

## Literary Connecticut

Edinburgh  
Crescent,  
Bridgeport  
Becker and Becker  
Associates

Connecticut's Puritan settlers placed great importance on every member's being able to read the Bible, thus ensuring a population of readers and establishing the state, along with the rest of New England, as a place that respected intellectual accomplishment. This, along with the presence of publishers in New Haven and Hartford, as well as easy access to larger publishing worlds of New York and Boston, made the state appealing to generations of writers who have made their homes here.

As a result, Connecticut boasts ties to major writers of national and even international reputation, among them Jonathan Edwards, Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe, Eugene O'Neil and Wallace Stevens. But the state has also produced secondary writers of talent and perception, and still others, best-sellers of yore now reduced by changing times and tastes to mere footnotes or even jokes.

Following the instruction to "write what you know," Connecticut authors used the places around them as a setting for their works—sometimes openly, sometimes more or less thinly disguised. And so the Connecticut story, from settlement to industrial development to suburbanization, has become America's story.

**Here are a just few Connecticut sites connected with literature in its many forms.**

### Bridgeport: Edinburgh Crescent

The brash industrial city of Bridgeport flaunted its prosperity with exuberant architecture, including a special fondness for onion domes. In *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), Mark Twain, himself no slouch when it came to exuberance, poked fun at the city's taste: *At the end of an hour we saw a far-away town sleeping in a valley by a winding river; and beyond it on a hill, a vast grey fortress, with towers and turrets, the first I had ever seen out of a picture. "Bridgeport?" said I, pointing. "Camelot," said he.*

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## From the Executive Director

We learned in early October that the National Trust for Historic Preservation turned down Hartford's bid to host the National Preservation Conference in 2011. This was a disappointment to all of us from the Trust, the Hartford Preservation Alliance, and the Greater Hartford Convention and Visitors' Bureau, who worked on the proposal. We felt that Hartford's enormous progress in developing community leadership and enthusiasm for historic preservation made a compelling story to share with preservationists from across the nation.

However, the National Trust decided that its presence could help Buffalo, where the city government recently unveiled a plan to demolish some 5,000 historic but blighted buildings. I am proud of the strong showing that we made. The decision was much more complex than simply a loss for Hartford, and I have been assured that it was very difficult. I know we all will be pleased to see, in 2011, that Buffalo is turning itself around and rebuilding on its heritage.

In the meantime, Trust members enjoyed two spectacular events this fall. On September 29, we gathered for HouseTalk at the Seth Wetmore house in Middletown to see for ourselves this fantastic example of 18th-century architecture and to hear the new owner's restoration plans (see CPN, July/August 2007). Thanks to Jack Bolles for giving us a "before" view of his acquisition, the fifth house he will have restored; we can't wait for the "after"! Thanks also to trustee Bill Hosley for his engaging talk



Barbara Delaney and members of the Reynolds and Griswold families, honored at the Barns Gala.



HouseTalk at the Wetmore house in Middletown

on the house and to Stephen Marshall, restoration contractor who has worked on the house on and off since the mid-1980s.

On October 11, the Trust returned to Middletown for a gala celebration of Connecticut barns at the Wadsworth Mansion. More than 90 original paintings of barns were on display and for sale to celebrate the Trust's efforts to document and preserve these important elements of the agricultural landscape. We are very grateful to the many artists who donated part of their sales to us. Special thanks for Jean Maynard of Middletown for help in coordinating this very successful venture, and to our sponsors: Diamond Sponsor:

Kronenberger and Sons Restoration, Inc.; Platinum Sponsors: Sue and Robert Vincent; and Silver Sponsors: Colonial Restorations, Crosskey Architects, Heritage Recruiting Group, LLC, and Halloran & Sage, LLC; and our media sponsor, the Middletown Press.

We also recognized the contributions of the Trust's founders with presentations to Barbara Delaney, to the wife and children of John Reynolds, and to the children of Harlan Griswold. The first meeting of the Connecticut Trust was held in John Reynold's living room in Middletown.

—Helen Higgins

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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Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

### Upcoming Meetings of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

December 5, 2007, at 9:30 a.m.  
January 2, 2008, at 9:30 a.m.

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

For more information call (860)566-3005

## Two New Staff Members Join Commission on Culture and Tourism

The grants staff at the CCT's State Historic Preservation Office has expanded with the addition of two first-rate historic preservationists, Mary Dunne and Wayne Gannaway. Ms. Dunne is the Local Government Grants Coordinator, a challenging position that includes administering the Certified Local Government program and working with local historic district commissions and study committees around the state. Prior to coming to the CCT, she was the Executive Director of the Manchester Historical Society where she planned and directed the organization's operations and programs. She also served as the Preservation Services Officer for the New Haven Preservation Trust. Ms. Dunne received her MA in Preservation Studies from Boston University and a BA in English from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She brings in-depth experience at the municipal level to her new position. She may be reached at [mary.dunne@ct.gov](mailto:mary.dunne@ct.gov) or telephone 860-566-3005 ex323.

Also joining the staff is Wayne Gannaway. Most recently the Curator of Historic Properties of the Mark Twain House & Museum, Wayne joined the CCT staff in July as the Construction Grants Coordinator. He will be overseeing restoration and rehabilitation projects funded by the Historic Restoration Fund, Endangered Building Fund and the Cultural Capital Fund. At the Mark Twain House, Mr. Gannaway oversaw the restoration and preservation of Twain's house, kitchen wing, carriage house and landscape. Prior to that, he was project manager for the Minnesota Historical Society's historic sites division where he worked with state and local governments and community groups to evaluate the preservation and development of an historic site. Mr. Gannaway earned his MA in historic preservation from Western Kentucky University and his BA in history from the University of Minnesota. He may be reached at [wayne.gannaway@ct.gov](mailto:wayne.gannaway@ct.gov) or telephone 860-566-3005 ex324. 🌿

## Commission on Culture and Tourism Seeks Public Input for 2008 Historic Preservation Program

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the CCT is soliciting public input for the development of the 2007-2008 work program. The CCT expects to receive approximately \$550,000 from the Historic Preservation Fund of the U. S. Department of the Interior to carry out its programs and operations. Ten percent of the award is reserved for pass-through grants to Certified Local Governments (CLG).

Under the National Historic Preservation Act, the SHPO has responsibility for administration of the federal historic preservation program in Connecticut. In brief, the purpose of the program is to encourage preservation of the state's archeological, architectural and historic resources. Historic preservation generates jobs, affordable housing, private reinvestment and tax revenue. It also promotes smart growth by rehabilitating and reusing buildings already serviced by existing municipal infrastructure. Historic preservation supports community-based revitalization in Connecticut's urban neighborhoods and small-town Main Streets.

Specific activities include the identifica-

tion of properties important in history, architecture, culture, and archeology; evaluation and registration of significant properties; formal review of federal and federally-assisted projects that could affect archeological and historic resources; development and implementation of the state-wide historic preservation plan; administration of the CLG program; administration of the federal and state investment tax credits program for certified historic structures; and public outreach activities.

A fuller description of the CCT historic preservation activities may be found in the History Programs and Services guide available on line at the CCT website, [www.cultureandtourism.org](http://www.cultureandtourism.org), or by request to Mary M. Donohue, Survey and Grants Director, Historic Preservation and Museum Division, Commission on Culture & Tourism, 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, CT 06106 or by email to [mary.donohue@ct.gov](mailto:mary.donohue@ct.gov).

Your comments will help the CCT determine projects and activities for 2007-2008. Please send your comments to Mary M. Donohue as shown above by November 30, 2007. 🌿



Mary Dunne and Wayne Gannaway have joined the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office.

## Three Industrial Communities

Three historic districts recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places represent industrial communities of varying types. **The Hemlock Glen Industrial Archaeological District**, in Hampton, represents a small rural cluster of industrial sites, clustered to take advantage of waterpower. Between about 1745 and about 1925 three privileges on the Little River saw a variety of small industries, including a sawmill, a gristmill, a clover mill, a tannery, a blacksmith shop, and a small factory that at various times produced pins and spoons.

These enterprises all required water, and coordinating an adequate supply for each required careful planning. Dams created ponds for water storage, but required permission to flood useful fields upstream, either permanently or for portions of the year. Cooperative agreements frequently spelled out which users could draw how much water and at what times. The difficulty of balancing needs frequently led to mill owners to simplify negotiations by trying to buy up neighboring properties.

While Hemlock Glen represented a group of small rural mills, the **Riverton Historic District**, in the town of Barkhamsted, was a complete village. In the years after the Revolution, Riverton became home to Lambert Hitchcock's pioneering chair factory. Hitchcock reduced shipping costs by selling chairs disassembled, anticipating IKEA by more than 100 years. Nonetheless, his profit margin remained razor-thin, and the company failed and was reorganized several times before Hitchcock moved away for good in the 1840s. Other Riverton enterprises produced tools, and farm implements throughout the 19th century, however, and in 1946 John Tarrant Keeney revived the Hitchcock Chair Company, which reinvigorated the village until it closed in 2005.

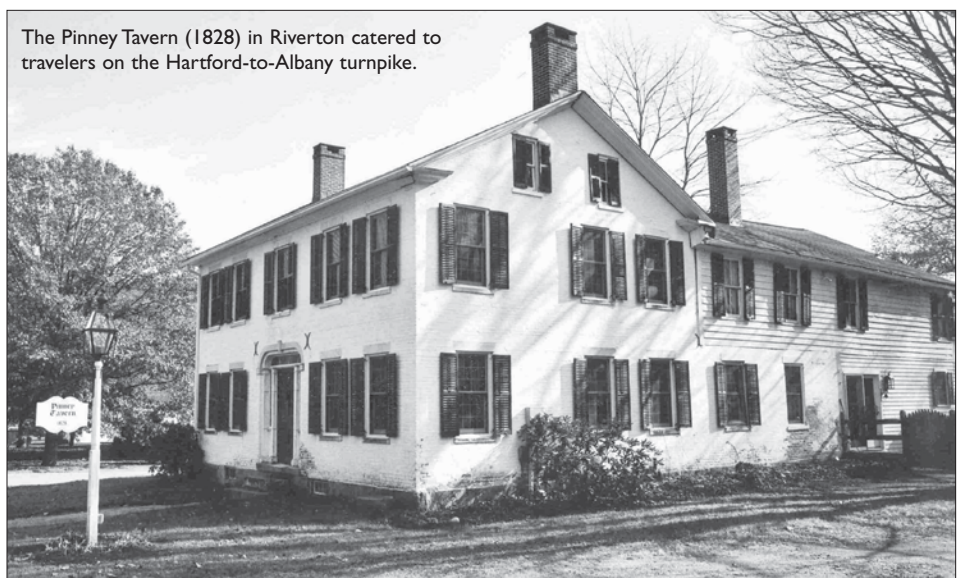
Riverton benefited from its location, at a bridge over the Farmington River and on a major road from Hartford to Albany. This made it easier for manufacturers to ship raw materials in and finished goods out. Two taverns survive in the village as witness to this competitive advantage.

*continued on page 5*



Factory workers in Riverton built modest but well-designed houses

Cunningham Preservation Associates



The Pinney Tavern (1828) in Riverton catered to travelers on the Hartford-to-Albany turnpike.

Cunningham Preservation Associates



With sections built between 1826 and 1946, the Hitchcock Chair factory is the major surviving industrial building in Riverton.

Cunningham Preservation Associates

Michael S. Rabber



Surviving dams and waterworks in Hemlock Glen illustrate the complexity of providing waterpower to early industries.

A third type of development is represented by the **Rossie Velvet Mill Historic District** in Stonington. Here, a textile mill was the catalyst for a new neighborhood in the existing community of Mystic, whose shipbuilding, fishing, and maritime commerce were on the decline in the third quarter of the 19th century. The Rossie Velvet Company opened a new mill here in 1898, operated by a German company that sought to avoid customs duties by producing cloth in the United States. By the 1920s the company was Mystic's largest employer, with a work force of nearly 500. The mill continued to produce textiles under various owners until 1958; the building is now part of the Mystic Seaport museum complex.

Many of the mill workers were immigrants from Germany or Italy, and they built not only houses, but also social institutions to shape their life in their new home. The Social Society of Frohsinn, a German-American club, still exists near the mill. 🌿

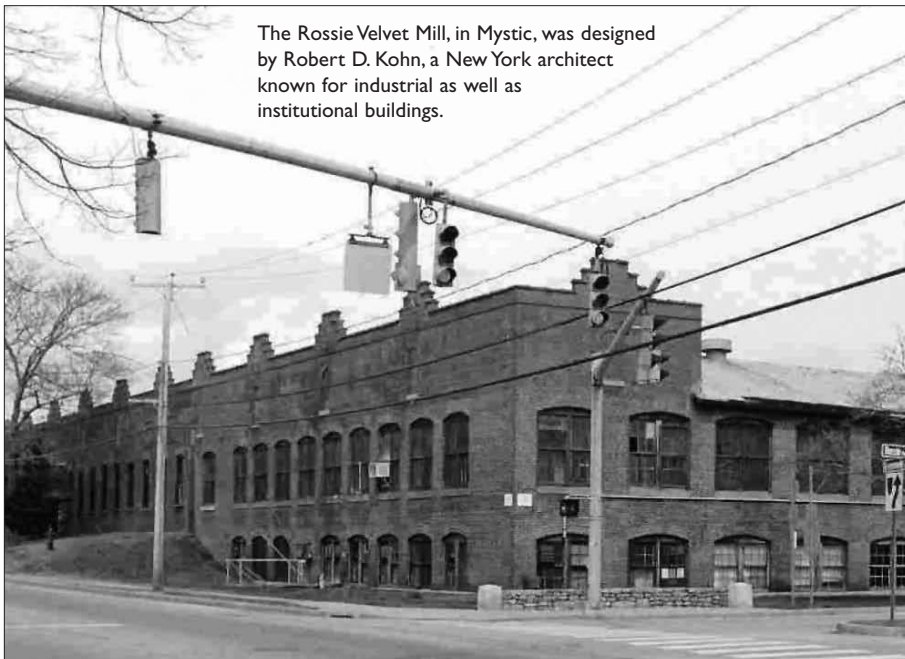
The Panciera house (1914) in the Rossie Velvet historic district (LEFT) reflects Italian immigrants' preference for and experience in masonry construction.

Frohsinn Hall (BELOW) was built in 1906 by a German immigrants who worked in the Rossie Velvet Mill.

Ted Hendrickson



Ted Hendrickson



The Rossie Velvet Mill, in Mystic, was designed by Robert D. Kohn, a New York architect known for industrial as well as institutional buildings.

Ted Hendrickson



**Hartford.** *The Connecticut Trust recently received this letter from the recipient of one of our Historic Building Finance Fund loans:*

I want to thank the Connecticut Trust's Forgivable Loan for my project on my house in Hartford. As you so well know, routine maintenance on a historic home can turn into an expensive custom job. It is often difficult to find qualified workers. Once you get started, one job can lead to another big job. Maintaining historic integrity is another challenge and expense. The necessary repairs are often very routine and not visible or glamorous. Many homeowners can simply not afford to make repairs. For these reasons, the tendency is to defer maintenance and then our beautiful homes fall into further disrepair that may be irreparable.

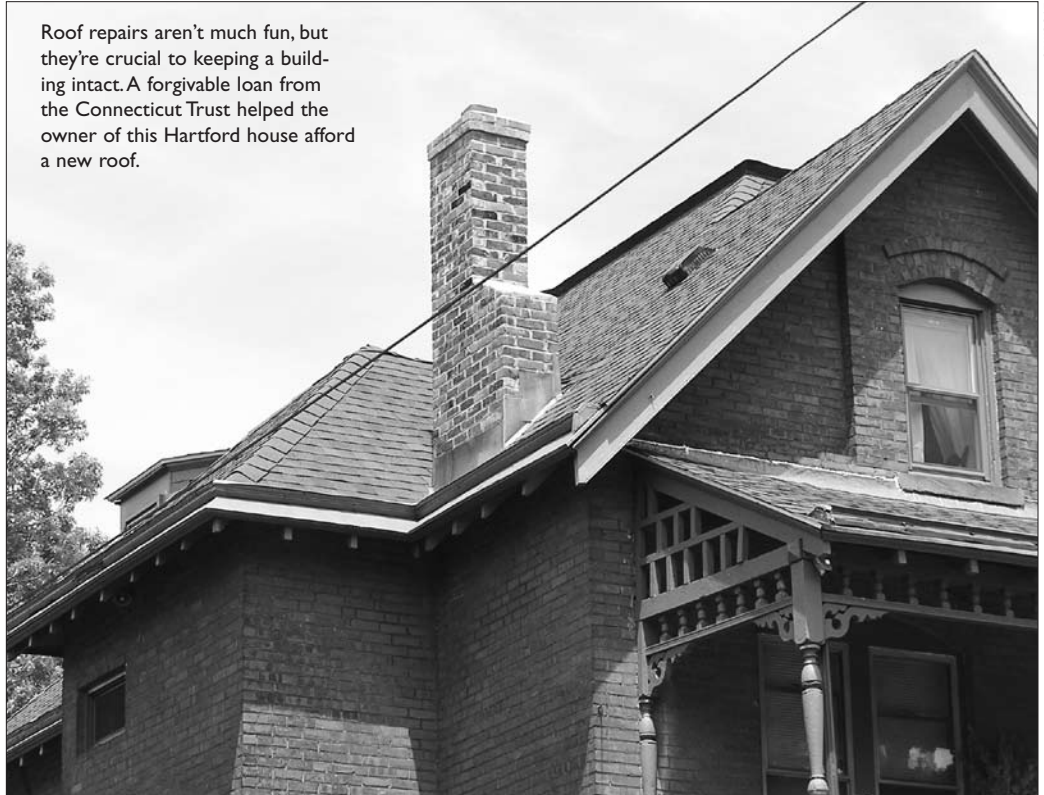
In my case, I delayed porch work on my Queen Anne for as long as I could. With the help of a loan through Neighborhoods of Hartford, Inc., and my personal savings, I finally began work on the porches and a few other little things. One of the other little things, minor roof repair, turned into a serious need for a complete new roof. I was at a loss as to what to do. For the reasons above, I am truly grateful that the Connecticut Trust helped me out.

I am honored to have been selected as a recipient of the Historic Building Finance Fund program. This is a great incentive to existing homeowners of historic homes like me, to make it possible to remain in their homes and also maintain them properly. I also hope that the Connecticut Trust will be able to help many more people through this program.

—Jennifer Cassidy, Hartford

*HBFF loans are made available through community loan funds that are members of the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Alliance, Hartford. Funds come from the Community Investment Act, administered by the Commission on Culture and Tourism. For more information, see CPN, January/February 2007, or visit [www.cctrust.org](http://www.cctrust.org) and click on Restoration Help.* 🌿

Roof repairs aren't much fun, but they're crucial to keeping a building intact. A forgivable loan from the Connecticut Trust helped the owner of this Hartford house afford a new roof.



B. Schilde

**Berlin.** The Worthington Ridge local historic district survived a repeal vote in September, but district officials say they have more work to do in educating property owners about district regulations and dispelling common misconceptions.

According to the Hartford Courant, William and Lucy Traverse launched a petition drive to abolish the district in 2004, after the historic district commission turned down their application for repairs to the leaking roof on their house. They claim that the delay caused their roof to cave in, destroying artwork inside and damaging the house's historic value. However, Lorraine Stub, a member of the commission, says that the Traverses sent a representative to the hearing on their application instead of appearing themselves. When the representative couldn't answer commissioners' questions, the couple moved to abolish the district.

Under Connecticut law, two-thirds of property owners must vote in favor of a proposed local historic district in order for it to take effect. The same requirement holds for repealing a district. In Berlin, 56 owners voted in favor of abolishing the district, versus 42-1/2 for keeping it (part-owners of properties cast partial ballots, in proportion to their ownership interest).

Without the two-thirds majority, the district survived, but with more than half of those voting against it, Stub says, "We really have a lot further to go in educating people about the importance of the HD and about why we make the decisions we do. I think we have come a long way in treating people with respect and in communicating with new homeowners and real estate agents." 🌿

**Fairfield.** Melanie Marks and her husband, Eugene, reside in an 18th-century tavern with a fireplace "so big you can stand in," but they wanted a hands-on restoration experience. While working on updating Fairfield's historic resources inventory, Melanie and former Connecticut Trust board member Jane Talamini learned of a house that was on the market and likely to be demolished for a subdivision. They went to the owner for permission to document the house. That's when Melanie discovered a connection: "This is a place to generate memories," she said.


By this time, the Connecticut Trust had also learned of the house, which was being marketed as a teardown. The Trust contacted the realtor and asked that the MLS listing include a photograph of the house,

which previously had only been mentioned as an afterthought. The Trust listed the building in the Historic Properties Exchange, highlighting its historic value, and the realtor followed suit.

Unfortunately, the house had been left open to the elements, and there were concerns about its structural condition. But an architect who inspected the building said, "The only way this house should come down is because of ignorance."

The house's history intrigued Melanie, who is a genealogist by profession. Built around 1785, it later became a boarding house for summer visitors from New York, with a cottage built in 1904 to accommodate more visitors. Eugene was taken with the rural setting, which also includes a barn and a well.

The Markses made the purchase and now they're looking forward to the restoration. They plan to remove a second kitchen (added when the house was divided into apartments), add a garage behind the cottage, and create a new master bedroom in a 20th-century addition. Otherwise, the house, barn and cottage will be restored to their original layouts.

When Eugene Marks asked his wife, "What do you want out of this?"—referring maybe to a modern kitchen or bathroom, she replied simply, "a clothes line". In other words, a connection. 

—Todd Levine



T. Levine

Originally marketed as a teardown, this 18th-century house in Fairfield has found a buyer who will restore it.

**Wethersfield.** Fire damaged the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center on October 11, after lightning struck the building's cupola.

Built in 1893 as a school, the town-owned structure has also served as a town court and library. Since 1985 it has been the home of the Wethersfield Historical Society and hosts community events.

*continued on page 8*

*"I look forward to an America which will not be afraid of grace and beauty, which will protect the beauty of our natural environment, which will preserve the great old American houses and squares and parks of our national past, and which will build handsome and balanced cities for our future."*

*John F. Kennedy - October 26, 1963*

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**Silas Robbins house, Wethersfield** (1999).

After a six-year restoration, the Silas Robbins house has reopened as a bed-and-breakfast. The Second-Empire landmark, built by a Wethersfield seed merchant in 1873, was devastated by fire 1996. Damage was so extensive that the owner applied for a permit to demolish the building. When preservationists objected, he agreed to let them try to find a buyer.

The buyer turned out to be John and Shireen Aforismo, who took possession in 2001 and began restoring the house to be a bed-and-breakfast. The first job was to make the house weathertight. When that was done, the Aforismos invited the Connecticut Trust to hold a HouseTalk at

the Robbins house. Trust members were able to see the devastation wrought by the fire, hear about the Aforismos' plans, and discuss some of the technical challenges they faced.

Fortunately, much of the elaborate woodwork survived, and missing pieces could be replicated to fill in the gaps. But the painstaking craftsmanship took years, and then the Aforismos wanted to decorate the house in the spirit of its original style.

The completion of the work was celebrated in October with tours to benefit Wethersfield's Richard M. Keane foundation, and on November 1 the house opened to guests. 🌿

*For before and after photographs, see [www.silaswrobbins.com](http://www.silaswrobbins.com).*

**Around the State, cont'd from page 7**

Thanks to speedy action by area fire departments, fire damage was limited to the cupola and attic, but large quantities of water from sprinklers and the firefighters' hoses ran through the building from attic to basement.

The Town and the Historical Society moved quickly to avoid major damage to the building and collections, hiring companies to inspect and stabilize the cupola and roof and to remove standing water and water-soaked ceiling tiles and sheetrock.

"Fortunately no major artifacts were damaged, and our exhibits didn't suffer, either," said Doug Shipman, the historical society's director. "We are taking the exhibits out for safekeeping to make sure they won't be damaged."

Connecticut Circuit Rider Greg Farmer visited the site soon after the fire. He pointed out that even though standing water had been removed, moisture will continue to seep out from the walls. In all, it will probably take about six months to dry the building out completely. In the meantime, he recommended regular monitoring of the building, and maintaining a cool and relatively dry environment to prevent the growth of mold. 🌿

Lightning started a fire in the cupola of Wethersfield's Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, but the greatest concern is moisture.



The Silas W. Robbins house, in Wethersfield, has been restored as a bed-and-breakfast



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## New Trustee

At its September meeting, the Trust's Board of Trustees elected John B. Toomey, Jr., to the Board. A graduate of Manchester community College and Central Connecticut State University, he works for the Connecticut Department of Labor as an Associate Research Analyst in the Office of Research.

Toomey served on the Wethersfield Historic District Commission from 2001 to 2004. He was a director and vice-president of the Bolton Heritage Preservation Trust and is currently president of the Bolton Historical Society. In 2006 he co-chaired events marking the 225th anniversary of the Washington/Rochambeau March to Victory. ❁

New Trustee John B. Toomey, Jr., with his mother, Violet M. Toomey



Kyle Doonan, All In One Photography



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Key	
(NR)	National Register of Historic Places
(NHL)	National Historic Landmark
*	Open to the public

**Ansonia: David Humphreys birthplace \* (NR)**

One of the Hartford Wits, David Humphreys (1752-1818) was born in this house in what was then Derby, where his father was the Congregational minister. Humphreys was also a Revolutionary War general, diplomat and industrial pioneer, achievements that have eclipsed his literary output. His patriotic poetry celebrates the heroes of the Revolution and includes works such as *Poem on the Industry of the United States of America* (1783).

**Branford: The Bungalow**

Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919) wrote popular poems that were cheerful, optimistic and sentimental. In 1891 she and her husband built a house in Short Beach that they called "The Bungalow"—one of the first houses in Connecticut to be known by that name, redolent of coziness. Today her work is mostly forgotten, save for the lines: "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone" ("Solitude," 1883).



**Bridgeport: Fanny Crosby Memorial Home**

Though blind, Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) wrote some 8,000 hymns, including "Blessed Assurance"; "Rescue the Perishing"; and "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior." She moved to Bridgeport in 1902 and spent the rest of her life there. In her will, she provided for the establishment of a home for poor old people, which still operates.

**Bridgewater: Van Wyck Brooks house (NR)**

In 1937 the literature critic and historian Van Wyck Brooks (1886-1963) won a Pulitzer Prize for *The Flowering of New England, 1815-1865*. He moved from Westport to Bridgewater in 1949.

**Brooklyn: Trinity Episcopal Church** epitomizes the country churches celebrated by Lydia Huntly Sigourney:

*Lo! mid yon vale's secluded green,  
Through clustering thickets dimly seen,  
The village church, whose walls of snow,  
Column, nor arch, nor buttress show,  
Nor taper spire, nor tuneful bell,  
With echoing chime, or funeral knell,  
To pour upon the balmy air  
Sweet warning to the house of prayer.w*  
(*"The Village Church,"* in *Scenes in My Native Land*, 1844))

**Cornwall: Cornwall Bridge railroad station (NR)**

One of America's great humorists, James Thurber moved in 1945 into a Colonial style house in West Cornwall that he and his wife called "The Great Good Place." The town found its way into some of Thurber's writings: "The train was twenty minutes late, we found out when we bought our tickets, so we sat down on a bench in the little waiting room of the Cornwall Bridge station. It was too hot outside in the sun. This midsummer Saturday had got off to a sulky start, and now, at three in the afternoon, it sat, sticky and restive, in our laps." (*The Thurber Carnival*, Harper & Brothers, 1945)



T. Zetterstrom

**Easton: Helen Keller house (NR)**

Helen Keller (1880-1968) won the nation's affection with her autobiography, *The Story of My Life* (1905). In 1938 she settled in Easton (the present house was built in 1946), where she wrote *Teacher*, a biography of her beloved teacher, Annie Sullivan, as well as other works while carrying out her advocacy for the blind. Keller's life became the basis for William Gibson's television play (later a movie), "The Miracle Worker."



HRC

**Easton: Ida Tarbell house (NHL)**

One of crusading journalists known as "muck-rakers," Ida Tarbell (1857-1944) wrote the classic exposé in her *History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904). She moved to Easton in 1906.

Courtesy of the Ida M. Tarbell Collection, Allegheny College



**Enfield: Enfield meeting house\* (NR)**

In 1741 Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), one of the leaders of the religious revival known as the Great Awakening, preached his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," in Enfield. A call to repentance and conversion, the sermon is known for its graphic images of the torments of hell. The present meeting house, now home to the Enfield Historical Society, is a replacement built in 1775. "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire."

**Fairfield: Greenfield Hill (NR)**

A preacher and educator so powerful that he was known as "Pope Dwight," Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) served as minister of the Greenfield Hill Congregational church and later as president of Yale. He belonged to the Hartford Wits, a group of writers who championed Connecticut's Standing Order. Dwight's poem "Greenfield Hill" (1794) holds





**Hartford: Nook Farm**

After the Civil War, Hartford's Nook Farm, a neighborhood of Romantic-style houses, became a literary hotbed, the home of Harriet Beecher Stowe, her sister Isabella Beecher Hooker, Charles Dudley Warner, and, of course, Samuel Langhorne Clemens—better known as Mark Twain.

Billiard Room, Mark Twain house, Hartford  
Historic American Buildings Survey



**Hartford: Mark Twain house\* (NHL)**

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910) poured his heart, as well as his money, into this remarkable

house, where he lived from 1874 to 1891 and wrote, among other things, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Prince and the Pauper*.

*"This is the house that Mark built.  
These are the bricks of various hue  
And shape and position, straight and askew,  
With the nooks and angles and gables too,  
Which make up the house presented to view,  
The curious house that Mark built."*

(*Traveler's Record*, 1877)

**Hartford: Harriet Beecher Stowe house\* (NR)**

Built with earnings from her blockbuster novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851), this house was home to Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) from 1873 to her death. The design, particularly of the kitchen, was influenced by *The American Woman's Home* (1869), which Harriet wrote with her sister Catharine E. Beecher.

**Hartford: Wallace Stevens house**

Insurance executive Wallace Stevens (1879-1955) composed many of his challenging poems while walking from between his job as an insurance executive and this house, which he bought in 1932. Earlier this year, a walk from Stevens' house to the offices of the Hartford Insurance Co. (originally the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Co.) on Asylum Avenue was dedicated, punctuated with stones each bearing one haiku-like stanza from "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" (1954). *continued on page 12*



C. Wigren

John Warner Barber, 1836



up the village as the embodiment of what he loved about New England—though one scholar comments that the poetry suffers from its utilitarian objective. Dwight later concentrated on prose works, including *Travels in New England and New York* (1821-1822).

*"Here every class (if classes those we call,  
Where one extended class embraces all,  
All mingling, as the rainbow's beauty blends,  
Unknown where every hue begins or ends)  
Each following, each, with uninvincible strife,  
Wears every feature of improving life."*  
(*"Greenfield Hill,"* 1794)

**Gurleyville (Mansfield): Gurleyville mill\* (NR)**

Wilbur Cross (1862-1948), Connecticut's beloved Depression-era governor, was born in Gurleyville, where his father operated a grist-mill. As a professor at Yale, Cross produced studies of English literature and in retirement he penned *Connecticut Yankee* (1943), an autobiography of his life from his boyhood in Gurleyville to his careers as professor and politician. The book also includes a valuable insider's view of the 1930s political scene. As an adult, Cross lived New Haven.

**Hamden: Thornton Wilder house**

The novelist and playwright Thornton Wilder (1887-1975) lived with his sister Isabel in a house built in 1929 to designs by local architect/builder Alice Washburn. Wilder often left town because he found home life distracted him from his work; however *Our Town* (1938), one of his best-known works, is said to have been written here. Wilder's study has been removed from the house and recreated at Hamden's Miller Memorial Library.



C. Wigren

**Hartford: Hartford Wits**

After the Revolution, Connecticut produced the new nation's first notable literary group, the Hartford Wits (or Connecticut Wits). Consisting of Joel Barlow, Timothy Dwight, David Humphreys, and John Trumbull, with Theodore Dwight, Lemuel Hopkins and Mason Fitch Cogswell sometimes considered members, the Wits produced satires and mock-heroic poems celebrating American independence and calling for a strong central government to keep the union together. The group's literary stature has diminished over the years (one later critic asked, "If these were the wits of Connecticut, what were the other members of the community?"), but they remain historically significant.

*"It was evening all afternoon  
It was snowing  
And it was going to snow.  
The blackbird sat  
In the cedar-limbs."*

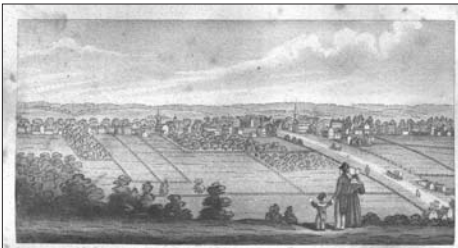
**Hartford: Colt Armory (NR)**

Before his adventure began, Hank Morgan, the hero of Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* worked at Colt's, where he developed many of the skills and industrial ingenuity that enabled him to transform medieval England into an industrial power ahead of its time.

**Lebanon: Jonathan Trumbull Library\***

The Jonathan Trumbull Library traces its history to the Philogrammatican Society, a private library founded in 1739. Jonathan Trumbull, the Revolutionary War governor, was one of the promoters of the library, which survived until 1792.

John Warner Barber, 1836



**Litchfield:**

Harriet Beecher Stowe's book, *Poganuc People* (1878), is set in a town based on Litchfield, where she was born and grew up in the early years of the 19th century.

*"Poganuc was a place where winter stood for something. The hill, like all hills in our dear New England, though beautiful for situation in summer was a howling desolation for about six months of the year, sealed down under snow and drifted over by winds that pierced like knives and seemed to search every fiber of one's garments, so that the thickest clothing was no protection."*

**New Canaan:**

**Maxfield Perkins house (NR)**

Writers need publishers, and Maxfield Perkins (1884-1947) discovered

such unknown talents as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe and Ernest Hemingway, transforming the staid publishing house of Charles Scribners Sons and altering the course of American literature. Perkins wrote to Fitzgerald in 1924: "I told you we bought a house

Richard Bergmann, FAIA



in New Canaan. It has the face of a Greek temple and the body of a spacious New England farmhouse....an ideal place to bring up children in the way they should go, girls anyway."

**New Hartford: Esperanza (NR)**

Cunningham Preservation Associates

The summer home and later the permanent home of romance novelist Julie Palmer Smith (1815-1883), Esperanza was the place where she and her descendants entertained artistic and literary friends, among them Nathaniel Hawthorne, H. G. Wells and Walt Whitman.



**New Haven:**

Charles Dickens described his first visit to America in *American Notes* (1842). He criticized much of what he saw, but not New Haven's streetscapes: "New Haven, known also as the City of Elms, is a fine town. Many of its streets (as its alias sufficiently imports) are planted with rows of grand old elm-trees.... Even in winter time, these groups of well-grown trees, clustering among the busy streets and houses of a thriving city, have a very quaint appearance: seeming to bring about a kind of compromise between town and country; as if each had met the other half-way, and shaken hands upon it; which is at once novel and pleasant."

**New Haven: Edgewood**

The author of popular essays such as *Reveries of a Bachelor* (1850), published under the pseudonym Ik Marvel, Donald Grant Mitchell (1822-1908) settled in New Haven because it was within easy reach of his New York publishers. Mitchell continued to write and also became a landscape architect, but his greatest energies were devoted to transforming his utilitarian farm into the model of beauty and productivity that he immortalized in *My Farm of Edgewood* (1863). He wrote, "It is a mistake, therefore, I think, to aim at the completion of a country home in a season, or in two, or some half a dozen. Its attractiveness lies, or should lie, in its prospective growth of charms."

Courtesy Elizabeth Mills Brown



**New Haven: Yale University**

Frank Merriwell of Yale was the ideal college student: a scholar, a gentleman, and a star athlete. He appeared in more than 200 novels written between 1896 and 1916 by Gilbert Patten, using the pseudonym Burt L. Standish, who explained, "The name was symbolic of the chief characteristics I desired my hero to have. Frank for frankness, merry for a happy disposition, well for health and abounding vitality."

**New London: Monte Cristo Cottage\* (NHL)**

Matinee idol James O'Neill bought this summer cottage for his family in 1884. His son, Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) used it as the setting for two of his plays, *Ah, Wilderness!* (1933) and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956).

*"Everything was done in the cheapest way. Your father would never spend the money to make it right. It's just as well we haven't any friends here. I'd be ashamed to have them step in the door."* Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

**New Milford: Eric Hodgins house**

Severe cost overruns forced Eric Hodgins (1899-1971), an executive at Time, Inc., to sell his country house in New Milford, built in 1937. Hodgins recovered financially by writing *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (Simon & Schuster, 1946), a comic novel that skewered naive city dwellers who moved to the country, and became the basis of a popular movie as well. Unfortunately, Hodgins was unable to buy back the house.

*"What the Blandings wanted, they explained to Mr. Simms, was simple enough: a two-story house in quiet, modern, good taste; frame and brick-veneer construction; something to blend with the older architectural examples that dotted the countryside around them, but no slavish imitation of times past. It would be, in effect, a bringing up to date of the Old House, with obvious modifications dictated by the difference between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries and by the difference between the profession of farming, for which the Old House had been constructed, and advertising, which should somehow be exemplified in the New."*

## Roxbury

Arthur Miller (1915-2005) moved to Roxbury in 1947. In a studio built the next year he wrote *Death of a Salesman* and later works.

## Norwich: 8 Elm Avenue (NR)

This Colonial house was probably built in 1737 around a "great room and lean-to" mentioned by Sarah Kemble Knight (1666-1727) in her famous account of her horseback journey from Boston to New York in 1704, published as *The Journal of Madam Knight* (Small, Maynard & Co., 1920). Madam Knight's lively and humorous descriptions highlight the difficulty of travel in early New England and depict life in the areas through which she passed.

"...we call'd at an Inn to Bait... Landlady came in, with her hair about her ears, and hands at full pay scratching. Shee told us shee had some mut-ton wch shee would broil, wch I was glad to hear; But I suppose forgot to wash her scratches; in a little time shee brot it in; but it being pickled, and my Guide said it smelt strong of head sause, we left it, and pd sixpence a piece for our Dinners, wch was only smell."

file



## Norwich: Olmstead-Lathrop house (NR)

Lydia Huntley Sigourney (1791-1865), who lived in this house as a child, later became known as "The Sweet Singer of Hartford," producing poems of what has been called "lachrymose verbosity and cloying sentimentality." Nonetheless, she was a superstar of her time. A century later, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) lived in the same house. Gilman is best remembered for the short story "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892), based on her own experiences with depression and the inadequacies of mental treatment at the time.

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## Norwich: James Lindsey Smith house (NR)

Smith escaped from slavery via the Underground Railroad, and eventually came to live

in Norwich's Jail Hill neighborhood, where he owned a home and a business. Smith's *Autobiography of James L. Smith* (1881), closes, "In conclusion, I must say that the more I contemplate the condition of my people, the more I am convinced that this is only the beginning of the end; but the end is not yet."

## Old Saybrook: James Pharmacy\* (NR)

Ann Petry (1908-1997) was the first African American to write a best-selling novel, *The Street* (1946), about life in Harlem. Two other novels, *County Place* (1947) and *The Narrows* (1953) draw on her life in Old Saybrook to explore relations between blacks and whites in small Northeastern towns. For children, Petry wrote biographies of Tituba and Harriet Tubman, as well as *The Drugstore Cat* (1949), set in Old Saybrook's James Pharmacy, owned by Petry's aunt, Anna James, and where Petry herself worked before she married.

C. Wigen



## Redding:

Born in Redding, Joel Barlow (1764-1812) was the most liberal of the Hartford Wits. Written while in France in 1796, "The Hasty-Pudding" nostalgically celebrates that humblest of New England creations, cornmeal mush.

"I sing the sweets I know, the charms I feel,  
My morning incense, and my evening meal,  
The sweets of Hasty-Pudding. Come, dear bowl,  
Glide o'er my palate and inspire my soul.  
The milk beside thee, smoking from the kine,  
Its substance mingled, married in with thine,  
Shall cool and temper thy superior heat,  
And save the pains of blowing while I eat."

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division



## Salisbury: Scoville Memorial Library\* (NR)

Calling itself "America's first publicly funded library," the Scoville Library traces its history to a subscription library founded in 1771 by Salisbury resident Richard Smith. The original regulations embody the high value placed on education: "Whereas, we the subscribers looking

upon it consistent with our duty to promote and encourage every rational Plan that may be proposed for the Encouragement of true religion; for the Promoting of Virtue, Education, and Learning; for the Discouragement of Vice and Immorality... a Library of Books on Divinity, Philosophy, and History, &c. may be conducive to bring to pass the above laudable design..." The current building was constructed in 1891.

## Silvermine: (NR in process)

Primarily known as an artists' colony since the early 20th century, Silvermine has also been home to a number of authors, several of whom used the picturesque and historic community as a setting for their works, including Edward Eager (1922-1964), who set three children's books here, and Faith Baldwin (1893-1978), who renamed the area "Little Oxford" in her novels. Other Silvermine hunters have included mystery novelist Evan Hunter (1926-2005), who also wrote as Ed McBain, and Vance Packard (1914-1996), journalist, social critic, and author of *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957).

## Southbury: S. G. Goodrich house (NR)

Under the pseudonym "Peter Parley," S. G. Goodrich (1793-1860) wrote volumes of history, geography, biography and science for children, many of which were used as textbooks. His magazine, *The Token*, published some of Nathaniel Hawthorne's first stories, and Peter Parley even rated a mention in James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Born in Ridgefield, Goodrich retired to Southbury after many years abroad.

## Southbury: Sanford Road (NR)

Gladys Taber's (1899-1980) descriptions of life in rural Southbury, published in her columns in *Ladies'*

*Home Journal* and *The Family Circle*, still attract loyal followers. Her own house and the farm of her neighbors (protected by a CTHP easement), featured prominently in her writings.

Perhaps the most important aspect of March to me is the view of Jeremy Swamp Road from my window. Footprints of winter are still there, and ice silvers the grasses, but the bushes stand with their feet in the dark water. It is as if the swamp suddenly shook off the blanket of snow and felt life pulsing in the roots. ("Butternut Wisdom," March 1967)

Cunningham Associates



continued on page 14

**Stonington: James Merrill's apartment (NR)**

Beginning in 1954, James Merrill (1926-1995) and his companion, David Jackson, spent their summers in Stonington. Village life and the apartment itself inspired some of Merrill's most important work, including *The Changing Light at Sandover* (1982), a book-length epic poem based on his and Jackson's communications with the spirit world by means of a Ouija board. The Stonington Village Improvement Association now owns the building and maintains the apartment as a residence for writers.

**Thompson: Ellen D. Larned house (NR)**

Local history was a burgeoning genre in the second half of the 19th century. An early practitioner was Thompson's Ellen D. Larned (1825-1912), whose *History of Windham County* appeared in 1858.

**West Hartford: Noah Webster birthplace\* (NHL)**

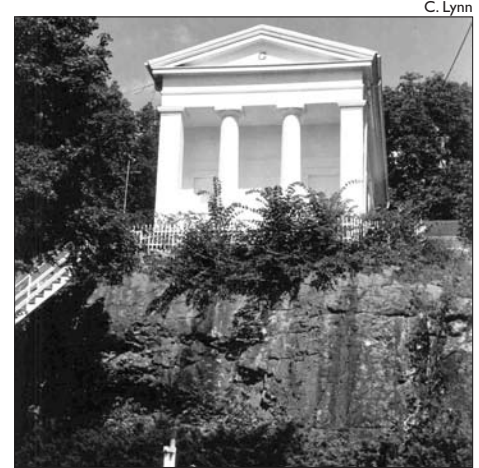
Webster (1758-1843), author of the famous *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), was born in this farmhouse, now a museum. As an adult Webster lived in New Haven, in a house that was moved to Henry Ford's Greenfield Village museum in Michigan in 1936.

**Winsted:**

Rose Terry Cooke (1827-1892) was a member of the "democratic regionalism" movement. She expressed her admiration for the "industrious poor" in poetry and stories such as *Happy Dodd* (1879) and *Huckleberries Gathered from New England Hills* (1892).

**Woodbury: King Solomon Masonic Lodge (NR)**

William Styron (1925-2006) used this dramatically sited little building in the opening passage of his novel, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (Random House, 1966). He was inspired by a



C. Lynn

dream that his daughter had about the building. Styron (1925-2006) lived in Roxbury.

*"Now as I drift near the cape I raise my eyes to the promontory facing out upon the sea. There again I see what I know I will see, as always. In the sunlight the building stands white—stark*

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white and serene against a blue and cloudless sky. It is square and formed of marble, like a temple, and is simply designed, possessing no columns or windows but rather, in place of them, recesses whose purpose I cannot imagine."

**Woodstock: Eliot Rock**

Eliot Rock is said to be the spot where John Eliot (1604-1690), the "Apostle to the Indians," preached to Wabbaquassetts in 1674. Eliot translated parts of the Bible into various Native American languages, and his *Indian Bible* (1663) was the first Bible printed in America.

**For more information:**

Christopher Collier with Bonnie B. Collier, *The Literature of Connecticut History (Occasional Papers of the Connecticut Humanities Council, No. 6, 1983)*. Their essay on literature can be found online at [www.ctheritage.org/biography/topical\\_culture/literature.htm](http://www.ctheritage.org/biography/topical_culture/literature.htm).

William Corbett, *Literary New England: A History and Guide* (Faber & Faber, 1993).

Glenn White, *The Connecticut Handbook: Authors, Legends, Literary Sites* (Connecticut English Journal).

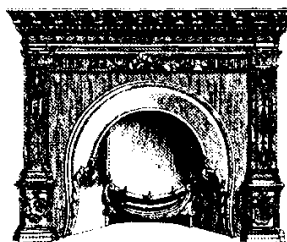
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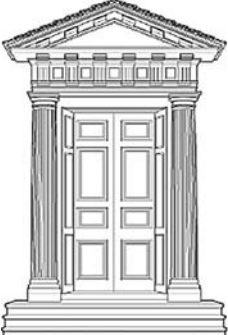
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## Leave Storm Windows Up

*I am thinking about making wooden storm sash for my 1909 Foursquare. I know I saw an article about it in the Old House Journal some years back, but I can't remember the issue—can you tell me where it is? Also, do you think it is sensible to hinge them so that they can be opened in warm weather without having to take them down—quite a frightening thought on my three attic dormers thirty feet off the ground.*

The article you are looking for is "Making & Hand-Fitting Wooden Storms, by William Houze, in the Sept.-Oct. 1989 issue. It is definitely a good idea to hinge them at the top. There are "loop and hook" fittings that act as hinges. You will also need special storm hooks that fasten the bottom of the window shut or hold it open. This traditional hardware setup sometimes allows you to remove and hang the storms from inside the house. This requires a lot of shoulder, arm and hand strength and is not easy to do. With in-swinging casement windows the sash open to give access through the whole window opening. Double hung sash may have to be removed, more of a task, but possibly safer than third-story exterior ladder work. A convenient alternative is a combination storm/screen product made by Midwest Architectural Wood Products. This is a traditional looking screen with a wood frame. The prototype for this window was developed for the historic Liddig House, in Davenport, Iowa. A wood cross bar provides strength and can be custom-placed to match the position of your window's meeting rails.

The frame is applied to the face of the exterior window casings in the usual way. Glass storm panel inserts can be slipped onto the interior side of the

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