



Connecticut Preservation News

March/April 2015

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Village Districts: Zoning for Preservation

By Brad Schide, Connecticut Circuit Rider

Historic preservation and zoning often can be at odds with one another. Preservation is associated with architecture, diversity, historic context and building protections, while zoning is concerned with uses, uniformity, lot, and parking restrictions. Zoning may not prohibit the rehabilitation of historic buildings in neighborhoods, but its requirements can make that effort difficult.

As a rule, zoning controls development by limiting heights, uses, and lot coverage in a given area, but does not look at a property's character, context, or its historic design. Since historic buildings and streetscapes do not meet the uniformity envisioned under typical zoning regulations, preserving and reusing historic buildings requires a variance—an exception from the zoning regulations where following the regulations would create a hardship for the property owner. An example might be where an

continued on page 4

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

As of late February, Governor Dannel Malloy has proposed eliminating all funding for history and historic preservation activity in his 2016-2017 budget. The Connecticut Trust is working with other historical organizations and legislative allies to restore funding, and encourages its members to urge their state representatives and senators to support history funding.

For updates, visit www.cttrust.org and www.communityinvestmentact.org.

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Lebanon adopted village district zoning to encourage more varied uses around the town green while protecting the green's historic character.

T. Levine

New Listings on the National Register

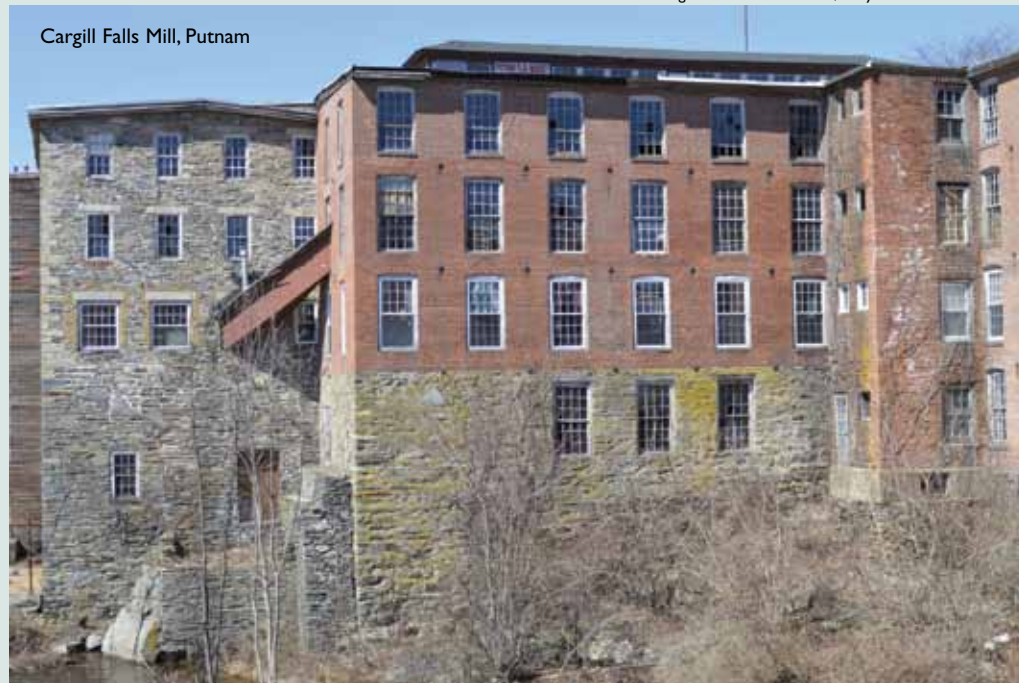
Six Connecticut sites newly listed on the National Register of Historic Places augment the record of the state's growth and development over a period of more than 200 years. With listing, these sites gain historical recognition plus eligibility for preservation grants or tax credits. The descriptions that follow are adapted from the nominations.

Located on the Quinebaug River in Putnam, **Cargill Falls Mill** reflects the early development, growth and nearly continuous operation of the textile industry in northeastern Connecticut. With abundant supply of water power, the site supported a variety of early milling operations and became the location of Windham County's first cotton mill, constructed for Rhode Island investors who established the Pomfret Manufacturing Company. The mill's prime location, successful entrepreneurship, and access to immigrant populations and rail lines promoted the development of what was to become Putnam's downtown core.

The twenty-building complex, with surviving structures dating from 1824 to 1950, represents more than 125 years of mill architecture. While the original four-story, wood-framed mill constructed in 1806 by Smith Wilkinson, agent for the Pomfret Manufacturing Company, is no longer extant, its stone foundations survive and serve as the basis for later, more fireproof, mill construction. The complex was expanded over the next century as the mills evolved to produce woolen goods, which required additional picking, washing, and dyeing facilities. After a switch to synthetics, textile production continued until 1984.

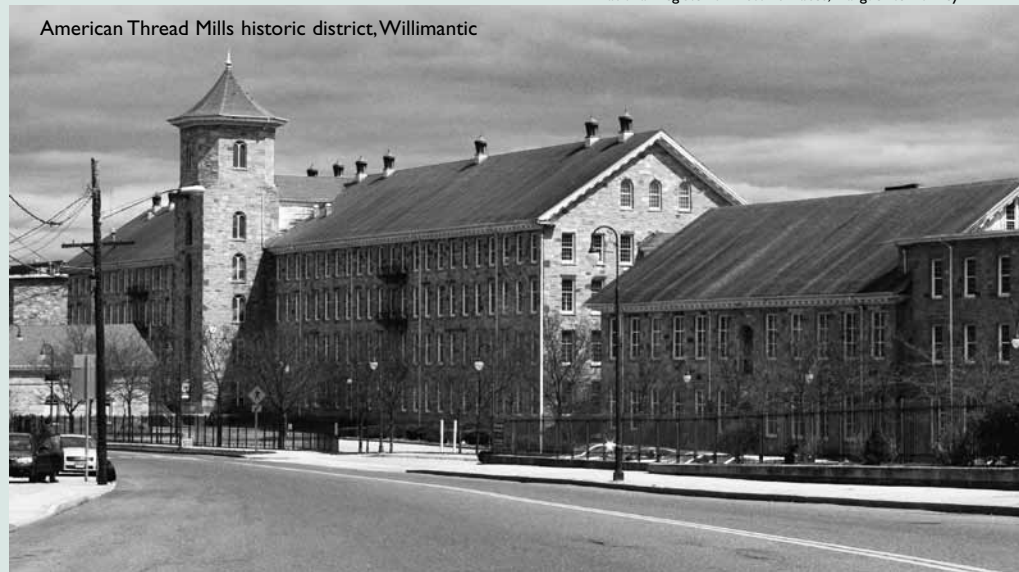
—*Evelyn Cole Smith,*
CME Architecture, Inc.

The **American Thread Mill complex**, located in Willimantic, is significant as a major textile mill that contributed to the rapid growth of Willimantic and played an important role in its development as a



Cargill Falls Mill, Putnam

National Register of Historic Places, Marguerite Rodney



American Thread Mills historic district, Willimantic

center of textile manufacturing. Beginning in 1857, the mill harnessed the power of the Willimantic River and provided a livelihood for hundreds of workers over several generations. Textile manufacturing was continuous on the site for almost 130 years, beginning with linen, quickly changing to cotton, and eventually switching to synthetic textiles, before closing in 1985. Mill No. 2, which has visually dominated the complex since 1864, was the site of early experimentation with electric lighting, leading to the radically different design of Mill No. 4 (1880; burned 1995) as the first mill building in the world designed for electric lighting. Despite the loss of

most of the complex's later brick mills, it retains much of its character through the survival of its earlier stone buildings, built of granite gneiss quarried from the banks of the Willimantic River. The buildings are excellent examples of mid to late 19th-century mill architecture. An early 20th-century concrete warehouse also remains, along with a stable, a storehouse, and a combination library-company store.

—*Marguerite Carnell Rodney*

The **Mystic Bank**, in the Town of Stonington, was founded by a group of local businessmen in 1833 to serve the

continued on page 6

From the Executive Director

We have sold the **Thomas Lyman house** (c.1791) in Durham. Individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1976, the house was a gift to the Trust in June 2013 from Lillian Hardy of New York City. Before putting the house on the market, we invested in a new septic system, removed large fallen trees from the property, washed and painted parts of the exterior and interior, oiled the floors, got rid of powder post beetles and termites, and then crossed our fingers for a buyer. We had an Open House in August that summer that yielded a great deal of interest but no buyers. The winter of 2014 was cold, and we endured burst pipes, a theft of copper tubing in the basement and large oil bills. By early summer we became convinced that the price of the house had to be decreased to attract a buyer. And we were right: Frank and Rose Tomaszewski of East Haven, who had been looking at the house for months, jumped in and made a bid that the Trust could accept.

The Tomaszewkis plan to live in the house as they slowly make repairs and restore it. Both the exterior of the house and the thirteen acres of land are protected by a Connecticut Trust preservation easement. For an added protection that gives the Town of Durham a say in the preservation of the house and property, the town is forming a study committee to prepare for designating the house as a Local Historic Property.

Proceeds from the Lyman house will go to the Trust's nascent **Revolving Fund**, which will make loans and take real estate purchase options on underutilized historic properties. With a grant from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority we were able to give Mutual Housing of South Central Connecticut a loan to bridge the historic tax credit at Gaffney Place in Waterbury. That loan has come due, just as we add the Lyman house capital to the fund. And I am delighted to report that The 1772 Foundation has recently granted us

\$75,000 for one year to invest in Revolving Fund projects. Let Greg Farmer know if you have a property you need us to help you with. He can be reached at (203) 464-7380; circuitrider@cttrust.org.

In February, Deputy Director Christopher Wigren helped teach a continuing education course on **Sustainability and Historic Preservation** for the Connecticut chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Chris outlined preservation basics, made the case for recycling historic structures, and described how traditional builders planned buildings to use available energy efficiently. His co-teacher, Ross Spiegel, FAIA, of Fletcher Thompson, Inc., discussed technical issues and walked attendees through the sustainable historic rehabilitation of the Mechanic and Farmers Savings Bank building (1930; NR), in Bridgeport. More than ever, we're convinced that the greenest building is one that's already built! 🌱

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

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Upcoming Meetings

Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

April 1, 2015, at 9:30 a.m.
May 6, 2015, at 9:30 a.m.

State Historic Preservation Board

March 30, 2015, at 9:30 a.m.

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owner wants to reconstruct a front porch and it is discovered that the house already exceeds lot coverage allowed by zoning. Even though the house historically may have had a porch, the fact that it is no longer there, and that building a new one would exceed allowable lot coverage, means the owner would need a variance. But historic preservation, or history in general, are not considered hardships. In some cases, frustration with complicated procedures leads owners to look to demolition as an option.

Planners and preservationists need to come together on regulations that monitor land uses, protect and enhance historic assets, and produce a sense of place. Village District Zoning has become one strategy for doing that.

The Village Districts Act, passed by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1998, is a tool to help municipalities protect and preserve their community character and historic development patterns. Under the law, a town can designate village districts to protect areas that have distinctive character, landscape and historic structures. This is done through zoning regulations, which are passed by the town planning and zoning commission and which are written to reinforce existing building and streetscape patterns and support the architectural themes, scale, and proportions of existing buildings. According to the Act, “in adopting the regulations, the zoning commission shall consider the design, relationship and compatibility of structures, plantings, signs, roadways, street hardware and other objects in public view.”

Despite its name, village district zoning can be used in urban, suburban and rural areas—any place where there is a concentration of historic buildings. The district boundaries are defined by the planning and zoning commission and may follow National or State Register district boundaries or may include a collection of undesignated historic buildings.

Village districts are the only zoning initiative that provide professional expertise to the planning and zoning commission. The law requires the town to designate a “village district consultant”—an architect, landscape architect or certified planner—to be involved in deliberations on properties. The consultant’s duties are to review



With a VCI grant from the Connecticut Trust Lebanon held community workshops to build consensus for village district zoning

proposals based on the Secretary of Interior Standards, federal guidelines for the reuse of historic buildings. The consultant provides written reviews and recommendations to the zoning commission for action concerning proposed projects located within the village district boundaries. Having a professional consultant makes it possible for zoning commissions to review proposals based, not only on zoning and design requirements, but also on historic preservation criteria and the reuse of historic buildings.

In 2013 Lebanon enacted two village districts, covering the area around the town green. A great number of historic resources surround the green—it is a National Register district and contains two National Historic Landmarks as well as one of Connecticut’s most evocative rural landscapes—but most of the resources have no protections except the village district zone and its design guidelines.

Lebanon’s goal was to protect historic assets, but also to promote use of properties for business and economic development purposes, encouraging small restaurants and home-based occupations, such as bed and breakfast inns. The previous zoning did not permit these uses along the Green and had no design controls.

According to Lebanon’s town planner, Philip Chester, the new zone permits the

town to control changes of streetscapes and design changes to buildings located in and around their historic green. “The previous zone did not permit the Zoning Commission to review a property based on its history,” he says.

To assist the Commission in evaluating the plans for the properties, the village district regulations set up a design review board. “The Review Board is appointed by the Planning Commission, made up of mostly residents within the district, and has a volunteer resident planner/landscape architect who serves as the professional consultant.”

Mr. Chester believes that communication was key to facilitating the new village districts; the town has heavily publicized the zones before and after enactment. “We felt we needed to go out of our way to follow up with residents after the adoption of Village District Zoning by sending them copies of the regulations and notifying them that they were in the district and the expectation to abide by the regulations.”

As Lebanon’s communications efforts show, the structure of a village district has to be carefully thought out—something best done through a community process that creates a consensus before the town enacts the measure.

As a way to reach that consensus, the Connecticut Trust’s Vibrant Community



Connecticut's newest village district, in Stony Creek, took effect on February 1. Because oversized new construction poses the biggest threat to village character, design review applies only to buildings over 3,500 square feet.

involved, is a draft of the proposed regulations, design guidelines and boundaries, as well as a timeline for submission and enactment. The Connecticut Circuit Rider program can also provide technical assistance beyond the grant period.

Village district zoning provides an effective way for towns to combine the important elements of zoning and historic preservation protections, but it does not necessarily replace other preservation tools such as a demolition delay, preservation ordinances, or local historic districts. Yet, as one option,

village district zoning can meet many historic preservation goals by highlighting and protecting historic areas, encouraging walkability, mixed uses and diverse streetscapes, and guiding the design and compatibility of new construction. 🌿

For more on village districts, visit www.cttrust.org or write to circuitrider@cttrust.org.

Initiative (VCI), funded through the State Historic Preservation Office of the Department of Economic and Community Development, has worked with local municipalities and zoning commissions to help them implement village districts. With VCI funding, municipalities have engaged multi-disciplinary teams to look at land use and historic building reuse issues and recommend solutions, which can include

village districts. To date, seven VCI recipients—Lebanon, Westport, South Windsor, Clinton, Waterford, Norwalk, and Ansonia—have pursued village districts through the grant.

The main advantage of the VCI grants is the requirement to involve stakeholders such as residents, government officials, and zoning officers. A final deliverable for a VCI grant, where a village district is

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growing shipbuilding community of Mystic and the surrounding area. By 1856, the bank was ready for a larger building. However, the shift of the economic center of the community from the head of the river to the communities of Mystic River and Mystic Bridge at its mouth had already begun. By 1887 the settlement at the head of the river was no longer the focus of the community and the bank it supported could no longer survive. In 1887 the bank closed. Just three years later, the name of the village was changed to *Old Mystic*, and Mystic River and Mystic Bridge were given a single post office with the name of Mystic.

The Mystic Bank is a well-preserved example of a small Greek Revival bank building. While modest compared to the academic Greek Revival buildings constructed in the country's urban centers, it nevertheless played an important role in the small town of Mystic in the middle of the 19th century. Constructed of brick and decorated with an eye toward the fashions of the day it possessed the solidity and grandeur needed to inspire confidence in the bank's customers and shareholders.

—James Sexton, Ph.D.

The **Hartford National Bank and Trust**, constructed between 1963 and 1967, is a major, architecturally significant contributor to downtown Hartford. The well integrated, distinctive design is the work of Welton Becket, FAIA (1902-1969), a nationally renowned architect. The level of significance is further enhanced by the contrast of the sophisticated formalism of Becket's design within the generally limited architectural language that prevailed in Hartford during this period. A harmonious counterpoint to the Old State House, the bank tower still serves as a guardian sentinel of the urban precinct, enhancing the architectural construct of the "Gateway to Hartford" envisioned by the urban planners of the 1960s.

In an urban context that produced many generic, unadorned glass and concrete high-rise buildings, Becket's skillful handling of precast concrete produced a unique high-rise, unlike any of the thirty other structures of this type built in Hartford in the second half of the 20th century. His unique interpretation of the Modernist style is also an exceptional example of an advanced level of structural engineering design. Although a number of other high-rise buildings feature a recessed façade arcade, here the stiling of the tower on just corner columns rather than multiple intermediate supports, was considered at the time



Mystic Bank, Old Mystic

Hartford National Bank and Trust building, Hartford



to be a unique departure from standard engineering practice.

—Jan Cunningham
Historic Preservation Services

The **White-Overton-Callender house**, located in Portland, is significant because of the role its various owners have played in Connecticut and American history. Captain Nathaniel White I, the initial landholder, was among the original proprietors of Middletown and was one of the first colonists to hold land on the eastern bank of the Connecticut River in the area that now is Portland. White's grandson, Captain Nathaniel White II, was among the 29 families who established the Third Society of Middletown, comprising the present towns of Portland and East Hampton, and it was he who built the house, between 1711 and 1714. In 1796, after being passed down through the White family, the residence was acquired by General Seth Overton, who served as a procurement officer during the Revolutionary War and commissioned the pirate-raiding frigate *USS Connecticut* in 1798. Currently occupied by the Portland Historical Society, the White-Overton-Callender house represents a fine example of Connecticut architecture



White-Overton-Callender house, Portland

which, although altered over the course of its nearly three hundred-year history, retains a notable degree of its early historical character and details. Colonial Revival alterations are typical of early 20th-century residential treatments to 18th-century buildings and as they have sympathetically graced the house for nearly 100 years have attained historic significance in their own right.

—Lucas Karmazinas,
FuturePast Preservation

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Erected as a convent and parish school in 1883 in response to Connecticut's expanding Irish work force, **Lakeville Manor**, in Salisbury, reflects the Catholic Church's essential role in shaping the immigrant experience during America's Industrial Revolution. Beginning in the 1840s, when roughly one-half of the two million Irish arriving in the country settled in New England, Catholics made a vital contribution to Connecticut's developing industrial economy. The growth of the Catholic Church in the state's mineral-rich Northwest Corner—one of America's major 19th-century centers for iron production—related directly to an influx of Irish laborers who filled mining jobs that others were unwilling to take. Lakeville's establishment as the seat of St. Mary's parish in 1875 indicates how important this company town had become in a region whose economy depended on the output of its numerous forges and blast furnaces. Constructed just a few years later at signifi-

Lakeville Manor, Salisbury



cant expense, the St. Joseph's Convent and St. Mary's parish school recall the broader socioeconomic effects 19th-century industrialization had on rural communities, while exemplifying the importance placed on parochial education by a minority population attempting to find its place in

a traditionally Protestant culture. From 1921 to 1968, the site was part of Lakeville Manor, a vacation house and summer camp operated by the Connecticut Council of Catholic Women.

—Rachel Carley



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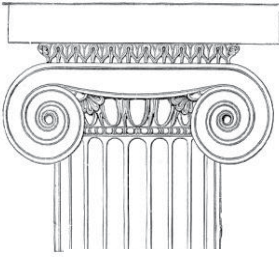
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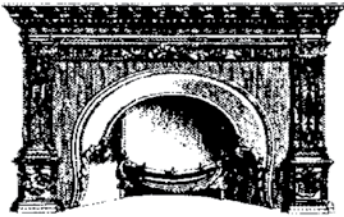
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Hartford Courant Headlines

In 1975, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation was created by the General Assembly to, "preserve, restore and reuse historic architecturally significant buildings and sites to their compatible ambience." 40 years later we are still committed!

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Briefly Noted

Bristol. ►

In January, the City Council voted to sell the former Bingham (1916) and O’Connell (1940, pictured) schools for redevelopment as senior housing. The Park Lane Group plans to put 35 market-rate units in each building and to apply for federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits. Bristol Hospital wanted to demolish the Bingham School to build new offices.



G. Farmer

Greenwich. ►

A preliminary agreement between the Greenwich Point Conservancy, the current owners, and the prospective buyer will preserve one of the town’s oldest houses. The Ferris house, said to date to the 17th century (but rebuilt since then), was slated for demolition for a new, bigger house. Under the agreement, the buyer will construct a new house on the property, and a preservation easement will be placed on the Ferris house, which the Conservancy will restore and open to the public on a limited basis.



Greenwich Point Conservancy

Guilford. ▼

An English archaeologist has counted tree rings to solve an historical mystery. Over the years, estimates have placed the construction of the Hyland House (NR) anywhere between 1660 and 1725. Last fall, the museum invited Daniel Miles of the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory to study the house. Dr. Miles took core samples from framing timbers and analyzed the patterns of the tree rings. By comparing them to known samples, he determined that the house was built from trees cut in the winter and spring of 1712-1713. Since green timber was typically used for framing, the house almost certainly was built in 1713.



Hyland House Museum

Note: “NR” indicates places listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



◀ **Hartford.**

After intervention by the Hartford Preservation Alliance and other community activists, the City has delayed demolition of 220 High Street (c.1855), in the Downtown North National Register district. Construction of a new baseball stadium just outside the district is sparking extensive redevelopment in the area. The City and its developer, Centerplan Development, planned new apartment buildings on the house's site. But under the Hartford preservation ordinance the city's historic preservation commission must approve any demolition of National Register-listed buildings. Preservationists are urging Centerplan to incorporate the house into its development.



◀ **New Haven.**

With the closing of the Anchor Bar, preservationists and community activists have been urging Yale University Properties, the building's owner, to preserve the longtime bar's Art Moderne storefront, dating from about 1940, and its matching sign, from the 1960s. While Yale has been sympathetic, the real test will be the desires of the space's next tenant. The building is part of the Chapel Street National Register district.

New London. ▼

The city's landmark Union Station (1885; NR) has been sold to a limited liability corporation headed by James Coleman, Jr. Mr. Coleman is Chairman of the Board of the proposed Coast Guard Museum, slated to be built on the pier opposite the station, which was designed by H. H. Richardson. The sale will give the museum input into future use of the station, including plans for a pedestrian bridge to be built over the railroad tracks.

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Gregg Wies Gardner Architects



R. Tribert

Simsbury. ▶

Developer Chestnut Hill Associates of Simsbury LLC has acquired the Joseph R. Ensign house (1905; NR) with plans to convert it to luxury apartments. Constructed for a leader of the Ensign-Bickford Company, the house was given to the First Church of Christ for a parish house in 1955 and converted to a bank in 1987, winning an award from the Hartford Architecture Conservancy. The developers plan to apply for state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits for the \$10 million conversion.



National Register of Historic Places, Cunningham Associates, Ltd., 1991

Southbury. ▶

Advocates for the intellectually disabled and government officials are calling for the Southbury Training School (1938ff.; NR) to be closed. Changing philosophies of treatment and the cost of maintaining and upgrading aging buildings have led to the closure of many historic health-care facilities in past decades. If the Training School is to be next, the State must start now to make plans for preserving its campus, an important reminder of Connecticut's history of caring for its citizens. A plan to secure, maintain, and efficiently market the property for reuse will protect taxpayers' investment and enable the school to avoid the shameful fate of such places as the state hospitals in Preston and Newtown, the Mansfield Training School, and the Seaside Sanatorium.





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Library of Congress, Gottscho-Schleisner Inc., 1955



◀ **Stratford.**

In February, the Town Council heard three redevelopment proposals for the long-vacant American Shakespeare Festival Theatre (1955; NR). The first, from the Stratford Stage Group, calls for building a hotel on the property to subsidize theater operations. The Elm Street Theater Company wants to rehab the building with historic and other credits and loans. The third proposal, from the Cultural Arts Center Project, calls for razing the theater and building an outdoor amphitheater and a small black-box in its place. The festival theater attracted world-class productions from the 1950s to the early 1980s. The State took it over in 1983, but revival efforts failed to achieve lasting success and in 2005 the property passed to the Town. The Council has not scheduled a vote on the proposals.

▼ **Waterford.**

Sasaki Associates, of Watertown, Massachusetts, is leading a feasibility study to determine best uses of the state's proposed park at the Seaside Sanatorium site (1934; NR), to be completed by mid-April. At a public information meeting in early February, team members listed one of the goals for the site to be "to restore, preserve and reuse historic assets where feasible." A complete conditions assessment of the historic buildings has yet to be completed, but preliminary investigations seem to indicate that they are usable, leaving funding as the main issue. Written feedback from the public also seems to support preservation; an online survey is posted at fluidsurveys.com/s/seaside/.

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Joel Stocker



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Savings Bank of New London 63 Eugene O' Neil Drive, New London

Great location in Downtown New London National Register District. Although this 34,000+ SF mixed-use retail/office building currently has two tenants, there is ample vacancy on the street level and 2nd floor. The interior and exterior of this section include many elaborate finishes such as vaulted ceilings, intricate woodwork throughout and a marble fireplace in the boardroom. The district is a hub of creative energy that gives the city its Top Ten rating among creative communities of its size in America. Art, music, and design venues, one-of-a-kind boutiques, and more than 30 eateries populate this 26-block National Register Historic District in New London, Connecticut.

Find listing agent and other property information at <http://www.loopnet.com/Listing/18953171/63-Eugene-O-Neill-Drive-New-London-CT/>



loopnet.com

Ponemah Mill (1884) 555 Norwich Avenue, Norwich

Taftville Ponemah Mill National Register Historic District. Finished and unfinished spaces available at historic brick warehouse building for the world's largest cotton mill. Built along the Shetucket River, the property is zoned to allow manufacturing and warehousing. The City of Norwich is encouraging housing development at an adjacent 5-story manufacturing mill.

Find listing agent and other property information at <http://www.loopnet.com/Listing/17948892/555-Norwich-Ave-Norwich-CT/>



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Hartford Italianate (1890) 15 Townley Street, Hartford

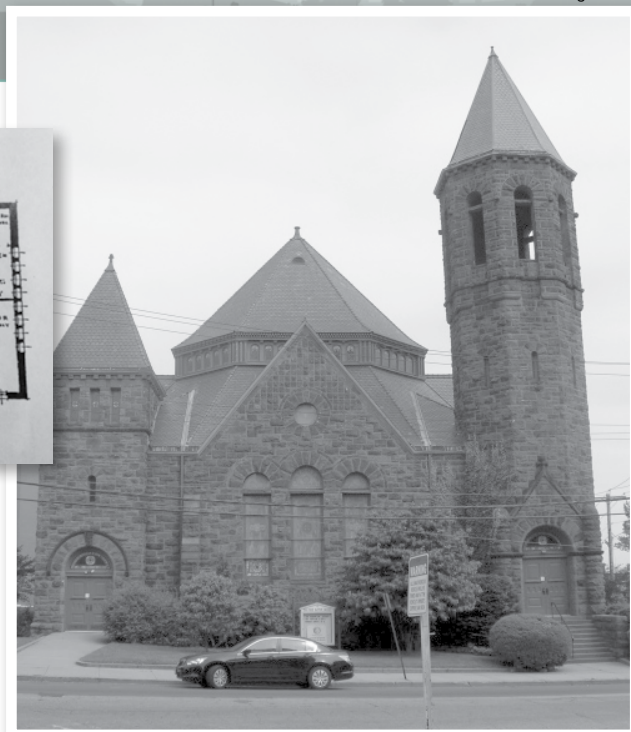
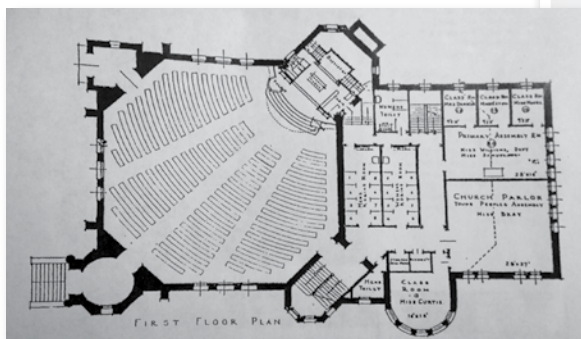
The loss of several mid-19th century buildings within the past twelve months has led the Hartford Preservation Alliance to list all of Hartford's Italianate buildings on its Top Ten Most Endangered Buildings watch list (<http://www.hartfordpreservation.org/2015-endangered-properties-list/>). This property is located within the Asylum Hill neighborhood, in walking distance to St. Francis Hospital. Large units with potential for rents in the \$950+ range. No renovations have been completed; the property will be sold as-is. A package deal is available with 17 Townley Street.

For more information on this property, contact the listing agent, Cynthia Burke and Associates at (855) 205-5156.

First Baptist Church (1893) 126 Washington Avenue, Bridgeport

Perfect for inventive philanthropist or not-for-profit! Individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this Richardsonian Romanesque church is constructed of local East Haven red sandstone. The architect, Joseph W. Northrop, incorporated an innovative auditorium plan in the layout. In 1930, a 17,918 SF parish house addition was built. Near to all public transportation and I-95 and Route 8. All offers will be considered. Rehabilitation may qualify for federal and state historic tax credits.

Find listing agent and other property information at <http://www.loopnet.com/Listing/18946433/126-Washington-Avenue-Bridgeport-CT/>.



litchfieldcountycommercial.com

McCarthy Block (c 1901) 120 East Main Street, Torrington

A contributing resource in the Downtown Torrington National Register Historic District, this landmark building is located next to a family-owned drugstore and across the street from St. Peter's Church. An additional lot to the rear allows for a generous amount of parking and access to side streets. Eight units total—two are first-floor commercial/retail units. A handsome building that retains much of its exterior architectural detail. Architect Carl D. Janssen may have originally designed the building as the East End Hotel, but it was never used as such. Rehabilitation of this property may qualify for federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits.

Find listing agent and other property information at <http://www.coldwellbankermoves.com/property/details/4392115/MLS-L10021317/120-East-Main-St-Torrington-CT-06790.aspx> [MLS# L10021317]



Deadline for submission to the May/June 2015 issue is April 10, 2014.

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

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

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



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Town Bridge, cont'd from page 20

in the nation,” according to TranSystems Corporation, the town’s engineering consultant.

Town Bridge is a rare survivor, one of only two “pin-connected Parker through truss” types remaining in the state. For those with some engineering savvy, it’s a living history lesson. Held together with both pins and rivets, it presages a transition to completely riveted designs. “With its combination of idiosyncratic and standardized components typical of the period,” writes the consultant, “the bridge chronicles the technological advances in a host of areas from metallurgy to . . . the very development of the profession of structural engineering.” It was the work of J.E. Buddington, an 1877 Yale graduate well known for area bridge designs.

At the town meeting, architectural details and engineering history were far

from hot topics. And while cost, closure inconveniences and environmental concerns were raised, speakers focused on the bridge’s beauty, both with sun sparkling on the trusses and in its seasonal chameleonic shadows and reflections on the river. Even the limitation of a single lane was praised for enabling people to slowly enjoy a view up and down stream. One person called it the original traffic calming measure, forcing drivers to step on the brake. There were recollections of swimming, paddling and even jumping off the bridge. Town Bridge, it seemed, was as much a work of public art and a means of civic expression as a way of crossing the river.

Faced with several alternatives from doing nothing and letting the bridge fall apart to replacing it with a wide, modern concrete span, there was overwhelming

support for restoring and strengthening the structure. Originally built at a cost of about \$8,500 and fitted with a wood plank deck, almost everyone was willing to part with just under \$2.9 million to keep the bridge in service for another century.

Long a local icon whose image has graced the cover of many reports and flashes on the town’s website, citizens have clearly developed an attachment to the old span that speaks of home. As Canton’s town meeting moderator, I’ve heard lots of vigorous public debate, some of it hotly contested. Never have I heard such heartfelt, elegiac pleas. Clearly, Town Bridge does more than connect opposite banks of the Farmington River. It bridges time as well as space, stitching a community together in more ways than commonly imagined.

Author David K. Leff is Canton’s town historian. This article is reprinted, with permission, from his website, <http://davidkleff.typepad.com>.

Preservation through Documentation Recording Modernist Landscapes

For its sixth annual Challenge, the Historic American Landscapes Survey is seeking entries that document significant Modernist landscapes that define specific regions of the country.

The Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) was created in 2000 to document our country’s landscapes—a parallel to the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record.

During the mid-20th century, landscape architects used design as an agent of social change, creating human-scale spaces, modern forms, and sculptural compositions which were intended to be experienced rather than simply viewed. However, many works by renowned Modernist landscape architects now face threats despite growing national awareness.

Modernist landscapes remain in all fifty states, but they may be unnoticed, their significance unappreciated. People from every state are hereby challenged to complete at least one HALS Short Format History to document these rapidly vanishing and often overlooked resources.

Entries should be submitted to HALS at the National Park Service no later than **July 31, 2015**. Guidelines, a brochure, and a digital template may be downloaded from the HALS website, <http://www.nps.gov/hdp/hals/>.

For more information, contact Chris Stevens at (202) 354-2146 or Chris_Stevens@nps.gov.



Constitution Plaza, completed in 1964, was Hartford’s most prominent urban renewal project. The project was unusual for the leading role played by its landscape design, developed by Sasaki, Dawson & DeMay, within architect Charles DuBose’s master plan.

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Bridging Time at Town Meeting

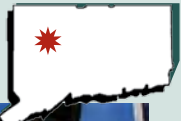
By David K. Leff

Neighbors gathering in late January for Canton, Connecticut's annual town meeting transformed an ordinary event into a Norman Rockwell moment. It could have been just more discussion of how to fix or replace and pay for yet another deteriorating element of highway infrastructure, in this case an old bridge. But it became an expression of deep affection for the community as seen through the silvery metal trusses of a one lane span over the Farmington River.

When Town Bridge was fabricated in 1895 by Connecticut's famed Berlin Iron Bridge Company there were only three hundred automobiles in the country. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it's a graceful 160-foot spider web of beams and trusses that sits high above the water on sturdy stone abutments with flared wing walls. It features decorative urns, lattice railings punctuated with cast iron floral medallions, cresting atop each portal, and other Victorian details. "The bridge presents as complete an array of period decoration as any" similar "bridge

continued on page 19

CONNECTICUT *Close-ups*



D. Leff

