

## National Attention to the Freeman Houses

Recent developments offer fresh hope for preserving one of Connecticut's most significant historic places. The Mary and Eliza Freeman houses were built in the 1840s by two sisters in present-day Bridgeport's South End. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the two modest, free-standing frame houses are

the sole surviving above-ground evidence of Little Liberia, a once-thriving community of free African Americans and Native Americans who lived apart from other established settlements.

One of a handful of such communities of non-European-Americans along the eastern seaboard in the antebellum years, Little Liberia boasted a luxurious seaside resort hotel,

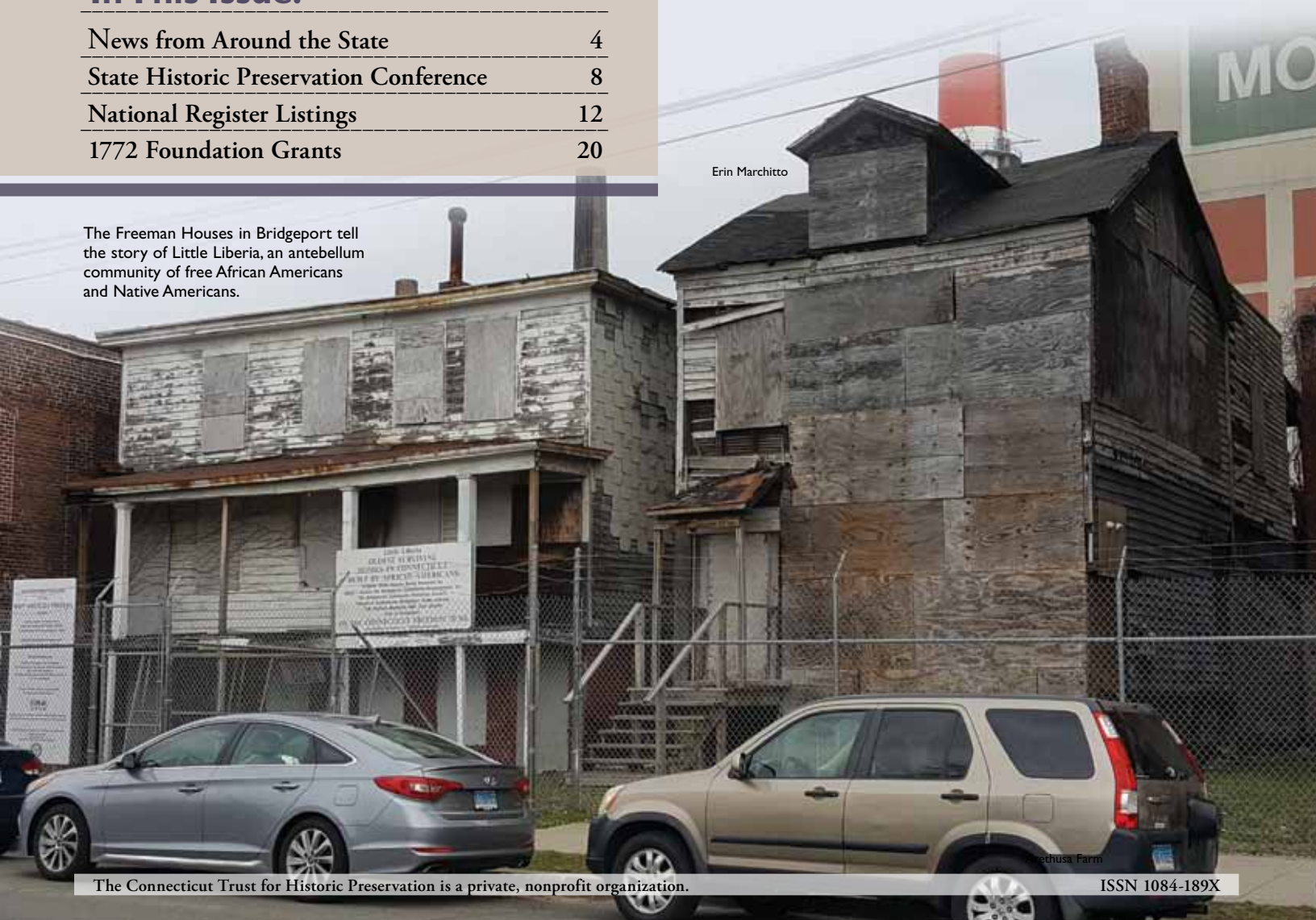
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The Freeman Houses in Bridgeport tell the story of Little Liberia, an antebellum community of free African Americans and Native Americans.

Erin Marchitto



Bridgeport's first free lending library, a school for its children, businesses, fraternal organizations, and churches, as well as homes for successful tradesmen and merchants.

The Freeman sisters exemplify Little Liberia. Born in Derby, Connecticut, Mary (1815-1883) and Eliza (1805-1862) Freeman were living in New York when they bought two lots in Little Liberia and

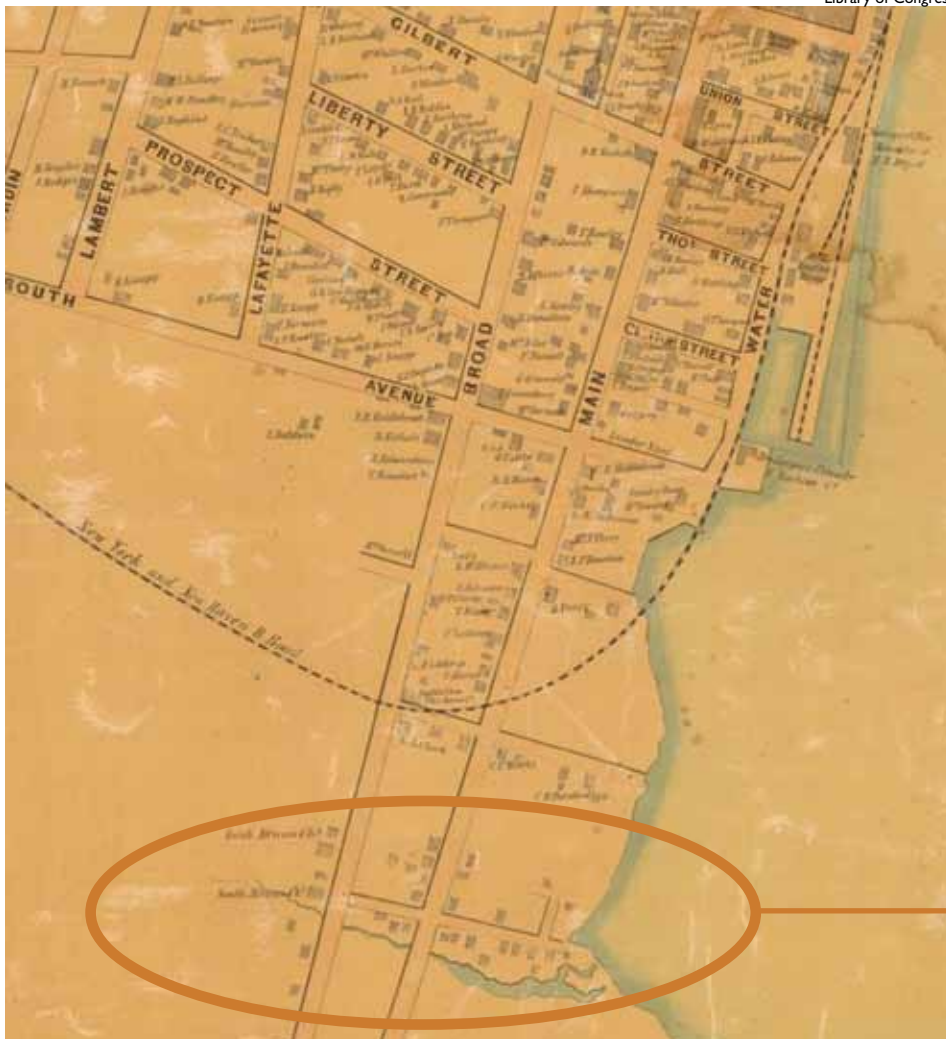
built the houses as rental properties. Both eventually moved to Bridgeport and were able to live off their real estate investments. When Mary Freeman died, the *Bridgeport Standard* reported that she was one of the city's wealthiest residents, owning between \$30,000 and \$50,000 worth of property in the city.

Restoration drawing of the Freeman Houses: although they look like many other houses of their time, they represent a rare and almost-forgotten history.

Michael Ong, courtesy of James Silvestro, Silvestro Design Operations



Library of Congress



On June 26, the National Trust for Historic Preservation recognized Bridgeport's Freeman Houses as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. The National Trust compiles this annual list to raise awareness of the threats facing some of America's greatest treasures to rally support for their preservation. Making the list sends a clear message that if urgent action is not taken, an irreplaceable place of great national significance will be lost.

"Mary and Eliza Freeman and their community of Little Liberia persevered in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds and achieved prosperity at a time when 90 percent of the nation's black population was enslaved," said Stephanie Meeks, president and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "We hope that by naming the Freeman Houses to our 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list we can help protect these historic homes as an enduring symbol of African American achievement in Connecticut and beyond."

The Freeman Houses join the the Cigna headquarters in Bloomfield (2001) and Merritt Parkway (2010) as the only Connecticut places the National Trust has named as endangered since the list was established in 1988. "The recognition helped resolve the immediate threats to both the Parkway and the International Style office building," said Jane Montanaro, Executive Director of the Connecticut Trust, "and we hope for a similar outcome with the Freeman Houses."

The Connecticut Trust has a long partnership with The Mary and Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community, which champions preservation of the site on behalf of ABCD, an anti-poverty

*continued on page 15*

In this detail of a map from 1850, Little Liberia appears as a loose cluster of buildings south of downtown Bridgeport.

## From the Executive Director

The National Trust's listing of the Freeman houses and George Washington's Mount Vernon among America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places is a call to action and a hopeful reminder of the origin story of American preservation. 165 years ago, when Little Liberia was new, Mount Vernon was as vacant and run-down as the Freeman houses are today. Distressed historic places bring together determined people. Champions of the Freeman houses can take heart from what the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association achieved many years ago. Both places attracted dynamic and effective champions. The Freeman houses found their champions in two of our outstanding Trustees, Adrienne Farrar Houel and Maisa Tisdale.

Sadly, both recently left the Trust board. We will greatly miss Adrienne, who lent her executive acumen and infectious

grace to the board since 2003, including two years as Secretary and a year as Vice Chair, and Maisa, whose passion for preservation inspires us all. We also say goodbye to Trustee Jane Grant, whose architectural expertise informed the Trust's grant-making.

Concurrently, we welcome two new Trustees. Ed Gerber, a former banker, has deep experience in preservation, having served in leadership positions on the boards of Historic Georgetown (DC) Inc.; the National Trust's Woodrow Wilson House Museum and affiliated 'friends' group; Friends of WWHM, and Westport's Historic District Commission and Historical Society. And Kristina Newman-Scott was appointed by Governor Malloy to fill the seat of former Trust Chairman Ed Schmidt who resigned in April. Kristina is the Director of Culture for the State of Connecticut where she oversees all aspects

of the state's programs and services related to art, culture, and historic preservation.

There's been much other news since the last issue of CPN. In May, about 90 people interested in investing in historic commercial properties around the Waterbury green gathered at an event co-sponsored by Connecticut and Waterbury Main Streets, the Mattatuck Museum, Webster Bank, and the Trust.

Around 60 members and others attended the Trust's Open House Talk at "Restmore" in Southport, open for the first time in many years. They heard from owner Dave Sturges and Circuit Rider Greg Farmer about its recent restoration.

The Revolving Loan Fund's first loan commitment kick-started construction by the Women's Institute to stabilize and rehabilitate the long-vacant former Reid & Hughes Department Store in downtown Norwich.

The Trust's portfolio of protected historic properties increased by two with the acceptance of preservation easements on the Adam Stanton house in Clinton and the Oliver West house in East Hampton.

On June 4, the Trust received two awards from statewide partners for Renée

*continued on page 14*

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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Printing: Kramer Printing, *West Haven*

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

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ISSN 1084-189X



## Upcoming Meetings

### Connecticut Historic Preservation Council August 1, 2018 at 9:30 a.m. Conference call

To participate contact Liz Shapiro  
(860) 500-2360; Elizabeth.Shapiro@ct.gov

### September 5, 2018 at 9:30 a.m. at the State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut

### State Historic Preservation Board September 14, 2018 at 9:30 a.m. 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut For more information call (860) 500-2343

# Briefly Noted

Courtesy of the Chester Historical Society



Barbara Delaney

## In Memoriam. ▲

Barbara S. Delaney, the last of the three original incorporators of the Connecticut Trust, died in March at her home in Chester. In 1975 she, along with Harlan H. Griswold of Woodbury and John F. Reynolds III of Middletown, formally launched the organization ahead of its chartering by the General Assembly. She also served on the Trust's Board of Trustees from 1975 to 1982. A writer and editor, Mrs. Delaney was on the staff of *The Magazine Antiques* from 1947 to 1970 and independently wrote on historical subjects, including *The Houses and History of Chester* (1976), which she edited for the Chester Historical Society, and texts for historical markers in Chester. In addition to her involvement with the Connecticut Trust, Mrs. Delaney spoke and wrote about preservation for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and served on the boards of the New York Municipal Arts Society, the Connecticut River Museum, the Chester Historical Society (which she and her late husband, historian Edmund Delaney, helped found), and a wide range of other environmental, cultural, and community organizations.



GNCB

## Barkhamsted. ▲

In June, the First Congregational Church of Barkhamsted moved back into its church building (1844; NR), which had been closed since August 2017, when engineers discovered a failed framing timber in the attic that spans almost 36 feet between the building's east and west walls. The project entailed reinforcing and stabilizing existing roof trusses and roof and attic framing using dimensional and engineered lumber to strengthen existing roof purlins and purlin post support beams. Funding included grants from the Eva M. Coty Fund, a fund managed by the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation, and from the State Historic Preservation Office's Historic Restoration Fund, as well as donations from members and area residents and a loan from the Fellowship of Northeast Congregational Christian Churches. Work will continue through the summer and fall with the installation of new roof shingles and flashing, the repair of the lower belfry tower, and the repair and painting of the plaster in the audience room.



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C. Wigren, 2011



### ◀ Hartford.

The Bushnell Park Foundation received the 2018 Olmsted Award from the Connecticut chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The Foundation's mission is to promote, preserve, and protect Bushnell Park, established in 1853 and listed on the National Register. The Foundation also routinely funds improvements to the park through private donations. Completed capital projects include many restorations, the construction of the Performance Pavilion, and the children's play area. Current initiatives include: restoration of the Israel Putnam Monument, working with the I-Quilt Foundation to expand the park, renovation of the play area, and working with the City of Hartford to renovate walkways and lighting. Visit: [www.bushnellpark.org](http://www.bushnellpark.org).

C. Wigren



### ◀ New Haven.

Demolition of Church Street South (1969, Charles Moore ML/TW) accelerated in June after the last resident left the urban-renewal era housing project. Completed in 1970 as part of New Haven's nationally significant urban renewal program, the complex was lauded for its lively supergraphics and a network of internal streets and plazas designed to encourage community life. For many years Church Street South was considered an attractive place to live, but neglect by Northland Investment Corporation, which bought the complex in 2008, rendered it unlivable and an eyesore. By 2015, federal inspectors found mold-infested walls, leaking roofs and windows, and structural deficiencies. A class-action lawsuit charges Northland with deliberate demolition by neglect to open up the site, which is convenient to downtown, Yale-New Haven Hospital, and Union Station, for more profitable redevelopment. The demolition of Church Street South highlights the need for thoughtful evaluation of the legacy of urban renewal, rather than broad-brush demonization, and for efforts to preserve and adapt the most significant of its works.

*continued on page 6*



### Stamford. ▲

Redevelopment proposals are being sought for the State Cinema in the Springdale neighborhood. Opened in 1927 as a vaudeville house called the Springdale Theater, it successfully made the shift to movies—first silent, then sound, and eventually digital. However, the Freedman family, who have owned the theater since 1976 and operated it since 1987, announced in June that it will close at the end of the summer—the victim, like so many others, of steep declines in moviegoing. Garden Homes Management Corporation, the family real-estate company, is seeking proposals. One requirement is that the main auditorium remain intact, perhaps as an art-house theater or a community meeting space, which Springdale now lacks. For information, write to Richard Freedman, richard@gardenhomesmanagement.com.

### Waterford. ►

Citizens from around the state are beginning the process of forming a Friends group for Seaside State Park, the site of the former Seaside sanatorium buildings (1931; NR). Helen Post Curry, the great-granddaughter of Cass Gilbert, who designed the main buildings at Seaside, called an organizational meeting on June 13 with the assistance of Kathy Jacques, a Waterford resident who has been skeptical of plans to convert the buildings to a privately-run lodge. Approximately 35 people attended the meeting. They differed about whether the buildings should be redeveloped but agreed on the importance of protecting the park as a park. Pamela Adams, president of the umbrella group Friends of Connecticut State Parks, noted that parks with Friends groups tend to fare better than those without, thanks to having volunteer labor and committed advocates. To learn more about the Friends of Seaside, visit <https://friendsofseaside.org>.

In the meantime, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is waiting for proposals for the lodge, which must be submitted by July 27 (see page 16). Potential developers attended two walk-throughs in May and June (pictured). The department hopes to select a developer by the end of the year.



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C. Wigren



**Hoyt-Burwell-Morse House**

8 Ferris Hill Road, New Canaan, Connecticut 06840  
 MLS #141863     \$1,000,000

Bedrooms: 3  
 Sq. Ft.: 1,902  
 Lot: 2.14 acres

Full Baths: 3  
 Style: Antique



The Hoyt-Burwell-Morse House is one of the oldest and finest antique homes in New Canaan. History happened here in the Time Before Now. Built by the Hoyt family, sold to the Burwell and Carter family, later owned by the Morse family, and other distinguished citizens of the town. Faithfully upgraded in mid-twentieth century. An amazing chimney stack anchors the structure. Because of its historic significance, the house must be made available for visits by the public once each year. The documentation of its placement on the National Register of Historic Places is fully available. Changes to the exterior of the house as it is seen from the road are not allowed. However, the house could be expanded towards the rear of the property, and/or a barn could be added.



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Speakers and attendees traded ideas at the State Historic Preservation Conference in May.

## State Historic Preservation Office Sends a Message of Stewardship at Second Annual Conference

By Jenny Scofield, Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office

With more than 250 guests and twenty exhibitors in attendance, the State Historic Preservation Office set out to inspire communities during our second annual conference held in Rocky Hill on May 16<sup>th</sup>. Under the theme of Shared Stewardship, the conference featured a line-up of non-traditional presentations along with technical panels and opportunities for idea-sharing. The “Edge of History” morning program was led by speakers whose creative work intersects with preservation through their appreciation of community history, its stories, and its places. Meant to encourage fresh perspectives and broaden concepts about who is contributing to historic preservation efforts, the talks offered new ways to make historic preservation relevant to a range of participants.

In a musically accented presentation with place-inspired lyrics, singer-songwriter and author Dar Williams kicked off the morning. Building on her recent book, *What I Found in a Thousand Towns*, Ms. Williams described her concept of “positive proximity”—a set of qualities that help towns grow and become places that we love. In a comparison to the Connecticut she became acquainted with as a student at Wesleyan University, Ms. Williams referenced Hartford as a community that is making downtown a place where people want to be, through its inherent history, events, and spaces that allow for positive gatherings. She spoke of the need for “making bridges” both between groups of people and between people and the history of the places they occupy.

Madeline Sayet, theatre director and member of the Mohegan Tribe, followed up on Dar Williams’ emphasis on the identity of a locale. She started her talk by bringing us to a place of our memories and continued by connecting the past to the present and future. She explained how indigenous philosophies about place can inform how we build and perceive our cultural environment. Ms. Sayet drew upon her experiences growing up on the Mohegan Reservation as inspiration for how story-telling supports community identity.

Artist Titus Kaphar, who challenges his audiences to look beyond the common interpretations of historic artworks, described his project to reuse an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century building while also bolstering the creative community in an historic New Haven neighborhood. His efforts to convert a vacant industrial space into a creative incubator is aimed at honoring the neighborhood’s legacy in multiple ways, through retention of a historic building, recognition of the area’s creative past, and by providing a path for new artistic entrepreneurs to learn the trade.

Connecticut native and prize-winning author Natasha Wing rounded out the speakers with a conversation about how to make historic preservation accessible. In writing her book, *How Jackie Saved Grand Central*, Ms. Wing sought to translate the concept of historic preservation and her appreciation for it to children. She mastered this challenge by finding an “access point” to the topic to encourage interest. In her story, the building takes on

character traits and the story unfolds in kid-friendly language.

The morning program set the stage for keynote speaker Carla Bruni, who works in community engagement at PlaceEconomics. Ms. Bruni delivered motivating remarks aimed at encouraging diversity in preservation by highlighting that we may have more partners than we might realize. She spoke of the importance of using everyday, non-technical language to describe preservation activities and offered several examples of innovative volunteer-staffed programs that provide technical preservation assistance to property owners.

The afternoon program was designed to transfer the innovative approaches of the morning to specific preservation challenges. The State Historic Preservation Office received positive feedback on the scope of these technical sessions, which ranged in topic from how to care for a historic property and how local preservation processes work, to community engagement strategies, innovative digital documentation technology, landscape stewardship, and a roundtable on resiliency strategies. Highlights from the afternoon included a recently completed virtual tour of Old New-Gate Prison & Copper Mine in East Granby. 🌿

*For more information about our conference speakers or to share ideas about stewardship in your community, call the State Historic Preservation Office at (860) 500-2300.*





## Thoughts from Young Preservationists

Since a major focus of the State Historic Preservation Conference was thinking outside the usual preservation box, CPN asked three young preservationists to reflect on the speakers and ideas presented.

**Stefon Danczuk.** Place matters. That's what the State Historic Preservation Office's Conference seemed to be about and with a wide variety of speakers talking about the places that have come to matter to them, SHPO pushed forward this idea of also having preservation be more inclusive. Everyone should be a preservationist, because everybody should care about the places they are from. I grew up in Durham, Connecticut with its vibrant Main Street Historic District. Passing by these historic buildings every day I never learned their history until doing independent research in graduate school. Whether it is the newly renovated Parson House, the old Center School House, or the historic Town Hall, these places matter to me and my community. But all over the state there are historic buildings that need saving before they are torn down and their stories are left forgotten.

The keynote speaker, Carla Bruni, made a compelling argument about the need for community engagement to promote grassroots preservation efforts. On issues like stewardship, having amateur preservationists in the local community can help to ensure historic buildings remain maintained. She showcased a few programs that help to foster a sense of stewardship by providing

members of the community with the tools and know-how they needed to maintain their historic homes. And this is where I feel preservation can really excel! If more communities had this sense of stewardship for their history and heritage, we would not have to worry about demolition or blight. These were the big impressions left on me by the conference: Place matters, and everyone can be a preservationist.

*Stefon Danczuk, a graduate student in Public History at Central Connecticut State University, is an intern at the Connecticut Trust this summer.*

**Regan Miner:** Throughout the museum and preservation field, practitioners often struggle to find ways to instill a love of history and historic preservation into the next generation. Natasha Wing attempts to solve this issue with her innovative and forward-thinking children's book, *When Jackie Saved Grand Central*. By translating historic preservation into kid friendly terms, she found an access point for kids to care about historic properties. Wing's book features the little-known story of Jackie Kennedy's campaign to save Grand Central Station from being bulldozed to make way for a skyscraper.

By picking two well-known figures, Jackie Kennedy and Grand Central Station, Wing made the story relatable to children; most kids have familiarity with the concept of a First Lady and have a general idea of where New York City is located. Additionally, Wing made Grand

Central Station a character in the book making it possible for children to empathize with the building. Wing's story shows children that one person can make a difference and illustrates how meaningful a building can be to a community. Wing spoke at the State Historic Preservation Office's May conference and as a fellow book-lover, I enjoyed hearing about her writing process and learning about the book's impact with young children.

*Regan Miner is a consultant for the Norwich Historical Society, a graduate student in Public History at Central Connecticut State University, and the 2018 recipient of the Trust's Mimi Findlay Award for young preservationists.*

**Barbara Sternal:** Since I'm a student and this was my first conference on preservation, I wasn't sure what to expect at the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office's Annual Statewide Conference, but I was pleasantly surprised by the main speakers, who were all from the artistic field rather than traditional preservation. These individuals spoke about their experiences with preservation and described preservation projects in which they were involved. Although some had stronger ties to the field than others, the presence of these outsiders made me contemplate new ways to connect to people who may not understand what historic preservation means and how it could help a community.

While the morning's speakers made me think outside the box, the keynote speaker,

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# THE EDGE OF HISTORY

With “Shared Stewardship” as its theme, the 2018 Connecticut Statewide Historic Preservation Conference featured four speakers from outside the professional preservation community—an artist, a writer, a singer, and a theater director. Some of the ideas they presented suggested links with existing preservation efforts or ideas for new directions. Here are just a few.



A.

Deborah Berke Partners, courtesy of NXTHVN



D.

**Singer-songwriter Dar Williams** talked about her recent book, *What I Found in a Thousand Towns*, a chronicle of the communities she has visited on concert tours and observations about what makes them tick.

*“Positive proximity:” “a state of being where living side by side with other people is experienced as beneficial” which is achieved through spaces that maximize good interactions, projects that build community identity, and translation—“all the acts of communication that open up a town to itself and to the world.”*

Places that are defining or recapturing their identity and building on it.

- Ms. Williams pointed out that Hartford has an identity as a community that has promoted social justice, as seen in the story of the Charter Oak and the works of residents Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain, and others.
- The New Haven Preservation Trust celebrates that city’s identity as a national center of Modernist architecture through a survey and an award-winning website, [newhavenmodern.org](http://newhavenmodern.org).

## To learn more:

Dar Williams, <https://darwilliams.com/product/>  
 Madeline Sayet, <https://www.madelinesayet.com/>  
 Titus Kaphar, NXTHVN, <https://www.nxthvn.com/>  
 Natasha Wing, <http://natashawing.com/>  
 Carla Bruni, PreserveGreen, <https://preservegreen.wordpress.com/>

**Storyteller and producer Madeline Sayet**, a member of the Mohegan tribe, stressed the importance of communities’ ability to tell their own stories.

*“Places carry names for a reason. A name is a story. Without these stories something is lost.”*

*“Think: What kind of heroes and ancestors did you need as a child? Now, think about what type of ancestor you want to be.”*

Places that are taking control of their own histories and celebrating local heroes.

- The revival of Mashantucket and Mohegan as place names has been an important component of those tribes’ regaining of official status and prominence in Connecticut’s society and economy.
- Charles Ethan Porter, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century artist celebrated for his still life paintings, is recognized in the Connecticut Freedom Trail with an entry for his house, in Vernon.

SCAD Museum of Art, via Wikimedia Commons

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt



B.



C. Natasha Wing

Illustrated by Alexandra Boiger

**A.** Hartford's history of promoting social justice, as exemplified by Harriet Beecher Stowe (her house, pictured) and others, could be highlighted as an aspect of community identity.

**B.** Charles Ethan Porter, an African American artist considered a master of still life, painted "Lilacs" in 1890.

**C.** *When Jackie Saved Grand Central*, written by Natasha Wing, tells the story of a pivotal preservation victory for children.

**D.** Titus Kaphar is converting a vacant factory in New Haven's Dixwell neighborhood into NXTHVN, an arts center for residents and high school students.

**E.** The Connecticut Trust's window-repair workshops help homeowners gain confidence in preserving their own historic houses, as suggested by Carla Bruni.

Erin Marchitto, 2015



E.

**Writer Natasha Wing**, author of *When Jackie Saved Grand Central*, described how she approached writing about historic preservation for children.

*"Find an access point; make the building a character; make it the underdog; translate the concept of historic preservation into kid-friendly terms."*

Places that communicate preservation values to young people and other new audiences.

- The Guilford Preservation Alliance and the New Haven Ethnic Heritage Center have programs to train high school students to serve as guides for historic places.
- What Connecticut preservation stories would make good children's books?

**Artist Titus Kaphar** reworks classical artworks to tell forgotten stories of African Americans.

*"The people here deserve this." "I want people to feel that this is a valuable community."*

Places that use history and the historic environment to help residents feel their community is valuable. Places that uncover the roles of forgotten peoples in history.

- Billings Forge, which received a Merit Award from the Connecticut Trust this year, uses rehabbed industrial buildings for housing, businesses, and job training programs for community residents.
- Titus Kaphar is currently building NXTHVN, with artists' studios, gallery, and art programming for high school students in New Haven's historically African American Dixwell neighborhood.

**Economist Carla Bruni** of Place Economics,

*"The focus is not just buildings, but the people in them. For whom are we saving this place?"*

*We recycle bottles and cans – we ought to recycle buildings. You're recycling everything else.*

*"Preservation isn't just a field, it's an ethic."*

Places that see preservation as recycling; teaching basic maintenance and repair skills for old objects and buildings.

- The Connecticut Trust sponsored workshops to teach window restoration in 2015 and is repeating them in July of this year.
- Building sustainable features into renovation of historic structures is becoming commonplace, but how can we make the public understand that preservation is integral to sustainability?

# Historic Places along the Coast

From waterfront estates to fishing villages to the busy corridor of Route 1 and Interstate 95, Connecticut's coast offers a wealth and a variety of historic places. But these places are vulnerable, too, as we learned again in 2012 with the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy. Since then, areas along the coast of Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean have been a focus of preservation efforts, thanks to federal funding to repair hurricane damage and plan improvements to protect significant places from future harm.

Among the results of this work has been recognizing sites in Westport, New Haven, and Stonington for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Once designated, these places are identified for resiliency improvements, and gain eligibility for other preservation incentives.

Although it contains buildings dating as far back as 1809, the **Bridge Street historic district** in Westport began to develop into its present form with the construction of a bridge across the Saugatuck River in 1869 (replaced in 1884 by the extant Saugatuck River swing

bridge, individually listed on the National Register). The new bridge allowed what had been farmland to develop as a middle- and upper-middle-class suburb. Convenient to the small commercial node across the river, the district gradually filled with the homes of storeowners, professionals, and industrial executives and managers. Built in a succession of popular styles, the houses share a general similarity of scale and materials, as well as a common setting of spacious lawns and shade trees. Of particular note are stone walls and fences, some of them dating to the laying out of Bridge Street in 1869, which mark the division between the public and private realms.

Another residential neighborhood is the **Morris Cove historic district** in New Haven. Here, however, intensive development began not with a new transportation facility, but rather with summer vaca-



Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.

Rufus Wakeman house (1884) and fence, Bridge Street historic district, Westport

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Streetscape, Morris Cove historic district, New Haven



Mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century section, Stonington Cemetery, Stonington

Robert Benson

tioners who by the 1870s were settling in among the farmers and mariners who lived along the eastern side of the mouth of New Haven Harbor, in what then was part of the town of East Haven. To accommodate the newcomers, landowners established hotels and boarding houses and carved off building lots for small cottages. By the early 1900s, year-round residents were beginning to move in, encouraged by the growth of New Haven (which had annexed the area in 1882) and the introduction of electrified streetcar service in the 1890s. The areas farther from the waterfront gradually filled in with one- and two-family houses for the urban middle class. With this growing population came urban amenities: stores, a firehouse and a school, and a park along the seawall.

Farther to the east, the **Stonington Cemetery** offers insights into the social history of Stonington Borough, as well as changing funerary practices and design trends from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Stonington Cemetery Association was chartered in 1849, a local manifestation of the incorporated-cemetery model first seen in Connecticut at the Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven. The three-acre cemetery incorporated a family burial ground dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Expanded twice to reach its current size of 19 acres, the cemetery houses a cross-section of the Borough's inhabitants, from business and civic leaders to ordinary citizens, as well as African Americans and European immigrants. There is also a section for paupers. Similarly, it represents three periods of cemetery landscape design: the irregular rows of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century family burial ground; the family plots and curbed



Hoyt-Barnum house, Stamford

roads and paths of a mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century municipal cemetery; and the more open late-19<sup>th</sup>-century landscape-lawn cemetery. Grave markers and mausolea similarly trace developments in funerary design.

In addition to these three new listings, documentation for one site already on the Register has been significantly updated. The **Hoyt-Barnum house** in Stamford was listed in 1969. In 2016 the City of Stamford moved the house to make room for a new city police station. In addition to documenting the move, the City paid for an updated nomination to provide more information about the house's history and significance. The new nomination includes a discussion of the house's plank-on-frame construction, where sawn planks are used instead of studs, a construction technique that depended on plentiful timber and established sawmills. The raised rear plate and rear porch (partly enclosed) suggest influence from Dutch building practices found in nearby New York. On its new site, the house continues to serve as a museum for the Stamford Historical Society. 🌿

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S. Bronin

Laurie Lamarre, Connecticut League of History Organizations; Renée Tribert, Connecticut Trust; and Cathy Labadia, State Historic Preservation Office, display the award of merit for the Making Places website.

Tribert's excellent work in the Making Places website. Chair Sara Bronin and Renée accepted the award of merit from the Connecticut League of History Organizations in New Britain simultaneously with the acceptance of a Connecticut Main Street Keystone Award by Trustees Ellen Gould and Charlie Janson with Wes Haynes in Danbury.

Three interns joined us for the summer. Barbara Sternal, a public history student at Central Connecticut State University, is documenting the history of the Puerto Rican community in New Britain for cultural equity updates and expansions of State and National Register districts. Stefon Danczuk, also a CCSU public history student, is investigating the local economic impacts resulting from historic rehabilitation using the state tax credits to assist with next year's advocacy efforts. Quinnipiac law student Anna Merin is analyzing the Trust's historic

rehabilitation tax credit loan program to improve its marketing.

And after a year of measured and mindful transition, I became the Trust's Executive Director on July 17. I am ever grateful to Wes Haynes for shouldering responsibilities with me this past year. He provided a great wealth of preservation expertise and program guidance and helped recruit consultant Sarah Shrewsbury to put in place a new approach to development. "I leave with the Trust forever in my heart but in the great hands of you and our staff," my former Co-Director insisted I tell you. "And Sarah brings to the Trust her strong development expertise earned at Yale, the Nature Conservancy, Mystic Seaport and AmeriCares, and her drive to help smaller organizations like us succeed."

*Jane Montanaro*  
Executive Director

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*Freeman Houses, cont'd from page 2*

non-profit which has owned the site since 1990. CPN first reported on the significance of the houses in 1993, soon after their story was fleshed out by local architectural historian Charles Brilvitch in preparing the National Register listing. Later, the Trust's Circuit Riders provided the Freeman Center with technical assistance, assisting them in visioning adapting the vacant and deteriorating houses as a cultural center in 2008 and leading to grants to plan and execute temporary stabilization in 2013.

The wake-up call for this recognition was a blight notice this past winter. Forward motion had stalled for lack of funding. The temporary stabilization measures are failing, and conditions continue to deteriorate. ABCD, faced with



A crowd gathered at the Freeman houses for the formal announcement of the Most Endangered listing.

mounting fines and threat of foreclosure, agreed to establish a timetable and proof

of funds for full exterior and limited interior restoration. To make this happen, the Freeman Center has spun off as an independent organization and is currently transitioning from a volunteer organization to a fully-organized, professionally-managed nonprofit.

But the clock is ticking, and much energy needs to be applied quickly. Significant work is needed to both make the buildings publicly accessible and capable of telling the story of Little Liberia. The success of this project remains a priority of the Connecticut Trust, which recently assisted the Freeman Center in obtaining a capacity-building grant from CT Humanities.

“The Freeman houses tell an important story told nowhere else in Connecticut, of how free African-Americans and Native Americans established thriving middle-class communities along the eastern seaboard in the decades prior to the Civil War,” says the Trust’s Jane Montanaro. “The grant from CT Humanities and recognition by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of the nation’s 11 most important endangered buildings will support the Freeman Center in realizing its vision for re-using the houses and carrying Little Liberia’s story forward to future generations.”

*For more information ...  
Mary and Eliza Freeman Center, <http://freemancenterbpt.com/>.  
National Trust for Historic Preservation, <https://savingplaces.org>.*

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### Seaside Sanatorium

36 Shore Road, Waterford

The State of Connecticut, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is seeking proposals for the redevelopment of existing historic structures of architectural significance at Seaside State Park. The purpose of this solicitation is to contract with a private partner who will rehabilitate, operate, and maintain the buildings as a privately-managed hotel/lodge with associated amenities. The proposed public-private partnership will be a long-term ground lease with a minimum term of 50 years and an opportunity for renewal. The envisioned redevelopment will rehabilitate, renovate, and maintain the structures, provide high-quality lodging of up to 100 rooms (a lower room count is preferred), offer amenities such as dining, meeting space, and a spa, and make the site an attractive destination that works in harmony with adjacent neighbors, the community, and nearby park properties.

Seaside is a site of outstanding historical importance, listed on the National Register of Historic Places at a national level of significance. As Seaside Sanatorium, the first purpose-built facility in the United States for the helio-tropic treatment of tuberculosis in children, it represented a significant step forward in combating a devastating disease. In addition to its place in medical history, Seaside is important in social and political history as an example of govern-



ment efforts in the 1930s to promote the welfare of its citizens. And, it is architecturally significant as the work of a nationally-recognized master, Cass Gilbert. Although Gilbert was a prominent traditionalist, at Seaside he was given the very modern job of inventing a new building type. His balancing of functional innovation with familiar forms and motifs created a facility that was technically up-to-date yet offered a comforting and comfortable environment for patients and staff. There is nothing like Seaside, anywhere. Moreover, it was created by the State and people of Connecticut, and represents a great achievement. Rehabilitation of the historic structures may qualify for historic tax credits and loans.

Proposals are due by 4:00 pm on July 27, 2018.

**Contact:** Tenia Seay DEEP – Bureau of Outdoor Recreation State Parks & Public Outreach Division 79 Elm Street Hartford, CT 06106-5127 (860) 424-3064 [Tenia.Seay@ct.gov](mailto:Tenia.Seay@ct.gov), More info: [https://biznet.ct.gov/SCP\\_Documents/Bids/46022/Seaside042818-BOR.pdf](https://biznet.ct.gov/SCP_Documents/Bids/46022/Seaside042818-BOR.pdf)

### Portland Silk Co.

27 Stack Street, Middletown

The Portland Silk Company was established in 1898 to take advantage of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century trade embargoes against foreign silk producers. The firm was one of two in Middletown that made woven broad silk. It began with a two-story wood frame loft along Stack Street, growing to accommodate production with the addition of two brick buildings c.1900 and c.1925. The company faltered during the Great Depression and sold its assets in 1935. From 1937 to the present, the Auburn Manufacturing Co. has produced rubber and plastic gaskets, seals, O-rings and other molded parts in the factory complex.

The c.1900 two-story brick masonry building has timber framing, 13-foot-high ceilings, arched windows with stone sills. Centrally located in a high density, walkable neighborhood, with convenient access to CT-9 and public transit, it is available for redevelopment.



Challenges include flood plain issues. Construction drawings for 20 units of affordable housing have been developed by Patriquin Architects of New Haven (contact Karin Patriquin (203) 535-1688 or [karin@patriquinarchitects.com](mailto:karin@patriquinarchitects.com)).

Mills: Making Places of Connecticut link: <https://connecticutmills.org/find/details/auburn-manufacturing-co>

**Contact:** Philip Gagnon, Colliers International, 860-616-4016

## Bishop House

### Woodstock

The Ebenezer Bishop House offers an opportunity to own and care for a unique piece of New England's disappearing past. Situated on a hill overlooking the English Neighborhood Brook, the Bishop House is a local example of Federal-era architecture with a highly intact interior that retains both Georgian- and Federal-period features. The 2.54-acre property maintains its historic character, including open fields, stone walls, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century carriage shed, and a 20<sup>th</sup>-century barn.

Family tradition holds that the Bishop House was constructed before c. 1780 and then enlarged by Dr. Bishop c. 1800. Nearly sixty years later, a descendent also named Ebenezer Bishop left his family farm as a young man to join the First Connecticut Calvary in 1861, at the beginning of the Civil War. During the War, he took part in several battles and eventually was captured in Virginia. He was imprisoned at Andersonville, Georgia, which he survived. His diary, knapsack, and canteen from this period survive and are part of Historic New England's collection.

During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Bishop family ran a modest dairying operation at the site. After 1910, the house was only used seasonally and it saw few aesthetic improvements or additions of modern conveniences. Given its historic significance, the Bishop family donated the property to Historic New England in 2017 to assure its long-term preservation.

Historic New England plans to permanently protect the Bishop House through its Preservation Easement Program, which currently protects over 100 privately-owned properties throughout New England.



More info: <https://www.historicnewengland.org/ebenezer-bishop-house-sale-woodstock-connecticut/>

Contact: Stephanie Gosselin, Berkshire Hathaway Home Services, POB 366, South Woodstock, CT 06267; 860-428-5960



Interior photo and rendering courtesy of Patriquin Architects, New Haven

### Deadline for the next issue is August 3, 2018.

*Historic Properties Exchange* is published to advertise endangered properties in Connecticut by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, a statewide nonprofit organization located at 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, Connecticut 06517. Real estate advertised in this publication is subject to the Federal Housing Act of 1968.

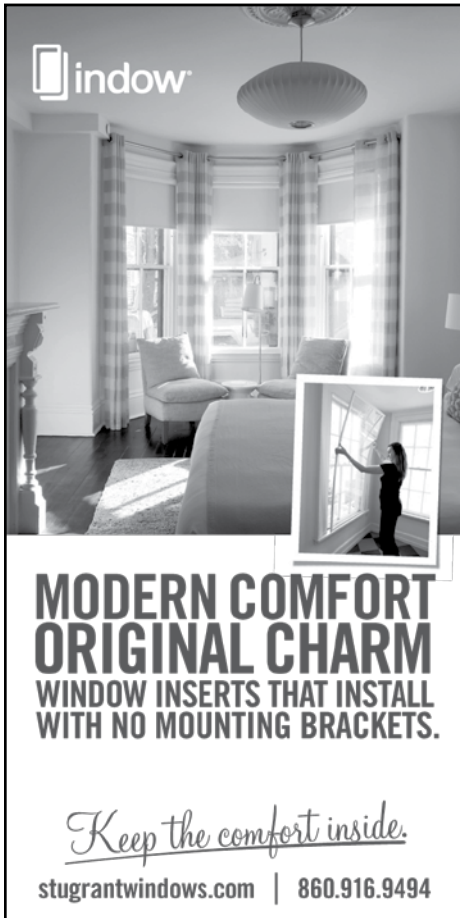
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To list a property, learn about properties listed or to subscribe, contact Jane Montanaro, Director of Preservation Services, at [jmontanaro@cttrust.org](mailto:jmontanaro@cttrust.org) or call 203-562-6312.

Carla Bruni, got me fired up. She compared preservation to recycling: something that was unfamiliar at first but is now widely supported and practiced. Bruni described her work involving small projects in local communities, like the creation of a tool library, appliance-repair workshops, and

home improvements that facilitated the first-time purchase of a house. These projects were preservation on a smaller scale, but perhaps were a way that people could begin to comprehend what it can mean to preserve. For Bruni, preservation is a "radical movement" and, personally, I'd like to be a part of it. 🌿

*Barbara Sternal, a graduate student in Public History at Central Connecticut State University, is an intern at the Connecticut Trust this summer.*



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The 2018 grant recipients were:

**American Clock and Watch Museum, Bristol:** \$4,000 for chimney repair at the Miles Lewis house (1801; NR\*)

**Canton Historical Society:** \$6,000 for exterior repairs and painting of its building, originally part of the Collins Axe Company (1865; NR)

**Historical Society of East Hartford:** \$7,500 to re-roof the Makens Bemont house, also known as the Huguenot House (1761; NR)

**Enfield Historical Society:** \$15,000 for painting of the Martha Parsons house (1782; NR)

**Pequot Library, Southport (Fairfield):** \$1,500 for masonry repairs (1894; NR)

**Dorothy Whitfield Historical Society, Guilford:** \$12,000 to re-roof the Hyland House (1713; NR)

**Dudley Foundation, Guilford:** \$12,000 for sill repairs to the Big Barn at Dudley Farm (1845; SR)

**Connecticut Audubon Society, Hampton:** \$15,000 for roof repair and chimney restoration of the Edwin Way Teale house (1806; SR)

**Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, Hartford:** \$6,500 to re-roof the Superintendent's cottage (1873; NR)

**Lisbon Historical Society:** \$10,000 to repair foundation, sills, and framing at the Burnham Tavern (c.1755; SR)

**Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust, Mansfield:** \$15,000 to repair the foundation and roof framing of the Gurleyville Grist Mill (1750; NR)

**Rockfall Foundation, Middletown:** \$12,000 to repair roof soffits and fascia, dormers, porch columns, windows, and door trim at the Capt. Benjamin Williams house (c.1792; NR)

**Denison Society, Mystic:** \$12,000 for roof repairs at the Denison Homestead barn (c.1780; NR)

**Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic:** \$12,000 to re-roof the Charles Mallory sail loft (1839)

**New Haven Museum:** \$12,000 to repair windows of the New Haven Colony Historical Society building (1930; NR)

**Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust, New Milford:** \$10,000 for gutters, foundation repair and drainage improvements, electrical safety provisions, and siding and door repair for the Smyrski farm White Barn (1870; SR)

**Norwich Historical Society:** \$5,000 for roof replacement, foundation repairs, and drainage improvement at the East District School (1789; NR)

**Old Saybrook Historical Society:** \$12,000 to repair windows at the General William Hart house (1767; NR)

**Simsbury Historical Society:** \$3,620 for security upgrades to the Phelps house (1771; NR) and four other buildings

**Torrington Historical Society:** \$12,000 for exterior repairs, painting, and access ramp at the Carson house (1880; NR)



For more information about The 1772 Foundation visit [www.1772foundation.org](http://www.1772foundation.org).

\*NR: National Register of Historic Places  
SR: State Register of Historic Places

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# 1772 Foundation Awards Maintenance and Repair Grants

**T**he 1772 Foundation, partnering for the eighth year with the Connecticut Trust, awarded historic preservation grants totaling \$191,120 to 20 private nonprofit organizations in Connecticut. Each grant recipient was required to have matching funds for its project. Grants were provided for exterior work: painting, surface restoration, fire/security systems, repairs to/restoration of porches, roofs and windows, repairs to foundations and sills, and chimney and masonry repointing.

Connecticut Circuit Riders Greg Farmer and Brad Schide made site visits and provided technical assistance to the grant applicants. Greg Farmer said, "The Trust is pleased to acknowledge the continued support of The 1772 Foundation in preserving historic buildings and museums throughout the state. The pool of applicants this year included 56 museums and historical organizations in 45 communities, representing a total need of more than \$1.6 million in capital repair projects. The twenty grants awarded throughout all eight counties will leverage more than \$298,000 in additional private funding and help ensure continued access to community-based heritage."



The Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust will be able to make repairs to the White Barn at the Smyrski farm in New Milford, thanks to a grant from The 1772 Foundation, administered by the Connecticut Trust.

B. Danforth Ely, President of The 1772 Foundation, commented on the importance of these grants to the preservation community. "They fund maintenance and restoration work that might otherwise be deferred. Funding for such work is often harder to come by than funding for programming. The requirement of a match means our dollars go further and also demonstrates to us community support and the recipients' commitment to preserving their buildings."

*continued on page 19*