservation category as well as for work involving historic buildings or relating to historic settings. Honor awards went to the following:

- **Augusta Lewis Troup School**, New Haven (1924, Charles Scranton Palmer; NR*): renovation and addition by Newman Architects, New Haven
- **Sterling Power Plant**, Yale University, New Haven (1923, Charles Z. Klauder): addition for a new cogeneration facility by Charney Architects, New Haven
- **Waterbury City Hall** (1915, Cass Gilbert; NR): Preservation Award for restoration by DeCarlo and Doll Architects, Meriden
- **Hillhouse Avenue pedestrian bridges**, New Haven (infill in NR district): award for “The Encompassing Art,” Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, New Haven

The chapter also presented merit awards for the following:

- **Wesleyan University Art History Department and Career Center**, Middletown (conversion of university squash building; 1934, McKim, Mead & White) by Newman Architects, New Haven
- **Bellarmine Museum**, Fairfield University, Fairfield (basement conversion of Bellarmine Hall, a converted Tudor Revival mansion, 1921), by Centerbrook Architects and Planners, Essex
- **Modern house**, Woodbridge (1952, King-lui Wu): renovation, by Dean Sakamoto Architects, New Haven
The Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects gave an Award of Merit to TO Design, of New Britain, for planning and analysis of the Waterbury Green, part of a process funded by a Vibrant Communities Initiative grant from the Connecticut Trust (see CPN, July/August 2011). The firm put together a team to study the entire southern end of downtown Waterbury to determine the factors that currently influence use of the green or might affect it in the future, including land uses, public art, pedestrian and vehicular connections, streetscapes, and circulation patterns. Information from archival photographs helped shape the final design.

*NR indicates properties on the National Register.
**Briefly Noted**

**Derby.** The Sterling Opera House (NR) will receive $150,000 in federal aid for interior restoration thanks to Rep. Rosa DeLauro. The money will help in the process of returning the opera house to use as a regional arts/theater venue. Built in 1889, the building was a theater until 1945 and Derby’s town hall from 1945 to 1965.

**Stamford.** The Connecticut Department of Transportation and the City of Stamford propose widening and realigning the intersection of Atlantic and Henry streets in the city’s South End National Register district. The plans include demolishing 745 Atlantic Street, a contributing structure in the district (1913) and a placemaker which marks the entry to the historic neighborhood. Preservationists are proposing alternate solutions.

**Kent.** After completing an Historic Structure Report for Seven Hearths (NR), its museum house (see CPN, March/April 2011), the Kent Historical Society has stabilized and repaired the house’s historic garage and privy. The fragile 18th-century privy was gently moved out of the way while new foundations were dug—a process that yielded significant early artifacts. Plans call for reusing the garage as a studio/classroom for local schoolchildren.
New London. A community forum in January heard about reuse possibilities for three key downtown buildings, as part of a Vibrant Communities Initiative grant from the Connecticut Trust. Ideas from Barun Basu Associates architects included creating a public atrium or arcade between the buildings, to bring more life to the area and provide second means of egress needed to redevelop the upper floors.

Hebron. The Town of Hebron recently completed the exterior restoration of the Peters house using a grant from the Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP). The Hebron Historic Properties Commission (HPC) is now planning for Phase 3, the rehabilitation of the interior to accommodate community meetings and historical exhibits. The HPC anticipates that much of the work can be done by volunteers.
Briefly Noted

**Moodus (East Haddam).** The Department of Environmental Protection is moving toward demolishing most of the buildings at the former Sunrise Resort. After buying the property in 2008, the State invited developers to submit proposals, but none was viable (see CPN, September/October 2011). The buildings have continued to deteriorate, though many still seem salvageable. Preservationists are trying to convince DEEP to mothball the buildings while they look for another use.

**Guilford.** The Henry Whitfield State Museum (NHL) may be one of the country’s oldest buildings, but it sports an up-to-date amenity, a special parking place for Segways. Donated by the Guilford Garden Club, it has a wooden curb to protect the site’s historic stone walls and trees, plus a rack for brochures. There’s also a bicycle rack for other car-free visitors.

**New Haven.** One casualty of the February blizzard was the historic house (c.1870) long occupied by the Ivy League clothier J. Press. The building already had structural problems; with the snow load portions of the façade began to pull loose. City officials declared the building unsafe and ordered it evacuated. As CPN went to press the owner was working with a contractor to plan repairs. Elizabeth Mills Brown, New Haven’s architectural chronicler, admired the “racy” mansard roof.
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Barns Listed on State Register

The Connecticut Historic Preservation Council voted in February to add twenty historic barns to Connecticut’s State Register of Historic Places. This was the first installment of the 200 nominations which the Trust is preparing in the current phase of its Historic Barns project. More will follow every month. The Council also approved the Context Statement, “Connecticut’s Agricultural Heritage,” which provides background information common to all the sites nominated (excerpts from it appeared in CPN, July/August 2012). The barns newly listed on the State Register are:

Burlington: Dr. Peres Mann farmstead, 18th-19th centuries. Built for Burlington’s first physician, the English bank barn illustrates how everyone, including professionals, had a barn and engaged in some agriculture.

Cornwall: John T. Andrews carriage barn, c.1885. This stylish Italianate/Stick style barn was built for a prosperous minister and teacher-turned-farmer. It’s now home to the Cornwall Historical Society.

Deep River: Ezra Southworth barn, c.1889. A Queen-Anne style hay barn later adapted for horse stall and now the Deep River Historical Society.

Derby: George F. Hunt carriage house, c.1895. This unusual bank-carriage barn design featured a well-preserved Victorian ornamental style.

East Windsor (Broad Brook): Anton Pfeifer carriage barn, c.1905. A good example of a carriage barn built just before automobiles and garages began to replace horses and barns.

Farmington (Unionville): Edwin M. Sanford carriage barn, c.1895. Together with its house and neighbors, the barn represents upper-middle class development on the growing suburban fringe of a prosperous industrial community at the end of the 19th century.

Guilford: John Rebuzzini barn, 1914. Built by a family of Italian immigrants to replace a barn that burned—the use of stone for an English-type barn reflects their European background.

Hamden: Enos Brooks farmstead/Town Poor Farm, 19th-20th centuries. The Poor Farm gave poor people a place to live and work to support themselves, from 1861 to 1947; it’s now a town park.

Hamden: Lockwood Farm/Patrick and Annie Kelly farmstead, 19th-20th centuries. This private farm was sold in 1910 to Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station; it still serves the CAES’s mission of research to support agriculture.

Ledyard: Parsonage Farm barn, c.1910. This Stick Style carriage barn was built for the Congregational parsonage across the road. Nails supplement mortise-and-tenon joints, reflecting changes in construction methods.

Lisbon: Benjamin Spicer farmstead/Allen-Thompson farmstead, c.1870. A typical workshop-and-barn combination from the late 19th century.

Monroe: Gray-Hurd farmstead, c.1860, 1895. The construction of a new road in 1935 made this barn highly visible to traffic passing by, and suited it for conversion to an art studio and gallery.

Monroe: Burr sisters studio, 1885. This barn is associated with Fannie and Jessie Burr, who in addition to being early professional women artists, ran the family farm in the early 20th century.

Monroe: Booth-Winblad farmstead, 1880s or earlier. These two English barns bear painted signs advertising Bridgeport stores. Dating from between 1890 and 1910, the signs are an example of the practice of barn owners’ hosting advertising in return for a paint job.

Norwalk (Rowayton): Theophileus Euphrat barn/Hart Castle barn, 1907. This Gothic-style carriage barn, built of stone, served the mansion of a local developer in the resort community of Rowayton.

Shelton: Eli Hubbell/Mary and Bennett French farmstead (Hubbell farm), 19th-20th
centuries. The farmstead’s buildings represent a range of activities from dairy cattle to ice storage, smokehouse, carriage barn, and modern additions to the complex for ongoing agriculture operations.

**Shelton:** Jones family farm, 19th-20th centuries. Philip James Jones, a Welsh-Irish immigrant, bought the property in 1848 and his family still farms it. The eight barns track the changing operations, from dairying to Christmas trees to nutritional education to winemaking.

**Stafford (Stafford Springs):** Johnson barn, 1885-95. This Stick/Eastlake carriage barn is a good example of the development of prosperous homes on the outskirts of an industrial community.

**Vernon:** Nathan and Abbey Strong farmstead/Strong family farm, 1917. Built to replace an earlier barn that burned, this barn’s progressive features include balloon frame construction, gambrel roof, silo (manufactured in Hazardville) and hay fork.

**Westport:** Gault brothers farmstead/Gault Energy barns, 1890-1913. As immigrants from Northern Ireland, the Gault family illustrates the trend of ethnic groups taking over farms from Yankee families and expanding from subsistence farming to other activities. The family coal business evolved into today’s Gault Energy.

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The YMCAs purchased the house and its neighbor in 2012 with the intention of razing both houses for more parking. Because of the historical and architectural significance of the Andrews-Olney house, when the Y obtained a demolition permit, in August, the Trust filed suit under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (see CPN, September/October 2012). CEPA allows any citizen to sue to prevent unreasonable demolition of historic resources. The Trust argued that the house was physically sound and usable, so tearing it down would be unreasonable.

After a preliminary hearing, the court issued a temporary injunction blocking demolition until the end of January, so the parties could attempt to negotiate a settlement. The negotiations were successful and resulted in the stipulation filed in Superior Court. It permanently prevents the demolition of the house and requires that the structure be secured and maintained.

John Myers, Executive Director of the YMCAs, noted that the Y has no immediate plans for rehabilitation of the house. Myers said, “We recognize that the Andrews-Olney house is part of the community’s heritage and we hope to find a compatible new use for the building.”

While the negotiations with the Trust were underway, the Y received planning approvals for expanded parking, including on the Andrews-Olney house lot, and is proceeding with site improvements. Preserving the house will only reduce the parking by about twelve spaces from the Y’s original plans.

At the same time, the YMCAs are pursuing plans to rehabilitate another historic house, located next to the Andrews-Olney house, for office and meeting space. The Trust has provided an Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant for that project.

Helen Higgins, Executive Director of the Connecticut Trust, spoke highly of the YMCAs’ commitment to the community and the cooperative spirit of the discussions about the Andrews-Olney house. “Through the Connecticut Trust’s field service program, one of our Circuit Riders was available to offer guidance and technical assistance to the YMCAs on this issue. The result is a clear win for all involved.”

—Helen Higgins

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(continued on page 14)
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Close-up, cont’d from page 16

restore the instrument as closely as possible to its original condition. Then he will return the organ to Trinity and re-tune it for the space, probably this spring or summer.

When the work is done, people will be able to hear what Thomas Hall’s customers heard in 1823. According to Huntington, the world was a quieter place then, without cars and radios and appliances humming away. Also, organs were used differently. Rather than accompanying an entire congregation, they generally were played by themselves or to accompany a choir. And, musical tastes of the time preferred sweet, gentle music. All this means the organ will have a softer sound than we are used to today.

That sound is hard to find. Huntington says this is probably the only New York-made organ of its age left in nearly original condition, anywhere. “This is a time machine.”

For more information, visit http://trinitychurchmilton.org/organ-restoration-project/.

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The Sound of History:  
Trinity Episcopal Church, Milton

Paintings and photographs, as well as surviving historic buildings and landscapes, tell us a lot about how the past looked, but how did it sound? One place to find out is Trinity Episcopal Church (NR), in the village of Milton, part of Litchfield. The church, built between 1802 and 1826, is a very early example of Gothic Revival design—really little more than a few pointed arches and some moldings tacked onto a Federal-style building, but it’s a treasure.

Inside the church is another treasure: one of the oldest organs in the country. It was built in 1823 by Thomas Hall, of New York, for Saint Michael’s Episcopal Church, in Litchfield Borough. When Saint Michael’s got a new organ in 1866, the old one went to Trinity.

Over the years there were alterations and repairs, not always properly done. These, along with wear and tear, have made the organ “cranky” and difficult to play. So, in January, Scot Huntington, of S. L. Huntington and Company, dismantled the organ and took it to his workshop in Stonington. There, he will make repairs and continued on page 15