Preservation Restrictions Protect Two Shoreline Sites

Two historic Connecticut buildings face the future with their protection assured, thanks to preservation restrictions (also referred to as easements) donated to the Connecticut Trust by their owners. The restrictions are private agreements that require the current owners, as well as all future owners, to maintain the buildings and get permission from the Trust before making alterations. These voluntary restrictions allow the properties to remain in private ownership, stay on town tax rolls, and continue to serve useful purposes while also contributing to the historic character of their communities. In some cases, donors of preservation restrictions qualify for tax benefits.

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TOP: The Stone cider mill, in Guilford, dates to the early 19th century. BOTTOM: Roof overhangs at the Chidsey-Linsley house, in East Haven, are an unusual example of Dutch influence in Connecticut architecture.
Oppotunities for Preservation

Connecticut’s sense of itself is, in important part, embodied in the places that have been created throughout its history. Lebanon Green, the evocative rural landscape from which Governor Jonathan Trumbull led the state throughout the Revolution; New London’s Bank Street, a place rich in Connecticut’s maritime history; downtown New Britain, which thrived as an industrial center producing goods for worldwide markets and attracted immigrant workers from all over the world: these are unique building blocks to use in constructing Connecticut’s future.

Since 2011, the Connecticut Trust’s Vibrant Communities Initiative (VCI) has provided grants to help Connecticut towns and cities turn key historic assets into catalysts for economic and community development. Although each grant produces a report and recommendations for future action, the process itself is equally important. These grants make the case for historic preservation as an integral and necessary part of economic revitalization, build community consensus and establish relationships between the Trust and municipal officials that can continue beyond the scope of the grant project itself.

The grants, usually for $50,000 each, are funded through the State Historic Preservation Office of the Department of Economic and Community Development, with money from the Community Investment Act. In addition to funds, Connecticut Circuit Rider Brad Schide works with each municipality throughout the process as the initial concept is refined, consultants are chosen, and the study carried out.

According to the Trust’s Executive Director, Helen Higgins, “VCI is predicated on economic development.” But it’s economic development that sees places—not just buildings that can be reused, but also the broader character of a town or city—as assets which can be used to build to more vibrant, prosperous, and successful places while remaining true to who and what they are.

Planning Vibrant Communities

Vibrant Communities Initiative projects typically fall into two types, in roughly equal numbers: planning projects for an entire town or neighborhood, or redevelopment studies for specific properties. The first have led to nominations to the National or State Register of Historic Places, municipal preservation ordinances, the establishment of village districts, or the creation of rehabilitation guidelines.

One of the first grant recipients was New Britain, once world-renowned for its hardware and tool manufactures, but now struggling to survive economically. Two VCI grants have helped the city create a structure for protecting and reusing its historic resources. The first grant led to the city’s adoption of Connecticut’s second municipal preservation ordinance, in 2012. The ordinance created a new preservation commission that is becoming an active voice in New Britain. The second VCI grant funded a preservation plan for the Walnut Hill National Register district.

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From the Executive Director

Even though we stayed busy all summer, September brought some new beginnings to the Connecticut Trust. After a year of subcommittee meetings, the Board of Trustees approved a planning document for the Trust for the next three years. The document—less a plan than a statement of who we are, what we do, and how we might move forward—will be reviewed and updated annually. Here are some highlights:

**Mission**

The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation preserves, protects and promotes the buildings, sites, structures and landscapes that contribute to the heritage and vitality of Connecticut communities.

**Visions**

Historic preservation activity results in economic growth in Connecticut, through job creation and leveraging public and private investment.

Historic places are preserved and used to enhance community character and stimulate placemaking while safeguarding our cultural heritage.

The Trust’s work is results-based, multifaceted and falls into four interrelated program areas. The specific goal for 2014-2017 is that the four areas, Grants and Loans, Field Work, Research, and Education, will work in tandem with each other and be supported through governance, finances, legislative activity, and partnerships to reflect the mission and two visions of this plan. As new programs are developed, they too will be incorporated into all areas.

**Partners**

The lead partner in Connecticut Trust programs is the State Historic Preservation Office at Department of Economic and Community Development. Other key partners are Trust members, both individual and corporate, private and community foundations, Restoration Services Directory sponsors and other advertisers.

To view the complete document, visit www.cttrust.org and click on “About Us.”

September saw another new beginning as the Trust welcomed Renée Tribert as Project Manager for Making Places, the historic mills of Connecticut project funded by Department of Economic and Community Development, with funds from the Community Investment Act of the State of Connecticut. Renée has a strong background in both environmental consulting on industrial buildings and in curatorial work with art and history museums. She is re-entering the field of historic preservation, having received an MS in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1980s. She brings a wealth of talent and expertise to this position.

We are also pleased to announce that our barns website, www.connecticutbarns.org, has been redesigned and updated.

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**Connecticut Preservation News**

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Design: David Woffram, Middletown
Printing: Kramer Printing, West Haven

Connecticut Preservation News is published bimonthly by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, Connecticut 06517. Publication is made possible by support of the members of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and by funds provided through the Community Investment Act in the State of Connecticut. The contents and opinions stated herein do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the State of Connecticut. The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation assumes no responsibility for the advertisements.

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**Upcoming Meetings**

**Connecticut Historic Preservation Council**

December 3, 2014, at 9:30 a.m.
January 5, at 9:30 a.m.

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

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**At the Trust**

Tom Hearn

Renée Tribert

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**Contact Information**

Connecticut Preservation News, November/December 2014

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**Connecticut Circuit Rider**

Gregory Farmer, AIA

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**The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation**

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.
### a three-day course for professionals

**Wooden Window Repair Methods**

Students will work on practical and economic methods to deal with sash stuck in place with paint, broken glass, rotten sash joints, weathered sills, bowed meeting rails, and frame joint decay. Learn how windows originally were constructed, why some last for centuries and others rot and fall apart after just a few years. Participants will learn to conduct assessment surveys on windows, evaluate window treatment options, plan and cost window repairs projects and how to plan for scheduled window maintenance.

To be offered in Waterford, Connecticut. Date and location to be announced. See www.cttrust.org for details.

18 AIA HSW learning units are available.

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### a free workshop

**Introduction to Wooden Window Restoration**

A hands-on community forum for understanding the worth and wealth of historic wooden windows.

To be offered in four Connecticut communities; dates and locations to be announced. See www.cttrust.org for details.

2 AIA HSW learning units are available.

Free and open to the public in an accessible building.

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The Preservation Education Institute is part of Historic Windsor, Inc. (HWI), a nonprofit preservation organization based in Windsor, Vermont. Since 1982, HWI has offered preservation skills training programs for professionals and savvy homeowners.

This project is funded in part by a grant from the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development.

For information and reservations call the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, (203) 562-6312 or email contact@cttrust.org.
Plan Ahead for Preservation

Milford preservationists spent much of the summer scrambling to find a way to forestall the announced demolition of the Elijah Bryan house. Built about 1790, the house belongs to a small but distinctive Milford group with an eye-catching silhouette: gambrel roof in front and long leanto in the rear.

The Bryan house’s owner applied for a demolition permit on June 26. With a town-imposed delay, demolition could not take place before September 26, giving the Milford Preservation Trust time to try to negotiate a way to avoid destruction. For a time, it seemed that the owner might be willing to sell the property to a preservation-minded buyer, but in the end he didn’t, and the house came down in the first week of October.

Meanwhile, a similar story was unfolding in Farmington where two historic houses were scheduled to be demolished for development of two new branch banks. One, the Woodford-Newell-Strong house (c.1807, possibly incorporating two 17th-century houses) has a temporary reprieve because the bank that was originally interested pulled out of the development. While not currently threatened with demolition, the house nonetheless remains vacant and unmaintained.

Nearby, the Phinehas Lewis, Jr., house (1798) is the proposed site of Berkshire Bank. The bank has secured all the local permits but granted local preservation advocates a 90-day grace period (from September 1) to come up with a plan for preserving or relocating the house. The bank has also made some initial contact with the State Historic Preservation Office regarding review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires an evaluation of any project that involves federal funding or permitting for its potential effect on historic sites.

Since both houses are located just outside the boundaries of Farmington’s National Register and Local Historic districts, they are not eligible for preservation incentives, and protections are limited.

The story of historic preservation in Connecticut is full of episodes like this: owner announces plan to tear down old building, community leaps into action but it has nothing to bolster its case—no historic designation, no regulatory authority, and no preservation incentives. At the same time that the people of Milford and Farmington were fighting demolitions, their fellows were launching similar efforts to save the Captain Knapp house in Bridgeport (1807), 167 Summer Street, in New Canaan (c.1836 or 1846)—and, no doubt, others.

continued on page 18
Plans for the National Register-listed Seaside Sanatorium in Waterford took another sudden turn on September 30 when Governor Dannell Malloy announced that the State was terminating its agreement to sell the 32-acre waterfront property to Farmington developer Mark Steiner.

Designed by the renowned architect Cass Gilbert and opened in 1934 as a tuberculosis sanatorium for children, Seaside was transferred to the Department of Mental Retardation before closing in 1996. The State named Mr. Steiner preferred developer in 2000, but Governor Jodi Rell cancelled that agreement in 2008, after deciding that the site should remain in public ownership. Two years later, amid the recession, the State revived plans to sell the property, and Mr. Steiner was again chosen as the preferred developer. He planned to develop the site as an upscale residential enclave.

Governor Malloy hopes to make Seaside a state park. The site certainly would make a beautiful park: it has waterfront views, a seawall, space for parking and picnic grounds, and possibly a beach. In fact, the State’s agreement with Mr. Steiner would have required him to create a public park along the waterfront.

Governor Malloy has asked the Department of Administrative Services and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to come up with a master plan for the property by January 1. A key issue will be how the plan proposes to treat the four historic buildings on the site: the main hospital, the nurses’ dormitory, and two staff residences. All four are severely deteriorated; Mr. Steiner had initially deemed it not feasible to reuse any of them. However, an independent structural evaluation of the nurses’ dormitory, commissioned by the Connecticut Trust, convinced him that that building was indeed usable and he was pursuing approvals to convert it to an inn.

Ironically, the day after Governor Malloy’s announcement, the state Historic Preservation Council was scheduled to approve a grant to the Town of Waterford for an independent structural evaluation of the hospital building, to determine if it, too, might in fact be usable. Given the governor’s action, the grant item was withdrawn from the agenda.

Clearly, that independent structural evaluation needs to be a part of the master plan. And it should be done in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office which, under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act, is required to review State-funded activities for their potential impact on historic properties.

Nonetheless, it’s difficult to see how the State would use the buildings as part of a park. David Collins, a columnist for The Day of New London, has already called for a public-private partnership to reuse them—something that looks remarkably like the abandoned agreement with Mr. Steiner.

Whatever the condition of the Seaside buildings, the State has no excuse for demolishing them. After twenty years of neglect, the State alone is responsible for their condition. To tear them down would violate its own policy of encouraging the preservation and reuse of historic properties. Even worse, it would send a message to every rapacious developer and every sleazy land owner in Connecticut that demolition by neglect is a justifiable and legal way to rid oneself of inconvenient historic resources.

Mr. Steiner has said he intends to challenge the State’s cancellation of its agreement with him. Whatever happens, there will be another delay, the buildings will continue to suffer neglect, and preserving Seaside will become a yet more distant possibility.
New Listings on the State Register

The Historic Preservation Council has approved the following sites for listing on the State Register of Historic Places.

**September 2014**
- Rafael Building, New Britain
- Coit Street West Historic District, New London

**October 2014**
- Memorial Boulevard School, Bristol
- The Childs Center, Great Mountain Forest, Canaan
- Ball and Socket Manufacturing Company, Cheshire
- Helen Pratt Foster House, Cornwall
- Atlantic Screw Works, Hartford
- Hartford Rubber Works Company, Hartford
- New Britain Public High School, New Britain
- The Creamery, New Fairfield
- St. Joseph’s Polish Roman Catholic Church, Norwich

For more information on the State Register, visit [www.cultureandtourism.org](http://www.cultureandtourism.org).

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FOR SALE

**Thomas Lyman house, Durham Connecticut, c.1790**

Located on 13 bucolic acres in historic Durham, Connecticut, the Thomas Lyman house is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The landmark house boasts 13 large rooms with high ceilings, complimented by 9 fireplaces and impressive woodwork. 4,150 s.f., 5 bedrooms, 3.2 baths, 2 ponds, an outbuilding and tennis court. **$439,000**

Sale of the Lyman house will provide capital for the Connecticut Trust Revolving Fund. For information on the house call the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation at (203) 562-6312 or visit [www.cttrust.org](http://www.cttrust.org).

John Campbell
Page Taft-Christie's International Real Estate
(203) 245-1593 x103  jcampbell@pagetaft.com

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**FOR SALE**

**C. Wigren**

The Hartford Rubber Works boiler house, built in 1912, is an early example of poured-in-place concrete construction. Hands on Hartford, Inc., is working to redevelop the site for supportive housing, with a Making Places Grant from the Connecticut Trust.
Briefly Noted

Bridgeport. ▲
A fire of suspicious origin further damaged the former Remington Arms factory in August. The fire, one of several to hit the complex in recent years, highlights the increasingly urgent need for action to secure and find a use for the factory, particularly its shot tower, which is one of only a handful in the world. Unresolved cleanup and disagreements between the city and the owner are hampering progress. Mostly constructed in the 1910s, the factory has been vacant since 1988; it lacks historic designation. A proposed new railroad station nearby could revitalize the neighborhood.

Cheshire. ▶
Ball & Socket Arts, a nonprofit group hoping to establish a cultural center, took possession of the vacant Ball and Socket Company factory in September. A loan of $1.7 million from the State covered the purchase and, along with a town grant, will help fund environmental cleanup. The factory, built between 1850 and 1946, manufactured buttons and was listed on the State Register in October (see page 7). For more information, visit ballandsocket.org.
**Hartford.**

In September the Bushnell Park Foundation and Mayor Pedro Segarra celebrated the completion of the restoration work on the Soldiers and Sailors arch (1886; NR). Cenaxo from Bloomfield performed the work which included cleaning, repainting, repairing masonry, restoring the wooden doors at the entrances, adding thermal and moisture protection, and switching to LED lighting. The foundation raised $250,000, which included an Historic Preservation Technical Assistance grant from the Connecticut Trust and funding from The 1772 Foundation, administered by the Trust.

**Litchfield.**

In August the State of Connecticut sold the Litchfield County jail (1812; NR, LHD) to developer Russell Barton for $130,000. Mr. Barton intends to renovate the building, which faces the Litchfield Green, but has not released any plans. Any renovation work will be subject to local historic district regulations. Disappointingly, the State did not place any preservation restrictions on the property.

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Vibrant Communities, cont’d from page 2

which overlooks the downtown, including an updated property inventory, identification of new funding sources, and case studies for key properties. Progress continues as students from Central Connecticut State University are preparing a National Register district nomination for the downtown. This will allow buildings there to qualify for preservation tax incentives or grants, as well as protection under the preservation ordinance.

Lebanon is one of Connecticut’s most significant heritage destinations, with its mile-long town green and Revolutionary War-era sites including Governor Jonathan Trumbull’s house and War Office drawing visitors and providing an evocative setting for day-to-day life. The town sought to enhance these riches, which include a National Register district and two National Historic Landmarks. Surprisingly, the town found it had few tools for guiding development or protecting its historic sites and character. VCI funding in 2011 made possible a study of zoning and development patterns around the green. Based on the study, Lebanon established two village districts in 2013, which enacted new zoning provisions to allow commercial development at an appropriate scale while providing for design review to protect the area’s historic character.

Westport, in prosperous Fairfield County, faced a different set of challenges. The town center is a thriving shopping destination whose popularity is creating pressures to increase density by replacing old buildings with bigger new ones. Here, too, a VCI grant funded a proposal for a village district, which would provide design review along with zoning regulations that can promote reusing historic buildings, rather than discourage it. In addition, a National Register nomination is being prepared; once approved, it will allow commercial buildings to qualify for federal and state rehabilitation tax credits. The proposals are now in the public hearing process, with an active steering committee leading the effort.

Planning for Key Properties

The Vibrant Communities Initiative also helps municipalities produce structural evaluations or feasibility studies or alternate redevelopment schemes for specific historic properties that have the potential to become catalysts for broader economic activity. Some of these studies also include broader town or city actions to encourage redevelopment, such as zoning changes or streetscape or infrastructure improvements.

A Gilded Age mansion designed as a castle atop Danbury’s highest point, Hearthstone Castle has frustrated preservation efforts for decades. Bought by the city in 1985 and incorporated into an existing park, the castle quickly fell into ruins even though it’s listed on the National Register. Grants and studies led nowhere, until VCI funded a more thorough study.
that analyzed seven options for reusing the structure, from simple stabilization to constructing a new magnet school within its walls. Crucial to the VCI process were leadership by Mayor Mark Boughton and a high level of public participation. The City has followed up by applying for, and receiving, an Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant from the Trust to plan needed immediate stabilization of the castle.

Another difficult problem was presented by three commercial buildings in the downtown New London National Register district. Built between 1880 and 1920, the buildings overlook the Parade from the corner of Bank and State streets, but adapting them to meet modern retail trends and safety codes seemed impossible. With VCI funding, in 2011, a multidisciplinary team provided an environmental, structural, and code review of the buildings to come up with a template for one way to overcome the obstacles to development. As CPN goes to press, a developer has expressed preliminary interest in the buildings, citing the VCI-funded study as sparking their interest.

At least one VCI project has combined the planning and individual-site approaches: in Clinton, a grant is funding National Register and village district studies for the town center, as well as recommendations for redeveloping the former Chesebrough-Pond factory. The village district will include zoning changes to allow the factory to be reused for non-industrial purposes, while National Register listing will make it eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits as well as recognizing the historic district around the factory.

**Setting the Stage for Community Revitalization**

Despite the Trust’s and the grantees’ efforts, VCI hasn’t led to much construction activity yet. Many of the buildings that were subjects of grants still await developers. In several cases, the issue remains funding, and particularly the gap between renovation costs and expected revenue. In some cases, loans from the Trust’s new revolving fund may be able to close this gap, but the message is that other sources of funding need to be developed.

As Circuit Rider Brad Schide explains, the lack of action also reflects the simple fact that redevelopment takes time. “We really are setting the stage for economic development and community revitalization, which takes time to percolate,” he says, pointing to the New London buildings, which waited two years before any developer expressed interest.

In the meantime, however, the VCI program has allowed the Trust to begin to build a stronger relationships with municipalities and citizens. Mr. Schide continues: “I do receive calls from owners in the area and the Trust has a presence there and a relationship with the municipality on preservation matters. In New London we exploded the myth that zoning and codes prevented all historic buildings from being rehabbed.”

As the VCI communities, and others like them, go forward, the Connecticut Trust hopes that they will continue to demonstrate the value of investing in historic places to build a robust Connecticut whose towns are defined by authenticity and whose residents—of every stripe—feel a strong connection to the places where they live.
The Chidsey-Linsley house was built about 1790 along what then was the Boston Post Road facing the East Haven Green. The green and its surrounding neighborhood, including the house, were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

A modest story-and-a-half cottage, the Chidsey-Linsley house is notable for its unusual flaring roof, which swoops out to wide eaves front and back—a feature common in Dutch houses in New York and New Jersey. The builders thrifty re-used parts from an older house, which still can be seen in the basement. The house even seems to stand on an older foundation, which may account for its double front door and the side door—both features typically seen only on larger dwellings.

Since 1968 the Chidsey-Linsley house has belonged to John and Marion Stevens. Mr. Stevens, an architectural historian, planned the house’s restoration and discusses the roof and its New York antecedents in his book, *Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America, 1640-1830* (2005). Recognizing the house’s significance and wanting to plan for its future beyond their ownership, Mr. and Mrs. Stevens decided to donate a preservation easement to the Connecticut Trust. The protections cover the entire exterior of the house, as well as the principal rooms inside.

A few miles to the east, seven generations of the Stone-Sperry family have lived in what is now the Guilford National Register district. On their property is a cider mill erected in the early 19th century and still containing two cider presses as well as a horse-driven “nut mill” used to chop apples before pressing. The mill stands near the West River, convenient for shipping cider to markets in New Haven and beyond.

Industrial historian Robert B. Gordon writes that the mill is “…a unique resource in Connecticut. It is in its original location, in a purpose-built structure, and has all of its original equipment. It illustrates an important component of 19th-century rural agricultural life. The barn structure is architecturally significant in illustrating the timber framing techniques artisans used to achieve the large, unobstructed space needed for cider making. The equipment shows the construction methods for machinery used in America’s wooden age, but now largely lost.”

Robert Sperry, the Stone cider mill’s current owner, made substantial repairs to the building and presses in 2011, with the assistance of a Barns Grant from the Connecticut Trust. The repairs made it possible to open the mill to school groups and the general public.
In addition to protecting the building and presses, the preservation restriction will prohibit construction in the field surrounding the mill, to preserve its agricultural setting and illustrate an important element of Guilford’s history.

The Trust is grateful to these two public-minded property owners for their longtime stewardship of their historic properties and for taking steps to ensure that these properties continue to play vital roles in the ongoing life of their communities.

For more information about preservation restrictions, visit www.cttrust.org or call Christopher Wigren at (203) 562-6312.

A horse-driven “nut mill” (left) was used to chop apples before pressing them to make cider.
In the past year, our Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation Circuit Riders made 250 visits to 90 towns to work with homeowners, local officials, developers, and nonprofits. They shared expertise regarding financial and economic development incentives, tax credits, State and Connecticut Trust grants, historic districts, local ordinances, and more.

These visits were made possible by our generous donors and members. Without funding, we cannot provide the personal support so many communities count on from the Connecticut Trust. Please give generously at this year end appeal so that we can continue this tradition of preservation service throughout Connecticut.

To donate, visit www.cttrust.org or call, 203-562-6312.
New London. ▶
A draft environmental impact evaluation recommends that a new pedestrian access bridge for the Cross Sound Ferry terminal and the proposed Coast Guard Museum be built on the site of the Greyhound bus terminal. The bus terminal originally was a luggage/freight building associated with Union railroad station (1885-87; NR), designed by the famed American architect H. H. Richardson. Aside from the loss of the bus station, building a pedestrian bridge high enough to pass above railroad wires is likely to impinge on views of the historic station. In 2005 a similar proposal drew extensive opposition for that reason. The document recommends ongoing design consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, but if the bridge is too close to the station, no design will be acceptable.

Preston.
The Preston Historical Society has taken title to the Long Society meeting house (see also page 16). The Second Ecclesiastical Society, with dwindling membership, no longer was able to care for the building. As a registered nonprofit organization, the historical society will be eligible for grants for planning and maintenance, ensuring that this rare building will continue to serve the community.

Waterbury. ▶
In October Girls Incorporated of Southwestern Connecticut bought its longtime Waterbury home from the Elisha Leavenworth Foundation. According to its web site, the organization was founded in Waterbury in 1864 as the first Girls’ Club in the United States. The club originally served young women working in mills and factories; today it has the broader but related mission of inspiring all girls to be “strong, smart and bold.” The building (1845; NR) was the home of businessman Elisha Leavenworth, who bequeathed it to the Girls’ Club in 1911.
The Historic Village at Johnsonville

Moodus

Auction.com and RM Bradley are presenting the sale of The Historic Village at Johnsonville in East Haddam, Connecticut. Originally a mill village, the property is an assemblage of 8 contiguous parcels totaling approximately 62 acres.

This historic village presents a unique redevelopment opportunity to combine the historic value of the 19th-century village with 21st-century living as permitted uses include: single family, multifamily housing to include market rate and affordable, senior housing, arts/entertainment center, B&Bs, inn, restaurant/banquet facility, retail shops and schools.

Johnsonville is located in the Moodus section of East Haddam, 30 minutes from Hartford and two hours from New York City and Boston. The Property is intersected by Johnsonville Road, running south to north. On the western side of the road is a 19th-century village with eight structures of historic significance, several of which were brought to the site to recreate the once-thriving Johnsonville mill community.

To the east of Johnsonville Road is the picturesque Johnson Millpond complete with covered bridge, wooden dam and waterfall along with 25 acres of land suitable for residential and commercial development. Online bidding on this property is scheduled to begin on October 28, 2014 with minimum bid set at $800,000. Go to auction.com for more information.

Contact: Jim Kelly, RM Bradley at (860) 241-2704 or jkelly@rmbradley.com

Maple Grove Inn / Parley Converse House (1816)

111 West Main Street, Stafford Springs

Parley Converse, a farmer and founding father of Stafford’s woolen mills, built this house in 1816, and his daughter and her husband extensively remodeled it in about 1870. One of Stafford Springs’ finest early Victorian buildings, the house was a restaurant from the 1930s until 1999.

Listed on the Connecticut Trust’s Most Important Threatened Places in 2005, the property is again threatened by demolition. The property is under deposit by a developer who plans to have the building demolished or removed from the site by May 2105.

Contact: David Bacchiochi (860) 985-9024 or davidbacchiochi@yahoo.com.
W. L. Hatch Company building (1929)
24 Washington Street, New Britain

This handsome Art Deco commercial building, designed by the local firm of Perry and Bishop, is located in downtown New Britain, just around the corner from City Hall. The City-owned property is included in the proposed downtown National Register district, as well as the City’s Walnut Hill Historic District Revitalization Plan, funded by a Vibrant Communities Initiative Grant from the Connecticut Trust. In need of stabilization and rehabilitation, the property may be eligible for historic preservation tax credits and grants.

Contact: Kenneth Malinowski (860) 826-3333 or kmalinowski@newbritainct.gov

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church (1916)
23 Church Street, Enfield

Built in 1916, historic St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church is located in Enfield’s Thompsonville Village Center district, the subject of a 2013 zoning study by The Cecil Group. The intended result is revised zoning within the district to encourage economic revitalization of the village while maintaining the best qualities of the historic character. A variety of uses including a place of worship, residential conversion, theater, daycare, restaurant and retail are allowed. The building has a total of 2,742 sf with 1,371 sf on the first floor and an additional 1,371 sf in the raised basement, which has full-sized windows. The building retains its original pews and arched, stained-glass windows. It has a newer heating and air conditioning system, updated electrical system, and 10-year-old roof. Situated on a .11-acre lot with on-street parking located near a bus stop, the neighborhood activity center and park, the Bigelow Commons Apartment complex, and the future Transit Center /Railroad Station. Easy access to I-91, Bradley Airport, Springfield and Hartford.

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Deadline for submission to the January-February 2015 issue is December 10, 2014.

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From the Executive Director, cont’d from page 3

to make it easier to find and use the information about Connecticut barns that we documented from 2008 to 2013. Thank you to Mission Branding for the redesign and SmartPill Design for the data reconfiguration. Take a look at right.

Finally, we continue to enjoy owning the Thomas Lyman house in Durham (c.1790). In September the elegant and well-preserved Georgian house proved an inspiring setting for meetings of our Board of Trustees and historic house museums that have received Connecticut Trust grants. However, nothing would please us more to find the perfect new owner for this magnificent house notable for its imposing double-hipped roof, gracious center hall, fine paneling, and more. Perhaps you can tell your friends and acquaintances about the house’s exquisiteness to help us sell it.

—Helen Higgins

Plan Ahead, cont’d from page 8

Trying to change a property owner’s mind after a demolition permit has been applied for or approved is almost always a losing battle. Worse, such efforts only reinforce the image of preservationists as nay-sayers, who only appear once all the plans have been made and tell others what to do with their own property and how to spend their hard-earned money.

What preservationists need is to plan ahead for what they want to preserve and put in place provisions that can either prevent unnecessary demolition or provide incentives for preserving and reusing buildings.

Marty Skrelunas, an architecture and landscape preservationist from New Canaan, summed up the situation in an interview with The New Canaanite news site: “I am a preservationist and love antique buildings, and I honestly no longer feel that it is right to cry if a building...is torn down, because we haven’t gone as a community to the town and said, ‘Please put these things [planning provisions and incentives] in place.’”

The one good thing about the loss of a prominent important building can be that it can lead to better measures for preserving others. The Milford Preservation Trust has advocated for some time creating a new Local Historic district in the neighborhood where the Elijah Bryan house was located; the loss of the house has given new strength to that effort. In Farmington, the demolition threat has led the town to discuss a stronger historic preservation component in its Plan of Conservation and Development, to weigh the possibility of a blight ordinance, and to work more closely with the Connecticut Department of Transportation to ensure that historic resources are considered in the Gateway plan for Farmington Center.

Towns and preservation organizations interested in strengthening local preservation protections and incentives can contact the Connecticut Circuit Riders at circuitrider@cttrust.org.

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CONNECTICUT PRESERVATION NEWS, November/December 2014
as “much larger than Solomon’s Temple,” boasts patterned brickwork, an elaborate steeple copied from Newport’s Trinity Church, and a pulpit richly festooned with swags of flowers and fruit.

Plainness, where it occurred, was more a function of poverty or isolation than ideology. In the back country, poorer societies put up buildings no larger and no more elaborate than their members’ houses. The Long Society meeting house measures only 29 by 33 feet and it has only the most rudimentary decoration—a simple cornice, turned gallery columns, and little more. Against this plain background, the arched pulpit window stands out as a vivid sign of the power and status of the minister.

By the time the Long Society constructed this meeting house, Connecticut’s religious landscape was changing. Increasing population and social complexity were driving a separation between religious and secular facilities, leading towns to build separate town houses for local government. Under the influence of changing religious practices and theologies—as well as increasing prosperity—Congregationalists were building a different kind of meeting house, with its entry and pulpit on the building’s narrow walls, with academically correct classical ornamentation, and with elaborate steeples. In form, the meeting house had become a church.

The Long Society seems to have considered a new-style building for their new meeting house; in Early Connecticut Meetinghouses, J. Frederick Kelly reproduces a plan of the new type, labeled “Architect’s Original Drawing.” But this apparently proved too expensive, or perhaps it was too new-fangled, for the building as built clearly sticks with the traditional pattern. It was, according to historian Peter Benes, one of only three old-style meeting houses built in New England after 1805, and the other two were in New Hampshire and Maine, places more recently settled than Connecticut.

Different sources say that the Long Society meeting house was dedicated on New Year’s Day of either 1818 or 1819. Whichever the date, it means that the new building coincided almost exactly with Connecticut’s new constitution, which was adopted in 1818 and disestablished the Congregational Church. The Puritans’ dream of a Christian commonwealth was at an end, and so was the architectural tradition of the meeting house. Future generations might erect buildings called ‘meeting houses,’ but in terms of architectural form, they’re churches. The Long Society meeting house was truly the last of the Puritans.
Austere and primitive, the Long Society meeting house sits surrounded by a small cemetery on a quiet road in Preston. The building was built in 1817, and so is nearly two hundred years old, but it belongs to a tradition that reaches back in Connecticut history for nearly two hundred years more.

New England’s Puritan settlers sought to cut through what they saw as centuries of Catholic error and return Christianity to the purity of its early years. Rejecting the idea that a place could be holy—a Church, to them, was a congregation of people, never a building—they worshipped in structures that could be used for secular as well as religious purposes. Meeting houses, they were called, and they hosted town meetings, elections, schools as well as worship. As often as not, the meeting house belonged to the town rather than the ecclesiastical society.

By the early years of the 18th century, a generally accepted formula had emerged for meeting houses: it called for a rectangular building with its entry on one long side, and the pulpit on the opposite wall. Seating filled most of the floor, and galleries brought more listeners in close hearing range of the pulpit.

Although meeting houses were simple, they were not necessarily primitive. The Puritans may have rejected the elaborate church buildings of Catholicism, but they were not averse to fine architecture. Surviving meeting houses in Farmington (1771) and Wethersfield (1764) were imposing and richly embellished in the context of their age. Wethersfield’s, mocked by the Tory priest Samuel Peters