One of the most exciting developments in historic preservation in Connecticut in recent years has been the development of municipal preservation ordinances. These ordinances, formalized under state enabling legislation passed this year, offer towns and cities new powers and flexibility to protect, enhance, and build on their historic resources.

Although Connecticut has more than one hundred local historic districts, they cover only a fraction—less than 25 percent—of the buildings and neighborhoods listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. That leaves thousands of other historic buildings and scores of other historic districts with no protection and no formalized means of providing technical assistance or advice to property owners making renovations or alterations.

One of these historic buildings was the Masonic Hall in Old Saybrook. Built in about 1839, the hall with its fat pilasters and bold trim (some of it perhaps added later) brought a quirky charm to the South Green National Register district. In 2006 an attempt to create a local historic district in the neighborhood

continued on page 4

In This Issue...

Vibrant Communities Initiative grants 2
New Listings on the National Register 13
Lawsuit in Milford 16
Grants for Vibrant Communities

In September, the Connecticut Trust awarded Vibrant Communities Initiative (VCI) grants of $50,000 each to Clinton, Derby, Hartford, Waterford and Westport. The initiative, generously funded by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Department of Economic and Community Development, with funds from the Community Investment Act, helps Connecticut municipalities to plan and act on preserving historic resources, to enhance and protect cultural landscapes, to promote preservation for downtown revitalization, and to revitalize historic villages, neighborhoods, or downtowns. In addition to the funding, Connecticut Circuit Rider Brad Schide will continue to work with each recipient to carry out the grant projects.

**Clinton: historic downtown resources.**
The area surrounding the vacant Pond’s/Unilever factory and the train station contains many historic resources. With grant funding the town is seeking to create a National Register district and implement village district zoning regulations there. The town will also complete a feasibility study of the vacant factory for mixed use development and tax credit funding.

**Derby: Birmingham Green National Register district.** The city will use grant funds to develop a preservation plan for the district, which encompasses most of downtown Derby. A consultant team will update the historic site survey, identify key historic properties in the downtown, and propose reuse options that tie into Derby’s broader development plans. The Trust and the State Historic Preservation Office are currently providing consulting services for the rehabilitation of the Sterling Opera House which lies within the area covered by this grant.

**Hartford: Capewell Horse Nail factory.** Listed on the National Register and is located in the same neighborhood as the Colt factory, Capewell is major priority for preservationists and Hartford. The City and State have committed funding for construction and environmental analysis, and a developer is committed to the project pending the environmental analysis. The VCI grant will fund detailed architectural drawings to facilitate development.

**Waterford: Jordan Village National Register district.** The town’s goal is a streetscape plan to link the municipal center with the historic resources of the National Register district. With the grant, the town will produce design guidelines and a preservation plan, and enact a village district zone.

**Westport: village district zoning.** As the town formulates a master plan for its downtown area, the VCI grant will ensure that historic resources are protected. Specifically, the grant will allow the town to identify boundaries and create guidelines for a village district and seek out properties to place on the National Register.
From the Executive Director

After 13 years, the Connecticut Trust is saying good-bye to a most valuable Trustee, Walter Fiederowicz, formerly of Litchfield, who is moving his primary residence to South Carolina. Walter has agreed to stay involved with us by becoming a member of the Advisory Council. For eight years, Walter chaired our Legislative Policy Committee, building a strong presence for the Trust at the legislature. Under his leadership, we received our first line-item appropriation from the Connecticut General Assembly. Afterward, he served as Assistant Treasurer, with oversight over our budgets and our audit and was instrumental in helping us define our investment policies. Whatever his position, Walter was a leader on our board; he asked probing questions that provided opportunities for board discussions to come to consensus around thorny issues. There has been talk of having Trustee meetings at his house in Charleston.

On October 2 and 3, the Trust participated in the fund raising extravaganza “Give Greater New Haven.” Led this year by our new Communications Manager, Erin Marchitto, we spent a whirlwind two days trying to stay on top of the special offers the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven made to elicit even greater donations for participating organizations. We count our participation a success and thank all of you who contributed.

The Trust is presenting a different face to the world these days with our newly designed web site, www.cttrust.org. I urge you to check it out. We believe it is much more user-friendly than the decade-old version it replaced. Thanks go to Jack Nork Consulting who put together an excellent team: Jenny Chan from Jack* Design; Mike Morris, database programming; and Kyle Summer, SmartPill Design, for web and content management.

The Trust is embarking on an exciting new project to stimulate preservation and reinvestment in industrial buildings and their neighborhoods and villages, with a two-year grant from the State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development. Funds from the grant will support research to update Matthew Roth’s Connecticut: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites, prepared under the auspices of the Society for Industrial Archaeology in 1981. In addition, the Trust will offer public education and strategic planning and pre-development re-grants to support planning for mill redevelopment. In the next issue of CPN, we will give more details on this major initiative, a partnership with DECD.

In the meantime, we continue to look for a buyer for the Thomas Lyman house in Durham. We love showing the house, so even if you are not an active “buyer” you might want to arrange a visit. We think word of mouth among our devoted members will help a lot. ☻

—Helen Higgins

Upcoming Meetings

Connecticut Historic Preservation Council
December 4, 2013, at 9:30 a.m.
January 8, 2014, 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

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 Preservation News, September/October 2013
failed, and recently every scrap of the Hall’s detailing was taken off, replaced with plastic siding and trim. With guidance or protective regulation the building’s owners might have chosen a different course, and the Masonic Hall might still be one of the stars of the neighborhood.

In 2006, Hartford tried a different approach when it adopted Connecticut’s first municipal preservation ordinance. The ordinance formally set an overall city policy to preserve historic resources. Under the ordinance, the city’s historic preservation commission is authorized to review and approve exterior changes or demolition of buildings listed on the State or National Register, or under consideration for listing.

“The historic preservation ordinance has bought about a dramatic change in the culture around historic properties in Hartford,” says Greg Secord, vice-chair (and former chair) of the historic preservation commission. Over six years, the commission has reviewed about 4,500 applications. Notable projects range from neighborhood corner stores to the restoration of the Travelers Tower (1919; NR), currently underway. The work involves repointing masonry and reglazing windows on the 34-story tower, long one of the city’s landmarks.

The Travelers project shows that the preservation ordinance does not have to delay economic investment, a concern when the law was first proposed. Mr. Secord explains: “We have worked hard to minimize delays, to be collaborative, and to encourage property owners to be in touch as they plan a project.” One way has been to delegate routine matters to city staff. This allows simple projects, such as replacing a roof in like materials, to bypass the commission hearing.

Another concern about the law was affordability, but Mr. Secord reports that the subject has come up very rarely in practice. Again, he cites the commission’s willingness to work with property owners to find solutions and even to approve alternate materials such as siding or replacement windows where they don’t seriously impair historic character.

Last year, New Britain approved the state’s second preservation ordinance, with language almost identical to Hartford’s. The historic preservation commission is still establishing its programs and procedures, says the chairman, Frank Self. But already the mayor and property owners are informally coming to the commission with questions about preservation and treatment of historic properties.

To encourage other towns and cities to adopt similar provisions, the Connecticut Trust sponsored passage of a statewide enabling act in the 2013 session of the General Assembly. The law, titled “An Act Authorizing the Establishment of Historic Preservation Commissions,” (PA 13-181) is very simple. It allows municipalities to “protect the historic or architectural character of properties or districts that are listed on or under consideration for listing, the National Register of Historic Places...or the state register of historic places.”

This simple language gives towns and cities great leeway in determining how to implement a preservation commission under the new enabling law, the Connecticut Trust has drafted a model Historic Preservation Ordinance, based on the ordinances that have been successfully adopted in Hartford and New Britain.

The model ordinance provides a modest level of municipal review for properties that are listed on the State or National Register.
Register of Historic Places, but are not included in local historic districts. Within that framework, municipalities will choose different approaches, so the model ordinance is written with separate sections providing varying levels of coverage. Towns and cities can choose the degree of involvement that best suits them.

At the most basic level, the preservation commission can concentrate on public awareness, sponsoring events, publications, and educational opportunities about the town’s history and historic resources. The commission also might help the town incorporate historic attractions and character into tourism marketing campaigns.

For a higher degree of involvement, the commission can serve an advisory function, providing non-binding information and advice to town boards and commissions. The City of Stamford recently set up an advisory historical commission to assist city staff and local land use boards (see CPN, November/December 2012).

At the highest level, chosen in Hartford and New Britain, the commission has a regulatory function, reviewing and approving alterations to historic buildings, including demolition.

These suggestions don’t rule out the possibility that local officials and citizens could add other interpretations of their own. One of the great possibilities of the enabling law is that it leaves room for innovative ideas about how best to preserve and enhance each community’s own unique mix of historic resources.

The Connecticut Trust is offering workshops on November 21 and 28 for towns and cities interested in learning more about preservation commissions. For more information, call (203) 562-6312 or visit www.cttrust.org.

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In September the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection demolished the buildings of the Sunrise Resort. Opened in 1916, the resort was one of several that brought summer visitors to the East Haddam area in the 20th century. After acquiring the 144-acre property in 2008, DEEP sought bidders to maintain and reuse the buildings, but none of the proposals went beyond initial discussions. The site will become a state park.

The Forlorn Soldier, a battered brownstone sculpture of a Civil War soldier, was rededicated in the State Capitol on September 17. The statue was created in 1866 by stonemasons associated with the monument firm of James Batterson and stood for years on Airport Road, where weather and vandals gradually wore away its face and hands. The Travelers Foundation, founded by Batterson, and members of the Kelly family, who owned the statue after taking over the stone-cutting company in the late 1800s, contributed to the cost of conserving the delicate piece.

**Briefly Noted**

**East Haddam.**

**Hartford.**

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Litchfield. ▶

The Litchfield Historical Society recently removed “permanent” paint from the Tapping Reeve house and Law School (1773, 1784; NHL). The rubberlike paint, applied in 2003, trapped moisture and caused some siding behind it to rot. Removing it was an arduous task, requiring powerful chemical strippers and intensive scraping. “It seemed like a good way to protect our buildings,” says executive director Catherine Fields, “but it didn’t work. We hope other stewards of historic properties will profit from our experience.”

New Haven. ▼

In September, Governor Dannell Malloy, New Haven Mayor John DeStefano, and officials from Yale Science Park and Forest City Residential Development broke ground on what will become the Winchester Lofts, a development of 158 apartments in former Winchester Repeating Arms Company buildings (NR). Forest City representatives credited a “powerful partnership” with the Department of Housing, the Department of Economic Development, and the State Historic Preservation Office to getting the project rolling—“taking a building with tremendous character and history, and turning the lights back on.”

continued on page 8
New Haven. ▲ (top)
Working with the New Haven Preservation Trust, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Connecticut Trust, the City of New Haven agreed to incorporate broader preservation options into a request for bids to demolish portions of the National Pipe Bending complex. The City acquired the former factory along with the adjoining Bigelow Boiler Company complex—both contributing resources in the River Street National Register district—and is seeking redevelopment ideas for the riverfront properties. However, without maintenance the long-vacant buildings continue to deteriorate.

New London. ▲
Connecticut College has completed restoration of the Steel House, a prefabricated house erected in 1933 by Winslow Ames, first director of the Lyman Allyn Museum. Contractors dismantled the neglected structure’s steel frame and panels, treated them to resist rust, and re-assembled it all. Listed on the National Register, the house, affectionately known as “Rusty,” is now the office of Josh Stoffel, the college’s manager of sustainability. Historical consultant Douglas Royalty coordinated the project, with support from New London Landmarks, the State, and private donors.
**Stamford.**

Brooklyn architect Morgen Fleisig's drawing of the Turn of River bridge won the Leicester B. Holland prize from the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) in August. The prize honors the best single-sheet measured drawing of an historic site, structure, or landscape prepared to HABS/HAER standards. The bridge (1893; NR) is a small but pristine example of the work of the Berlin Iron Bridge Company, which fabricated iron bridges for use across the country in the late 19th century. The distinctive lenticular truss design economized on materials and made the company's products easy to recognize.

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**Stamford.**

Two nonprofit organizations, the Center for Art and Mindfulness and the National Post Office Collaborate, plus a city resident, have filed suit to block the sale of the former Stamford post office to a developer. The plaintiffs claim that the U. S. Postal Service failed to follow proper procedures in closing and selling the property. The developer, Cappelli Group, plans to raze the 1939 addition and build two high-rise residential towers on the property and the adjoining lot. The original portion of the building would be converted to retail. Based in California, The National Post Office Collaborate has been fighting to save historic post offices across the country, focusing on their artwork; the Center for Art and Mindfulness is a Stamford arts group whose bid to acquire the building was rejected by the USPS.

*continued on page 12*
Wealth, Scandal, and Rescue
Stories of the Thomas Lyman House

Every house has its stories, but the stories related to the Thomas Lyman house seemed disappointingly sparse for a structure of its architectural distinction and connections to one of the leading families of Durham. To flesh things out, the Trust commissioned a more complete history of the property by Melanie Marks and Morley Boyd of Connecticut House Histories, LLC.

One of the first questions they looked into was the house’s date, and it turned out that the Lyman house is actually a bit later than previously thought—1778, according to the National Register nomination. The historians were hampered in their research by the lack of documentation; Durham only has grand lists for three years in the 18th century: 1766, 1783, and 1787. According to the 1787 list, Thomas Lyman and his brother Abel were co-owners of a house with only one fireplace—clearly not the present structure. By 1798, when the federal government levied a direct tax, records show the brothers living in separate houses, and they rate Thomas as the sixth-wealthiest citizen of the town. This suggests that the house was built sometime between 1787 and 1798.

Looking more closely, the historians found two references in Thomas Lyman’s account book, given to the Durham Historical Society by the Hardy and Winder families: one, from 1787, refers to selling “the North part of the old house,” for £9. The second, from 1792, refers to work “on the Cheese Room.” Based on these entries, they conclude that the house probably was built between 1787 and 1792.

How did Thomas get to be so rich? The account book shows that he presided over a multifaceted trade and farm operation that produced, among other things, apples, cider, beans, tobacco, timber, corn, wheat oats, flax, beef, veal, salt pork, butter, cheese, and pigeons. Lyman also sold leather, iron, lime, shoes, molasses, candles, brass screws, white lead, iron, paper, rice, and grass seed. And, he owned part-interest in two brownstone quarries, tutored his neighbor’s sons in mathematics, and provided legal services (without actually being a lawyer).

Thomas Lyman’s successes didn’t come without difficulties, and at least some of them seem to have been of his own
making. In 1793 a young Durham woman named Ruth Dunn claimed that Lyman was the father of her child. Although Ruth reentered the same charges in New Haven County Court the next year, something caused her to retract them in 1795, when she wrote, “...I hereby declare that I have unintentionally sworn my child upon said Lyman being instigated and over-persuaded thereto by the malicious, designing and evil-minded, heinous enemies of said Lyman, who took advantage of my weak state of pregnancy…”

At almost the same time—March, 1793—Lyman was accused of violating the Sabbath by bringing in hay. He called for an investigation and managed to string it out for more than a year, before the Congregational Church finally removed him from its membership.

After Thomas Lyman died, in 1832, the house passed through four generations of his descendants, finally landing in the hands of his great-great-grandson-in-law, Homer Johnson. Living alone in the decaying house, with no plumbing, no heat, and very little wiring, he sold the property in 1949 to Mary Winder, who with her sister, Lillian Hardy, would own the property for more than 60 years.

The Winders and Hardys set about restoring the house. Mary Winder's husband, Frank, an architect in the New Haven firm of Orr, deCossy, Winder and Associates, oversaw needed repairs and the sensitive addition of modern systems. He also initiated the National Register nomination and prepared documentation for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), while Lillian's husband, Gordon Hardy, carved trails through the woods and dug the ponds. Although no one actually lived in it, the house became a much-loved retreat, a place where the two families celebrated holidays, entertained relatives and friends, and—as Frank Winder put it—had fun.

The Thomas Lyman house is currently being offered for sale by the Connecticut Trust. The proceeds will go to establish the Trust’s new preservation revolving fund. For more information, call the Trust at (203) 562-6312 or email info@cttrust.org.

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The Silas Bronson Library recently added Hobart Victory Welton (1811-1895) to its Waterbury Hall of Fame. The local engineer became famous in the 20th century as an important American folk artist. Welton’s most famous work is a carved gate now owned by the Mattatuck Museum, but he also created a unique stone-vaulted carriage shed (1858) at the family homestead on Wolcott Street. The cavelike shed was recently listed on the State Register of Historic Places as part of the Connecticut Trust’s historic barns initiative.
Four Connecticut sites recently added to the National Register of Historic Places reflect themes of architectural change, industrial development, urban expansion, and literary achievement from the late 18th century to the mid-20th century.

**Old Saybrook: Bushnell-Dickinson house**

This well-preserved late-18th-century house was built in about 1790 by Phineas Bushnell, a member of one of the first families to settle in what is now Old Saybrook. Bushnell's descendants married into the Dickinson family and continued to occupy the dwelling until 1934.

The house is primarily significant as an example of changing trends in architecture at the close of the 18th century. While its center-chimney plan had been common in Connecticut for more than one hundred years, in the Bushnell-Dickinson house this traditional form was modified by the use of a gambrel roof, which gave it more headroom upstairs as well as a more imposing silhouette.

The house was further distinguished by the use of classical elements such as the fluted pilasters framing the door and the moldings that ornament cornices and door and window openings. These academic forms were disseminated through illustrated patternbooks, allowing local builders to produce designs using elements that were fashionable in England.

One noteworthy detail: while much of the hardware in the Bushnell-Dickinson house appears to be original, a few pieces are reproductions made by Douglas Ryan, a 20th-century owner and occupant who also was a maker of reproduction 18th-century architectural hardware. Ryan's work can be distinguished by a stamp bearing his initials.

**Hartford: M. Swift & Sons Company historic district**

Hartford emerged as a national manufacturing leader by the 1880s, producing firearms, hardware, sewing machines and machinery for national and international markets. A less-known product was gold leaf. Like the city’s other industries this required great precision and a skilled workforce to beat gold into progressively finer sheets—eventually resulting in fragile layers so thin that a stack of 280,000 of them stands only one inch high.

In 1864 Mathew Swift, an English immigrant, found work in the Hartford gold-beating shop of J. M. Ney. By 1887 Swift had launched his own firm; and by 1902 it had 32 employees, making it the largest company of its kind in Connecticut. After Swift’s death control passed to his sons Matthew and Ernest, and then to his grandson M. Allen Swift, eventually closing in 2005.

The Swift factory grew with the company, the initial frame building receiving additions in 1900, 1903, 1929, 1947, and 1948. Following typical mill design, the open plans accommodated machinery in evolving configurations while big windows provided abundant natural light. A special feature was air

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13
conditioning, introduced in 1929 to protect the delicate gold leaf from harmful fluctuations in temperature and humidity.

In addition to the factory, the district includes Martin Swift’s simple vernacular house, built about 1887, and a stylish Colonial Revival dwelling designed by Hartford architect Burton A. Selwee for Matthew Swift in 1914.

Today, the M. Swift & Sons Company complex stands vacant as the City of Hartford, with funding from one of the Connecticut Trust’s Vibrant Communities Initiative grants, explores ways to preserve this significant component of Hartford’s industrial heritage.

**Hartford: Sisson-South Whitney historic district**

Located along the city’s western edge, the Sisson-South Whitney district grew up in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as the city’s central neighborhoods grew in population. Initially marketed as a scenic enclave for Hartford’s upper-middle class, the district developed along a different path in the 1910s and ‘20s as the city’s trolley system made it possible for those of more modest means to live here. The result was a mixture of smaller single-family and multifamily dwellings, as well as apartment buildings. Commercial and institutional structures along the principal thoroughfare, Farmington Avenue, served the needs of the working and middle classes. This gives the district a different character from the areas north of Farmington Avenue, where large single-family houses dominated.

One of the most prolific of the local architects and builders who contributed to the shaping of the district was William H. Scoville, whose company erected 15 multifamily homes here between 1893 and 1915. Although not formally trained as an architect, Scoville oversaw a staff of draftsmen and architects who designed most of the buildings that his company constructed. He also operated a millwork shop that produced wood trim and interior details for his buildings. They were primarily designed in various combinations of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Neoclassical styles; one group of multifamily houses stands out for its use of monumental, full-height porch columns.

**Stonington: James Merrill house**

The renowned American poet James Ingram Merrill (1925-1995) lived and worked in Stonington from 1954 until his death in 1995. Noted for his use of meter and rhyme, Merrill received numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize, two National Book Awards, the Library of Congress’ first Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry, and Yale’s Bollingen Prize for Poetry.

In 1956 Merrill and his longtime partner, David Jackson, bought the Burtch Block (1901) a late Victorian commercial and residential building located at a prominent corner in Stonington Borough. The two writers (Jackson was a novelist) lived on the building’s third floor and made it a center for the artists and writers who flocked to the quaint maritime village in the 20th century.

Historian Rachel Carley writes in the National Register nomination, “It is easy to identify the influence of his Stonington residence on Merrill’s work in the recurring references to his rooms and their contents. He opened Mirabell: Books of Number (1978) with a wry account of the petty vanity of dealing with the Wrong Wallpaper in his Stonington sitting room: a ‘fussy and dated’ covering that he replaced with his fantastical pattern of clouds and bats. Later in the poem, readers learn that the room’s oriental carpet came from a Boston dealer, its gilded mirror was a castoff from a new neighbor and that its bat paper was commissioned from friend and designer Hubell Pierce during a snow evening of cocktails and soufflé.”

Merrill bequeathed the building to the Stonington Village Improvement Association (SVIA). With the subsequent gift of the apartment’s contents, the building and its apartments are as a memorial to Merrill’s life and work as well as home to a writer-in-residence program sponsored by the SVIA as a way of continuing Merrill’s literary legacy.
New Listings on the National Register

James Merrill house, Stonington: the fantastical bat-and-cloud wallpaper was commissioned by Merrill, as he recounted in one of his poems.

Lucas Karmazinas

Monumental porch columns distinguish these houses by architect/builder William Scoville in Hartford’s Sisson-South Whitney historic district.

Rachel Carley

Classical features dress up a traditional form at the Bushnell-Dickinson house, in Old Saybrook.

Tod Bryant

The M. Swift & Sons Company factory, in Hartford, produced gold leaf form 1887 to 2005.

Lucas Karmazinas
Settlement in Milford

On November 6, the Connecticut Trust and the Milford Preservation Trust reached a settlement with the owners of the Sanford-Bristol house to prevent the house’s demolition. The settlement came as a result of a lawsuit filed under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act, which allows citizens to challenge the unreasonable destruction of historic resources.

In June, the Milford historic district commission had approved demolition of the house. The owners, who wanted to build a new residence on the scenic spot overlooking the park-like banks of the Wepawaug River, claimed the house was unsafe. Preservationists report that, while neglected in recent years, it remains solid.

On October 11, two days before a town demolition-delay period was to expire, the Milford Preservation Trust filed suit. A few days later, the Connecticut Trust joined the suit as a co-plaintiff. An initial hearing was scheduled for October 28, and then postponed to allow a more thorough structural investigation.

The settlement gives the two Trusts until mid-January to find a new buyer who will complete the renovation of the house. Over the past months, several people have expressed interest in the property.

Built in 1790, the Sanford-Bristol house is a contributing resource in the River Park National Register district. With its uncommon outline—a gambrel roof in front and a leanto in back—it belongs to a small but distinctive group in Milford, likely the work of a single builder, or a reflection of local tastes.