

The Most Important Threatened Historic Places in Connecticut – 2004



This dam, which powered the American Thread Company mills in Willimantic, is one of many across the state that are threatened with demolition. Since this photo was taken in 1968, the brick mill has been demolished and the stone one renovated.

Using nominations submitted by members, leads from an informal poll of preservationists across the state, and the observations of our Connecticut Circuit Riders, the Connecticut Trust has compiled a list of the most important threatened historic places in the state. Our aim is to call attention to especially important historic sites that are under threat or to common dangers that imperil a number of historic places in Connecticut.

As we looked around the state this year, three recurring themes emerged. One is the need for sources of funding to close the “appraisal gap” — the difference between the cost of renovating a building and its expected value once renovation is complete. Even when there is recognition of significance, local support, and a willing developer, commercial lenders will not lend more than their appraisals indicate a property is worth. Convinced of the long-term viability of many preservation projects that cannot obtain short-term financing, the Trust is investigating ways of closing this gap.

A second theme is demolition by neglect. From inner cities to expensive neighborhoods, important historic buildings are allowed to deteriorate. “The building fell into disrepair,” owners say, as if their role in the process was entirely passive. “We have no choice but to take it down.” Sometimes the owner truly doesn’t have the resources to maintain the structure, but all too often neglect is a deliberate first step in demolition, intended to forestall preservationists’ opposition.

A third theme is the offer to let an historical society or someone else move a building to make room for new development. While moving is sometimes the only satisfactory solution, it is always difficult and expensive. The majority of buildings offered for moving end up being destroyed, and all that’s saved is the

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The Board of Trustees and staff were deeply saddened to learn that board member **Robert Harper, FAIA**, died suddenly on July 31 of a massive heart attack. He was 65 years old. A truly unpretentious person, Bob graduated from Amherst and received his Master of Architecture from Columbia University School of Architecture and Planning. He was a founder and partner of Moore Grover and Harper in 1975, which became Centerbrook Architects and Planners in 1984. In 1997 Bob founded Robert L. Harper, FAIA, Architect. Among his major buildings are the Amherst College Life Sciences Building; the Williams College Museum of Art; Williams Hall, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories, New York; the Sharon, Connecticut, Country Club; and more than 50 single-family



Robert Harper

houses, both new and renovated. One of Bob's great contributions to the Trust was his service on the Building, Grounds and Easements Committee where, in the words of that committee's chairman, David Barkin, he shared his incredible "wealth of knowledge as a practitioner," particularly in reviewing plans for alterations to buildings on which we hold easements.

One of Bob's special interests at the Trust was the **Eli Whitney Boarding-house**, the Trust's office. The building was restored in 1989 but continues to have restoration, maintenance and decorating needs. In July, board members Ted Ells, Stan Fullwood and Jeff Muthersbaugh joined Membership Manager Cathyann Plumer for an all-day scrape-and-paint party. The impetus to paint the conference room, front porch posts, cellar hatch and back door on a hot and humid summer day came from the offer of conference room furniture from Dow Chemical's Union Carbide Corporation in Danbury.

The new conference table, matching chairs and mahogany bookcases will be in place by September. We especially thank Leroy Diggs, Manager, Facilities and Site Services, Union Carbide Corporation, a subsidiary of The Dow Chemical Company.

We are pleased to announce that the Trust has received a \$5,000 grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council to perform a preliminary **study of historic barns** in the state. Architectural historian James Sexton will undertake the research. The project, jointly sponsored by the State Historic Preservation Office, is one of many initiatives associated with the Connecticut opening of the Smithsonian's traveling exhibit *Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon* in Spring 2005. For more information on activities

planned around the exhibit, visit the Connecticut Humanities Council's web site, www.ctheritage.org.

We would like once again to thank **Cesar Pelli & Associates Architects**, who for more than ten years have underwritten our much-referenced *Historic Properties Exchange*. The Exchange appears in every issue of *Connecticut Preservation News* and online at www.cttrust.org.

We are also pleased to announce that **Middlesex Mutual Assurance Company** will become a lead sponsor of our preservation portal, www.cttrust.org. The Trust has had a longstanding relationship with Middlesex, working with them as they produced and refined their special antique homeowners insurance program, The Restorationist. Middlesex generously underwrote the Trust's popular *Restoration Services Directory* in the late 1990s — now available online on the portal. The Trust and Middlesex will be partnering on several initiatives in the next year. 🌸

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 with statewide organizations, it encourages, advocates and facilitates historic preservation throughout Connecticut.

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Trust Adopts Strategic Plan

At its July meeting the Board of Trustees unanimously adopted a new strategic plan. Working with Laura Roberts of Roberts Consulting in Cambridge, Massachusetts, an ad hoc Board committee spent nine months clarifying goals and strategies that will guide the Trust for the next five years. The plan is organized around six goals:

Be the first and best source of expertise and information about historic preservation in Connecticut. Working together, the Circuit Rider program, which provides on-site, specific advice and support, and the Internet portal www.cttrust.org, which provides information that the general public can navigate and customize, have transformed the educational services of the Trust. These projects, which were launched with grant funds, are now part of core operations, significantly increasing the operating budget. Knitting the two together more closely, combined with *Connecticut Preservation News* and other public information and marketing efforts, will secure the Trust's place as a valued, reliable and responsive source of information.

Build the community of preservationists in Connecticut. The Trust's primary audience is a diverse group that has in common support of historic preservation, including public and private stewards of historic properties, public officials, and professionals in the field of preservation. Secondary audiences include people who find information on the portal, read the "Place" section in the *Hartford Courant*, or hear a presentation by Trust staff at a

public hearing. A small portion of this audience formalizes its relationship to the Trust by becoming members. The Trust needs to expand its audience, both by serving more people who are already committed to preservation and by bringing the persuasive argument for preservation to new audiences including a wider circle of public officials, residents of urban areas, and developers of commercial properties.

Be the voice for the place of historic preservation in public policy debates about the future of Connecticut's built environment. With the creation of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism (CCT), merging the Connecticut Historical Commission with other state agencies, the Trust's role as an advocate for preservation has become even more critical. The partnership between the Trust and the CCT is strong and can be strengthened even more, building on the shared goals of the two agencies.

Advocacy, however, extends to every level of government, as cities and towns deal with critical issues of managing their growth while preserving the important historic and natural resources that make the state distinctive and an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Demonstrate the economic value of historic preservation in Connecticut. Critical to the success of historic preservation is the understanding that preservation is not incompatible with development, but that it in fact makes economic sense. As the state recovers from the recent recession and continues to work to turn around its urban neighborhoods, we need to make

the case for preserving and adapting older buildings for new uses. We can do this by working more closely with those who are grappling with these challenges, by sharing models and data from across the country, and by creating new investment mechanisms.

Increase the capacity of the Trust to accomplish its work. While this plan does not envision dramatic growth of the Trust, absorbing into the operating budget the cost of programs that were begun with grant funding will require new sources of revenue. Recognizing that the most significant source of funds for nonprofit organizations remains private philanthropy, we need to build our development capacity. We believe that this plan is the foundation of a strong case for private, corporate and public support; we need to make that case more professionally and persuasively.

Attend to critical infrastructure needs. The Trust is, itself, the steward of an historic building. The Eli Whitney Boardinghouse, built in 1827 and on the National Register of Historic Places, has served as the Trust's headquarters since 1989. There are, as expected, continuing maintenance and capital needs. In addition, the financing must be renegotiated, given the changing real estate and financial markets. And while the Boardinghouse meets most of the Trust's office needs well, increased activity in the state's capital would be easier with a small workspace for staff while they are in Hartford.

As with any small nonprofit organization, when faced with the choice of delivering services and taking care of itself, the mission of the organization usually wins. There are a handful of management issues that need attention in the next two years. 🌻

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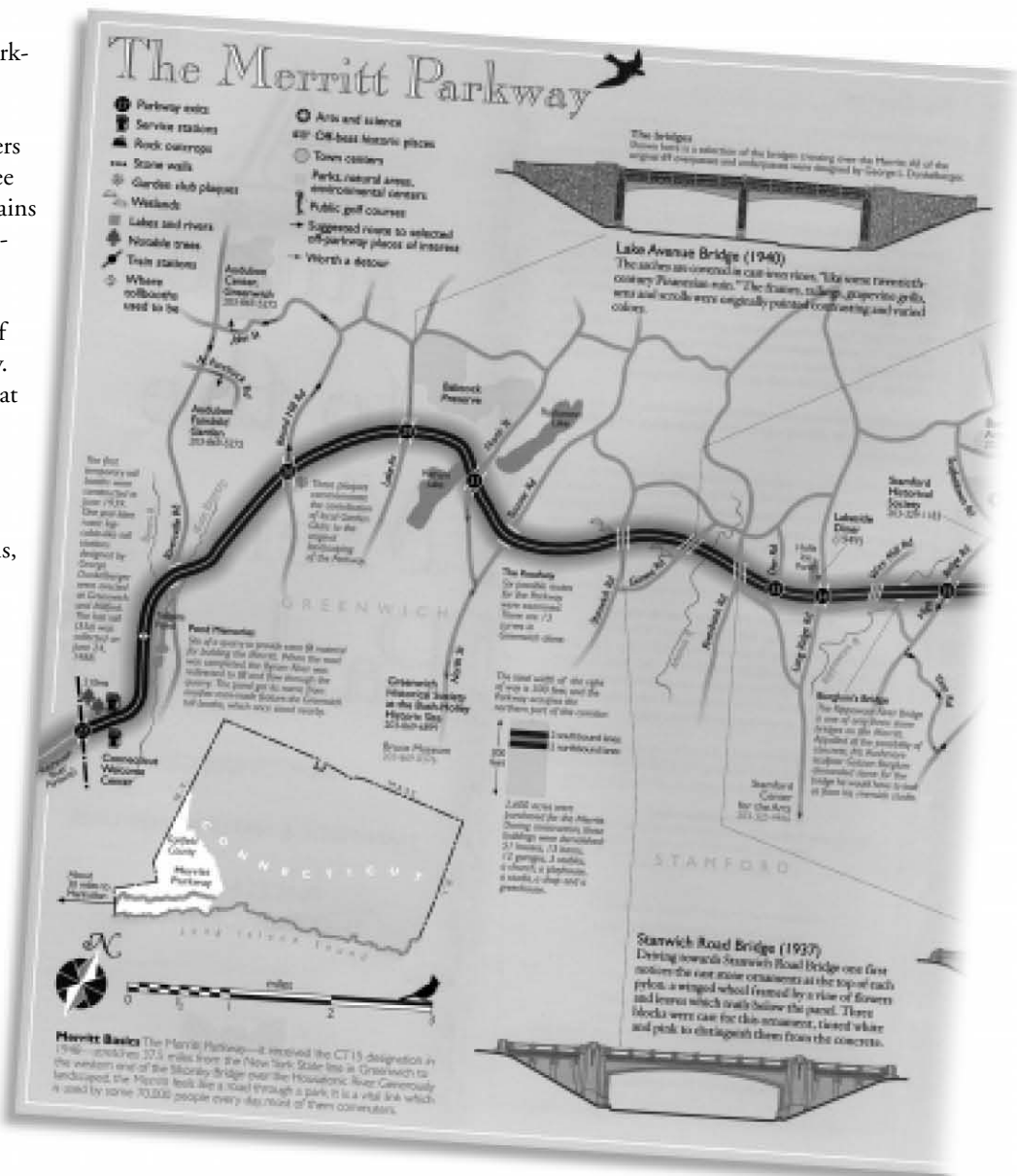
FAIRFIELD COUNTY. The Merritt Parkway Conservancy has published a new guide to the parkway, a brochure that proclaims itself “the first map for drivers of the Merritt Parkway in 50 years” (see sample panels at right). One side contains a brief history of the parkway, a discussion of its design — including its Art Deco bridges and its naturalistic landscape — and thumbnail biographies of the major figures who made it a reality.

The other side is a detailed map that shows exits, rest areas and bridges, as well as notable landscape features, fleshed out with snippets of parkway lore. In addition to the parkway itself, the map shows other nearby attractions, including golf courses, parks, arts and science centers and what the brochure calls “off-beat historic places.”

Copies of the guide are available at Parkway service areas, thanks to a grant from Mobil Oil, which runs the service stations.

The Conservancy was founded in 2001 under the sponsorship of the Connecticut Trust. Its mission is to “revitalize and celebrate” the Parkway. The Trust also funded part of the development of the brochure with an Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant in 2003.

For more information, call the Merritt Parkway Conservancy at (203) 661-3255 or visit them online at www.merrittparkway.org.



BERLIN. A group of residents has petitioned for a referendum on whether to abolish or continue the Worthington Ridge local historic district. According to the *Hartford Courant*, more than 70 percent of the district’s homeowners have signed the petition. They complain that the historic district commission’s rulings have been arbitrary, overly restrictive and even historically inaccurate.

Abolishing the district involves more than a petition, however. Since the district is written into the town’s charter, repealing it would require amending the charter, something that town officials are reluctant to do.

Members of the historic district commission say that the petitioners are overreacting. They are willing to discuss specific complaints, but argue that abolishing

the district would harm the neighborhood. Worthington Ridge is the oldest settled section of Berlin, a long string of historic

buildings that has been a local historic district for 30 years. The area is also listed on the National Register. 🌻

Historic Restoration Grants Available

The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is offering grants for the restoration of historic buildings owned by municipalities or nonprofit organizations. These grants are the only source in Connecticut of funding for bricks-and-mortar restoration. In its 2004 session the General Assembly authorized \$600,000 for grants in fiscal year 2005. Although there is no set limit for grant awards, it is expected that most will not be higher than \$60,000. There is a \$60,000 first-preference set-aside for archaeological investigations or projects that includes substantial archaeological work.

Phase I applications are due December 10. The due date for Phase II has not yet been set, but it will probably be in early May, 2005. General information on application requirements and guidelines can be found on the SHPO’s website at www.chc.state.ct.us or can be obtained by calling (860) 566-3005.

New Ordinances for Preservation in New Canaan

In order to protect its historic resources, the Town of New Canaan has passed one new ordinance and is considering two others. The first is an amendment to the zoning regulations adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission on June 29 and effective July 9. The new amendment allows the Commission to grant special permits that “modify the maximum allowable lot coverage and/or any other dimensional standard...in order to allow for the preservation of historic structures that are found to enhance community character.” The amendment applies to structures that are at least 75 years old. When a permit is granted, any modifications to the structures must be approved, and the structures must be properly maintained. If these conditions are not met, the town may withdraw the special permit.

The amendment was passed as a result of efforts to save two barns on a property that had been subdivided, making the barns exceed the allowable lot coverage (see *CPN*, May/June 2004). The property owners submitted suggested language, which the town modified and approved.

The second provision, currently under consideration, is a delay of demolition ordinance. As proposed, the ordinance applies to any to any building 50 years old or older. Applicants who wish to demolish a building must publish a public notice. If anyone files a written objection within 21 days, demolition is delayed for 90 days from the initial application. This means that preservationists will have to follow demolition applications and be prepared to move quickly when necessary to seek alternatives.

The third proposal relates to New Canaan’s crop of historic Modern Movement houses, included in the Trust’s 1999 edition of *The Most Important Threatened Historic Places*. Part of an overall revision of the town’s zoning regulations recommended by the planning firm Planimetrics, this provision would add a new section encouraging preservation of the modern houses. Very similar in wording to the historic building amendment,

the proposed ordinance gives the Planning and Zoning Commission a great deal of discretion to encourage preservation of modern houses (see sidebar). Lazlo Papp,

chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission, expects public hearing on the preservation ordinance in September with adoption to follow in October. 🌿

Draft Ordinance for Preserving Important Modern Houses in New Canaan

Preservation of “Modern Houses”

1. In order to encourage the preservation and architectural integrity of “modern houses,” the Commission may, by Special Permit, modify the lot coverage regulation and any other dimensional standard of these Regulations provided that:
 - a. the New Canaan Historical Society or other source acceptable to the Commission shall have recognized the principal structure on the property as a “modern house” worthy of continued preservation,
 - b. the “modern house” shall be preserved,
 - c. the New Canaan Historical Society or other source acceptable to the Commission shall have determined that any proposed improvement shall retain the architectural integrity of the “modern house,”
 - d. the regulatory modifications shall be clearly identified on the application presented to the Commission, and
 - e. any regulatory modification approved by the Commission shall only be the minimum amount and geographical extent required to authorize the improvements approved by the Commission.
2. Any regulatory modification granted by the Commission shall only remain effective so long as the “modern house” is preserved and maintained as the principal use of the property.

(Draft, June 1, 2004)

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The RWA Houses: An Update

Two months after the deadline for proposals for moving houses, the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority is still in negotiations with potential takers for only a handful of the sixteen historic buildings that the authority wants removed from its lands. Most of the buildings are still in danger of needless demolition (see *CPN*, May/June 2004).

Speaking to Woodbridge's Board of Selectmen in August, CEO David Silverstone stressed RWA's determination never to sell watershed land under any circumstances and noted that language in the authority's land use plan calling for preservation of historic resources was conditional, using qualifiers like "wherever possible." Silverstone reported that the authority is pursuing approvals needed to raze the buildings, but he does not expect any demolition to begin before March, 2005. In the meantime, RWA is still willing to consider any reasonable proposal, including proposals to keep the buildings on their original sites for non-residential use, if local zoning permits.

The listing below includes ratings ("most important," etc.) that were part of an architectural and historical evaluation of the buildings that the Connecticut Trust did for RWA. The Trust considers those rated "most important" and "highly important" to be among the most important threatened historic places in Connecticut this year (see page 8).

APPARENTLY SAFE

Elam Ives house, Hamden: RWA is nearing an agreement with the town of Hamden and the Hamden Historical Society to allow the house to remain on its site for non-residential use. *Most important.*

Nancy Polk



The New Haven Water Company built this bungalow in Woodbridge in the early 20th century. It now faces demolition by the Regional Water Authority.

POSSIBLY SAFE

John Norton house, Guilford: The Guilford Preservation Alliance has been looking for a way to move it, but as of press time the high cost of land and RWA's demanding requirements are complicating plans. *Most important.*
House, 501 Derby Avenue, Orange: RWA is looking into moving the house to nearby non-watershed land. *Most important.*
House, 1029 Johnson Road, Woodbridge: Negotiations are underway with a po-

tential taker who wants to move the house out of state. *Important.*
House, 115 Sperry Road, Woodbridge: Negotiations are underway with a potential taker who wants to move the house out of state. *Important.*

SAFE FOR THE MOMENT

Barn, Amity Rd., Bethany: The current

tenant will be allowed to stay for the time being. RWA is expected to resume the effort to have the barn moved or demolished when he leaves. *Moderately important.*

FACING DEMOLITION

Isaac Doolittle house, Bethany: A proposal to move it to has fallen through. *Highly important.*
House, 233 Skiff Street, Hamden: No proposals for moving. *Moderately important.*
House, 752 Summer Hill Road, Madison: No proposals for moving. *Important.*
Angelo Forte house and gas station, North Branford: A proposal from the Totoket Historical Society to move the gas station has fallen through. No proposals for moving. *Most important.*
DiSanti house, North Branford: No proposals for moving. *Moderately important.*
Hanan Palmer house, North Branford: No proposals for moving. *Highly important.*
Henry Reed house, North Branford: No proposals for moving. *Important.*
Fred Harrison house, North Branford: No proposals for moving. *Most important.*
New Haven Water Company house, Woodbridge: No proposals for moving. *Highly important.*
Willis Doolittle house, Woodbridge: No accepted proposal, but the Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society and the Town of Woodbridge are considering the possibility of moving the house to nearby town-owned land. *Highly important.* 🌸



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Most Important, cont'd

developer's conscience. On the other hand, recent experience in East Haven confirms that with imagination historic buildings can often be fitted into new plans.

New listings begin below, and on page 14 is a summary of sites listed in previous years.

Historic Dams, Statewide

Significance: Connecticut residents have been building dams since the earliest days of European settlement, first to operate grist- or sawmills, later for the state's burgeoning factories. Located in cities, small towns and the countryside, these dams and their associated waterways help us understand industrial processes and the never-ending search for reliable and inexpensive power. The ponds formed by the dams have become distinctive features of the landscape, characterized by their own flora and fauna.

Threat: There is a growing environmentalist movement to remove dams in order to restore streams' natural flow, control flooding, provide for recreation, or reduce

maintenance costs. Several historic dams in Connecticut currently face threats. The Nature Conservancy wants to breach the 140-year-old dam that forms Parke Pond in **North Stonington** after an earlier proposal for installing a fish ladder was rejected in light of needed repairs. In **Stamford**, the Army Corps of Engineers has recommended removing a dam from the Mill River to reduce flooding and clean up an unsightly area. The first dam on the site was built for a gristmill in 1642; the current structure dates from 1922. In **Willimantic**, a nonprofit group of kayakers and canoers wants to remove four 19th-century dams built for the city's massive textile mills in order to create a whitewater park. The group suggests saving half of one dam as a nod to history.

What's needed: First, determine which dams are historically important and assess their condition. Then, get environmentalists and preservationists together to determine the best treatment for each one: preservation, breaching, or removal. For dams that are to be preserved, there should

be a program to help with maintenance and restoration, perhaps through an expansion of the State Historic Preservation Office's Historic Restoration Fund. Dams to be breached or removed should be documented and, where possible, interpreted on site.

Uriah Hosmer still house, Norwich

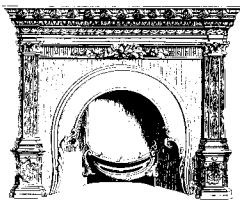
Significance: Built about 1741 as a brewery and distillery, this is a very rare surviving 18th-century building in a downtown location. It is a contributing resource in the Downtown Norwich National Register district.

Threat: The still house, long home to the Chelsea Landing Pub, was condemned in April because of structural problems. Repairs will probably exceed the building's value. The City is looking into foreclosing on a public utilities lien to take control.

What's needed: A new owner. Gap funding will probably be needed for repairs.

continued page 8

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Upcoming Meetings of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

October 6, 2004, at 9:30 a.m.
November 3, 2004, at 9:30 a.m.

◆
State Historic Preservation Board

October 14, 2004, at 9:30 a.m.

◆
All meetings take place at the
South Congregational Church
277 Main Street, Hartford

For more information: (860) 566-3005.

Help us hit the side of a Barn!

The Connecticut Trust is preparing to conduct an important survey of barns across Connecticut. Let us know what the significant barns are in your town (definition: big enough to shelter crops and/or animals).

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Fax: (203) 773-0107

Located high on a hill in Middlebury, CT this beautiful circa 1742 salt box colonial proudly stands on one acre of land. The living room features the main center chimney fireplace and hearth, wide floor boards and some barnboard wainscotting. A second fireplace is located on a rear addition with stone foundation which requires finish work. There are several out-buildings located on the property including one crafted from the field stones.

Price: Under \$300,000



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Most Important, cont'd

Three houses, Yale University, New Haven

Significance: Yale owns a number of buildings constructed for other uses and subsequently acquired either for academics or as income property. Among them are three significant houses: **88 Prospect Street** is a Greek Revival residence probably built about 1830 next to the Farmington Canal. Nearby is the **Daniel Cady Eaton house**, a handsome Victorian Gothic dwelling built about 1865 for a Yale professor and pioneering botanist. In downtown New Haven is the home of Yale president **Theodore Dwight Woolsey**, built about 1840. The house has a distinguished Colonial Revival façade, added around 1906 by Woolsey's son, another prominent Yale professor.

Threat: All three seem to be undergoing demolition by neglect. While not the only property owner to do so, Yale has frequently sought to justify demolishing historic buildings by first letting them fall into disrepair and then claiming that repairs were too expensive. After Yale bought 88 Prospect Street in 1999, tenants were

immediately kicked out. Officials now say rehabbing the house would be uneconomical. The Eaton house, owned by the University since 1971, contained faculty offices until recently, but maintenance has been minimal for years. Long-term plans reportedly call for new academic buildings on both sites. The Woolsey house, which Yale acquired in 1936, had shops in its ground floor until last summer, when their leases were not renewed. Offices continue to occupy the upper levels, but university officials are talking about enlarging the small parking lot behind the house.

What's needed: Yale's wealth and influence insulate it from much preservation pressure, but the university sometimes responds to intense publicity.

RWA houses, New Haven County

Significance: The South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA) owns a number of buildings that the authority rented out for decades. Dating from the 18th to the early 20th centuries, these buildings contribute to the history of

their communities (see *CPN*, November/December 2003).

Threat: Despite a special act allowing it to sell the houses with restrictions to protect the water supply, RWA decided last year that they must be moved or demolished. After months of marketing, only a fraction of the buildings have potential takers (see page 6). The rest continue to face demolition. The Connecticut Trust considers the following to be of highest priority:

- **Isaac Doolittle house, Bethany**
- **Angelo Forte house and gas station, North Branford**
- **Hanan Palmer house, North Branford**
- **Fred Harrison house, North Branford**
- **New Haven Water Company house, Woodbridge**
- **Willis Doolittle house, Woodbridge**
(*Note:* The Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society and the Town of Woodbridge are considering the feasibility of moving this house to nearby property.)

What's needed: As a regulated utility, RWA is largely immune to public pressure, but perhaps state legislators could convince

C. Wigren



James Sexton

HSTG



Nina E. Harkrader

Clockwise from above:

Daniel Cady Eaton house, New Haven.

Thomas Lyon house, Greenwich.

Saint John's Rectory, Bridgeport.

77 Sherwood Place, Greenwich (center).

the authority to focus on properties that have a significant effect on the water supply, rather than relying on a blanket policy never to sell any watershed land. There also remains the possibility of allowing some of the houses to remain on their original sites for non-residential use.

77, 81 and 85 Sherwood Place, Greenwich

Significance: These vernacular houses, built around 1900, are contributing resources in the Fourth Ward National Register district. The neighborhood was one of the earliest modest subdivisions in Greenwich and the center of the town's Irish and African American populations, a segment of the town's population that is often overlooked.

Threat: Developers want to replace the three with new two-family dwellings. They point to the houses' loss of original detail and the neotraditional design of the proposed replacements as justification.

Broader issues: Greenwich preservationists say these are only the latest in a rash of teardowns driven by astronomical real estate prices; two buildings in the Greenwich Avenue National Register district are also threatened. Another issue is the gradual erosion of historic districts represented by projects like this. Greenwich historian Nils Kerschus said, "Not every house in a historic district has to be first rate as far as architecture or integrity... In other words, the district is greater than the sum of its parts. Once you start tearing down two here, three here, pretty soon, you'll have no neighborhood."

What's needed: Greenwich's Historic District Commission has urged the developers to apply for historic overlay zoning, which would provide an economic incentive by allowing greater density in exchange for keeping the houses.

Thomas Lyon house, Greenwich

Significance: Erected around 1690, the Thomas Lyon House is representative of the dwellings built by the region's earliest settlers. In 1926 the Lions and Rotary clubs moved the house to a nearby park to save it from demolition and rented it to community groups. The house is individually listed on the National Register.

Threat: The Lions Club (the Rotarians



Wheeler Memorial Fountain, Bridgeport, in 1983.

backed out some time ago) and the town are no longer interested in maintaining the house, which is vacant and in poor condition. If a new use is not found, it will likely face demolition again.

What's needed: A viable new use. With a grant from the Connecticut Trust (see page 12), as well as other private resources, the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich is studying possible reuse of the house as housing. If the Town approves the results of the study, it will then be necessary to raise the funds needed.

Sanford House (Saint John's rectory), Bridgeport

Significance: Completed in 1903 as the rectory for Saint John's Episcopal Church, this stone building echoes the church's Gothic Revival style and is one of dwindling number of original structures on a once-elegant stretch of Park Avenue. The rectory is listed on the National Register along with the church.

Threat: The house has suffered water damage and needs code updates, which the church estimates would cost \$1.5 million. Efforts to find another party to lease and repair the rectory have been unsuccessful so far. If no one can be found, the church plans to level the house. The Tudor Revival parish house was torn down for parking in the 1990s.

What's needed: A tenant or buyer with a new use and money for repairs. A for-profit owner could qualify for federal rehabilitation tax credits.

Wheeler Memorial Fountain, Bridgeport

Significance: Built in memory of Nathaniel Wheeler, a leading 19th-century inventor and industrialist, this fountain is the work of Gutzon Borglum. Unlike his better-known monumental figures, this is expressionistic, even playful, with mermaids, seahorses, and leaping fish that provide a spot of delight in the middle of a busy intersection. The fountain is individually listed on the National Register.

Threat: Restored about 20 years ago, the fountain is once again neglected and no longer operating. Its basins have been filled with soil, and the bollards that once protected it from traffic have disappeared.

What's needed: Maintenance and unobtrusive protection from vehicles. The City of Bridgeport is apparently responsible for the fountain, but perhaps a nonprofit or "friends of" group could help.

9-11, 13-17, 25 and 33 Colony Street, Meriden

Significance: These four buildings, contributing resources to the Colony Street-West Main Street National Register district, are significant examples of late-19th-century commercial architecture and integral parts of a larger downtown streetscape.

Threat: All four are vacant and need repairs. After unsuccessfully marketing the buildings for rehabilitation, the City has proposed demolishing them. The city claims that the cost of rehabbing the

continued page 10



C. Wigren

William H. Mason house, Thompson.



R. Podolsky

George Seyms house, Hartford.

George Seyms house, Hartford

Significance: Built in 1880 and probably designed by Hartford architect George Keller, the Seyms house is, according to Hartford preservationists David Ransom and Gregory Andrews, “a High Victorian confection...with brick walls, terra-cotta embellishments, and fish-scale shingles.” It is a contributing resource in the Asylum Hill National Register district.

Threat: Damaged by fire in December 2002, the house is now vacant and only partially boarded up, leaving it vulnerable to vandalism and decay.

What’s needed: More secure mothballing, then a renovation plan. Gap financing may also be needed.

Josiah Twitchell house, Oxford

Significance: Built around 1755, this Colonial farmhouse was associated with Oxford’s agricultural history for more than two centuries and still boasts fine original woodwork. A State Register nomination is in process.

Threat: A developer plans to demolish the house for construction of a gated adult

continued page 13

Most Important, cont’d

buildings, \$2.1 million, exceeds their likely value after renovation, only \$1.2 million. The Connecticut Historic Preservation Council voted on July 7 to request the assistance of the Attorney General in blocking demolition under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act, but it is not certain that the AG’s office will agree to take action.

Broader issues: In deteriorated neighborhoods, the cost of rehabilitation often exceeds the expected value of the completed building, a situation known as an “appraisal gap.” Once other buildings are rehabbed and the area begins to have a better reputation, this gap can disappear, but that takes time and a broader approach than just fixing up one building.

What’s needed: Financing to close the appraisal gap and a plan, with funding, to revitalize the entire street.

William H. Mason house, Thompson

Significance: William H. Mason, a partner in the textile mills of Masonville (now North Grosvenordale), built this Gothic Revival house facing the common in Thompson Hill in about 1845, using a design published in Andrew Jackson Downing’s *Cottage Residences* (1842). The house and its matching outbuildings are part of the Thompson Hill National Register district and a local preservation zone.

Threat: Mario Buatta, a prominent interior designer from New York bought the house several years ago and began extensive renovations but then stopped work abruptly. The house is vacant and overgrown. The heat has apparently been off for years, and there are reports of water damage from broken pipes.

What’s needed: The owner should take care of the house or sell it to someone who will.



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Trust Awards Grants for Historic Preservation

Between July of 2003 and June of 2004 the Connecticut Trust awarded \$55,040 in Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants (HPTAG). The grants, made in collaboration with the Connecticut Humanities Council, support preservation initiatives that help communities plan for the preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings and neighborhoods. The 16 grants leveraged an additional \$320,660 in preservation funding.

BRISTOL: \$2,500: The City of Bristol served as a sponsoring organization for four local community groups, the Bristol Historical Society, the Greater Bristol Chamber of Commerce, the Bristol Federal Hill Association and the American Clock and Watch Museum. The grant will pay for a consultant to update and make digital Bristol's historic resource inventory, a key tool for municipal planning.

CLINTON: \$850: For a number of years, the Clinton Historical Society has wanted to be more active in the community and use its expertise to bring awareness of the heritage of Clinton to residents and visitors alike. Urged on by the Chamber of Commerce, the Society used HPTAG funds to produce a walking tour brochure of downtown Clinton.

EAST HAVEN: \$300: The East Haven Land Trust acted as the sponsoring agency for the newly formed East Haven Preservation Trust in requesting a mini-grant to help create architectural drawings that would demonstrate the adaptive reuse potential of two houses in the East Haven Green National Register district that were threatened by new development (see *CPN*, July/August 2004). Thanks to the drawings and the East Haven Trust, one house will remain and be included in the development.

COVENTRY: \$7,500: The Antiquarian and Landmarks Society received funds for an Historic Structure Report on the Hale Homestead in Coventry. This is part of a multi-year, multi-million dollar restoration and reinterpretation project to enhance the property as a tourist destination.

ENFIELD: \$3,500: The town of Enfield, acting in consort with the Enfield Local Historic District Commission, the Enfield

Historical Society, the Martha Parsons Trust and House Museum, and the Hazardville Institute Conservancy, received funds to hire a consultant to expand the boundaries of the existing Bigelow-Hartford Carpet Mills National Register district. The overall goal is to stabilize Thompsonville through preservation and restoration.

GLASTONBURY: \$4,400: The Historical Society of Glastonbury has expanded its mission to be more active in preservation issues in the town. With the support of the Rocky Hill Historical Society, the Connecticut River Ferry Preservation Association, the River Front Preservation Society of Rocky Hill and local residents, the society will hire a consultant to prepare a National Register nomination for the area around the Glastonbury-Rocky Hill Ferry, the state's oldest continuously operating ferry.

GREENWICH: \$5,000: The Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich, which in 2003 received a HPTAG to incorporate historic preservation into its strategic plan, received funding for two consultants to study the feasibility of re-using the Thomas Lyon house (c.1690). Working with the town of Greenwich, especially its Housing Authority, the Society hopes the study will leverage federal funds to renovate the house as a single- or two-family dwelling. *See also page 9.*

continued page 12



NINA



Buildings of Connecticut



Antiquarian & Landmarks Society

Top: 47 Sigourney Street, Hartford, en route to its new location. **Above:** The Hale Homestead in Coventry will be the subject of an Historic Structure Report **Left:** Workers' housing in Thompsonville will be included in an expansion of a National Register district.



Left: A new town survey in Madison includes this house on Middle Beach Road. **Right:** Manchester's Cheney Homestead will receive a new climate control system.

Trust Awards Grants, cont'd

HARTFORD: \$5,000: The newly formed Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (NINA), a nonprofit corporation organized to further revitalization of Hartford's Asylum Hill neighborhood, received funds to plan for moving a brick house, listed on the National Register of Historic Places and in danger of demolition at its original location. Though small in light of the total cost of the move, the HPTAG grant represented the first funds committed to this project. In July, NINA successfully moved the house several blocks to a site where it will be renovated as part of a larger redevelopment plan.

FAIRFIELD COUNTY: \$1,500 AND \$5,000: Formed in 2003, the Fairfield County Preservation Trust (FCPT) counts among its supporters preservation and history groups from 23 towns. The FCPT received a grant to hire a consultant to lead a one-day retreat to identify common concerns and develop a mission and overall strategy for development. Building on the retreat, the FCPT received additional funds to develop a strategic plan for building its capacity to serve as an advocate and resource for the preservation of historic structures and landscapes in Fairfield County.

MADISON: \$5,000: The Madison Historical Society received a grant to hire a consultant to update the town's historic resources inventory, originally completed in 1980. Considerable support for the initiative comes from other heritage groups in town. The updated survey will pave the way for further protection of Madison's historic assets, especially the development of a proposed local historic district.

MANCHESTER: \$3,500: The Manchester Historic Society owns four buildings, including the Cheney Homestead, a contributing structure to the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District. The Society will use HPTAG grant funds to hire a professional preservation architect to develop specifications and plans for a climate control system designed to protect the building and its contents, as recommended by an Historic Structures Report for the house.

NORTH BRANFORD: \$390: The Totoket Historical Society received funds to document three houses listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The houses will be demolished as a part of a Department of Transportation road reconstruction project.

NORWICH: \$4,600: The Greenville Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) group, established by the City of Norwich in 2001, asked the City to apply for funds to prepare a National Register nomination for their neighborhood. The NRZ considers the preservation of the neighborhood's historic and cultural assets a high priority. National Register listing will also assist the city in executing its overall historic preservation goals and allow homeowners to qualify for Connecticut's Historic Homeowners' Tax Credit.

SUFFIELD: \$5,000: The Friends of the Farm at Hilltop received funds to hire a consultant to prepare a nomination of the massive barn at Hilltop Farm to the National Register (see *CPN*, November/December 2003). The Friends hold a 99-year lease on the structure, where they will ultimately offer community programs. This was the first grant received by the

group, who worked for two years to save the barn.

WETHERSFIELD: \$1,000: Wethersfield's Historic District Commission received HPTAG funds in 2003 to transfer material generated by a survey of 1,100 historic buildings into a web-based data system. This year's grant supplemented the first to allow for completion of the project.

To apply for Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants, call (203) 562-6312 or visit www.cttrust.org. 🌻

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Most Important, cont'd

community. He has offered the house to the Oxford Historical Society if they will move it. The small society is trying to find a nearby site and money for the move, but it's uncertain that they will succeed.

What's needed: With a bit of creativity, the house might be incorporated into the developer's project as residential units, offices or a community center.

AND ONE TO WATCH...

Elisabeth M. Bennet Middle School, Manchester

Significance: The school comprises three buildings by the New York firm of Carrère & Hastings erected in 1914, plus the Cheney Building, constructed about 1925 as a trade school to train students for the textile industry. All four are contributing resources in the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark district.

Threat: The school is not threatened at present; in fact, there is widespread consensus in Manchester that the buildings are worth preserving, but a strong contingent in town wants to build a new middle school, in which case a new use would have to be found for the existing structures. Most discussions of reuse call for demolishing the Cheney Building, which is historically important for its ties to the town's textile industry. The Manchester Historical Society and the Historic District Commission are urging the Board of Education to keep the buildings' historic and architectural importance in mind when making plans for them.



Mary Dume

Cheney Building, Bennet Middle School, Manchester.

What's needed: Careful planning and serious consideration of how best to use the school, either as a school or for some other purpose. 🌿

Traprock Ridge, cont'd

use the game trail. Due its local abundance near the area of the site, quartz pebbles represented an almost unlimited supply of raw materials, allowing hunters to continue to make points as long as necessary. This type of strategy may well have been used at Wintergreen Notch where nearly a hundred quartz spear points and fragments had accumulated in one small sample area involving only ten one-meter square excavation units.

Another Late Archaic site near Konolds Pond was a stone tool making station covering approximately 2,000 square meters. The Konolds Pond site was located on a level and well-drained area along the top of a glacial outwash terrace, which in turn rested against the base of West Rock Ridge.

Finally, a survey along the summit of West Rock produced three archaeological sites: the Kietan Lookout, Blakesly Quarry and West Rock Ridge sites. Each of these sites seemed to represent a temporarily used

location where hunting equipment was repaired. All of the sites were positioned only a few meters away from West Rock's cliff face and subsequently provided an extraordinary vantage point for viewing a large expanse of the West River Valley below. I believe the proximity of these sites to the cliff's edge may indicate that the sites were used as observation points where information may have been gathered about game movements in the West River Valley. The survey included only a 200 meter section along the top of West Rock, which is many miles long, and may therefore suggest that other similarly located sites may remain undiscovered wherever a particularly good vantage points of the West River Valley would have been available.

I believe that my research at West Rock Ridge has allowed me access to sites uncovering unique aspects of the lifeways of South-Central Connecticut's prehistoric inhabitants, which may not be available through studying prehistoric villages or cemeteries. 🌿

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The Most Important Threatened Historic Places: A Status Report

Since 1990, the Connecticut Trust has listed nearly 125 Connecticut places as important and threatened. We periodically publish updates as certain sites are in the news, but here is the entire list through 2003, by town, with a brief notation of the status of each. Broad thematic listings are included at the end. We welcome information on the "status unknowns." If you can fill us in, please call the Trust at (203) 562-6312 or send an email to endangered@cttrust.org.

Ansonia

Opera House, 1994: still threatened

Bloomfield

Cigna campus, 2000: Emhart Building demolished; Wilde Building still threatened

Branford

Wyllys Russell house and barn, 2003: saved

Bridgeport

Crescent Building, 1991, 1992: renovated as housing
 Palace and Majestic Theaters, 1991, 1992, 1994: still threatened
 Deacon's Point HD, 1992, 1993: status unknown
 Dewhirst Farm, 1992: demolished
 Freeman houses, 1992: still threatened
 Pembroke City HD, 1993: status unknown
 Seaside Park, 1997: bath house restored
 Downtown Historic Districts, 2000: still threatened

Bristol

Rockwell Park lagoon, 2000: status unknown
 Messier Building, 2001: saved
 Four houses in Forestville, 2002: saved
 Memorial Boulevard, 2003: saved

Brooklyn

Green, 1992, 1996: highway project completed, mixed results

Colchester

CVS site, 1997: one building saved, one still threatened

Colebrook

Barn, 1992: saved

Cornwall

Rumsey Hall, 1990, 1991, 1992: status unknown

Danbury

Hearthstone Castle, 1993: still threatened
 Marian Anderson's studio, 1996: saved

Derby

Sterling Opera House, 1994: restoration underway
 Main Street, 1999: demolition underway

Durham

Main Street, 1997: status unknown

East Hartford

CVS site, 1997: status unknown

Enfield

Shaker compound, 1993: status unknown
 CVS site, 1997: status unknown

Fairfield County

Merritt Parkway, 1990, 1991: widening proposal abandoned, declared state scenic road, enhancements underway

Fairfield

Unquowa Hotel, 1992: demolished
 Burrwood, 1997: house and part of gardens preserved

Greenwich

Cos Cob Power Station, 1990, 1991: demolished
 Tomes-Higgins house, 1994: restored
 Mead homestead, 2001: demolished

Guilford

Faulkner's Island Light, 1994: saved, restored

Hamden

Hamden High School, 1993: saved
 Ghost Parking Lot, 2001: demolished

Hartford

Frog Hollow, 1993: status mixed
 Goodwin Estate, 1994: restoration underway
 G. Fox building, 1995: rehabbed as community college
 Hartford, 1997: many threats ongoing
 Mortson Street and Putnam Heights, 1999: some houses renovated
 Ann Street (parking), 1999: status unknown
 410 Asylum Avenue, 1999: renovation planned
 Colt Armory, 2001: restoration underway
 2nd North District School, 2001: still threatened
 Capewell Horse Nail Co., 2001: renovation planned, but financing still uncertain
 307-311 Franklin Avenue (drugstore site): demolished

Killingly

Peep Toad Road bridge, 1994: status unknown

Ledyard

Route 2 Corridor, 1992: traffic pressures remain

Litchfield

Litchfield High School, 2003: still not decided

Manchester

Great Lawn, 1990: saved
 Bunce house, 1995: status unknown

Middletown

Wadsworth Estate (Cenacle), 1991: saved
 Waterfront (Route 9), 1992: status unknown
 Connecticut Valley Hospital, 1994: still threatened
 Hubbard Farm, 2002: barn dismantled
 Old Woodward and Weeks Halls, Connecticut Valley Hospital, 2002: still threatened
 Seth Wetmore house, 2003: still threatened

Milford

John Downs house, 1999: saved

Naugatuck

Building 25, 2003: status unknown

New Britain

77 Lexington Street, 1999: status unknown
 Trinity United Methodist Church, 2001: reuse plans in process

New Canaan

International Style houses, 1999: town considering zoning regulations to encourage preservation (see page 5)

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C. Wigren



The Palace and Majestic Theaters in Bridgeport are still threatened with demolition.

New Haven

Davies Mansion, 1990, 1991, 1993: restored
 Willis Bristol house, 1990, 1991: restored
 Ninth Square, 1991: redeveloped
 Phoenix Building, 1992: demolished
 Quinnipiac River bridge, 1992: expansion underway; stakeholders' recommendations ignored
 Lincoln Street School, 1993, 1994: demolished
 YMCA/Liberty Building, 1994: renovated
 Yale Divinity School, 1995: renovated, mixed results
 Yale Boathouse, 1997: to be demolished
 110 Crown Street (parking), 1999: demolished
 School sites, 2000: mixed results
 Upper Congress and Davenport avenues neighborhood, 2002: demolished; a few buildings saved
 Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 2002: still threatened
 11 Orange Street, 2003: still threatened

New London

Winslow Ames house, 1990: saved
 Capitol Theater, 1991, 1994, 1996: still threatened
 Bank Street, 1996: threat abated
 Fort Trumbull neighborhood, 2000: mostly demolished; rest still threatened
 Hopson and Chapin Manufacturing Co., 2002: still threatened

Newington

Hartford Drive-In, 1997: still threatened

Newtown

Fairfield Hills Hospital, 1994: partial demolition likely

North Stonington

Route 2 Corridor, 1992: traffic pressures continue

Norwalk

Old City Hall, 1993: saved
 Remington Rand Laboratory, 2003: status uncertain

Norwich

Ponemah Mill, 1990: on the market
 Downtown, 1991: overall preservation atmosphere much improved
 Beit Brothers Market, 1992: saved
 Edgerton house, 2001: saved
 Norwich Hospital, 1994: still threatened

Old Saybrook

George Beach house (Castle Inn), 1999: part demolished, rest renovated

Main Street School, 2001: being renovated
 William Tully house, 2002: not demolished

Plainfield

Lawtown Mill, 1997: half demolished; remainder still threatened

Portland

Brownstone Quarry, 1993: status unknown

Preston

Route 2 Corridor, 1992: traffic pressures continue
 Norwich Hospital, 1994: still threatened
 Poquetanuck Village and Hallville, 1995: traffic pressures continue

Redding

Gilbert & Bennett factory, Georgetown, 1995: planning for reuse underway

Scotland

Samuel Huntington house, 1994, 1995: saved

Simsbury

Belden house, 1996: demolished

Southbury

Southbury Training School, 1994: status unknown

Southington

Lake Compounce Carousel, 1990: status unknown
 Town Center, 1993: status unknown

Sprague

Baltic Mill, 1996: burned

Stamford

Burdick School, 1992: burned

Stratford

Gen. Matthias Nicoll house, 1993: status unknown

Stonington

Trumbull Iron Works/Monsanto site, 1993, 1999: burned; site redevelopment underway

Thompson

Thompson Hill, 2000: status unknown

Tolland

Old Town Hall, 1993: restored

Torrington

Wetmore School, 1993: status unknown
 Fire House, 1996: still threatened
 Old Depot, 1999: still threatened
 Migeon house, 2001: still threatened

Washington

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Marbledale, 1994: repaired
 Red House, 1996: saved

Waterbury

Palace Theater, 1991: restored
 Scoville Brass Works, 1993: demolished, except one building
 Liberty Street houses, 1992: status unknown

Waterford

Seaside, 1994: still threatened
 John B. Palmer house, 2002: demolished

West Hartford

Revolutionary War campsite, 1999: still threatened

Westport

Long Shore Cabin No. 4, 1994: status unknown
 Eno Mansion, 1996: demolished

Wethersfield

Silas Robbins house, 1999: saved

Town Unknown

Mather homestead, 1991: status unknown
 Beecher house, 2001: site found for re-erection

Thematic listings

Industrial sites, 1998
 Downtowns, 1998
 Demolition for parking, 1999
 Trees, 2000
 Stone walls, 2002
 History museums, 2003

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Archaeological Research Upon a Traprock Ridge in South-Central Connecticut

By *Cosimo Sgarlata, City University of New York*

I have spent the past four summers, since 2001, investigating archaeological sites along West Rock Ridge in New Haven County, Connecticut. West Rock represents a difficult area for archaeological research due to its rugged, uneven and rocky topography. But the rough topography doesn't mean that important sites can't be found there. Since there seemed to be less archaeological interest in this type of landform than other landscape features such as river valleys, coastal plains and lakeshores I decided to make my study of the prehistoric usage of one of Connecticut's several prominent traprock ridges the subject of my dissertation as a Ph.D. candidate at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

A particularly interesting site was the Wintergreen Notch site, located within a narrow gap that seems to have been a natural game trail over the top of West Rock Ridge. Numerous artifacts, including thousands of waste flakes and 113 projectile points — mostly narrow-stemmed and side-notched points probably representing a Late Archaic occupation — were found there. The site was located on a slope and above the game trail. A very large number of broken spear point tip fragments were recovered. I've interpreted this to mean that spears were actually thrown and tip fragments lost at the site as hunters attempted to take game animals passing through Wintergreen Notch.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Edited by Harold Juli

If this interpretation is correct, then the Wintergreen Notch site could be described as an ambush hunting location. An ambush site would be a spot at which hunters would intercept game animals because having observed their movements they understand that patiently waiting at such a spot should reward them with a close shot at a desired game animal.

I would like to make an observation about the usage of quartz pebbles at the Wintergreen Notch site as raw material for the manufacture of projectile points (that quartz

pebbles were used is obvious due to the great many points having the smooth exterior of a river rolled quartz cobble still adhering to their bases). Quartz pebbles seemed to have provided an ideal source of raw material at Wintergreen Notch due to the nature of the hunting activity conducted there. Let me explain.

The most likely game animals that the hunters at Wintergreen Notch would have been pursuing were White Tailed Deer. Since White Tailed Deer aren't migratory species, they don't often travel in large herds. Because of this the hunters at Wintergreen Notch could have expected their prey to pass by in trickles of small groups. In this case the greatest number of game animals could only be taken if hunters quickly cleaned up and repaired broken hunting equipment after ambushing the first group while waiting for the next animal or animals to approach. This type of activity could potentially continue until no more deer were expected to

continued on page 13



Archaeologists believe that Native Americans may have used this site on West Rock Ridge to repair hunting equipment and scan the valley below for game.