Making Places:  
Investing in Connecticut’s Industrial Heritage

Connecticut’s innovating role in the nation’s nineteenth century industrial revolution still echoes through the diverse ancestries of its people and our existing transportation network. Its presence is most visible in the hundreds of villages and neighborhoods centered on factories and mills where workers produced cotton and woolen cloth, window screens, industrial boilers, six-shooters, parlor organs, helicopters, and much more. Just as important as the products were the never-ending improvements industrialists made to the machinery and working methods. Yankee ingenuity was one of Connecticut’s most valuable products.

continued on page 4
A new owner has saved the Sanford-Bristol house, giving it a promising future. Lesley Mills, of Milford, plans to renovate the once-threatened house, which was built in 1790 and is part of the River Park National Register district, as well as a local historic district.

In October the Milford Preservation Trust, joined by the Connecticut Trust, sued to prevent demolition of the house under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA), which allows citizens to challenge the unreasonable demolition of historic resources. In November the two trusts reached a settlement with property owners William and Gwendolyn Farrell, which allowed the house to be sold to another party.

The Sanford-Bristol house lawsuit was the third successful CEPA case in recent years, following efforts in Wallingford and Southington. With them it confirms the principle that selling an historic property to a new owner is a reasonable alternative to demolition.

Lesley Mills, the owner/director of Griswold Home Care, a provider of in-home care services, stepped up to save the house despite not being able to view it. She said, “We could not let our community lose this house that has served Milford families for over 200 years.”

Ms. Mills plans to renovate the house for rental housing. A preservation restriction held by the Connecticut Trust will ensure that the renovation preserves the historic character of the house and that it never again will face demolition.
From the Executive Director

In December, we welcomed Michael Forino to our staff as Project Manager of the Making Places, Historic Mills of Connecticut project team, led by Circuit Rider Wes Haynes. Mike recently received his Master’s degree in Public History at Central Connecticut State University. He has a substantial background in industrial history, and most recently was Assistant Director of the Manchester Historical Society, a city with a remarkable collection of restored and reused industrial buildings. Mike will manage the research, preparation and database of at least 200 Historic Resource Inventories on Connecticut’s industrial sites. He will administer the Making Places grants and be a liaison with consultants involved with the project.

The Connecticut Trust has been awarded a grant of $250,000 from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) as the first major investment to start our Revolving Funds program. The grant funds will be invested as loans to up to four historic rehabilitation projects involving affordable housing. We have in the pipeline projects in Hartford, Stamford, New Haven and Waterbury. The loans will primarily be used as bridge loans for historic tax credits and as gap financing in the historic rehab projects. Funds for the grant come from the Community Investment Act in the State of Connecticut. We welcome inquiries on this program.

We continue to look for the perfect buyer for the magnificent Thomas Lyman house (c. 1790) in Durham that Lillian S. Hardy gave to the Trust as a gift in June, 2013. We have lowered the asking price to $599,000. We show it empty of all furnishings to allow imaginations to roam and to showcase the historic features that make the house special, especially the paneling. The house comes with 13 acres of land. Advisory Council member Stephen Lash, who recently toured the house, suggested that we find some volunteers to draw up conceptual ideas of how the land might be landscaped. Lucy Van Liew of Madson and Christine Darnell of Chester volunteered and they have been out to the house with cameras, measuring tapes, and great imaginations. We look forward to seeing their ideas.

In early December, I had a wide ranging one hour discussion on numerous historic preservation issues with radio talk show host Faith Middleton, on WNPR. We discussed the Trust’s new Creative Places and Making Places projects and even what to do with old but probably historic miniature golf courses. The call-in questions centered on access to funds, and I am always happy to be able to say that the Connecticut Trust gives grants for preservation planning, maintenance and repair of publically owned barns, churches and municipally owned historic buildings. It is always good to be able to present historic preservation to listeners and others as more than preservation of colonial houses. ❖

—Helen Higgins

Upcoming Meetings

Connecticut Historic Preservation Council
February 5, 2014, at 9:30 a.m.
March 5, 2014, at 9:30 a.m.

State Historic Preservation Board
March 24, 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
This vast collection of industrial buildings, representing hundreds of thousands of constructed square feet, presents great opportunities to be creative centers of new economic and cultural activity and desirable places to live and work. Mill villages and industrial neighborhoods embody the pedestrian-friendly urban characteristics—enclosure, human scale, transparency, complexity, coherence, legibility and linkage—sought in transit oriented developments planned throughout the state.

Even though manufacturing plays a much less significant role in Connecticut’s economy nowadays, most industrial buildings are inherently flexible to adapt to new working, commercial and living uses. Examples are all around us: the Norwalk Lock factory now contains offices; Billings Forge, in Hartford: offices and apartments; the Thermos Company plant, in Norwich: apartments. Many others, from Stamford to Putnam, house antique dealers; others, small scale machine shops, printers, or specialty retail. In addition, hundreds of mill villages and other company housing from Danielson to Amesville to Potsdam Village are still home to thousands of people.

But many of Connecticut’s industrial communities and neighborhoods are at risk. Empty, underutilized and decaying mills depress their surrounding communities and understandably become targets for demolition and redevelopment. Too many are plagued by unresolved site problems such as floodplains and contamination. Zoning issues, daunting size, poor stewardship, or lack of financing can hamper re-use. Most damaging of all is the lack of community vision and support for investment in places that many see as merely eyesores.

Decades of disinvestment, abandonment and decay have led to structural collapse, vandalism, or fires of suspicious origin. In New Haven, the City is preparing to demolish parts of the Bigelow Boiler and National Pipe Bending factories, while in Thomaston a large section of the Plume and Atwood brass mill collapsed last June. Fires have claimed factories in Hartford, Baltic, Waterbury, and Stamford. This process has reached a critical point in the life cycle of many of these places.

The Connecticut Trust is launching Making Places, a new initiative to stimulate preservation and reinvestment in industrial sites. Funded by a two-year grant from the State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development (SHPO), this program will survey industrial sites all across the state, evaluate their potential for revitalization, and provide first steps toward revitalization or reuse or both. Connecticut Circuit Rider Wes Haynes will oversee the project, with project...
The first step will be a survey of historic industrial complexes, mill villages, and industrial neighborhoods across the state. Connecticut is fortunate in possessing an earlier survey, Matthew Roth’s *Connecticut: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites*, prepared under the auspices of the Society for Industrial Archaeology and the Connecticut Historical Commission in 1981. Roth and helpers identified and documented some 200 sites, including places where raw materials were processed, manufacturing complexes, power sources, utilities plants, transportation facilities including bridges, and specialized structures. While the 1981 inventory is a highly valuable resource, it was a selective list, with 87% of inventoried plants constructed between 1840 and 1910.

Since 1981, historical understandings and preservation practice have become more catholic. In addition to factory complexes, the Trust’s survey will include associated residential and commercial construction and extend the time frame forward to 1965. One important question is how industry, commerce, housing, and institutions together shaped manufacturing.

In Collinsville, for instance, the Collins Axe Company exercised total control over its company village, where it planned and constructed housing and commercial and civic buildings and also dictated how they should be used. Its goal was not only to continued on page 6

Mill villages like Collinsville played an important part in maximizing industrial output.
provide places for its employees to live, but also to create a structured environment that allowed them to achieve maximum production. Collinsville author David Leff writes, “The village, no less than the production lines ... was an engine of industry.”

When the survey is complete, it will include an overview of industrial development in Connecticut as well as compiled information on individual sites—ranging from single buildings to entire communities—to be available on the Trust’s and the SHPO’s websites.

The second part of Making Places will focus on preparation for redevelopment and reinvestment. A part of the survey process will be evaluation of sites for their potential for becoming attractive centers of communities rather than attractive nuisances.

The Trust will develop a brief educational program explaining the survey and promoting the benefits and strategies of reinvesting in industrial buildings and neighborhoods drawn from recent case studies. The program will be aimed toward local businesses, community groups, developers, and public officials in communities where inventory work is carried out.

Finally, the Trust will offer small grants for strategic planning and pre-development of underutilized mills. Priority will be given to projects that have a broader potential to help other communities solve problems typical of mill preservation. Grants will assist applicants to secure mill buildings and lay the groundwork for re-use, including such things as emergency stabilization or mothballing, community advocacy and planning events, conditions assessments, market analysis, master plans, and National Register nominations, among other things. The Trust also hopes to raise funds for a second level of grants to provide capital investment in well-planned mill projects.

In Manchester, the Cheney Brothers silk company created one of Connecticut’s most notable industrial communities, one that encompassed mills, housing for workers, managers, and owners, and community facilities such as a meeting hall, schools, and even a bath house—all of which has been designated a National Historic Landmark district. Beginning in the 1970s, most of the mills were converted to new uses and today they form a densely populated historic district that successfully combines industrial heritage with 21st-century living.
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“This didn’t happen all at once,” says Wes Haynes. “What we see in Manchester was the result of thirty years of intensive planning and rehabilitation. It’s what we’d like to see in other industrial villages and neighborhoods, and in many of them it can happen, but it will take time. But where Manchester is at Year Thirty, most of those other places are still at Year One. We’re losing pieces of our industrial heritage every day. The time to start is now.”

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Book Notes: Connecticut’s Indigenous Peoples

Connecticut’s Indigenous Peoples: What Archaeology, History, and Oral Traditions Teach Us about Their Communities and Cultures, by Lucianne Lavin, director of research and collections at the Institute for American Indian Studies, in Washington, Connecticut, is the first thorough history of Native Americans in Connecticut in many years and the first to incorporate materials from decades of academic, professional, and amateur archaeological activity in the state. CPN presents two reports on this important book, one by an archaeologist, and one by a layperson.

An Archaeologist’s View

Working in Connecticut for over 30 years, Dr. Lucianne Lavin has a considerable knowledge of regional prehistory, cultural chronologies, and archaeological research. Thanks to her efforts, at last we in Connecticut have a more comprehensive overview of the Native American peoples who have, and continue to, reside in the region. Dr. Lavin’s new book, Connecticut’s Indigenous Peoples: What Archaeology, History, and Oral Traditions Teach Us about Their Communities and Their Cultures, expands upon earlier publications and writings on Native American cultural history, and provides an excellent source of information on the known pre-contact and modern chronology of Connecticut’s indigenous peoples.

Dr. Lavin provides an overarching cultural chronology for Connecticut and the region, beginning with questions surrounding the date and origin of the earliest Paleo-Indian settlers, a controversial topic. Among other topics, she discusses a recent and controversial theory of early human migration originating from Europe through Greenland and Iceland, suggested by the recovery of artifacts in South Carolina that bear resemblance to European Paleolithic tools. Providing balance to the discussion, she cites a Native American explanation for the similarity of tools as having resulted from Abenaki (northern New England and Canadian indigenous peoples) maritime voyages to the east where tools, and possibly DNA, were acquired and returned to North America.

Dr. Lavin provides an overview of some well known, and some not so well known, archaeologically excavated sites in the region that highlight both conflicting and converging theories of cultural development and settlement. She further presents multiple theories of interpreting divergent cultural chronologies that leave the reader eager for more.

Dr. Lavin’s presentation of Native American cultural heritage provides important context for the interpretation of archaeological and cultural objects. For instance, a quartz Levanna projectile point, recovered from a child burial at the Morgan site in Rocky Hill, is seen to have symbolic, spiritual meaning as well as functional use, based on the understanding that the Native belief system sees all objects as containing spiritual matter—including animals, plants, rivers and rocks—and that these are closely affiliated with the natural world.

Beyond this cultural understanding, the reader is provided with an overview of Native American prehistory in Connecticut, referencing contemporaneous sites within greater ecological regions and beyond our borders. Her technical review of off-shore drowned sites and climate change as it pertains to Native American site locations, resource procurement, and seasonal settlement, is insightful and encouraging.

Above all else, Dr. Lavin’s book reminds us that critically important sites can still be found in unexpected places, that coupled with knowledge from extant Indigenous cultures they are significantly meaningful—filling the gap where written records do not exist—and that research on the Native American presence here in Connecticut has just hit the tip of the iceberg. There is much still to learn.

—Faline Schneiderman, R.P.A., Historical Perspectives, Inc.

A Layperson’s View

As Charles C. Mann’s 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus (2005) made clear, published histories of the native peoples of the Americas have lagged far behind the findings of archaeologists and historians. Mann began to correct that situation with his groundbreaking study, and now Lucianne Lavin has carried it forward with her history of the native peoples of Connecticut.

Two themes run through Connecticut’s Indigenous Peoples: diversity and continuity. Connecticut’s inhabitants were never a single monolithic group, but rather exhibited regional and tribal variety. Lifestyles varied according to the natural settings in which different groups lived and the resources available to them. Interestingly, this diversity fueled a long history of trade that brought goods, technologies, and, apparently, ideas to Connecticut from elsewhere in New England as well as from other regions—as far away as the South and Midwest.

continued on page 14
A federal court ruling in Stamford has blocked the sale of the Stamford Post Office (1916, 1939; NR) to a developer. The case has nationwide implications for the Postal Service’s disposal of historic post office buildings.

In September, The National Post Office Collaborate and the Center for Art and Mindfulness, plus a concerned Stamford citizen, filed suit to block the sale of the Stamford post office to a private developer (see CPN, November/December 2013). The developer, Cappelli Group, planned to raze an addition and built two residential towers on the property.

On October 28 federal Judge Janet Bonar Arterton issued a preliminary injunction blocking the sale because the Postal Service had failed to conduct an environmental review as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Postal Service claimed that an environmental impact study was not needed because the intended use of the property after the sale would have “the same general environmental impacts” as before the sale. The judge found this reasoning to be “completely unsupported by any evidence.”

Judge Arterton dismissed a second claim, that the Postal Service also violated the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), since the USPS has provided for preservation restrictions to protect the building’s exterior. The restrictions, approved by the State Historic Preservation Office, allow demolition of the addition and provide no protection for interior features.

The broader result of the decision is to stop the Postal Service’s fast-tracking of post office sales. Brian R. Turner, a field officer and attorney for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, writes in the National Trust’s Forum blog, “The court’s decision is an important repudiation of the inconsistent and unpredictable process by which the Postal Service has been selling its historic assets to the highest bidders….This decision will clearly shift the tide in requiring the agency to take the ‘hard look’ NEPA requires prior to selling historic buildings into private hands.” He concludes, “…the court’s ruling makes clear that advocates have greater leverage than the agency has assumed and that USPS must take its federal historic preservation responsibilities seriously.” The National Trust has identified preserving historic post offices as a priority.

For more information, visit http://blog.preservationleadershipforum.org/2013/11/15/stamford-post-office-nepa/#.UopIOY0o5ok.

Since the Stamford post office closed, in September 2013, vandals damaged a bronze lantern in front of the building, seen here in an older photograph.
Statewide.  ▲
Visual arts teachers learned how to use the Connecticut Freedom Trail in their classes through a workshop presented by the State Historic Preservation Office and the State Office of the Arts Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Schools Program in December. The Freedom Trail Quilts provided the basis for raising awareness about places associated with the history of African-Americans in Connecticut through the HOT Schools approach to teaching and learning in, about, and through the arts. This quilt square depicts the grave of Venture Smith, in Haddam.

Hamden.  ▲
After a four-year restoration and renovation, the Memorial Town Hall (1924; NR) reopened in October. Highlights of the project include restoration of original light fixtures and stained glass windows in the entry rotunda, and an addition for the police department. Mayor Scott Jackson (a Trustee of the Connecticut Trust) commended the town Historic Properties Commission for ensuring that the building’s historic character was preserved.
Manchester.
A town education planning committee has dropped its recommendation to demolish the Washington School (1915; NHL), based on opposition from local preservationists, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Connecticut Trust. Instead, the committee presented alternatives that include either closing or renovating the school. Other recommendations include combining the Bennet Academy and the vacant Cheney Building, two other historic structures, to create a new fifth- and sixth-grade academy.

New Milford.
Developers want to demolish an historic East Street house (1861; NR) to build a four-story apartment building. Built for John B. Marsh, the house is also associated with State Senator Andrew Mygatt; most recently was a bed-and-breakfast. Rob Burkhart, president of the New Milford Preservation Trust, decried the erosion of the National Register district, but town zoning allows commercial and multifamily uses on the street, putting economic pressure on the street’s historic buildings. A CVS store was built next to the house in 2006.

Pomfret.
On December 7 a devastating fire struck the First Congregational Church of Pomfret (1832, 1920), a prominent element of the Pomfret Street National Register district. While the church was a total loss, the State Historic Preservation Office hopes to offer assistance in planning a replacement that will be compatible with the historic district.
Southington. ►
The Southington-Cheshire Community YMCAs have buttoned up the Andrews-Olney house (c.1800, NR), which was preserved in a settlement between the Trust and the YMCAs (see CPN, March/April 2013). While much of the land around the house has been made into a parking lot, and the building awaits a new use, it continues to be a highlight of Southington’s Main Street.

Westport. ►
Overriding the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Representative Town Meeting unanimously approved moving the Kemper Gunn house (1885) from Church Lane to a town-owned parking lot nearby. Without the approval, the house would be demolished for the Bedford Square development, which includes the historic Westport YMCA building; the developer has offered to pay for the move.

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**Stratford.**

Developer Stratford Point Renewal (SPR) has an agreement with the U.S. Army to purchase the Stratford Army Engine Plant located at the mouth of the Housatonic River. Associated with the famed aeronautical engineer Igor I. Sikorsky, the 77-acre plant is significant in the field of aviation development. It was established by the Sikorsky Aviation company in 1929 and used for the development and production of many types of aircraft, including the world’s first production helicopter, in 1942. SPR plans a mixed use development.
1940s when big air scoops of Monel metal (a highly corrosion-resistant nickel-copper alloy) were added to the roof. At about that time, corrosion was also threatening the steel framing in the southern portion of the building, and the company replaced it with timber, a more old-fashioned choice but a less vulnerable on in this situation.

According to the National Register nomination, the main reason for these changes was to protect the building, but the conditions must have affected the workers in as well. Zinc vapor has been connected with a condition called “metal fume fever” with symptoms such as fatigue, chills, muscle pain, fever, coughing, and shortness of breath—for both workers and neighbors of industrial plants.

Today, Mill C has been converted to apartments, but its monitor, its ventilation tower, and the row of metal scoops that line its roof are potent reminders of the human cost of Connecticut’s industrial achievements. ✩

**Book Notes, cont’d from page 8**

Diet reflected this variety. One surprise is how late most Connecticut peoples adopted agriculture, and particularly raising corn—generally considered the Native American food. Although corn arrived in Connecticut as early as 1000 A.D., there is little evidence of its being grown in coastal areas before about 1500. Dr. Lavin explains that in these areas foraging and hunting continued to provide easier, and more healthful, ways to obtain food.

Despite this diversity, there were many points of continuity. One was clearly the relationship of people to their natural environment. While this is known as an aspect of Native American spirituality, it is grounded in the necessity of living in an often difficult and changing world.

Dr. Lavin traces cultural changes that resulted from climate changes such as rising sea levels between about 3800 and 1650 years ago, which created marshlands along the coast and provided new possibilities for fishing.

A powerful passage highlights cultural continuity in the post-contact era, where Dr. Lavin argues that the adoption of European technologies and materials did not indicate cultural assimilation. Indians who used European guns or cloth or housing forms were not necessarily becoming more European culturally—no more, she writes, than Europeans who bought Asian porcelain were assimilating into Chinese culture.

For preservationists, this book is a reminder of the need to identify and protect archaeological sites. Because information for thousands of years of history is available only through archaeology, each site is precious. It also highlights the need to recognize the ongoing presence of Native Americans in Connecticut—up to and including the present day. This means reading historical records carefully to be aware of the often-hidden evidence of Indians, usually at the margins of society. And it means working with Connecticut’s present-day Native inhabitants. As Dr. Lavin makes clear, there still is much to learn.

—Christopher Wigren, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Connecticut’s Indigenous Peoples is available from Yale University Press, [http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/](http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/)

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The Thomas Lyman House:
An Architectural Appreciation

The Thomas Lyman house (c. 1790, NR), given to the Connecticut Trust in 2013 by Lillian S. Hardy, ranks as one of Durham’s most imposing residences. When it was built, the grand house straddled a stylistic divide. On one side stood the Baroque of the Connecticut Valley gentry—like the Ebenezer Grant house in East Windsor Hill (1757), with its forceful, if provincial, Connecticut Valley doorway. On the other was the Palladian classicism of the emerging merchant elite, seen in the geometric purity and classical correctness of the John Watson house (1788), also in East Windsor Hill. The Lyman house’s overhangs and bulky double-hip roof point to the former; the lower roof pitch, classically-proportioned entry porch, and center-passage plan to the latter.

Although he belonged to a prominent local family, Lyman was a political and religious radical, and the dual nature of his house seems to reflect this. Historian Peter Dobkin Hall calls the house “a self-conscious statement of his dissent from the Standing Order.”

After a visit, restoration architect Michael Glynn, of Redding, commented, “Clearly this was built for a wealthy man and executed by a master craftsman … The proportions of the main block are perfect, and the contrast between its ordered, formal elevations and the vernacular, functionally formed ell provides a charming counterpoint to the overall composition. Most impressive is the Palladian floor plan and the symmetry and proportions of the principal rooms. And the through-hall plan, so common in big houses in Mid Atlantic and Southern states, puts this house in a special class. There have been many minor changes over the decades, but the house is essentially unsullied. This is very rare indeed; most houses of this period have been either ruined by neglect or by ‘restoration.’”

The Thomas Lyman house is being offered for sale by the Connecticut Trust. The proceeds will be used to establish a new preservation revolving fund at the Trust. For more information, call (203) 562-6312 or email lyman@cttrust.org.
Hazardous Duty: Wilcox, Crittenden and Company factory, Middletown

Factory work could be dirty and dangerous, something that we don’t always grasp when looking at industrial buildings, particularly ones that have been converted to new uses. But a careful look at the Wilcox, Crittenden and Company factory, in Middletown, offers a glimpse into the hazards of industrial work.

Wilcox, Crittenden, the largest manufacturer of marine hardware in the United States, produced all manner of hardware for ships, from grommets and swivels to 30-ton steel anchors. The company’s factory was located on Middletown’s South Main Street, next to a deep ravine that had provided water power for mills since the 17th century.

Mill C, built in 1907, was the company’s galvanizing and forge shop. Like the rest the complex, it is listed on the National Register and has been converted to apartments. The building is a utilitarian structure, 350 feet long, with concrete-block walls. Like most forges it had a clerestory monitor to provide light and vent fumes. The interior frame was steel, an up-to-date choice at the time.

A series of alterations to Mill C reveals ongoing efforts to cope with corrosive fumes which threatened its structural stability. The original monitor proved inadequate to vent the fumes generated by the galvanizing process, in which iron or steel pieces were dipped into molten zinc to provide a corrosion-resistant coating, especially important for items in constant contact with seawater. In 1913 the company added a square ventilation tower to the west side of the building and by 1924 had enlarged it for even more ventilation. Further changes came in the

continued on page 14