

Report from New Britain:

How Preservation Is Helping Revitalize a Connecticut City

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New Britain's City Hall is Downtown New Britain: city hall (center). The tall building to the left is Anvil Place apartments, in a former bank building.

Tod Bryant, National Register of Historic Places

A new leader in preservation activity is New Britain, a mid-sized industrial city in central Connecticut. Over the past ten to fifteen years, the city has made preservation a key element of its overall development and revitalization planning.

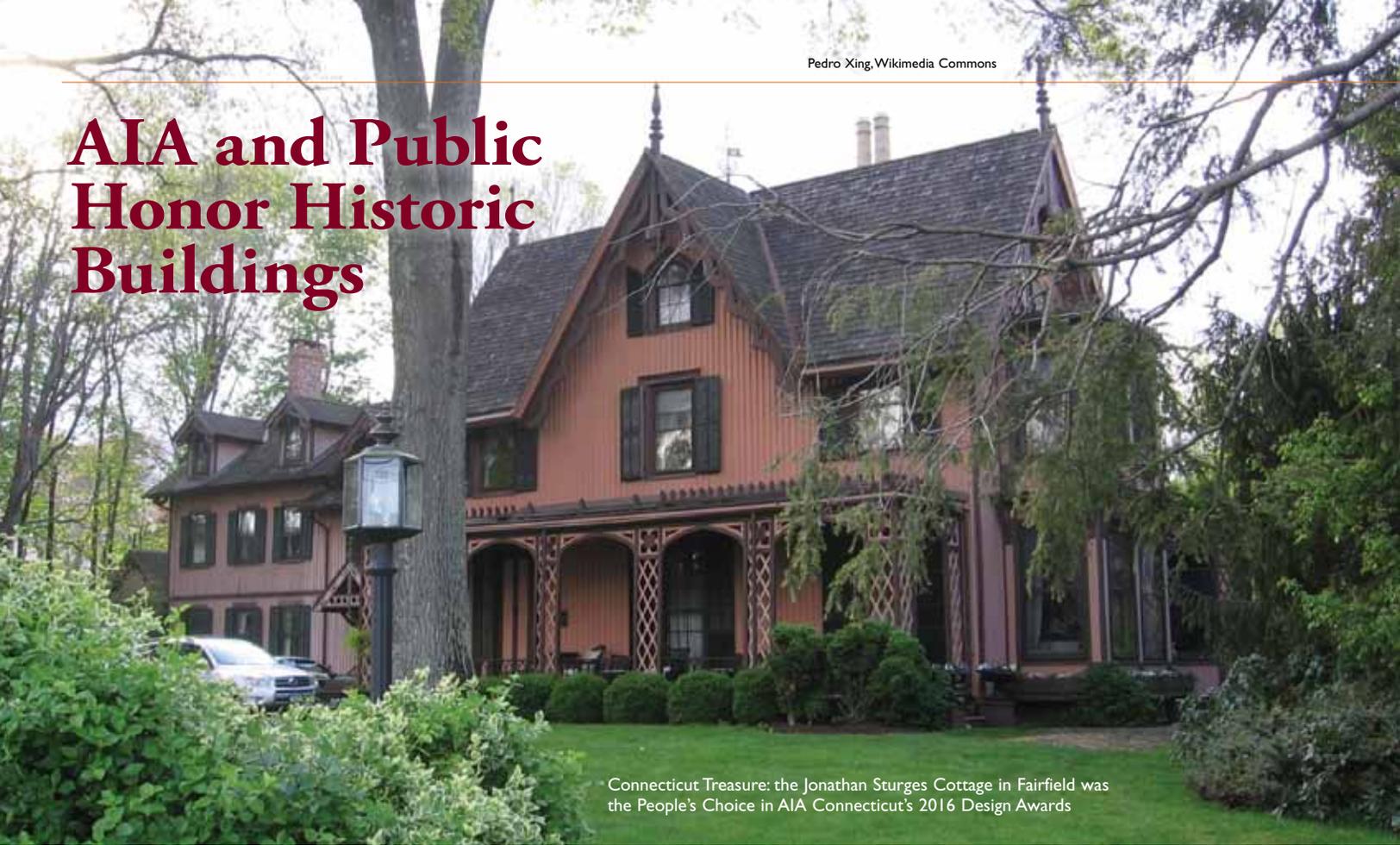
Originally part of Farmington, New Britain emerged in the mid-19th century as a center of hardware and tool manufacturing, home to companies such as American Hardware, Corbin Screw, and Stanley Works, which still has its headquarters there. The thriving factories attracted immigrants from a mix of countries, particularly eastern Europe. As a result, New Britain has a mix of ethnic groups, including Connecticut's largest Polish-American population, centered in Little Poland north of downtown.

With the decline of manufacturing after World War II, many of the factories closed, putting large segments of the population out of work. Urban renewal took out many factories, split the city with new highways, and cleared a large swath of downtown.

Nonetheless, New Britain continues to support a variety of cultural and institutional resources including an active library, a downtown industrial museum, Central Connecticut State University, the New Britain Museum of American Art, and the Erwin Home (see page 20), as well as numerous churches and synagogues. Many of these institutions are the legacy of 19th-century industrialists.

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AIA and Public Honor Historic Buildings



Connecticut Treasure: the Jonathan Sturges Cottage in Fairfield was the People's Choice in AIA Connecticut's 2016 Design Awards

The **Jonathan Sturges Cottage** in Fairfield (1840 and later; NHL) won the AIA Connecticut 2016 People's Choice Award in the category "Connecticut Treasure." The rambling Gothic Revival landmark, designed by the British-born architect Joseph Collins Wells and still in the original family, vied with seven other places for the honor. The People's Choice awards provide an opportunity for the public to vote on architectural projects in several categories.

Another People's Choice Award, for "Your Favorite Place to Work," went to the **Colt East Armory Building**, in Hartford (1865; NHL). JCJ Architecture has converted the building's fourth floor—directly under the trademark dome—for its Hartford office.

In an interview with the Hartford Business Journal, JCJ's president, Peter Stevens, explained the choice: "In the end, we felt that locating in Coltsville allowed us to create a very dynamic workspace—one that is both sustainable and healthy. While Coltsville is still considered to be 'on the fringe' of the downtown area, this is not new for us; JCJ has

a passion for reinventing and reimagining historic structures, and our new headquarters truly celebrates the rich history of the East Armory Building and surrounding neighborhood."

AIA Connecticut also presented three Design Honor Awards for preservation projects.

Loom City Lofts, Rockville (1906; NR), by Joseph Vallone Architects and Development Studio of Westport, is the apartment conversion of the former Roosevelt Mills, an early cast-concrete industrial structure. The awards jury commented, "This worthy, refreshing project deserves an award for its effort as much as for the outcome. The jury liked its affordability, its restraint, and the adjustments, but not too many, of a concrete building. Its totality is commendable."

Knight Architecture of New Haven was recognized for its conservation work at the Yale Center for British Art (1973-77). The jury said, "Impeccably done, this project strikes the right balance, making certain modifications that acknowledge 21st century needs. There is a deft, light hand, the knowledge of when to push further and when to restrain efforts, exemplified



Richard Caspole

Renovation of Louis Kahn's Yale Center for British Art garnered a Design Award in the Preservation Category.

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From the Executive Director

We are in the midst of busy weeks for the Connecticut Trust, and I want to provide updates on the Connecticut Trust's advocacy work.

High-Speed Rail Advocacy

As CPN goes to press, the Trust and our partner, SECoast, await the Federal Rail Administration's (FRA) announcement of its preferred route for high-speed rail service across Connecticut. Of three possible routes, a document posted online in August (and removed once SECoast and the Trust called attention to it) indicated that the FRA prefers modifications to the existing coastal route with an added spur to Hartford and Springfield, Massachusetts.

To achieve faster speeds, the plan calls for a fifty-mile coastal bypass between Old Lyme and Kenyon, Rhode Island, to eliminate curves and avoid lift bridges for marine traffic. The plan also includes a new crossing over the Connecticut River.

Unprecedented public opposition to the plan presented the FRA with a dilemma: carry on, alter the plan to mollify some local concerns, or drop the bypass altogether. A tunnel was quietly proposed as an alternative to a bridge over Old Lyme's National Register district, but could prove prohibitively expensive. Re-routing tracks around Old Lyme still would burden historic communities to the east with new industrial-scale railroad infrastructure. Proposed bypasses in Fairfield County have not yet drawn significant attention, but could prove equally controversial.

The FRA was supposed to announce its preferred route in late August. The Trust and SECoast hope that the delay means our early advocacy has influenced the planning process, but we continue to prepare for any eventuality. Visit www.SECoast.org to follow the issue and donate to this advocacy work.

Pursuing New Tax Credit Allocations

Amid this multi-state federal planning process, the Trust continues its state-level advocacy. Responding to news that the Connecticut State Rehabilitation Tax Credit program filled its \$31.7 million annual allocation early in the second quarter of the fiscal year, we will lead a campaign to double the allocation to \$60 million.

That will be a challenge, given projections of ongoing state budget deficits. But it is one that the Governor and legislature must address if the tax credit program is to remain effective. There is no better building block for continued economic revitalization than this incentive to private investment in our historic downtowns, main streets, and industrial sites. Out-of-state developers continue to show interest in historic Connecticut properties, and we don't want this incentive to fall short of the demand. With so many worthy programs on the defensive, our tax credit advocacy will stand out as a bold and affirmative ask.

Sign Up for Preservation Action Alerts

We're going to need your help to secure an enhanced tax credit program, protect the Community Investment Act, and act on other preservation initiatives in Connecticut. Please sign up for our email alert system at <http://cttrust.org/cttrust/page/Advocacy>. This will greatly enhance our ability to involve you in our legislative work at the state and federal levels. Watch for an email invitation to join this system.

Words of Gratitude

All historic structures need care, and our office at the Whitney Boarding House is no exception. I want to thank contractor Jud Aley and his crew for their work on several projects this fall. You can find R.J. Aley Building Contractor and other experienced contractors in our online directory, <http://cttrust.org/services>.

Thanks also to you, our members, for your support and input as we seek to advance historic preservation and economic development in this unique state. 🌸

—Daniel Mackay
dmackay@cttrust.org

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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A Millennial's View: Growing Up during an Old House Restoration

By Thomas Petraglia

When I was eight, my parents moved into an 18th-century farmhouse in Douglas, Massachusetts. It's one that we still live in now, although it doesn't look like the same house after twelve years of restoration projects. What was once an old, rundown farmhouse has become a very elegant and sturdy home. The transformative process took place over the span of twelve years, and I've slowly been learning to appreciate what it means to live in an old house.

Being a family member living in an antique home shaped my childhood in a unique way. I spent hours wandering the cement floors of Home Depot, admiring the high shelves full of unknown tools and materials. My older brother and I used to play hide and seek during the longer visits. I've put walls up and torn them down, in varying orders. My dad spent much of his "free" time working on the house, so my time spent with him was almost exclusively through working on the house and other similar projects. I'm used to the smell of fresh paint and old wood; I spent some time putting one over the other, handling paint rollers and messy cans half full of primer. I've learned to walk on creaky floors, feet barely grazing the unfinished hardwood boards that shifted with every step. I've learned to sleep through the sounds an old house makes: winds catching in the nooks and crannies, animals scurrying through the walls, debris settling in the pipes of the woodstove. It's these small things that come to mind when I think about home.

As I grew up in the house, I would try to hide from the responsibility of work projects. My dad would call on me for help every now and then, so I would try to remain absent by hanging out in one of the many different rooms. The idea of living in a house that still needed work seemed ridiculous to me; why would anyone live in an unfinished house? Surely if we didn't have a bathroom door (merely a curtain),

we shouldn't be here. We should be living where the house isn't a part-time job.

These were my thoughts during my time up until high school. I slowly began to accept that the house was just something that needed attention every now and then, like an old family pet that occasionally was on the mend from one ailment or another. I didn't pay any attention to the work on the house unless I was summoned, lending as few hands as possible for each project. I would stand behind my dad, while he worked, with one foot out the door.

As the house progressed, the projects changed. It became less construction and additions, more minor alterations and maintenance. I realized that no matter how "done" the house was, it would always need work. Something fell off where it should be attached, some hideaway area needed to finally be cleaned out, and a thing stopped working six months ago and "it's about time we get to it." There was never an end to the list of responsibilities for the house.



Thomas Petraglia (center) with his father and brother.

When I moved away to go to college I felt relieved, no longer having to deal with the seemingly nonstop tasks that the house seemed to generate. I figured I could shirk my way out of responsibility when I was home on breaks, and I wouldn't have to deal with any of it. And for a while, I didn't think about it; I had other things on my mind, like getting settled in college. It wasn't until I was able to separate myself from my



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"Standing behind my dad, with one foot out the door."



Tom and his father laying bricks.

home that I was able to realize what each individual project had been doing for me as a collective whole.

After coming back to the house for occasional breaks, I began to understand and appreciate the transformative process that comes with living in an antique house. Returning home after being away at college for an extended period of time, the house seemed more finished than it had ever been. It felt like a different place than where I had fled from. As I continue to come home from school, I realize it is my outlook on the house that has changed.

Even the most pristine old houses will need work, and with that work comes the ability to create something new—some kind of vision that comes from within—that makes the house more like your own, while respecting the past. In a greater sense, living in an old house has taught me that having ownership gives the ability to

take control and create a personal vision. By doing something with your own hands, there's suddenly a way to carefully add to a long piece of history.

When we have guests that have never been to the house, I sometimes find myself leading them on a tour, explaining the history that the house holds for me. "Here's the patio that my brother and I helped make." "This is the floor I nailed in with my dad." "This front door took me and a dozen other people to lift into place." When I bring my own friends over too, I show them around the house with a sense of pride that I had never felt until I returned from college.

I may not yet be able to fully appreciate the antiquity of an old property, but I've come to understand and value what it means to live in an antique home. 🌸

Thomas Petraglia is the son of John Petraglia, publisher of Antique Homes, where this article first appeared. He is a senior attending the University of Connecticut and studying Psychology and Human Development. He looks forward to having his own home one day, and conscripting his father...and his father's tools. We thank Tom and Antique Homes for permission to reprint this article.



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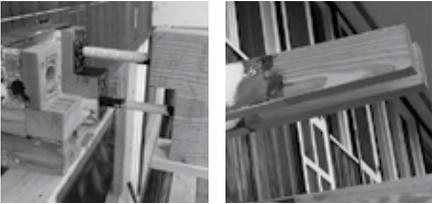
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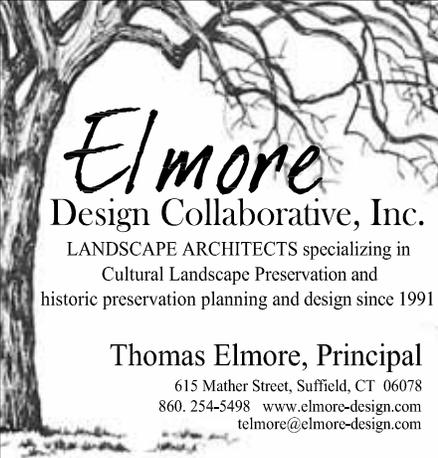
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Strong Protection: The Connecticut Environmental Protection Act

By Todd Levine, *Environmental Review/ Connecticut Freedom Trail Coordinator*

Connecticut citizens have a unique tool to protect historic and natural resources from unreasonable destruction through the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CGS 22a-14 through 22a-20), one of the strongest preservation laws in the country.

This law is based on the premise that there is a “public trust in the air, water and other natural resources of the State of Connecticut and that each person is entitled to the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the same.” Because of this, the Protection Act, as passed in 1971, allowed all citizens to take legal action to protect the air, water, and other natural resources from unreasonable pollution, impairment or destruction. In 1982 the General Assembly extended the legislation to protect “historic structures and landmarks”—defined as buildings listed on or under consideration for the National Register of Historic Places. A property is considered “under consideration” once an approval for study has been issued by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

It is important to note that the Protection Act gives *every citizen* the right to bring suit to prevent the demolition of an historic structure or landmark. Quite literally anyone can hire a lawyer and bring a case to court to halt the demolition of a historic structure or landmark, but there are risks. The plaintiff has the burden of

proving there are feasible and prudent alternatives to demolition. If the plaintiff cannot show enough initial evidence that there are feasible and prudent alternatives, the court will charge all costs for the proceedings to the plaintiff.

In addition, the State itself may take action under the Protection Act (provided SHPO has not agreed to demolition through Policy Act review). In that case, the process begins with information gathering by the SHPO staff, including outreach if possible to the property owner, to determine whether demolition is really necessary and to identify potential alternatives to demolition. SHPO presents this information to the State Historic Preservation Council, which may vote to request that the Attorney General’s office bring suit to prevent the unreasonable demolition. Finally, the Attorney General’s office decides whether or not to do so.

In many cases, just the threat of a lawsuit is enough to make the owner find a feasible alternative to demolition. That happened earlier this year with the Olcott House in South Windsor. The Connecticut Trust and SHPO together worked with local citizens and the owner to find an alternative, in this case selling the property to a new owner who is currently rehabilitating the structure.

In court, the plaintiff must show that the proposed demolition is unreasonable—that

its, that there are no feasible or prudent alternatives to demolition. This is a very broad standard; for example, while cost may be considered, a mere showing of expense will not mean that an alternative is imprudent. In several cases, the existence of a third party willing to buy the property has qualified as a reasonable alternative to demolition.

In recent years, the Protection Act has been instrumental in protecting historic houses in Norwalk, Wallingford, Southington, and Milford. In Wallingford and Milford, other buyers were found to purchase and rehab the houses. In Norwalk, the owner, a local inn, agreed to renovate the house. And in Southington, a settlement allowed the owner, the YMCA, to demolish the house’s rear ell and mothball the structure for future use.

Like the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (see CPN, September/October 2016), the Protection Act is an important part of SHPO’s responsibilities, but the real strength of both laws is in how they empower the public as stewards of the state’s environment and history.

Just as the Policy Act requires opportunities for public participation, the Protection Act provides additional protection to our state’s important cultural and natural resources by giving the public a direct path to seek legal remedy from their “unreasonable pollution, impairment, or destruction.” 🌸

Tod Bryant



Thanks to the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act, demolition of the Grumman-St. John house in Norwalk was averted. The house has been rehabilitated as a guest house for the Norwalk Inn & Conference Center.

Stamford: The Environmental Protection Act in Action

W. Haynes

Recent developments in Stamford show how the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act can give preservationists an opening to negotiate with a developer.

Earlier this year, Building and Land Technology, a developer active in Stamford's South End National Register district, took the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) and local preservationists by surprise when they applied for demolition permits for five contributing buildings without having initiated the land use review process.

The proposed scheme would cover much of the site with two eight-to-ten-story residential towers. The former Blickensderfer Typewriter factory (1895) on Atlantic Street would be demolished for one of the towers, while four Queen Anne houses on Garden and Henry streets—all occupied until January 2016—would be demolished to create a park-like entrance to the complex.

The NRZ and Stamford's Historic Neighborhood Preservation (HNP) obtained a 180-day demolition delay and immediately reached out to the developer to discuss alternatives. After two months without response the organizations approached the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to intervene under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act. Four months into the delay, SHPO granted the developer a one-month extension in order to prepare and present a plan to the local community.

On October 5, the state Historic Preservation Council held a hearing to consider asking the Attorney General to take action under the Environmental Protection Act to prevent the unreasonable destruction of the historic buildings. At the hearing, the NRZ, HNP, and Connecticut Trust argued that given the preliminary nature of the site plan there was opportunity to integrate the historic buildings within the development by slightly shifting and possibly re-massing one of the towers. This would be a feasible scenario in light of an unusual provision in Stamford's zoning code which provides variances for new

650 ATLANTIC STREET DEVELOPMENT SITE, SOUTH END HISTORIC DISTRICT, STAMFORD, CT

Contributing Resource, National Register of Historic Places



This aerial view shows the developer's preliminary scheme. Buildings identified by address are slated for demolition: four houses on Garden and Henry streets and the former Blickensderfer factory on Atlantic Street. Preservationists hope to convince the developer to modify the plan to preserve historic buildings.

construction when historic buildings are retained. Moreover, given the neighborhood's desire to maintain affordable housing in its historic buildings and state tax credits available for both preservation and affordable housing, reusing the buildings would provide greater economic

incentive than removing them.

The Historic Preservation Council tabled a motion to pursue a lawsuit under CEPA in lieu of accepting a sworn oath from the developer's attorney to voluntarily extend the demolition delay period until January 2017. This will permit time

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The city also still boasts an impressive built heritage including Walnut Hill Park (1870ff; NR), one of Connecticut's best preserved Olmsted parks; a city hall by McKim, Mead & White (1883-1885; NR), and well preserved neighborhoods.

The early 1970s saw the beginnings of organized preservation activity in New Britain, with the celebration of the city's 100th anniversary. Early surveys resulted in the first nominations to the National Register, and an architectural guide to Walnut Hill was published. However, few other recommendations were followed up on. The City completed a more comprehensive survey in 1996, but again, many of its recommendations for designation and other preservation measures went unfulfilled.

Since the early 2000s, preservation efforts have been on the rise. One high-profile case involved Trinity United Methodist Church, a highly visible downtown congregation. In 2000 the dwindling congregation proposed demolishing its Richardsonian Romanesque building, built in 1891, which it no longer could afford to maintain. In a community-wide effort (assisted by the Connecticut Trust), the building was purchased by a new nonprofit organization, listed on the National Register, and converted to a performing arts venue, Trinity-on-Main.

In the 2000s New Britain's city government increasingly pursued larger-scale preservation efforts to encourage economic revitalization. The Arch Walk Way, a



The Berkowitz building, located at the gateway to the Little Poland neighborhood, presents opportunities for transit-oriented development, but its very poor condition makes it a challenge.

multiyear project finished about 2003, redesigned streetscapes to create two loops through the downtown from Franklin Square along Arch and Main Streets and finished up at the grand stairway to Walnut Hill Park.

The effort, initiated by Marilyn Cruz-Aponte of the city's Department of Public Works, and designed by TO Landscapes LLC, a New Britain landscape architecture firm, combined public art, landscape, sidewalks, pedestrian amenities, and improved lighting with the goal of knitting together historic buildings and landscapes within the central business district and encouraging people to get out of their cars and walk. Important because it established

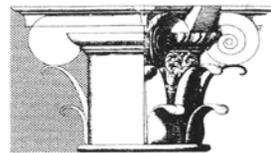
preservation as a cityscape/planning effort, not just for individual structures, the Arch Walk Way received a Merit Award from the Connecticut Trust in 2006.

Another highly visible adaptive use project was Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford's residential conversion of the former Commercial Trust Company building (1927; NR), located next to city hall. Now called The Apartments at Anvil Place, the former bank contains apartments for the elderly.

Preservation in New Britain moved beyond individual projects in 2009 when the City applied for, and received, a Community Cultural Planning grant from the Connecticut Trust (funded through



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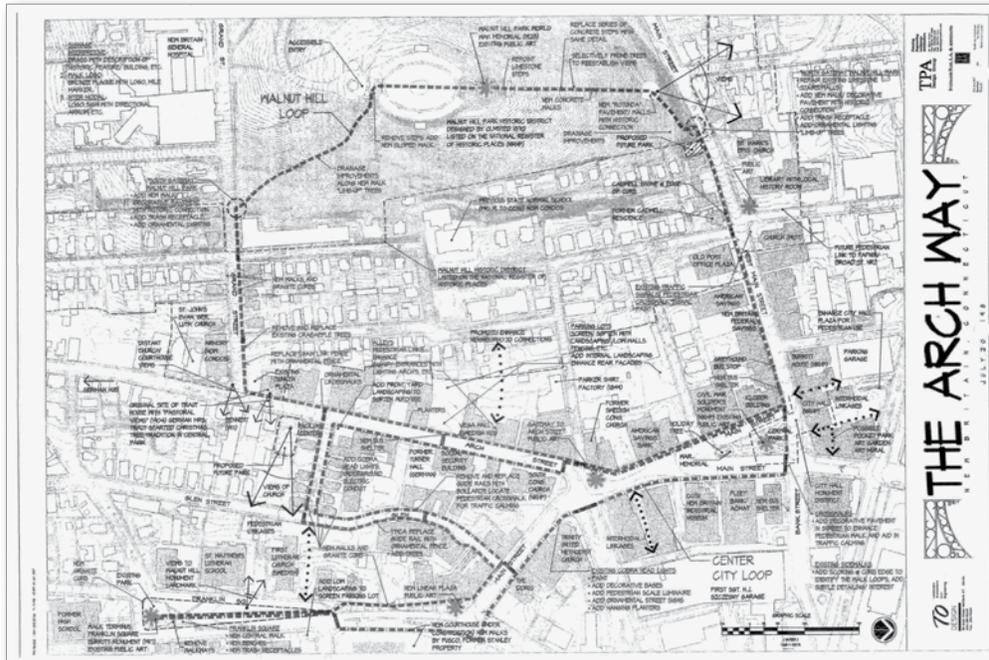


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The Arch Walk Way, linking commercial, cultural, and historic assets, was conceived to get people out of their cars and onto the sidewalks.

nation for the Downtown New Britain National Register district went through, even though that put more than one hundred buildings under the Preservation Commission's purview. Objection by a majority of property owners could have blocked the listing, which received final approval this past summer. With National Register designation, properties within the district are now eligible for preservation benefits such as historic rehabilitation tax credits, further encouraging preservation and reuse.

In the meantime, individual redevelopment projects continue. The City is actively seeking developers for the Hatch building (1929) in the new National Register district, as well as the Berkowitz building, a long-blighted apartment block located at the gateway to Little Poland. The former offices of the New Britain Herald (1952, 1969; SR) has been partly converted to medical offices.

The Connecticut Main Street Center brought its "Come Home to Downtown" program to New Britain 2014, offering technical assistance for creating upper-floor residential units in downtown properties. The CMSC worked with developer Avner Krohn to develop housing in the upper levels of the Raphael Building, 99 West Main Street (1925; NR). Mr. Krohn had already improved the façade and remodeled the ground-floor commercial space.

In the spirit of the Arch Walk Way,

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the State Historic Preservation Office with monies from the Community Investment Act). The grant funded a study which recommended a comprehensive historic preservation plan for the City. Suggested elements of that plan included nominating districts to the National Register, beginning with the downtown; establishing local historic districts to protect historic neighborhoods; enacting a delay of demolition ordinance; establishing a City historic preservation commission to carry on the work of preservation; and drawing up design guidelines to enhance new construction and renovation work particularly in the downtown.

Following those recommendations, New Britain adopted a citywide preservation ordinance in 2011. Modeled on

Hartford's first-in-the-state law adopted in 2006, the ordinance established a city Historic Preservation Commission to help property owners preserve and improve the appearance and architectural character of historic buildings. The commission reviews and approves alterations to buildings listed on the State or National Registers.

Up and operating for two years now, the Commission is still working on how to apply its guidelines, says City Planner Steven Schiller. "Sometimes it's more important to get the rehab done than have a one hundred-percent true original restoration," he says. "They're trying to strike a reasonable balance."

It could be considered a tribute to the commission's success that the nomi-





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Briefly Noted

C. Wigren

Hamden. ▶

Plans by Quinnipiac University to raze several historic houses in the Mount Carmel area are causing concern among residents. In September the university filed for demolition permits for five houses built between 1770 and 1890. One, the Orrin Todd house (1815), is listed on the National Register, along with a toll house (c.1800) built for the Cheshire turnpike. Both buildings have been badly altered; the Todd house has lost its beautifully crafted doorway and Palladian window, while oversized additions overwhelm the toll house. Unfortunately, the other houses, with higher levels of integrity, have no designation to offer any protection. According to a spokesman, Quinnipiac has no plans for the properties. Several of the houses had been rented to students—a matter of ongoing conflict between Quinnipiac and some of its neighbors. But it seems unreasonable to demolish significant, usable buildings simply because they have been misused. The 90-day delay of demolition period will expire in early December. As CPN goes to press, Quinnipiac has suggested it might entertain proposals for some of the buildings. (Pictured: Joseph Miller house, c.1875, and Alfred Vick house, c.1890)



Connecticut Department of Transportation

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I-84 HARTFORD PROJECT

POTENTIAL TOD OPPORTUNITIES

KEY PLAN

EXISTING

Hartford. ▲

The Connecticut Department of Transportation is pursuing plans to reconstruct Interstate 84 through the center of Hartford. The viaduct that currently carries the road is rapidly deteriorating. After studying several alternatives, ConnDOT is recommending that the roadway be sunk and capped in the area of Broad Street and Asylum Avenue for new buildings or parks. Rebuilding I-84 would remove a barrier that divides the city

in half and provide opportunities to make neighborhoods next to the road more attractive. Some historic resources would be demolished, such as the former Hartford Wire Mattress Company factory on Laurel Street (1886 and later), identified by the Connecticut Trust's Making Places project. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation is currently underway. For more, visit www.I84Hartford.com.

Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress



G. Farmer



Hartford. ▲

The Old State House (1796; NHL) may re-open soon, thanks to a new agreement reached in early October between the legislative and executive branches. The agreement reverses the transfer of the landmark from the Office of Legislative Management (OLM) to the Department of Energy and Environmental Services (DEEP) approved by the General Assembly in May as a budget-cutting measure. The transfer proved more difficult than envisioned, leaving the already-strapped DEEP without sufficient funds to maintain and operate the building. The Old State House closed to the public on June 30. In August, Governor Dannel Malloy and legislative leaders put the transfer on hold, and on October 7 they announced the new agreement. As CPN goes to press, OLM hopes to re-open the Old State House, probably on a reduced basis, by November 1. The State took over operation of the Old State House in 2008, and has developed programs related to civic engagement as a way of continuing the building's history.

Litchfield. ▲

Newly painted walls and reproduction 12-over-12 windows are the most visible signs that renovation work is progressing on the Litchfield Jail (1812 and later; NR). Russell Barton and his partners, who bought the jail from the State, are renovating the building for residential, commercial, and office use. According to Harriet Saltzman, the partners are planning to have most of the exterior work done this fall, and to spend the winter working on interiors. Several potential tenants have expressed interest; the hope is for the first business, a coffee shop in the 1812 section of the jail, to open in the spring.



The Chidsey-Linsley house was built about 1790 across from the East Haven Green, where General Lafayette and his troops camped during the Revolution. The 1½-story, center-chimney Cape is notable for its unusual flaring roof, which swoops out to wide eaves front and back—a feature common in Dutch houses on nearby Long Island but extremely rare in Connecticut. The builders thriftily re-used parts from an older house, which still can be seen in the basement. They even reused an older foundation, which may account for the double front door and the side door—both features typically seen only on larger dwellings. Owned for many years by an architectural historian, the Chidsey-Linsley

house retains its original layout and most of the original exterior clapboards. Interior floors, trim, and paneling remain in pristine condition. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the house is eligible for Connecticut's Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit. Within walking distance are shops and restaurants, Long Island Sound, and scenic salt marshes.

\$199,500

Katherine Bennett, Betsy Grauer Realty,
(203) 787-3434; katherine@betsygrauerrealty.com

Betsy Grauer Realty, Inc.



cont'd from page 11

Lauralton Hall



Milford. ▲

The Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, also known as Lauralton Hall (NR), has restored an historic water tower to provide environmentally sustainable irrigation for its campus and serve as an educational tool for its students. The tower was built in 1864 to serve the estate of Charles Hobby Pond; the property was sold to financier Henry Augustus Taylor in 1889 and has been a Catholic girls' school since 1905. According to the school website, "Restoring the original design and use of the Water Tower will give students hands on access to study the 19th-century design and engineering required for a properly-functioning irrigation system. It will also allow students to study the effects of water conservation and its impact on our environment... Third, the functioning Water Tower will allow Lauralton to reduce its carbon footprint by conserving water..." For more, visit <http://webelieve.lauraltonhall.org/news/>.

G. Farmer



Norwich. ▲

In early October, the City Council approved up to \$8 million to demolish the Reid and Hughes building (1869, 1898; NR). Located in the center of Downtown Norwich, the former department store has been vacant for decades; several renovation attempts have failed since the City acquired the property in 1993. The vote came as the Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development, a Hartford-based nonprofit with a track record in renovating old buildings, was proposing to renovate the building for retail plus affordable housing. The group asked the city to spend an estimated \$300,000 to stabilize the building. City officials, who calculated that they already have put \$195,000 into the building, feared the cost could be much higher. They were not inclined to invest any more in the structure. However, local preservationists observed that after spending even more the only result will be a vacant lot in what up to now has been an intact historic streetscape. Preservationists opposed to the demolition are seeking assistance from the State Historic Preservation Office.

Wallingford.

Five years after a Connecticut Superior Court blocked demolition of the Roger Austin house (c.1890; NR), Rich and Erin Benham have rehabbed and moved into the Main Street house. In 1994 the Town of Wallingford bought the house, long occupied by the American Legion, with the idea of tearing it down for additional town parking. However, a lawsuit filed by the State under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) stopped that. CEPA allows any citizen to sue to prevent the unreasonable destruction of natural or historic resources. After the ruling, the Benhams bought the house from the Town in 2013. They have restored the exterior and created two dwelling units inside, incorporating historic fireplaces, floors, and stained-glass windows.

New Britain, cont'd from page 9

streetscape projects also continue; this summer the city completed a redesign of Central Park at the intersection of Main and West Main streets, in front of City Hall. A focus of the city since the early 19th century, the park functions as New Britain's town green.

A number of factors have contributed to the increase in preservation activity in New Britain. The biggest factor, according to Steven Schiller, has been preservationists' greater ability to articulate the benefits of historic preservation.

"In the 1970s," Mr. Schiller says, "downtown merchants thought [preservation] was all about what they couldn't do. This time, we had a good steering committee, with people who understood the value of preservation. That it wasn't an obstacle but could help. That it was about making a more attractive ambience in the city."

Mr. Schiller also points to partnerships that have helped. Students from Central Connecticut State University's public history program, working under the guidance of Associate Professor Leah S. Glaser, prepared the National Register nomination for downtown. And, he says, the Connecticut Trust's grants really got the process going.

Another factor has been the construction of CTfastrak, the bus lanes operating between the city and Hartford. Since it opened in 2015, CTfastrak has brought increased traffic to New Britain. Among other things, this is encouraging the redevelopment of historic buildings near



Upper floors of the Raphael Building, at 99 West Main Street, are being converted from offices to apartments to meet new demand for downtown living.

the bus line to residences for commuters. The reuse of the Herald building has been credited to its proximity to the CTfastrak, as has the increased demand for downtown residential development behind 99 West Main.

Perhaps the most important factor has been leadership—by elected officials, city employees, and concerned citizens. Their commitment to building a better New Britain fueled the applications for grants and accounted for hours of effort to conceive and pass the preservation

ordinance and organize the Preservation Commission.

Much remains to be done. Potential areas of action include moving preservation into the city's neighborhoods and addressing vacant or underused industrial sites, including Stanley Works. In the meantime, New Britain remains a distressed city. Wide gaps between renovation costs and low property values pose significant obstacles to revitalization. But the city has laid a solid foundation of real achievements. ❁



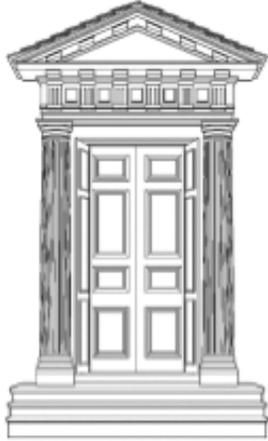
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CONNECTICUT PRESERVATION AWARDS ■ 2017

The Connecticut Trust's Preservation Awards recognize outstanding achievements in protecting and nourishing Connecticut's significant buildings, landscapes and communities. The 2017 Awards will be presented in early April.

Connecticut Preservation Awards honor exemplary efforts in the preservation and enhancement of historic places throughout Connecticut, including:

- restoration, maintenance, preservation or adaptive use of historic buildings, structures, complexes, neighborhoods, cultural landscapes or landscape features
- studies, documentation or plans for preservation, enhancement, or revitalization of historic places
- effective leadership in community, regional, or statewide preservation efforts

Any individual, organization, or project involved in historic preservation in Connecticut is eligible to receive a Connecticut Preservation Award. Nominated projects must have been completed since January 1, 2013. Nominations must be made by members of the Connecticut Trust. Trustees and staff of the Connecticut Trust are not eligible for awards during the period of their active service.

And introducing: The Mimi Findlay Award for Young Preservationists

Visit www.cttrust.org for information on this new award, which honors Mimi Findlay, of New Canaan, longtime preservationist and former Chairman of the Board of the Connecticut Trust.



NOMINATION PROCEDURE

For forms and further information, visit www.cttrust.org or call (203) 562-6312 or email cwigren@cttrust.org.

Nominations must be received by 4:00 p.m. Friday, February 17, 2017.

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THE 1772 FOUNDATION

Announcement

2017 Connecticut Historic Preservation Matching Grants for Private Non-Profit Organizations



in cooperation with the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

The 1772 Foundation has announced that funding in the form of 1:1 matching grants of up to \$15,000 will be made available for the following historic preservation projects: exterior painting, finishes and surface restoration, fire detection/lightning protection/security systems, repairs to/restoration of porches, roofs and windows, repairs to foundations and sills, and chimney and masonry repointing.

To demonstrate the sustainability of historic sites, applicants may be required to submit a cyclical maintenance plan, condition assessment, restoration plan or stewardship plan that has been prepared or updated within the last five years. If an appropriate plan does not exist, the Foundation will consider providing support for development of a plan on a case-by-case basis.

All organizations who wish to be considered should send a one-page letter of inquiry to: 1772@ctrust.org and use *1772 Foundation* in the subject line.

The letter should include: *the amount of your request, the purpose of the grant including the name and address of the historic resource for which project funding will be used, the matching funds you have or plan to have, the time frame for project completion and ownership status (own or lease) for the site. Also, please attach a current photo which best shows site condition, no more than 1.5MB, and provide web address for the site/organization.*

Letters of inquiry will be accepted until December 31, 2016.

Invited applications will be due March 1, 2017.

Not all letters of inquiry will result in invitations to submit full applications.

To be eligible to apply, organizations must have a 501c3 IRS designation.
Funding will not be provided for schools or churches.

The Foundation will consider the following:

- Matching grants for exterior painting, finishes and surface restoration
- Matching grants to install or upgrade fire detection, lightning protection and security systems
- Matching grants for repairs to/restoration of porches, roofs and windows
- Matching grants for structural foundation and sill repair/replacement
- Matching grants for chimney and masonry repointing

The Asahel Olcott House (1782)

1091 Main Street, South Windsor

The Asahel Olcott House, recently saved from demolition, is currently being restored and is available for purchase. Located in the Windsor Farms National Register Historic District, Old Main Street in South Windsor is a quiet but vibrant community along the Connecticut River. The house retains many original features including flooring, paneling, staircases, and a corner fireplace in its Beverly Jog. Currently asking \$250,000, but the price will adjust as restoration continues. Restoration work may be eligible to receive Connecticut Historic Homeowners Tax Credit.

Contact: Linda or Ed Sutherland, Sunderland Period Homes
info@sunderlandperiodhomes.com (860) 528-6608



The Comet Diner (1948)

267 Farmington Avenue, Hartford

Sheldon Good & Company are set to auction The Comet Diner, formerly known as The Oasis Diner, Aetna Diner and more, in November. With its sleek Art Deco streetcar design, the Oasis reflects an image of the "good ol' days." The restaurant and downstairs lounge/banquet area can seat approximately 230 patrons. The building is 5,366 SF evenly divided over two levels. The main dining area contains 24 booths and counter seating for 16, with ceramic tile flooring throughout and etched-glass windows. The diner is being offered with a suggested opening bid of \$100,000 for all the improvements on the ground which include the stainless-steel diner structure. The buyer may then elect to either execute a ground lease with the seller for a 30-year term and keep the diner in place or may dismantle and move the building to a new location.

Contact: Wayne I. Benjamin, Principal, Georgetown Associates
wbenj.gta@gmail.com (860) 785-3236



photo credits: W. Benjamin



Zechariah Crouch House (c.1780)

151 Lambtown Road, Ledyard

This large, center-chimney antique house is sure to please! Located on a winding country road close to town, it will surely be worth the cost to rehab! Amenities include an open great room kitchen/living room/dining room with a huge fireplace, plus three bedrooms on the main floor with two more fireplaces and a full bath. Upstairs there's a full bath, two bedrooms, and a Master suite. Seeking a buyer to restore this gem. The property is well researched, but has no official historic designation. Property may be eligible for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places and qualify for historic tax credits.

Contact: Marsha Roberts Re/Max Realty Group 1641 Route 12, Gales Ferry, CT 06335. (860) 467-4891. View complete listing at <http://www.remax.com/realestatehomesforsale/151-lambtown-rd-ledyard-ct-06339-gid500014341084.html>.



Former M and T Sault Co. (brick blocks dated 1864 and c.1920)

419 Chapel Street, New Haven

M. Sault & Co. were making lathes on this site in the early 1850s. By the 1870s it was Yale Iron Works, makers of architectural iron castings. The building is being marketed now as an industrial warehouse/light manufacturing building containing a small office area, two lavatories, mezzanine, and overhead doors. The property is located at the corner of Chapel and Wallace Streets in busy commercial stretch, close to Interstates 91 and 95, Wooster Square, and the Downtown CBD. Rehabilitation may qualify for historic tax credits. Included in the Connecticut Trust's Making Places survey of historic industrial sites.

Contact: Mike Richetelli, Commercial and Residential Real Estate, Colonial Properties (203) 795-8060 ext.11. View full listing here: <http://www.loopnet.com/Listing/19842175/419-Chapel-Street-New-Haven-CT/>.



Deadline for the next issue is December 23, 2016.

Historic Properties Exchange is published to advertise endangered properties in Connecticut by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, a statewide nonprofit organization located at 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, Connecticut 06517. Real estate advertised in this publication is subject to the Federal Housing Act of 1968. Neither advertisers nor the Connecticut Trust are responsible or liable for any misinformation, misprints, or typographical errors contained in *Historic Properties Exchange*.

To list a property, learn about properties listed or to subscribe, contact Jane Montanaro, Director of Preservation Services, at jmontanaro@cttrust.org or call 203-562-6312.

for an inspection of the properties and preparation of a feasible alternative.

Update: On November 1, BLT withdrew all its demolition permit applications. Local preservationists will continue to explore preservation options for the buildings with the company. Without the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act they very likely never would have had the chance to do so. ❁

by the restoration architect's approach to concrete."

Another museum, the **Wadsworth Atheneum** in Hartford (1842-44 and later; NR), also received an award for its restoration by Smith Edwards McCoy Architects of Hartford. The citation notes, "This impressive restoration increased gallery space by moving the mechanical

systems, thereby adding a resilient component and completely solving a space planning puzzle. The reuse of space is commendable as so often is not done: there was no compunction to add a new order. The jury admired deftness and restraint in a restoration that enhances the entire building." ❁

For more information, visit <http://aiact.org>.

W. Haynes



126 Henry Street, Stamford: vinyl siding has been removed in preparation for demolition, now on hold.

Upcoming Meetings

Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

December 7, 2016, 9:30 a.m.

Conference call

To participate contact

Todd Levine

(860) 256-2759

Todd.Levine@ct.gov

Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

November 30, 2016, 9:30 a.m.

January 4, 2017, 9:30 a.m.

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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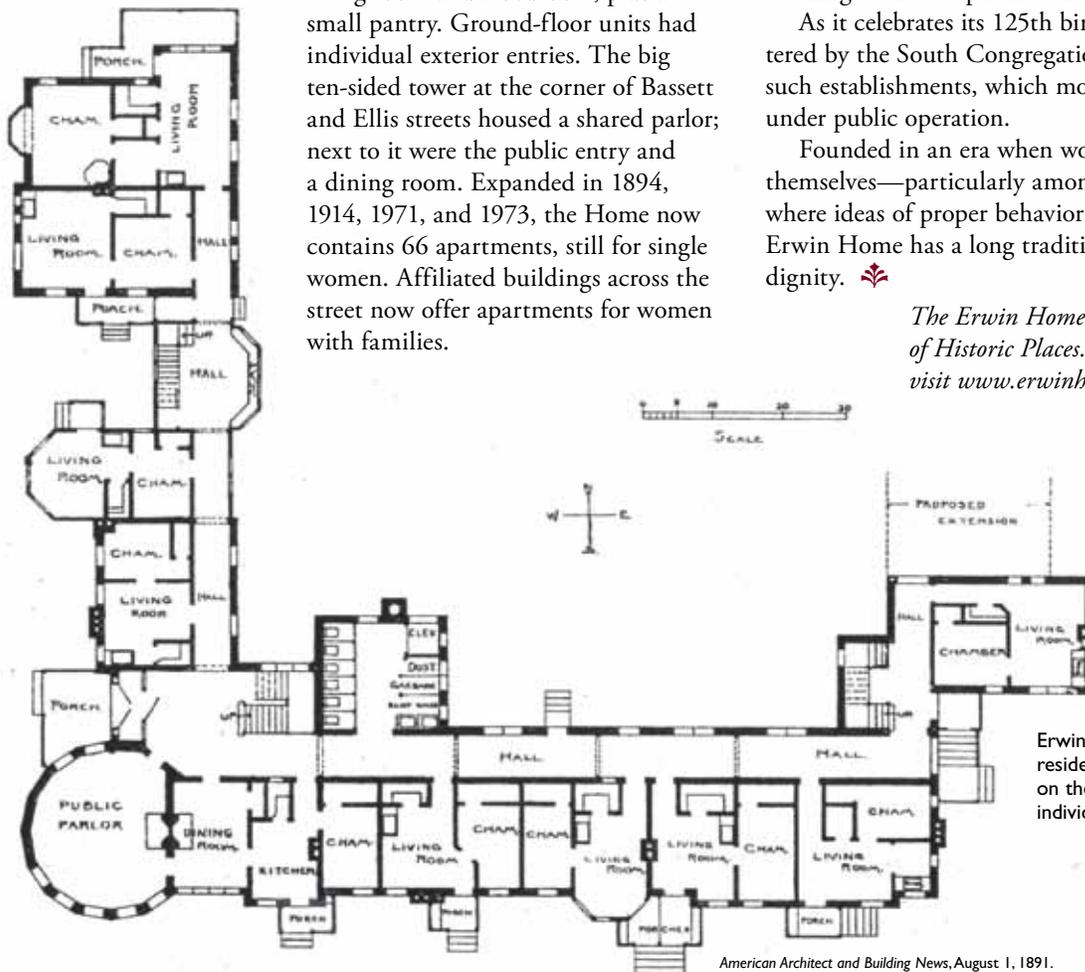
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Erwin Home, cont'd from page 20

Melvin H. Hapgood (1859-1899). Trained at the Massachusetts Normal Art School, in Lowell, Hapgood became a master of the artistic strain of Aesthetic/Queen Anne design. For the Erwin Home, he created a rambling, irregular design that avoids any institutional appearance, seeming rather to be a group of middle-class row houses, or perhaps a big resort hotel.

The plan gave each resident her own apartment with a

living room and a bedroom, plus a small pantry. Ground-floor units had individual exterior entries. The big ten-sided tower at the corner of Bassett and Ellis streets housed a shared parlor; next to it were the public entry and a dining room. Expanded in 1894, 1914, 1971, and 1973, the Home now contains 66 apartments, still for single women. Affiliated buildings across the street now offer apartments for women with families.



American Architect and Building News, August 1, 1891.

The original rent was \$2.00 per month. A report in 1900 noted, "A few residents of the home are able to support themselves in part by nursing. A few work in factories, and some obtain a small income from needlework or other manual labors." In addition, they did their own housekeeping and tended the Home as a whole. Today, rent is based on each resident's ability to pay. Residents must be able to care for themselves, and take turns working at the reception desk.

As it celebrates its 125th birthday, the Home is still administered by the South Congregational Church, a rare continuity for such establishments, which more often become independent or fall under public operation.

Founded in an era when women had fewer options to support themselves—particularly among the middle and upper classes where ideas of proper behavior and morality were limiting—the Erwin Home has a long tradition of offering independence with dignity. ❀

The Erwin Home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For more information, visit www.erwinhome.org.

Erwin Home, the original plan. Each resident has her own apartment; those on the ground floor originally had individual entries.

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CONNECTICUT
Close-ups 

Aid for Independent Living: Erwin Home, New Britain



The Erwin Home, New Britain

The businessmen who built Connecticut's 19th-century manufacturing power could be hard-nosed and even rapacious. But many of them also understood the importance of giving back to the community through private institutions for self-improvement or care for the destitute. One of these community-minded industrialists was Cornelius B. Erwin (1811-1885), founder and president of the Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Company, makers of locks and hardware. Erwin also was an incorporator and president of the New Britain National Bank and a director of other local companies. With his business partner, Henry Russell, he built the hotel, designed by McKim, Mead and White, that now is New Britain's City Hall.

At his death, Erwin left bequests to a number of New Britain institutions, including the state normal school, the New Britain Institute (now New Britain Public Library), and the South Congregational Church. The last included \$80,000 to build and operate a home, described in the moral terms typical of 19th-century philanthropy, for "worthy women of limited means" who have a connection to New Britain.

The U-shaped building takes up an entire block and was built in several stages, but the first section, completed in 1891, set the tone and is one of the most prominent surviving works of the talented designer

continued on page 19